

MARIAN GOODMAN GALLERY

APOLLO

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The bookish side of Parisian art

By Tom Jeffreys (February 14, 2017)



Yvon Lambert, Paris, deals in high-quality artists' books and editions

The recent opening of a standalone book store by esteemed gallerist Marian Goodman is confirmation, if any were needed, that in Paris the art world and the book world frequently overlap. In 2016, French publishers released no less than 5,652 books about art. Artists here are often bookish; books invariably beautiful.

Goodman, who has galleries in New York and London as well as Paris, started her career selling artists' editions, multiples and books in 1965. The new Librairie Marian Goodman, just down the road from her spacious gallery in the Marais, therefore represents something of a drawing together of her achievements in the art world. 'Marian has always wanted to open a bookshop,' says gallery director Nicolas Nahab. 'She has always published and promoted artists' multiples and prints, and the gallery has a fantastic inventory.'

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The Librairie Marian Goodman recently opened in Paris

Unsurprisingly, Librairie Marian Goodman focuses on books, prints, and other editioned works by the gallery's artists. On my last visit several handsome photography books by Thomas Struth caught my eye, as well as William Kentridge's multi-layered *Triumphs and Laments*, which documents the creative process behind the 500 metre-long frieze the artist produced in Rome in 2016. Beyond the books is a small exhibition space, currently hosting photographic works by James Welling as an extension of his solo show in the main gallery. 'We hope that it will also be for our artists a new dimension to explore, and a new outlet of creativity,' says Nahab. The glass-fronted space is also likely to attract a different clientele from the main gallery, which is hidden away behind a pair of imposing wooden doors.

Goodman's new initiative is the latest addition to an increasingly diverse scene. Just a few streets away is the bookshop of venerable Parisian dealer Yvon Lambert. Lambert, who opened his gallery in 1966 and made his name championing American minimalists and conceptualists like Carl Andre and Lawrence Weiner, has been working with artists to produce sublimely beautiful limited edition artist books since 1992. In 2014 he closed his Paris gallery in order to focus on his foundation – the Collection Lambert in Avignon – and on his bookshop, which he opened in 2001. Lambert sees his work within the long Parisian tradition of great art dealer-publishers, such as Ambroise Vollard, Aimé Maeght, and Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler. 'In France we love books,' he tells me from among the boxes in the basement office beneath his shop. '[There] is a very old tradition here for beautiful books.'

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Yvon Lambert, Paris

But it is not just the long-established dealers who are making their mark in arts publishing. One of Paris's most interesting recent initiatives is the tiny but brilliant Section 7 Books, run by critic and curator Benjamin Thorel with a collective of other artists and writers. Section 7 Books began life as a temporary project within Belleville project space castillo/corrales. When the gallery closed in 2015, Thorel decided to keep Section 7 Books going in order to explore ways in which publishing might offer economic alternatives to the traditional gallery model. Books are generally cheaper to produce and buy than art. They don't require large studio spaces or much specialist equipment. There are fewer gatekeepers. Books arguably have a wider appeal too. In France, as elsewhere, contemporary art is often seen as more elitist than literature. 'The field of publishing feels like a place where new things can happen more easily,' says Thorel. Maybe this also explains the emergence of innovative new bookstores like Volume alongside independent publishers such as Editions Bessard, Poursuite, and Éditions Dilecta.

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Section 7 Books at FIAC art fair, 2009. Photo: Aurélien Mole

From Section 7 Books' current location, hidden away down a narrow covered passageway, Thorel is 'trying to find a way to make the project self-sustaining without relying on public funding'. In part this means building a community – both locally and internationally. It also means providing something new: Thorel tries 'to bring books to Paris that you can't find anywhere else', such as works in English or other foreign languages, which he explains can be 'tricky' to find in the city. As well as 'zines and artists' books there is a strong focus on independent publishers, and the shop stocks a wealth of wonderful titles, many of which I've never seen elsewhere. In addition to Section 7 Books, Thorel is also involved in publishing collective, Paraguay Press, whose ongoing series, 'The Social Life of the Book', is on display in the shop. The project brings together artists, publishers, writers, designers, booksellers and others in order to examine the way such communities enable (and are produced by) the dissemination of new ideas. It is almost a commentary on Section 7 Books itself.

Further north is Le Bal, an independent non-profit space that combines gallery, café and bookshop. The bookshop specialises in contemporary, self-published, out-of-print art and photography books and also publishes its own essay collections under the title of Les Carnets du Bal. The gallery programming often has a literary or publishing strand too: December saw a weekend dedicated to independent publishers and bookstores. Le Bal's current exhibition 'Again and Again' (until 9 April) is a solo show by Stéphane Duroy which enacts a literal and conceptual pulling apart of the book. On the ground floor, two of Duroy's photography books – *Distress* and *L'Europe du Silence* – are presented opposite each other, both as wall-mounted photography and as books. Downstairs, Duroy rejects the limitations of book-based photography, working over copies of his own 2007 publication *Unknown* and transforming it into collage, sculpture, and installation with a mania precipitated by and commenting on current political events.

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Paris Photo: shortlisted titles for PhotoBook of the Year

All this activity has helped spawn a number of new initiatives. In 2010, Yannick Bouillis founded annual book fair Offprint in Paris. There are now instalments in London and Milan as well as a permanent space in Arles in the south of France. In 2012, Paris Photo and photography foundation Aperture launched the PhotoBook Awards. Then in 2014, photographer Laurent Chardon and writer-curator (and Le Bal alumnus) Sebastian Hau launched Polycopies, a ‘market place’ for photography publications, which last year took place on a boat on the Seine and showcased some 30 independent publishers, including London’s Trolley Books and brilliant Dutch book design studio The Eriskay Connection.

It was at Offprint 2016 that I first came across the works of Peeping Tom, another publisher taking a collaborative approach to art and to books. Based out of Paris suburb Les Lilas, Peeping Tom originally started out as a curatorial collective running events and exhibitions. Since 2008, they have focused on a series of books entitled Peeping Tom’s Digest. Each takes as its subject the art scene of an individual city – so far Berlin, Mexico City, Beirut, and Paris – and follows an organic path of investigation through meetings, events, and word-of-mouth recommendations in order to build up not only a picture of a scene but also a community of contributors and readers around each publication. Each is approximately two years in the making. As Peeping Tom’s co-founder Caroline Niémant explains: ‘Ephemeral projects are too hysterical, sad and frustrating to me! I prefer the long, tedious and calm editorial process. Making books has a different rhythm, a healthier one.’ 2016’s Paris digest is a rich, strange, fascinating insight into the lives of the city’s artists. Lack of money is a recurring theme – both as a source of lament and of potential. As Niémant herself puts it in a line that tells us much about the whole publishing ecosystem: ‘Anyone can make a book. It breaks the boundaries of creativity.’

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