The Event of Art

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Marc Lafia, et al.
The Event of Art.

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The Unbounded Word
Long before the Internet, books were the miracle that carried information far and wide. Some scribbles printed on a page conveyed worlds. But as Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore so deftly showed in *The Medium is the Massage*, a book is a material technology. It is a thing with limits that inflects information to fit its needs and desires (most notably, perhaps, books tend to be linear).

Books—from codex to clay table, from papyrus to scroll, from hardback to paperback to e-book—are bound by their material form. Bookbinding is the process of physically assembling a book from a number of folded or unfolded sheets of paper or other material. In *The Unbounded Wor(l)d*, Marc Lafia reconsiders the book and re-figures it as a new site of possibility, as a geography, as a territory with new ways of knowing, seeing, and enjoying.

Lafia writes with books. He doesn't write books; he doesn't write about books. He uses the books themselves as his material to write new books. The focus of the content has shifted from what’s in the book—the words and information—to the form itself. The material here is not words or facts or fictions but bindings, spines, pages, and the vast cultural discourse of books.

Lafia comes at the book from different angles. He takes up found books and uses their pages, bindings, spine, words, covers, contexts, and layouts to re-situate, re-purpose, and re-imagine the book as a new site, re-embodied and spatially situated. Other times, he builds the book from scratch, usually using complex folding techniques that allow the pages to be juxtaposed or splayed.

These books becomes sites, environments, creating new situations from the spatial, unwinding, re-territorialization and dispersal of the once bound. Here, the book is unbound, unleashing new modes of reckoning—of knowing, seeing, organizing, enjoying.

The results are as varied and complex as the creation themselves. We find Somerset Maugham turned inside out; we find the live tweets of a London university riot enduring long past their digital lifespan, the words echoing to eternity; we find trees splayed and literally indexed; we find sawed spines supporting clouds. What was once bound and organized has been reorganized—folded, pleated, and redistributed. Suddenly, the cultural, political, and personal meet at new and surprising angles, an origami of knowing at once whimsical and poignant.

The book as we know it is dying. But this is not an elegy for the book. This is not nostalgia. Lafia takes up the exquisite detritus—books today are sold by the pound—and finds new beauty, new lives, new possibilities. Much as the land artists shaped and re-purposed the desolate and abandoned, Lafia shapes and re-purposes the book, forging new territories out of the pages we are abandoning.

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EXHIBITION

Marc Lafia - Featured artist at Wu Jin bookstore
Time: July 11th – September 11th 2013
Address: 36 Jianzhang Hutong (off Guozijian Jie), Dongcheng District, Beijing 100007

MABSOCIETY in collaboration with Wu Jin Bookshop (Beijing) is pleased to feature a special presentation of publications by New York-based artist Marc Lafia. Using ready-made materials in both sculptural and conceptual ways, Lafia’s works are an exploration of cinema, the photographic image and personal history. His subjective visual narratives come to life in this series of handcrafted, limited edition books. For the next few months Wu Jin Bookshop will stock a small number of Lafia’s publications for viewing and sales.

Curated and run by artists, Wu Jin Bookshop provides a platform for display and sales of independent publications from China and beyond, and will periodically feature thematic groupings on our bookshelves. (www.wujinbeijing.com)
Using select found books and cutting them 1½ inches from their spine, a new book is created becoming an object, a space, a territory. The flags placed on the surface of ridged pages, on and around words, denote it as a new space, a space of conquest, and a space of signs naming overtaking other signs. Somewhere between Mallarmé and Broodthaers, the space of words and their figures become sites in geometry of space.
Well Done Kids, What’s Next?

In *Well Done Kids, What Now?*, a Twitter narrative, the posts of Penny Red are used to put forward and highlight a new kind of reportage, a new narrative discourse.

They're starting fires right at the front. Have climbed fence, piece of ash just went in my face. There are about ten thousand here.

»

Two thousand protesters are coming down Southampton row, waving flags and blowing whistles.

»
Well Done Kids
Now What?
A Twitter Riot

As treated by Penny Reed, London, August, 2012 and presented here by
Marc Lefa, 2013

They say we are the
vandals, but we are
the voices of the
future!
Rousing speech
from female
student, huge
screams of
approval.

Just got word that
police horses being
deployed outside
part. 80.
Police are
estacating.

Cops grabbing
cloths off the
fitwatch girls. It's
going to get nasty.

Guardian journalist
@snowman1 just got
beaten bloody by
police baton.

F*ck a police officer
just went down.
He's ok though.
Officer 3217.
Could see no blood
he was right at my
feet.

Seen a couple of
kids lobbing sticks
towards the police.

They say we are the
vandals, but we are
the voices of the
future!
Rousing speech
from female
student, huge
screams of
approval.

Look where that
young kid has his
arm: poor Churchill.
He can't protect his
dignity, he's made
of metal.

Paras already here,
about seventy blue
hats. Trying to see
what's going on -
they may kettle us
in Bloomsbury.
Both a book and object of one statement wrapped in plastic, *hugs and kisses* presents 70 color field prints with statements about the engineering, management and shaping of individual and social desire. The fear of the irrational mind and the mass propelled corporate interests with the propaganda tools (euphemistically known as “public relations”) to appeal to and assuage people’s selfish desires. The commodifying of the self would prepare the soil for the politics of the triumph of the self as the ultimate expression of democracy. The seductive print works of color fields and elegant text give consistency of form and rhetorical argument to the idea that people can be made better, they can be engineered.

Here the topology of the book is pleated with neither beginning nor end, putting forward the complexity of the multiple trajectories of the social
The book, not quite a book, but something that folds into a book, is a kind of puzzle of space and action, suggesting that seeing is a repertoire, as is space, action and perception. To repeat is never quite to repeat. To intervene is both to repeat and to try to break repetition. In the digital and in nature, buildings, assassins, viruses continually replicate and disperse, well outside our perceptual field.
REPERTOIRE
a collection of works

SEEING
preception by mean of the eyes.

PRECEPTION
what is perceived
In 1960, French avant-garde artist Yves Klein created a photo montage of himself leaping from a wall over a quiet Paris street. The black and white photograph, called *The Leap Into the Void*, was Klein's way of embracing the irrational and
celebrating groundlessness. The book creates a spatial zone that brings together Yves Klein’s notion of the zone of immaterial pictorial sensibility with Bas Jan Ader’s work All is Falling.

These are passed through a reading of Tacita Dean’s work Disappearance at Sea, which brings together In Search of the Miraculous, Ader’s fatal attempt to sail across the Atlantic, in a 13-foot pocket cruiser called Ocean Wave; and Donald Crowhurst, an inexperienced sailor entering the Golden Globe Single-Handed Round-the-World Yacht Race and who, like Ader, never returned home. All three are leaps into the depths of the unconscious, the great terra incognita—the unknown land.

The work combines two books, Youth and Sex with Marie Antoinette and places them inside a folio case with arched windows setting off a narrative within an architectural space to amplify both the confines of the body and the binding of narrative inside books.
Pear

What is the parness of the pear, its familiar shape, its taste, its color, its same but unique dimensions... here the book binding is used like the core of pear—and each page unique. Tapering towards the top (botanically this is the bottom, the stem end) and rounded at the bottom (botanically this is the apex).

Book Bag

A book bag is a durable bag, satchel or backpack that is used to carry books and sometimes other supplies such as notebooks, ring binders and file folders, particularly by students. The bag and the book are not so far apart. Both are made of paper and both are made to carry things, one, words and ideas, and the other, whatever can fit or be carried in the bag. This “book bag” brings together both the armature and straps of a paper bag and a book whose binding has been sewed off. The bag literally carries the book.
Loose sheets of select books, unbound, unmoored, wandering, without binding find themselves in the shape of boat, set sail.

Here sections of pages cut out from books become unmoored words, pages outside linearity, back to words themselves... set sail into the unknown.
The hardback book: its hard cover often was printed with neither the title nor the image, but had a wrapper around it with image and title. Here as material objects have a presence unto themselves.