



In her introduction, Bright states that, "I am able to let the differences as much as the likenesses inform and illuminate the story of the book's continuing appeal to artists".

This she does, and admirably. She also seeks to address a very important aspect of the field, an "amnesia" which "has produced an increasing number of artists' books...whose content or strategies were long ago exhausted." Her wide-ranging history succeeds in this goal as well, and it is another reason her book is invaluable.

Working chronologically, with concise, informative, and highly readable prose, she tracks the progress and lineage of fine press books, deluxe books, multiple bookworks, and sculptural bookworks, including altered books and performance and installation bookworks. Her coverage is not limited to the two decades or the continent that the title suggests; she begins with the Kelmscott Chaucer, William Blake, Aubrey Beardsley, the Russian Constructivists, and of course, Duchamp. Periodically, European and British books make appearances. But Betty Bright doesn't simply focus on descriptions of the books and their underlying conceptual framework; she situates their history by examining all the attendant circumstances surrounding their development: the adoption and availability of printing methods including photocopiers and photo-based processes; she looks at artists as publishers, at influential exhibitions, publications, and conferences, and at the development of book arts centers and distributors, and she covers collectors, both public and private. She even takes a concurrent and informative look at what was happening in the mainstream publishing trade. It's a comprehensive, meticulously researched history, not only in the context of taking an inclusive view of what was produced, but of how it was produced and through what means, and of how and where the book works met their readers.

And, from Marinetti's challenge to Mallarmé in 1913 to several views still hotly debated, she also notes the ensuing flurries of reviews, criticism, dialogue and territorial claims; many written by preeminent critics and curators, but just as often, by artists actively involved in the field.

While Bright aptly shows us the significance of the attendant discourse, she allows the writers to expound on their theories and reveal their positioning agendas in their own words, and then gently brings us back to the authenticity of the times. Of one particularly voluble critic, she writes, "From today's perspective, Clive Philpott's inexhaustible proselytizing achieves its own heroic stature. It would be incorrect, however, to characterize the period as viewed through his aesthetic, which so resolutely separated different kinds of artists' books. As has been noted, exhibitions at Center for Book Arts and other organizations displayed multiple bookworks alongside sculptural bookworks, fine press, and deluxe books."

I have my own agenda in praising *No Longer Innocent*. It takes an involved historian and curator such as Betty Bright to remind us that this “zone” book artists inhabit is a single country, though it contains a wildly varied topography and distinctive zipcodes within its borders. Her book finally captures the wide range of approaches that, happening simultaneously, fueled the energetic explosion of the book arts in this country.

In short, she shows us what actually happened.

It is to be hoped that what Richard Minsky predicts for *No Longer Innocent* will come true: that it will become the standard reference work in the field, and that future histories of later periods will seek to follow Betty Bright’s long overdue example.

I still firmly believe that the future of the field is contingent on its continued diversity. To paraphrase Betty Bright, the field is a “realistic if motley” entirety, and artists still produce work that is to be “paged through, circled around, and perhaps gaped at”. Inheriting an awareness of a truthful, encompassing overview will help keep artists and students alike from being falsely educated away from their individual passions, and allow enthusiastic, informed explorations to continue on, well into the second century of artists’ books; or even into their own millennium.

Buy this book.

Melissa Jay Craig, Chicago

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