

## Printing & publishing

The methods of making printed pages have always changed and evolved, from the impression of formed metal and thick ink, to the repelling of water and oil on a photo-sensitised surface, to the electrostatic charge of fine powder fused by direct heat.

The activity of publishing, tethered by the economies particular to each publisher, utilises these various means to produce books and pamphlets, either handing over the entire process to printers and binders, or, as is often the case with self-publishing and artists publications, carrying out parts of the process, and becoming a book manufacturer as well.

The ability and willingness to self-produce a publication is as varied as the actual content. The traditional book, printed on quality stock, sewn and case bound, is beyond the inclination of the vast majority of those primarily concerned with simply issuing content to the world at large. However, the plain form of the

pamphlet, typical of much self-publishing of the twentieth century, is both relatively cheap and easily-achieved—mimeographed or photocopied pages, collated, folded and stapled or sewn—a very often domestic activity.

I began producing small publications in the late 1970s, printing on a table-top letterpress machine, with hand-set type, and images made with tipped-in parts, or via relief-cuts or blocks. Plain and basic things, printed in runs of never more than a hundred copies, they were part of what was a teething process. The method was always distinctly restricting, and with hindsight the limitations probably played a large part in the content itself. So text was short, page size small, extent modest; in its way the means led to the ends.

With such restrictions always in mind, elaboration was by integrating other parts from elsewhere, to combine what could be done 'in house' with what might be got in. Change isn't a necessity of course, the restrictive can

provide opportunity to entrench and and pursue endless variation; but, the pursuit of hybrids wasn't the intention, this was an experiment in trying things out, to see what was possible, while at the same time looking for what might necessarily be the content and subject.

During the following years, working with and alongside like-minded artists/writers/printers/publishers, differences and similarities were gradually made plain. The distinct matters of choice, and concern. It became clear that to publish was to have a preoccupation with the book itself: how it could be made, how it could be used, and how it could be read.

The structure of sequence, and direction, the gathering and grouping of content, became the subject of many attempts and demonstrations, in each instance informed by what had gone before. This wasn't exactly a regular list of titles, a pile of books, nor an accumulation in a linear sense, but an expanding whole, the parts placed at the edge of something that gradually defined its own limits.

The content was more often than not borrowed, or commandeered, for new usage. Edited piecemeal from sources such as geographical texts, modernist literature, radio transcripts; the book became a structure for fragments to be placed and read, by page, and then by the further diminishing unit of line and word and letter. Not a literary project as such, but a deployment of text as a conceptual tool for the disruption of meaning and structure. There was always a subject, or a focus, often inherited from the source: a type of place; a type of sound; a type of direction, or action.

The making of a pasted-up artwork, using photosetting and drawn or processed line-work, placed, and fixed with adhesive, was the prime activity for print production prior to computer formatting. Whether for photocopy or offset litho the means was the same, and the final printed page disguised the process, only the method of reproduction, be it ink or toner, was actually evident.

