

due to changes in software and back-up technology. I can see that this will happen in other arenas. I see digital productions as being as fragile and ephemeral as unique copies of artists' books.

I saw my blog for many years as an ephemeral production, but it is now being archived by the National Library of Australia's Pandora project, which made a commitment to sustaining the software that will allow people to read it in the future! I still have my doubts about their capacity to fulfil that promise, but it did change my outlook for the blog: it felt like a more stable entity, which made me rethink my writing a bit.

I use mainly traditional methods due to the quality of production, but also because I love the time it consumes. I am a big fan of Slow Making, even if I can't manage to have a Slow Life. I love the idea of being a 'tradition bearer' (as someone called me recently), but I don't really feel like I earn that title, because I cut corners and push the technology in more contemporary ways when I want to. The production methods I use (letterpress, hand-sewn bindings) are as endangered in my country as the panda is in China, and while it feels important to keep them alive in public view, I have missed out on the kind of formal training that would allow me to feel secure to teach them formally. So I try to pass on the fun of the process so that others will want to keep it alive after me.

Production methods are generally successful if they are used for the right reasons. I do not adhere to any one 'method' of production. I believe that artistic publication is for the most part content-driven, and the production should be dictated by what the idea needs to become an entity. I don't think any form of production can be revered or privileged over any other. That old adage – don't blame the tool, blame the user – is very true.

The computer is very important. I make productions, I plan productions, I research things and source materials, all using my computer. I have never been averse to combining new and old technology. To do so would be churlish.

New technologies do influence my production. Layout software has eased my production immeasurably, allowing me to make mock-ups and layout plans without hours of pencil and calculator. Photoshop and other programmes have made digital experimentation and production easy (perhaps too easy!). I also use the internet to communicate with bookbinders and printers and to research bookbinding and letterpress methods. Australia has few resources,



Ampersand Duck, *Grieving: Hold* (2009). Vintage book spine, letterpress offcuts, antique cotton thread, metal rod. c. 800 x 220 x 60 mm.

and we are such a small book community that swift communication with overseas makers is a blessing. I am also constantly playing with different materials that emerge with improved commercial packaging and offset and digital printing methods.

I would consider publishing an artist's book on electronic 'paper' if I had the right content and motivation for doing so. Electronic publishing suits certain visual content; my fine press publishing uses content and production methods that emphasise the materiality of books (for example, embossing prints, or using laid paper that has a definite texture and look). I might use electronic publishing if I wanted a certain luminosity of image that I just couldn't achieve with more material methods. Or to disseminate a book that was just too labour-intensive to produce by hand but I felt deserved a much wider audience.

Are you producing any books that are not hand printed but use purely digital media?

Yes, I see my blog that way. I also have an online reproduction of an artist's book on my website that has been physically lost, so it now seems only to exist online.

Does cost influence your methods of production? If so, how?

Yes. Thanks to geographic factors, paper is very expensive here in Australia. In the past I have only been able to afford small runs of books, or have used materials found at hand. I applied for, and got, an ACT Government grant to purchase materials to produce two fine press editions. I only asked for material funding, because the time factor is too extensive to price. That funding allowed me to make the two editions, which are starting to fund further editions and various other publications. However, I still need to work in paid jobs to supplement production costs.

Other, smaller publications are still made with what is lying around me. Again, idea-driven books do not need to be lush and expensively produced to be effective. I would like to reiterate that in my publication ideology, there is no hierarchy of production as long as the end production has a combination of method and content that works together.

Marketing and Distribution

I sell the majority of my artists' books through my website, blog and exhibitions. I am researching other methods of distribution (like retail). As my productions are quite varied, I have a variety of 'target' audiences. My fine press editions are still quite new, and because Australia has lost most of its private presses there is no public awareness of the genre, so I am still exploring ways to reach interested parties. I have talked a lot about my publications on my blog,

which gets a reasonable readership. I have sold copies of both fine press and book-arts productions via this audience. I write an irregular newsletter (Snail Mail) that I send through the post rather than electronically, and my mailing list is slowly growing. I think people still like to get things through the mail, especially envelopes without windows.

If we only made things that we knew would sell, how much art would actually get made? Sometimes you just have to make, and hope that someone else will respond accordingly. I have a lot to improve upon with marketing my work. I get so busy actually making that I forget about the distribution. I'd love to have an agent! I don't think book-arts agents exist, do they? I'm following some bookshop leads, but it's Catch-22, looping between making time and administrative time.

The Future of the Book

I have grave concerns for traditional letterpress and bookbinding in Australia, where there is very little equipment left and even fewer people able to teach the use of it. I am trying to teach what skills I have to students, but they have very little patience for hand-setting type, as it is extremely time-consuming.

I am not sure how this can be remedied in my country. I have just started a small residency programme in my personal studio, inviting a couple of graduating art students a year to make broadsides with me, in the hope that I can fan some flames. I think all I can do is keep making and inviting collaborations, and hope that it inspires others.

This case study forms part of the Centre for Fine Print Research's AHRC funded project 2008 - 2010: *What will be the canon for the artist's book in the 21st Century (In an arena that now includes both digital and traditionally produced artists' books, what will constitute the concepts of artists' publishing in the future?)* <http://www.bookarts.uwe.ac.uk/canon.htm>