

Three Star Books

Jonathan Monk
The Billboard Book Project (Paris)
Published January 2010

Edition of 40 copies with 20 artist's proofs all numbered and signed by the artist.
Numbers 1 to 6 are accompanied by the 400 x 300 cm folded billboard poster.
Dimensions: 26,5 x 43 cm.
Hard cover with silkscreened cardboard
210 pages printed in 2 colors

About forty years ago, artists like Robert Morris and Joseph Kosuth were making works explicitly about self-referentiality. In the case of Morris, tautology took the form of objects. In the case of Kosuth, it took the form of words, sentences, and paragraphs. Works about the sound of their own making, or word pieces that spoke of being "self-described and self-defined," turned language and forms into short circuits and logical conundrums that still inspire today.

The nitty gritty, however, did not play a part.

Yes, work came to be embedded in a metropolitan urban context. Kosuth and Daniel Buren inaugurated the use of billboards. But the work kept a rigorous linguistic, or a completely abstract, base. By the time of Kruger and Gonzalez-Torres, billboards by artists were still vehicles, but always, well, monumental.

Morris showed tautology in performance and in objects where the "I" of the artist, and his utterly naked self, conflate being, saying, making, and doing.

But there was always a level of abstraction to performative and conceptual art which, well, left out you and me.

The "Billboard Book" book of Jonathan Monk, harks back to other times. It is fabricated from the billboard project announcing its publication, is a great piece of conceptual wizardry. It refers to itself in the natty text that Monk devised, invoking every last piece of technical detail constituting its manufacture.

And then, the object slices up, and becomes a volume, showing, in one neat gesture, how irrelevant taxonomies such as sculpture/painting/book, really are. Daniel Buren and others have chewed on these problems.

But what is so really neat, and now, about Mr. Monk's piece for Three Star Books, is the human dimension. In the age of the social network, where you and me can really log right on to anyone else's site, why should the printer of this billboard book book be left out? And isn't it nice that the photographer is mentioned too? Not to speak of the dear lady crating the book in its cartons and that the design is by Vier5.

Here, the humility and humor of Monk come brilliantly to the fore. Every last soul involved in the manufacture of this book object has been duly mentioned. Gone is the age when art authorship and art assistants were two separate matters. Monk acts more like a producer in this case, and shows the artistic process for the collaborative endeavor it really is.

Now, for all those old-time Marxists, with their very good intentions, and sometimes lesser capacity to enact them, here is a beautiful lesson in how to be both procreative, and democratic, both deferential to one's mentors, and yet, generative, all at the same time, and in 1.8 kilograms of highly meaningful paper pulp.

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This billboard was designed by Paris-based German graphic designers vier5 to advertise a new book by Berlin-based British artist Jonathan Monk.

The book is fabricated from this 400 x 300 cm billboard design, with each page being cut down to 43 x 27 cm.

The book is published by Three Star Books, Paris/Rome, in a strictly limited edition of forty copies, with twenty artist's proofs.

Each edition is signed and numbered by the artist and the designers on the inside back cover with a black Sharpie pen. Numbers 1 to 6 are accompanied by the 400 x 300 cm folded billboard poster.

Three Star Books is the collaborative project of Christophe Boutin, Cornelia Lauf, and Mélanie Scarciglia, with associate Giuseppe Catalano. The accountant for this project is Françoise Andignac.

The principal office of Three Star Books is 49, rue Albert (at the corner of rue Jean Fautrier close to rue Marcel Duchamp), Paris, France. www.threestarbooks.com

The book is printed by Cassochrome, Waregem, Belgium managed by Bernard Soens. Cassochromes sales representative is Laurence Soens. The pre-press files have been treated by Pascal Hoedt followed by production inspector Steven Deryckere. The book is printed on a Komori S540 72 x 102 cm chantafiche white paper, blue on the verso, mat, 115 g/m² from igepa (70 x 100 cm) by Cedric Truffaut. The paper comes in packs of 125 sheets cut to the correct format on a Schneider Senator SC cutter by Arnaud Vanderzwaen and shipped to Paris by dbv, Tourcouing, France.

Binding has been done by CPMC, Paris, France. CPMC is managed by Gilles Vercel: their sales representative is Thierry Martin. CPMC's studio is managed by Isabelle Salak. The cover is made of grey cardboard Redoublé 20/10 distributed by AZAP and folded on a Refouleuse Boistay, le Bourget. The cover has been silk-screened by Nadia Kesbi and the finished books will be packed by Rosita Grelet.

This billboard space is owned by Eurotrade Services and managed by Chif Lee. The billboard was digitally printed by Achromat Images, Toulouse by Sylvain Petit in 6 parts on a large Jeti Digital Printer using heavy solvent inks. Achromat Images is managed by Gerard Revel. The printed poster was transported to Paris by TNT. The billboard was installed by MP Com managed by Patrick Petit with a flour-based poster glue on week 47 of 2009.

Documentation is provided by Florian Kleinfenn with a Hasselblad hd2d 39 equipped with a 300 mm f5,6 Hasseblad lens. The image will be treated on a Apple Macintosh computer with photoshop CS4. An image of the installed billboard will appear in the book and will be printed by négatif +, Paris on Fuji color crystal archive paper on a Fuji frontier printer and glued to the inside cover with archival double-face tape.

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