

New formats, new roles, new agents: Artists' publications in Spain since 2000

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Half a century after the 1960s, commonly considered to have been the period when artists' publications expanded and consolidated, this genre seems to be experiencing a new 'golden age'. In recent years, the number of books and printed matter produced by artists has grown exponentially, and so has the interest in them demonstrated by exhibition curators, public and private collectors, and even the media. The contemporary art scene in Spain is not immune to this phenomenon. On the contrary, over the last decade, artists' publishing has undergone an explosion in quantity, quality and impact with no precedents in Spanish art history. The causes for such an explosion and its main traits are explored here, focusing on a number of significant examples and protagonists. Relevant sources of information documenting its course are offered, both online and in print.

New formats

In the text reprinted in the catalogue for the exhibition *Llibres d'artista / Artist Books*, the first important survey devoted to artists' publications in contemporary Spain, Ulises Carrión emphatically stated: 'In the old art, the writer writes texts. In the new art, the writer makes books.'¹ If this statement were to be made today, it would probably have to be rephrased to assert that, nowadays, the artist does no longer 'make books', but rather makes *works which, sometimes, may (also) take the form of books, printed matter or digital publications*. Indeed, one feature common to the practice of many contemporary artists, particularly for younger generations, is their freedom in the use of medium, genre or technique, moving easily from drawing to video to installation to printed matter... and back again, and often combining different media into one single work, depending on the needs, aims and strategic requirements of the project.

A discussion of contemporary artists' publications must, therefore, start by acknowledging that printed and digital supports have become part of the range of media used by

artists, often simultaneously, in their works. As the artist Joan Morey puts it, 'Younger artists have incorporated publishing into their artistic practice in a natural way, they have normalized it, taking advantage of the possibilities that it offers as an object of desire, as an object that generates expectation on the viewer's side.' Artists, he adds, 'have understood publications as a format which generates expectations and is, therefore, strategic to their work, and at the same time have realized their potential to create complexity in allowing different paths of access to it.'²

This is the case, for instance, in the work of Pedro G. Romero (Huelva, 1964), where publications coexist with other formats almost since the beginning of his career. His project *Archivo FX* (2000 – ongoing) is paradigmatic in this sense: starting in 2000 with the aim of becoming 'a vast archive of images of anti-sacramental political iconoclasm in Spain between 1845 and 1945, [including] photographs, films and documentaries',³ it has undergone a constant expansion over the years, materializing along the way in exhibitions, audio pieces, an internet archive, lectures and slide shows, videos, as well as a series of publications which pose significant (and intentional) difficulties in their classification, sharing the traits of



Artist and design book fair *Arts Libris*, Barcelona, 2012.

artists' books, scientific publications, essay collections and even tourist guides, sometimes all of them in a single volume.⁴

Unir els punts (2008–2011), by Mariona Moncunill (Tarragona, 1984), is a slightly different example of this kind of multi-media project. Its first step consisted of a multiple (a deck of cards), the last an artists' book and, in between, the artist proposed the creation of a hypothetical three-dimensional sculpture of ever-moving volumes. In Moncunill's own words, 'The sculpture project *Unir els punts* (join the dots) starts with the publication of a deck of cards in the context of the exhibition *4 x 12 i el gat*, curated by Amanda Cuesta at the Palma Dotze Gallery (Vilafranca, Barcelona). In this project, based on the exercises that request joining a series of dots according to a pre-established order, so as to obtain a "prefabricated" drawing, the numbered dots have been scattered on different supports [...] so as to create a three-dimensional latent drawing. Dots can be bought, given, exchanged, sold or destroyed, like any work of art, and some of them are embedded in displays or works by other artists. The sculpture that would be formed by the hypothetical joining of these dots is subject to constant change, and its shape depends on the will of the owners of each one of the dots, and on the vicissitudes of the market.'⁵ The subsequent artists' book presented photographs of all the numbered dots 'scattered' on the most varied

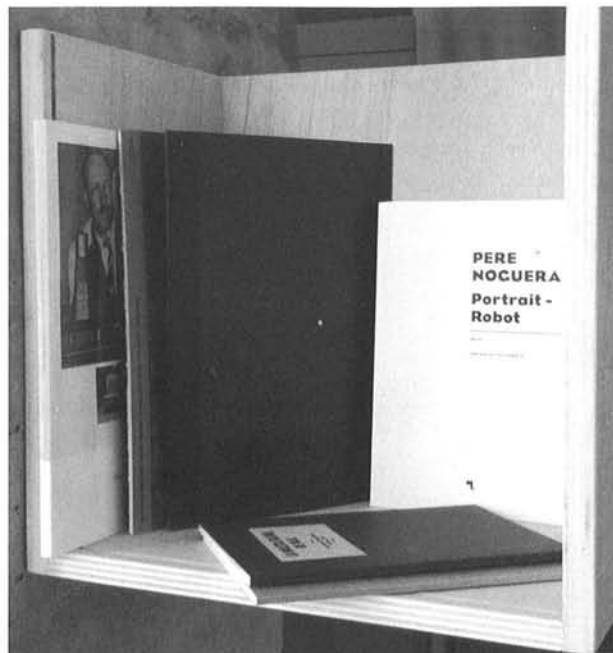
supports, among them the artist's right foot, a framed blank piece of paper resting on the shelf of an art gallery, the wall of an exhibition space, etc.



The artist book series *Cru*, published by Bisdixit, a graphic design studio based in Figueres and Barcelona, started in 2000 with *Loopculture*, a publication by artist and publisher Jordi Mitjà (Figueres, 1970), and is undoubtedly one of the key collections of artists' publications that have appeared in Spain in recent years. Its value lies not only in the quality of each single publication taken individually, but also in the variety of formats and strategies that the different volumes use, and in the fact that it includes work by the most significant and consistent practitioners of artists' publishing in recent years in Spain. Apart from those by the already mentioned Jordi Mitjà, the series includes books or printed matter by Gustavo Marrone (Buenos Aires, 1962), Dora García (Valladolid, 1965), Mabel Palacín (Barcelona, 1965), Martí Anson (Mataró, 1967), Rafel G. Bianchi (Olot, 1967), Iñaki Bonillas (Mexico City, 1981), Oriol Vilanova (Barcelona, 1980), Antonio Ortega (Sant Celoni, 1968), Alicia Framis (Barcelona, 1967), Daniel Jacoby (Lima, 1985) and, with the highest number of titles in the series, Javier Peñafiel (Zaragoza, 1964), whose books in *Cru* are often co-

authored with the label's founder and Peñafiel's personal friend, Àlex Guifreu. *Mera coincidència* (2007) is one of the titles by Peñafiel, and another instance of the book as one of the various facets of a wider project. It began as a series of conversations in the flat the artist rented during a stay in Lisbon, and later on materialized in a dramatized conversation recorded in video, a publication and a series of public presentations which used the book, in turn, as an integral part of the performance, projecting enlarged images of its spreads on the wall.⁶ The book *Mera coincidència* collects a significant amount of material from the other formats the project used, as well as texts by Peñafiel and other authors, and it plays a double role, being a part of it but also, as the original events gradually recede in time, the key element for documenting and disseminating the project.

Over the last decade, art formats such as 'artistic research' and other process-oriented artistic practices have been increasingly used by artists. These practices do not necessarily result in the production of a final 'art object', and this has prompted artists to find presentation tools which can communicate their outcome. Publications have often fulfilled such needs and are used for recording and disseminating time-based practices, such as performance, and other ephemeral modes such as site-specific installations. An example of those artists' publications which share similar motivations, is Rafel G. Bianchi's *Quién soy yo: autoanálisis de inclinaciones y aptitudes. Ejercicio realizado por Rafel G. Bianchi*, also published by Cru.⁷ This book is actually the 'documentary proof' of the artist's performance, taking the form of a facsimile of an intelligence test dating from the 1970s, which Bianchi diligently devoted himself to answering during a whole weekend, inviting curator David Armengol to be 'official' witness of this otherwise private event. Prior to the publication of the book, an exhibition with the same title could be seen at Nogueras Blanchard Gallery, in Barcelona, which attested 'to the artist's academic intention to explain the whole



Some of the books published by Crani Edicions, Figueres.

process. In a similar way to Marcel Broodthaers' *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard* (1969), which offered a conceptual analysis of the book by Stéphane Mallarmé of the same title published in 1914, Bianchi parts from the book *Who am I*, breaking down the different categories and formalizing the section of answers by means of tracing paper, thus achieving a similar aesthetic to the conceptual artists of the 70s.⁸

New roles

The spread of digital technologies for personal use, which started in the 1980s and increased in speed and penetration during the 1990s and 2000s, is significantly responsible for the fresh attention publications have attracted as an artistic medium. Easy-to-use digital technology has brought with it an increased accessibility to self-publishing resources and tools, both digital and in print, thereby providing an enormous dynamism to the 'do-it-yourself' approach on the artists' side. This phenomenon, in turn, has contributed to the blurring of the boundaries between the roles different agents play in the field of art in general and, indeed, in the field of art publishing. A significant number of artists, in carrying out their editorial activities, have situated themselves in equidistant positions between the collector, the editor, the author and even the curator, enhancing the ambiguity of the roles in each of these categories, and exploiting their respective potential to the maximum.



Exhibition *Biblioteca Intervenida*, curated by Hablar en Arte, at DAFO, Lleida, 2012.

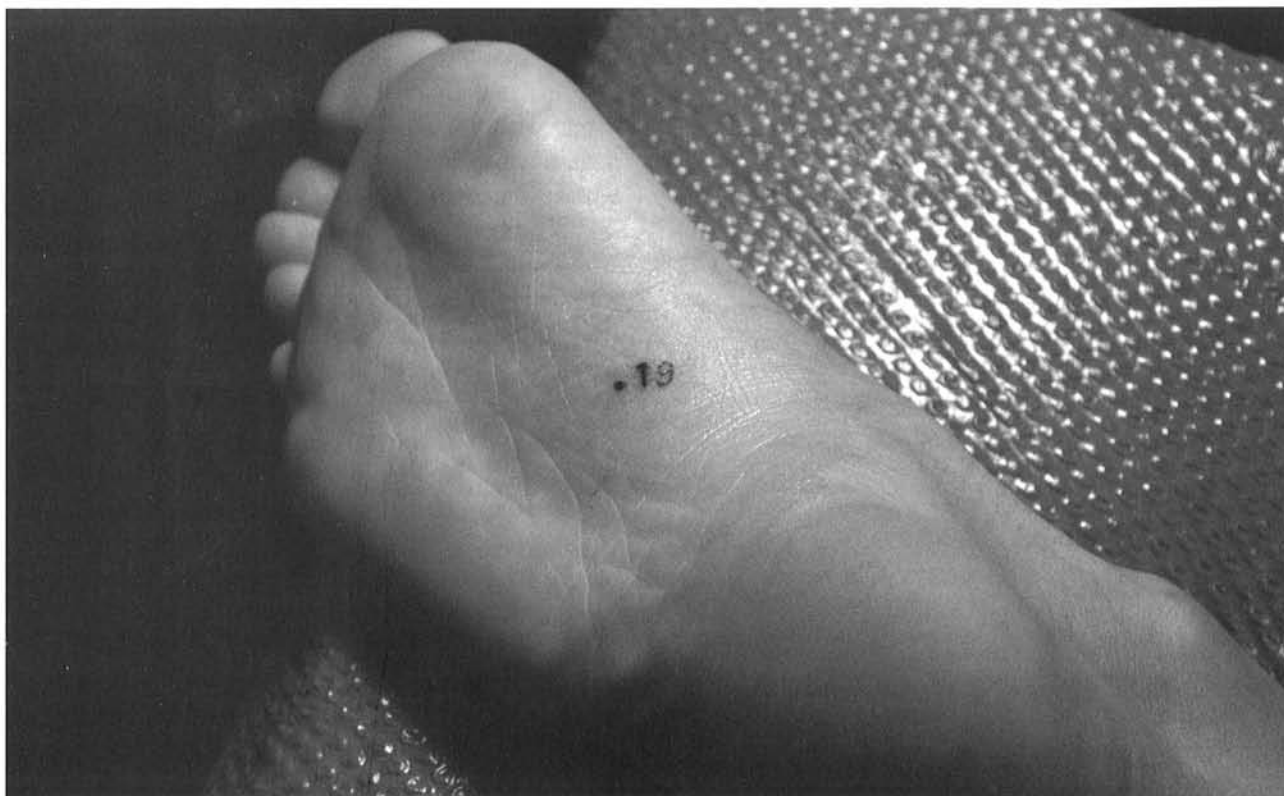
As a consequence of this new distribution of roles, the concept of authorship has undergone a shift in meaning, as a new generation of artists, graphic designers and curators comfortably engage in collaborative projects often resulting in the production of publications (not just books, but also posters, websites, etc.) which become key components, alongside exhibitions, of complex art dissemination strategies. As the artist and academic Eloi Pujol puts it, 'when we discuss artists' publications, in fact, we are partially negating one of the specific changes that this *new publishing mode* has brought about, namely the fact that, when we now talk about publishing formats, we no longer mean "things made by artists", but rather new ways of dissemination that result in a *multiplicity of new visibility formats*, as well as new agents for production.' 'New publication formats have arisen in replacement of traditional exhibition catalogues, with artists collaborating with other professionals to find ways to convey meaning through a publication which, as has already been pointed out, may coexist with other textual or narrative supports,

all of them being different aspects of the same artistic impulse.

The paradigmatic example of graphic designer Àlex Guifreu in his role as initiator, producer and sometimes co-author of artists' publications that appear under the label Cru, is far from being isolated. A similar enterprise was undertaken by ferranElOtro, whose publishing label, Save As... Publications, founded in 2008 in collaboration with Irene Minovas, has produced a substantial series of artists' books in a very short time. Save As... Publications has its own specific way of working, accurately described by critic Manuel Segade: 'ferranElOtro is a graphic designer with a degree in Fine Arts, whose work as an artist was to develop selection strategies, close to a curatorial process, from collections of works by artists of his own generation. This allowed him to propose pilot projects where his own authorship was dissolved in what others showed. Irene Minovas, with a degree in Fine Arts, was interested in perceptual processes and sound in her work as an artist, and is currently developing her interests in the field of interpretation. Both, particularly interested in this form of speech that takes place in someone else's mouth, founded



Napoleón Dynamita (Madrid: Ediciones Puré, 2012).



Mariona Montcunill, *Unir els punts* (Barcelona: Cru, 2011).

Save As... Publications in 2008. This is a publishing project that, as we shall see, is a true platform for artwork production and distribution, and a true emotional resonance field of the Catalan art scene.¹⁰ Save As... Publications has recently announced that it will cease to exist in 2013, and it can only be hoped that ferranElOtro will continue his publishing endeavours with new fruitful collaborations with artists and organisations.

Javier Narváez, in Madrid, has followed a similar path. Besides actively working as a graphic designer, he has collaborated with existing publishing labels as Bilbao-based Belleza Infinita (founded in 2002), to 'organise events and produce publications, questioning the limits of the aesthetic experience'.¹¹ And, more or less simultaneously, in 2007 he also founded his own imprint, Ediciones Puré, 'a publishing house which produces artistic "things",¹² where he has published his own art book projects as well as those of other authors. Indeed, Ediciones Puré may come closer to a fanzine and comic culture than contemporary art, but it still constitutes a significant example of the role played by designers in artists' publications in recent years.

Some artists, on the other hand, have stretched their role in the opposite direction, passionately embracing the role of publishers. Such is the case of Jordi Mitjà, who, as has already been noted, was the first author to publish a book under the label Cru, and shortly

after, in 2008, moved on to create his own label, Crani Edicions, alongside Jesús Novillo and Carolina Trébol. Through Crani, Mitjà has published projects by himself and by a number of other artists. Interestingly, in a relatively short time, Crani Edicions has already gone beyond mere publishing to take up related activities, something often demanded by the difficulties involved in turning small-scale projects like this into economically sustainable enterprises.

According to Mitjà, diversification is the key to the future of his publishing label: 'Thinking about our immediate future, I envision three fields of action: *co-publishing* with artists who can contribute partial funding to their projects, *self-publishing* in the most radical sense of the word, and *leading educational workshops* in the field of publishing... besides, of course, reaching an international audience for our books through a really good distribution network.'¹³

In 2010, after taking part in a workshop about narrative forms, artists Gabriel Pericàs (Palma de Mallorca, 1988), Daniel Jacoby and David Bestué (Barcelona, 1980) edited, designed and self-published *Texto*, 'an independent publication [...] for which 18 visual artists, most of them living in Barcelona, have been invited to work around the idea of narrative.'¹⁴ Artists responded to this call, producing proposals which ranged from fiction narratives to series of images, including literary transcriptions of

performances, comics or even incomprehensible languages. *Texto* is, therefore, a collective artists' book, but also a website, *Texto 2*, where, as Pericàs reports, new artist contributions have already and will continue to be published, so that the website turns into an online archive of artist texts in Spanish (original and in translation), as well as, possibly, a periodical publication online.¹⁵

The book and exhibition *Ref. 08001*, edited by curator Juan Canela at Galeria Nogueras Blanchard in 2010, have worked in a similar way. For both collective exhibition and publication, seventeen artists were invited to submit new work about 'the idea of reference, in its broadest sense, not only from an artistic point of view, but also in terms of any cultural, social, recreational or personal expression that might somehow generate influences or points of interest in the artists' practice.'¹⁶ Like Juan Canela, over the last decade other curators have moved onto the field of publishing as well. Such is the case of Peio Aguirre, who in 2006 founded the publishing label CO-OP, which he himself defined as 'a modest publisher platform' which would enable him to bring out publication projects devised with some of the artists he has worked with, among them Asier Mendizábal (Ordizia, 1973), who inaugurated the series with his book *Smaller than a mass*. For Peio Aguirre, the task of publishing is just one extension of the task of curating,

so it is natural that curators assume more and more of this role.

The curatorial office Latitudes, based in Barcelona and run by Mariana Cánepa de Luna and Max Andrews, have also experimented with publishing in some of their manifold and varied projects. *The Last Newspaper*, for example, consisted of 'a hybrid exhibition inspired by the way artists approach the news and respond to the stories and images that command headlines. Alongside the exhibition, a number of partner organisations, including Latitudes, used on-site offices to present their research and stage public dialogues, opening up the exhibition galleries as spaces of intellectual production as well as display. *The Last Post / The Last Gazette / The Last Register* ... was an evolving-titled 12-page free weekly newspaper and incremental exhibition catalogue edited during a 10 week editorial residency by Latitudes. Produced from a micro-newsroom placed on the third exhibition floor of the museum, the tabloids were an archive-in-progress for the *The Last Newspaper* exhibition, artworks and events, as well as being a platform for critical reflection on the wider agency of art and artists with respect to concerns about how information is produced, managed, recorded, re-ordered, and disseminated.'¹⁷

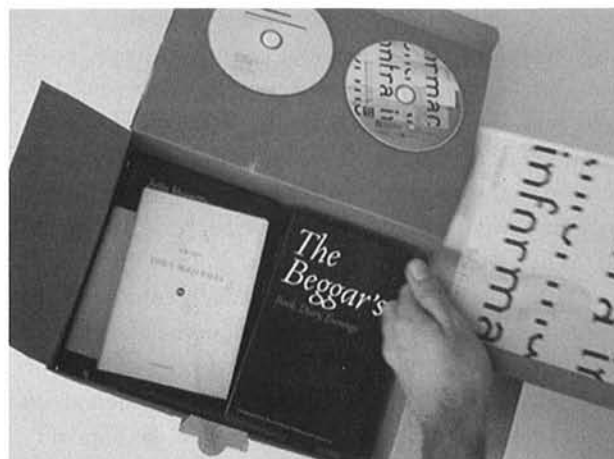


Artist and independent publishing fair *La noche de los libros mutantes*, Madrid, 2012.

New agents

While the liveliness and richness of the artist publication scene in Spain in recent years have been the result of work by individual agents, as has been described in the previous sections, it is also the case that, around the turn of the millennium, a number of Spanish institutions began to focus their attention on artists' publications, not just initiating new collections of artists' books, or 'normalizing' artists' publications by acquiring them for their art collections, but also by devoting increasing attention to their study and dissemination. La Panera, in Lleida, has been a pioneering institution in this field under the direction of Glòria Picazo. Picazo has been deeply involved in promoting artists' publications as a genre in its own right since the 1980s, and was instrumental in including for the first time a section devoted to artists' publications in the 2004 edition of the Leandre Cristòfol Biennial, organized by La Panera. This was followed, one year later, by the creation of the museum's Documentation Centre, where artists' publications are collected and exhibited. Shortly afterwards, at the end of 2007, the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA) opened its Study Centre which, among other objectives, aimed at establishing a collection of reference for artists' publications from the 1960s to the present. Meanwhile, the Centro Cultural Montehermoso (Vitoria) and the Museo Patio Herreriano (Valladolid) set up comprehensive documentation centres where documentary collections were complemented by a strong focus on artists' publications, whereas Museo Artium, also in Vitoria, concentrated on comics alongside a significant reference collection. Finally, at the end of the decade, under the direction of Manuel Borja-Villel, the library of the Museo Reina Sofía in Madrid evolved into the current Documentation Centre, where artists' publications are actively collected with the collaboration of international expert Guy Schraenen. Work is also in progress to analyse and improve current classification systems for artists' publications (taking as a basis a draft system started at the MACBA Study Centre), while a new exhibition space and a continuous exhibition programme devoted to artists' publications and archives has recently been launched.¹⁸

But museums and public institutions are no longer the only agents playing a relevant part in the production, collection and study of artists' publications. The last decade has also seen the appearance of a number of new, frequently non-official frameworks for the production and dissemination of art, such as small-scale



Box containing publications issued as part of *Proyecto Edición*, Santiago de Compostela, 2008.

exhibition spaces devoted to contemporary art, artist-run spaces and associations of art professionals which, alongside some commercial galleries, curatorial offices and graphic design studios, have demonstrated a marked interest in artists' publications or, at least, in publications which no longer follow the recognizable patterns of traditional exhibition catalogues. Regardless of their character, many of these entities share certain traits: they are often non-profit, commonly having a small structure which enables them to work with a freedom from institutional constraints that museums rarely enjoy, and have access only to limited budgets. These factors come together to enhance their interest and potential for publication modes that no longer fit into traditional art documentation patterns.

The curatorial team DAFO, recently formed by David Armengol and Jordi Antas in Lleida, is an example. Between commercial gallery and project space, in less than two years of existence it has already shown a peculiar interest in artists' publications through their collaboration with Multiplos Books in the DAFO Showcases, consisting of selections of artists' publications accompanying every exhibition of artworks in their programme, as well as through including artists' books in their exhibition programme. Madrid-based Proyecto Rampa, in turn, has been created by 'researchers, culture producers, designers, critics, film makers, binders, photographers, lawyers, artists and carpenters'. Among its fields of activity, their project Prisma 'focuses on the creation of new cultural artefacts which may be incorporated to Rampa or to any other spaces which devote themselves to producing knowledge.' Publications count

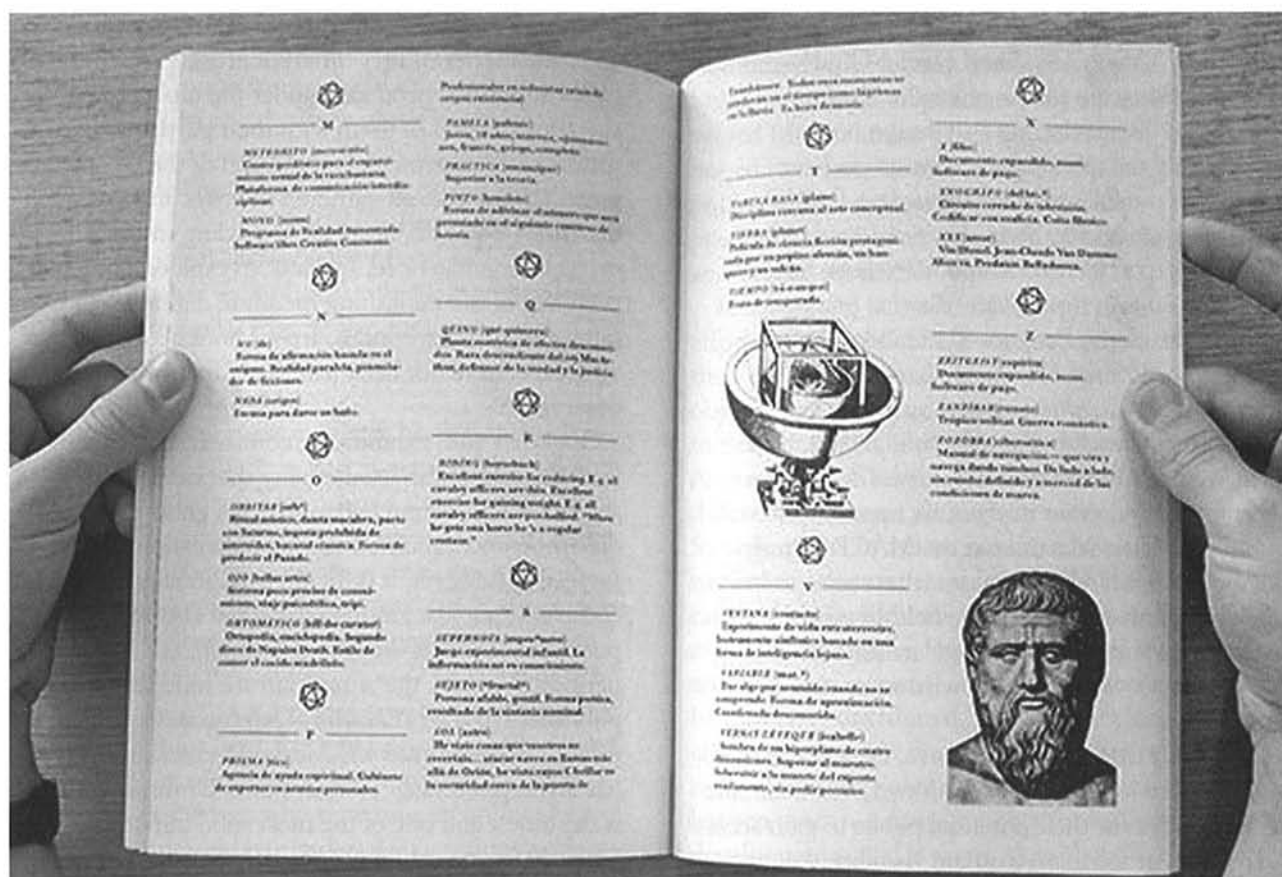
among such *cultural artefacts*, whose production is a response to Rampa's perspective that 'current instability is the ideal incubator for future culture producers whose competences will not be based on specialised knowledge, but rather in open processes.'¹⁹ Hablar en Arte, also in Madrid, define themselves as an 'independent platform for projects which support the creation, dissemination and promotion of contemporary culture', and Consonni, in Bilbao, which notoriously 'invites artists to develop projects that *do not* take the form of an art object exhibited in a space', has also shown a clear interest in art publications and publishing that materialized, in the latter's case, in three different collections of publications, while the former have organized an on-going exhibition project with books which have been intervened by artists.²¹ Further south, in Cartagena, a magazine promoted by a private collector, *La Naval*, has evolved into a multi-faceted project which not only exhibits artworks, but also produces artists' publications. A list of these initiatives would be long, if it aimed to be complete.

Together with private art galleries such as Projects SD in Barcelona or, with a totally different scale and style, Ivory Press in Madrid,

these new structures for the creation and dissemination of contemporary art have had and continue to have an undoubtedly significant impact in reshaping the publishing scene in the field of art, turning it into a much more flexible, versatile and rich spectrum of publishing modes which no longer solely depend on public-funded, big-scale institutions for their survival.

Access, dissemination, distribution

In the context of such a rich panorama in terms of production, the question of access is, undoubtedly, an important one. How are these uncountable artists' books and alternative space publications, magazines, etc. going to be accessed by the public? For the dissemination of artists' publications, exhibitions, in particular historical or retrospective surveys, are an obvious option. Over the last decade a number of historical shows have been organized both inside and outside Spain in order to research, evaluate and disseminate artists' publications. Among these, *Printed in Spain / Impreso en España. Publicaciones de artista de los años sesenta a ochenta* (curated by Anne Thurman-Jajes at Neues Museum



José Díaz, *Notas sobre la órbita* (Madrid: Proyecto Rampa, 2012).



Gabriel Pericàs, Daniel Jacoby and David Bestué, *TEXTO* (Barcelona: self-published, 2010).

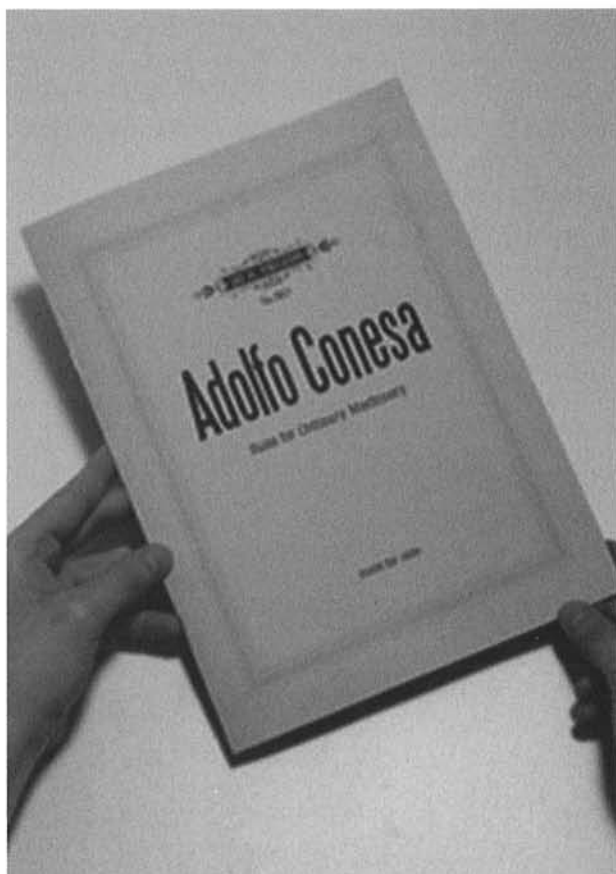
Weserburg, Bremen, 2001), and *VisualKultur.cat* (curated by Vicenç Altaïó and Daniel Giralt-Miracle at Museum für Angewandte Kunst, Frankfurt, 2007, including also design books), are probably the most significant ones to have taken place outside, whereas *Nómadas y Bibliófilos. Concepto y estética en los libros de artista* (curated by Glòria Picazo at Centro Koldo Mitxelena, San Sebastián, 2004), *Alguns llibres d'artista* (curated by Sílvia Dauder at Projecte SD Gallery, Barcelona, 2005), and *ENSaMBLaDoS. Revistas ensambladas 1977-2008* (curated by Pepe Murciego at Casa Revilla, Valladolid, 2008), took place in Spain. In recent times, *El mal de escritura. Un proyecto sobre texto e imaginación especulativa* (curated by Chus Martínez at the MACBA Study Center, 2010) set out to explore what seems to be one of the newest trends in the field of artists' publications and could be called 'artists' fiction', that is to say: works of fiction written by visual artists.

In recent times, exhibitions have, for a number of reasons, been increasingly questioned over their role as the vehicles for their potential public to gain access to artworks or for them to attain visibility, whereas publications, in turn, seem to have become a more fitting medium for many artists to gather, organise

and make public the results of their artistic endeavours. The project *Take Away. Exposicions per emportar* (2002), by curator Martí Manem, addressed these issues frontally. In the show, visitors were confronted with various boxes, similar to the packages commonly used for take-away food, containing a collection of materials which included digital images stored on CD, texts, visual works on paper and multiples, created by artists Óscar Abril Ascaso, Alku, Fifty Fifty, Oriol Font, Sonia López, Carolina Massó and Job Ramos. The show explained itself through this text: 'Take Away. An exhibition project about exhibition models. The shift of roles in the art world, the relationship with the artwork, the idea of artwork itself... force us to rethink exhibitions. Since it is not clear how this should be done, maybe the best is for users to do it themselves. Seven proposals which may give raise to seven hundred exhibitions.'²¹

Proyecto Edición, started by Manuel Oliveira at the Centro Galego de Arte Contemporánea (Santiago de Compostela) with the collaboration of MARCO (Vigo) and the Seoane Foundation (A Coruña), set out to explore the field of publishing and its potential for creative uses, placing publications at the core of a two-year programme where exhibitions, in this case, played a complementary role in relation to printed matter, thereby turning upside down the traditional institutional hierarchies. From 2006 to 2008, a series of very different artists' publications was produced under the umbrella of this project, each of them with their particular means of circulation and, at the end of the project, they were all gathered in boxes and disseminated as a collection. According to the project's organizers, its aim was 'to explore all the potential of the publishing medium: digital publishing, image editing, artists' books... which, until now, have not been paid the attention they deserve.'²³

Together with exhibitions, commercial distribution (and the economic sustainability that can bring) should be the second leg on which a good dissemination circuit for artists' publications stands. Its reality, however, is difficult, traditionally a cause for complaint not just among artists, but also among publishers, institutions (big and small), etc. In terms of periodical events, the annual fair for independent publishers *EDITA (Encuentros Internacionales de Editores Independientes y Ediciones Alternativas)*, which has taken place since 1994 in Punta Umbría, Málaga, is the oldest and one of the most solid initiatives. Since 2010, the exhibition space Arts Santa Mònica, in Barcelona, hosts in April the annual *International Book Fair Arts Libris*, with a somewhat irregular



Alfonso Conesa, *Suite for Ordinary Machinery* (Barcelona: Save as... Publications, 2008).

selection of publishing projects which also include, besides artists' publications, hand-crafted and design books. 2010 also saw the birth of the annual event *La noche de los libros mutantes*, in Madrid, as an alternative programme to the official activities organized to celebrate April 23, the Day of the Book. Also in Madrid, the fair *MasQueLibros: I Feria del Libro de Artista de Madrid* took place for the first time in June 2012 at the Escuelas Pías de San Fernando, with similar structure and aims as Arts Libris in Barcelona, sharing its annual character.

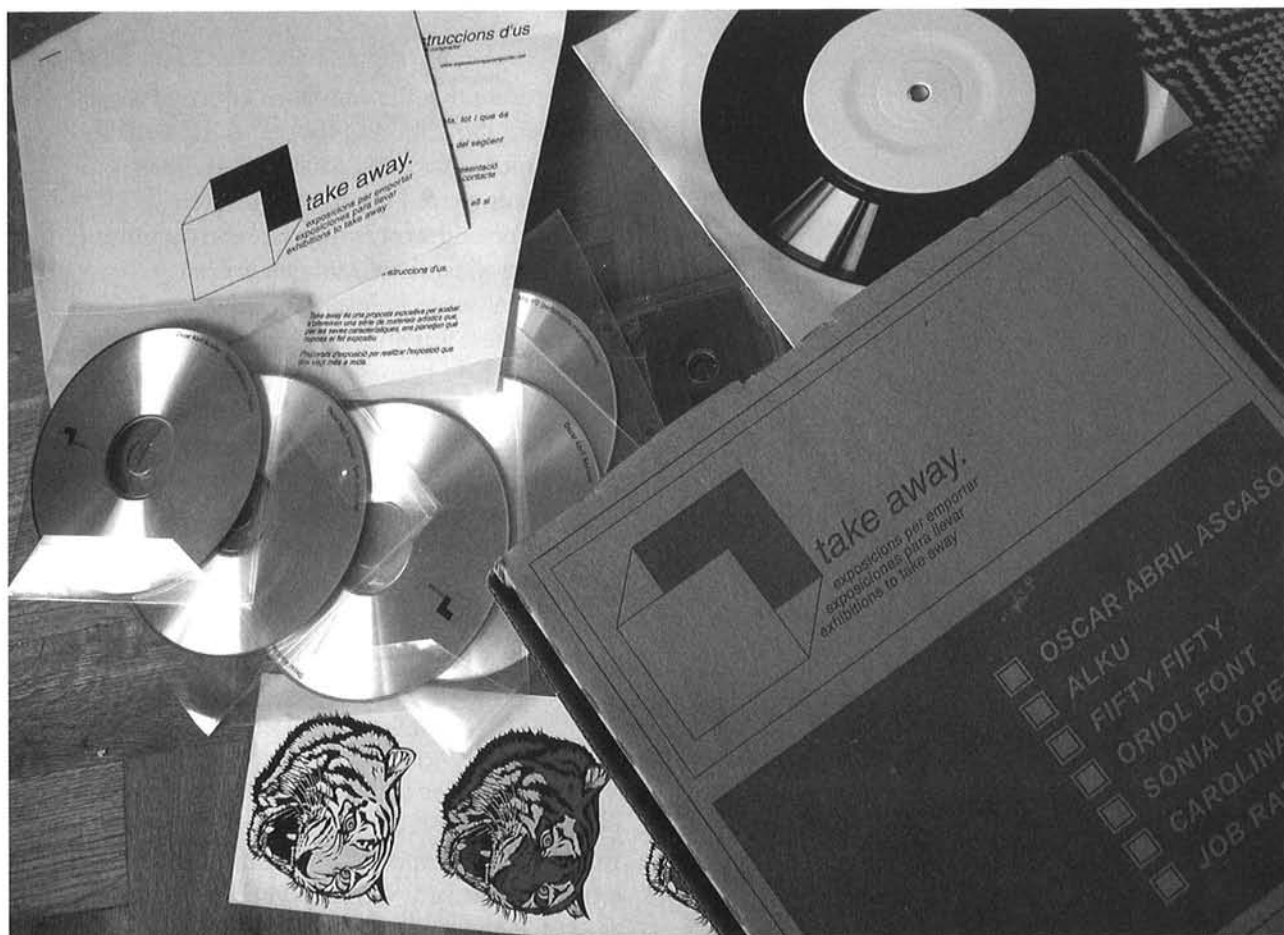
Alongside these regular events, bookshops such as La Central, Laie (both in Barcelona and Madrid) and Ivory Press (Madrid) have created stable sections for artists' publications in recent years. And, in 2011, the launching of Multiplos Books, a small bookshop in Barcelona specialising *only* in artists' publications, was very much welcomed, and raised many hopes for an improvement in their distribution. The fact that the lively bookshop space, in close proximity to MACBA, could not last for long and had to close down after less than two years of existence, has not discouraged its owner, Anna Pahissa, who now runs an online shop of the same name, and has undertaken a serious project of national and international distribution which will, no doubt, render fruits in the medium term.

Epilogue: the future

It is apparent that the combined efforts of artists, publishers, curators, graphic designers, and also institutional collections, exhibition projects, regular commercial events and private distribution endeavours have all been significant in the consolidation of a vibrant artists' publications scene in Spain since the year 2000. Many of these activities that took place over the last decade have been documented in a project by La Panera, a book of essays bearing the long and descriptive title of *Impasse 10. Libros de artista, ediciones especiales, revistas objectuales, proyectos editoriales, ediciones independientes, publicaciones especiales, ediciones limitadas, autoediciones, ediciones de artistas, publicaciones digitales*.²³ La Panera is preparing a programme of virtual exhibitions devoted to artists' publications, which will be on view from May 2013 onwards in a new section of their website, designed by ferranElOtro, who will also be the first curator of this series.

Meanwhile, the collection of artists' publications and related activities at Museo Reina Sofía are expected to become wider in scope and intensity, whereas other museums such as MACBA, Artium, Patio Herreriano etc. have seen theirs severely truncated by the current economic crisis, which has brought with it significant reductions in funding available. Small-scale and independent projects have not ceased to exist and to produce, and it is to be hoped that, in spite of current difficulties, artists' publications will continue to be actively produced and find their way into institutional and private art collections.

It remains to be seen, through all these combined efforts, if artists' publications succeed in truly reaching their public or, instead, survive only to become 'rare' objects, and therefore exactly in the opposite position to that for which, in most cases, they were intended. As curator Maribel López has pointed out, 'It is a different question to know where we place the fetishism level of artists' publications. It is not necessarily the monetary aspect which is at stake, but rather their intellectual, "insider" nature. In fact, maybe a big mistake lies in considering that access to an exhibition is special and scarce, whereas a book will be massively distributed.'²⁴ In spite of this and other challenges, the buzzing activity that has involved so many different professionals and art lovers over the last ten years has paved the way for more interesting developments, and it seems clear that, in terms of artists' publications in Spain, the future seems promising.



Some of the items exhibited in *Take Away. Exposicions per emportar*, curated by Marti Manen and on show at Can Felipa, Barcelona, in 2002.

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