

ARTIST'S NOVELS — David Maroto

5-day workshop at Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts de Lyon

7–11 March 2016

10/12 MFA students. 6 hours/day.

Introduction

The artist's novel is a current phenomenon that is gaining an increasing relevance in contemporary art. There are many artists who have written novels, but the artist's novel is something else: it is a medium in the visual arts. It is a contemporary phenomenon in which visual artists employ their novels within their broader projects, as they would employ installation, performance, or video. Here, the creation of a novel does not differ from any other artwork. Both processes, writing and art-making, feed each other as they evolve within the same body of work. In an artist's novel the reading experience is part of the work, but it does not constitute the entire artistic experience. The narrative expands beyond the space of the page to take place in a body of works that belong to the same art project.

In my work as artist, co-initiator of The Book Lovers project, together with curator Joanna Zielinska, as well as in my PhD research (Edinburgh College of Art), my efforts have been directed to identify what is specific of the artist's novel as a medium. At the end of this document I offer some basic bibliography that can clarify notions related to this workshop.

Description

The Artist's Novels workshop is an opportunity to explore the introduction of traits from the novel into the visual arts, such as fiction, narrative, imagination and identification. Students will create an art project in which the creation of a narrative fiction text occupies a central position. For example, the student must not necessarily sit down and start writing on a stack of blank A4 pages. Instead, she can opt for using artistic tools, such as performance, public events, installation, collaborative strategies, appropriation, and so on, in order to generate innovative conditions of readership, and/or to alter conventional notions of authorship.

The workshop is aimed at increasing the students' writing skills and creative resources, which can later be applied to their own research. Obviously, we cannot aim at writing a

whole novel, but the notion of artist's novel will remain as a horizon of reference throughout. At the end of the workshop, each student will have produced an art project, part of which must be a piece of narrative fiction (advised: 2,000–3,000 words). The idea is that both textual and plastic elements of their projects are produced by following the same artistic processes.

In order to introduce narrative fiction in their artistic projects, students can choose from the following two strategies:

(A) Writing the narrative first and then use it as a machine that creates the artworks.

(B) Producing first an art project that will be employed as a writing technique, generating the narrative text as it develops.

The narrative fiction piece will be published and delivered to an audience as part of the art project. It could be printed as a book or booklet to be distributed, but students are encouraged to search for other, innovative ways to integrate their texts in their artistic strategies: posters, wall prints, sound installation, websites, video projections, performance, etc. The last day of the workshop will be focused on a public presentation of the results.

Structure

The workshop runs through 5 days, from 10.00 to 17.00, with 1 hour for breaks. Thus, 6 working hours a day.

Day 1 (Mon 7 March): (10.00–12.00) Introduction to my practice: artist, writer, curator, researcher = artist. The artist's novel: essential concepts (narrative, fiction, accessibility, text as con-text, deceleration of art experience, etc.) and relevant examples: Gerry Bibby, Goldin+Senneby, Jill Magid, Mai-Thu Perret, Benjamin Seror, Cally Spooner. The Book Lovers project.

Lunch break (12.00–12.30)

(12.30–14.00) Close reading of Cally Spooner's *Collapsing in Parts*' excerpt. We will elucidate the textual structure in relation to the art project from which it stems. We will pay special attention to the notions of narrative, fiction, identification, imagination, and the specific relation established with the spectator/reader.

(14.15–16.15) Description of the workshop. Students' choices: creative strategy (A) or (B); work individually or in groups; brainstorm and planning towards the final presentation; technical needs.

(16.15–17.00) Presentation of each project and group feedback.

Day 2 (Tue 8 March): For those who chose (A): writing day. For those who chose (B): producing the art project. I will accompany the process and provide feedback by having face-to-face meetings with each student. At the end of the day there will be a group meeting to assess the progress.

Day 3 (Wed 9 March): For those who chose (A): produce the art project stemming from the text written yesterday. For those who chose (B): produce the narrative text derived from the art project that was made yesterday. I will have face-to-face meetings with each student to accompany the process and provide feedback. At the end of the day there will be a group meeting to assess the progress.

Day 4 (Thu 10 March): Installing the art project in the exhibition space: artworks, audio-visual equipment, etc. Printing and publishing the pieces of narrative fiction. Rehearsing performances. In the middle of the day there will be a group meeting to assess the progress of the exhibition as a whole. The conclusions will be implemented in the second part of the day.

Day 5 (Fri 11 March): *Morning:* round of presentations. Each student explains their project in order to be discussed with the rest of the group (10 min + 5 min feedback). Critical yet constructive feedback from the other students will be valued.

Afternoon: Opening of the exhibition, public reception and performance programme (if there are any to be performed).

Bibliography

FUSCO, M. (2010) How Hard It Is To Die. *Metropolis M.* 31, no. 2 (April–May), pp. 99–101.

MAROTO, D. and ZIELIŃSKA, J. (Eds.) (2015) *Artist Novels*. Berlin/Krakow: Sternberg Press/Cricoteka.

SPOONER, C. (2011) *Collapsing in Parts*. Birmingham/Milan: International Project Space/Mousse Publishing.

Further reading (optional)

DE COINTET, G. (2013) *Espahor Ledet Ko Uluner!* [performance]. Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, 26 October. Available from: https://youtu.be/e81_BwqT0hg [Accessed 30/09/2015].

DILLON, B. (2015) The Exhaustion of Literature. *Mousse Magazine* 47, pp. 38–47.

PROVAN, A. (2015) Introduction. Headless Commercial Thriller. In: GOLDIN+SENNEBY [K.D., pseud.] *Headless*. Berlin/New York/Stockholm: Sternberg Press/Triple Canopy/Tensta Konsthall, pp. 9–43. Also available online: https://www.canopycanopycanopy.com/contents/headless_commercial_thriller [Accessed 23/11/2015]

Artist's novels bibliography (selection)

For the complete bibliography, please visit:

<http://www.thebooklovers.info/Artist-s-Novels-Bibliography>

<http://ensembles.mhka.be/ensembles/the-book-lovers>

BIBBY, G. (2014) *The Drumhead*. Berlin: Sternberg Press.

CHONG, H., COSTINAS, C., HEATHER, R., MCKEE, F., REINFURT, D., RUSHTON, S., TANGEN, L. M. and WALLER, M. A. (2007) *PHILIP*. Dublin, Ireland: Project Press.

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PERRET, M-T. (1999–) The Crystal Frontier. In: KELLER, C. (Ed.) *Land of crystal*, Zurich: JRP | Ringier.

SEROR, B. (2015) *Mime Radio*. Paris/Brussels/Amsterdam: BAT éditions/Kunstverein Publishing.

SINGH, A. (2008) *The Marque of the Third Stripe*. New York/Rome: Preromanbritain LLC/Monitor Gallery.