

BRIEF SYNOPSIS OF NOTES: ARCA ART WRITING AND PUBLISHING FORUM, SAINT JOHN, NB, MAY 2013

Common threads, ideas, and themes from the discussion as recorded by Eryn Foster, scribe:

On Distribution:

- there are infinite ways to distribute books and we need to do a better job looking at alternatives; as well as how ARCs and independent publishers can make formal and informal distribution methods work for them.
- more work needs to be done on facilitating access to alternative dissemination methods, networking and sharing of information amongst ARCs, publishing organizations and other independent publishers.
- the bookstore model is perhaps one of many potential new venues for access and circulation; we need to open up and have access to different markets, there are definitely untapped opportunities.

On Publishing Practices:

- there seems to be a common desire to get away from the classic exhibition catalogue; more ARCS and publishers view the book as an artwork in and of itself and want to create artist books: “the book might be dead but now more than ever there is a huge demand for artists books”.
- we are also changing the way we print and publish; more of us are doing “print on demand” and, shorter print runs, now made possible with digital publishing.
- there is the recognition that more can be done in terms of co-publishing practices, in and outside of the art world; there is room for collaboration amongst ARCs and independent publishers who may traditionally not have been involved in art/artist publications.
- there exists a tension between digital vs online. Some choose to do one or the other, some do both; there is the recognition that digital publishing is really in the end not that much cheaper; and in truth, at the end of the day, most are doing what they do because they have a material relationship to the book as an object.

On Funding for Art Publishing and Artist Books

- several participants reflected on and communicated that they were not happy with the programs available to them through the Canada Council; the writing and publishing program is restrictive, is not flexible or open to publishing projects that fall out of the traditional literary forms of editing and production.
- it was also noted that the CC does have funding for artist books but most artists find it difficult to access, the funding is essentially in the form of block grants to publishers; but even these are restrictive and not very flexible: too many rules dictating what can be funded.
- more lobbying and discussion with Council needs to take place to ensure that more funding opportunities can be made available to ARCs, art orgs, publishers etc..
- we also need to look at other alternative sources for funding these projects; and for travel, so publishers and artists can attend international art book fairs like NYABF which has been a very important event for many small art publishers.