

Numbered Editions

Experimental Imprint for Artist's Writing

FIGURE-GROUND PERCEPTION IS the cognitive mechanism through which we apprehend our surroundings, isolating the *figure* – the words on the page, the features of a face, the lines on a map – from the background. It is how we orient ourselves, how we communicate, how we mediate and make order out of the torrential flux of sensory information around us, the well of what William James called 'pure experience'. It is also one of the key principles of modern cartographic design.

This concept – with its connections to map-making, orientation and cognition – was a key co-ordinate for a new publication, *figure | ground*, published in December 2020, featuring work by artists and writers from around the world¹. This is the first in a series of Numbered Editions, an experimental imprint for artists' writing, which we recently co-founded, building on our long-standing collaborative editorial practice and shared interest in experimental publishing.

The publication and the imprint have their origins in a 12-day residency we curated at Cow House Studios in 2017, in collaboration with the centre's director, Frank Abruzzese. The residency's title – 'The Map is Not the Territory' – was borrowed from the work of a Polish-American scholar of general semantics, Alfred Korzybski. His famous dictum points to an ontological gap between lived experience and the mapped or otherwise abstracted models of reality through which we make sense of the world. Using this conceptual foundation, the residency explored the geography of Cow House, unpacking ideas of abstraction, translation, cartography and other fictions.

The night before the residency started, Hurricane Ophelia had left a trail of destruction along the south-west of Ireland, toppling trees and powerlines. When we arrived, the electricity at Cow House had cut out completely. That first night, there was no hot water, heating or light; no way to use the studios in the large, converted cow shed that gives the centre its name. It felt jumbled, calamitous but also strangely energised, to be thinking about maps in this atmosphere of expediency and repair, in the wake of an environmental emergency.

Through a series of interactions with facilitators and guests – including Christodoulos Makris, Sarah Pierce, Barry Dalby, Francis Halsall, Paul Ferguson and Conor McGarrigle – the artists developed a set of processes and propositions in relation to cartography, (dis)orientation,

non-Western mapping, walking-as-research, the psychogeography of the rural. These propositions led to the work gathered in *figure | ground*, a rich set of visual and textual reflections on mapping and place.

The residency model is an unusual basis for a publication, but it turned out to be generative, allowing a sense of interconnection to inform the contributions and feed into the work of our designer, Clare Bell, who devised a format modelled on a 1970 issue of *Archigram* – a British architectural magazine, stapled along the cover's right edge, that could reflect some of the experimental, performative, playful quality of the artists' processes.

As an editorial and design team, we are interested in the legacies of radical publishing experiments like *Archigram*. We are excited by forms of writing and publishing that can destabilise the fixed status of the 'book', extending it instead along participatory, collaborative, processual lines. The same interests led us to conceive of the publication as the first in this ongoing series of Numbered Editions, an imprint for which we devised the following principles:

1. Numbered Editions is an imprint for artists' writing – an occasional experimental platform that publishes and hosts various kinds of writing by artists across forms.
2. Numbered Editions is particularly interested in points of intersection – where distinctions between art forms blur.
3. Numbered Editions operates on the principle of serialisation but is not a periodical.

This year, we have been awarded an Arts Council Literature Project Award to assemble a second Numbered Edition, using a workshop-based editorial process. We also plan to publish monographs in future: book-length works by artists who write. In short, we hope to continue the experiment, exploring models and creating occasions for artists' writing, across forms.

Numbered Editions is coedited by Nathan O'Donnell and Marysia Wieckiewicz-Carroll.

Notes:

¹Contributors: Jennifer Brant, Marianne Hoffmeister Castro, Serena Lee, Eoghan McIntyre, Julia Mejnertsen, Wendy Peza, Sheilah (Wilson) ReStack and Abigail Taubman.



figure | ground, (Numbered Editions, 2021); photograph by Bryan Meade, courtesy Numbered Editions.

Stereo Editions

Publishing Collective



ruth weiss, *Light/Lumière*, 2017, bilingual edition; Image courtesy Stereo Editions.

STEREO EDITIONS IS a lovechild of Juliette Liautaud and Helena Gouveia Monteiro. From a timid initial encounter at the atelier édition of the fine art school in Nice, where a shared lust for paper stacks and cotton stitching bound us together, a resolution was made – to carry forward a way of conceiving and producing that preserved the physical appeal of handmade pages and gave some purpose to an uneasy decade of compulsive reading and inconstant scribbling on margins to keep dog-ears at large.

We began with *Oreste* because it was an ode to rocks and minerals, an anagram of Stereo that spoke of what remained ingrained after tragedy. *OOO* followed, introducing vegetable textures, skin, and body to a somewhat sterile first attempt at a photobook. Then there were others. A proximity with experimental film brought along Alberte Pagán, then Emmanuelle Nègre. Juliette's music pieces and an anthology of sound works released as *FLUX 1* opened the ground for sonic forms.

Light, a poem by ruth weiss in bilingual edition (English-French), inaugurated our textual work. Sadly, ruth is no longer among us and we remember fondly the process of publishing *Light/Lumière* through a series of letters posted back and forth between Albion, California and Marseille that culminated in a final translation and a double booklet shape, contained in a cyanotype cover, speckled with light traces.

After a few years, Stereo Editions was becoming a small intuitive network of artists, writers, and filmmakers from France, Ireland, Portugal, Spain, Czech Republic, Lithuania, Mexico, US, Japan and onwards. Collaborations with arts organisations and independent bookshops were crucial in driving these projects forward and making them visible.

With no particular editorial line, theme, or direction, Stereo's metamorphic elasticity can be applied onto radically different forms. From the book-object, some publications grew towards sculpture. In Stanislava Karbušická's *~H avā*, sculptural forms are rendered on the page through textures and transparencies while Quentin Dupuy's *Dessous* uses a three-dimensional object – a mock-up rock – to enclose the printed edition.

The cosmos pushed its way in and we condensed Vica Pacheco's maps of the stars in the telescopic fold-out edition, *Yabui*, and Eglé

Vismanté's ambiguous chalk drawings on black board in two double-sided posters for *Capicua*. Laura McMorrow brought a generous enthusiasm filtered into collective workshops with the Gallery of Photography Ireland and a beautiful book of collages that doubles as a picture frame. The publication of *Opium for Ovid* by Yoko Tawada is ongoing, one chapter at a time, times 22, is as many as 1100 handmade books with eclectic materials and varying shapes. The Book-object is a central concept and for each work there is a form to be found, articulated with the text, and bound together in an autonomous existence.

During lockdown we tried our hand at a collective online edition, with interactive images and a double soundtrack. Pulling together graphic elements in an audio-visual environment with a sonic background punctuated by interactions that adapt to the page and play on the merging of print and digital media, this experiment was of great interest to us as a new form of publication to explore. With a row of book fairs and events cancelled through the pandemic, we have similarly considered other forms of presentation and hope to further develop these ideas while working together in both Dublin and Marseille over the next year. We look forward to welcoming Kate Fahey to the collective with a new publication of her visual and textual works and to the much-awaited release of Alberte Pagán's interviews with experimental filmmakers, carried out during the annual S8 festival in Galicia.

Five years onward the commitment is still strong. So is the unease and the necessity to give time and space to forms that would otherwise not exist. No, we do not publish emerging or women artists exclusively, nor do we restrict all production to printing and binding by hand. We work hard to support projects we esteem worthy of and lacking attention, while finding alternative modes of production and distribution. Stereo Editions works in what it fails to convince, running at its own pace and allowing for collective effort without the pressure of efficiency.

Stereo Editions is a publishing collective founded by Helena Gouveia Monteiro and Juliette Liautaud to support the creation of challenging edited forms in a mutually supportive environment.

stereoeditions.com