



Disassembling the Archive: Fiona Tan, *Art Gallery of York University* (2007). Book design: Bryan Gee. The page opening shows the point in the book where two signatures, printed on contrasting paper stocks, meet.

## Writing with Images

Visual books call for an expanded design language, BRYAN GEE discovers, in this exploration of their sequential nature.

### OPENINGS

A page is an opening, a threshold through which we enter the space of books. We often think of it as a kind of frame within which meaning is fixed, but it is an ephemeral surface, one side of an oscillating leaf across which meaning flows. The instant we open a book we are caught up in the momentum of its kinetic action. It's an action defined in part by the material mechanism of the codex form which dictates the physical aspect of reading, but also echoed in the narrative progression of writing or the sequencing of images. We see this expressed as a visual metaphor throughout the history of the book in the countless title pages designed as architectural façades or passages; we experience it when Alice passes through the surface of the looking glass

on the recto page to a transformed world on the verso; and it is present in the mysterious black rectangle that makes a funereal void of the text area on both sides of a leaf in Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*. That leaves in books are hinged like doors only strengthens the metaphor.

As poet and publisher Dick Higgins writes, "[A] book in its purest form is a phenomenon of space, time and dimensionality that is unique unto itself. Every time we turn the page, the previous page passes into our past and we are confronted by a new world."<sup>1</sup>

The insistent, forward-moving trajectory of the codex was indelibly impressed on me through one of my earliest memories of a picture book. In Peter Newell's *The Hole Book* (1908), a boy accidentally fires off a gun, immediately destroying

a clock on a mantlepiece. We follow the path of the bullet (represented by a die-cut perforation in each leaf) through the wall and throughout the book where we encounter the series of shocking mishaps it leaves in its wake. This propulsive, sequential action can feel almost cinematic, but it's not something imposed on books from movies—it's an untapped cinematographic potential inherent in the codex form itself.

#### HOW IMAGES TRANSFORM BOOKS

The primacy of the written word and its typographic expression have always been central to the practice of book design. But what of the printed image? In the vast canon of literature that exists on books, the defining importance of illustration, which has evolved with and influenced the history of printing, is virtually eclipsed. Scholarship on illustration itself does no better, rarely including in-depth discussions about book design, while some of the best treatises on typography revolve around its application in books. And yet, over the last 100 years the book has been radically transformed by the image.

Modernist approaches to both typography and photography in the 1920s dovetailed with new printing technologies and layout strategies where images, no longer required to conform to the constraints of the text block, could be oriented to the page itself. Images in books could now print to the edge of a page or cover its entire surface as a “full-bleed.” The “image-page,” as I prefer to call it, was a defining feature of the newly liberated book allowing for design possibilities that have yet to be exhausted.

While theory lags behind, book design itself has evolved by leaps and bounds over the last 30 years. A case in point is Dutch designer Irma Boom whose uncompromising work has inspired a generation of book designers working internationally. Boom works with industrial printers, challenging the norms of industrial

book manufacturing and commercial publishing. Her innovative books are as beautiful and tactile as they are conceptually rigorous in their faithful presentation of visual content. We are seeing more designers who are becoming more adept at bringing images into the foreground.

It's hard to fathom that we see so many photography or art books published where the images fall flat. Not because of the printing but because the images conform to a page structure designed for and defined by the printed word.

There is a huge gap in the language of book design that is calling out to be filled. Some of the most perceptive writing about how images and text co-exist in books can be found in literary theory and art criticism. But if we want more books that speak the language of images, and a guiding literature that reflects the innovative realities of contemporary book publishing, we need to articulate that language from within the field of book design.

#### DESIGNING FOR IMAGES

I came to book design by way of a visual art education and practice. Designing catalogues and magazines for artist-run galleries evolved into more ambitious books for museums. My collaboration with curators, artists, and educators was invaluable. It helped reinforce a respect

for the integrity of artworks and the critical difference between designing *with* images and designing *for* images.

My writing process began by sketching a broad outline for a visual taxonomy of books, a kind of lexicon for designing with images, but I arrived at a more concentrated focus on the specific aspects of books that persist in captivating my interest. Much of what I write about and present here emphasises art books and photobooks that reflect my preoccupation with the “image-page” sequence. I've also chosen examples of my own book design, and books that



Tristram Shandy (1759)

have influenced me, based on how they have informed my current project developing what can be best described as a visual novel.

What I look for and value above all else in any book is how it embodies meaning, the way the design engages with and reflects the content. I'm a practitioner, not an academic, and by sharing first-hand what I have learned about the dynamics that come into play with images on pages, I hope to shed some light on visual books that will resonate beyond the specific examples I choose to discuss.

#### MISE EN PAGE

I first encountered what is arguably the finest photobook designed and printed in Canada on the dusty shelves of Hugh Anson-Cartwright's antiquarian bookshop in Toronto. *Portrait of a Period: A Collection of Notman Photographs, 1856–1915* has become a favourite case study that I frequently share to illustrate what a book that puts images first looks like.

Published in 1967 by McGill University Press and designed by Robert R. Reid (1927–2022), it was already a 25-year-old book at the time, but I remember it standing out as by far the most contemporary looking one in the shop. I was almost baffled by the immediacy with which the images came to life on the page. I was already familiar with Notman through a 1985 monograph and its related exhibition at the Art Gallery of Ontario, but it felt like I was seeing these images for the first time. How to explain it? The book's impressive scale and outstanding printing are undeniable, but it was also clear that image editing, pacing, and layout contributed significantly to bringing the photographs to life on the page.

Exactly what makes Reid's design so exceptional is elusive, revealing itself over time. But immediately apparent is that this powerful expression of photography in book form could only have come from a deep engagement and respect with the subject matter.

*Portrait of a Period* was published during a fertile decade in the history of the photobook. Photographer Richard Avedon's books *Observations* (1959) and *Nothing Personal* (1964), were widely distributed and their innovative page layouts particularly influential. It was a bold move for Reid to apply such a contemporary



approach to a book of historical photographs, but it paid off. Reid, like Avedon, was focussed on maximising the effect of the images and it is striking how the layout actually amplifies the historical quality of photographs rather than being at odds with it. The feeling of the past speaking to the present is almost palpable.



Richard Avedon's photobook,  
*Nothing Personal* (1964)



Reid activates the photographs by matching pairs, putting them into conversation with one another and with the reader. Photographs bleed, but always respecting their original aspect ratios with minimal cropping (notice the varying margins and gutter space used to accommodate this). Even partial bleeds like the photographs



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*Above and top: Portrait of a Period (1967),  
designed by Robert R. Reid*

above break the deadening effect of symmetrical framing and activate the spatial dimension of the images. The extended sequence of portraits is especially striking, each spread seeming to use a different layout strategy that instead of distracting attention, engages it. We can see it in the subtle tension of the layout where matched portraits are brought into a more dynamic relationship when pushed to the extremities of the spread. Reid paired photographs with surprising sensitivity, using visual rhyming to tease out connections. In the example shown below, the formal design of the ornate floor grate captured in the larger photograph is echoed in the pattern of cracked emulsion of the glass negative visible in its partner on the opposite page.

In printing, Reid set the bar high—so high, that after commissioning Joh. Enschedé in the Netherlands, one of the finest printers in the world, to make test prints of the photographs, Reid rejected them. The book was printed just as offset lithography was reaching new levels of fidelity capable of revealing nuances not possible in letterpress or gravure printing. Reid and his production associate Claus Unterberger solicited advice from Kurt H. Volk, a printer in New York who specialised in duotone, a method where monochrome images are printed in two impressions with two different shades of ink (black plus grey or sepia for example), thus covering a much wider tonal range than printing with a single impression of black ink. Pre-press work was done directly from Notman's fragile glass negatives which contained more detail than any photographic print could capture. A further enhancement was the use of matte ink on matte paper which eliminated glare and provided a velvet finish to the page.

I have some personal evidence in my own collection that further demonstrates the lengths to which Reid and his associates went. Visiting a bookstore a few years ago, I discovered a full set of unbound printed signatures for the book that I assumed was meant to be circulated as a review copy. I couldn't resist buying the set but it remained more or less unexamined in a box. In doing research for this story, I took a closer look, only to discover that the pages were printed in black and cool grey, not the black and sepia

that the final book used. The pages I had bought were clearly the result of a test print run, an experiment to help determine what colours of ink to use in the final printing.

In his self-published memoir Reid credits the book's printer with the idea of trying a warmer ink colour; that suggestion may have been made in response to these proofs. The black/grey proofs share, and sometimes exceed, the rich detail of the final reproductions, but their comparative flatness is striking: we are aware of ink on paper. In contrast, the final black/sepia reproductions have a dimensional depth evoking the warmth of natural light and flesh tones in the human subjects. These may be subtleties, but I describe them at length to demonstrate how the vision for any book can be realised through an accumulation of small production and design details.

The three subsequent monographs that have appeared on the Notman studio since 1967 only seem to heighten Reid's achievement. Each of them are printed and typeset masterfully, but only the most recent volume, published more than half a century later, aspires to Reid's masterful feel for the printed image.

Such a singular achievement reminds us how rare it is when conditions align to allow a landmark of Canadian publishing like this to emerge. It also poses an enigma. In a rich career that continued for another five decades, Reid himself never made another book as image-driven as *Portrait of a Period*.

#### WRITING WITH IMAGES

Having explored a book where the modernist layout feels almost inseparable from the quality of the printed image, I look at the next example from



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*Top and bottom: page openings from W.G. Sebald's novels Vertigo (2000) and Austerlitz (2001)*

the opposite perspective: beautiful books that embrace the resilience of images and their ability to withstand the worst of printing conditions.

The novels of German writer W.G. Sebald weave images into the flow of the narrative that, like the black rectangles in *Tristram Shandy*, are essential to the meaning of the work and as such are inseparable from the text itself. Sebald's work is so convincing it calls for a rethinking of literary genres, his images challenge existing definitions of what constitutes a text.

The majority of Sebald's illustrations are photographic but he also includes handwritten notes, glyphs, maps, and other forms of ephemera. They are most often embedded within

text pages either individually or in groupings, always uncaptioned. While their placement in the flow of the text is relatively precise, they rarely refer directly to what is being written about.

Notable is his preference for rephotographed, or photocopied, images and the murkiness that emerges which lends the photographs a kind of historical aura, especially when they're printed in mass-market fiction books. But they also take on a schematic quality through the process that allows them to join with the typographic texture of the page. This kind of integrated harmony of word and image has been the aim and achievement of author-illustrators throughout the history of books. One thinks of William Blake, the Japanese haiku poet and painter Yosa Buson, or the natural history books of English wood-engraver and author Thomas Bewick.

In a 2001 interview Sebald describes the kind of image-text integration he is after: "I write up to these pictures and I write out of them also, so they are really part of the text and not illustrations and hence, if they were produced



Martin Vaughn-James's *The Cage: A Visual Novel*, Coach House Press (1975)

in a much better form, which would be technically very easy to do nowadays, then they would ruin the text. They must not stand out; they must be of the same leaden grain as the rest.”<sup>2</sup>

Sebald's images are robust enough to carry their intended meaning through editions and translations that he has no control over. They clarify the important distinction between primary visual content and the interpretive enhancement of book design and production. Beautiful printing as we have seen in Reid's *Notman* book can be central to how we experience images in books, but Sebald shows it doesn't have to be.

#### VISIONARY SEQUENCES

One of the most mind-bending and formative books I encountered as a teenager was published by Coach House Press. Martin Vaughn-James's *The Cage: A Visual Novel* (1975), is a work that continues to gain recognition as a significant progenitor of the graphic novel. The book owes more to the Surrealist collage novels of Max Ernst, such as *Une Semaine de Bonté* (1934) than it does to the underground comic culture that it also partly emerged from. Of particular interest to me now is the fact that while Vaughn-James's earlier books used the classic comic format of multiple panels per page, his approach had evolved into something significantly different with *The Cage* where image, text, and page form an integrated unit. Each captioned panel is presented on a single page or page opening in an extended novel-length sequence. Drawn in a

deadpan *ligne-claire* style that evokes architectural rendering, *The Cage* engages with the space of the book in a sequence of scenes that take us on an existential journey through disintegrating urban landscapes and interior spaces. When I talk about the work I'm doing on a "visual novel" I'm often asked about the term and what it means. It's only recently that I've recognised the term was planted in my mind by Martin Vaughn-James.

At the Bauhaus in the 1920s, artist László Moholy-Nagy saw how photography was revolutionising visual communication. Inspired in part by the montage theories of Russian avant-garde film, he wrote extensively about his vision for a visual literature he named "typophoto" that combined verbal and optical modes. He stressed



*Procès de Jeanne d'Arc. Film. Paris, 1962.*  
The book contains director Robert Bresson's script followed by a carefully edited image sequence on coated paper which opens (unlike the film itself) with the image of a door.

the need for a new image-based literacy and was particularly insightful when describing how photographs behave in sequences. In his 1947 book *Vision in Motion*, he wrote that the image in a series “is no longer a ‘picture’ and none of the canons of pictorial aesthetics can be applied to it. . . the picture loses its separate identity as such and becomes a detail of assembly, an essential structural element of the whole.”<sup>3</sup>

In his book *Notes sur le cinématographe* (1975), film director Robert Bresson echoes Moholy-Nagy’s understanding of image sequences when he describes his approach to montage as applied to film shots: “[I]mages, like the words in a dictionary, have no power and value except through their position and relation.”<sup>4</sup> Bresson, like Sebald, was interested in a kind of visual flatness, the less an image expresses individually, the more easily it is amplified and transformed by contact with other images.

#### A PAGE TURNER

A new type of artists’ book took hold in the late 1970s that was entirely different from the deluxe *livre d’artiste* which emerged in part out of limited edition printmaking generations earlier. Bookworks, as they are also referred to, were closely associated with conceptual art, minimalism, and the Fluxus art movement at a time when artists were inventing new forms and inhabiting existing ones, questioning the ways art was distributed and exhibited. Artist’s books were seen as a way to bypass the gallery system and reach new audiences with inexpensive art objects in book form. They also provided an opportunity to explore form and content, and challenge the idea of what a book can be.

Artist Michael Snow (1928–2023) did just that with his book *Cover to Cover*. Published in 1975 by the Nova Scotia College of Art & Design and New York University Press, the book is comprised entirely of a continuous sequence of full-bleed black and white photographs, including the front and back covers, that initially appear to objectively document the artist’s movements as we follow him through the interior spaces of his home, then outside to his car, which drives to a second interior location, an art gallery. But there is nothing reliably objective about



the journey that plays out in *Cover to Cover*. The book embraces the format of the codex and exhaustively explores its many aspects.

Let’s start with the cover, which features a photograph of the top half of a door evoking the portal metaphor from book history, but with a kind of deadpan photographic realism and added tactility. The object quality of the book feels uncanny, a door unframed by surrounding architecture evoking the freestanding doors of Duchamp or Magritte. As we open the book we actively participate in the metaphor and the illusion.

As we saw in the Notman book, full-bleed images have an entirely different effect than pictures that float framed by the white space of a page. When an image fills a page, a kind of fusion occurs that enhances both the object quality of the page and the spatial illusion of the image. *Cover to Cover* increases this tension between flatness and depth. We leaf through the double-sided picture planes, engaged by the illusion of moving through architectural space, photographic space, and book space at the same time we are made aware of the flatness of the page. The visual and tactile rhyming of turning and opening collapse the haptic and the conceptual into the same action.

Snow himself is central to the book. He uses



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Michael Snow's *Cover to Cover* (1975). Front cover (left) and a page opening (above).

two photographers to capture his movement from opposite vantage points. The resulting photographs appear on the corresponding recto and verso sides of the same leaf, in the same way that Tenniel's illustrations of Alice and looking-glass are positioned. His two photographers also capture each other, exposing the process of how photographs were made for the book. Their vantage point is also ours.

Snow's progression through the seemingly tangible deep space of the book continues with more unexpected turns and sleights of hand. By the time we get to the last page we have emerged from a perceptually complex and

spatially multi-faceted journey, a mind-bending *mise en abyme* that turns our idea of what a book can be inside out and, literally, upside down.

*Cover to Cover* reveals the kind of conceptual dimension and complexity that can be achieved with the image-page. It opened up my thinking about the cinematographic potential of the codex form and has influenced my design approach more than any other single book.

#### JUMP CUTS

The design of a book that emerges in part from engaging with the structural qualities of the object not only promises a satisfying integration of form



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John Baldessari's *"Back To Back Is Not The Same As Side By Side"* (Parkett, 1985)



and content, but has the potential to enhance and even generate meaning. The conceptual artist John Baldessari explored the possibilities of folding and re-printing images in his book-like magazine insert “*Back To Back Is Not The Same As Side By Side*” (Parkett, 1985). The final printed piece is based on a process that came out of selecting 16 film stills from Hollywood movies, folding them in half and building a sequence by matching left and right sides in spreads to form a 32-page sequence. In the printing of the insert, the right side of the image is printed on the recto side of the leaf and the left side of the image is printed on the verso. Baldessari’s play of recto/verso is engagingly disorienting and encourages a kind of multi-directional page-turning to make sense of it. Such a simple procedure results in a rich experience of “reading” images in a sequence where, matched and interleaved, their meanings and associations collide.

#### BOOKS THAT TALK BACK

When I design art books it’s my response to the visual material that drives my conceptual approach. *Disassembling the Archive: Fiona Tan*, a book written by curator Philip Monk and published by the Art Galley of York University in 2007 to accompany an exhibition of work by contemporary artist Fiona Tan was an opportunity to take that approach in a new

direction. Before I made any attempt to arrive at a formal scheme, I immersed myself in the process of image editing, reviewing the artwork, and responding to it intuitively before reading the text. I was immediately drawn to the source material for one of the artist’s video installations, *The Changeling*, which was comprised entirely from archival school portraits of girls taken sometime in the 1930s in Japan. The exhibition contained a broad selection of work, but I built the book around the interplay of Monk’s text and these portraits. My interest was in exploring the use of a single visual typology through repetition, knowing that by reducing variables I was providing the conditions for text and image to interact. The portraits are printed recto/verso on each sheet with facing text pages, interleaved throughout the extent of the book.

Monk’s experimental curatorial essay takes the form of a novel-length one-sided, “quasi-fictional correspondence”<sup>5</sup> with the artist. When Monk addresses his thesis on photography and the archive to an absent Tan, the resulting vacuum is filled by the girls whom we can’t help but experience as surrogates of the artist so that one cannot read the text without encountering their disruptive, influential gazes. Their seemingly deadpan expressions begin to take on subtle nuances signifying thoughtful engagement, skepticism, bemusement, disgust, or delight. While




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*Disassembling the Archive: Fiona Tan, Art Gallery of York University (2007). Book design: Bryan Gee.*

this interaction between text and image was my intent, the intensity of the effect was unexpected. The kind of dynamic, third level of meaning that emerged from these chance alignments anticipates some of what I am now exploring as I develop my visual novel.

*Making Meaning* (2000) is a modest pamphlet-like book that, like the Fiona Tan book, has taken on new importance to me because of the interaction of text and image. I designed it when working in-house at the Art Gallery of Ontario. It contains six essays by writers who describe the gallery through the lens of their immigrant experience. The proportions of the book were based on those of the archival photograph I chose as the frontispiece which shows an interior gallery space during the museum's construction in the early twentieth century (top). Viewing the photograph digitally I discovered significant details that were hardly visible in the print, which inspired me to pair unique details from the photograph with each of the essays. Through the process of mixing and matching, I discovered the way the titles of the essays resonated with the visual details and teased out latent meanings.

#### PICTURE COLLECTION

Image editing is one of my strengths as a book designer, but at times my appetite for visual research and collecting threatens to overwhelm creative production. Photographs torn from magazines, printed ephemera picked up at paper shows—it all ends up in boxes, inaccessible, filed away with vague ideas for future use.

The most persistent idea is to use the images to build a narrative book. I've discovered notes about this in journals that I wrote decades ago. It's the type of book I've searched for but never found, which compels me to write it.

The obstacles to actively working on a book like this have been considerable. I struggled for a strategy that would allow me to adapt images



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*Making Meaning* (2000)  
*Art Gallery of Ontario.*  
*Book design: Bryan Gee.*

to page or spread. The daunting prospect of scanning, sorting, placing, and scaling images in a digital layout would multiply the variables rather than provide focus. I needed a viable working process that was immediate, tactile and intuitive, with constraints that would open up possibilities.

A few years ago, I stumbled onto two distinct practices that led to what has become a continual process of development. They are both forms of sketching or prototyping, where image editing develops into a kind of image writing. I think of the resulting book objects as models for a visual novel.

#### FOLDED BOOK MODELS

Collecting inexpensive books from thrift stores that contained full-bleed images, I soon discovered that many mid-century books,

including seemingly uninspired ones, used a surprisingly systematic layout scheme. I stumbled upon my process with a book titled *The Instant it Happened* (Abrams, 1976), which contained page after page of dramatic news photographs on right-hand pages that were getting the life sucked out of them by the uninspired typographic layout on the facing pages. I attempted to “save” the book by folding every image page in half to conceal the text pages. The random juxtapositions in the transformed book (now half the width of the original) were compelling. I started hunting down similar books, anything that would lend itself to this chance operation. I've made dozens of these folded books; I see them as a form of sketching, book maquettes that allows me to experience how different qualities of printed images behave in a wide variety of sizes and shapes of books.

#### POSTCARD BOOK MODELS

The other form of model-making I'm engaged with has taken me deeper into the process of writing my novel as opposed to the chance operations and juxtapositions of the folded



Conjoined Landscapes *postcard book model*, Bryan Gee.

books. Taking advantage of the uniform size of uncropped picture postcards was the kind of creative limitation I had been looking for. Cards printed in the first half of the 20th century used an international standard size of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  by  $5\frac{1}{2}$  inches. If I considered these proportions to be the basis for page dimensions, I could eliminate the variable of cropping and selecting details, and focus my process on matching uncropped postcards juxtaposed in spreads and grouped into visually rhyming sequences usually within a specific visual subject typology. One of my first extended postcard books focussed exclusively on doors and doorways, for example.

I continued collecting large quantities of inexpensive vintage postcards, expanding on the specific image typologies I had already established: doors, stairs, bridges, paths, roads, cliffs, gorges, mountains, caves, arcades, museum interiors, ruins, solitary figures in landscapes, and various other landforms. Each of these suggested a specific formal treatment or narrative direction.

The process gained momentum when I discovered small portfolio books with transparent sleeves the same size as the cards. This allowed me to easily group images as fixed pairs resembling book spreads. They also offered the flexibility to swap cards in and out, editing the pairings to find the most dynamic matches. Some of my sequences extend beyond 100 pages each.

Initially I had some ambivalence about using vintage postcards as my primary source of imagery because, despite their vast range of subject matter, the clichés attached to the postcard form itself might detract from the tone I'm after. Postcards have a way of flattening pictures into a kind of sameness. But the more I began to work with them the more I appreciated how their banality is an advantage. In much the same way that Bresson speaks about film editing, the flatness allows postcards to be effective in dynamic pairings.

When I started making postcard books, I saw them as prototypes that would, like the folded

books, ultimately lead me in other directions. But the narrative potential of extended image sequences developed in such promising ways that I now consider them the primary source material for my visual novel.

As we saw in the Notman book, any book opening that juxtaposes one image against another can be seen as a form of montage, though we may not identify it that way. This is also true of many of the postcard books I have made. But there was one type of postcard image—one type of pairing in particular—that worked differently. Once I started juxtaposing vertical landscape postcards on facing pages, it was interesting how easily they hinted at a single continuous landscape view across the spread. I continued to experiment with pairings that were either closer matches or compelling for other reasons. Certain aspects of visual perception that help us make sense of the world like object recognition and Gestalt principles of grouping come into play.

What I've discovered through the process is that the most reduced form of montage/collage involving no cutting, tearing, or folding—relying only on juxtaposition—results in the most compelling kind of visual tension. There's a fluidity to the process that feels as though I'm writing with images.

Now that I have established a visual method, the narrative direction of the book is following where the pictures lead. Separate, text-only page openings echo the image treatment, the flow of writing from page to page interrupted by changes in location, time, or perspective—or marked by different styles of prose. I'm immersing myself now in the messages written on the verso side of postcards, a kind of found vernacular poetry that photographer (and postcard collector) Walker Evans called "lyric documentary."

As a designer I've learned how engaging with the self-reflexive aspects of books (their action, object-quality and metaphorical associations), can enhance, amplify, and create meaning. Film director Robert Bresson speaks to this in an interview with fellow filmmaker Jean-Luc Godard:

I attach a great importance to form. An enormous importance. And I believe that form generates rhythm. And that rhythm is all-powerful. It's the



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*Folded book models, Bryan Gee.*

primary thing. Even when you add a voice-over, this voice-over is initially seen, is felt, as a rhythm. Next, there's colour: it can be warm or cold. And then there's meaning. But the meaning arrives last.<sup>6</sup>

#### EPILOGUE

As we increasingly migrate our attention to digital media to absorb textual information, visual books are not only proving their resilience—they are thriving. Witness the renewed interest in photobooks and experimental artists' books evident in the growing international popularity of art book fairs; the emergence of new forms like the graphic novel; and more recently, the as-yet to be adequately defined genre of "hybrid fiction" where writing and pictures interweave to form a single "text." The visual and kinetic possibilities of the codex are far from exhausted. The need for a visual literacy in book design that encompasses the complex language of images is therefore perhaps more important than ever.

1. Dick Higgins, "A Book," *Intermedia, Fluxus and the Something Else Press: Selected Writings of Dick Higgins*, eds. Steve Clay and Ken Friedman (Siglio Press, 2018), 272.

2. Christopher Bigsby, *Writers in Conversation* (Pen & Ink Press, 2001), 155.
3. László Moholy-Nagy, *Vision in Motion* (Paul Theobald & Co., 1947), 208.
4. Robert Bresson, *Notes on Cinematography*, trans. Jonathan Griffen (Urizen Books, 1975), 5.
5. Philip Monk, *Disassembling the Archive: Fiona Tan* (Art Gallery of York University, 2008), back cover.
6. Robert Bresson, *Bresson on Bresson: Interviews, 1943–1983*. (New York Review Books, 2016), 148.

#### FURTHER READING

Johanna Drucker, *The Century of Artists' Books* (Granary Books, 2004).

Peter Mendelsund, *What We See When We Read: A Phenomenology with Illustrations* (Vintage Books, 2004).

Andrew Piper, *Book Was There: Reading in Electronic Times* (The University of Chicago Press, 2012).

Amaranth Borsuk, *The Book* (MIT Press, 2018).

Louis Lüthi, *On the Self-Reflexive Page II* (Roma Publications, 2021).

~ Bryan Gee is a Canadian designer and writer. In addition to his independent design practice, he has held senior design positions at The Art Gallery of Ontario, *Saturday Night Magazine*, and Bruce Mau Design. He is currently art director for Opinion at *The Globe and Mail*. He has designed books for museums and galleries including the Art Gallery of Ontario, Art Gallery of York University, Canadian Cultural Centre (Paris), Deutsche Bank Art, Gagosian Gallery, The Power Plant, and YYZ Books.

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