

## OPENING RECEPTION

**Out of Print: Kristan Horton, John Latham, Roula Partheniou, Amy Robinson, Molly Springfield, David Stein, Derek Sullivan**

Curated by Sarah Robayo Sheridan

Friday 7 January 2011, 7 PM

## MEMBER EVENTS

**In Studio: Kristan Horton**

Thursday 3 February 2011, 7 pm

Free and guaranteed to Sustaining Members on RSVP / \$25 single tickets for non-members (pending availability)

## PUBLIC PROGRAM

**No Reading After the Internet**

**Reading: Ulises Carrion's *The New Art of Making Books***

Thursday 17 February 2011, 7 PM, free admission

*No Reading After the Internet* is a free monthly series curated by cheyanne turions, in which a text is read aloud and discussed. The event is open to all and no prior knowledge of the text or author is necessary. For this iteration, Ulises Carrion's "The New Art of Making Books" has been selected as a complement to *Out of Print* by the exhibition's curator Sarah Robayo Sheridan. A series co-presented with the Liaison of Independent Filmmakers of Toronto (LIFT).

## ARTIST'S CABIN

**Paul Chan: *My Own Private Alexandria***

The artist's cabin will serve as a listening room for free DIY voice recordings by Paul Chan of some of his favourite texts. Also, freely distributed through his website [www.nationalphilistine.org](http://www.nationalphilistine.org)

## BILLBOARD PROJECT

**James Carl: *Content 1.0***

Special for winter, the billboard features a line drawn anti-freeze bottle, a character in the artist's font "Content 1.0."



### Mercer Union, A Centre for Contemporary Art

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**Gallery Hours: Tuesday – Saturday, 11AM – 6 PM**  
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Mercer Union acknowledges the support of its membership, the Canada Council for the Arts, the Department of Canadian Heritage, the Government of Ontario through the Ontario Arts Council, the Ontario Ministry of Culture, the Ontario Trillium Foundation, the City of Toronto through the Toronto Arts Council and the City of Toronto Cultural Services' Culture Build Investment Program.

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ISBN 978-1-926627-13-7

Printed by Sonicprint.ca

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Cover image: Molly Springfield, *Kindle*, 2009. Graphite on paper, 22 x 17 inches.

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**LIFT**  
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INDEPENDENT FILMMAKERS  
OF TORONTO

**SONIC PRINT**.CA

## BIOS

**John Latham** was born in Rhodesia in 1921. He studied at Chelsea School of Art and taught at St Martins School of Art, London. He founded the Artists Placement Group (APG) in 1968. Latham's filmmaking began as a means of recording the evolution of his bookworks *Unedited Material From Star 1960*, but developed to embrace collaborative works with the Event Structure Research Group, abstract animation in the 1960s, and works made for television in the 1990s.

**Kristan Horton** studied fine art at the University of Guelph and the Ontario College of Art and Design. His multi-disciplinary practice includes sculpture, drawing, photography and video. His work has been exhibited internationally and he has had solo exhibitions at White Columns, New York (2008) and The Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver (2007), among others. Horton was the winner of the 2010 Grange Prize. He is represented by Jessica Bradley Art + Projects, Toronto.

**Molly Springfield** was born in 1977. She received her MFA from the University of California, Berkeley in 2004, and was a participant at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in 2006. Her work has been the subject of solo shows in New York, Chicago, San Francisco, and Washington, and group shows in museums and galleries across the United States and Europe. She lives and works in Washington, DC.

**Amy Robinson** lives and works in Phoenix, Arizona. She received her MFA from the University of California, Irvine in 2006 and has subsequently taught art at the post-secondary level. Her own work has been exhibited in group and solo exhibitions in the US. This is the first exhibition of Amy Robinson's work in Canada.

**Derek Sullivan** is a Toronto-based artist. In the autumn of 2010 the University of Waterloo Art Gallery presented "It is more difficult to hit a moving target", a solo survey of work from the past 5 years. He is represented by Jessica Bradley Art + Projects, Toronto.

**Roula Partheniou's** work is marked by a concern for marriage of material and form and is drawn together by a strong sense of both logic and play. She has exhibited her work both nationally and internationally, with recent exhibitions including *Never Odd or Even* at MKG127, Toronto; *100 Variations* at Priska C. Juschka Fine Art, New York; *Permutations* at Truck Gallery, Calgary, and an upcoming show at Modern Fuel, Kingston. She is represented by MKG127, Toronto.

**David Stein** is an artist based in San Francisco. His work has been exhibited at Southern Exposure, Club Six, New Langton Arts, the Rooseum, and the Kunsthaus Dresden. Stein has held residencies at the Bemis Center for the Arts and The McDowell Colony and was also the recipient of the Murphy Fellowship and the All College Honor Award from the California College of the Arts. He is represented by Eleanor Harwood, San Francisco.

**Sarah Robayo Sheridan** is the Director of Exhibitions and Publications at Mercer Union.

## ALL INCLUSIVE

### MERCER UNION MEMBERS' SHOW & SALE

Mercer Union thanks all the artists who contributed work to *All Inclusive*, the 2010 members' show & sale. This year's exhibition featured works by Basil Alzeri, Anahita Azrahimi, Katie Bethune-Leamen, Adam David Brown, Tammi Campbell, Jenal Dolson, Andrew Duff, Danica Evering, Gillian Foster, James Gardner, Lauren Hall, David FM Hanes, Mallory Hazlett, Lee Henderson, Robert Hengeveld, Marcia Huyer, Shari Kasman, Matt Killen, Caroline Larsen, Cowyn Lund, Suzanne Nacha, Mary Porter, Marie-Lyne Quirion, Kerri Reid, Erwin Rummel, Jon Sasaki, Chris Shepard, Miles Stemp, Derek Sullivan, Aislinn Thomas, Flavio Trevisan, Jessica Vallentin, Jennifer Wardle, Donna Willard, Julita Wolanska. In addition to our board and staff, we were also thankful to the following volunteers for their assistance in the event: Ronnie & Susie de Leon, Myung-Sun Kim, Miles Stemp and Aislinn Thomas.

## E-FLUX JOURNAL DISTRIBUTED BY MERCER UNION

The print edition of *e-flux journal* can be purchased for \$3 during regular gallery hours.



# IN STUDIO

## MERCER UNION'S EXCLUSIVE STUDIO VISIT SERIES



### IN STUDIO: KRISTAN HORTON

Thursday 3 February 2011, 7 PM

Free and guaranteed to Sustaining Members on RSVP

\$25 single tickets for non-members (pending availability)

Refreshments will be served

Following the success of the first visit in the series—Abbas Akavan graciously hosted by Micah Lexier—we are pleased to present this exclusive opportunity for Mercer Union Sustaining Members to meet with 2010 Grange Prize winner Kristan Horton in his studio.

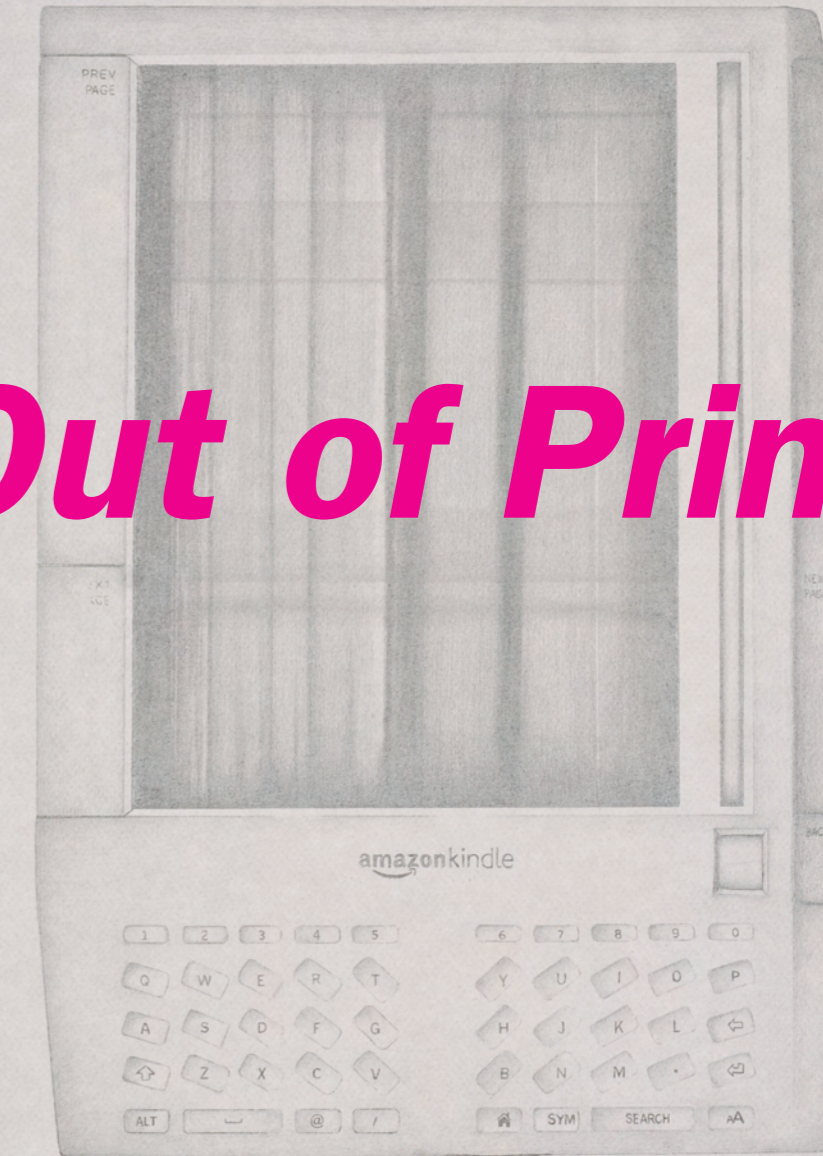
A limited number of tickets may be made available to non-members at \$25, pending availability. To secure your reservation for future exclusive events in the series, buy a Mercer Union Sustaining Membership.

Space is extremely limited. To reserve or make membership inquiries, contact York Lethbridge, Director of Operations & Development by email to [york@mercerunion.org](mailto:york@mercerunion.org) or by calling 416.536.1519.



Kristan Horton  
John Latham  
Roula Partheniou  
Amy Robinson  
Molly Springfield  
David Stein  
Derek Sullivan

# Out of Print



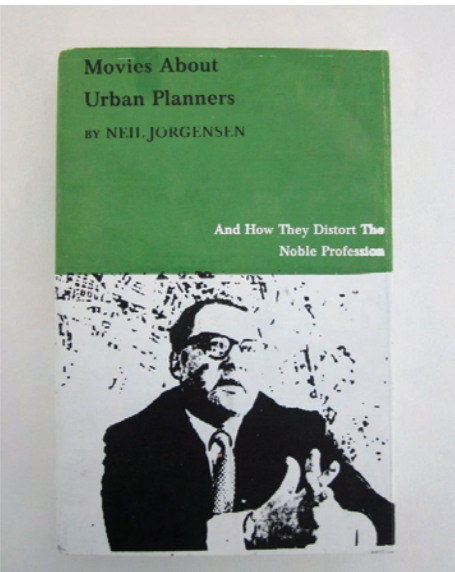
7 January–26 February 2011  
Opening: Friday 7 January, 7 PM



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Image credits

- Kristan Horton, *Oracle V2*, 2003. A machine that turns books on tape back into books. Dimensions variable.
- Derek Sullivan, *Stack*, 2004. Plywood, 3 copies of the edition *National Gallery Catalogue*. Edition of 3 (+1 AP). Base measures 24 x 12 x 12 inches.
- David Stein, *Unlikely Library*, 2008. Modified Books. Dimensions Variable.
- John Latham, *Britannica*, 1971. 16mm transferred to video. 6 minutes. Courtesy Lux, London.
- Roula Partheniou, *Composition With Yellow Lines Xeroxed*, 2010. Graphite on paper. Photo: Toni Hafkenscheid.
- Amy Robinson, *Kurt Vonnegut*, 2008. Watercolor, gouache and ink on paper. 22 x 15 inches.

# Out of Print

Kristan Horton, John Latham, Roula Partheniou, Amy Robinson, Molly Springfield, David Stein and Derek Sullivan

Curated by Sarah Robayo Sheridan



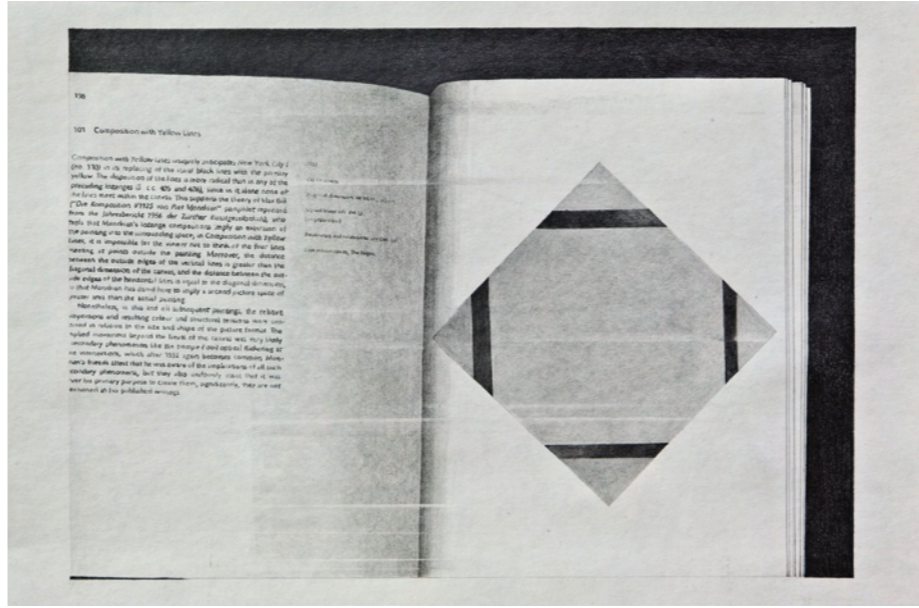
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“Out of Print” designates a book whose print run is exhausted, making it difficult to locate within the market. When a book becomes a scarce commodity, its meaning can shift from its content (the book as a relay of ideas) to its form (the book as precious object, curio). In recent years, book publishing has undergone major change—the sale of books has largely migrated to the internet and the very form of the printed page, the major platform for the written word in the last millennium, seems now waning in favour of electronic formats. Slowly, printed materials are headed for obsolescence and, as if in premonition of this end, there has been proliferation of contemporary artworks that explore the legacy of the book. *Out of Print* frames a small selection of book-related artworks in relationship to the cultural shift prophesied by end of print.

Kristan Horton has been exploring the meaning and potential of media migration in *Oracle*, a project initiated in 1997. *Oracle* is a nearly realized prototype for a machine to turn books on tape back into books. The source for the experiment is a nine-hour recording of Alex Jennings reading the Penguin edition of Homer’s *Odyssey*. In *Oracle*, several degrees of interpolation are compounded—the oral tradition of the epic poem standardized as a text, an English translation from the Homeric Greek,<sup>1</sup> read aloud by an English actor, the voice transcribed back into written form through artificial intelligence and the whole rematerialized as a laser print out. Because software lacks the ability to discern semantic meaning, the result lacks the precision of a human translator to detect homonyms, tone and other nuances of speech. *Oracle*’s *Odyssey* has its closest kin in the scrambled prose of email spam—raw and senseless data. Unmoored from common language, the text is comparable to the enigmatic utterances of the oracles of antiquity, whose prophecies had to be deciphered by priests. Like many of Horton’s projects, *Oracle* has legs — it encompasses the idea, a critical catalogue in the form of an artist’s book, the prototypes, the various sketches and the various travels the idea has taken over time. Horton’s way of working aligns with the Deleuze and Guattari’s use of the rhizome (from the Greek, a “mass of roots”), to describe a form of thinking that eschews the top down ordering of knowledge in favour of idea propagation with multiple exit and entry points, no beginning or end.

The rhizome is also an often-cited metaphor for the lateral knowledge possibilities of internet and the proliferation of coauthored information in shared forums like Wikipedia. The internet’s dynamic architecture promises content that is malleable rather than fixed—a potential point of connect with the oral tradition.<sup>2</sup> Online “pages” come and go, their source changes, and it is perhaps this very instability that now makes the physical book seem a charming artifact in contrast. The fixity of the physical book exemplifies an older canonical ordering of knowledge exemplified by Diderot’s *Encyclopaedia*, which was written in the spirit and belief that knowledge could be finite, contained, ordered. This notion comes under attack in John Latham’s 6-minute film *Britannica* (1971). Shot on 16mm, the film is composed by the continuous stream of single frames each reproducing the sequential open page spreads of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. In one blip, the hand is caught in the act of turning the page, but otherwise, the succession of pages appears automatic. The effect is a stop-motion flicker film, in which the potential density of information is but an empty set of fleeting signs, too quick for the eye to recompose in the mind as text. The contrast is high enough at the outset that we can discern bits of content here or there but by the end of the reel, overexposure serves to obliterate the page contents. This action can be compared to the tabula rasa moment of Rauschenberg erasing the William De Kooning drawing in order to start anew.<sup>3</sup> Latham’s action was as revolutionary a cry. His prior book-annihilating exercises included the action *Still and Chew/Art and Culture*, carried out in 1966-67.<sup>4</sup> Latham borrowed a copy of Clement Greenberg’s *Art and Culture* from St. Martin’s School of Art, enlisted a group of collaborators to chew up a portion of the book. The material was spit back out and then fermented for nine months. When the overdue notice arrived, a corresponding vial was returned to the library and Latham was promptly fired from his teaching post.<sup>5</sup> The act was both a visceral rejection of Greenberg’s art historical authority and also an attack on the idea of the book as a precious object. This antagonism towards the book was emblematic of Latham’s strongly held belief in the need to explore temporality (“Event Structures” in theoretical physics parlance) over objects.

In contrast to Latham’s fight against objects and materials, there is a counter-current of artists from a subsequent generation who are active in processes we might call the “rematerialization” of the art object.<sup>6</sup> Amy

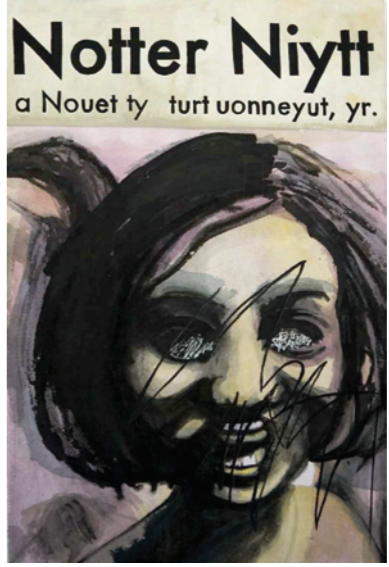


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Robinson, Roula Partheniou and Molly Springfield each present detailed hand-renderings of existing mechanical layouts from books, in an interesting reversal of the process of industrial printing. Roula Partheniou’s practice of making detailed copies of book covers, which she calls “Handmade Readymades,” affirms a connection to Duchamp’s legacy with the reinsertion of the artist’s hand added to the process. Her sculpture, *Circular Logic*, assembles a 3D grid of her paint on canvas surrogates of paperbacks. Produced at a one-to-one scale with the source books, the collection is housed in a construction of glass cubes, reminiscent of both library display and minimal sculpture. All the titles feature arrows, which pointing to, and against, each other create a ping-pong effect and multi-directional loop structure. Partheniou’s adoption of these titles highlights the material history of the book, placing emphasis on the history of book design and in particular the popularization of Bauhaus design principles in paperback titles appearing post-WWII.

Amy Robinson likewise embraces the history of print design in her work. In a series of vivid watercolour and gouache drawings, she memorializes some of the most innovative examples of dust-jacket design from cherished books by Norman Mailer, Hal Foster, HG Wells, George Orwell, Kurt Vonnegut, Philip K. Dick. In one of the most eye-catching drawings, Robinson trains her attention on graphic artist Paul Bacon’s jacket design for *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*.<sup>7</sup> Appropriating Bacon’s style of hand-drawn letters, Robinson re-renders the original layout, scrambling the title text through her own encryption system. This strategy of *near* resemblance makes for an uncanny effect. The familiar—a known book cover of a widely circulating cult text—is made into a visual puzzle to be solved. Robinson’s drawings suggest protected information through coding techniques that also share a military affiliation.<sup>8</sup> In a new series of works, Robinson explores the widespread growth of SMS<sup>9</sup> language, or “Textese.” Using ornamentation methods common to illustrated manuscripts, Robinson elevates faddish SMS terms into the position of important texts. Illuminated manuscripts are some of the best surviving examples of medieval painting—providing a key to a cultural understanding of that history. Robinson’s own act of illumination also serves a preservation or conservation function, freezing in place the very fluidity of SMS as a contemporary sub-dialect. By so doing, she situates her own role as an artist in relation to the role of the medieval scribe, slowing the intended speed of SMS transmission to a monk’s pace.

In a similar fashion, Molly Springfield’s meticulous drawings can be understood as a way of paying witness to the changes afoot in information technology. Springfield has redrawn the Google book scanner patent documents using the blackletter type style recognizable as that of the Gutenberg Bible. Springfield’s hand rendering of the typeface also aligns her labour with that of the typographers who would have originally chiseled out the letter forms on which movable type is based. These drawings emphasize a direct association between the import of Gutenberg in the history of mechanical reproduction and the equally significant turn represented by the Google patent.<sup>10</sup> Rather than the compression and erasure desired by Latham in *Britannica* or the deviations of Horton’s proposed *Oracle*, Google’s patent technology is directed at producing verbatim electronic copies of works in print through highly sophisticated text-recognition software. This machine thus opens the gates to mass migration of McLuhan’s “Gutenberg Galaxy” into the digital arena. The advent of e-book readers has also encouraged this



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transition from the page to the screen. Amazon’s “Kindle” is a curious example, with a branding that one can’t help but associate with the sinister history of book burning. Springfield gives us portrait of this object, executed with the same scientific realism of an anatomical or botanical drawing. The rise of print-on-demand is another important change in the book trade, reinventing what forms now constitute the book. While the press standards are lowered, the technology has widened the possibilities of self-publishing and eroded the traditional divisions of author, designer, editor, publisher, printer, making print-on-demand a natural vehicle for artists’ books. Derek Sullivan has paid close attention to the legacy of art publishing in his own practice. In *December 19, 2010*, he assembles nine of his print-on-demand artists’ books into a book mobile that marries Alexander Calder’s signature sculpture to the proletarian library model of Rodchenko’s Workers’ Club. Among the titles suspended by aircraft cable, *Every Letter in the Sunset Strip* takes its cue from a now famous self-published title by artist Ed Ruscha. While the price tag on a first edition of the Ruscha is several thousand dollars, the status of Sullivan’s text as a self-proclaimed “unlimited edition” for sale on lulu.com runs counter to the art market’s desire to protect prices. Yet, Sullivan points out in the online product descriptions: “These books undergo continual development and revision; so that each copy printed has the capacity to be a unique version.” With the random selection of paper stocks assigned other changes to the rapidly evolving technology added to Sullivan’s ability to revise the works as he sees fit, the open edition becomes, in fact, an infinite chain of unique exemplars. The book comes to life one copy at a time, in a strange rejoinder to the single copy production of the scribe of antiquity, with a sped up turnaround. As a counter note to the open print run possibilities of print-on-demand, Derek Sullivan’s *Stack*, is a sculptural assemblage of hand-made stand-ins for the now coveted catalogue raisonné on Donald Judd published by the National Gallery of Canada. The book substitutes are made with Orange paper stock, the title drawn in pencil to replicate the minimalist design of the originals. Three copies are placed atop a wood prop that evokes Judd’s forays into furniture design begun in 1973. The Judd furniture represents another class of on-demand objects, since the designs are still made to order today. The interpolation of art historical lineage is also in play in Roula Partheniou’s new series of graphite drawings, including the example *Composition with Yellow Lines Xeroxed*, which features several degrees of separation from the original, in this case, a painting by Mondrian. Partheniou’s point of encounter with the work is through the 1966 Art Gallery of Toronto<sup>11</sup> catalogue *Piet Mondrian, 1872-1944*.<sup>12</sup> This offset book reproduction of a colour painting is further diminished by grayscale photocopying, which, in turn, Partheniou copies in an elaborate pencil drawing that captures not only the design of the book spread splayed open for the copier but also the print quality of the Xerox process and its uneven spread of the toner across the page. A gamut of printing process, photo-mechanical reproduction and photocopying are all synthesized by hand.

David Stein’s series *Unlikely Library*, is a project which confusing both found titles and his own whimsical and humorous invented titles. In dust jacket designs bearing titles such as *Managing Thermostat Disputes*, Stein pokes fun at the glut of the publishing trade—useless trivia, hair-brained schemes, and the pop psychology of hackneyed self-help manuals. Some of Stein’s books are downright absurd, items that no commercial book store would want to carry, save perhaps or own beloved Monkey’s Paw, a local curio bookshop devoted to tracking just this sort of material—things that should have been out of print before going to print, but whose very exceptional state is their point of interest. For the moment, books on paper still continue to be published, and the life of print is at least temporarily assured by the printing of this very exhibition brochure.

— Sarah Robayo Sheridan

- Notes
- English translation by E.V. Rieu revised by his son D.C.H. Rieu and Dr. Peter Jones.
  - For a detailed analysis of correspondences between the oral tradition and the Internet, see the Pathways Project: <http://www.pathwaysproject.org>.
  - Robert Rauschenberg, *Erased de Kooning Drawing*, 1953. Collection of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, New York.
  - For an account of Latham’s other book destroying projects, see “Book Smart: Chrissie Lies on John Latham,” *Artforum*, April 2006.
  - Subsequently, the Museum of Modern Art, New York, acquired this performance remnant for their collection.
  - In contrast to what Lucy Lippard named the “dematerialization of the art object” in *Six Years* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973).
  - Paul Bacon was also noted for designing record sleeve for jazz albums.
  - An early example is the “enigma machine,” a rotor mechanism developed in the 1920 and used to relay secret messages in WWII.
  - SMS stands for Short Message Service, a text communication system commonly used on cell phones.
  - Block printing and movable type printing was known in Eastern Asia long before it was known in Europe. The earliest cited example is a set of ritual books, *Sangjeong Gogeuim Yemun*, printed in Korea using movable metal type in 1234.
  - The museum was renamed the Art Gallery of Ontario later the same year.
  - Piet Mondrian, 1872-1944* (Toronto: Art Gallery of Toronto, 1966).