

büro very TASSE #16 - BD

J

When we first discussed the books you publish, I remember that I wanted to talk about production, technical means, as I was impressed by their slick quality. You seemed surprised, as for you it was obvious to go through online services and get this sort of industrial finish. Why did you choose to work that way, without much involvement in the material production? Or maybe I'm mistaken and you do create books some other ways as well?

B

Thank you J :)

I looked surprised because I am a surprised person. My actual feeling is that it's not obvious or a good thing to rely on industry.

I couldn't get direct technical means when I started to produce books; and at the time & where I was, I knew no people experienced in this zine-derived approach, which I applied to 'big' books. The alternative to books-as-a-means-of-promoting-another-artwork (which would be external to it) was 'artist's books' / contemporary art – which is awesome, but only if you fuel it with other cultures. Afterwards, I was told that personal printing machines could easily break; agaga :(.

At this moment, the invention of HP indigo printers + the development of online printing services (giving rise to a reduced and therefore less expensive human interface :/) provided me with a fun toolbox to play with on the internet (:

So no I didn't choose. It was destiny's child.

This printing method since became a new standard in publishing fairs, at least in France. For me, the handmade adjustments that I add (the colored edges, the silly cutouts and glue blocks over some covers, the re-bindings...), are aimed at restoring a sense of humanity to this industrial cleanliness, which could otherwise stink of luxury – and is also very pretty.

Yes, I do print & bind books myself as well! Generally I like my books to be not necessarily slick, but 'finished'. I often do my best (via these craycray manual additions, etc.) to suggest that one should not be fooled by this cleanliness, or the false seriousness that it would evoke if I were not actually serious / skillfully tightened of the behind.



J

Do you manage to find an economical balance out of this setup? I understood that you get an income on the side, but is it how your publishing house is sustainable? Or is it sustainable at all?

B

Yes, the economical fuel of every project is my own (side) income only. Yes, it is sustainable to the extent that I have made intense financial calculations aimed at embracing gaily my proto-Protestant ideal for each publishing project: NOT to make money (or give it to the poor) and NOT to lose any.

I surely didn't achieve this 'zero' balance and lost many \$; nevertheless I would be obviously content paying BILLIONS to the artists I publish.

J

I remember you told me about the specific project of selling some original notebooks of Yu Mastuoka, a painter, with an incrementally increasing price for each new notebook on sale.

What were the different commercial strategies that you tried? I also heard that you chose not to take any cut on these sales, and give back everything to Yu. Is that correct?

B

Yes! Yu got all the lettuce! I didn't want to be a greedy jerk, though according to the holy teachings I should have gotten myself 50cts from the transaction – that logic is legitimate though. And 50cts after another, one micropublisher may end up being able to buy themselves a kebab in 10 years : D

Otherwise, yes man! There were three books, I suggested to Yu that I would sell the first at €88, the second at €99, the third at €111, effectively increasing sales after sales. It responded to a logic of elegance because my mother is handsome, but also practically it seemed consistent with the value her work could 'gain' in the process, & also to a basic test logic: if it goes for that price, let's see if the next one goes for that price (etc).

As for other strategies, ...I sell second-hand items, and also books published by other people; not just to greenwash my rose cheeks, but also because I don't want to self-lovingly fill a field already loaded with forgotten beauties.

I prefer not to sell _rare_ 2nd-hand materials – which would evoke too much of a collector's luxury – but rather things that could be beautiful if they were being paid a specific attention to.

So – I find it 'fun' to put some of these cheap things for sale for 1000€, but FYI their humbleness will actually be worth 10000000€ in paradise. And there is also a lot of free stuff on the Les Lilas website! Movies, downloadable books. So my commercial strategy is: free stuff.

J

Do you consider these strategies, for the lack of a better word, as part of your artistic input as a publisher or an art editor? They're definitely a part of your publishing house's identity.

B

Yes man!

But heu, not a lot. I mean most of these personal projects are about creating little worlds maybe, the ecology of which would undo itself, if they were to be reduced to an identity (I mean a 'reduced identity', like a slogan, or a brand charter, any set of tricks).

What matters for worlds isn't identity, it's to be... lived in, hamdoulillah, I mean it's a goody 2-shoes answer but true still. Also these financial strategies may vary, depending on the needs of the project.

J

Another thing that strikes me – maybe that's because I'm older than you – is your involvement with social media. You don't use them only for promotion. It is something more playful, both very direct, as a tool for expressing emotions, and very sophisticated, as a clever game of references, display of bad taste, etc. Sometimes, I fear that there's something there like brand building. What do you think of all that?

B

You are very old Jonas. You even have a beard!

Your opening up to me about your fears is beautiful.

I don't think artist brand-building is to be feared, it's to be vomited. Those doing this on purpose will be put in jail. By the Sheriff!!



J

I have a hard time really pinpointing your position and connections with a singular scene, if that makes sense. When we chat, it sounds like you know a lot of newcomers, young artists involved with digital media and not so much with books. But you also have older friends, belonging to more traditional margins: performances, noise music, old fashioned fazines, etc. And on top of that, you are also remote in a way, in your small town near Nantes.

Do you think that you are part of a scene? Is it something that you try to avoid? Does it matter at all?

B

Living in a city where, at some time, I could not find any element of the ideal community I've been desiring to be part of, is the reason.

Curation work allowed me to get in touch with the people whose works carried, in my view, a singularity/intensity; because I anticipated – rightly & wrongly – that a personal erudition, where ego might be lost, would be the origin of it.

(Discovering their work through personal research felt good, better than through meeting them by chance in a super nice Parisian swingers club)

I'm very happy to be part of a scene if that scene isn't self-destructive. ...Some eruditions have roots in fear, or in an actual disinterest of others; some lost egos may bounce back stronger when erudition isn't socially integrated; sometimes an erudition has nothing to do with passion and is the result of another paradigm (a rich educational context; a well-learned supporting partner; a taste for career...); sometimes guys come labelling themselves as erudite and 'passionate' and it becomes clear later they just wanted to fuck people up the ass etc. And actual erudition may lead to bad pride! Hate and love are all around, though identifying the discreet Jedi in another heart, part of the apprenticeship may be.

That being said, narrowed imageries aimed at creating connivence|companionship (there's no neutral translation for this in English) bother me. I like erudition when it's cross-media!! Like those scenes you mentioned actually, when they're at their best.

But digital media for hype's sake are as lol as old-school media for dusty respectability's sake, I have taste for neither.

I have love for the 'margins', but no differentiated interest for them – neither for the boring romanticism – or just cynical branding yes – that may go with fake ideas of marginality and counterculture.

(I have same feelings for its consumerists opposites, 'destroying the system from the inside' / 'you can't make an omelette without getting dirty hihi' – obviously a few capitulo-capitalist contexts are OK for creativity, but I don't know if artificially legitimizing them is.)

What matters to me in art is what is kindly given to an audience, and not trying to attract this audience with immediately comforting local (like generational, etc) clichés, or winks-to-the-guy-who-also-knows-this, still seems important. A culture isn't necessarily closed, but it does offer the possibility of a sterile closed circuit. Zines, cinema, contemporary art, or videogames all had (have) moments when they were(are)n't cultures, but fields of ~emotionally accurate~ experimentations.

J

I guess that what I'm getting at is this: who do you make books for? Are they for "the world", for yourself, for the artists themselves, for your friends and like-minded individuals?

B

For like-minded individuals. Or at least it started this way. Of course, regarding your specific formulation – do they exist and are we _friends_; yes! Some of them do and are. (coucou !) 'Peers' is more important to me though; I hope that rejecting romanticism, in that kind of love, may own me that greater link I'm indeed craving for; which may tie us, at somber ends of ragnagnarok, against Jordy B, junk food, and Sephiroth °°–)

And yes, some of these peers are artists and some are not.

What remains, of that first phase targetting ideal people, is that I don't assume that my potential audience is stupid, or at least it's their own business (as I'm not particularly high-brow or low-brow, an audience shall already have all the keys, if they know how to look with the heart).

My family and childhood friends are also part of the target audience. I mean they're not related to art, are culturally self-taught; so I find it practical to ask myself – what would they think of this and these if I do it like that etc. (it doesn't matter if they eventually see the result or not)



Because I like it when art is complex (and thus ‘reflecting the world’) but not when it is mysterious; so there’s back & forth between simpletoning it down and adding complexity.

These days I’ve been trying to create many more things alone, to find inside of me something I may enjoy from me.
Also I am extremely satisfied when I do things it for kids. Areuh areuh.

J

There have been long discussions about potential exhibitions. How do you work to organize these? Do they eventually happen as much as you want? Why making exhibitions instead of books?

B

I find it very enjoyable to organize things in space, where people will circulate. Visualizing this space in my brain, its potential, combining it with the potential of the people I invite there or who are already there, talking to them, listening to their reluctances or digging deep enough to discover their unexpected abilities, it’s good!

On the other hand, 1 day of hanging art on walls surrounded by love, intelligence, and joy, sometimes mean 6 months of a work with a good taste of shit. Exhibitions don’t last, books do; and being proud of having created an exhibition that 99.9% of the audience won’t see, solely for documenting it online to support one’s art career, seems to me like a weak war plan for weak war pervs.

On the other other hand, I did a work I’m not sure many people have looked at; on Les Lilas’ website, I tried to develop phantasmagorical narratives within which are included the documentation of the 15 exhibitions I curated [I mean I didn’t take flash photos of exhibitions in cellars while making fucks at the camera to ‘create a narrative’]. So it would be BOTH boring archiving AND something else!

Regarding ‘name-dropping’, exhibitions mean strong restriction, since unless their curation implies being paid to do PR for Bernard Macron, the choice of artists for an exhibition is by definition made on a scene which won’t require travel expenses (local, for example). But it’s also what may make it a fun work; books allow perfectionism, exhibitions demand adaptability (:

And it is of course more emotionally enjoyable to talk, deal with, and look into the eyes of humans in the real world rather than via PM. Letters (/emails) are great though :)

J

The last issue of your magazine did impress me. It is thick and dense. There is obviously a lot of work from your part, as there are many artists involved and it still feels like a coherent whole. How did you work on that one? How much do you feel like getting involved with the content provided by the contributors? Is it only a matter of selection (“editing”) or do you transform some pictures to create a more homogenous ensemble?

B

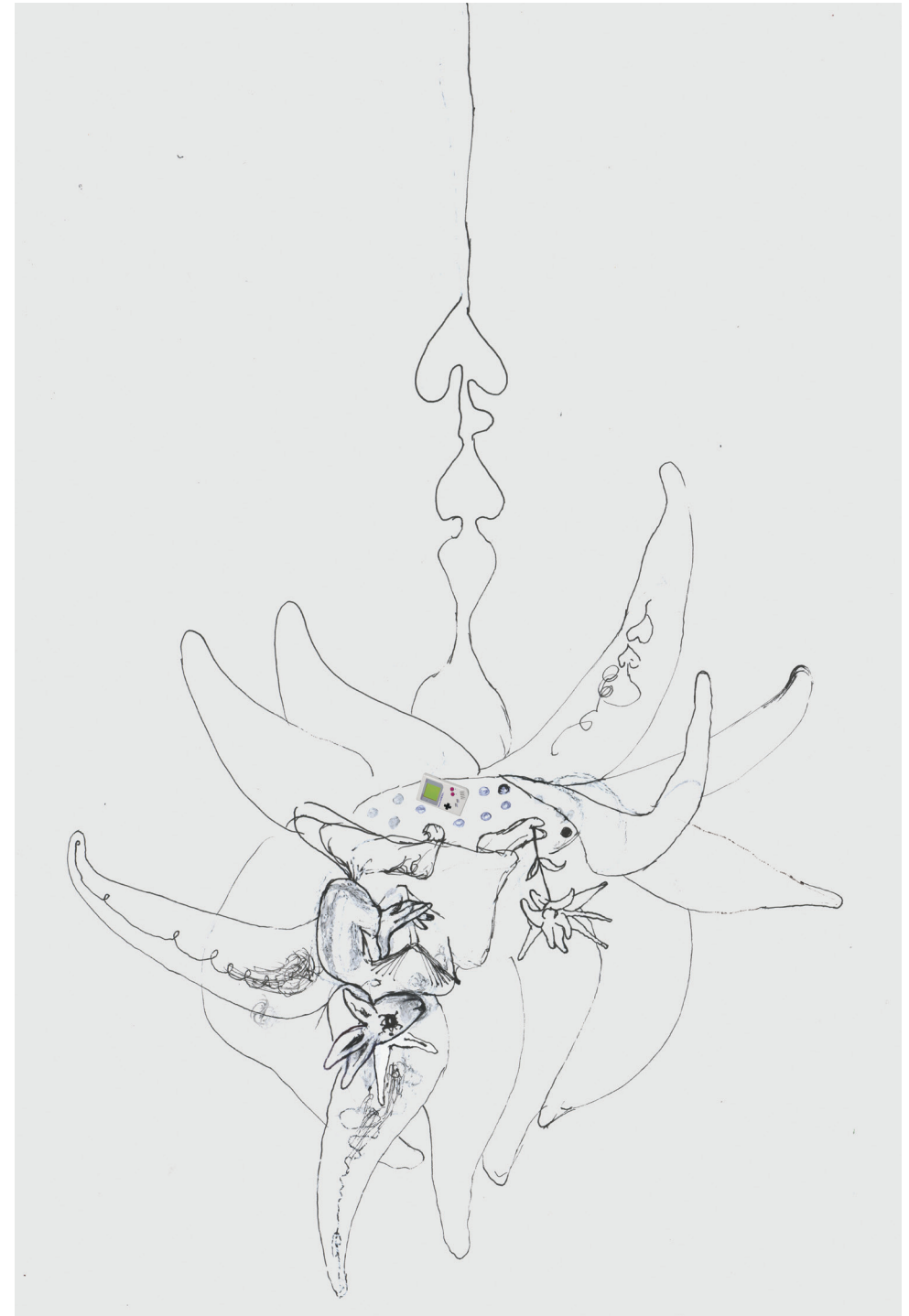
YOU are thick and dense. Thank you!!) For Blessure Magazine 6 I established many protocols specific to the personality of each artist. The idea being not to pit the works against each other, but to invent ways for their narrative strengths to differ from each other & coalesce.

I’d feel very uncomfortable retouching someone’s images without telling them – but there were a lot of technical adjustments to resolution, colorimetry, bleeds, RGB > CMYK transition etc., that I made in dialogue with the participants.

Then, there were cases where I was authorized to choose the order of their _pages_; cases where I was free to lay out their _images_ alongside others’ on the same page; cases where I wasn’t free to mix their artworks with someone else’s and had to arrange the layout of one’s images on _their own page_ myself; cases where I was instructed to take part in the completion of their artworks, with raw materials they supplied; and cases, of course, where the artist wanted their work to be untouched, in terms of layout, page order etc.

I optionally told the artists what I thought could make their work more relevant to the rest of the book project, while trying to offer as many suitable solutions as possible (managing some technicals myself, etc). But beyond that, no, I’m not going to tinker with an artist’s image without telling them.

(Except for found images, in which case it’s my obligation to, at least, distort it strongly to make it morally fit into the collage domain.)



Of course I wanted – out of RISPEKT – to ensure that the book could function on the one hand as a showcase for their work, by communicating about it (their sites, who had done what, other aspects of their practice that would be invisible in the book, etc.):

- in the book (via a separate leaflet, where I could detail everything);
- on social networks, often with new works, made ‘for the screen’;
- and of course dialoguing with people who come to consult/buy BM6.

On the other hand, collective books that function ONLY as showcases are indeed WINDOWS ON HELL, and beyond the intervention of each, another narrative (...mine) worked underneath to fly the whole thing. (Wanting for the book to be happily heterogeneous, being paradoxically part of the cohesive intention. ‘Happily’ being the key-word)

For example, if pages sent to me would display an aggressive, sad or opaque tone, or something else which risked being perceived as complacent to eyes other than those of Christ, I’d bring a similar yet burlesque tone somewhere else sometimes. (Knowledge/love/respect of the vocabulary, context, angsts specific to the artist were useful in these cases.)

All the materials I have produced myself inside the book have zero self-worth and have been made solely for this purpose, to formalize a flowing story, from bridge to bridge, between the productions of each people. Consequently, this book should be read from page 1 to page 640. It’s FORBIDDEN to open it to any page you like. (The PDF is free – I’ve worked hard to make it available – and it’s a bit more effective as, in this form, you can only read it from A to Z.)

J

How do you work? Do you take notes? Ideas written in a Moleskine? Post its on the fridge? Your own drawings look like they’re mostly realized on a computer. Are they?

B

Yes Jojo first thing I do in the morning is getting into the fridge and vigorously write “ideas”, all over the walls!!! ...First I try to study cultural subjects as much as possible, taking notes on my computer and making lists to train my memory; the fact that I want to keep them up to date makes the handwritten notebook complicated.

But, whether it’s drawing or making lists or jotting down ideas, if I restricted myself to the computer I’d turn into a slug; so I cobble in the real world with my soft flowerwanker hands as much as possible.

I like drawings that tend towards painting. My visual artworks usually imply sketching ideas, drawing, scanning, collaging, printing, painting – composition/stratification/coagulation also take a lot of time – so there’s computer + hand-only work.

J

During our discussions, you often show an interest towards the history of self publishing, French graphzines, alternative and experimental comics or artists books and magazines. Is there a conscious intent of sustaining a tradition of sorts? Choosing informed positions, both formally and socially?

B

NO (lol)
I pray that it’s NOT an intent (it’s not) but an ACTION! Something i DO!

I find taking some space in a scene without studying it and loving it is really a boor’s practice. On the other hand, I’m not keen on cherishing tradition because it’s traditional (= stuffy and farty); I’m a shocking old lady, not a paedophile priest.

Heroes and models are good when their individualism dissolved into their work of creation; famous ones are very lucky, or gross predators. Good night to all. On the other hand, there are the art results; the ‘little worlds’. I do believe they are good enough a reason to live and keep the eyes open through the shit rain.

I’ll stay interested forever in understanding why and how people who have done good things have done them, and still ready to please them orally myself.

But ‘tactics’, such as _socially choosing informed positions_... are, heh, legitimate, but wearing flabby trousers with side pockets shouldn’t mean I’m in the military! I’d better go with John & Yoko planter 2 glands pour la paix.

boujou

1 love

