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Tom Sowden – ‘Click, Swipe, Download, Share’

Senior Research Fellow, Centre for Fine Print Research, University of the West of England

Biography

Tom Sowden is Senior Research Fellow in the Centre for Fine Print Research, and Lecturer on the MA Multi-disciplinary Printmaking course, at the University of the West of England. He is also a practising artist for whom artists' books make up a significant proportion of his output.

Tom completed a two-year AHRC funded research project with Sarah Bodman entitled: *In an arena including digital and traditional artists' publishing formats - what will be the canon for the artist's book in the 21st Century?* During the study he developed an interest in the ways in which digital technologies can aid, develop and change artist's book production.

‘Click, Swipe, Download Share’, *the future of books*

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During this talk I will look at how and why artists are using digital publishing tools to produce books. For the purposes of this essay I am going to include works which may not have been specifically titled as books when they were produced, but I believe have elements within them that appear to have their origins in books - or have, as the British artist Les Bicknell would define as having 'bookness'¹. By that I mean there is something in them that references or can be attributed to a book, it could be text, text with image, narrative, order, sequence, structure, collection or means of publication. This is not to try and term all of them as books, but rather show and suggest ways in which book artists can work if they want to publish books digitally and engage with a new set of possibilities. I am also presenting this from a practitioner's point of view. I make books myself, and am interested in seeing how digital can influence my own production and whether I could publish entirely digitally. I like some of what I'm seeing and wonder, can I do this myself?

In early 2010 Sarah Bodman and myself completed a two-year study – *What will be the canon for the artist's book in the 21st Century?* – which culminated in the publication *A Manifesto for the Book*² [Figure 1]. In developing the Manifesto we were interested in seeing how and why artists were approaching digital technologies in the production of their books, and how this influenced their practice and possibly changed the formats that they were using to publish books. The Manifesto opens with the following paragraphs:

"Ulises Carrión's *The New Art of Making Books* begins with: A book is a sequence of spaces.

If it is to be argued that a book has to be a sequence of pages inside a container, and if a container is considered as a physical entity – then as well as covers, a container must also be able to be a computer monitor, a mobile phone screen, a room, a box, the Internet. A series of pages can exist on paper or on a screen. On screens we scroll through the pages reflecting an original, historical book format. The big mainstream publishing houses have no problem terming screen-based works as books. Just look at the recent push for ebooks from publishers and hardware manufacturers alike."

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for copyright reasons.]**

At that point there were a few artists who were using digital technologies to produce what they termed books, but not many. Others were working digitally but did not consider that they were producing books, but rather something different. Because of this, we thought about using the term "artists' publishing" as opposed to "artists' books" as a descriptor of contemporary practice, but this met with resistance from those who were producing physical books. It was a love of paper-based books and reading that had led them to making books, and they didn't want to lose that term. In the end we settled on the term 'book arts' to encompass those practitioners who produced any artwork around the book, but we still wanted to wrestle this term away from the slightly hobbyist connotations it had become synonymous with.

Under this established but broader term, we began to look at book-related activity, very much including digitally-based production and presentation of work. At the time there were a few notable examples, but since then more have begun to appear. One of the key moments since the publication of the *Manifesto* was Apple's launch of the

Figure 1 - *A Manifesto for the Book*

iPad. At the time of our publication this was on the near horizon, but still a few weeks away. We believed then that it would be the iPad that would change the way in which artists published their work. Although it does appear that artists are beginning to look at tablets as an opportunity to publish work, there is perhaps not as much activity as we had anticipated.

Some artists will not position the publications made through a digital sphere as a 'book', rather wanting them to have their own terminology to better describe that which will only exist as a digital output. For example, the American artist Sally Alatalo, for whom books are a regular part of her practice, says: "I think the web is an incredibly interesting vehicle for publishing... but I don't think it's a book. I think it's the web, I don't know what to call it. Why we want to borrow these terms I don't know. I guess it's a sense of familiarity, but I think it's a mistake to use that space only in the same way as we use a book space, because it's got so much more potential."³

The first artist's work I'm going to show you is Andi McGarry's. McGarry has been making books for a number of years and he originally made 'unique unlimited editions' of books which were each handmade and handpainted. His book *Paddle Notes* from 2002 [Figure 2] depicts the course of a morning's paddle on the South East coast of Ireland, with the marbled pages charting the exploits of paddlers in a boat. In 2007 Sarah Bodman and myself first asked him: "Did he think computers would impact on the way he produced work?" He answered by saying: "I chortled as I picked up the quill pen to produce another handmade copy"⁴ but he then won a bursary from Folkatronica that allowed him to explore some moving image and sound ideas. He also acquired a laptop and digital camera which meant that he could add another dimension to his work, and he started to make films that retain a book feel about them that he could distribute through YouTube.

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for copyright reasons.]**

Figure 2 - *Paddle Notes*, Andi McGarry, 2002

McGarry sees his artists' publications in film as a follow-on from his publications in book form, and one that allows him to incorporate sound. He will often record a soundtrack or as he says an 'audio narrative', and combine this with moving image or a quick succession of stills. Importantly, the publication part for him remains similar to that of his books in that it is produced and distributed directly by him. Also by distributing his films for free via YouTube [Figure 3] he is able to produce again the 'cheap multiple', one of the reasons many artists turned to producing work through the book in the first place. As he says, "Artists' publications/movies hold distinct advantages - making something straight off the press and sharing with a 'ready-made' audience. Artists have at their disposal some of the greatest tools of mass expression ever created since the printing press arrived... Exciting times."⁵

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for copyright reasons.]**

Figure 3 - Andi McGarry, www.youtube.com/user/AAAAAAndi

For me, one of the key artists at the forefront of digital publishing is Radosław Nowakowski who lives and works in rural Poland. He tends not to describe himself as a book artist; his work is produced as part of the literary-based genre, *Liberature*.⁶ Nowakowski is a multi-faceted, incredibly talented musician, writer and artist who has been producing his own books since the late 1970s. Producing books under Communism in Poland at that time was a difficult and risky business, so Nowakowski would produce small editions on his typewriter. Layering paper and carbon paper, he could produce at least five legible copies in one go. He knew a local bookbinder who was willing to bind these pages into books for him so he could produce small editions, small enough to be ignored by the authorities.

As Communism fell and technological changes enabled Nowakowski to re-produce existing works and produce new ones, so his books began to change. Reformatted on a computer and printed on a dot matrix printer, then on an inkjet printer. Finally Nowakowski was able to produce works in a new way, entirely hypertext 'books' such as *End of the World According to Emeryk*⁷ [Figure 4]. 'Books' in inverted commas because Nowakowski doesn't really think that a hypertext book is possible. A hypertext poem, novel or story yes, but a book no. As Nowakowski says "A book is an object having some weight, volume, capacity. Anybody can take a book, keep it in his or her hand, put it into a pocket or onto a shelf. A monitor is also an object having some weight, volume and capacity... but a monitor is a part of a bigger unit, a bigger device and does not contain only stories. It can be used to make a lot of other things like watching films, drawing charts or listening to music."⁸

Although some of Nowakowski's hypertext work also exists as a printed book, the beauty of the hypertext version is that it has been very specifically designed to work only on a screen and as a hypertext work. Sometimes the pages are very large so you have to scroll both vertically and horizontally, sometimes the text is larger than the screen so that it cannot all be viewed at once, and of course the narrative is such that it is designed to be played with by the reader. The jumping nature of allowing a clicked link to take you somewhere unknown and different each time - sometimes into a dead end, sometimes back to the beginning.

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for copyright reasons.]**

Figure 4 - *END OF THE WORLD* according to EMERYK, Radosław Nowakowski, 2002 & 2005

Nowakowski's on-going hypertext work is *Liberlandia*⁹. A work in progress that again plays with the labyrinthine possibilities of hypertext. With text available in Polish, English and Esperanto, the narrative puzzle appears to send you in pre-determined routes with arrows pointing the way, but the signage only extends so far, and it is not long before you are looping around the story of *Liberlandia*. Visually pleasing and engaging narratives mean that a journey through *Liberlandia* doesn't appear to be a confusing chore, and with a web-based programme you can never get truly lost. The trail of breadcrumbs in the forest never gets eaten, you can always just click 'back' to retrace your steps.

Nicolas Frespech, his colleagues and post-graduate students from the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-arts de Lyon have been developing artists' books to be read across multiple digital platforms. Entertaining, funny and often playing with the act of reading and interacting with the very device you are viewing it on. These works are designed to be viewed purely on a digital device and invite an audience to work with the, even change and participate with them. Frespech has even coined a new acronym for these new works - BIPs (Books in Progress). Because of this they are not throwaway either, they are intended to be adapted and interacted with. They're not transient, but not eternal either.

The books made to date are available to download from www.lirepub.com or www.frespech.com/ebook and many of the titles can be viewed across multiple platforms as they have been created in the epub format. This is easily read on, amongst other things: an iPad/Phone/Pod through Apple's iBooks app, on a computer using a programme such as Adobe Digital Editions or through a browser such as Firefox using its epub add-on. Two of my particular favourites particularly play on the fact that they are intentionally digital books.

Frespech's *Bookcases*¹⁰ [Figure 5] presents us with page after page of images of empty bookcases that have been sourced through the Internet. The idea of leafing (or swiping) through this book of pixel-rendered objects, whose existence will become redundant if the very device you are reading the book on becomes ubiquitous, leads you through feelings of guilt and nostalgia. *Bookcases* begins with a quote from Ed Ruscha, when he was first producing his own artists' books "The books are definitely not works of art in the same sense

as the paintings [...] They're tied to a bookshelf". Now it seems they don't even have to be tied to a publication date. As an example of a BIP, the version I was reading was 1.6, and it has been in production between November 2011 and March 2012 to this point. Not transient, but adaptable and changing. It was also perhaps best read through Apple's iBooks app before the recent style change imposed by Jonathan Ives. Before this change, you had choose the Frespech's book of virtual bookcases, from a virtual bookcase, complete with fake wood panelling [Figure 6].

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for copyright reasons.]***

Figure 5 - *Bookcases* (Version 1.6), Nicolas Frespech, March 2012

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Figure 6 - *iBooks* before the recent style change

Another of the works that I particularly like from Frespech's associates, is the book *Prendre du Recul* (*stand back*) by Florent Lagrange¹¹ [Figure 7]. This book really has to be read on an iPad, preferably starting at 20.06 in the evening, with 27% battery, Bluetooth on and 2 out of 3 bars on the Wifi connection (trust me, it's more fun this way). This book also plays with the device that you are reading it on and how you often sit when reading it. The pages appear to stack on the screen and begin to repeat themselves endlessly, much like looking at a reflection in two opposing mirrors. The bottom page slowly disappearing downwards as you swipe through the pages. The resulting effect is one of being slowly pulled up, whilst looking down into the abyss as it grows away from you.

This book seems to play on the way in which we position screens of mobile devices. Unlike desktop computer screens that sit up in front of you - and should be at eye height to alleviate a bad back - mobile devices are often read from above. Much like a book. Excluding the times when you might be lying down, they are on a table top or similar, or anywhere between the chest and waist area. The fact that you read this book by looking down into it, increases those vertiginous feelings as you progress through the pages.

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for copyright reasons.]**

Figure 7 - *Prendre du Recul*, Florent Lagrange, 2012

New and established digital platforms also give artists a new outlet for a continuation of their work. For example On Kawara has transferred his 'I AM STILL ALIVE' series of work to Twitter¹². Originally the series was made from telegrams that he sent daily to friends and colleagues around the world. As using the telegram as a communication tool has died, he has now just adapted the work to a contemporary and very similar form of communication. The Twitter feed follows the same pattern, a daily announcement that I AM STILL ALIVE, and after each one #art so that it can 'trend' and be easily searched for on the subject. Is it a book? I'm not really sure if that is the intention, but considering the telegrams had previously been collected into an artist's book, why not class the Twitter account as an artist's book? It certainly is artists' publishing. The question is, does it have the same resonance? For me, possibly not. Maybe it is the ease of presentation and distribution that reduces its impact, perhaps it's the fact that we can all see it and he no longer needs to target recipients; perhaps the fact that there isn't the backdrop of the Vietnam war (although we have had Iraq and Afghanistan), or perhaps it's the handy hashtag that tells us that it is art. The real poignancy

for me is that as he reaches his 80th year, how much longer will these keep coming? When he does die will it just end?

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Another book that can only really exist digitally, and uses web-based tools, is Angie Waller's *The Most Boring Places in the World*, from 2009¹³ [Figure 8]. Utilising the Google Earth plug-in, this web-based book takes a tour of the most boring places in the world by virtually flying around the world and zooming into these boring locations as described by the inhabitants. During a four month window in 2009 Waller gathered comments from blogs, chat rooms and journal-ers, who all believed that where they lived or were holidaying were the most boring places they could imagine. As Waller says "what these destinations share in common is their ability to inspire existential crises, home-from-college woes, and the suffering specific to beautiful scenery, suburban sprawl and shopping malls."

Much like Frespech's work, you are also left feeling this could be a BIP, and why not, these crises will continued to be shared all the time. Although specifying the period she gathered this information, Waller lists the entries and locations that she has gathered as 'to date', leaving the door open for a growing project. I also like the passive

Figure 8 - *The Most Boring Places in the World*, Angie Waller, 2009

viewing of this work. It is presented as a video, but it only does what I have been prone to do when finding out about a new place, and that's search for it on Google, going right into Street View if I want a closer look. Only this time I am taken on other people's journeys.

Guy Begbie is another book artist who has also produced videos that have a direct relationship with books. A prime example of this is the work *Orange Rumba*¹⁴ [Figure 9]. The outcomes of this work are a video and an altered book, both produced collaboratively by Begbie and his family. Noah Begbie Crewe cut pages from the law book 'Statutory Instruments' and inserted a bespoke pyrotechnic orange smoke flare. Guy Begbie is filmed igniting the flare and rotating with the burning book. Rollo Begbie Crewe and Charlotte Crewe document the book activation with video and stills cameras. The video has been edited by Rollo Begbie Crewe in collaboration with Guy Begbie and is set to music that turns the act of making and recording the production into a dance. The orange dye and residue from the flare, "leaves a premeditated drawing in the form of a variety of marks and colour on the cover and page surfaces of the altered book"¹⁵. Although the video is not a book, the documentation of the performance has equal status to the finished book (or perhaps more because it can reach a larger audience), is an interesting concept for me, and an area I have begun to explore in my own work.

Much of the work that I have shown you has been self-published and produced by the artist, but it is also worth noting that there are publishers of digital artists' books, as well as tools to aid in ebook production. Artists' eBooks¹⁶ is a project from James Bridle and booktwo.org, that concentrates solely on the production of work in the artist's book tradition, but through the experimentation and distribution of ebook technologies. In New York, Badlands Unlimited¹⁷ and Klaus Gallery¹⁸ are also each producing digital artists' works that are exploiting the variety of interactive tools that digital offers. In the case of Klaus Gallery, they are aiming to release a new book every three weeks - designed to be viewed on an iPad or Kindle.

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Figure 9 - *Orange Rumba*, Guy Begbie, Charlotte Crewe, Noah Begbie Crewe, Rollo Begbie Crewe, 2012

I am also interested in the new tools being released that allow for the ease of producing your own ebook. Blurb, one of the biggest print-on-demand companies, has released the Blurb enhanced ebook¹⁹ to publish ebooks for iPad. It allows the incorporation of moving image and audio, as well as text and image, but for me it is still too closely wedded in appearance to a printed book to make it very exciting. I do wish they would stop mimicking the look and page-turning experience in this new digital format, there has to be much more that can be done with it. The People's Ebook²⁰ is a new platform in construction and was funded through a Kickstarter campaign. It is only currently available in beta form, but from the few tests I have done it is looking promising, but again it is not offering a wildly different experience. The other major print-on-demand company Lulu also has the capacity for producing ebooks, but there appear to be fewer tools to help with production and those that are available need to be paid for.

For me I find that some of the most interesting and exciting work is when there is a relationship between digital and physical books. One very well established artist that has begun to explore this is Helen Douglas. Her book *The Pond at Deuchar* [Figure 10] was conceived as both digitally printed book²¹ and also an e-scroll. Image wise they are both very similar, but the act of reading and reception is different. I would say that neither is more dominant, they just offer a different experience. A particularly interesting event in the production of the e-scroll also highlights to me the fallacy of the supposed 'democratic' nature of digital.

The production of the e-scroll was funded and assisted by Tate Research, with the intention that it would become an app for the iPad. The e-scroll was produced, but the problem occurred when it was submitted to Apple for inclusion on the App Store. Apple wrote back to Tate and Douglas (anonymously) and said they had come to the decision not to allow it to be marketed through the App Store, because they didn't believe that it had enough function to

engage the viewer. Perhaps because there is no 'Art' section, or certainly not an 'Artist's Book' section in the App Store, they were never going to find an easy fit for it, but I think it is worrying that an anonymous person(s) is acting as the gate keeper and not allowing work through. Such decisions are not based on the merit of the idea, but purely on the level of function it affords the viewer. Thankfully Douglas and Tate have managed to release this scroll in a web-based form²² so that it can still be appreciated, but it is a shame it isn't visually quite as distraction-free as an app version would have been.

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for copyright reasons.]***

Figure 10 - *The Pond at Deuchar*, Helen Douglas, 2013

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for copyright reasons.]***

Heidi Neilson's work *Volumes with Flock*, 2012²³ [Figure 11], also has a relationship between a digital and physical outcome. The printed book has page after page of a series of flying birds, but this is also designed to be viewed with a video available online. The video shows two people leafing through the book. The video is speeded up so that it becomes apparent that the printed pages of the book are in fact individual frames from another video and we're viewing the book reading at the speed of the original video (c.24 pages per second). There is a direct relationship between video and book in this piece, and a comment on the very different viewing practices needed for both. It really highlights the slow speed and physical connection of reading a paper-based book, as opposed to the passive viewing of a video.

Figure 11 - *Volumes with Flock*, Heidi Neilson, 2012

There is of course another method of publishing that has really taken hold around the world by artists, writers and anyone wishing to tell their story, and that is blogging. Many artists use blogs simply as a means of communicating their practice to an audience outside of the gallery, but there are also those who treat a blog as if it was an artist's book. One artist who does this, and whose work I greatly admire and enjoy is Kevin Boniface. A Huddersfield-based artist, writer and postman in the UK, he has, for a number of years been producing works that revolve around his experiences as he goes about his postal round.

He has previously had his artists' books published by Old Street Publishing²⁴ and self-published his own printed books, but since 2010 he has also been publishing via his blog *The Most Difficult Thing Ever*²⁵ [Figure 12]. The blog suits his diary-entry style of writing and also allows him the freedom to include images, moving image and sound. The combination of video with ambient sound and accompanying text works particularly well for his work and subject matter. Deadpan videos viewed on their own are intriguing, but in combination with the tragic and very funny texts they become elevated in status. Whilst seemingly unconnected directly, the texts, photographs and images speak about a keen sense of observation and the ability to retell everyday experiences in an engaging and appealing way.

There are many notable entries on this ever-expanding blog/book (perhaps a BIP?) as was recognised with his award in winning the Blog North Awards, 2012. A particular favourite of mine is *Vincent, my neighbour, caught me as I was leaving for work...*²⁶ an early entry from August 2010 that has footage of a Benny Hill style pigeon accompanied with text that varies from describing his neighbour trying to offer him a disposable foil cooking tray that came with a store-bought chicken, to the man who is walking down the road cutting his own hair with plastic scissors by feel alone.

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Figure 12 - *The Most Difficult Thing Ever*, Kevin Boniface, 2010 and ongoing

An early adopter of both ebooks and print-on-demand is the American artist Clifton Meador. His publications from 2008 *Internet Police Uniform Sites*²⁷ [Figure 13] and *Dallas Texas Bail Bond Yellow Pages Ads*²⁸ are available through Lulu to buy as a printed book and to download as an ebook (PDF) for free or a nominal amount. This is something that he has continued to do with subsequent publications. His latest books, such as *Sixteen: Flu*,²⁹ are now available on Lulu and also on the iBookstore so that they can be immediately read on an iPad/Phone/Pod.

Meador does not seem to be trying to construct a new reading experience that is closely wedded to the digital device it is read on - although presenting photographs of a computer screen (*Internet Police Uniform Sites*) back on a screen in an ebook is definitely playing around with it. His books are almost the same in both virtual and digital format and are read very much like you would a 'traditional' book. What this technology does allow him to do is reach a wide audience quickly, and to distribute cheaply. Much in the same vein as those who were appropriating the book format in the Conceptual Art movement of the 60s, it seems to be more about ease of distribution and a positioning of artwork outside the gallery system that underpins his choice of publishing format.

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Figure 13 - *Internet Police Uniform Sites*, Clifton Meador, 2008

Much like Meador, Waller and Frespech, there are of course many others who use the Internet as a place to gather source material and apply this in the making of both digital and physical books. So much so that the artist Paul Soulellis founded the *Library of the Printed Web* in 2013³⁰. This ever-growing collection of physical books has one common theme linking them all; the books' content has been gathered from the web. Be it screen shots, search criteria or browsing data, they are all using the web as the giant catalogue of information that it is. Interestingly the books often share the same production techniques too in that they are produced through the print-on-demand. This again gives them a common look in conjunction with the common source of content.

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An example of a book in the collection is Erin Zwaska's *This is Where*, 2014³¹ [Figure 14]. Zwaska gathered the text from Tweets that contained the phrase 'this is where', that had been posted between 12pm and 12.15pm, local time, on any given day from a city. She then paired this text with a screen capture from Google Street View of the corresponding

Figure 14 - *This is where*, Erin Zwaska, 2014 and ongoing

place of the Tweet's origin. Although there is no direct relationship between the text and image, other than the physical source, new narratives begin to emerge. Also Zwaska's reasoning for gathering the Tweets from such a specific timeframe relates to the fact that Google often captures city Street View images at noon to avoid shadows appearing in the pictures. I enjoy this book from the collection for its related, yet completely unrelated source material. Much like life in a city, multiple narratives co-exist, occasionally colliding to combine, reform, and then depart.

Two other works from the Library of the Printed Web collection that particularly appeal to me are by Silvio Lorusso and Sebastian Schmieg. I think it is the humour that attracts me, I enjoy humour in artists' books, but also the simplicity, yet strength of the ideas. Each of these works looks at the digital reading habits of Kindle readers, and uses the information to produce physical and digital books. The first of these works is *Networked Optimization* from 2013³² [Figure 15]. This is a collection of three books that have been created from the reading habits of Kindle readers. Taking three crowdsourced popular self help books - *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, *The Five Love Languages* and *How to Win Friends and Influence People* - Lorusso and Schmieg have reproduced the books only with the text that has been highlighted by Kindle readers. Each time a reader highlights a passage on a Kindle, Amazon stores this information in their data centres. Lorusso and Schmeig have data-mined this information to bring you the most important passages as defined by the Kindle readers themselves; their key points to self-betterment. Each is presented at the correct point on the page together with the amount of times the passage was highlighted.

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for copyright reasons.]**

Figure 15 - *Networked Optimization*, Silvio Lorusso and Sebastian Schmieg and Amazon Kindle Users, 2013

Perhaps my favourite book is Lorusso and Schmieg's *56 Broken Kindle Screens*, 2012³³ [Figure 16]. This book and ebook (available for Kindle) presents fifty-six images of a broken Kindle screen as posted by Kindle users on the web. Each of these images presents the particular beauty that is found when an e-ink display goes wrong. What it creates is an engaging collage of various pages, text and illustrations that Lorusso and Schmieg have presented back to us in book form. This works particularly well when viewing it on a Kindle. Putting the images back onto the device that generated them in the first and filling the screen,

it becomes difficult to discern whether your device is affected or not. There is also a particular beauty in the transitions between the pages that the Kindle affords³⁴. Sliding and fading in and out of view, there is a mesmerising flow to the ebook.

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Figure 16 - *56 Broken Kindle Screens*, Silvio Lorusso and Sebastian Schmieg, 2012

I hope that these examples I have shared with you give just a little flavour of the ways in which artists are publishing book works digitally. As I stated earlier, this is by no means an exhaustive list, there are many others approaching digital technologies to produce work in many different and interesting ways, and these are just a few of the works that I consider to be of value. One thing I think it is important to note, is that digital does not seem to have become as dominant a force in publishing, in both the traditional and artistic book worlds, as might have been expected at this point. As Corinna Kirsch, senior editor at Art Fag City tweeted on 20th October 2012 - “Either I'm missing something or there's a serious lack of artist-designed apps and ebooks.”³⁵. I think I agree.

As I stated at the beginning, I am someone who produces my own artists' books, and I have an interest in the ways in which artists are beginning to use digital publishing because I am considering how I could move my practice into a digital sphere. Yet, I still have no desire to do it now. I think that is why I am so drawn to the books at the end of this talk, there is still a relationship with, or the outcome is, a physical book. I think it is the complete lack of preciousness with a huge amount of effort that bothers me about the purely digital route. As I have spent the day fighting with computers, phones and tablets that are an essential part of my work life, I also feel a close connection to what Alessandro Ludovico says in his recently published book on post-digital print: “having an information carrier which is physically reliable (as well as independent of electrical and data connections) is increasingly being recognised as a precious resource by a generation which spends much of its days glued to ‘unsteady’ laptops.”³⁶ Maybe I just want my books to be ‘steady’, maybe I just like the feel and smell of them. Whatever it is, as excited as I am about the possibilities of digital publishing, I won't be dipping my toes in the pool just yet.

Tom Sowden, May 2014

Endnotes

- ¹ <http://www.slideshare.net/l.bicknell/what-is-bookness-10>
- ² Bodman, S, Sowden, T, *A Manifesto for the Book*, Impact Press, Bristol, UK, 2010
- ³ Ibid, pp 66.
- ⁴ Ibid, pp 7.
- ⁵ http://www.bookarts.uwe.ac.uk/new_wave09/McGarry.pdf
- ⁶ <http://www.bookarts.uwe.ac.uk/contrado9/liberature.htm>
- ⁷ <http://www.liberatorium.com/emeryk/end.html>
- ⁸ Nowakowski, R, 'Is a hypertext (artist's) book possible?' *Artist's Book Yearbook 2012-13*, Impact Press, Bristol, UK, 2011, pp 51.
- ⁹ <http://www.liberlandia.net/>
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- ¹² twitter.com/On_Kawara
- ¹³ <http://angiewaller.com/video/the-most-boring-places-in-the-world-2009/>
- ¹⁴ <http://vimeo.com/37903577>
- ¹⁵ <http://www.guybegbie.com/Pages/video.aspx>
- ¹⁶ <http://www.artistsebooks.org/>
- ¹⁷ <http://badlandsunlimited.com/>
- ¹⁸ <http://www.klausgallery.net/ebooks/>
- ¹⁹ <http://www.blurb.co.uk/ebook>
- ²⁰ <http://beta.thepeoplesebook.net/>
- ²¹ <http://www.weproductions.com/handprinted.html>
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