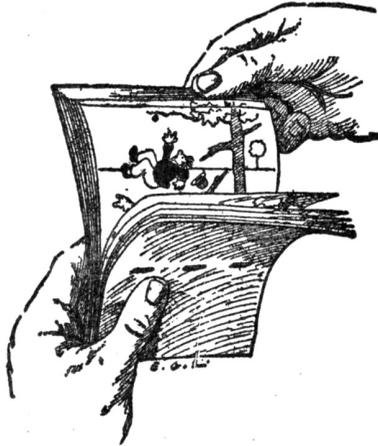


# **The Book in Intermediary Form**

**Kasper Andreasen**

Kasper Andreasen's essay is meant as a parallel to the video 'Tomorrow', which he made in collaboration with Hanne Lippard. (This video can be seen on the Wintertuin website, at <http://www.wintertuin.nl/producties/ramsj>). Both text and video complement each other. The text discusses the notions that lead up to a hypothesis for an audiovisual book. The video on the other hand is a materialization of some of the notions that are discussed in this essay. Andreasen tries to integrate two main considerations to the production of artistic books: 1) the multidisciplinary aspect that bring book collaborations together, and 2) how the book's definition and form can be determined by structure and usage. For clarification, he cited two works of Italo Calvino and Ulises Carrión in both the text and the video. Both sources are used to establish the relation between photography and the book's conception as a way of structuring and reflecting about the artist's book, and today's symptomatic reading condition.



THE KINEOGRAPH.

ill. 1

Consider the performative act of picking up a book and flipping through it. I think that most of us can identify with this form of judging a book. Through the external appearance we can gather an idea of its content, through the title, cover, flap, layout, or reading the blurb; these elements constitute our impression of the book's form and content.

ill. 1 The automatized gesture of picking up a printed object and flipping through it is a very common reaction to today's abundant cultural production of printed matter, whether it is applied to magazines, newspapers, novels, artists' books, or other printed periodicals. This act in a way has become a common reading condition. The act of flipping produces a short film in our minds; it is as if the flickering of the pages becomes a short cinematographic experience.

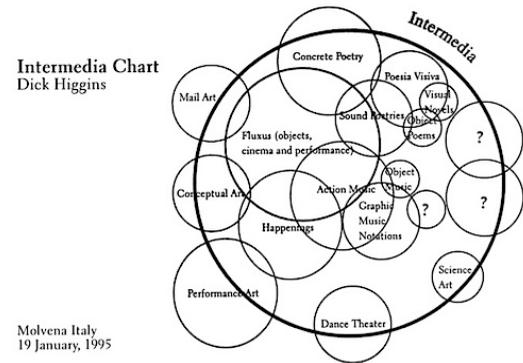
This idea was first expressed by John Barnes Linett in 1868 through the invention of the *Kineograph*, meaning 'moving picture', also known as flick book. The *Kineograph* utilized the form of the book and the potential of the pages' linear sequence as a way of making images move. By working with this succession of images, the reader would keep his or her eye on the same location of the book and the act of flicking would produce the illusion of a small animation<sup>1</sup>. Similar to today's reading condition of flicking, the reader keeps his or her eye in the

same location. This is different from the normal (concentrated) act of reading in which the eyes move over the page, extracting meaning from the words. Flipping through a book creates an abstraction of the book in moving images. Much like the sound of flipping a page is a way of abstracting the almost silent gesture of turning pages.

In this essay I intend to address how flipping through a book is a different way of 'reading' and 'considering' it. By conceiving the flipping of the physical book in filmic terms I would like to point at some of the considerations that have emerged through this intermediary shift. How can artists' books be audio visual objects?

ill. 2

Let me start with defining the term *intermedia*. The term, often used by artist Dick Higgins, was meant as way of describing a collaboration and crossover between the different disciplines in the arts such as literature and painting, sculpture and poetry, drawing and performance. This crossover would have the potential to create a new type of art. Higgins pointed towards the tendency in the 60s, as in Conceptual Art or Fluxus, that artistic disciplines were no longer fixed to one field. Even though a discipline could be defined according to media characteristics, intermedia would bring disciplines together,



ill. 2

the characteristics of their forms as well as the operations of the artists. In other words, what if one medium becomes the extension of another? And what happens when two types of media and their respective disciplines merge?

One of the prolific mediums that has managed to bring disciplines together is the artist's book. This type of book has had the ability to collate the output of different practices such as writing, painting, drawing, design, sculpture, photography, music, electronic media (etc.) without simply reproducing a work of art but instead being a work of art in its own right. In its elementary form the artist's book is one that questions the conceptual and material part of a book's appearance, and relates a content (if any) to this form in unexpected ways. It also questions normal production activities.

Johanna Drucker has defined the bookish relations among these activities as 'a zone of activity, rather than a category into which to place works by evaluating whether they meet or fail to meet certain rigid criteria.'<sup>2</sup> She points out that in the course of the 20th century, collaborations with other artists and different production techniques have led to many activities which exist alongside that of the artist's book.

What is interesting in Drucker's text is that making books in the arts has not been able to

attain a straightforward definition, it has continuously been redefined according to different artistic positions, their concepts, and production (media) parameters. The physical book, with its page-turning-left-right mechanism, is changing due to collaborations between different disciplines and media. I think that intermediary books have a future in the sense that the merging of disciplines and media can make use of books in new configurations. For example, reference books such as dictionaries and encyclopaedias are being replaced by software with hypertexts. Books that are not supposed to be read from beginning to end are easily accessible through a system that links topics by a click of the mouse. As Umberto Eco states: 'A hypertext can give the illusion of opening up even a closed text: a detective story can be structured in such a way that its readers can select their own solution, deciding at the end who should be guilty, the butler, the bishop, the detective, the narrator, the author, or the reader. They can thus build up their own personal story. Such an idea is not new. Before the invention of computers, poets and narrators dreamt of an open text that readers could infinitely re-compose in different ways.'<sup>3</sup> But sometimes the nature of the content doesn't allow the reader to restructure the story. The story is meant to end the way the author intended it. As such, the structure of a

book determined how and sometimes even what we read.

I feel that the status of today's books is largely dependent on their usage and is therefore determined by necessities of reading, reference, or just simply flipping and looking. In the case of artist's books, I think they also risk failure, they assume a sense of obscurity and disinterest at first, they address a certain necessity and publishing problem, and don't answer to the demands of the publishing house or the market. Thus, artists' books are able to push the conventions of what a book is, how we read it, the language it uses, and the space of publishing it defines.

Let us return to the scenario of flipping through a book seen through the eyes of a camera lens; an intermediary shift. Imagine a form which focuses on a viewing process that mediates the turning of pages by moving images and sound. In order to register this reading condition, one would have to stage the flipping of the book from above. This could reinforce a particular way of looking by using the art of flipping to animate the contemplation of the reader as well as the sound of reading. In other words, how can this act of flipping say something about the way we see and judge a potentially bad or good book? Firstly, flipping has

become a form of silent critique. This viewing process could show something about how the reader wants to understand or what he might be considering. Secondly, reading and looking (flipping) are real experiences which could be interpreted by the camera and sound.

In the 1970s, Ulises Carrión wrote in his seminal analysis 'The New Art of Making Books', about the possibilities of engaging with the structure and experience of books in the future. He proposed that artist's books ('new art') unlike normal literary books ('old art') are autonomous entities and therefore entitle the reader to their own space-time experience. Not only the reader, but also the creator of these 'new' books has to understand and take control of this space-time experience. In my collaboration with Hanne Lippard, we have tried to use the space-time experience to achieve an intermediary form. It is an audiovisual work which merges the book together with film, performance, writing, and photography.

### The Audiovisual Book

The starting point for this work is an image essay. The images in this book comprise snapshots that defy the grace and elegance of fine photography. It would probably be best described

in *The Adventure of a Photographer*<sup>4</sup> as ‘[...] the exceptional moments that are nevertheless produced at every moment and in every place.’ These images are not only placeless but also eventless; there is no singular classification for them, they are the result of failure.

One could also say that the result of the effort of these photographs does not bridge the intention to the original objective. They are random pictures that question and break the sequence that could have been ordered into a normal flick book. Flipping too is an arbitrary act of reading. By using the randomness of failed photography, we have tried to mirror the accidental rhythm of flipping through the book’s pages to the characteristics of this type of photography. The symbiosis of image and sound in the video tries to emphasize the way we think about the book’s form and experience. The sound considers the definitions, judgments, and preconceptions about the artist’s book’s content and form.

With the sequence of flipping, we have tried to create a movement which could be compared to that of a journey or a route. In the same way, the reading of a page in a book creates a similar movement. That movement can present itself differently to every reader, and its interpretation is therefore individual. One sentence can have multiple meanings, multiple origins, and

multiple objectives. With this we wanted to produce a kind of storytelling, one that encourages viewing and listening to it over again; a way of rediscovering the artist’s book. This is also due to the fact that the judging of books partly relies on the memory, knowledge, and social conditions of the reader.

With these considerations in mind, the visual language of ‘Tomorrow’ tries to investigate the definition of the artist’s book: the way a book in an intermediary form can ask questions about itself, the role of snapshot photography versus a structure of chance, and a ‘space-time sequence’ which is a reflection of today’s symptomatic reading condition. The following pages give an outline of the script.

## Tomorrow

Kasper Andreasen and Hanne Lippard

- intro: waves crashing,  
transition to noise coming from  
the city.



[sound of folding a dog-ear]

[sound of skipping half a paragraph]



- film still of a man holding a blank book.  
(from: *In Praise of Love*, Godard, 2001)



- sound of the street and flipping through the book  
continues throughout.

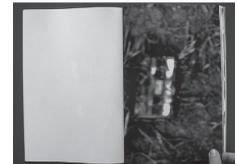
'If I were to start taking pictures, I'd see this thing through, even if it meant losing my mind. But the rest of you still insist on making a choice. What sort of choice? A choice in the idyllic sense, apologetic, consolatory, at peace with nature, the fatherland, the family. Your choice isn't only photographic; it is a choice of life, which leads you to exclude dramatic conflicts, the knots of contradiction, the great tensions of will, passion, aversion. So you think you are saving yourselves from madness, but you are falling into mediocrity, into hebetude.' (Calvino, 1984)



[going over a page]

Fetishism is the starting point of the creative activity in the new art. Old art's authors have the gift for language, the talent for language, the ease for language. For new art's authors, images and language are an enigma, a problem. The book has made things worse.

There are faster reading methods because writing methods are too slow. To read a book, is to perceive sequentially its structure. (based on Carrion, 1975)



[never-ending autobahn]

At the end of the third line on page fifteen there is a divided truth. When turning the page and holding it up against the light, the word 'book' which appears mirrored has a double meaning. In the old art you write 'I love you' thinking that this phrase means 'I love you'. But: what does 'I love you' mean?

[you are an awful liar]

[déjà vu]



Paris Syndrome is characterized by a number of psychiatric symptoms such as acute delusional states, hallucinations, feelings of persecution (perceptions of being a victim of prejudice, aggression, or hostility from others).



[travel madness]

[still life]



The second chapter is dark. The fourth is no better. The fifth chapter is hard to understand by anyone except for those who have experienced which is described there in detail. The first editions of this book has a 40% chance of opening up on page 65 by itself if you let the to 27 is highly autobiographical but the author's sister denies the fact that it has anything to do with her.

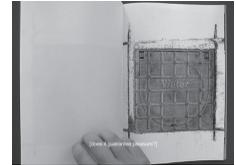
[artist's book]

[book art]

[bookworks]

[livre d'artiste]

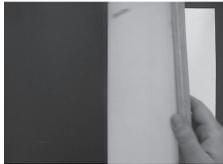
[does it guarantee pleasure?]



18 people have thought about this connection, but been reluctant to admit it. From above it could seem completely normal. In the middle of this book there is a truth. At the end of the book there is a short line with a forced ending. At the beginning of the book there is a strong statement which is being doubted upon by every third reader.



'It is only when they have the photos before their eyes that they seem to take tangible possession of the day they spent, only then that the mountain stream, the movement of the child with his pail, the glint of the sun on the wife's legs take on the irrevocability of what has been and can no longer be doubted. Everything else can drown in the unreliable shadow of memory.' (Calvino, 1984)



- outro: ambulance sound

Extracts from Italo Calvino 'The Adventure of a Photographer'  
Ulises Carrón 'The New Art of Making Books'

## Notes

1 - 'Flipbook', see: terminology and image *Kineograph*. Online available: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flip\\_book](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flip_book).

2 - Johanna Drucker, 'The Artist's Book as Idea and Form', from: *The Century of Artists' Books*. New York: Granary Books, 2004. She defines 'a zone of activity' which brings together activities such as independent publishing, arts and crafts, fine printing, painting, music, conceptual art, performance, political art etc. to delineate the area around and at the limit of the artist's book.

3 - Umberto Eco names poets such as Stéphane Mallarmé and Raymond Queneau as people who were composing and manipulating language and storytelling. Eco discusses this on the basis of finite and infinite interpretations of a story. From: Umberto Eco. 'Vegetal & mineral memory: The future of books.' Online available: [http://www.bibalex.org/attachments\\_en/Publications/Files/Umberto\\_Eco\\_.pdf](http://www.bibalex.org/attachments_en/Publications/Files/Umberto_Eco_.pdf), November, 2011

4 - Italo Calvino. 'The Adventure of a Photographer', from: *Difficult Loves*. Orlando: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1984, pp. 23.