For Fans and Scholars Alike

Ulises Carrión and the artists' book as a 'democratic multiple'

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Introduction

"One day I'd like to see artists' books ensconced in supermarkets, drugstores, and airports and, not incidentally, to see artists able to profit economically from broad communication rather than from lack of it."[1]

"Books are the best medium for many artists working today.[...] It is the desire of artists that their ideas be understood by as many people as possible. Books make it easier to accomplish this."[2]

These lines were written in 1976, that same year, Sol LeWitt and Lucy Lippard joined efforts and founded Printed Matter, which dedicated itself to the dissemination, understanding and appreciation of the artists' book.[3] Both quotes express a great optimism about the possibilities of the artists' book in its potential to communicate directly to a broad audience. The artists' book did not end up as popular as Lippard predicted. This can be pointed out by a trip to the supermarket, and will be painfully clarified by the confused facial expression of the cashier when asked about them.

Printed Matter still exists and operates as it did back in 1976. The circulation of artists' books however seems to be supported by a small yet international group of enthusiasts rather than Average Joe going for groceries. The artists' book has gained the status of a somewhat obscure segment of the art world.

The optimism expressed in the above quotes in hindsight seems out of place, however, '*in the affluent era of the 1960s [...] it was possible to have such a vision.'*.[4] As Johanna Drucker argues, the optimism of Lippard and LeWitt was common place amongst protagonists of the artists' book. Drucker argues that the artists' book emerged mainly in the 1960s. With its supposed inexpensive, easy to produce, easy to distribute and potentially unlimited edition, the art form was embraced as a 'democratic multiple'. According to Drucker, this notion of the 'democratic multiple' formed a 'definitive paradigm' that fueled the proliferation of the artists' book.[5]

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[1] Lippard, Lucy. "The Artist's Book Goes Public". *Artists' Books: A Critical Anthology and Sourcebook.* Ed. J. Lyons. New York: Visual Studies Workshop Press, 1985: 48.
[2] LeWitt, Sol. "Books". *Sol LeWitt.* Ed. B. Gross. Zurich: JRP Ringier, 2012: 236.
[3] Printed Matter. "History", Accessed October 7, 2016, https://www.printedmatter.org/what-we-do.
[4] Drucker, Johanna. *The Century of Artists' Books.* New York: Granary Books, 1995: 78.
[5] Drucker, *Century*, 72.

In its multiplicity and ease of distribution the artists' book is today in many ways outpaced by digital technologies making virtually instant communication of ideas possible to potentially millions of people at once. The implications of the artists' book, as well as the optimism with which it was embraced however is mirrored in the emergence of digital art, especially in the past decades.[6] The artists' book – far from being an obscure relic of the past generation – has developed a renewed interest through these technologies. As the circulation of physical and informational objects has increased, many artists have moved towards a practice of communicating and circulating information, tracking these networks and compiling, stacking and stealing data to compose them into on demand printed books, which today can be – due to digital technologies – offered in unlimited editions through websites such as Blurb and Lulu.

One of the key artists in the theorization of the artists' book during the 1970s is the Mexican artist Ulises Carrión (San Andres 1941 - Amsterdam 1989). Coming from a literary background, he moved to Amsterdam in 1972 and started making his own artists' books. Besides publishing artists' books himself, he also started the first gallery of its kind dedicated to artists' books and ephemeral material called Other Books and So, which later became the Other Books and So Archive. Whereas this archive has been dispersed after Carrión's premature death in 1989, his artists' books and theoretical texts are still of major importance to many theorists and artists involved with the artists' book. What position did Carrión take within the development of the artists' book, and how did he relate to the optimistically embraced notion of the 'democratic multiple' so persistent in the history of the artists' book?

These questions are the main focus of this research, and are approached in three movements. The first chapter focuses on sketching a genealogy of the emergence of the artists' book, thereby defining the main characteristics of the artists' book, and describing some key moments in its development. The revolutionary discourse with which the artists' book was associated is then placed in a broader context. This way, Drucker's notion of the 'democratic multiple' is extended to gain a better understanding of the notion and how the artists' book relates to it. The second chapter the oeuvre of Carrión is examined with a focus on his bookworks. The last chapter positions the bookworks and other activities of Carrión towards the extended notion of the 'democratic multiple' described in the first chapter.

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[6] Bühler, Melanie. *No Internet, No Art: A Lunch Bytes Anthology.* Eindhoven: Onomatopee, 2015: 14-16. In her introduction Bühler describes how digital technologies were optimistically embraced as a '*free online space for artistic production*' that contrasted the traditional art world, this optimism is argued by Bühler now to be tempered. Heavily exploited by capitalist commodity culture, has cut out the 'anarchic fun' of the internet, which however evolved into an ever present cultural tradition.

Despite the century-long involvement of artists in bookmaking, the first chapter shows that the notion of the 'democratic multiple' is rooted in the idea that a new art form emerged from the mid-1950s onwards: the 'artists' book'.[7] This rupture developed in a critical discourse during the 1970s, and it is within this discourse that Drucker positions her notion of the 'democratic multiple'.

To gain a better understanding of the emergence of the artists' book, this research further discusses two concurrent discourses that show a close relation to the emergence of the artists' book. By juxtaposing the development of the artists' book with the emergence of conceptual art and the development of information and communication technologies, close relations appear between these concurrent developments both in the revolutionary capacities that they promised and the optimism with which they were embraced. Interestingly all three of these 'revolutions' were soon argued to have failed.

Researching artists' books from an art-historical perspective offers a significant challenge. First off, the notion of the artists' book as a field of art historical research is relatively new. Two major publications serve as the foundation of the research on artists' books, specifically *The Century of Artists' Books* by Drucker, which was published in 1995, and *Artists' Books: A Critical Anthology and Sourcebook*, edited by Joan Lyons, which was published in 1985. The literature generally acknowledges an overwhelming popularity of this newly emerged art form from the 1960s onwards. What exactly sets the publishing activities of these artists aside from those earlier that century, even in previous centuries, is topic of debate.

It is there that a second difficulty comes in. As Barbara Moore and Jon Hendricks point out, there are probably as many definitions of the artists' book as there are artists' books themselves.[8] Additionally, great efforts have been made by historians focusing on artists' magazines,[9] the use of language, either spoken or written, in modern and contemporary art,[10] or relationship between the word and the image.[11] All of this involves the development of the artists' book to a greater or lesser extent. As the scope widens, the concept of artists' book grows increasingly opaque.

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[7] In literature, the artists' book is occasionally termed artist's book. In this research the spelling artists' book is deployed, which is most importantly more commonly used in the historicization of the art form, and additionally recognizes the association of the artist and the book without suggesting the inclusion of books that are merely owned by artists.

[8] Hendricks, Jon and Barbara Moore. "The Page As Alternative Space: 1950 to 1969". *Artists' Books: A Critical Anthology and Sourcebook.* Ed. J. Lyons. New York: Visual Studies Workshop Press, 1985: 87.

[9] Allen, Gwen. *Artists' Magazines: An Alternative Space For Art.* Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2011.

[10] Kotz, Liz. *Words to Be Looked At: Language in 1960s Art.* Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2010.

[11] Morley, Simon. *Writing on the Wall: Word and Image in Modern Art.* London: Thames & Hudson Ltd, 2003.

The book format has been a focus of experiment for artists in virtually every discipline. In accurately describing the development of the artists' book, an interdisciplinary and non-linear could thus prove more effective. Stephen Bury has argued that a more useful way to deal with the manner is to speak of 'leitmotifs', an approach that allows him to connect a vast variety of elements, disciplines, time periods and geographies.[12] This approach however leads Bury towards a heterogeneous notion of the artists' book that resist a better understanding of the phenomenon, and ultimately leads him back to a conventional perspective on the phenomenon based on periods, movements and styles.

These issues are of a main concern in the first chapter, as it aims to describe the manner in which the artists' book is historicized. A number of views on what is and what isn't an artists' book is elaborated upon. As the chapter primarily seeks is to detect and define the revolutionary discourse that is described by Drucker and on which she bases her notion of the 'democratic multiple', it is more useful to address these issues without attempting to tackle them, and, as suggested by Dick Higgins, to determine that during the postwar period *'a new time had come for the artists' book'*, although essential conditions preexisted.[13]

It is thus not the aim of this research to define the artists' book. It is however important to note that Carrión himself has made an important contribution in this respect, as it is his categorization that will – however loosely – be deployed in this research. A book is defined by Carrión as *'a sequence of spaces'*.[14] Carrión uses the term 'artists' book' as an umbrella term for all books made by artists, whatever those may be. Within this broad category Carrión differentiates between different forms, for example, 'object books', in which the used materials become the primary deliverer of content, and 'book objects', which are art objects that only have a vague relation to a book. Lastly, Carrión describes his own works as being ' bookworks'.[15] This term is preferred as Carrión tries to exclude books such as catalogues and biographies, and disconnects the bookwork from the necessity of an artist making them.[16] In describing his own work, Carrión speaks of bookworks, and states that *´for*

[12] Bury, Stephen. *Artists' Books: The Book as a Work of Art 1963-2000.* London: Bernard Quaritch Ltd., 2015: 20.

[13] Higgins, Dick. "A Preface". *Artists' Books: A Critical Anthology and Sourcebook.* Ed. J. Lyons. New York: Visual Studies Workshop Press, 1985: 12.

[14] Carrión, Ulises. *Second Thoughts.* Amsterdam: Void Distributors, 1980: 7.

[15] Zutter, Jörg. "Van boek tot kunstenaarsboek: interview met Ulises Carrión". *Kunstenaarsboeken uit het Otherbooks & So Archive Amsterdam.* Ed. U. Carrión. Schiedam: Stedelijk Museum, 1981.

[16] Carrión, Ulises. *Second Thoughts.* Amsterdam: Void Distributors, 1980: 66.

an artists' book to be a bookwork, it is essential that it looks and functions like an ordinary book.'.[17] This categorization parallels the diagram made by Clive Phillpot, also known as the 'fruit salad' diagram [0.1].
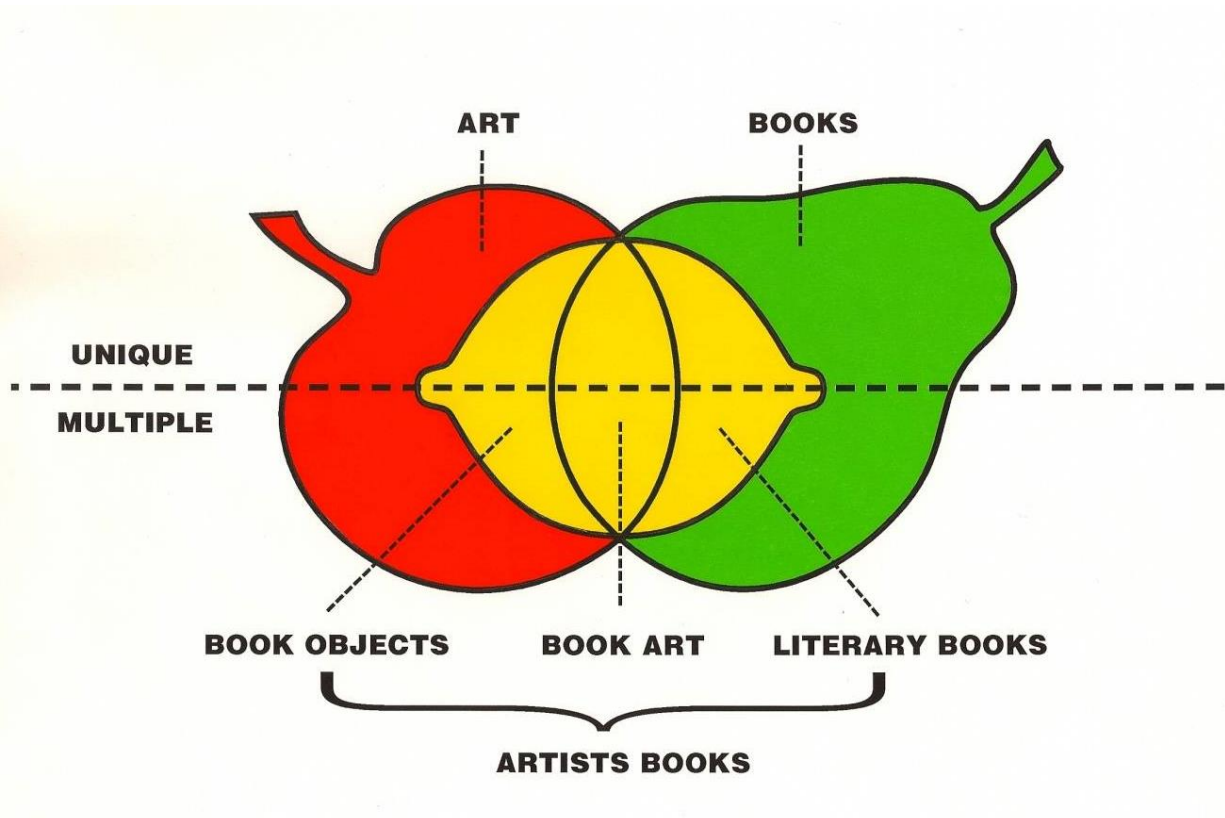
0.1 Clive Phillpot, *Artists Books Diagram.*

In this diagram a distinction is made between 'art' and 'books', the space in which these two overlap is referred to as the space of 'artists' books'. Within the artists' book, Phillpot places 'book objects' as bordering 'art', and literary books as bordering 'books'. 'Book art', which he also calls bookworks, is sandwiched in the middle.[18]

Interestingly, multiplicity is inherent in neither the model of Carrión, who does not mention it, nor in the model of Phillpot, who's unique-multiple axis runs through the middle of all forms of books thus not noting it as a defining element. Drucker however would come to describe the idea of the 'democratic multiple' as '*the idea of the book as a democratic,*

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[17] Carrión, Ulises. "Bookworks Revisited. Part 1: A Selection". [video] 1987. Accessed on july 7, 2016. http://www.li-ma.nl/site/catalogue/art/ulises-carrion/bookworks-revisited-part-1-a-selection/2991.
[18] In referring to this diagram it should be noted that the usage of fruit imagery in the diagram could be seen as a tongue in cheek reference to the comparison between apples and oranges, and the impossibility of categorization.

affordable, available multiple in which an artist is able to produce a vision and disseminate it widely' and as '*a book which is able to pass into the world with the fewest obstacles between conception and production, production and distribution.*'.[19] Thus giving multiplicity a prime importance.

Aiming at an extended notion of the 'democratic multiple' described by Drucker, the scope of this research is not defined by either of the above mentioned models. However, literary books nor book objects have prominence in this research. Looking at concurring movements within conceptual art and the relation between art and information and communication technologies, the concept of Phillpot's 'book art' or Carrión's 'bookwork' is stretched to include experimental publishing activities such loose leaf magazines with multiple contributors and printed works that are meant for distribution through mass media. This is the case especially in the first chapter. The second and third chapters are based primarily upon Carrión's bookworks. The sole focus on bookworks however is be too limiting, and incidentally a broader scope on publishing activities that extend towards a general use of information and communication technologies ultimately proves fruitful. In this research, the latter particularly includes a growing emphasis on media and the communication, circulation and processing of information, in the creation of meaning of the work.

Working from the notion of the 'democratic multiple', this term is used throughout the research. Drucker points out the difficulty of the term already in the association with multiples in art, which are often three-dimensional works made in editions, whereas her notion of the 'democratic multiple' artists' book is ideally a mass produced, unnumbered and unlimited edition.[20] It should be noted that the creation of multiples was often fueled by an ideological impulse, but was clearly more demanding in terms of labor and material. The edition-sizes of these multiples were limited, and despite its ideological motivation, the endeavor was perhaps as much a market-driven one.[21] Even more problematic is the second part of the term. Democracy is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as being '*a system of government by the whole population or all the eligible members of a state, typically*

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[19] Drucker, *Century*, 88. Additionally, it could be argued that scarcity is an inevitable element in 'object books' and 'book objects' due to their reliance on physical properties. 'Bookworks' are, in theory, not held back by these properties.
[20] Drucker, *Century*, 71-72.
[21] Phillpot, Clive. "Some Contemporary Artists And Their Books". *Artists' Books: A Critical Anthology and Sourcebook.* Ed. J. Lyons. New York: Visual Studies Workshop Press, 1985: 102.

through elected representatives'.[22] The artists' book would ultimately question the authority of a single author in regard to the audience, and would open up discussions about collective authorship, nevertheless, defining the artists' book on this term obviously would be problematic. Another definition of democracy given by the dictionary '*the practice or principles of social equality*' this will prove more workable and much closer to what Drucker aims at when speaking of the 'democratic multiple'. As will become clear, the notion of the 'democratic multiple' will imply a general shift in the notions of authorship, distributor, object and audience.

The first chapter aims for a better understanding of the notion suggested by Drucker, it thus functions as a means of rhetorically getting around the complications implied by the term itself. It is from this aim that the focus is put on conceptual art, its involvement with the artists' book, and its revolutionary discourse. This is not to suggest the artists' book is an invention of conceptual art, nor is this move made to suggest that Carrión can or cannot be categorized as a conceptual artist. Whereas it becomes clear that his practice shows close similarities with what is generally known as conceptual art, the positioning of any author within or outside categories that are themselves constantly redefined, seems a futile endeavor.[23]

In the second chapter the focus lies on the oeuvre of Carrión. The oeuvre is described according to a number of major developments and ruptures with a strong emphasis on his bookworks. The chapter thus aims at gaining a better understanding of his works, their subject matter and their implications. Whereas the chapter gives an impression of Carrión's career, and includes biographical elements, it does not aim to be biography, nor does it aim to exhaustively describe his work. Instead, a selection of his bookworks is analyzed, this condenses into a number of important aspects that reoccur in his bookworks. This focus will also clarify the shift he made from being a literary writer to a maker of bookworks. The second chapter also points towards his later career, in which the bookwork seized to be a prime focus. The tendencies that would dominate his later works are examined briefly, which enables us to relate his bookworks to his oeuvre as a whole.

Carrión is relatively unknown but his popularity has increased in the past decades. Various tendencies can be held responsible for this increase, for example the academic

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[22] Oxforddictionaries. "democracy", accessed on October 7, 2016, https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/democracy
[23] It is for this same reason that I have tried to avoid associating Carrión's work with categories such as concrete poetry, minimal poetry, visual poetry or language art.

tendency to rewrite recent art history through a global and inclusive scope.[24] Another tendency that Carrión benefits from is a wide interest in discovering 'hidden treasures' of the 1960s avant-gardes, which is partially stimulated by the art market.[25] Especially in Spanish speaking countries, mainly Mexico, his work has recently gained popularity and has been subject to research. The attention for his work in the Netherlands however has been limited. Whereas the efforts of Spanish authors cannot be ignored, it is probable that some of these contributions are overlooked due to inevitable language barriers. This is hopefully compensated by the use of other valuable sources of information that are still in need of further examination. As his activities mainly took place within the Netherlands, many sources are here to be found and need still to be exhausted. This research combines seminal texts that are internationally known about Carrión with documents found in archives of institutions such as the Appel, LIMA and in the personal experiences and archives from his contemporaries. These rich sources are combined in order to analyze the contributions of Carríon in order to fathom the ideological backdrop that motivated him.

The third and last chapter synthesizes the findings from the first and the second chapter. Thereby, the work of Carrión as laid out in the second chapter is placed within the context of the emergence of the artists' book and its 'democratic' discourse as described in the first chapter. The third chapter then focuses on the extent to which the career of Carrión collides with the broader development of the artists' book and specifically the paradigmatic notion of the 'democratic multiple'. Through his bookworks, essays and statements the motivations of Carrión to reinvent the book become clear. The manner in which Carrión positioned himself towards the notion of the 'democratic multiple' can thereby be determined. Concluding, a nuanced positioning of Carrión towards this notion will be formulated thereby clarifying his position towards the broader field of the artists' book, the art world and general culture.

This research is performed as an essential component within the Master program Erfgoedstudies: Museumconservator offered by the UvA and the VU. Whereas the research is not exclusively focusing on museological subject matter it touches on a number of urgent museological issues. The ephemeral and anti-institutional nature of the work of Carrión has lead to a number of problematic concerns in the reception of his work, which have recently

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[24] Van Winkel, 28.
[25] Aden, Maike. "The Posthumous Reception of Ulises Carrión". *Dear reader. Don't read.* Ed. G. Schraenen. Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, 2016: 61. Aden relates names Carrión among a number of other artists whose recent popularity has largely increased, such as: Bas Jan Ader, André Cadere, Charlotte Posenenske and Paul Thek.

intensified. For example, reprints and facsimile editions of his bookworks and other materials have recently emerged under the supervision of Juan J. Agius. Also the dispersal of Carrión's archive has been topic of debate, and efforts have been made to recollect the archive. Viewing the work of Carrión through the lens of the notion of the 'democratic multiple' helps to clarify the motivations and aims of Carrión and shows the complexity of his position towards authorship, the object and the audience, this research may therefore help to clarify the authenticity of the above noted efforts.

In addition, the research touches upon the issue of museological representation of work that is rooted in an active attempt to avoid this very institutionalization and representation through fetishized objects. The growing institutional interest in the work of Carrión creates a paradoxical situation in which objects meant to be non-precious, reproducible and of use value are now kept in climate controlled spaces to be occasionally viewed through glass-cases in dimly-lit print cabinets. Documents and other physical residues of past events that gained value only through circulation, now gain the status of relics. Whereas completely valid from conservational stance, one can ask what exactly is being conserved. How do these relics communicate the lived moments they refer to? This question does not only concern the work of Carrión, but is a key issue for many ephermeral and conceptual artworks preserved and displayed in a museological context. This research might help to formulate a well-informed answer to the above noted questions, and will name a few examples of alternative models of dealing with the work of Carrión. These issues are fundamental to the reception of Carrión's works, as perhaps in conserving the physical remains of the artwork, the work itself is irreversibly changed, even lost in the process.

Chapter One:

Towards an Extended Notion of the 'Democratic Multiple'

1.1 The Origins of the Artists' Book

According to Drucker, the artists' book became a self-sustaining, self-defining art form mainly in the 1960.[26] During the early 1970s a more or less elaborate network of artists, publishing houses and distributers emerged.[27] What made the book so appealing? This chapter critically examines the notion of the artists' book as a 'democratic multiple' and aims at extending this notion through the examination of some of the key narratives that it relates to. First the historicization of the emergence of the artists' book and its democratic implications is described. Thereafter this development will be embedded within concurrent developments that parallel the democratic discourse that surrounds the artists' book. Thereby an extended notion of the artists' book as a 'democratic multiple' can be formulated. As will be argued, this 'definitive paradigm'[28] in the development of the artists' book, is a construction that synthesizes coinciding developments that are similarly described as revolutionary.

The development of the 'democratic' artists' book will be encapsulated within the development of conceptual art, as well as the development of information and communication technologies. These two developments were embraced with an optimism that climaxed during the late 1960s along with counter culture, the Vietnam War and student protests,[29] and matured during the 1970s. In this research, the chapter serves to create a critical backdrop from which the activities of Carrión can be viewed, and to clarify the discourse that he was actively engaged in.

Lippard, Phillpot and Lyons amongst others describe the artists' book as a phenomenon that emerged in the late 1950s and early to mid-1960, and proliferated mainly during decade thereafter.[30] [31] [32] The focus on the 1960s thus partially neglects the historical predecessors, as becomes clear by reading the text of Moore and Hendricks who describe pioneering developments of letterists, Cobra, concrete poetry and fluxus. By arriving to

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[26] Drucker, *Century*, 69-70.
[27] Ibid., 82.
[28] Ibid., 72.
[29] Stimson, xxxiix. Kosuth characterized conceptual art as '*the art of the Vietnam war era*'.
[30] Lippard, *Goes Public*, 45.
[31] Phillpot, Books, 97.
[32] Lyons, Joan. "Introduction and Acknowledgements". *Artists' Books: A Critical Anthology and Sourcebook.* Ed. J. Lyons. New York: Visual Studies Workshop Press, 1985: 7.

conceptual artists of the mid- to late 1960's only at the end of their essay they point at the importance of earlier developments of the book as medium for visual art, and independent ways of production and distribution, thereby pushing back the timeframe set by Phillpot and Lippard.[33]

Drucker argues that the artists' book is a phenomenon that is essential for 20th century art as a whole, preoccupying virtually every major art movement in the 20th century.[34] Drucker as well as Susi Bloch point out the importance of the classical avant-gardes and their involvement with print. Drucker stresses how during the 1910s publications could be independently made, and thereby a production was started that existed in large numbers and was embraced as a vital form for immediate, direct expression.[35] She also mentions typographical innovation pioneered by these avant-gardes and continued by post-war concrete poets, as well as the emergence of the photographic book which was produced industrially and on a commercial scale.[36] These elements would come to signify Drucker's notion of the 'democratic multiple'.

An important distinction made by Lippard, Drucker and Bloch, is the distinction between the artists' book and the *livre d'artiste*. The latter is described by Drucker as a deluxe edition that has a rich tradition in the 19th century both in France and England. These finely made books contained works of a notable or emerging artist or poet, and were elaborately produced to be attractive for a sophisticated, elite market. What sets these works apart from what Drucker calls an artists' book is that they don't explicitly interrogate with the book as a conceptual spatial and material whole.[37] It is this *livre d'artiste* tradition that Lippard refers to as the artists' book's '*coffee table origins*'.[38]

It is on this polarization that the authors come to propagate the emergence of the artists' book as '*a product of the 1960s*'.[39] Despite its historical predecessors, Drucker concludes by stating that many avant-garde publications kept close ties to the traditional *livre d'artiste* and illustrated book traditions, other developments were largely forgotten at the time artists' books emerged in the 1960s, thus limiting their influence on the artists' book.[40] Similarly, Phillpot points out that the classical avant-gardes generally worked within

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[33] Hendricks and Moore, 87-95.
[34] Drucker, *Century,* 1-9.
[35] Ibid., 46-50.
[36] Ibid., 63.
[37]Ibid., 3-4.
[38] Lippard, *Goes Public,* 47.
[39] Ibid., 45.
[40] Drucker, *Century*, 59-64.

typographic and literary traditions.[41] Drucker states '*it is overwhelmingly evident that artists'* *books become a self-sustaining, even self-defining, realm of activity after mid-century.*' Drucker thus bases her text on the 'democratic multiple' mainly on developments starting in the mid-1950's and mainly the 1960s.[42]

It is out of the distinction between the *livre d'artiste* and the artists' book that the French poet Stéphane Mallarmé is often referred to as the major predecessor of the artists' book.[43] The contribution that Mallarmé is credited for is his experimental approach to poetry, most notably in his work *Un coup de dès jamais n'abolira le hazard*.[44] With this work text was placed on the page in an experimental manner, conventional structure of the page and the book were thereby abolished [1.1]. As the reader had significant influence on the sense that was made from the text, chance elements were introduced while the reader was repositioned as a co-author.[45] As Bloch notes, Mallarmé turned the book format into an analytical whole, in which the physical qualities of the book are an extension of the letter, thus an essential as a signifier.[46] The contribution of Mallarme is thus mainly his analytical focus on the book and its content as a semiotic system on itself. In a correspondence with Edgar Degas, Mallarmé wrote: '*My dear Degas, poems are made of words, not ideas*'.[47] As Barthes would later put it, Mallarmé showed that '*[…] it is language that speaks, not the author*'.[48]

In a similar fashion Drucker mentions Mallarmé as one of the defining contributors to the intellectual history of the book. Drucker widens the narration offered by Bloch by placing Mallarmé in a succession of artists starting with predecessors William Blake and William Morris, and positioning Mallarmé along some of his contemporaries.[49] Along with *Un coup de dès jamais n'abolira le hazard* Drucker stresses the importance of *Le Livre*.[50] Though never realized, notes reveal that Mallarmé envisioned *Le Livre* as a book consisting of loose

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[41] Phillpot, *Books*, 101.
[42] Drucker, *Century*, 69-70.
[43] Mallarmé was actively involved with the tradition of the *livre d'artists,* creating refined and richly decorated publications in collaboration with artists such as Edouard Manet, Odilon Redon en Théo van Rysselberghe.
[44] Arnar, Anna Sigridur. *Stéphane Mallarmé, the Artists' Book, and the Transformation of Print Culture.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011: 2-4. Translation: '*A throw of the dice will never abolish chance*'. *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hazard* was first published in 1987 in the magazine *Cosmopolis.* The work was then posthumously published in 1914 following instructions of Mallarmé.
[45] Arnar, 2-5.
[46] Bloch, Susi R.. "The Book Stripped Bare". *Artists' Books: A Critical Anthology and Sourcebook.* Ed. J. Lyons. New York: Visual Studies Workshop Press, 1985: 134-135.
[47] Dworkin, Craig. "The Fate of Echo". *Against Expression.* Eds. C. Dworkin and K. Goldsmith. Evanston: Northwestern UP, 2010: xxiii-liv.
[48] Barthes, Roland. "The Death of the Author". *Aspen 5+6.* Ed. B. O'Doherty. New York: Roaring Fork Press, 1967: paragraph 3.
[49] Drucker, *Century*, 21-37.
[50] Ibid., 36.

LE MAÎTRE
                                              hors d'anciens calculs
                                              où la manœuvre avec l'âge oubliée

surgi
    inférant
                                                      jadis il empoignait la barre

            de cette conflagration   à ses pieds
                                                de l'horizon unanime

                    que se   prépare
                                                s'agite et mêle
                                                    au poing qui l'étreindrait
            comme on menace   un destin et les vents

    l'unique Nombre qui ne peut pas   être un autre

                                                Esprit
                                                    pour le jeter
                                                        dans la tempête
                                                    en reployer la division et passer fier

                        hésite
                        cadavre par le bras écarté du secret qu'il détient

plutôt
    que de jouer
        en maniaque chenu
            la partie
            au nom des flots

                            un   envahit le chef
                                        coule en barbe soumise

                    naufrage cela   direct de l'homme

                                            sans nef
                                                n'importe
                                                    où vaine

1.1 Stéphane Mallarmé, *Un Coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hazard,* 1897

sheets, thereby increasing chance elements and loosening the grip of the author. Accoring to his notes, Mallarmé envisioned the reading of *Le Livre* as a collective, temporal, performative action.[51]

Whereas the experiments with typography apparent in many avant-garde publications echo the work of Mallarmé,[52] the importance of Mallarmé gained a more elaborated succession in the work of Marcel Duchamp, as argued by Anna Sigrídur Arnar. She points at Duchamp's loose leaved *The Box* (1914) and *Boîte Verte* (1936), which mirror *Le Livre*, and to notes that Duchamp acknowledged his interest in Mallarmé for his strive towards an '*intellectual expression rather than an animal expression*'.[53]

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[51] Arnar, 2-5.
[52] Bloch, 135-139.
[53] Arnar, 283-285.

It is important to note – also in viewing the efforts of the historical avant-gardes – that the reception of Mallarmé slowly started to take off after the First World War, and due to its hermetic qualities was contentiously received. It was only after the Second World War that his work gained any significant popularity.[54] It is during this period that the artists' book emerged and numerous clear references to Mallarmé appear, for example by Belgian artist Marcel Broodthaers, and – as will be elaborated upon later – by Phyllis Johnson, founder of Aspen Magazine, and Dan Graham. Carrión would also refer to Mallarmé in his theoretical texts as a central figure. The reference to Mallarmé is thus particularly of interest in historicizing the artists' book as the artists had a significant influence on artists associated with the artists' book during the post war period.

The same could be argued of Duchamp, who's reception particularly in the United States mainly emerged in the 1950s and 1960s, and had a decisive impact on artists associated with the artists' book. For example in 1963 a retrospective of Duchamp was organized in Pasadena, a suburb of Los Angeles. Edward Ruscha, who lived in Pasadena at the time, was heavily influenced by Duchamp and published his first and most iconic artists' book in 1963.[55] It is his work that serves as Druckers prime example of her notion of the 'democratic multiple' as we will see.

1.2 The Artists' Book as a 'Democratic Multiple'
In her essay on the 'democratic multiple', Drucker takes the artists Dieter Roth and Ruscha as a starting point for the artists' book. Characterized by the fact that the book became a major aspect of their activity,[56] Roth and Ruscha are used as two opposing examples of the new movement. This maneuver is adopted from Phillpot. In his overview of artists' positions towards the book, he refers to Roth and Ruscha and juxtaposes the two.[57] This juxtaposition is used by Drucker to oppose two distinct attitudes, and to describe her notion of the 'democratic multiple' that – however default – would be the defining paradigm that fueled the proliferation of artists' books.[58]

Roth – a Swiss artist associated with neo-dada and concrete poetry – is credited for

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[54] Ibid., 17-19.
[55] Buchloh, Benjamin. "Conceptual Art 1962 – 1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions". *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology.* Eds. A. Alberro and B. Stimson. Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1999: 521.
[56] Whereas Roth made books throughout his career, the production of artists' books was Ruscha's main activity only during the 1960s and 1970s, after which he shifted his prime focus to painting.
[57] Phillpot, *Books*, 97-106.
[58] Drucker, *Century,* 72.

his experiments with the formal and physical qualities of the book as an object, thereby exploring the possibilities of the artists' book as an autonomous whole. An early example of his works is his *Kinderbuch,* on which he started in 1954, and which was published in 1957 [1.2]. The square, spiral bound book has pages with colored geometrical shapes, some of the pages have holes or are transparent. Flicking through the book, the pages visually differ continuously in relation to each other. Another example that is given by Drucker is his *Daily Mirror Books,* which he made from 1961 onwards [1.3]. For these works he cut newspaper pages into squares bound them as a book, thereby creating different modes of reading and viewing. The dimensions of these works varied from a more usual size to thick stacks of tiny squares.[59] Apart from making books, Roth also made a number of book objects, a well-known example in this case is his *Literaturwurst* (1961)*,* a sausage made by following a recipe for sausages using water, gelatin and spices, but replacing the meat with cut-up newspapers.

1.2 Dieter Roth, *Children's Book (Kinderbuch),* 1957.

While Roth often sought to create books that had the aesthetic of industrial produced books, most of his works are laboriously produced and exist in small, signed and numbered editions

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[59] Phillpot, *Books,* 102-103.

published and distributed through a wide range of publishers throughout Europe.[60] Phillpot points out that his works are associated with the upcoming market for 'multiples', a primarily European endeavor, which was perhaps ideologically but certainly market driven, and catered for less-wealthy collectors. Drucker points at this notion, underscoring its democratic impulse.[61] It was only during the late 1960's that Roth started to publish some of his works in editions that exceeded a thousand copies thereby – theoretically – escaping the association of his artists' books with the creation of limited edition multiples.[62]

1.3 Dieter Roth, *Collected Works (Daily Mirror Book),* 472 pp., 23x 17 cm., edition: 1000 1970.

In opposition to Roth, Ruscha deployed the book as an apparent neutral carrier of his conceptual photographic sequences. In 1963 he published the work *Twentysix Gasoline Stations,* which is a small paperback containing black and white pictures of twenty-six different gasoline stations casually shot by Ruscha from his car while traveling from Los Angeles to Oklahoma City, and captioned with their name and location [1.4]. The photographs are simple snapshots rather than fine-art photographs, and according to Ruscha are not interesting on themselves, the modest size of his book could even be argued to obstruct a proper examination of the photographs themselves. The photographs were made only after Ruscha decided on the title of the book, and thus became secondary to the idea of the book itself. Ruscha openly denied interest in the medium, in gasoline stations and in the presence of a message or meaning in his work. This statement is reinforced by the fact that for his later *Thirtyfour Parking Lots* (1967) he did not even shoot the pictures himself, as they were taken by a specialized aerial photographer after Ruscha's instructions, thereby splitting

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[60] Ibid.,101-102.
[61] Drucker, 71-72.
[62] Phillpot, *Books,* 101-102.

mental and physical labor. He stated to be primarily interested in showing facts, the pictures are to be valued for their evidential character rather than their aesthetic qualities. In addition, Ruscha deliberately selected the pictures that were the least eccentric.[63] It neglected the tradition of the photo-book and that of the importance of the skilled artist.

1.4 Edward Ruscha, *Twentysix Gasoline Stations,* 48 pp. 17.9 x 14 cm 1964.

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[63] Rawlinson, Mark. "'Like Trading Dust for Oranges': Ed Ruscha and Things of Interest". *Various Small Books.* Eds. J. Brouws, W. Burton and H. Zschiegner. Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 201: 14-15.

Not only did these books, which were printed in large editions, become Ruscha's primary vehicle for art,[64] Ruscha also established great visibility for books within the art world. After *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*, Ruscha produced a number of other photo books in a virtually unchanging corporate style and the same literalness, repetitive minimalism, scarce use of language and tongue-in-cheek choice of subject matter such as *Various Small Fires* (1964), *Some Los Angeles Apartments* (1965) and *Nine Swimming Pools and a broken glass* (1968) [1.5]. For the most part, the titles reveal just what the books contain. Ruscha has stated never to have been aiming at the books being allegorical or meaningful in any such way.

1.5 Some artists' books by Edward Ruscha.

Their simplicity makes the works both enigmatic and tongue-in-cheek. The nonchalance or deliberate amateurism in his books is deployed consistently and thoroughly. This for example shows in the fact that he consciously misspells double-digit numbers, and *Thirtyfour Parking Lots* only features twenty-eight pictures. As will become clear, the

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[64] I here point at the distinction between primary and secondary material. Apart from the fact that creating books became Ruscha's main preoccupation for a period of time, the photographs of Ruscha were meant to be communicated through the books rather than to be printed, framed and hung on gallery walls. The books thus became primary material, rather than secondary.

negation of aesthetics, the division between mental and physical labor, the focus on communicating factual information and the focus on circulation are elements that appear in Ruscha's work, which would become central to conceptual art.

While in Ruscha's works, the book is deployed as an apparent neutral carrier of his photographs, the book as a form is in fact an essential and conscious choice, and are only way to properly experience the works. With its ordinary and economic design the books could be published and distributed on a massive scale. In fact, their simplicity is exactly what distinguished them from the rare book or limited edition art book, and made them more comparable to commercial post-war printing.[65] While his first edition was numbered, Ruscha soon stopped signing and numbering his editions thereby leaving the *livre d'artiste* and multiple tradition behind. The books appeared in frequently repeated and large print runs, and their market value did not exceed a few dollars. The book as an accessible and effective means of communicating facts became central to the work. Not only did the appropriation of Ruscha's work become a genre on itself,[66] it is the work of Ruscha that, as Drucker argues, became the idiom for a new generation of artists' books and became paradigmatic for the notion of an artists' book as a 'democratic multiple'.[67]

Phillpot points out that – ironically – the work of Ruscha seems not to have been responding to a democratic impulse, which he centers within the '*street politics of the late sixties [that was] democratic, even socialist*'. While Phillpot does not explicitly clarify this statement, arguments that support this claim can be made. Ruscha frequently published and distributed his books in direct association with galleries, thereby expressing no effort to escape the exclusive gallery system. In addition, Ruscha's subject matter is not socially engaged or directly related to 'street politics' that Phillpot here refers to. Phillpot nevertheless takes Ruscha's work as a prime example of the book as a repeatable artwork that can assimilated within culture with great ease and can thus act as an effective agent.[68] Similarly, it is through the work of Ruscha that Drucker comes to describe this notion as '*the idea of the book as a democratic, affordable, available multiple in which an artist is able to produce a vision and disseminate it widely*'. Drucker goes on stating that '*this idea had many ideals, and hopes for transforming the art world and wider worlds as arenas in which artists could*

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[65] Drucker, *Century,* 77.
[66] Moineau, Jean-Claude. "After Michalis Pichler after Edward Ruscha after Hokusai" *Michalis Pichler: Thirteen Years: The Materialization of Ideas From 2002 to 2015.* Eds. A. Gilbert and C. Krümmel. New York: Printed Matter Inc., Leipzich: Spector Books, 2015: 38. Moineau states that the appropriation of Ruscha's work was already started by himself, as many of his works are variations on his earlier works.
[67] Drucker, *Century,* 72.
[68] Phillpot, *Books*, 100.

operate without regard for commodification of their work'.[69] In her essay Drucker mentions a large number of artists' books as examples, concluding that the nature of the 'democratic multiple' is '*a book which is able to pass into the world with the fewest obstacles between conception and production, production and distribution.*'[70]

The features that formed the attraction of the book, and on which the ideal of the artists' book as a 'democratic multiple' is based, are summed up by Richard Kostelanetz , who states the book is cheap in production and distribution, easy to carry, the content is accessible, the form is compact, the editions are big, it can be offered in bulk rather than unique objects, it is not commercially attractive and the artists can have great control over the production of the work.[71] Lippard refers to Pat Steir, who makes a similar enumeration: '*1. portable, 2. durable, 3. inexpensive, 4. intimate, 5. non-precious, 6. replicable, 7. historical, and 8. universal*'.[72] As some of these properties can be easily questioned, it becomes more clear that these protagonists of the artists' book were driven ideologically. In a recent lecture, Phillpot expresses his awareness and present day skepticism of the idea of the 'democratic multiple' based on its features of being '*art that is accessible [...] not signed, not numbered, not made precious in some artificial way, but just reprintable*'.[73] Lyons adds the artist-controlled nature of the artists' book as a democratic impulse, thereby pointing out the possibility of independence from the traditional museum and gallery structure.[74]

The ability to independently propagate an artistic vision on a massive scale however does not necessarily make the book 'democratic' as such. Defining the artists' book as 'democratic' suggest a political dimension that is not explicitly defined by Drucker. In a later essay however Drucker points at another quality of the book, namely the potential of the artists' book to introduce unorthodox material through a '*Trojan horse of ordinary appearance*'.[75] By taking a closer look at conceptual artists, who made excessive use of the artists' book, it will become apparent that this 'democratic' aspect is an attempt to thoroughly revise the relationship between viewer, author an intermediary to establish a notion of art that is not restricted to a specialized segment of cultural workers, spaces and public. The artists'

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[69] Drucker, *Century,* 78.
[70] Ibid., 88.
[71] Kostelanetz, Richard. "Book Art". *Artists' Books: A Critical Anthology and Sourcebook.* Ed. J. Lyons. New York: Visual Studies Workshop Press, 1985: 27-28.
[72] Lippard, Lucy. "Conspicuous Consumption: New Artists' Books". *Artists' Books: A Critical Anthology and Sourcebook.* Ed. J. Lyons. New York: Visual Studies Workshop Press, 1985: 49-50.
[73] Phillpot, Clive. "Multiple Future". *Amsterdam Art/Book Fair.* [video file] May 14, 2011. Accessed on October 7, 2016. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aMMPJ-UE_dc.
[74] Lyons, 7.
[75] Drucker, Johanna. "The Myth of the Democratic Multiple". *Figuring the Word: Essays on Books, Writing, and Visual Poetics.* New York City: Granary Books, 1998: 178.

book, in its cheapness and multiplicity, proved very suitable for this purpose, however other means are also adopted to serve similar ends.

It is also this potential where the influence of Mallarmé seems to fit in. While not aiming for a large and cheap editions to reach a broad audience, Arnar argues that the idea of the book as a catalyst of social change was in fact key to the work of Mallarmé.[76] For Mallarmé, this change could be initiated by the process of reading. Arnar argues that Mallarmé aimed to empower the reader as an independent creative agent.[77] One of the central claims Arnar makes in her book is that Mallarmé constituted poetry as one of the few arenas in which democracy could be fully realized,[78] thereby focusing on collective and democratic reading and drawing inspiration from mass media.

During the 1960s and 1970s the artists' book was indeed embraced with great optimism. Many artists' books were made, for example by artists associated with conceptual art such as Hanne Darboven, Douglas Huebler, Robert Barry, Joseph Kosuth, Vito Acconci, John Baldessari and Hans peter Feldmann, some of whom started deploying the artists' book continuously throughout their careers. LeWitt stated in 1976 that *'books are the best medium for many artists working today. […] Its the Desire of artists that their ideas be understood by as many people as possible. Books make it easier to accomplish this'.*[79] That same year Lucy Lippard wrote her text *The Artists' Book Goes Public,* in which she stated that the artists' book offered the cheapest possibility of communicating artistic ideas. As Lippard argued, independent publishing of artists' books would make art-centers like New York or Paris unnecessary, as the art world would decentralize. The possibility to own an artwork would become as accessible as owning a magazine, and would therefore also rule out the critic.[80] While she described some difficulties in distribution, she ends her essay with undeniable optimism: *'One day I'd like to see artists' books ensconced in supermarkets, drugstores, and airports and, not incidentally, to see artists able to profit economically from broad communication rather than the lack of it'.*[81] Together Lippard and LeWitt founded Printed Matter, which is *'dedicated to the dissemination, understanding and appreciation of artists' books'* ever since.[82]

Writing with historical distance, Drucker is skeptical of the notion and states that it

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[76] Arnar, 15.
[77] Ibid., 15.
[78] Ibid., 26.
[79] LeWitt, *Books*, 236.
[80] Lippard, *Goes Public*, 47.
[81] Ibid., 45-48.
[82] Printed Matter, https://www.printedmatter.org/what-we-do/history

was based on a number of myths, and concludes by stating that '*in the affluent era of the 1960s, still booming from the post-war economic rush, it was possible to have such a vision*'. A myth however, is not necessary a lie, and the perhaps too high hopes for the artists' book did have a significant impact, and still has a attraction today. This myth was however not an ideal isolated to artists and bookmakers. Drucker takes the work of Roth and most notably Ruscha as founders of the artists' book. As Roth is associated with fluxus and concrete poetry, whereas Ruscha is largely associated with pop art and conceptual art. Thereby her notion of the 'democratic multiple' already signifies a great art historical complexity. As I will argue, the development of the artists' book as a 'democratic' art form is closely intertwined in at least two major developments that were simultaneously embraced with equal optimism: conceptual art and the media environment that changed through de development of information and communication technologies. How exactly did these shifts relate to each other?

1.3 The Promise of Conceptual Art

The idiom developed by Ruscha was heavily deployed by conceptual artists, and the notion of the 'democratic multiple' is paralleled by the revolutionary discourse that dominated the reception of conceptual art in its early stages. To understand the optimism with which the artists' book was embraced for its 'democratic' potential, it is fruitful to take a closer look at the optimistic discourse that dominated conceptual art. This is of further relevance in the broader scope of this research, as Carrión was well aware of the recent history of conceptual art and its democratic discourse, as well as its relation to the artists' book. While Carrión distanced himself from the movement and even denied the importance of conceptual art in the development of the artists' book, I will argue that the legacy of conceptual art is at the core of many of the methods deployed by Carrión in his works.

Conceptual art as was not a movement created by a homogeneous group of like-minded artists. This makes it difficult to pin down precisely what is meant by the term. Artists that are often mentioned in this context did not have a shared agenda, and even took positions contradicting each other.[83] Nevertheless, conceptual art has been exhaustively historicized by scholars since its onset. Within this research the work done by Van Winkel will prove of vital importance. In his research on conceptual art Van Winkel points out that conceptual art is most commonly framed between 1965 and 1975, reaching a climax between

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[83] Buchloh, 519.

1968 and 1969.[84] For the artists involved, he bases his focus on three seminal exhibitions that aimed at canonizing conceptual art. His vision is thus based around a number of mainly North-American and European – especially British, French and German – artists.[85]

These choices are made to avoid working with a too broad and general scope. Within the current research Van Winkel offers an interesting and highly critical view on conceptual art, and as he moves from the historical to the contemporary touches upon the artists' book and its broader historical context. In addition he sets apart fundamental paradigms such as the revolutionary discourse of conceptual art, to which he is skeptical. It should however be noted that his view is reductive not only in geographical and quantitative terms as it projects conceptual art as a movement isolated in time and geography. It also ignores the ties between conceptual art and for example concrete poetry, minimalism and fluxus.[86] Major pivotal figures that operated within these overlapping tendencies are largely ignored, such as Vito Acconci who had a background in poetry and moved towards a conceptual and performative practice, and could thus prove an intersecting figure between the conceptual artists' book and poetry. Walter de Maria, who serves as a pivotal figure in fluxus, minimalist and conceptual practices, and created an extensive interdisciplinary oeuvre is left out altogether. Liz Kotz points out the important intersection of the linguistic dominance in visual arts and its intersection with poetry. The older model segmentation between painters and poets is hereby insufficient. She points out the interconnectedness between different media, categorizations and genres and thereby stresses the poetic background of Carl Andre and Vito Acconci.[87]

Despite its blind spots, the perspective taken by Van Winkel serves a purpose in this research as it includes a number of artists that have played a major role in the proliferation of the artists' book.[88] In addition to that, and more importantly, Van Winkel deduces three dominant notions within the historiography of conceptual art that I will argue are essential for the connection between conceptual art and the book: firstly the non-visual, anti-visual or dematerialized nature of conceptual art, secondly the idea of conceptual art as a revolutionary

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[84] Van Winkel, 28-29.

[85] Ibid., 76-77. Van Winkel takes three major survey exhibitions as the 'canon' of conceptual art. These took place in Leverkusen (1969), Paris (1989) and Los Angeles (1995).

[86] A number of developments are accredited to conceptual art and the development of the artists' book whereas they are preceded by earlier movements. For example, the reduced primacy of the artistic gesture and the division of mental and physical labor can clearly be found in minimalist work. The use of the 'readymade' had a considerable influence on conceptual art, which was thereby heavily influenced by dada and neo-dada or fluxus tendencies.

[87] Kotz, 10.

[88] Van Winkel, 76-78. For example Ed Ruscha, Dan Graham, Sol LeWitt, John Baldessari, Lawrence Weiner, Joseph Kosuth, the Art & Language Group, Stanley Brouwn, Hanne Darboven and Marcel Broodthaers.

movement that failed, and finally bureaucratic tendencies of conceptual art.[89] While all three of these notions parallel the evolvement of conceptual art, it is the second notion that most notably resonates with the artists' book as 'democratic multiple'.

As will become clear Van Winkel points out the a-priori impossibility of immaterial art, and is highly skeptical of the productivity of the revolutionary focus in the reception of conceptual art. In addition it should be noted that the idea of conceptual art as a revolutionary movement that failed is most notably described by Stimson. This 'revolution' implied mostly a revolution within art, and its reception and distribution through a new conception of art and authorship, thereby revising the social position of art, the artist, its distribution and its reception, rather than aiming to portray conceptual art as militant organization that can be positioned within (geo-) political power struggles. Conceptual art nevertheless coincided with a number of social and political revolution. Stimson therefore argues conceptual art allows the rare opportunity to evaluate the position of art within society, and places conceptual art along other artistic developments that coincided with political events such as those of 1789, 1848 and 1917, and the work of Jacques-Louis David, Gustave Courbet and Vladimir Tatlin.[90]

The move away from the visual is one of the three essential genealogies of conceptual art, as pointed out by Van Winkel. This is characterized by a shift towards the concept of the artwork rather than its visual or physical form. This shift is theorized by LeWitt when he in 1967 wrote the text *Paragraphs on Conceptual Art*, stating that '*The idea becomes the machine that makes the art*'[91] thereby detaching the concept and the execution of the piece, and freeing the work of the artist from that of the craftsman. LeWitt made this move in order to eliminate arbitrary and the subjective,[92] thereby distancing himself from the positivistic critical discourse set by Clement Greenberg to promote the emotive formalism of abstract expressionism. By shifting the attention to an idea, LeWitt states that '*all the steps in the process are of importance. The idea itself, even if not made visual, is as much a work of art as any finished product*'.[93]

LeWitt stresses the importance of the physical realization of an idea, proposing a synthetic whole existing between the idea and the physical and visual presence of it. Thereby

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[89] Ibid., 32.
[90] Stimson, xxxiix – xxxix.
[91] LeWitt, Sol. "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art". *Sol Lewitt* Ed. B. Gross. Zurich: JRP Ringier, 2012: 208.
[92] Ibid., 209.
[93] Ibid., 209.

LeWitt underlines the essential difference between pure logics and the aesthetic experience.[94] The physical form should however be dictated by the idea, which should be executed in the medium most suitable,[95] he thus disconnects his practice with any specific medium, and formulates a dialectical position towards the positivist discourse that dominated the post war era through abstract expressionists and most notably Greenberg, and which had come to a tautological endpoint.[96]

With the execution being a perfunctory affair, the work of LeWitt could in theory be redone by anyone, and exist on multiple sites at a time, thus suggesting an unlimited public.[97] A similar democratizing element is noted by Alexander Alberro in the work of Lawrence Weiner, who presents the art object in the form of a general statement, and is equally valid communicated verbally or materially documented,[98] as Weiner stated, '*the work need not be built*'.[99] Joseph Kosuth and the Art & Language group would regard obstructing traditional categories as painting and sculpture their main concern, and propose what Alberro refers to as '*linguistic conceptualism*'.[100]

The emphasis on the concept rather than the execution would lead Lippard and John Chandler to predict a complete 'dematerialization' of art in 1968, in which the '*The studio is again becoming a study, [this] may result in the object's becoming wholly obsolete*'.[101] In similar fashion Alberro describes how the reductivism '*push[es] the conventional objectness of the artwork towards the threshold of a complete dematerialization*'.[102] This dematerialization has become a paradigm and is described by Buchloh as a '*rigorous elimination of visuality and traditional definitions of representation*' that was characterized by a replacement of the object with its linguistic definition. This is seen by Buchloh as an assault on the status of the object, its visuality, commodity status and form of distribution.[103]

This discourse of dematerialization became very dominant, Van Winkel points out that the '*obsession with the pure idea*' led a great number of artists to emphasize mental labor while delegating the physical counterpart. The realization of a work thus became more

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[94] Buchloh, 516-517.
[95] LeWitt, *Paragraphs*, 208-210.
[96] Buchloh, 517.
[97] Alberro, Alexander. "Reconsidering Conceptual Art, 1966-1977". *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology.* Eds. A. Alberro and B. Stimson. Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1999: xx.
[98] Ibid., xxii.
[99] Weiner, Lawrence. "Statements". *Art in Theory 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas.* Eds. C. Harrison and P. Wood. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2003: 894.
[100] Alberro, *Reconsidering*, xvii-xviii.
[101] Chandler, John, and Lucy Lippard. "The Dematerialization of Art". *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology.* Eds. A. Alberro and B. Stimson. Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1999: 46.
[102] Alberro, *Reconsidering*, xvii.
[103] Buchloh, 515.

dependent on the efforts of a third party,[104] thereby the artists incorporated chance and participation in their work as formal elements. Paradoxically the physical qualities of the work were of vital importance nevertheless, as argued by Van Winkel,[105] he argues that conceptual art is not based on the refusal of visuality but on the primacy of information, making the notion of visuality irrelevant.[106]

The term 'dematerialization' is also problematic as it is reductive of the heterogeneity of works that subvert the conventional art-object. As Kotz describes a more general linguistic turn, which emerged mainly during the 1960s and – while dominant in conceptual art – cuts across categories and movements and coincides with a more general shift in the Humanities as a whole.[107] Rather than a 'dematerialization', this move implied a 'rematerialization of language'.[108] This linguistic turn was fueled by a thinking in structures, and aimed at showing how structures of thought conceal rather than reveal reality and thereby direct our thought and action. Simon Morley states this structural move, reacted to the emotive existentialist discourse so fundamental for abstract expressionism and the phenomenological discourse that soon encapsulated minimalism.[109] This structuralism was signified by a general shift away from the author onto a system – semiotic or otherwise – that generates meaning. This system was thus by no means neutral. Barthes, influenced by Marxist theory, for example sought to reveal how mass-media disguised social and political realities, while a subversive structural reading could expose these 'myths'.[110]

The described negation of aesthetics, and a general linguistic turn supposedly made conceptual artists less dependent of the institutionalized gallery system, as the information often could be better communicated through more accessible media. The artists' book often proved a suitable format to produce and distribute works. Similarly, magazines became an important platform for conceptual artists, and became to replace the gallery. Many magazines were founded such as *Artforum* (1962)*, Aspen Magazine* (1965-1971)*, 0 to 9* (1967-1976) and *Avalanche* (1970-1976). As Allen points out, '*you read it because it told you what was going on partly because so much of what was going on was not to be seen in the galleries*'.[111] These magazines did not only publish articles about art or reproductions of works, for many works

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[104] The idea was for example communicated through event scores, used in a vast variety of cases by musical composers, fluxus artists and conceptual artists.
[105] Van Winkel, 111-112.
[106] Ibid., 12.
[107] Kotz, 7-8.
[108] Dworkin, xxxvi.
[109] Morley, 139.
[110] Ibid., 140.
[111] Allen, 1.

they became the primary exhibition site.

As pointed out by Van Winkel the notion of a 'dematerialized' art form coincides with a vision of conceptual art as a revolution that ultimately failed. Van Winkel takes this as the second paradigm in the historicization of conceptual art.[112] As Kosuth puts it, conceptual art was '*the art of the Vietnam war era*'. This view is critically examined by Stimson in his text *The Promise of Conceptual art.*[113] By aligning conceptual art along the emergence of the Black Panthers, hippies, women's liberation and gay power advocates, Stimson argues conceptual art occupies a place in a pivotal moment in history of importance similar to 1789, 1848 and 1917, and therefore provides the occasion to evaluate on the social and political role of radical art. He goes on to describe conceptual art as a movement that '*successfully renegotiated its place in social order, gaining new authority for art and artists in the process and, at least momentarily, redefining the social function of art*'.[114]

Stimson states that conceptual art set out to recast its own institutions, thereby fiercely rejecting the established discourse of formalism, targeting Greenberg and Michael Fried and attempting to overthrow the power of the critic and art historian who, as LeWitt put it, is a result of the notion of '*the artist [as] a kind of ape that has to be explained.*'[115] Stimson argues these revolutionary ambitions were realized for a short but critical moment by the efforts of amongst others Seth Siegelaub.[116]

As a gallerist and publisher Siegelaub published a number of artists' book, and organized various exhibitions in which the catalogue was of significant importance, and sometimes was even the only means through which the exhibition could be viewed. Attempting to radically change the relationship between the author and the viewer, he relied heavily on existing means of communication as possible. This enabled him to organize exhibitions that were geographically decentralized.[117] His first exhibition that fully reliant on a publication was the book that became known as the *Xerox-book* (1968),[118] which contains contributions of seven artists [1.6]. Each artist was assigned twenty five pages to show a work. The exhibition was meant to be produced on a Xerox copy machine, a new technology

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[112] Van Winkel, 32.
[113] Stimson, xxxiix.
[114] Ibid., xxxix.
[115] Stimson, xxxiix-xli.
[116] Stimson, xi.
[117] Notable in this respect is the exhibition called *July, August, September* (1969), that took place on eleven different locations throughout Europe and the United States and Mexico. The only way to experience the full exhibition was through the catalogue.
[118] This title does not appear on the publication at all, as far as the title is concerned, the cover of the publication is left blank, the names of the participating artists are mentioned on the spine in alphabetical order: Carl Andre, Robert Barry, Douglas Huebler, Joseph Kosuth, Sol LeWitt, Robert Morris and Lawrence Weiner.

that was depersonalized the production process and contested aesthetical norms.[119] Siegelaub did no longer need a gallery space, as he stated '*my gallery is the world now.*'*[120]* With his innovative distribution system Stimson argues, Siegelaub actively renegotiated the relations between artists, intermediaries and the audience. Conceptual art thus created a system that was – in theory – more democratic as it was capable of a broad and efficient distribution.[121]

1.6 Seth Siegelaub (ed.), *Andre, Barry, Huebler, Kosuth, LeWitt, Morris, Weiner* (Xerox Book), 21 x 28 cm., 1968.

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[119] Alberro, Alexander. *Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity*. Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2003: 135-150. Conform to his business-like attitude, Siegelaub attempted to persuade the Xerox company to facilitate the production. This proposal was neglected, on top of that, it would be more expensive than a regular print. The Xerox-book was thus never made on a Xerox machine.
[120] Ibid., 131-132.
[121] Stimson, xli.

Important contributions in testing the possibilities of using mass media as an alternative distribution channel were made by Dan Graham. Starting in 1966 he published a number of works that were specifically meant for magazines. He started this practice after he ran a gallery through which he became acquainted with minimalists and conceptual artists such as Ruscha, Lewitt, Dan Flavin and Donald Judd. After seeing how the readymade lights of Flavin gained meaning through the gallery context, Graham noted how magazines could in fact operate as an extension of the gallery space through the symbiotic relationship between art magazines and galleries as an extension of the gallery space. As the magazines wrote about galleries, and the galleries paid them through advertisements.[122] In a statement for the Art Workers' Coalition he critiqued this system as benefiting galleries, magazines and dealers, but not artists themselves.[123] Graham later made a number of works that were meant for magazines outside of the art context, thereby seeking to reverse this Duchampian gesture by placing his artworks in non-art contexts through magazine advertizing, rather than placing readymade objects in an art context. His work *Homes For America* (1966-1967) for example was meant for the popular magazine *Esquire.* The work *Schema* (1966) plays with the magazine context, as it concerns a poem that should be written by the editor of a magazine, thereby creating a site specific work in a magazine using its organizational structure as content [1.7]. The scheme functions as a score dictating what should be included in the poem, which is basically an inventory of the specific features of the page on which the poem is placed. The poem can never be completed as the writing of the poem itself changes the page it is dependent on.

One magazine Graham contributed to, and which was particularly experimental, was *Aspen: Magazine in a Box,* a loose leafed magazine, which ran between 1965 and 1971 and had ten issues that vastly expanded the notion of the multimedia magazine by including flexi discs, booklets, sound recordings films, souvenirs and other objects.[124] A great variety of topics were broached, for example the third issue was a pop-art issue edited by Andy Warhol, Fiore made an issue about McLuhan and new media, Graham and George Maciunas made an issue about fluxus and Angus and Hetty MacLise made an issue about psychedelics.[125]

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[122] Graham, Dan. "My Works for Magazine Pages: a History of Conceptual Art". *Themes and Movements: Conceptual Art.* Ed. P. Osborne. New York: Phaidon Press Inc., 2011: 246-247.
[123] Allen, 64.
[124] *Aspen* was founded by Philis Johnson in1964. From the third issue onwards promising artists and theorists co-edited each issue.
[125] Van Gageldonk, Maarten. "Multimedia in the Pre-Digital Age: Aspen Magazine (1965-1971) and the Digital Magazine Revolution". *TS: Tijdschrift voor tijdschriftstudies* 27 (2010): 49-54.

Schema for a set of pages whose component variants are specifically published as individual pages in various magazines and collections. In each printed instance, it is set in its final form (so it defines itself) by the editor of the publication where it is to appear, the exact data used to correspond in each specific instance to the specific fact(s) of its published appearance. The following schema is entirely arbitrary; any might have been used, and deletions, additions or modifications for space or appearance on the part of the editor are possible.

SCHEMA:

(Number of)	adjectives
(Number of)	adverbs
(Percentage of)	area not occupied by type
(Percentage of)	area occupied by type
(Number of)	columns
(Number of)	conjunctions
(Depth of)	depression of type into surface of page
(Number of)	gerunds
(Number of)	infinitives
(Number of)	letters of alphabets
(Number of)	lines
(Number of)	mathematical symbols
(Number of)	nouns
(Number of)	numbers
(Number of)	participles
(Perimeter of)	page
(Weight of)	paper sheet
(Type)	paper stock
(Thinness of)	paper
(Number of)	prepositions
(Number of)	pronouns
(Number of point)	size type
(Name of)	typeface
(Number of)	words
(Number of)	words capitalized
(Number of)	words italicized
(Number of)	words not capitalized
(Number of)	words not italicized

1.7 Dan Graham, *Schema,* 1969, in: Art-Language 1 no. 1 (May 1969), p. 14.

Arguably the most ambitious issue was *Aspen 5+6* (1967), the minimalism issue, edited by Brian O'Doherty [1.8]. The issue is housed in a white box which contain essays, mini-sculpture of Tony Smith, the first artists' book of LeWitt, experimental recordings and a score of John Cage and a film reel containing films by László Moholy-nagy, Robert Rauschenberg and Robert Morris.[126]

1.8 Brian O'Doherty (ed.), *Aspen 5+6,* 1967, 21 x 21 cm. New York: Roaring Fork Press.

O'Doherty approached the medium as an exhibition through which the viewer could find its way in a non-linear manner. The white box, which contains the content of the issue, refers to a minimalist sculpture as well as the *White Cube* gallery space, the assumed neutrality of which O'Doherty later harshly critiqued.

An important contribution that appeared in *Aspen 5+6* was the essay *The Death of the Author* by Roland Barthes, which was published for the first time, and Duchamp's *The*

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[126] Allen, 52-57. The magazine suffered from a constant lack of funds, for this reason issues were published on a highly irregular basis. Especially *Aspen 5+6* stretched the financial possibilities. Barthes was never paid for his now famous contribution to the magazine.

Creative Act (1956)*, which was added both in printed text and a sound recording. Both texts plead for a more emancipated role of the viewer of the work of art. As Barthes argues, a text is a constellation of multiple sources that enter into dialogue and come together not in the author but in the reader. Therefore Barthes states: *'The birth of the reader must be ransomed by the death of the author'*.[127] Thereby not aiming to diminish the author completely, but to reexamine the power structures in which the author and the reader are staged.[128] This primacy of reception is paralleled by the statement made by LeWitt in his contribution, *Serial Project #1,* in which he states that '*the role of the artist is not to instruct the viewer, but to give them information. Whether the viewer understands this information is incidental to the artist; he cannot foresee the understanding of all his viewers.'*[129]

As Allen argues, this 'birth of the viewer' had been an issue in minimalist phenomenological models of spectatorship, to which *Aspen 5+6* refers to, however the importance of *Aspen 5+6* lies in its intersection between this phenomenological mode of perception, and the post-structuralist investigation of language, in which the meaning of a text is determined by the experience of the reader rather than the intention of the author.[130] In *Paragraphs on Conceptual Art,* LeWitt states that the idea can only be perceived by the artist and the public after it is executed.[131] He thereby essentially enables the author to be the viewer of his own work.

The idea of the reader as an active agent who creates meaning can be traced back to Mallarmé and becomes most prominent in *Le Livre.* In his essay, Barthes states that Mallarmé was the first to stress the necessity of overthrowing the tyrannical importance of the author.[132] The notes of Mallarmé were translated to English for the first time in 1964, and read by artists such as LeWitt and Graham – the latter artist, whose work *Schema* was included in *Aspen 5+6* – was strongly influenced by Mallarmé. In his article *The Book as Object* (1967) Graham explicitly mentions *Le Livre,* its non-linear structure and the active engagement of the reader. It was Graham who convinced O'Doherty to dedicate *Aspen 5+6* to Mallarmé.[133]

Stimson attributes the most radical accomplishment of conceptual art as a revolutionary movement to a group of artists in Rosario, Argentina, who reacted on their

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[127] Barthes, paragraph 7.
[128] Foucault, Michel. "What is an Author?". *The Art of Art History.* Ed. D. Preziosi. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009: 327-333.
[129] Allen, 57.
[130] Ibid., 53-54.
[131] LeWitt, *Paragraphs*, 208. '*Once given physical reality by the artist the work is open to the perception of all, including the artist. […] The work can be perceived only after it is completed.*'
[132] Barthes, paragraph 3.
[133] Allen, 53.

social and political context.[134] This context was the reality of Tucumán, a city struck by poverty due to military government policy, the government launched a largely fictional media campaign soon thereafter.[135] For Stimson their activism is a precursor for a number of artists involved in *synthetic*[136] propositions, thus making propositions that are not merely art related. In this respect artists are named such as Hans Haacke and Martha Rosler who had an outspoken socially engaged practice.[137]

Alberro makes the same reference more explicit in his texts *Reconsidering Conceptual Art, 1966-1977* and *A Media Art: Conceptualism in Latin America in the 1960s.* Pointing out that in many Latin-American counties the harsh economic and political climate triggered a number of conceptual art movements early on that focused on ideological structures as opposed to the post-structural and linguistic preoccupation common in the United States and Europe. Edouardo Costa, Raúl Escari, and Roberto Jacoby used the mass-media or 'informational circuits' as channels for their artistic practice. The artists aimed to attack the mystified media image, and to destroy bourgeois forms of art that reinforced individual property and personal pleasure of the unique art object. In *A Media Manifesto,* written as early as 1966, the artists stated that '*ultimately, information consumers are not interested in whether or not an exhibition occurs; it is only the image the media constructs of the artistic event that matters*'. The work – as Alberro points out – shows similarities to that of Graham's works for magazine pages in its use of mass-media.[138]

The efforts of Costa, Escari and Jacoby were followed up in 1968 by a group of artists founding the Grupo de Artistas de Vanguardia, related to the Confederación General del Trabajo (CGT), which with their action known as 'Tucumán Arde' sought subvert the official information and to heighten the political consciousness of the spectator. Alberro also points out the emphasis on participation in the work of artist Hélio Oiticica and the use of alternative circuits in the work of Cido Meireles.[139] Similar to Stimson, Alberro parallels this radical and activist practice to works of conceptual artists in the United States and Europe in the late

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[134] Stimon, xl
[135] Alberro, *Reconsidering*, xxxv-footnote 34.
[136] Kosuth, Joseph. "Art after Philosophy". *Themes and Movements: Conceptual Art.* Ed. P. Osborne. New York: Phaidon Press Inc., 2011: 232. The distinction between *analytic* and *synthetic* propositions is made by Joseph Kosuth, thereby following the distinction made by Immanuel Kant and evaluated by A.J. Ayer. Kosuth uses the distinction between *analytic* and *synthetic* propositions and referring to the former as a category for artworks which are valid only 'as art' and thus can only be appreciated if one is familiar with art, and opposing these to artworks that are gain validation through 'outside information'.
[137] Stimon, xl.
[138] Alberro, Alexander. "A Media Art: Conceptualism in Latin America in the 1960s". *Rewriting Conceptual Art.* Eds. J. Bird and M. Newman. London: Reaktion Books, 1999: 140-143.
[139] Alberro, *Reconsidering*, xxvii.

1960s and early 1970s, such as Daniel Buren, Hans Haacke and *The Fox* (1974-1976), published by Art & Language.[140]

The idea of conceptual art as a revolutionary movement has been important in the historicization of conceptual art, and has a clear parallel with the 'democratic' discourse that Drucker refers to. The emphasis on the revolutionary aspects of the movement however is problematic, states Van Winkel, as it seems incompatible with another prominent tendency in conceptual art, namely its bureaucratic preoccupation, which Van Winkel notes as the third genealogy in the historicization of conceptual art.

Conceptual artists deployed a bureaucratic aesthetic that consisted of filing, documenting and systematically organizing information. Another tendency through which this bureaucratic aesthetic becomes evident is the formation of coalitions and corporate identities by artists as a way of further negating the role of the artist as author. These tendencies were defined by Buchloh as a '*aesthetics of administration*'.[141] LeWitt would characterize the position of the artist as that of an office clerk: '*The serial artist [...] functions merely as a clerk cataloguing the results of his premise*'[142] and stated that conceptual art needed to be 'emotionally dry' in order to become mentally interesting.[143] Buchloh refers to Ruscha's books as a way of sampling and choosing from an infinity of objects with a 'negation of aesthetics', in the legacy of Duchamp and Cage.[144] This could however better be termed an 'aesthetics of indifference', as this 'negation of aesthetics' was carefully formulated in a visual language that moved the artist towards a practice that mirrors that of a designer. About his work *Statements,* which was published by Seth Siegelaub in 1968, Weiner stated that '*there is a design factor to make it look like a $1,95 book that you would buy'.*[145] It is notable that both LeWitt and Ruscha worked from a graphic design background.

However unconventional in an aesthetic sense, the imitation of the bureaucratic corporate and managerial methods show how conceptual art was not revolutionary but confirmative to institutional, corporate and managerial power.[146] Mal Ramsden and Michael Baldwin, members of Art and Language group stated in the 1980s that these bureaucratic aspects paved the way for the artist as businessman, and moved the artists in the role of

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[140] Ibid., xxiv-xxv.
[141] Buchloh, 525.
[142] Van Winkel, 40.
[143] LeWitt, *Paragraphs,* 208.
[144] Buchloh, 520-521.
[145] Van Winkel, 143-152.
[146] Ibid., 40.

curators and managers.[147] Thereby contradicting the revolutionary discourse associated with conceptual art.

In fact, Van Winkel's whole book is aimed at offering an alternative to the counter-cultural reading of conceptual art that he states created a one-sided view based on meager evidence. Van Winkel argues conceptual artists deliberately mimicked bureaucratic culture, thereby reflecting on external conditions and the artists dependence on it.[148] This notwithstanding, I would like to argue that even these bureaucratic tendencies were however motivated by an optimistic discourse that resonates strongly with conceptual art's revolutionary ideals, as well as the defining paradigm of the 'democratic multiple' fueling the artists' book. In addition, the revolutionary discourse continues to inspire many artists working with the artists' book.

1.4 The Promise of Information and Communications Technology

The above described shift from an object based conception of art towards a notion of art that is based on information, resonates strongly with the bureaucratic tendencies of conceptual art. It should be noted that the emergence of the artists' book and conceptual art not only manifested itself during the '*Vietnam war era'*, it also coincided with a shift towards a post-industrial society that focused heavily on information. As Van Winkel points out, Lippard's influential book *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object* was published in the same year as *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* of sociologist Daniel Bell.[149]

The possibilities of new information and communication technologies were embraced with an optimism that starkly contrasted the critical skepticism of Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer who amongst others dominated the debate on mass media. This optimism was propagated especially by Marshall McLuhan, who gained significant influence through his publications *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (1962)*, Understanding Media* (1964) and *The Medium is the Massage* (1968). His work is highly associative and of great pluriformity. In describing his theories he sometimes seeks support for acrobatic mental leaps by weaving in quotations of William Shakespeare, James Joyce or Lewis Carroll. This gave him a doubtful academic status, as did his media image, his film *The Medium is the Massage* was broadcast on NBC in 1967, and an interview with him appeared in *Playboy Magazine* in 1969. His ideas thereby however gained great popularity

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[147] Ibid., 41.
[148] Ibid., 54-55.
[149] Ibid., 12-13.

amongst countercultures of the 1960s and 1970s.

McLuhan argued that media[150] are no neutral carriers of information, but dictate the scale and content of human behavior, therefore McLuhan states that '*the medium is the message*'.[151] In addition they cultivate or 'massage' specific ways of thinking: '*All media work us over completely. They are so pervasive in their personal, political and social consequences that they leave no part of us untouched, unaffected, unaltered. The medium is the massage.*[152] He goes on stating that when medial environments change, men change.[153] After 3000 years of segregation electronic media now made way for a new era in which mass communication turns the world in a 'global village'. This revolution would have great consequences for about every facet of society and social order.[154] In the move towards a tribal or collective society, the book as a form would be thoroughly reviewed.

In *The Gutenberg Galaxy* McLuhan argues that the alphabet, the printing press and literacy has had a fundamental influence on Western culture. These technologies brought about fragmentation of the senses that ultimately gave way to a society based on individualization and specialization in which political, artistic and scientific domains were separated. The printing press laid the foundation of the Fordian-style assembly line mass production methods, and the novel is a product of capitalist society.[155]

The basis of this wide ranging convictions is that the book is an extension of the eye. The dominance of literacy implied the dominance of the eye. This statement is refined by McLuhan in *The Medium is the Massage,* in which he argues the book is based on a linearly of reading, thus stimulating a specific linearly rhetoric. Reasoning and empirical sciences are based on this – by now outdated – medial influence of the book.[156]

The book that McLuhan refers to here is the traditional codex-type book.[157] This form is argued to be outdated and in need of revision. McLuhan notes that other types of print

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[150] The term 'medium' is used by McLuhan in the broadest sense of the World and includes not only communications media but virtally every tool used by men.
[151] McLuhan, Marshall. *Mens en media.* Bilthoven: Ambo, 1971:14-17.
[152] McLuhan, Marshall and Quentin Fiore. *The Medium is the Massage.* London: Penguin Books, 2008: 26.
[153] Ibid., 41.
[154] McLuhan, *Mens en Media*, 16-17.
[155] McLuhan, Marshall. *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of typographic Man.* 1962. Reprint, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967: 124.
[156] McLuhan, *Massage*, 44-45. Notable is the reference made by Quentin Fiore to Lewiss Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (1865), a reference that would later also be made by Jack Burnham in the title of his text '*Alice's Head'.* This book plays excessively with the linear rhetoric here described by McLuhan by continuously degenerating time, space and causality. The book was adopted by counterculture during the time McLuhan's book came out, as Jefferson Airplane and The Beatles refered to it in their songs, as well as the band Boeing Duveen and Beautiful Soup in their band name and various songs.
[157] This is important to note in relation to the artists' book as it is exactly this type of book that artists' would reject in order to reinvent the book in a different way

media have different effects and recent experiments with typography have searched for new ways of using print. Two notable authors that McLuhan points out as pioneers in reinventing the book are Mallarmé – with whom McLuhan shares the interest in the newspaper page as a more varied form – and James Joyce.[158]
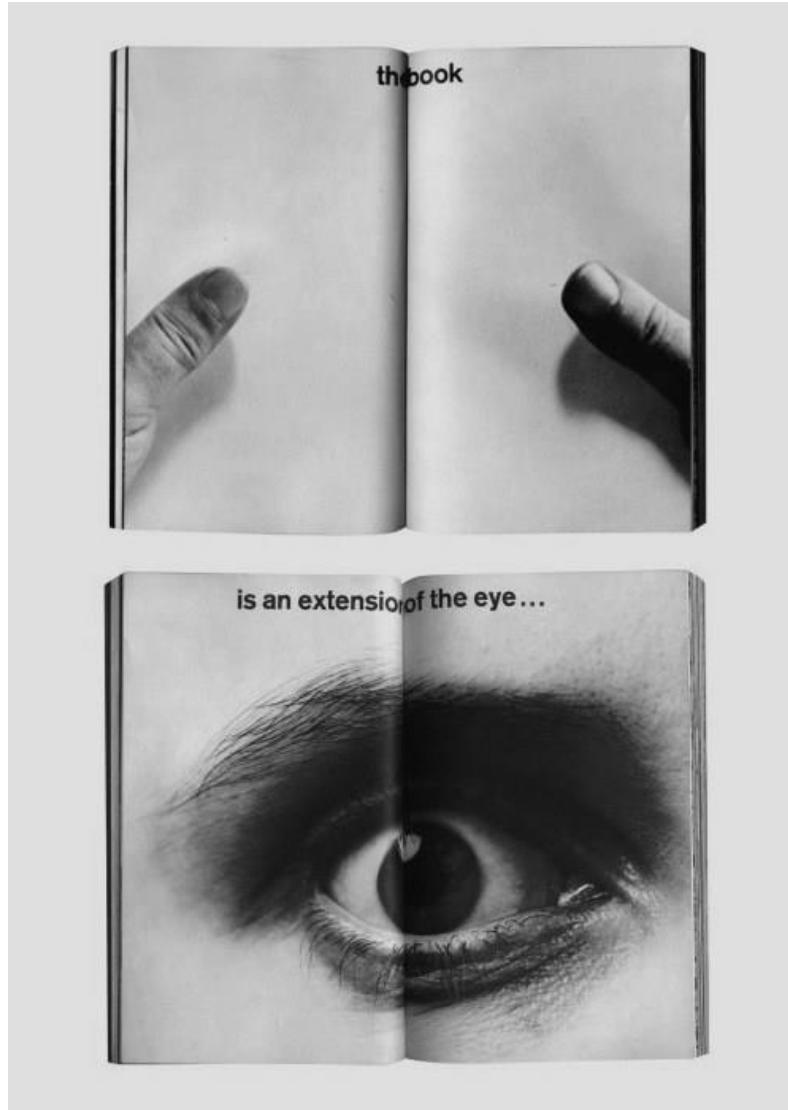
1.9 McLuhan, Marshall and Quentin Fiore. *The Medium is the Massage.* London: Penguin Books, 2008: 34-37.

Accordingly, the book *The Medium is the Massage* as designed by Fiore, can be seen as an attempt to reinvent the book and change the reader's experience [1.9]. Throughout the book typography is used to express the content of the text. Illustrations and photographs are incorporated, thereby references are made to history, art and popular culture, and creating a constant awareness of its own mediality.

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[158] Ibid., 120.

An important shift that McLuhan foresees is a shift in the emphasis on authorship, which McLuhan argues is a result of print culture. In the new era, the relationship between the author and the reader would change. McLuhan points in this regard to xerography, making instant publishing a possibility, and making appropriation of text and image accessible.[159] Through this technology, Fordian production methods are surpassed as '*anybody can become both author and publisher'.*[160] At the same time McLuhan points out that with the diminishing of specialization within separate domains, spectatorship now implies a participatory attitude. In the last pages of *The Gutenberg Galaxy* he quotes Joyce, who wrote about Finnegans Wake: *My consumers are they not my producers?'*[161]

Between the optimistic vision of McLuhan and the motivation of conceptual artists to work with artists' books, close ties are apparent, for example in McLuhan's interest in Mallarmé, which he shares with Graham and LeWitt among others. The liberation of institutional framework and geographical centers as pursued by Siegelaub echo's the idea of the Global Village, as pointed out by Alberro.[162] His interest in Xerography is mirrored the Xerox Book (1968) by Siegelaub, which drew on a strategy of photocopying used by Mel Bochner, as pointed out by Alberro.[163] In their manifesto *A Media Art,* Costa, Escari and Jacoby refer to McLuhan.[164] The changing relationship between author and reader described by McLuhan recall the positions taken by Barthes and Duchamp.

The forth issue of Aspen Magazine in 1967, designed and edited by Fiore was dedicated to McLuhan. In the issue some pages of *The Medium of the Massage* were published, other contributions referenced psychedelic experiences as well as computer circuitry.[165] Aspen 8 was made by Graham and Maciunas, and focused on art, information and science, suggesting that implications of cybernetics – often associated with digital technologies – were equally applicable to print media.[166] In its editorial note, Graham makes a clear reference to McLuhan and abolishes his media-deterministic approach, pointing out that the communicative possibilities of print depend on socio-economic conditions of production and consumption. Thereby Graham also points out the role of the author in

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[159] Ibid., 122-123.
[160] Ibid., 123.
[161] McLuhan, *Gutenberg*, 278.
[162] Alberro, *Politics of Publicity*, 153, 159.
[163] Ibid., 133-134. Other works to be noted using xerography are Mel Bochner's *Working Drawings and Other Visible Things on Paper Not Necessarily Meant to Be Viewed as Art* (1966) and Ian Burn's *Xerox Book* (1968).
[164] Costa, Eduardo, Raúl Escari and Roberto Jacoby. "A Media Art (Manifesto)". *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology.* Eds. A. Alberro and B. Stimson. Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1999: 3.
[165] Allen, 47-48.
[166] Ibid., 65.

relation to advertisers in creating meaning.[167]

The influence of McLuhan, and the close relationship between conceptual art and experiments with art and technology have not gained much attention in art historical literature, states Edward Shanken.[168] According to Shanken this is due to the fact that the use of innovative technologies was often found too expressive, and exhibitions were not successful due to reoccurring technical difficulties. Another reason Shanken points out is that new technology was associated with a range of problematic issues, such as warfare and environmental problems.[169]

The 'bureaucratic' investigations by conceptual artists into informational structures as preconditions for the creation of meaning resonate with cybernetic systems created by artists experimenting with technologies to create new aesthetic systems.[170] Art historian, critic and curator Jack Burnham delivered a fundamental contribution the theorization of this affiliation, enthusiastically seeking to bridge conceptual art and information and communication technologies. In 1968 he wrote the text *System Aesthetics,* in which he argues that the transition from an industrial to an information society implies a shift from a object-oriented towards a system-oriented society. Whereas the roots of system analyses lie in warfare, systems only gain relevance from their context. Systems have a certain beauty, and paradoxically aesthetic decision making is necessary to save the world from biological self-destruction.[171]

Burnham states that for art to regain any cultural significance, it should free itself from its *art pour l'art* status and traditional disciplines, and instead should focus on social structures and aesthetic decision making in relationship to its direct context. He then basically writes a short history of minimalism and conceptual art, thereby comparing the methods of Donald Judd and Robert Morris to those of computer programmers. Furthermore he names Andre and Allan Kaprow in the diminishing importance of the formalist object of art and the shift towards a focus on systems and processes. He thereby also points to Russian constructivists, the influence of which however was crushed by Stalinist regime.[172]

Burnham had gained experience with computer technology, and curated the exhibition

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[167] Ibid., 64-65.
[168] Shanken, Edward. "Art in the Information Age: Technology and Conceptual Art". *Leonardo* 35, no. 4 (2002): 436.
[169] Ibid., 437.
[170] Ibid., 434.
[171] Burnham, Jack. "Systems Aesthetics". *Themes and Movements: Conceptual Art.* Ed. P. Osborne. New York: Phaidon Press Inc., 2011: 215.
[172] Ibid., 216-217.

Software, Information Technology: Its New Meaning for Art in the Jewish Museum, New York, in 1970. Central in this exhibition was the circulation of information, and the interaction between people and information processing systems. The show included a large number of conceptual artists.[173] The title was based on an idea of Les Levine, who stated in the catalogue that, in a software dominated society, information perceived through the media constructs our perception of the world.[174] In his catalogue essay Burnham relies heavily on writings by McLuhan.[175] In his text *Alice's Head: Reflections on Conceptual Art,* Burnham argues that conceptual art, with its examination of symbolic systems and emphasis on systems and processes at the core of our everyday experience, fulfills McLuhan's model of art in a preliterate, which should merge the individual and the environment.[176]

1.5 Failure

The proliferation of the artists' book and the notion of the 'democratic multiple' coincided with two developments that were embraced equal optimism: the promise of conceptual art and the emergence of information and communication technologies, and its promise of an post-industrial information society. These notions are closely connected, as all three of them promised a thorough and overall reorganization of aesthetic production that would replace the hierarchical relationship between author, mediator and spectator towards a more egalitarian model.

The proliferation of the artists' book can essentially be understood as a focus on mediality. The artists' book implied a reinvention of the book, which was now no longer a carrier of text but an artistic medium on itself that promised a number of advantages over traditional artistic media. The artists' book would be independently produced and distributed by the artist, creating a decentralized and broad public that was directly addressed, and stimulated to co-create meaning, subverting the gallery system in the process.

Similarly, mediality could be argued to be at the foundation of the works of conceptual artists, who sought to liberate themselves from traditional media, burning their

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[173] Artists involved were amongst others Vito Acconci, John Baldessari, Robert Barry, Hans Haacke, Douglas Huebler, Joseph Kosuth and Lawrence Weiner.

[174] Shanken, 434. This claim clearly echo's the words of *A Media Manifesto.*

[175] Burnham, Jack. "Notes on Art and Information Processing". *Software - Information Technology: its New Meaning or Art.* Ed. J. Burnham. Chicago: The Jewish Museum, 1970: 11-13.

[176] Burnham, Jack. "Alice's Head: Reflections on Conceptual Art". *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology.* Eds. A. Alberro and B. Stimson. Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1999: 217. This text was first published in *Artforum* in February 1970, the *Software* exhibition opened in September that year.

paintings[177] and selecting whichever medium offered the most direct communication of their ideas to the largest number of people in the greatest economy of means, thereby making the choice of medium and the manner of communication central. Craftsmanship and subjective decision making were negated in favor of a structural approach. In the process the author was declared dead, as the sovereignty of the author in creating meaning swapped for a more central position of the reader as creative agent, cutting out the institution and the critic or mediator as the artist no longer was an '*ape that has to be explained*'[178].

This coincided with a shift towards an information-based society triggered by developments within information and communications technologies and embraced with enthusiasm amongst media theorists such as McLuhan and Burnham, who predicted a broad cultural shift powered by technological innovation. Electronic media would enable communication to spread quickly and increase senders and receivers, creating a broad reach and contracting the world into a 'global village'. Cultural production would desegmentize, blurring boundaries between specialized authors and the public. The book needed to be thoroughly revised in order to remain relevant in this emerging situation.

The optimism about the capacities of conceptual art, the artists book and information and communication technologies however was soon paralleled by a discourse of failure. While Stimson argues that the revolutionary ambitions of conceptual art were realized for a short moment, he goes on arguing that a discourse of failure emerged as early as 1973, and was formulated by the protagonists of the movement, notably Lippard and Siegelaub.[179] Lippard stated that it was '*unlikely that conceptual art will be any better equipped to affect the world any differently than, or even as much as, its less ephemeral counterparts*' thereby referring to avant-garde movements in the first half of the 20th century. Similarly, Siegelaub stated conceptual art questioned all fundaments of the arts, however was still mainly concerned with aesthetic questions and failed to gain further social relevance.[180]

The institutional system seemed impossible to abandon. Robert Smithson argued for example that even his land-art projects failed to leave the gallery space, but rather moved the gallery to a different location. He went even further by arguing that conceptual art, with its

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[177] John Baldessari famously burned his paintings in 1970, this statement signaled his liberation from disciplinary tradition and his move to conceptual art.

[178] LeWitt, *Paragraphs*, 208.

[179] Stimson, xi.

[180] Lippard, Lucy. "Postface". *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972*. New York: Praeger, 1973: 295.

cheap and mass produced artworks, was stimulated by market demand.[181] Siegelaub attempted to organize the major shift in the relationship between the viewer and the author by setting up the *Artist's Reserved Rights Transfer and Sale Agreement.* The artist's signature came to mark authenticity, which enabled the artist to partially control the market and protect his or her work. The radical shift their work implied was however limited.[182] Shortly after, Siegelaub decided to abandon the art world altogether and started focusing on publishing other types of publications.[183]

As Alberro points out, the ultimate conclusion of conceptual art as is was pursued by Siegelaub and Lippard, is that by using carriers and distribution systems similar to any commercial communication it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish art from cultural production as a whole. By disseminating art to a mass public and surpassing art institutions, art loses specificity and enters the domain of publicity. The tangible art object is replaced by a mediated one, and thereby the aesthetic domain loses its experimental form and merges with daily experience. Baudrillard argued that this would ultimately lead to the end of art itself, in which art would completely merge with mass culture.[184]

The argument made by Alberro is based on the very foundations of the notion of the artists' book as a 'democratic multiple', namely the book's predetermined place in general culture. Lippard warned that the artists' book would become *'an ineffective and poorly distributed stepchild to big-time publishing'*.[185] In addition she stated that in their competition with mass products, many artists' books lost their critical distance and became hardly distinguishable from mass produced books, apart from its cheap and amateuristic appearance. The competition with mass produced books could also seduce the artists' book in going back to its '*coffee table origins*'.[186] This notwithstanding, and despite denying the revolutionary potential of conceptual art already in 1973,[187] Lippard was still hopeful for the capacities of the artists' book, these capacities she however recognized in a more explicit socially engaged practice.[188] A general turn towards a socially engaged practice is visible in many conceptual artists.

As Van Winkel argues, the promise of the post-industrial society proved a myth. In

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[181] Smithson, Robert. "Production for Production's Sake". *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology.* Eds. A. Alberro and B. Stimson. Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1999: 284-285.
[182] Ibid., 164-169.
[183] These publications were largely political or rooted in critical theory.
[184] Alberro, *Politics of Publicity*, 150.
[185] Lippard, *Consumption,* 51.
[186] Lippard, *Goes Public*, 47.
[187] Lippard, *Postface*, 294.
[188] Lippard, *Consumption,* 50-51.

reality depended on the displacement of industrial production to less wealthy countries in order to lower prices.[189] The radical implications that Burnham recognized in the bureaucratic tendencies of conceptual artists and often deployed in the artists' book, ultimately gave way to a managerial revolution. In this respect Van Winkel argues conceptual art to be essentially conformist to an omnipresent bureaucratic regime that manifests itself in corporate, governmental and institutional forms. Van Winkel states that this view on conceptual art is incompatible with its anti-institutional reading.[190] The deployment of bureaucratic strategies by conceptual artists stressed the importance of the institutional context of the production and reception of art, thereby stripping artisthood of its mysticism and romanticism. Van Winkel argues that the mimicking of bureaucratic styles was paradoxically only critical in the fact that conceptual artists were not critical to this new type of managerial artisthood. The artists did not control quality, as any result – even no result – was acceptable. By the mid-1970s this indifference and therefore the demystification of artisthood – had been restored.[191]

For the artists' book finding support of the broader public proved the most difficult.[192] Commercially the artists' book was uninteresting for both galleries and regular bookstores, complicating distribution.[193] A significant international distribution system started to emerge during the 1970s, as a great number of small initiatives started distributing, showing and printing artists' books. This could explain the optimism of Lippard. Fluxus artist Dick Higgins was a predecessor with his Something Else Press (1964-1973). During the 1970s many comparable initiatives emerged, often initiated by artists and critics, such as Franklin Furnace,[194] Printed Matter,[195] Visual Studies Workshop,[196] Nexus, Bookworks, Beau Geste Press and Other Books and So. This was paralleled by a theorization of the artists' book, and the evolution of the artists' book as an art historical segment. Many institutions founded in the 1970s gained a solid reputation within an international network, and are still functioning more or less in the way they did when they were founded.[197] This system professionalized

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[189] Van Winkel, 140.
[190] Ibid., 40.
[191] Ibid., 65-67.
[192] White, Tony. "From Democratic Multiple to Artist Publishing: The (R) evolutionary Artist's Book". *Art Documentation: Journal of the Art Libraries Society of North America* 31, no. 1 (2012): 48.
[193] Lippard, *Goes Public*, 46-48.
[194] Franklin Furnace started in 1976 and focused mainly on exhibiting and collecting books. The collection is now acquired by the MoMA, New York.
[195] Printed Matter was founded in 1976 by amongst others Lippard and LeWitt
[196] The Visual Studies Workshop was founded by Joan and Nathan Lyons. Carrión participated in a residency there that resulted in the bookwork *For Fans and Scholars Alike* (1987).
[197] Drucker, *Myth*, 179.

over time, resulting in an institutional system in its own right.[198]

Although supported by a growing and international system, the emerging distribution system remained small and mostly interesting for a limited public. In addition Perrée notes, many artists' books have grown to be rare collector's items. Editions were often relatively small and reprints were rarely made, resulting in high market values. The books are therefore mostly collected by specialized collectors or libraries.[199] It can thus be argued that the artists' book has been incorporated in the system that artists initially rejected.[200]

In many ways Perrée's argument can be put in perspective as many artists' books produced in the 1960s and 1970s can still be found on the market for relatively low prices. For example the artists' book *Geometric Figures and Color* (1979) by LeWitt can still be found for under $50 today.[201] Furthermore, reprints of seminal artists' books have appeared, the websites of Primary Information and Kenneth Goldsmith's Ubu have made many rare books available as pdf-files.[202] Even the now highly overpriced books by Ruscha – who ironically represents the top end of the market – are relatively cheap compared to works by seminal artists' in more traditional media.

Drucker states that the failure of the artists' book as a 'democratic multiple' is not a failure of production but of reception. With its democratic ability and subversive nature still intact, Drucker suggests the artists' book as a democratic art form might be more fully realized in the future.[203] New technological developments sparked a revival in the popularity of McLuhan, as well as the artists' book. The internet has triggered a radical openness of information. As argued by Janneke Adema and Gary Hall, the promise of the internet as an open and accessible platform is paralleled by the democratic impulse they recognize in the artists' book. This has recently given rise to what they describe as an 'academic spring', in which academics promote a democratization of academic knowledge.[204] Digital technologies a number of artists working in the artists' book shifted towards a practice that was based on digital technologies, such as Michael Gibbs, who signaled a 'boom' in artists' publications in

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[198] Adema, Janneke and Gary Hall. "The Political Nature of the Book: On Artists' Books and Radical Open Access". *New Formations* 78, no. 1 (2013): 15.

[199] Perrée, Rob. *Cover to Cover: The Artist's Book in Perspective.* Rotterdam: NAi publishers, 2002: 134.

[200] Adema and Hall, 16-17.

[201] Phillpot, *Books,* 109. Phillpot mentions this artists' book as one of very few examples of artist' books that were published by a major publisher. This made the book exceptionally available. The book was originally priced $6.

[202] Recent reprints of for example the Xerox-book, or Jan Dibbets Robin Redbreast's Territory (1969) and Green As Well As Blue As Well As Red (1972) by Lawrence Weiner also prove the opposite.

[203] Drucker, *Myth,* 183.

[204] Adema en Hall, 16-17.

1993.[205] These technologies have made the production of books more accessible and also gave rise to numerous small presses and artists working in the book format that often exists in open editions and is produced and distributed through print on demand platforms such as Lulu, Blurb and Publication Studio. These developments seem to make the 'democratic multiple' ever more accessible.

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[205] Perrée, 133.

Chapter two:

The work of Ulises Carrión

2.1 Ulises Carrión and the 'New Art'

Ulises Carrión was born in 1941 in the Mexican city San Andres and moved to Mexico City in 1960 to study philosophy and literature. After receiving a grant he moved to Europe in 1964, studying in France and Germany until 1966. He received his post graduate diploma in English language and literature in England in 1972. By that time, Carrión had gained a notable reputation within Mexico as a writer of short stories, theatre plays and radio and TV-shows. His two literary works titled *La Muerte de Miss O* (1966) and *De Alemania* (1970) were published in Mexico and were well received. By the time he settled in Amsterdam in 1972 however, he had renounced his literary roots to dedicate himself to the artists' book. Not only did he publish his own artists' books and those of others, he also created the first of its kind artists' book gallery and contributed to the theoretical discourse with analytical texts about the artists' book.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the artist' book had been an emerging discipline, and by 1972 started to gain a significant system of small publishing companies and distribution centers. It is safe to assume that Carrión was aware of these developments. The Mexican art scene had by no means been isolated from artistic communities in the United States and Europe. Throughout the 20th century Mexican artists regularly traveled abroad. Intercontinental exchange had given rise to Latin-American avant-garde movements, which – although with their own characteristics – in many ways paralleled those of Europe.[206] In the 1950s and 1960s, Brazil was the main art center of Latin-America where concrete poets were active, particularly those related to the magazine *Noigrandes* (1952-1962), and biennales were organized hosting experimental fluxus events.[207] In Mexico developments similar to fluxus occurred, the country was also frequented by writers of the Beat Generation.[208]

An important channel through which cutting edge developments of experimental poetry were communicated was the magazine *El Corno Emplumado/The Plumed Horn* (1962-1969) initiated by Philip Lamantia.[209] The magazine focused on established poetry as

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[206] Hellion, Martha. "The Origin of Modern Artists' Books". *Artist's Books.* Ed. M. Hellion. Madrid: Turner, 2003: 28

[207] Ibid., 34.

[208] Ibid., 39.

[209] The work of Lamantia is considered surrealist poetry, however he is closely related to the Beat Generation.

well as new critical and experimental poetry from Latin-America, the United States and Europe. It was spread internationally and featured work by many artists among others Juan Rulfo, Octavio Paz, and Philipe Ehrenberg three writers whom would have a decisive impact on Carrión's career. The magazine published work by Carrión as early as 1964.[210]

Perhaps Political and economic conditions in Mexico were not optimal for independent artists publishing. *El Corno Emplumado* was struggling with censorship and a constant lack of funds. In comparison to England, the environment was orthodox, repressive, and the infrastructure for small presses was nearly non-existent.[211] In a correspondence with Paz in 1973, Carrión noted that the Mexican scene was not only homophobic but also a place where his writing was considered extreme even in experimental circles.[212] As Ehrenberg points out, especially after 1968 social unrest grew and publishing became increasingly dangerous.[213] It was due to the repressive and tense atmosphere that Ehrenberg and Martha Hellion moved to Leeds, England where they founded Beau Geste Press (1970-1974). This small and experimental publishing company produced and distributed artists´ books, postcards, flyers, pamphlets and magazines and was closely associated with conceptual art practices, experimental visual poetry and fluxus.[214]

Carrión knew Ehrenberg from the Mexican literary scene, and encountered Beau Geste Press in 1971, there he made contacts that would prove vital in his later activities.[215] He worked with Beau Geste Press preparing the *Fluxshoe* catalog 1972, documenting exhibitions and performances linked to fluxus and the emerging mail art network.[216] Through Beau Geste Press he also met Gibbs, who had already founded the poetry magazine *Kontexts,* and would later move to the Netherlands. It seems that this contact with Beau Geste Press had a decisive impact on Carrión, who made a fundamental shift away from traditional literature towards the bookwork soon thereafter.

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[210] Carrión, Ulises. "Olvidar este verano". *El corno emplumado* 9 (1964): 137-140. Carrión's work is published in the magazine amongst works of contemporary poets from Europe, the United States and South America. The issue features works by Henri Rousseau, Giorgio de Chirico, Paul Klee, Francis Picabia, Jean Arb, Oskar Kokoshka and Salvador Dalí.

[211] Ehrenberg, Felipe, Javier Cadena and Magali Lara. "Independent Publishing in Mexico". *Artists' Books: A Critical Anthology and Sourcebook.* Ed. Lyons. New York: Visual Studies Workshop Press, 1985: 167-169. Ehrenberg returned to Mexcio in 1974 and encountered 'no infrastructure to speak of' small press and the orthodoxy was restraining in comparison to the climate he encountered in England while working for Beau Geste Press.

[212] Yépez, Heriberto. "Ulises Carrión's Mexican Discontinuities". *Dear reader. Don't read.* Ed. G. Schraenen. Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, 2016: 53.

[213] Ehrenberg, Felipe. "Carrión: Beyond Literature". *Dear reader. Don't read.* Ed. G. Schraenen. Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, 2016: 27.

[214] Conwell, Donna. "Beau Geste press". *Getty Research Journal* 2 (2010): 183.

[215] Hellion, Martha. "Ulises Carrión: A Biographical Sketch". *Ulises Carrión.* Madrid: Turner, 2003: 15-16.

[216] Held, John. *Small Scale Subversion: Mail Art and Artistamps.* Breda: TAM Publishing, 2015: 125.

This shift from literature to the artists' book meant a rigorous rupture in his career, and was partly historicized by Carrión himself. Carrión donated his private collection of literary works to friends. Afterwards, he didn't want to talk about his earlier literary works for an interview in *Fandangos*.[217] An autobiographical document states 1972 as the start of his career, thus denying his preceding literary career.[218] This shift did not mean an abandonment of language nor the book, it rather implied a radical reinvention of language, text and the book. This was elaborated upon later by Carrión stating: '*I consider myself a writer in the sense that I think that my work is important for language [...] but the fact is that my own work has taken such strange forms.*'[219] As we shall see, these ´strange forms´ involved bookworks, sound performances, mail art projects and later video, television and media works, as well as his efforts of running the bookshop, exhibition space, publishing company and later archive Other Books and So.

The cultural scene in Amsterdam that Carrión must have encountered was vibrant. Fluxus happenings, minimalism and conceptual art had made their ways to museums and the expanding international gallery system. Numerous small initiatives and galleries were founded, which were often run by artists.[220] This vibrant cultural scene, as well as the good social system and beneficial grants and subsidies[221] attracted a significant group of foreign artists during the late-1960s and early-1970s.[222] Carrión was one of them.

The scene for artists´ books in the Netherlands was small but emerging. Perrée states that – while the artists' book became increasingly successful in the United States, the United Kingdom and Germany due to conceptual art – in the Netherlands the artists' book was greatly overlooked until the late-1960s.[223] This view however seems ignorant of a few important developments. The difficulty in sketching the emerging artists' book scene lies partially in the fact that early artists' books were often made in the margins of any institutional structure. A number of artists structurally worked with the medium, such as Stanley Brouwn and herman de vries who had been publishing artists' books already in the

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[217] Yépez, *Mexican Discontinuities,* 49.
[218] Schraenen, Guy. "We Didn't Think of Winning: An Unstructured Approach of Ulises Carrión and His Activities". *We have won! Haven't we?* Ed. G. Schraenen. Amsterdam: Museum Fodor, 1992: 13.
[219] Van Raay, Jan. "End of an Era?" *Artzien* 1 no. 3 (1979).
[220] Belder, Lucky. "Galleries in Amsterdam". *Amsterdam 60/80: Twenty Years of Fine Arts.* Amsterdam: Museum Fodor, 1982: 80-93.
[221] Fernandes, João. "Art as Subversion: Make and Remake to Make Anew". *Dear reader. Don't read.* Ed. G. Schraenen. Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, 2016: 42.
[222] Gribling, Frank. "Art, Artists and the Amsterdam Artworld, 1960-1980. The Facts and How They Are Related." *Amsterdam 60/80: Twenty Years of Fine Arts.* Amsterdam: Museum Fodor, 1982: 20.
[223] This is argued by both Perrée and Schraenen, who note that since the first half of the 20th century through the fifties, Holland had been publishing experimental works that however remained within the *Livre de peintres* tradition.

early sixties.[224] The Mickery Gallery was founded in 1965 and amongst other disciplines, focused briefly on books before shifting fully to theater and performance art in 1970.[225] The gallery Seriaal was founded in 1968 by Wies Smals and focused on prints and multiples from the ideal of bringing art to a broad audience. After being disappointed about the sole interest of collectors, she founded de Appel in 1975 which focused on performance art.[226] The printing workshop Steendrukkerij De Jong & Co produced highly experimental prints, and artists´ books of international artists such as Ed Ruscha and Dieter Roth had been available.[227] Stichting Octopus published a number of artists' books between 1968 and 1972 by among others Ruscha, Darboven, Ger van Elk, Ben d'Armagnac and Ger Dekkers. Art & Project started publishing their Bulletin a publication, which functioned as an extension of their gallery space, and in many cases evolved in works of art in their own right, the gallery was in other ways involved with artists' books, as reflected in their vast collection of artists' books in their archive.

In Amsterdam Carrión co-founded In-Out Center (1972-1974) along with three others [2.1].[228] This early non-commercial artist initiative functioned as an informal meeting place for an international group of artists. Here Carrión met artists who soon joined In-Out Center, such as Michel Cardena, Raúl Marroquín, Hreinn Fridfinnsson, Kristján and Sigurdur Gudmundsson, Hetty Huisman, Pieter Laurens Mol, Gerrit Jan de Rook and John Liggins. In the tiny exhibition space the artists took turns exhibiting their work and doing performances.[229] Shortly after opening In-Out Center Carrión bought a secondhand mimeograph machine with which he started publishing his own as well as artists' books by others under the name of In-Out Productions.

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[224] Flip and Gerrit Jan de Rook. "Nederlandse kunstenaarsboeken" *Nederlandse Kunstenaarsboeken, Gemeentemuseum Den Haag.* Den Haag: Gemeentemuseum, 1978: 4. Herman de vries published his rist (untitled) bookwork in 1961, it was reprinted in 1968.
[225] Belder, 88
[226] Belder, 90. Seriaal didn't focus on artists books however the multiple and the artists' book are related in ways. Founder Wies Smals later founded the Appel in 1975.
[227] Schraenen, *We Didn't,* 31.
[228] Ehrenberg, 29. In correspondence with Ehrenberg, Carrion notes two Colombians (Cardena and Marroquín), and a guy who owned equipment as other founders.
[229] Schraenen, *We Didn't,* 19.

2.1 Opening exhibition In-Out Center, 1972. Photo: Paul Hartland.

Through In-Out Center and In-Out Productions, Carrión moved into the quickly growing network of small artist-run initiatives. This network became very important for Carrión, who published essays and works through many different small and independent channels. For many artists associated with In-Out Center printed material was already at the core of their practice, and In-Out Productions was not the first publishing company with a focus on artists' publications. For example, De Rook had already started the publishing company *Exp/Press,* in Utrecht in 1970, and published the magazine *Bloknoot* since 1968.[230] Gibbs founded the publishing company *Kontexts Publications* (1968-1983),[231] and initiated the magazine *Kontexts* (1969-1977), which served as a international platform for art, and later initiated the magazine *Artzien* (1978-1982), which spoke about art. Work of Carrión was

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[230] Carrión published *Conjugations (Love Stories)* through *Exp/press* in 1973.
[231] Gibbs met Carrión through Beau Geste Press, and participated in the residency program at the Jan van Eyck in 1974 before moving to Amsterdam where he worked with Carrión, who had his work *6-plays* (1976) published through Kontexts publications.

included in several issues of both magazines.[232]

In Maastricht an important network of artists developed working with books and ephemeral publications. *Agora Studio* (1972-1985) promoted printed matter and focused on video and media art, and published the magazine *Fandangos* (1973-1978). Among the founders of *Fandangos* was the artist Marroquín who ran the publishing company Mad Enterprizes Inc. (1972-1974). The Jan van Eyck academy owned an offset printer and had an influential residency program. Rod Summers studied here in 1973, being involved in mail-art project and publishing artists' books under the name VEC (Visual, Experimental, Concrete). A group of graduates of the Van Eyck academy started Cres Publishers. International connections become visible as well, Beau Geste Press for example not only published works by Carrión,[233] but also collaborated with Marroquín[234] and Sigurdur Gudmunsson.[235]

In 1975, after In-Out Center had closed, Carrión opened Other Books and So (1975-1978) at the Herengracht 227 in Amsterdam [2.2, 2.3], which moved to the Herengracht 259 in 1977. Other Books and So was a first of its kind gallery that focused on artists publications and ephemeral art forms such as postcards, posters, artists' newspapers, tape-cassettes, and graphic works.[236] Other Books and So provided a meeting place and platform for the emerging network of small publishing houses.[237] Whereas the circulation of bookworks took place through mail, and was therefore hard to trace, Other Books and So gave visibility to this distribution network.[238] In addition to that, during its short lifespan, over fifty exhibitions, film screenings, performances and concerts took place.[239]

The initiative of Other Books and So was highly improvised at first. Carrión and Aard van Barneveld had a vague idea of creating a place for exchanging artists books. They found

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[232] Schraenen, Guy. "The Bloody Alphabet, or How to Crack It". *All or Nothing and Other Pages: Michael Gibbs.* Eds. G. J. de Rook and A. Wilson. Devon: Uniform Books, 2016: 183. Artzien was founded together with Harry Ruhé – who founded artists' book and multiples gallery *Galerie A* in 1976. Carrión worked with this gallery for his *Clues* project in 1981.

[233] *Looking for Poetry* and *Arguments,* both 1973.

[234] Marroquín´s *How* (1974) was published in a collaboration between Beau Geste, Mad Enterprizes Inc and Agora Studio).

[235] Gudmundsson´s works *Or* (1973) and *Circles* (1974) were published by Beau Geste Press.

[236] Schraenen *We Didn't,* 27.

[237] Hellion, *Biographical sketch,* 17.

[238] Bool and De Rook, 5.

[239] Schraenen, *We Didn't,* 27.

2.2 Ulises Carrión in front of Other Books and So.

2.3 Ulises Carrión in Other Books and So.

a suitable space, which they rented with borrowed money from friends. Carrión sent a large amount of letters to artists, writers and publishers to send books without specifying the type of book to send. This triggered a vast and ongoing response, enabling Other Books and So to open three weeks later, and soon made it unnecessary to request any more.[240] Carrión never made a selection, but simply sold what was sent to him. The books offered in Other Books and So were thus extremely diverse, and soon covered a big geographical territory, which covered whole of America, Japan, Australia, Western- and Eastern Europe.

Rather than reflecting a single type of art, it first and foremost reflected the international network that Other Books and So was involved in. Other Books and So structurally served as a distribution center for Beau Geste Press – which was distributing many Latin-America and Eastern European publications – and other earlier mentioned presses and related magazines, but was also selling publications by Higgins' Something Else Press inc., Siegelaub, Ruscha, LeWitt, Roth and the Situationists and many works by lesser known artists and small presses, which were often produced in editions smaller than 500 copies. Through Other Books and So Carrión actively maintained and vastly expanded the network of book-artists and independent publishers. At the same time he positioned himself as a central figure within this network. This network would eventually become essential to the content of his work.

2.2 Carrión's Bookworks: Appropriation and Structure

It was through In-Out productions that Carrión published his first bookworks. The bookworks produced by Carrión consist mainly of mimeographed paperbacks printed in editions of 500 at most, which are either perfect bound or simply stapled together. They do not show a clear overarching style, some editions are numbered, some are signed, most however aren't. Many of the bookworks published by Carrión were also written down in notebooks, often in Spanish while English is the dominant language in his published bookworks. A number of notebooks survive that show works that were never published during Carrión's life for reasons unknown, also, Carrión produced a few unique and handmade bookworks. The following section will focus on a number of bookworks that made it into printed editions.[241] While not attempting to be exhaustive, an overview will be given of some of the most important features that occur in his bookworks and later works.

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[240] Van Raay.

[241] Schraenen, *Dear Reader,* 213. As Carrión has pointed out, the step towards publishing a book is of vital importance, as he states that the capacity for a book to be multiplied has important consequences for its form and function.

The examination of these bookworks shows how Carrión moved towards a radically different approach to literary convention and text. These bookworks show how poetic and literary texts establish significance through a coded system of relationships depending on basic segments of printed language. The works decompose semantic systems utilized in books such as literary conventions and physical, visual and lingual elements of written language. This is done by repeatedly executing simple actions on appropriated texts to confront the reader with conventions of writing, printing and reading that are normally disregarded. Narratives and characters are thereby simplified and transformed into structures, which prevent psychological interpretations and often lack textual expression.[242] A closer look at his bookworks will reveal specifically how this comes to being.

The first bookwork that Carrión published was *Sonnet(s)* (1972) and was dedicated to Marroquín [2.4]. It was published by In-Out Productions in an edition of 200, numbered and some of them signed.[243] In this work, a sonnet – a traditional form of poetry consisting of fourteen verses – is repeated 44 times on 44 typewritten A4 sized pages stapled together without numbering. The sonnet was not written by Carrión himself, but is an appropriation of the *Heart´s Compass* (1881) by the Pre-Raphaelite painter Dante Gabriel Rossetti. The fact that the sonnet is appropriated is made explicit in *Sonnet(s)* as the first version is called *BORROWED SONNET,* and leaves Rosetti's version intact. The original author is however not mentioned, the sonnet is thus used only as raw material. What follows a sequence of variations on the original text, every version has a different title indicating the way the sonnet is altered. For example, *Interrupted Sonnet* ends half way the tenth verse, *SYLLOGISM SONNET* is divided in three strophes, which start with 'if', 'and if' and 'then'*, UNDERLINED SONNET* is underlined, *MIRRORED SONNET* is mirrored, *VERTICAL SONNET* is vertical.

Making his position on appropriating texts clear, he published a short text called *Why Plagiarisms?*. He firstly states *'there are so many books; it takes too long to read or write a book'*. He goes on arguing that his appropriations *'give a book a second chance to be read'*, however his next statements states: '*They make reading unnecessary'*.[244] A very similar position is taken in his later text *The New Art of Making Books,* where he notes that *'plagiarism is the starting point of the creative activity in the new art'.*[245] Thereby he points

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[242] Fernandes, 38.
[243] Marroquín, Raúl. 'Which one was First, 'Sonnet(s)' or 'Before and After'?'. *Het Andre Behr Pamflet* 23. Amsterdam: Boekie Woekie, 2012: 14-15.
[244] Carrión, Ulises. "Why Plagiarisms?". *Vandangos* 1, (1973): 1.
[245] Carrión, *Second Thoughts*, 18.

at the changed function of text, writer and reader in his works. This change is further clarified in correspondence with Paz, when he writes: *'In my texts, words do not count because they mean this or that to me or to somebody else, but because, taken as a whole, words form a structure'*.[246] In *Sonnet(s),* the content of Rossetti's work seems of no importance. In no instance is the reader expected to fully read the sonnet or even know what it is about. To understand the sonnet is to identify the interference made by Carrión on the textual convention of the original.

While mainly using the appropriated text as raw material to '*test the language's ability to mean something*',[247] he also refers to the original work of Rosetti in some instances showing himself well aware of the material he works with. Most notably in this respect is the *PROSE SONNET.* After the death of Rossetti, his brother did not hesitate to alter the sonnets in order to make the works more accessible. As the brother stated '*I should take it upon me to expound their meaning. This I have done in the form of a paraphrase in prose*'. In *PROSE SONNET* the words of the original sonnet are kept intact, however the verses are turned into paragraphed blocks of text. In the context of *Sonnet(s)* this can be seen as a commentary on the ignorant position towards printed text and its semiotic abilities.[248] The choice for Rosetti is also significant as he is known as a literary writer as well as a visual artist. Thereby, this first work of Carrión also hints at the visual elements of language, as well as the artist that is not limited to a single discipline.[249]

By binding a large number of variations together in a book, the *Sonnet(s)* is not a commentary on a single feature of a single literary genre, but can be perceived as a conceptual exercise or method of altering meaning by changing basic conventional parameters. This method is deployed to a readymade text, and is thus an act of non-writing, to create to an accumulation of permutations. To identify the approach taken by Carrión is to understand the work. The process carried out by Carrión could then also be expanded, the last sonnet – *FAMOUS SONNET* – ends half-way with '*Et cetera*' making the work explicitly

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[246] Alonso, Rodrigo. "Margin Notes Ulises Carrión in the Eighties". *Art? Skill? Technique? Ulises Carrión's Cultural Strategies and Communications Tactics, Five Reports.* Ed. J.J. Agius. Coruña: Ediciones La Bahía, 2013: 15.

[247] Carrión, *Second Thoughts*, 19.

[248] Gilbert, Annette. "Geliehene Sonette. Appropriationen des Sonnets im Conceptual Writing (Dmitrij Prigov, Ulises Carrión, Michalis Pichler)" *Sonnett-Künste: Mediale Transformationen einer klassischen Gattung.* Ed. E. Greber and E. Zemanek. Dozwil: Edition Signathur, 2012: 473. Gilbert points out other variations in Carrión's *Sonnet(s)* that also refer to the reception of Rosetti's cycle, such as *DATED SONNET* and *MODERNIZED SONNET.*

[249] Ibid., 457.

open ended thus hinting at a possible continuation of the project.[250] With *Sonnet(s)* Carrión thus makes a shift towards a conceptual approach. To put it differently, Carrión essentially followed an idea that functioned as *'a machine that makes the art'*.[251] This approach would be fundamental to many of his later bookworks.
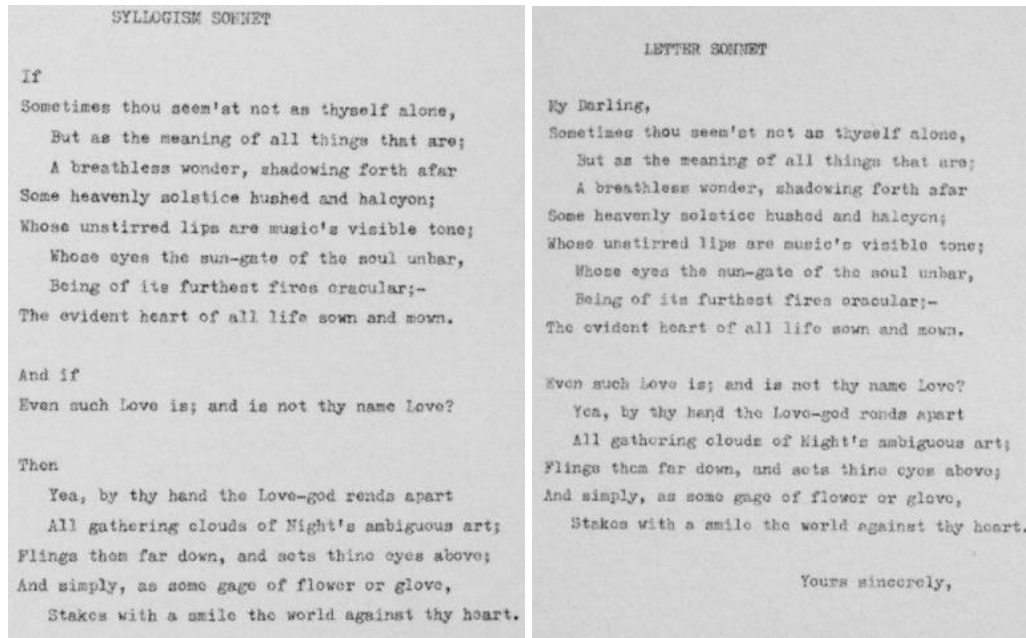
2.4 Ulises Carrión, *Sonnet(s),* In-Out Productions, 1972.

The bookwork *Arguments* (1973) explores the potential of narrative with a minimum of referential text [2.5]. *Arguments* consists of twenty-five 'arguments' each evolving over one or several unnumbered pages. These arguments are numbered from one to twenty-five, and consist exclusively of names repetitively placed on the space of the page to form minimalistic patterns of varying complexity, these are sometimes divided into parts to signify different episodes within the narrative of one argument.[252] The patterns were supposedly formed by Carrión after analyzing the narrative structures and relationships between different characters in existing texts. *Argument 19* for example is said to be based on Oedipus.[253]

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[250] In his work *SOME MORE SONNET(S)* (2009) Michalis Pichler expanded the number of sonnet as initiated by Carrión by another 44 variations in 2011.
[251] LeWitt, *Paragraphs,* 208. Unlike the method of LeWitt, the idea of *SONNET(S)* still left a large number of choices to be made during the process of making. The degree in which the idea dictates the outcome of the work differs between artists and works.
[252] Different parts are signified with letters, for example, a), b), c) etc.
[253] Wright, Annie. "Arguments". *We have won! Haven't we?* Ed. G. Schraenen. Amsterdam: Museum Fodor, 1992: 114. The names that occur in this 'argument' however do not correspond with Oedipus. The sound work *Hamlet for Two Voices* (1977) is similar to *Arguments* however refers more explicitly to the original source.

These literary sources on which the arguments are based are not mentioned, neither can they be traced by looking at the repetitive sequences of names. Similar methods were consistently exercised upon the different texts. The relationships between different characters of the stories were analyzed. These relationships were then condensed to just a few pages per story in a structured and unassuming manner by using exclusively names and their placement on the page, thereby revealing relationships between characters through which a narrative unfolds. At the heart of *Arguments* thus lie methods that are similar to the earlier named bookworks, as Carrión appropriates texts and plays with typographic elements and linguistic conventions in order to change the meaning of the text. The parameters set by Carrión for the work result not just one example or text, but a whole sequence of variations that could – in theory – also be extended.[254]

The textual suppression results in a drastic abstraction of the appropriated works, great freedom is thereby given to the reader in unveiling a storyline. Carrión's work does not call for a meticulous study of the words themselves, only a free interpretation concerning the characters and their social relationships through the patterns. The position of the reader as an active participant is further emphasized on the last pages, as Carrión addresses the reader by stating '*My name is Ulises. What´s yours?*'. Thereby reducing himself to a name and provoking the reader to do the same, perhaps in order to be subjected to similar patterns as described in the book.

Carrión's new approach enabled him to move between different textual genres, as '*The new art uses any manifestation of language [...] the text of a book in the new art can be a novel as well as a single word, sonnets as well as jokes, loveletters as well as weather reports.*'[255] Around the same time *Sonnet(s)* and *Arguments* were published, Carrión made a number of drawings,[256] booklets and texts that were unique works or were partly published through magazines.[257] These works show a similar preoccupation with appropriating and systematically modifying texts thereby suppressing the text in order to stress linguistic signs and reveal semiotic systems. Besides works dealing with text, these early experiments reveal different levels of abstraction that sometimes move away from the linguistic fixation towards
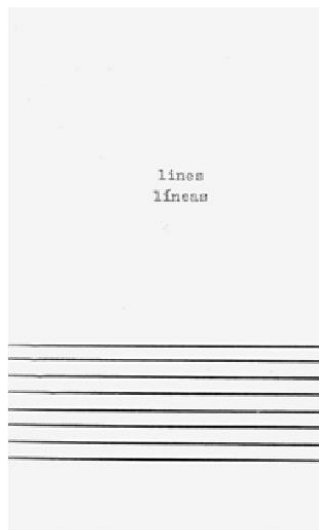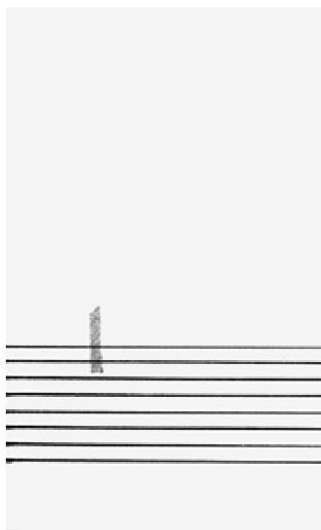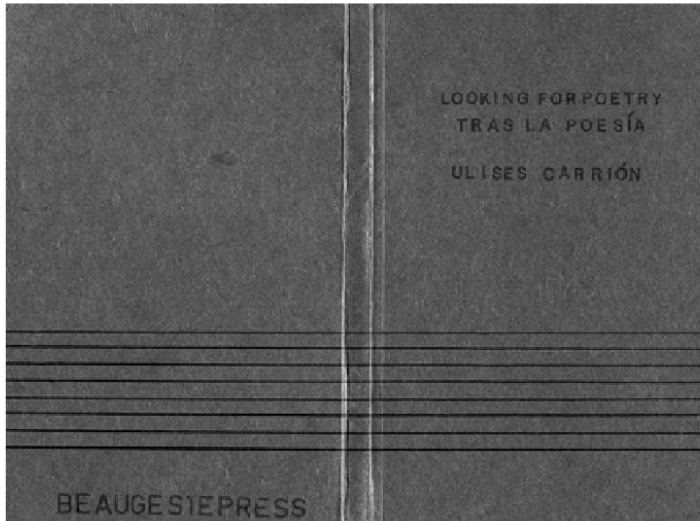
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[254] In *Arguments* Carrión does not hint at the possibility of extending the project as he does in *SONNET(S)*.
[255] Carrión, *Second Thoughts*, 19.
[256] Guy Schraenen (ed). *Dear Reader.* Madrid: Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, 2016: 120-125.
[257] Here I'm referring especially to books such as *10 stamped texts* (1973)*,* the poems that were posthumously published in *Poesías* (2007), *Before and After* (1972, first published in 2012), the handwritten booklet *(a,b,c)* (1972) published by Boabooks in 2016, *Exclusive Groups* (1974) existed as a unique bookworks, parts of which were published in Fandangos in 1973, the book was posthumously re-published however in a different form in 1991.

relations between abstract elements expressed in lines on a page or through numerical systems. It is telling that Carrión referred to his early experimental poetic works as being 'research patterns'.

ARGUMENTS

BY ULISES CARRIÓN

BEAU GESTE PRESS

Argument 2

a)
Alfred	Sylvia	Thomas	Alison
Alfred	Sylvia	Thomas	Alison
Alfred	Sylvia	Thomas	Alison
Alfred	Sylvia	Thomas	Alison

b)
Alfred
Alfred
       Sylvia
Alfred & Sylvia

c)
Alfred & Sylvia
Alfred & Sylvia
            Thomas
Alfred & Sylvia & Thomas

Argument 8

Stephen   Beatrice
Stephen   Beatrice
Stephen   Beatrice
Stephen   Beatrice
Stephen   Beatrice
Stephen   Beatrice
Stephen Beatrice
Stephen   Beatrice
Stephen   Beatrice
Stephen   Beatrice
Stephen   Beatrice
Stephen   Beatrice
Stephen   Beatrice
Stephen   Beatrice
Stephen   Beatrice
Stephen Beatrice

Argument 12

Anne		Matthew	Julia
Anne		Matthew	Julia
Anne		Matthew	Julia
Anne		Matthew	Julia
Anne		Matthew	Julia
Anne		Matthew	Julia
Anne	Matthew		Julia
Anne		Matthew	Julia
Anne		Matthew	Julia
Anne		Matthew	Julia
Anne		Matthew	Julia
Anne		Matthew	Julia
Anne		Matthew	Julia
Anne		Matthew	Julia
Anne		Matthew	Julia
Anne		Matthew	Julia

2.5 Ulises Carrión, *Arguments,* Beau Geste Press, Cullompton: 1973.

2.6 Ulises Carrión, *Looking for Poetry / Tras la poesía,* Cullompton: Beau Geste Press, 1973.

An emphasis on visual elements of language is visible in *Sonnet(s)* and more exclusively in *Arguments*. Whereas words still function as to refer to the signified, the visual components of the signifier are emphasized through the use of exceptional spacing, patterning of letters or words. A play with the relationship between signified and the signifier itself is similarly approached in the small bilingual bookwork *Looking for Poetry/Tras la poesía* (1973) [2.6]. Each page has eight lines printed on them in blue ink. Throughout the book, these same lines gain concrete or abstract significance in juxtaposition with the plural nouns such as *arrows, folds, latitudes* or *shadows*. The last pages read *relations, symbols, metaphors, poetry*, thereby again positioning his work as a reflection on literary discipline. The bookwork *In Alphabetical Order* (1978) [2.7] works in a way. Black and white photographs – photography is an exception in Carrión's oeuvre – repetitively show Carrión's card filing box 26 times page after page, each time a different number of cards stand upright. Each picture is captioned with a category relating to the people the cards refer to, for example '*My best friends, people I love*' or '*People I've met, but wouldn't recognize*'. Again, the caption, the reference to the alphabet, as well as the card filing box solidly center the work around linguistic systems.

Whereas most bookworks produced by Carrión are simple in execution and have no exceptional material qualities, *Tell Me What Sort Of Wallpaper Your Room Has and I Will Tell You Who You Are* (1973) forms one of few exceptions. The small book has pages of actual wallpaper, the rich materiality and alluring patterns of the wallpaper however serve a purpose outside its decorative character. The printed text refers to a room for each page. Thereby the wallpaper forms an indexical relationship to a room belonging to a person, such as *my lawyer's room* or *my guestroom*.[258] By using the page as a deliverer of content Carrión again points at elemental parameters of a written text normally ignored, but capable of producing meaning nevertheless. The material quality in this example does thus not function as a decorative element, but plays a fundamental role in the book as a conceptual whole. As Carrión would state in an interview:

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[258] Reijnders, recorded conversation: 0:58:00. Reijnders points out that for this work Carrion used wallpaper-sample-books he found on the streets. The books came from the wallpaper factory Rath en Doodeheefver in Amsterdam. A re-edition was made using leftover samples in 2005.
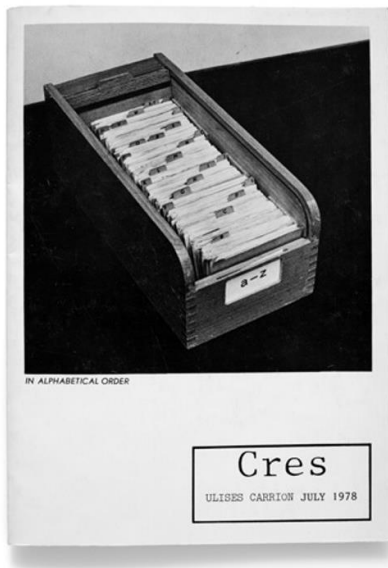
2.7 Carrión, *In Alphabetical Order*, Amsterdam/Maastricht: Cres publishers/Agora Studio, 1978.

'*I try as much I can to use different signs of a non-literary and certainly non-linguistic nature. […] I'm very much aware of paper. I try to show that books have a definite development. It is not that the message must be easy to understand but rather that the book's structure, the way it's constructed must be made clear.*'[259]

This materiality of the page as well as the shape of the book, was investigated throughout Carrión´s career, however the strong emphasis on these physical qualities of some books stand out in relation to his other works. After the above mentioned book, few examples followed such as *Margins* (1975), which has partially torn off, penetrated pages, *Mirror Box*

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[259] Guy Schraenen, *We didn't*, 44-45.

(1979) [2.8], which has pages made of felt and shows a sequence of rubber-stamped boxers in different poses, and the series *Sistemas* (1983). These works, especially the last one has a outspoken handmade and sculptural quality, the significantly lower editions are therefore unsurprising. These works are getting closer to what Carrión would describe as objectbooks rather than his preferred bookworks.[260] [261] As Schraenen points out, Carrión produced a number of unique bookworks and drawings, either with an immediate link to other projects, or purely for financial reasons.[262] In many instances the object based nature of these works could also be identified as resulting from an examination of the page as a semiotic element of the book.

An ongoing interest that shows in his bookworks is the emphasis on personal, emotional, social relationships, expressed through names, dates and addresses.[263] This interest in social relationships in narrative structures already became apparent in the above mentioned work *Arguments,* in which these relationships are evaluated upon within storytelling. *In Alphabetical Order* and *Tell Me What Sort Of Wallpaper Your Room Has and I Will Tell You Who You Are,* both suggestively refer to people that are close to Carrión, thereby making the content very personal. The same could be said of *Ephemera No. 7,* which is an eight-page long text in which Carrión included as many people as possible by their first names.

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[260] Zutter, Jörg. "Van boek tot kunstenaarsboek: interview met Ulises Carrión". *Kunstenaarsboeken uit het Otherbooks & So Archive Amsterdam.* Ed. U. Carrión. Schiedam: Stedelijk Museum, 1981. Carrión makes the division between bookworks, objectbooks and bookworks. Objectbooks are still functioning as books but outspoken material qualities become prominent.
[261] Carrión, *Second Thoughts,* 66. In his text *Bookworks Revisited* Carrión makes clear that the term artists' books for him includes all books made by artists.
[262] Guy Schraenen, *We Didn't,* 46. Schraenen does however not specify to which works he hereby refers. Tineke Reijnders suggests that these were his unique and often framed pieces. A value judgment concerning these works on behalf of Schraenen's remarks should however be suspended.
[263] Carrión, Ulises. *Names and Adresses: Verbal, Visual, and Aural Works 1973-1980.* Maastricht: Agora, 1980: 7.
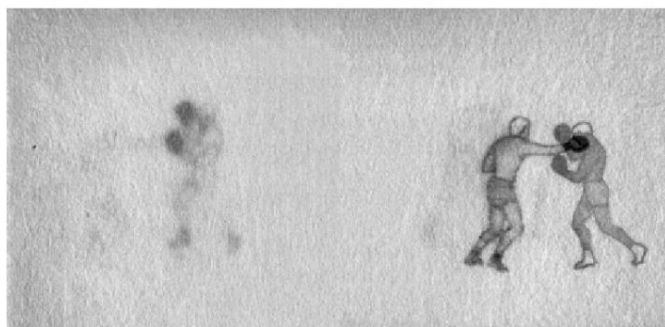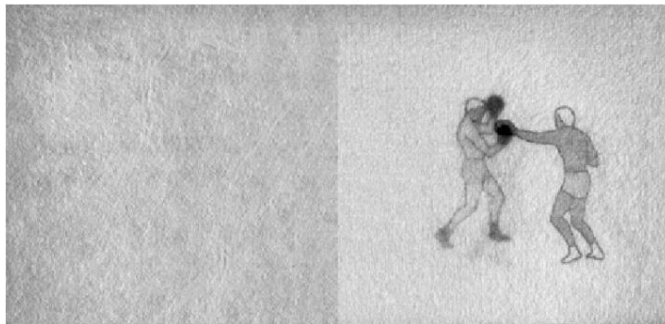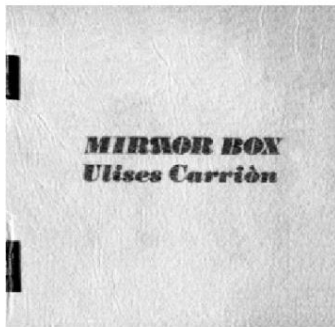
2.8 Ulises Carrión, *Mirror Box,* Amsterdam: Stempelplaats, 1979.

By focusing on names, dates and addresses, people are reduced to simplified bits of information, which enable Carrión it to structure them and to incorporate them in organizing systems, such as the card filing box in *In Alphabetical Order* [2.7]. The activity of meticulously going through his personal contacts and sorting them in twenty-six categories is perhaps a very systematic activity, the categories he uses are however arbitrary, and very personal. This way the grouping of personal contacts becomes not only a very personal practice, but also suggests to reveals very intimate facts about Carrión's relation to others, this could even prove insulting to the people involved. As the index cards are not readable, these facts however are only expressed in quantity while leaving the details to the imagination of the viewer.

The work of Carrión could be compared to the paradigmatic work of Ruscha's

Twentysix Gasoline Stations, while there remains no record of Carrión linking his work to Ruscha's directly,[264] close formal similarities are apparent such as the 26 matter-of-fact-style black and white photographs, positioned on the upper half of the right page leaving the other empty, and juxtaposed with a short caption. The comparison does show the stark contrast between the intimate nature of *In Alphabetical Order* and the neutralizing tendency characteristic of many conceptual artists. It could even be perceived as a critique of the supposed 'natural facts'[265] This further becomes most clear in a statement that he made about his bookwork *The Muxlows* (1978), which features a list of dates, names and places that tell the history of an English family from Yokshire. The list was found by Carrión in 1972 in an old Bible and turned into a book. Carrión stated about the work that:

´When one reads the names, dates and places one after another, these become interchangeable: individuality, space and time, united in one single flow of words, one single flow of sounds, become a pure rhythm, a primitive chanting. And then again this rhythm, composed of the most essential events of life, brings us back to earth and ourselves´.[266]

The personal focus – albeit emotionally detached – could thus be seen as a way of bridging the structural abstraction and the everyday and emotive reality, thereby blurring the border between theoretical models and reality. As will be pointed out, this merging of art and a general cultural and social context would become Carrión's main preoccupation in his later 'cultural strategies'.

Whereas *Sonnet(s)* mainly focuses on linguistic structures, it could be argued that *Arguments, In Alphabetical Order* and *The Muxlows* specifically focus on social structures and power relations. As pointed out by João Fernandes, structuralism was highly influential in Europe during the 1960s and 1970s and effected virtually every academic field. Carrión certainly came in contact with structuralism.[267] This interest in the structural approach of language and literature was formulated already before his earliest bookworks were published, in his thesis on *Judas'Kiss and Shakespeare's Henry VIII* written in 1972:

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[264] Carrión, *Second Thoughts,* 66-67. Carrión names Ruscha and Roth as two prominent figures that concern the artists' book. Roth's as well as Ruscha's works were sold in Other Books and So.
[265] Davis, Douglas. "From Common Scenes, Mr. Ruscha Evolkes Art". *Leave Any Information At The Signal – Ed Ruscha: Writings, Interviews, Bits, Pages*. Ed. A. Schwartz. Massechusetts: MIT Press, 2004: 29.
[266] Guy Schraenen, *We didn't*, 45.
[267] Fernandes, 40.

'A play is a structure. [...] The structure has a meaning which we can discover by summing up the various elements: speeches, actions and characters. [...] The characters are what their function within the structure of the play tells us they are.'[268]

In 1975 he stated that *´nobody or nothing exists in isolation: everything is an element of a structure. Every structure is in its turn an element of another structure´.*[269] This structural thinking was indeed at the core of his concept of the bookwork. As suggested by Lourdes Morales, by making an abstraction of language, the structure of a text could be revealed without focusing on a particular meaning of a specific text.[270] While structuralism often aimed at revealing a hidden complexity, the focus on structures in Carrión's work often resulted in formal simplifications, which suppressed text in favor of basic textual conventions normally ignored, emphasizing elements such as rhythm syllable division, grammatical structure, punctuation, orthography and narrative structure.[271]

Despite his turn to systems and the adaptation of conceptual methods that ruled out writing itself, literary elements are found throughout his work, in his books as well as his later films and media projects.[272] Whereas Carrión distanced himself from his earlier literary works, he still positioned his works squarely in the context of poetry and literary tradition by excessively examining literary conventions and referencing paradigmatic writers such as William Shakespeare[273], Rosetti and James Joyce.[274] However, Carrión deals with literature in a profoundly different way. This move away from literary traditions can be positioned in a historical narrative of the demise of literature, and even the destruction of literature, which had been repeatedly announced at the time by concrete poets.[275]

Besides being inspired by the practice of Ehrenberg and Beau Geste Press, the shift made by Carrión is described by Heriberto Yépez as a reaction to a supposed end of literature, which Carrión declared through his admiration for the work of Juan Rulfo. Carrión viewed Rulfo's work as an endpoint in a progression towards an unsurpassable formal beauty.[276] Carrión additionally argued that the narrative convention was exhausted.

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[268] Schraenen, *We didn't*, 39.
[269] Carrion, *Second Thoughts*, 17.
[270] Morales, Lourdes. "Of the Book as Structure". *The Age of Discrepancies: Art and Visual Culture in Mexico 1968-1997.* Ed. O. Debroise. Mexico City: UNAM/Turner, 2006: 165.
[271] Fernandes, 40.
[272] Alonso, 18.
[273] This is the case in *Hamlet For Two Voices* (1977).
[274] As Reijnders has suggested, *Ephemera no. 7* can be seen as a reference to the excessive amount of characters that appear throughout Joyce's *Ulysses*. Fernandes points out that his unpublished work *Constellations* is said to be based on aspects of the work of Joyce (43).
[275] Morales, 164.
[276] Yépez, *Mexican Discontinuities,* 50.

Therefore, the only reason to employ narrative elements was to explore underlying formal structures.[277] This radical break with the 'old art' could thus be seen as a search for a new use of literary conventions rather than their abandonment, and destroyed his place in the Mexican literary tradition that he seemed destined for.[278]

Already in 1973 Carrión's experimental writings were published in the influential *Plural* magazine, edited by Paz, who had received Carrión's work in 1972. In a correspondence between Carrión and Paz, the latter begs Carrión to reconsider his shift away from literature. This not only shows the potential Paz saw in Carrión as a literary writer, but also underlines the radicality of this work in comparison to his former publications. Paz however also praised Carrión's work for his 'moving structures' were poetic anti-texts, which announced the destruction of text and literature. Carrión's work however created commotion amongst the literary community. As Yépez pointed out, *Plural* catered for both an experimental as well as a reactionary public.[279]

It is in a well aimed response to the conservative Mexican milieu that his seminal text *The New Art of Making Books* (1975) should be viewed, as Yépez argues. The text was first published in *Plural* (no. 41) and reacted directly to texts earlier published in the magazine that mocked conceptual art, mail art and more importantly, ridiculed the emergence of artists' books. Carrión refers to one of these texts directly by mimicking the tone of this texts while reversing its meaning. The manner in which Paz published the text of Carrión however deradicalizes it as Carrión is introduced by the editor in a paternalistic tone, and the text is published alongside a text that seeks to render all the experimentalism absurd. *The New Art of Making Books* was the last contribution Carrión made to *Pural* and can be seen as the final break with the Mexican literary scene.[280]

Shortly after its publication in Plural the text was published in English by Gibbs in *Kontexts* magazine (no. 6/7) that same year. This slightly shortened version became the standard version of the text, it has undergone only a few minor changes, and has been heavily quoted, published and translated for many occasions.

In the highly analytical text *The New Art of Making Books* Carrión defines what a book is, and comes to propagate ´the new art´. He clarifies his perspective on 'the new book', whereby the book as a form on itself is no longer ignored by being simply used as a container of text, but is liberated as a system of signs or a structure that can be apprehended. First,

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[277] Wright, 107.
[278] Yépez, *Mexican Discontinuities,* 51.
[279] Ibid., 52.
[280] Ibid., 54-55.

carrion defines both the book and language as spatial and temporal media: '*A book is a sequence of spaces.[...]Written language is a sequence of signs expanding within the space.*' He further states that books are often used as containers for a text making all pages look similar, which no matter how thrilling the content of the words, is boring as a book.[281] A book however can also exist as an 'autonomous and self-sufficient form' this is the defining feature of what Carrión calls the 'new art'.[282] The pages as well as the words in the bookwork are elements of a structure that exist in the real, physical space of the book, which exists as a volume in space.[283]

Carrión describes a shift in labor, which is implied by this shift from the old art to the new. The old art is a result of labor being divided between the writer who writes a text while servants, artisans or workers, 'others', are responsible for the actual book. As all elements of the new book are to be considered as forming one structure, the division of labor collapses as the writer now assumes responsibility for the whole process of production. '*In the old art the writer writes texts. In the new art the writer makes books.*'[284] As Schraenen points out however, his conceptual method also enabled Carrión to delegate much of the work, not only by appropriating texts, but also by giving strict instructions to others who could then carry out the work for him. The actual producers of the work were not mentioned as the execution of the work became of secondary importance and was good as long as the instructions were followed. [285] The extent to which Carrión delegated labor remains unclear, and in the case of *Arguments* it is known to have financial motivation.[286]

In the new book, reading is fundamentally different from the old book. As this new type of book is a structure formed by all elements it consists of, reading a new book means identifying all elements, understanding their function and thereby unraveling its structure. Whereas in old books reading the first page takes just as long as reading the last, in the new book reading can accelerate or slow down.[287]

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[281] Carrion, *Second Thoughts*, 9.
[282] Ibid.,7-8.
[283] Ibid., 15-17.
[284] Ibid., 8. This claim clearly echoes McLuhan's argument that Fordian production methods are surpassed as '*Anybody can become both author and publisher*'. (*Massage*, 123.)
[285] Schraenen, *We Didn't,* 45.
[286] Ehrenberg, 29. Ehrenberg here describes his extensive correspondence with Carrión, and points out how Ehrenberg asked if Carrión could be present during the production process of *Arguments* that was carried out through Beau Geste Press. Carrión was much willing to come, but unable financially.
[287] Carrion, *Second Thoughts*, 20.

2.3 The Book as a Cultural Strategy

Producing bookworks Carrión was most productive before 1975, this demise corresponds with the opening of the gallery Other Books & So, which was ran by Carrión and his friend and partner Van Barneveld until 1978 and proved very demanding. The sales were so low that no profit was ever made. Despite many applications Other Books and So never got any subsidies.[288] Also, Carrión was disappointed by the fact that books that were progressive and cheaply made did not sell, while works by renowned artists became expensive collector's items. This eventually moved Carrión to decide to close Other Books and So in 1978.[289] This however did not move Carrión to regain his productions of books, on the contrary, his production of books would be lowest in the eighties.

While Carrión was still producing books, and Other Books and So obviously was centered around bookworks, it should be noted that around 1975 Carrión started exploring other media. His early sound and video works unmistakably echo his bookworks. For example his soundwork *Hamlet For Two Voices* (1977) consists of a repetitive sequence of names similar to the bookwork *Arguments.* Preparations also had been made to translate *Arguments* to the medium of film.[290] The works *Six Plays* (1976) and *The Muxlows* were performed well before being published as a bookwork.[291] Carrión's performances often took the form of sound-poetry readings performed in a simple and dry manner.

The structures examined in his bookworks were thus actively shifted to different media. Carrión thus not only examined structures, but also examined how these structured behaved in different media. The early bookwork *Dancing With You* (1973) could be seen as a reversal of this exercise by re-contextualizing dance movements into typed text and the book form. The work is a tedious description of dance movements. The dances described are reduced to factual bits of information, and are thereby completely abstracted and stripped from emotive or expressive content.

Carrión thus actively sought to create works that existed between media. It is telling that the first film Carrion produced was the work *A Book* (1978) in which a pair of hands tear out all pages of a book, while another puts the pages back together in random order and

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[288] Van Raay.

[289] De Vries, Alex. "Boekkunst: Ulises Carrión" *Metropolis M* no. 4 (1980): 21-26. The bookshop was reopened by Karen Kvernes who called it *Art Something* which lasted for two years and focused on punk and feminism as Carrión proceeded with the Other Books & So Archive.

[290] Wright, 114. This video was never made as the friendship between Carrión and filmmaker Danniel Danniel was ended over a dispute concerning the game *Go.*

[291] The performance *Six Play* took place in Utrecht in 1975.

finally puts them back in the cover again. Other early videos reference musical experiments, as can be derived from titles such as *Bullet Swing, Chinese Checkers Choir, Chinese Checkers Melody, Dice Tune, Shooting Ragtime and Playing Cards Song* (all 1980).[292] As pointed out by Fernandes, Carrión's view on the bookwork as a spacio-temporal structure sets his bookworks aside from concrete poetry. This view makes Carrión position his bookworks alongside film, performance and mail art, rather than painting, the traditional book or the newspaper.[293]

While after closing Other Books and So in December 1978 he stated that he would at last have more time to focus on his own work, the exploration of other media signals an important shift in focus and explains the diminishing production of bookworks. This shift was further prompted by his work for Other Books and So, which he increasingly saw as an artistic activity:

> '*It became evident to me that it was very important to make your work of art through a social entity [...] You cease being a person, I mean an individual, who is doing a certain work only in his name. You become an institution, a social body that works among other social bodies.*'[294]

This view is best characterized as a shift towards ´cultural strategies´, a concept that he referred to in relation to a number of later works that involved organizing, curating and programming, thereby activating networks of artists and audiences that were independent from the cultural institutional system. He theorized the term in his essay *Personal Worlds or Cultural Strategies?*, which was published only half a year after closing Other Books and So.[295] In his text Carrión states that creating 'cultural strategies' aims at creating a social reality. The projects can exist in an exhibition of works, however gain meaning both in the exhibition, as in the external world at once. They thus exist in the wider concept of culture rather than what is traditionally called art. The meaning of such a project is thus not *'hidden in the depths of the artist's soul'* but in the reaction of the artist on conditions that the external

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[292] It should be noted that Carrión would soon stop making video's, as he found that they were too much of a ritual, whereas TV coincides more closely with everyday life. (for more info: Carrión, *TV-Tonight Video*, Amsterdam: self-published, 1988.)

[293] Fernandes, 41.

[294] Van Raay.

[295] The essay *Personal Worlds or Cultural Strategies?'* was published on the occasion of the exhibition *Postage Stamps and Cancellation Stamps,* at the Stempelplaats. The title is a reaction to the exhibition *Personal Worlds* in the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam in 1978, which showed conceptual artists who, as argued in the exhibition catalogue, took personal perceptions as a point of departure and structure reality to express this individual experience. In defense of a critical examination of personal experience, Curator Antje von Graevenitz ends her essay in an attack on critics that, in the interest of society, bemoan the 'flight into individual privacy' made by poets, story-, body- and performance art. (for further information: Antje von Graevenitz, *Personal Worlds.* Amsterdam: Fodor, 1978: 8-11.)

world impose on him.[296] He further states that an artist may include every part of organization and distribution as a formal element of the artwork.[297] This echoes and extends Carrión's earlier statement made that *'in the new art a writer makes books'*.[298] By making every part of the distribution and organization a potential formal element of the work, the artwork loses its independence of its circulation system, and furthermore includes the reception of the work.[299] The significance of the critic, theorist or historian to explain the work to the general public is surpassed, as the general public becomes an active participant as all reactions are to be treated as formal elements.[300]

While specifically promoting mail art in his essay, which depends on using mail as integral part of the work, the ambition to create cultural strategies led him to explorations of an endless variety of media such as radio, TV, mail and telephone. Whereas Carrión states that the initiator of the project still remains the author – thereby rejecting the idea of multiple authorship – the relationship between author, institution and public is thoroughly revisited. These projects often are no private and egocentric endeavor, resist the separation between art and culture, and aimed for a more central position for art in culture at large.[301] Thereby the public becomes an active participant in a project that often cannot be fully grasped by anyone.

This can be seen as a continuation of his emphasis on the context in which information gains meaning, and can thus be viewed as an offshoot of his thinking in structures which made him abandon literature in favor of the books as an 'autonomous self-sufficient form'. The distribution and circulation of ideas now became formal elements of the works. In his projects he often mimicked and ironized existing institutional models. In his aim for 'cultural strategies' the book as a form was no longer a necessity, instead it was only one of many options, and the use of mass media in general became the focal point of his activities. Despite the demise of his production of bookworks, his later mail-art and media projects often show a preoccupation with lingual, literary and narrative content.[302]

The closeness between bookworks and mail art is also pointed out by Carrión, as he states that the latter radicalizes tendencies initiated by the former, thereby often retaining the book format. Despite the efforts of Other Books and So, artists' books were almost

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[296] Carrion, *Second Thoughts,* 52.
[297] Ibid., 51.
[298] Ibid., 8.
[299] Alonso, 17.
[300] Carrión, *Second Thoughts*, 50.
[301] Van Ginneken, Lily. "Kunst met post verbreedt eigen blikveld". *De Volkskrant, July 21, 1979.*
[302] Alonso, 18.

exclusively distributed through mail.[303] This, Carrión argues, is the decisive factor in the proliferation of the artists' book in the first place.[304] Mail-art projects often were systems that created a massive interchange of communication, this could develop into a book or exhibition, however this product would be only a part of the greater project in which the viewer was actively taken into account and provoked to participate.[305] Closely related with mail art was stamp art, which Carrión became especially involved with through Van Barneveld who founded the Stempelplaats, and which became an important hub within the international mail art circuit.

The step towards mail art that Carrion made is hardly surprising. Not only considering the close relation between the bookworks and mail art, but foremost concerning the vast network he was constantly confronted with and of which he had become an important part. It was on this network that he started relying more heavily within his artistic practice. Already a subject in his bookworks, his social network was actively recruited in a number of projects. Carrión participated in many mail art and related stamp-art projects with more and less elaborate works, but also initiated the projects themselves. *Ephemera* (1977-1978)[306], *Box Boxing Boxers* (1978) [307] and *The Stampa Newspaper* (1980).[308]

This networked practice of mail art often removed the single artist's gesture, and by radicalizing the multiplicity and ubiquity already apparent in bookworks, it further problematized the notion of authorship.[309] While a multiplicity of authorship is often assumed concerning mail art projects, Carrión argues against this notion held by his peers such as De Rook[310] and Gibbs.[311] In line with his view of the author of the 'new art' in which a writer

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[303] Van Raay
[304] Carrion, *Second Thoughts,* 28.
[305] Van der Meijden, Peter. "Box Boxing Boxers: Mail Art Projects, Exhibitions and Archives". 2014, http://www.lomholtmailartarchive.dk/texts/peter-van-der-meijden-box-boxing-boxers-mail-art-projects-exhibitions-archives 2-6. As Peter van der Meijden points out, Carrión's view on these mail art projects is similar to the way fluxus artist Dick Higgins explaines it as being 'intermedia' in 1966, as blurring boundaries between media, and between the creation, the communication through mail and the reflection of the works to the theme. This leads to a complex conglomerate of contributions which are no artworks in themselves, but '*convey a process of rethinking, community-building and psychological and intellectual extension*' as Higgins puts it.
[306] This monthly magazine was organized together with Aart van Barneveld and Salvador Flores. *Ephemera* published ephemeral art pieces sent to Other Books and So through mail. It ran for 12 issues.
[307] *Box Boxing Boxers* was the fifth issue of *Commonpress* a magazine project initiated in 1977 by Polish artists Pawel Petasz, of which a contributor to one issue would edit the next. For this issue Carrión called artsts to respond to the theme *Box Boxing and Boxers,* an theme that is deliberately puzzling and open to interpretation.
[308] For this project, Carrión sent out letters asking for stamp designs. These were then created at the Stempelplaats that was founded by Aart van Barneveld, and placed on one of the eight pages as indicated by the participant. The paper was then distributed.
[309] Carrion, *Second Thoughts,* 29-30.
[310] De Rook, recorded conversation: 49:00.

'makes books', Carrión boldly retains to the idea of single authorship in which the initiator of the project authors all that emerges from it. This would even includes elements that come into being unintentionally or with great independence from the author. In the case of mail art projects for example, Carrión states that the project is the artist's attempt to structure a chaotic range of factors, among postal regulations, emotions, objects and pieces by other artists.[312] The influence of the author on the outcome of the project however lessens as a wide range of factors make up an artwork that is vast, ungraspable and decentralized. The position of this singular author thereby also grows more opaque.

Carrión's mail art projects can thus best be described as a strategy of delegation whereby work of others is appropriated, this strategy is paralleled in his bookworks. Reducing the author's gesture served to create live projects and social settings whereby Carrión used everyday means and aimed to become invisible as an artist.[313] This would especially become clear in media projects such as *Trios and Boleros* (1983) and the *Lilia Prado Superstar Film Festival* (1984) [2.9]. The former being a one hour radio show in which Carrión introduced and broadcasted 39 popular Mexican 'bolero' songs. The latter was a four-day film festival screening films featuring the Mexican actress Lilia Prado, who was invited to attend the festival.

Both these projects could have easily been experienced as regular cultural events by an audience not familiar with Carrión's work. The events were however created by Carrión as an investigation of the spread and reception of information in specific communities and cultural contexts, and the effect of re-contextualizing information on its meaning. Every part of each project was part of one open ended artwork, including the reception it provoked. This challenged the notion of 'the artwork' as the work existed as an accumulation of temporal and ephemeral moments and encounters that could partly crystallize in a material products such as newspaper articles, however was an open-ended whole that could never be fully grasped.[314]

As his focus shifted from text to the general distribution of information regarding

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[311] Gibbs, Michael. "Thoughts on Second Thoughts by Ulises Carrión". *Artzien* 2 no. 8 (1980). This stance taken by Carrión was a point of debate. Michael Gibbs argued that Carrión did not emphasize the communal aspect of mail art.

[312] Carrion, *Second Thoughts,* 52-53.

[313] Ruhé, Harry. "The Media Projects of Ulises Carrión". *We have won! Haven't we?* Ed. G. Schraenen. Amsterdam: Museum Fodor, 1992: 66.

[314] Alonso, 17-19. The notion of the art object is most clearly challenged with Carrión's project *Gossip, Scandal and Good Manners* (1988) for which Carrión made up rumors about himself, and had others tell them to people to see how these rumors would spread. The greatest difficulty in this project was in fact to trace the outcome of the project and create a way in which it could be perceived.

specific cultural contexts, the bookwork ceased to be Carrión's primary focus. This cannot be described as an abandonment of the bookwork, in fact carrion states that the book is exceptionally suitable for creating cultural strategies, as the very ordinariness of the bookwork guaranties their place in general culture. Through the use of the book the specialized context of the art world becomes irrelevant. The most effective way of achieving ordinariness, is to mimic any well-known genre of ordinary book in form and content.[315] Rather than a central focus, the bookwork became one option amongst others in creating cultural strategies.

2.9 Poster for the Lilia Prado Superstar Film Festival, 1984.

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[315] Carrión, Ulises. "Bookworks Revisited. Part 1: A Selection". [video] 1987. Accessed on july 7, 2016. http://www.li-ma.nl/site/catalogue/art/ulises-carrion/bookworks-revisited-part-1-a-selection/2991.

2.4 The Other Books and So Archive

The closing down of Other Books and So did not stimulate Carrión to resume making bookworks. His ongoing preoccupation with the book now resulted in the Other Books and So Archive, which he spoke about already before the closing of Other Books and So, and which opened in 1980 at the Bloemgracht 121, and in 1982 moved to his apartment at the Ten Katestraat where it remained until his death in 1989. The archive consisted of the bookworks that Carrión originally sold at Other Books and So, Carrión kept receiving new publications through mail which were also added. As opposed to Other Books and So, for his archive he actively acted as a gatekeeper, accepting only bookworks, mail art and documents related to bookworks. The Other Books and So Archive was open from Wednesdays to Saturdays between two and five PM.[316]

The Other Books and So Archive functioned as a regular archive open to the public. As such, it had a place in general culture, in Carrión's words, it could be stated that the archive created a 'social reality' and can thus be seen as a cultural strategy. By extension, the archive was seen by Carrión as an artwork in its own right. Not only did Other Books and So Archive reflect his daily activities and social network, it can be argued to be a consequence of his earlier works, as the practice of archiving already shows in his earlier bookworks.[317] The keeping of an archive is also apparent in a number of his works. The bookwork *In Alphabetical Order* shows a clear interest in the concept of the archive as art.[318] A preoccupation with archive-like methods such as systematic repetition, variation, permutation of words and names, and the creation of lists and records show throughout his works.[319] The involvement with this highly bureaucratic endeavor was both serious and ironic. As Peter van der Meijden points out, this becomes apparent in his *Table of Mail Art Works* (1978), which was published as a postcard to announce the opening of the Other Books and So Archive, a table for structuring mail art that has one category named 'Anomalities', a non-category, which obstructs the system as a whole.[320] In the archive the content was meticulously catalogued using several card filing systems that complemented each other to an almost ridiculous extent.[321]

The foundation of the Other Books and So Archive should be seen as paralleled by a

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[316] Van Raay.

[317] Maderuelo, Javier. "An Archive Is an Archive Is an Archive Is an Archive". *Dear reader. Don't read.* Ed. G. Schraenen. Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, 2016: 58.

[318] Fernandes, 43.

[319] Maderuelo, 58.

[320] Van der Meijden, 19-20.

[321] De Vries, 22.

broader tendency of mail artists who became the owner of archives.[322] Carrión makes this clear by mentioning that his idea of the archive was based on visits to three archives, all three of which had a focus on dada, Fluxus and mail-art related practices.[323] As pointed out by Van der Meijden in this context, an archive can be described as an active institution which saves and preserves selected documents and keeps them in circulation thereby defining knowledge, shaping collective memory and maintaining discourse. The archive ultimately acts as a scenario in which the archived makes available a range of possible meanings rather than offering a predetermined 'scripted' reading. Through the archive, objects – in this case mail-art works and bookworks – transform into documentation that simultaneously works as fragments of the past, the present and the future.[324]

In the essay and video *Bookworks Revisited* (1987) Carrión stated that all books would eventually die, and that archives, libraries and museums were the perfect cemetery for books.[325] This cryptic statement on the Other Books and So Archive as 'cemetery' can perhaps be understood in direct reference to Foucault, who aligns museums, archives, libraries and cemeteries on basis of their shared function in society. Being 'heterotopias', they are 'spaces of difference', physical spaces in which real emplacements of culture are represented, contested and reversed.[326] From the Foucaultian perspective the Other Books and So Archive is by no means dead, on the contrary, heterotopias are central to culture and connected to all other emplacements of society. It is a space were time accumulates and historical values are subjected to critique. This view of the Other Books and So Archive as an institution that has an influence on all segments of culture corresponds with Carrión's focus on cultural strategies. Whereas the books are thus described as dead objects that have lost their place in general culture, within the archive they can be reflected upon and revived and reflected upon.

Carrión ran Other Books and So Archive until he got AIDS and died in October 1989. Shortly before his death he decided to donate the Other Books and So Archive to his friend Agius, who lived in Geneva and worked as a bookseller specializing in post war avant-garde publications. The reasons why Carrión decided to send his archive to Geneva, and his expectations of it are topic of heated debate. Schraenen argues that the archive was sent

[322] Schraenen, Guy. "A Story to Remember". *Dear reader. Don't read.* Ed. G. Schraenen. Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, 2016: 19.
[323] Carrión, Ulises. "Other Books and So Archief". *Artzien* 2 No. 8 (1980).
[324] Van der Meijden, 16-19.
[325] Carrión, *Bookworks Revisited*.
[326] Lord, Beth. "Foucault's Museum: Difference, Representation and Genealogy. *Museum and Society,* 4 No. 1 (2006): 1-3.

abroad due to an incomprehensible and regrettable lack of interest in his work within the Netherlands.[327] The dissatisfied position of Schraenen, which was initially shared with De Rook however resonates with that of Perrée, who writes that the archive '*disappeared out of the country as not a single institution in the Netherlands made any effort to keep it here.*' Perree goes on stating that '*the impression now is that it is now being slowly sold off [...]. With the disappearance of this collection, history is being deprived of a record of activities*'.[328] De Rook once similarly regretted the dispersal of the archive, and stated that '*Carrión's greatest artwork was destroyed*'.[329] He changed his position shortly afther the publication of his statement, as he in retrospect admitted the dispersal of the archive by Agius was justified and inevitable.[330]

In reaction to the dissatisfaction caused by the dispersal of the archive, Agius explains that it was Carrión who consciously decided that the archive should not outlive him. While Carrión's friends were eager to find a solution that would guarantee the continuity of the Other Books and So Archive suggesting private and public collections and even started putting together a foundation to keep the archive in Amsterdam, Carrión had already started dispersing some of his collections, for example his video collection was donated to Time Based Arts.[331] According to Agius he was asked by Carrión to disperse the archive and gave him some directions and tips concerning this matter, Agius thus dispersed the collection 'without hesitation'.[332]

The reason that Carrión decided to disperse the Other Books and So Archive remains unclear. His motivation is speculated upon by Agius in one of his statements. Agius firstly counters the idea that the Other Books and So Archive project was Carrión's 'greatest work of art' by simply stating that it was '*nothing more than the backdrop of Carrión's art practice, which had nothing to do with his art practice*'. By nullifying the importance of the Other Books and So Archive Agius takes a position that boldly contradicts the accuracy and dedication to which Carrión carried out his Other Books and So Archive as well as his other works. A more interesting suggestion is made by Agius when he continues arguing that the

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[327] Schraenen, *We Didn't*, 29.

[328] Perree, 41.

[329] De Rook, Gerrit Jan. "Tatatá tatatatá ta: Ulises Carrión and Other Books and So" *Metropolis M* 5 (2010), accessed on july 7, 2016. http://web.archive.org/web/20160612071124/http://metropolism.com/magazine/2010-no5/tatata-tatatata-ta/english.

[330] De Rook, recorded conversation: 09:14:00.

[331] TBA was led by Aard van Barneveld who was also infected with HIV and died in 1990. The collection of TBA was later cared for by NIMK (1994-2012), and is currently housed by the orginazation LIMA (2013-present).

[332] Agius, Juan J. "Other Books and SoA/JJA". Letter written by Agius (2016).

deliberate destruction of the Other Books and So Archive resonated with Carrión's ideas about the ephemeral quality of things and of processes.[333] [334] Tineke Reijnders states that shortly before passing away Carrión had told her that he did not want the Other Books and So Archive to be institutionalized.[335] By dispersing the archive Carrión kept control over its unwinding.

Due to the efforts of Agius the contents of the Other Books and So Archive have been scattered throughout the world. Carrión's personal archive, existing of his published and unique bookworks, Mail Art related material, ephemera, correspondence and diaries, notebooks and other documents of his projects are now mostly held by the Archivo Lafuente in Spain. Agius still owns the manuscripts as well as the copyrights to Carrión's works and theoretical essays, and has been responsible for the publishing of posthumous editions, facsimiles and translated editions of bookworks and theoretical texts through different publishers. Carrión's essay *The New Art of Making Books* has been translated into many languages and was recently even published in Vietnamese.

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[333] Ibid.

[334] Agius, Juan J. "Other Books and So and Beyond". *Art? Skill? Technique? Ulises Carrión's Cultural Strategies and Communications Tactics, Five Reports.* Ed. J.J. Agius. Coruña: Ediciones La Bahía, 2013: 255-256. The tone of Agius in this text is much milder than the version he wrote three years later.

[335] Tineke Reijnders, recorded conversation: 1:02:00.

Chapter Three

The bookworks of Ulises Carrión and the notion of the 'democratic multiple'

3.1 Strategy of Distance

As described in the first chapter, the proliferation of the artists' book was fueled by the notion of the 'democratic multiple'. This notion is described by Drucker as '*the idea of the book as a democratic, affordable, available multiple in which an artist is able to produce a vision and disseminate it widely*' and as '*a book which is able to pass into the world with the fewest obstacles between conception and production, production and distribution*'.[336] This notion is closely related to revolutionary ideals in the historicization of both conceptual art as well as information and communication technologies. These three interwoven revolutionary narratives all pursued a thorough revision of the hierarchical relationship of author, mediator and spectator and were aimed at a more egalitarian model in which the author would be able to independently produce and distribute ideas to a broad decentralized audience, which participated as a co-creator of meaning.

The optimistic discourse concerning the artists' book peaked around the end of the 1960s and early 1970s and tempered or even turned toward a discourse of failure in the subsequent decade.[337] When Carrión shifted his focus from literature towards the artists' book in 1972, the artists' book had already gained a steady reputation internationally and gradually gained visibility in the Netherlands. In the period that would follow, the artists' book was embedded more solidly in a theoretical and art historical framework while a specialized global distribution network emerged. The demise in optimism gave way to a number of more nuanced positions towards the artists' book and its democratic implications that are still relevant today.

Through In-Out Center, Other Books and So and later the Other Books and So Archive he actively contributed to the emerging distribution network of the artists' book while producing his own bookworks. His analytical essays helped the theorization of the diverse emerging field. These texts are often quoted and provide the foundations of many publications studying the artists' book as a phenomenon.[338] It is there that his most obvious

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[336] Drucker, *Century,* 88.

[337] The discourse of failure in conceptual art is described by Stimson and traced back to 1973, a discourse of failure concerning the artists book followed some years later.

[338] *The New Art of Making Books* has gained an important status in the field of artists' books. It is translated in many languages, and is the first text in Critical anthology.

contribution to the artists' book lies. Well aware of the developments of its time, Carrión inevitably positioned himself towards the revolutionary notions of the artists' book. In this chapter the vision of Carrión as it becomes apparent through his works and statements will be related to the notion of the 'democratic multiple' described in the first chapter. By doing so, his ideological position towards the book can be revealed. This will clarify both Carrión's involvement with the book and his later move towards other media.

The bookworks of Carrión show close similarities with conceptual art, as the idea gains importance over execution of the work, and it shows a preoccupation with bureaucratic systems. More importantly, the rejection of literature over the bookwork was a result of the conception of a book as a '*sequence of spaces*' rather than a container for text.[339] This results in a focus on the materiality of language and the book as a semiotic system. This development mirrors the rematerialization of language that concluded the 'linguistic turn' made by conceptual artist.[340]

This focus on mediality coincides with the optimistic discourse around information and communication technologies in which theorists announced a fundamental, technology-driven revolution that would reshuffle fundamental structures of thought and society. Old technologies were to be reinvented to remain relevant. Carrión announced the collapse of segmented production methods, and actively sought to reinvent the book as an artistic medium. As he stated, the book now gained privileged position for artists as '*in our time, the invention and spreading of multimedia communication allows for the purely artistic use of 'monomedia' like books, postcards, letters etc.*'[341]

Despite the above noted similarities, Carrión does not neatly fit into any category. This is partially due to the fact that he actively kept himself away from established forms while he clearly knew how to take advantage of their experiments. Thereby he opposed legitimizing networks and protected himself from the construction of fame.[342] First he distanced himself from the Mexican literary scene. Similarly, Carrión denied the importance of conceptual art in the development of the artists' book. This is done not only by using the bureaucratic idiom for personal and emotive subject matter thereby contradicting the matter-of-factness of these systems, but more importantly to stress the materiality of communication. He states that conceptual artists were often not at all involved with making bookworks as they '*weren't interested in books as such but in language. Therefore they made their*

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[339] Carrión, *Second Thoughts,* 7.
[340] Dworkin, xxxvi.
[341] Ibid., 54-55.
[342] Fernandes, 37.

publications look as normal as possible'.[343]

This rejection of the importance of conceptual art is made in an attempt to schematically decompose a definition of the bookwork in his text '*Bookworks Revisited'* which he wrote as a lecture held at the Visual Studies Workshop and the Art Institute of Boston in 1979, and was published in New York in *The Print Collector's Newsletter* in 1980. In this lecture he describes his concept of the bookwork and the history of the artists' book, and thereby problematizes arguments made by Phillpot, as well as Martha Wilson, founder of Franklin Furnace, as he resists the importance of some books by artists, such as *Royal Road Test* (1967) by Ruscha.[344] Thus not only showing him well aware of the current debates, but actively working against them to formulate his own position.

Additionally he denies the contribution of fluxus for the artists' book, as they found books too heavily laden with prestige and therefore turned to loose cards in boxes.[345] While he states conceptual art and fluxus added to the popularity of the artists' book, he counters a fundamental influence, thereby reacting to Phillpot. He then states the real innovations were made by the concrete and visual poets who – without artists taking notice – have experimented with the space of the page going *´beyond Mallarmé´s wildest dreams'*.[346] He furthermore negates the cultural significance of dada artists. He does this on the basis that their efforts lacked repercussions in society as a whole. He thereby simultaneously denies the cultural significance of art historians and critics, as what is important from an art historical viewpoint often is detached from general society.[347]

Carrión moreover rejects the notion of the 'democratic multiple', which he tackles head on through clear statements in his theoretical texts. Carrión describes the notion of the artists' book that could allow a cheap, widespread and direct contact to a potentially infinite number of people, thereby creating greater autonomy of critics while promoting a social responsibility among creators.[348] The great optimism with which this idea was embraced however vanishes quickly with a deeper analyses, states Carrión. He argues that this idea totally ignored the 500 year history of the book, which developed along with market strategies and a celebrity syndrome similar to the art world. Carrión continues by argues that the subversion of the art galleries and critics by the use of the book form is nonsensical: liberation from the art world would imply falling into the hands of publishers and book

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[343] Carrión, *Second Thoughts,* 66-67 .
[344] Ibid., 66-67.
[345] Carrión hereby refers to works such as *Water Yam* (1963) by George Brecht.
[346] Carrión, *Second Thoughts,* 66.
[347] Schraenen, *A Story,* 24.
[348] Carrión, *Second Thoughts,* 63-64.

critics.[349] Similar to Drucker and Phillpot,[350] Carrión mentions Roth and Ruscha as two founders of the artists' book, stating that in their time the book was not adopted by artists, which enabled them to use the form with innocence, as making a book as an artwork was itself meaningful enough. This innocence was however was soon lost.[351]

In relation to mail art, Carrión again brings up the notion of the democratic implication of the art form. This is done in the text *Mail art and the Big Monster,* which he wrote in 1977 and coincided with the opening of Carrión's Erratic Art Mail International System (E.A.M.I.S.), which briefly functioned as an alternative to the regular mail system. In his text, he asks '*Is Mail Art democratic?*', concluding that the number of artists and viewers involved is very limited. More importantly, he states that this question is beside the point, 'a *more important question is, can you make good art with mail art?*'.[352] A similar move is made by Carrión concerning the cheapness of the book, which would imply its democratic potential, about which he states that '*even if we could prove that this is true – and that would be quite a job – prices cannot be used as a norm for quality or efficiency in art*'.[353] [354]

Unlike the model set by Ruscha, the editions are unknown to exceed 500 copies. Some works are laboriously produced works exist in very limited editions or even as singular objects. In addition, many of his editions were numbered, and some even signed, thus making no attempt to suggest large or unlimited editions.[355] Clearly his concept of the bookwork did not imply large print runs, circulation or cheap materials per se, as it is stressed by protagonists of the 'democratic multiple'. In this respect, the move away from literature towards of the artists' book could arguably be a move towards rather than away from the art world's commodity market. The importance of this claim could however be refuted by his undeviating efforts to fall prey to legitimizing systems. It could moreover easily be discredited as a result Carrión's continuous financial struggle.[356] [357] Indeed, financially the

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[349] Ibid., 64.

[350] Phillpot, *Future.* Carrión is known to have spoken to Phillpot, wether they spoke about this polarization is unknown.

[351] Carrión, *Second Thoughts,* 65.

[352] Ibid., 43.

[353] Ibid., 64.

[354] Ibid., 41. He again makes this argument when he argues that it isn't important whether or not mail art is is easy, cheap, unpretentious and democratic, it is more important to see if you can make good art with it.

[355] Marroquin, 14-15. Marroquín points out that signing and numbering editions was alien to Carrión when he first started making bookworks as this was uncommon in the literary scene.

[356] Reijnders, recorded conversation: 0:58:00. In contrast with this claim, Reijnders points out artists often struggled with poverty, creating books through big publishing companies was out of reach for them.

[357] De Rook, recorded conversation: 25:00. His numbering and signing of bookworks was inconsistent and arguably a casual activity. The relatively small editions thereby are argued to be realistic – even optimistic – as there was very little interest for the works at the time. Second editions of his bookworks were not printed by Carrión but only emerged recently when his work gained popularity.

production and distribution of his bookworks was barely sustainable. Other Books and So was opened through loans of friends, and never made profits. Carrión was personally dependent partially of the BKR.[358] A correspondence with Ehrenberg makes clear that his work *Arguments* was printed by Beau Geste Press without his presence due to a lack of money. Carrión even had to loan a small sum of money to afford the paper and ink needed.[359] It is thus not surprising that a glance at his published bookworks shows an ambivalent interest in reaching a large audience per se.

3.2 Independence as revolt

It would be tempting to assume that Carrión had no intention to radicalize or further develop democratic notions that had triggered artists to hopefully embrace the book as an autonomous artistic practice. However I will argue that, paradoxically, by thoroughly denying importance of the artists' book as a 'democratic multiple', he comes to a more refined and radicalized concept of just that notion, which would ultimately move him away from the bookwork altogether.

It can be argued that Carrión strategically distanced himself from established forms, to escape being captured by pre-established modes of institutionalization and commercialization. Throughout his career, Carrión took a clear and independent stance, as he prevented himself from being associated with established forms. As Yepez points out, Carrión had very specific and radical views that he held onto despite the disagreement with his contemporaries. For this reason Yepes even describes Carrión as a militant artists.[360] In his bookworks he directly addresses conventions of language, literary tradition and the book as a semiotic system. As Fernandes argues, the bookworks of Carrión are therefore a '*crusade against textuality [...]. Carrión rebels against the supremacy of the literary text in the Western cultural tradition [and] each of his 'bookworks' is the announced funeral of the literary book.*'[361]

The work of Carrión was taken seriously by prominent figures in the Mexican literary scene, who eventually rejected him. The radicality of his work is often tempered in the reception of his work by ether ridiculing his contributions, or by describing it as a dead end.

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[358] The 'Beeldende Kunstenaars Regeling' was a government run social project that ran from 1956 until 1987 and provided artists financially in exchange for artworks. Carrión took part in this program.
[359] Ehrenberg, 29.
[360] Yépez, Heriberto. "Other Ulises and so. Los periodos póstumos de Ulises Carrión" Speech held at the Reina Sofía museum, Madrid (2016). Transcription accessed on july 7 (2016). https://ulisescarrion.com/category/artists-books/.
[361] Fernandes, 40.

This is still the case today, as pointed out by Luigi Amara.[362] Christopher Domínguez Michael for example, argues that the criticism on the work of Carrión is more interesting than the work itself, and describing Carrión as a conventional grandson of Dadaists and ridiculing him by fantasizing how Carrión would have grown old as a bibliophilic owner of an antique shop.[363] This argument is however based on speculation and a small and very early segment of Carrión's work that was furthermore published posthumously. A second position pointed out by Amara is represented by a recent text by Ernesto Kavi, who describes Carrión as the destroyer of books, who reduced literature to a conceptually dissected skeleton of what once promised beauty.[364] The argument that Carrión reduced literature to merely empty signs on the page however is blind for the transformation of the book implied by Carrión, as argued by Amara.[365]

Though the analysis of his bookworks in the previous chapter, it has become apparent that Carrión's bookworks result in a shift within notions of authorship and originality in favor of a more participatory function of the reader. Working from the assumption that all stories had been written already, and undermining his own originality as a skilled writer, he performed simple actions on readymade texts. By reducing these texts to simple abstractions, textual meaning and personal expression are suppressed in favor of basic textual conventions normally ignored. By revealing underlying patterns in the appropriated text, and thereby not naming the appropriated source, which varied from the historically significant to the banal, but only mentioning himself as the author of the work, he further undermines the notion of originality of the author.

This is dissection of textual convention and the suppression of the author's importance is ultimately in favor of the text and the book itself as a semiotic system. As Carrión states, '*language is an enigma, a problem […] The author has no other intention than to test the language's ability to mean something*'.[366] This shift implies a liberation of the reader as creator of meaning. This reader is assigned to himself to construct any meaning or

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[362] Amara, Luigi. "El Efecto Carrión en la escritura contemporánea". Speech held at the Reina Sofía museum, Madrid (2016). Transcription accessed on july 7. https://ulisescarrion.com/2016/09/22/el-efecto-carrion-en-la-escritura-contemporanea-luigi-amara/.
[363] Domínguez Michael, Christopher. "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy". *Letras Libres,* June 13th 2016. Accessed on july 7. http://www.letraslibres.com/mexico-espana/all-work-and-no-play-makes-jack-dull-boy.
[364] Kavi, Ernesto. "El arte Nuevo de hacer libros, de Ulises Carrión". *Confabulario.* Accessed on June 13 2016. http://confabulario.eluniversal.com.mx/la-bestia-ha-muerto/
[365] Amara.
[366] Carrión, *Second Thoughts,* 18-19.

none, and is occasionally addressed directly.[367] '*The reading itself proves that the reader understands.*'[368] Thus, the bookworks of Carrión propose a more egalitarian model in which author, object and audience play their parts. This move thus implies the move of knowledge and cultural production into the public domain. This move made by Carrión is also visible in his appropriation of existing text. This was not only a denial of originality, but also a result of his denial of art as private property, and could thereby also be argued to be an attack of the commercial art system.[369]

The denial of originality of the author as a creative individual is also expressed in the lack of visual unity between the bookworks. The books don't have a signature style or trademark. This absence of an overarching visual 'style' is argued by Schraenen to be a result of the delegation of the production of the books,[370] which should be conceived as an artistic strategy and a conscious choice for which Carrión should be held responsible.[371] This lack of visual unity should thus be interpreted as either artistic disinterest, a negation of aesthetics or a toleration of chance.[372] Despite this absence of a signature style, some obvious similarities between the bookworks are to be pointed out, as the majority of the bookworks are simple, modest sized paperbacks. With the exception of *In Alphabetical Order* (1979) none of the books contain pictures. Illustrations nor decorative elements are apparent.

The cheap,[373] independent and non-precious way of printing that Carrión used was highly favored by Carrión and a conscious artistic choice. As expressed in an interview in 1977, Carrión started publish his own work after being denied by many major publishing companies. Self-publishing his books liberated him from the traditional system of production and distribution and gave him independence he was looking for.[374]

As pointed out by Ehrenberg this independence was crucial.[375] With In-Out Productions he started printing his own books, this activity was later done through the label of Daylight Press in Other Books and So. With Other Books and So he took further independence as he now not only exhibited and published works single-handedly, but also distributed them and those of others, thereby subverting the distribution system by creating

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[367] Fernandes, 41.
[368] Carrión, *Second Thoughts,* 19.
[369] Carrión, *Why Plagiarisms?*.
[370] Schraenen, *We Didn't,* 45.
[371] Carrión, *Second Thoughts,* 8. '*In the new art the writer makes books'*
[372] A visual unity present neither in his own bookworks printed through In-Out Productions, which he most probably printed himself, nor the production of other artist's books through Daylight Press.
[373] Ginjaar, Aloys. "Andere boeken en zo". *Plug,* march (1977). Carrión points out that printing a book on mimeo or offset can be done for as little as 20 guilders.
[374] Ibid.,
[375] Ehrenberg, 29-31.

his own parallel system. This implied a further shift from the individual artist as author, towards the artist as a public institution, thereby replacing his own identity with a corporate identity. This could be seen as a further collapse of specialized modes of production distribution and consumption that were initiated in his bookworks. The rejection of traditions and notions of originality and craftsmanship would also enable Carrión to experiment with different media, as he became fascinated by the idea of making books without being a writer, producing films while not being a filmmaker, and producing events without being involved with theatre, and doing so independently.[376]

In many ways the aims of Carrión to work independently echo the aims of Beau Geste Press, which were formulated by Ehrenberg as:

'*To cut out all the grievous bullshit about submitting work 'for consideration'; and the ensuing stress [...] the act of submitting work of any sort for the approval of any editor carries implicitly a series of concessionary attitudes, detrimental to the work'*.[377]

The act of self-publishing was thus seen as an act of speaking out without concessions. The goal of rejecting economic and institutional filters imposed on artistic production and creating a parallel network instead that is independent of any official or commercial system is thus analyzed by Olivíer Debroise as a highly political act. This view is supported by Ehrenberg who stated that setting up a cooperation such as Beau Geste Press was '*The answer to the uniformity of taste, to the monopolic control of culture by the artmongers (publishers, galleryowners, museum curators, critics, the whole proverbial slew of mystifiers –sic –sick).*[378] Comparable strong language is absent in Carrión's texts, however – as Debroise argues – his undertakings with In-Out Center, Other Books and So, and the cultural strategies are an effect of the same 'allergic reaction', and is argued to be a side effect of the 1968 crisis.[379]

As he pointed out, the book format indeed gave artists the advantage of multiplicity and a wide distribution of the work, thereby highly decentralizing the art world. This was of great importance according to Carrión as there is no longer a need for prestigious galleries but only a modest post-office.[380] According to Carrión, the ease of distribution was essential to the popularity of the artists' book. Carrión mentions the fact that Other Books and So had a good relationship with Poland, thereby pointing at the political implications of the artists'

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[376] Fernandes, 38.
[377] Ehrenberg, 29-31.
[378] Medina, Cuauhtémoc. "Publishing Circuits". *The Age of Discrepancies: Art and Visual Culture in Mexico 1968-1997.* Ed. O. Debroise. Mexico City: UNAM/Turner, 2006: 158.
[379] Ibid., 158-159.
[380] Carrión *Second Thoughts,* 31.

book. Despite censorship of the communist regime, bookworks could subvert the system and find its way to Other Books and So because of its strange forms. The mundane qualities of the book made the medium interesting for Carrión as '*the very ordinariness of the bookwork guarantees their place in general culture*' it thereby lent itself to be used as a cultural strategy.[381] This statement clearly echoes the subversive qualities addressed to the artists' book's '*Trojan horse of ordinary appearance*' as described by Drucker.[382]

Carrión thus actively maneuvered away from legitimizing systems through his bookworks, and created an independent system of production and distribution. At the same time he acknowledges the subversive potential inherent in the form due to its importance of multiplicity, circulation and its ordinariness. Rather than exploiting these elements of the 'democratic multiple' in order to communicate ideas to the largest number of people possible, his use of bookworks was motivated to an important extent by the possibility of working independently and creating an artwork that could circulate within general culture. Whereas Carrión suggests that '*the new art appeals to the ability every man possesses for understanding and creating signs and systems of signs*'[383] his bookworks are enigmatic and show a great level of intellectual abstraction and were interesting mostly for an audience with an artistic or literary background. Rather than creating broad social support Carrión actively pursued the implications associated with the 'democratic multiple' in order to gain independence from institutional systems and create a parallel system of distribution.

It can be argued disappointment in the effectiveness of these very qualities eventually moved him away from the bookwork. When closing Other Books and So he noted the inability of the bookwork to escape from being institutionalized and commercialized.[384] This discomfort was again expressed in an article in the American magazine *ArtRite* where he stated that '*nowadays the only trouble with artists' books is that they have gained the attention of museums and collectors. The Sabbath dance of the signed / numbered limited first edition has begun*', he was as such quoted in the *New York Times*.[385]

The move away from the bookwork towards an emphasis on mail art and media projects is an effect of radicalizing elements that are apparent in the bookwork. The multiplicity and circulation of bookworks was actively stimulated by Carrión through the

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[381] Carrion, *Bookworks Revisited.*
[382] Drucker, *Myth,* 178.
[383] Carrión, *Second Thoughts,* 22.
[384] De Vries, 22.
[385] Glueck, Grace. "Art People". *New York Times,* March 18 (1977). Accessed on October 13, 2016. http://www.nytimes.com/1977/03/18/archives/new-jersey-weekly-art-people-when-is-a-book-not-a-book.html?_r=2.

network he maintained with Other Books and So, which soon represented artists from a great geographical variety. He states that these elements are often still secondary in bookworks, yet become formal elements in mail art where these tendencies are radicalized to an extent that these projects often – but not always – surpassed the book format all together. With mail art, this ubiquity of the work becomes essential to create new forms.[386] Also, pushed to its extreme, his position on authorship becomes exceptionally clear in his later mail-art works and cultural strategies. He counters the idea of collective authorship, stating that these projects function as a whole. The content of his authored work is thus decided by a large number of parties creating a complex artwork with a considerate amount of indeterminacy.[387] It is thus not the assigned death of the author, rather than its demise in importance as a creative individual. He however points out that these works often question authorship making it hard to justify the answer.[388]

With mail art and his media projects Carrión's role as an artist shifted from a producer towards that of a manager, his activities now included organizing events and activating a network of artists and audiences independent of cultural institutions through cultural strategies. Communicated through the existing and normally pragmatic infrastructure, the projects merged with general culture. The meaning and effect of these works depended to a large degree on input by others, echoing cybernetic feedback systems that are put forward by Burnham in the *Software* exhibition. These works would evolve to be highly ephemeral events, which could never be fully grasped and of which no single meaning could be obtained. Not only the importance of the individual artist was denied, but also that of the singular art object, therefore the projects escaped from fetishized and commercialized.

As Carrión actively avoid being associated with established forms and being institucialized, mythologized and commercialized. Due to these efforts he has been associated with institutional critique.[389] His works however do not show an aggressively formulated attack on specific cultural institutions, under the surface this critique is however apparent. For example, the title of his text '*Personal Worlds or Cultural Strategies'* is a reaction to the position taken by Antje von Graevenitz who curated an exhibition that took place in the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam. While he states that he respects the artists shown, he goes on arguing that this exhibition reflected a bureaucratic and reactionary official policy on art made in the Netherlands. In addition he objects the idea of the critic or historian as a

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[386] Carrión, *Second Thoughts,* 25-27.
[387] Ibid., 52.
[388] Ibid., 29.
[389] Alonso, 16.

mediator explaining the significance of the works to the general public.[390] In his text *Mail Art and the Big Monster,* which is focused on '*the big monster*', Carrión also describes an anti-institutional aim. He describes mail art as '*a guerrilla war against the Big Monster*'. Who or what this monster is, is unknown to Carrión. However, in knocking at his door, the only thing that counts is the echo produced.[391]

Whereas Carrión formulated his critique on institutionalized systems, his works cannot be seen as a well-aimed and aggressive critique of institutional boundaries, nor do his works aim to reveal political or economic systems in order to show and potentially change social conditions. Some efforts have been taken in this respect towards his project *Lilia Prado Superstar Film Festival* (1984), which is argued by Yépez to be a critique on post-colonial inequality.[392] It would however seem forced to align his work with that of others associated with institutional critique, such as Hans Haacke or Martha Rosler who are mentioned by Stimson in relation to the fulfilled promise of conceptual art,[393] and the latter of which is also mentioned by Drucker as an exemplar of the 'democratic multiple'.[394] The propositions made through his bookworks do not suggest an social, political or economic urgency as such, as opposed to a number of artists put forward by Lippard in order to underscore the social potential of artists' books. Nor does Carrión seem to be interested in the socialist position of the artist in service of society at large. He did not unite with organizations that aimed at strengthening the position of the artist towards society as done by for example the *Art Workers' Coalition.*[395]

By revising the relationship between author, object and audience, Carrión moves towards a more egalitarian model, in which all factors add up to the artwork as a whole, and incorporating distribution and reception as formal elements. Ultimately, Carrión attempts to place the artist and the artwork within general culture. He thereby surpasses the bookwork, and takes the implications of conceptual art to its extreme as he aimed at completely merging with culture and making the artwork and the artist indistinguishable. Rather than a quantifiable social significance, the democratic implications pursued by Carrión are to be

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[390] Carrión, *Second Thoughts,* 50.
[391] Ibid., 44-45.
[392] Yépez, *Other Ulises.*
[393] Stimson, xl.
[394] Drucker, *Century,* 85-86.
[395] Similar organizations did exsist in the Netherlands. For example, the BBK (Beroepsvereniging Beeldende Kunstenaars) was founded in 1945, or its more radical offshoots the BBK '69 or the socialist BBKA (Bond van Beeldende Kunst Arbeiders). A prominent member in this organization was Bob Bonies, who worked in a hard-edge painting, and specifically positioned himself in the tradition of the constructivists, not unlike minimalists such as Carl Andre who joined the Art Workers' Coalition.

considered as a liberal stance, in which the artist provides his own platform that cannot be categorized in relation to existing models, it does not justify itself through institutional and commercial supports or public demand, but through its very existence alone.

3.3 Posthumous Reception

Through his bookworks and later projects, Carrión thus sought to merge art and general culture, thereby redefining the relationship between author, art object, institution and the audience towards an egalitarian model in which the work merged with general culture almost completely, and existed independently from the justification through art historical, institutional and commercial recognition. During his life, Carrión actively prevented himself and his works to be captured by these justifying systems. From this viewpoint, it is plausible that Carrión gave his archive to Agius to disperse it as a way to control its unwinding. By bringing its content in recirculation, the current state of the archive was destroyed. Thereby it was also prevented from being commercialized or institutionalized. The dispersal of the archive – whether authored by Carrión or Agius – contains a beauty in the manner to which it resonates with the work of Carrión. Motivated by a fascination for Carrión present efforts to reassemble the archive should be seen as an attempt to create a renewed posthumous interpretation rather than an achievable desire to restore it. The position taken by Carrión is however exceptionally precarious, and is challenged, even threatened by the posthumous the reception of his works through institutions. The recent increase of interest in Carrión's works makes the issue of reception more urgent.

Yépez points out that the recent fascination for Carrión has resulted in Carrión being put forward as Mexico's first conceptual artist, giving him a reputation of a national hero. Recently a major exhibition was organized by the Reina Sofía in Madrid. Yépez fittingly argues that this goes contrary to the efforts taken by Carrión to prevent himself being categorized and glorified as such.[396] Even more striking is his popularity among artist's and enthusiasts, who – either online or offline – quote, appropriate or pay homage to his work. Due to its complex character, the content of Carrión's work stands in close relation to its distribution and reception. The presentation and representation of his works is therefore a precarious issue, which on the one hand can keep his work alive but on the other hand can make it fall prey to institutionalization, commercialization and iconization, which he actively tried to avoid.

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[396] Yépez, *Other Ulises.*

Due to the recent popularity of Carrión and the scarcity of his bookworks, these books have now become precious collector's items. There good reasons to assume that Carrión would have aimed to make his books more available in case of greater demand, thereby preventing them from becoming the precious collector's items they are becoming today. Agius has righteously set to the publication of reprints and facsimile editions of some of his works, thereby making his works more available to the public. For example a good reprint of *Arguments* was published by Héros-Limite in 2005,[397] who also published a precise facsimile edition of *Looking for Poetry/Tras la poesía* in 1996. A precise facsimile edition of *In Alphabetical Order* appeared through Boabooks in 2016. The largest part of Carrión's bookworks however remain unavailable to the public.

These efforts however sometimes results in publications apocryphal material that can be interesting however the publication in a book format could be questioned. Other publications diverge substantially from the original works, thereby muddling the oeuvre, and obstructing a proper critical examination of Carrión's works. Measuring the authenticity of such publications thereby becomes increasingly difficult. A number recent publications makes this clear. As examples, the books *Syllogisms* and *Exclusive Groups* can be named, which were posthumously published in 1991 by Estampa Ediciones. *Syllogisms* was never published as a book before, but appeared as a set of handwritten A5 cards in 1977. *Exclusive Groups* has been used by Carrión as a work for magazine pages already in 1973, was made by him into a unique, hand-made and signed book with semi-transparent felt pages and used a large fond size in 1974, and was later written down in a notebook. The reprints of these works are not true to these original forms. Another case in this point is the work *Poesías*, a number of poems dated 1972, but never published as a book by Carrión. Published by Taller Ditoria in 2007 and in a reduced size 'facsimile' version in 2015, *Poesías* has gained wide popularity the past years and serves as the basis for various critiques on Carrión. The booklet (a,b,c), published by Boabooks in 2016, is a printed edition of one of Carrión's handwritten notebooks dating from 1972 that contains structural exercises but was never published by Carrión.[398] It can also be pointed out that the publication of this apocryphal material often focuses on very early stages in Carrión's career, a tendency of which the sensibility can be

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[397] This reprint visually differs from the two original versions of 1973, the contents are true to the original, however the work is translated to French, an unnecessary change which has very little impact.
[398] The publications *The Drum* and *(rrr)*, both published by Boabooks in 2016, could also be named in this respect.

questioned.[399]

These recent publications broaden our scope on the activities of Carrión, published without additional contextual information it however becomes difficult to estimate the value of these works. What makes these publications problematic, is that decisions made for stylistic changes and the selection of the printed material is not elaborated upon. Published by the estate a certain authority is assumed , which after inspection can be questioned. Through the publications we become acquainted with obscure segments of Carrión's oeuvre that he intentionally or unintentionally kept from becoming public throughout his life. Due to the meager availability of Carrión's original works, an image of Carrión emerges that is essentially based mostly on questionable material.

Besides the efforts to reassemble the archive and to posthumously publish work, facsimile editions and reprints, there is another strain of active reception taking place in which the work of Carrión is remixed, appropriated or and variations are produced of his works. For example, Horacio Warpola posted videos on Youtube in which Google Translate 'reads' one of Carrión's poems in several languages,[400] and in addition created a Twitter-bot which tweets variations on Carrión's poems [3.1].[401] His radio program *Trios & Bolero's* has recently been constructed into an online and downloadable version by the Mexican artist Israel Martínez. Rumor has it that the project *Gossip, Scandal and Good Manners* (1981) will even be 're-performed' during the Documenta14 (2017).

The work of Michalis Pichler is latter is an interesting case in this point. Pichler has created a second version of the bookwork *Sonnet(s),* Pichler has taken it upon himself to create an updated version of the open-ended work of Carrión. Pichler's book is the same size and contains another 44 variations on the sonnet, he thus essentially proceeds the efforts initiated by Carrión, and creates a bookwork that is relatively close to the rare original. Using contemporary techniques, the experiments carried out by Pichler however greatly differ from the ones that Carrión was able to work out on his typewriter. Furthermore Pichler not only appropriates the work of Carrión, but in addition combines appropriations of artworks that he

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[399] The focus on discovering very early works seems to be a tendency, that is also visible in the posthumously published *Before and After,* by Boekie Woekie, in which a short text by Marroquin is titled 'Which one was first, 'Sonnet(s)' or 'Before and After'?.

[400] Warpola, Horacio. "*Traductor de Google lee poema de Ulises Carrión (árabe)"* [video] accessed on October 13 (2016): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=42pfxTHH2eM

[401] Warpola, Horacio. "Bot Poesías Carrión". [website] accessed on October 13 (2016): https://botwiki.org/bots/twitterbots/UC_Poesias_Bot/. These works are again based on the very early work published in *Poesías* in 2007, but which was never published while Carrión was alive.
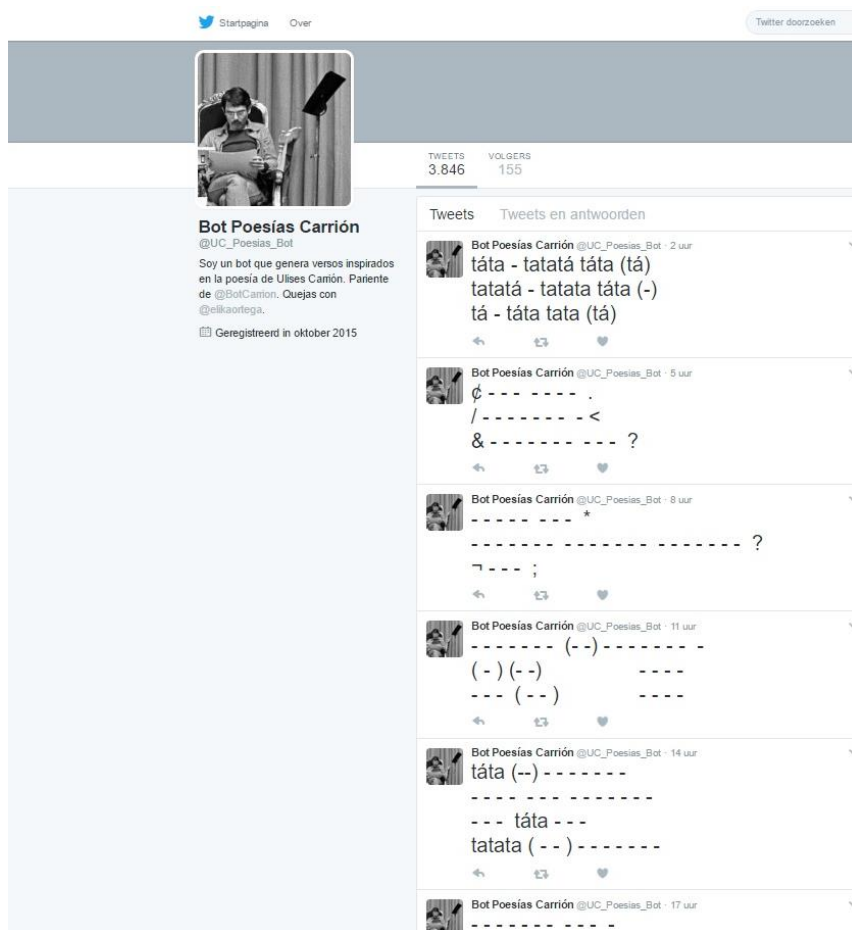
3.1 Horacio Warpola, *Bot Poesías Carrión*, 2015.

characterizes as 'greatest hits' and thereby creates an artistic practice that is based almost exclusively on appropriation. Thereby Pichler playfully relates Carrión's work to numorous other sources. For example, Pichler included *SONNET (IMAGE)* and *SONNET (SCULPTURE)* with which he not only refers to Carrión's appropriation of Rosetti's sonnet, but in addition refers to the appropriation of the famous *Un coup de dès jamais n'abolira le hazard* by Mallarmé as it was appropriated by Broodthaers, and subsequently appropriated by Pichler himself in an earlier work [3.2]. As argued by Wieland, with these well-educated appropriations Pichler re-frames existing works in considered ways and thereby invites the viewer to read the works anew, a practice that is not very different from framing a picture and hanging it on the wall.[402] Through his excessive appropriations and his denial of creativity, the work of Pichler is associated with conceptual writing, a practice that takes place at the

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[402] Wieland, Magnus. "Sculpture Lecture: Reading Un coup de dés". *Michalis Pichler: Thirteen Years: The Materialization of Ideas From 2002 to 2015.* Eds. A. Gilbert and C. Krümmel. New York: Printed Matter Inc., Leipzich: Spector Books, 2015: 33-34.

intersection between visual art and poetry and is outspokenly uncreative. Appropriation as practiced by these 'uncreative' artists is similar to the appropriation that was at the core of the bookworks of Carrión. Interestingly, uncreative writers is confronted with critique very similar to the critique on Carrión, namely robbing poetry of its joy.[403] This proves the point made by Goldsmith – a central protagonist of uncreative writing – who states that literature is still confined to traditional models of creativity.[404] It are exactly these models that Carrión tried to overthrow, and upon which the glorification of the author is based.

3.2 Michalis Pichler, *SOME MORE SONNET(S),* Berlin: greatest hits, 2011.

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[403] Goldsmith, Kenneth. "From Uncreative Writing". *No Internet, No Art: A Lunch Bytes Anthology.* Ed. M. Bühler. Eindhoven: Onomatopee, 2015: 31-32.
[404] Ibid., 28-30.

The popularization of Carrión through internet appropriations could, as Yépez points out, lead to a romanticization of the artist,[405] which can moreover be poorly informed. Maike Aden states that these references to Carrión are nice, however often do not explore new horizons and lack audacity whereas others demonstrate artistic joy and are exciting.[406] Whether appropriations of Carrión's works are successful either artistically or in a representational sense can be topic of dispute. Most striking is however the extent to which these current appropriations mimic artistic strategies used by Carrión.[407] The digital culture of remix, mashup and bootleg is embedded in controversial debates in which protagonists support the culture of use, reuse and 'prosumerism' whereas skeptics disregard the trend as old fashioned laziness. Most interesting is the almost utopian expectantly of revolutionary innovation towards a more democratic practice that drives the protagonists.[408] Whereas the extreme positions on both sides within this debate are questionable, it is clear that this 'remix culture' is part of a posthumous reception that could be both challenging as well as beneficial to the way we understand Carrión's works. A critical examination of the potential or pointlessness of these efforts is therefore necessary.

In order to gain new insights on Carrión's work, it is essential that accurate information about Carrión's work is available, and comprehensively and precisely communicated. Academic efforts, good facsimile editions and well informed museological displays can thus serve an important function. It could however be argued that it is the practice of well-informed appropriation that ultimately leads to perhaps a more just and sensible means of providing access to some works of Carrión. While the 'dead' objects are stored in heterotopias, and informed appropriations often depend on academic historicism, and theoretical thought, the interpretation through appropriation has clear advantages specifically with the work of Carrión. The appropriation of his work can be used to put forward elements of his works otherwise ignored, but more importantly denies the presence of a rare and 'original' work, and lacks the pretention of an authoritative, all-knowing narrator. The appropriation rather places the work back into general culture, putting Carrión's intellectual heritage back in circulation through contemporary methods. While the position of Carrión's works within general culture is thereby inevitably changed, it is also updated and prevented from becoming an obscured segment of art history, controlled by mechanisms of

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[405] Yépez, *Other Ulises.*
[406] Aden, *Posthumous Reception,* 66.
[407] Aden, Maike. "Carrión Carries On". *Journal of Artists' Books* 40 (2016): 9.
[408] Aden, *Carries On,* 7-8.

institutionalization and commercialization. It thus seems appropriate to conclude by reciting Carrión's text about plagiarism as appropriated by Yépez, and with a nod to Warpola:

"*I will conclude by answering this question: why the posthumous appropriation of Ulises Carrión? Because there are too many of his books difficult to find and it takes too long to read and understand; because their works are privately owned; Carrion because such appropriations are a sign of love for Ulysses; because all these appropriations are a second life and enable dear reader, do not read; because ownership is the psychology of our time and has utility and commercial purposes;because appropriations are simple and emphatic and, above all, because all appropriation of Ulises Carrión is in a beautiful.*"[409]

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[409] Yépez, *Other Ulises.* This quote is translated from Spanish to English by Google Translate.

Conclusion

Whereas artists have been involved with the making of books for centuries, Drucker argues the artists' book is a phenomenon that is essential for the 20th century. Along with scholars such as Lippard, Bloch and Phillpot however, Drucker states the artists' book becomes overwhelmingly prominent in the 1960s. The artists' book that is hereby referred to is a book that is disconnected to both literary roots, as well as the luxurious *livre d'artiste* tradition. Mallarmé is often noted as an important predecessor of the artists' book. His contribution had been the experimentation with typography on the physical space of the page, and more importantly, the centrality of the text and the book as creator of meaning, in which the reader and the act of reading are seen as co-authoring entities. These efforts gained an important succession in the work of Duchamp. The reception of both these artists had an important influence on the development of the artists' book in the 1960s.

Drucker bases her notion of the 'democratic multiple' on the polarization between works of Roth and Ruscha, a move adopted from Phillpot. Ruscha established an idiom of the mass produced artists' book that was cheap and could circulate in unlimited numbers. This idiom was highly influential, and serves as the model for the artists' book as a 'democratic multiple' that Drucker describes as the 'definitive paradigm' of the artists' book. Drucker describes this paradigm as '*the idea of the book as a democratic, affordable, available multiple in which an artist is able to produce a vision and disseminate it widely*' and as '*a book which is able to pass into the world with the fewest obstacles between conception and production, production and distribution.*'.[410] The artists' book not only implies that the artist can propagate his or her ideas cheaply and widely, but also suggest a empowerment of the reader as a creative agent.

The artists' book was embraced with great optimism by artists, many of which were associated with conceptual art. The anti-visual or dematerialized art object, better described as a turn towards communication of information through a structured use of language, and the bureaucratic aesthetics form two major narratives in the historicization of conceptual art.[411] These tendencies made the book format a attractive medium. Works themselves could comfortably thereby be distributed widely for relatively low costs, and in relative independence of established institutions.

A third important narrative in the historicization of conceptual art is the narrative of

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[410] Drucker, *Century,* 88.
[411] Van Winkel, 32.

conceptual art as a revolutionary movement that failed.[412] This narrative describes conceptual as a movement that for a short moment in time, '*successfully renegotiated its place in social order, gaining new authority for art and artists in the process and, at least momentarily, redefining the social function of art*'.[413] Conceptual art rejected established models, and promised to revise the position of artists, distribution systems, and the public, thereby subverting the authority of the institutional system as well as art historians and critics. This promise is argued by Stimson to be achieved most clearly by artists who aimed at making propositions that were not merely art related, and often critiqued social, political or economic inequality. He hereby mentions a group of Latin American artists that actively used mass media for their art projects, as well as a number of artists from Europe and the United States that had an outspoken socially engaged practice.[414]

Whereas Van Winkel states that the bureaucratic tendencies conceptual artists adopted in their work was in hindsight conformist rather than revolutionary, the focus on mental labor and bureaucratic systems can be rooted in yet another optimistic discourse. As information and communication technologies became of increasing importance, these innovations were embraced with optimism and collided with the shift from the industrial towards a post-industrial or information society.[415]

The notoriously popular theorist McLuhan predicted that electronic media described Western society as being on a turning point in evolution that would imply the coming of a new tribalism. The world turned into a decentralized global village, as senses would be reunited all faculties of society would merge. This would counteract a 3000 year long development that was initiated by the medium of written language an accelerated by printing press, putting forward visuality, empirical science and linear reasoning and the industrial society. The now outdated book, that lied at the heart of the 'old' patterns that shaped society, needed to be thoroughly revised to remain relevant. McLuhan in this context praises the innovations made by Mallarmé and Joyce. An important shift that McLuhan points at is the shift in the authority of the author of a work, as with technologies authenticity greatly diminishes as due to xerography '*anybody can become both author and publisher*'.[416]

Close connections can be revealed not only between McLuhan and a number of conceptual artists and their publications, as well as their experimentation with information

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[412] Van Winkel, 35.
[413] Stimson, xxxix.
[414] Ibid., xl.
[415] Van Winkel, 72.
[416] McLuhan, *Massage*, 123.

technologies and abstract systems. An important theorist who focused on this relationship during the late 1960s and early 1970s was Burnham. In 1968 he wrote the text *System Aesthetics* in which he proclaims that society is experiencing a shift from an object-based to a system-oriented society. Systematic thought – closely related to what is called the bureaucratic aesthetics by Van Winkel – thus becomes very fundamental to both society and art, and ultimately would save the world from self-destruction.[417] Burnham argues that conceptual art fulfills the model described by McLuhan.[418]

The notion of the 'democratic multiple' should thus not be exclusively tied to the artists' book, as it is closely related to other developments. Information and communication technologies promised a major cultural shift in which the specialized and segmented society would evolve towards a more communal model, in which systematic thought would be crucial. Conceptual art proved to do this for art, the institutionalized system would be subverted, and author and audience would no longer separated and mediated by institutions as the audience, artwork and author would co-create. The book would be at the center of these changes. It could be argued that the artists' book was an arena in which alternative functions of the book were to be tested, the multiplicity only one of the factors explored.

All three of these revolutionary discourses were countered with a demise of optimism during the 1970s and even a discourse of failure. New technologies grew unpopular through associations with warfare and their negative impact on the environment. The subversive ability of conceptual art was put into question by its very protagonists. Similarly, the artists' book did not find the support it was hoping for. Instead a small yet global network of publishers and distributors emerged, which professionalized over time resulting in an institutional system in its own right through which it was also theorized. Rather than overthrowing the art world, the artists' book thus became a segment of the art world.

Carrión actively contributed to the latter part of the evolution of the artists' book, as he actively maintained an international distribution network of artists' book throughout his career, and wrote a number of essays that have become seminal texts. Arriving to the artists' book in 1972, the genre had already established itself. Well aware of recent developments in philosophy, literature as well as art, he sought to reinvent the book by creating other means of writing and reading, thereby liberating himself from his literary roots. In his bookworks he stresses literary conventions such as the sonnet form or narrative progressions, as well as lingual conventions normally ignored. His experiments also investigate the physical qualities

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[417] Burnham, *Systems,* 215.
[418] Burnham, *Alice*, 217.

of the book, visual qualities of written language, the relation between pictorial elements and language, and the unraveling of highly abstract systems.

Whereas his works involve making abstractions, categorizations and reductions, his works often refer to characters, people and the most basic but crucial parts of life, such as birth, death and love and social relationships and even gossip. His works thus attempt to bridge systematic abstraction similar to the bureaucratic style of conceptual art, and the personal and emotive. In his bookworks he often appropriates existing texts without mentioning the source. He then uses this text to structurally perform similar actions upon them, thus working form a conceptual method. The result is a systematic and often repetitive text based structure that suppresses textual meaning and neglects both the originality of the author who wrote the text that is appropriated, but also neglects the originality of Carrión as a skilled writer in a process of non-writing. This is done in favor of the artwork itself, an eventually, the liberation of the reader.

Carrión created most of his bookworks before he opened Other Books and So (1975-1979), which would take up much of his time. While he kept on producing bookworks throughout his career, other projects gradually gained prominence. He started experimenting with other media by doing sound poetry, performance and video. He over time got more and more involved with mail art and the closely associated stamp art. When Carrión closed Other Books and So he continued working with mail art, stamp art, and developed his notion of the 'cultural strategy'. Soon thereafter he initiated a variety of media projects that among other things involved a radio program on the national broadcasting agency, and organizing a film festival. These projects interested him as they radicalized notions apparent in the artists' book. The Multiplicity, circulation, the undermining of authorship and the feedback from the audience all were important elements in his projects.

Carrión's cultural strategies aimed to merge with and disrupt general culture. All elements, including the distribution and the reception, were to be viewed as formal elements. Despite his preoccupation with other types of work, Carrión did not disregard the book. Many of the goals persuaded through his bookworks were radicalized through his later projects. Due to its ordinary nature, the book could serve as a good starting point for a cultural strategy. His main involvement with the bookwork however moved from producing bookworks to assembling the Other Books and So Archive. This archive was initiated by Carrión as an artwork that functioned as an expanding, publicly accessible and well organized archive of artists' books.

Throughout his career, Carrión actively distanced himself from established

institutions. He started publishing his own books and those of others early on became acquainted with an international network of others who were doing the same. While taking advantage of established movements such as conceptual art and fluxus he actively distanced himself from them at the same time. Not in the least from literature and the Mexican literary scene, for which his bookworks were received as a fierce attack on literature.

Carrión rejected the notion of the 'democratic multiple' as being ignorant of market strategies, celebrity syndrome and the system of critics and publishers that had developed around the book. Nevertheless, he persuaded the very implications the 'democratic multiple', for which it was paradoxically necessary to distancing himself from established terms. It were after all precisely these institutionalizing mechanisms that he tried to avoid and disrupt in order to create art that addressed author and audience in a more egalitarian way. With his bookworks and later projects he actively sought to revise the relationship between artist and audience, thus changing the position of art within society. By disregarding the importance of the author in favor of the object as a deliverer of meaning, and eventually in favor of the liberation of the reader, Carrión placed the production of art within the public domain and general culture, rather than in the privatized commercial or institutional systems.

The works and statements of Carrión do not show an outspoken engagement with social issues, nor an urge to question or potentially change political conditions. The content of his bookworks neither the edition sizes they were printed in express any hope to capture the attention of mass audiences. He rather created methods to work independently within a very selective circuit. He described his projects as *'a guerilla war against the Big Monster',* this 'Big Monster' was however undefined. Carrión can rather be said to have aimed at a achieving great independence. This liberal act aimed at denying any justification established modes by taking manners in one's own hands, thereby ensuring the near complete merging of art and general culture, and justifying the work through its existence alone.

The recent appreciation of Carrión's work has created a great desire to reassemble his archive and created a greater demand for his bookworks. Recent publications of apocryphal material and dubious reprints of bookworks have been muddling our perspective on Carrión's oeuvre, and already had a detectible influence on its reception. The growing popularity of his work furthermore threatens to idolize Carrión and create the aura that Carrión seemed to successfully escape from. The works themselves and their place within general culture is thereby lost. The propagation of his work is therefore precarious act. Recently enthusiasts and artists have appropriated Carrión's works and used it as material to create new works. While playing around the work of Carrión is recreated from contemporary viewpoints. In the

process its place within general culture is reclaimed. Perhaps this approach constitutes one of few legit manners in which Carrión's works can be dealt with. To gain valuable insight through this method, it is however essential that those involved are well informed and aware of what is dealt with. The publication of accurate facsimile editions and academic research is therefore essential, for fans and scholars alike.

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2.3 Ulises Carrión in Other Books and So. Image url: http://emks.fi/attachments/Image/1920px-Ulises_Carrion.jpg?template=generic.

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