

March 1, 2023

In the fall of 2022, I had the pleasure of working with MFA Candidate Kristian Thacker on a new body of work that built upon his proclivity for image making and expanded into the field of RISOgraphy and book making. Having served on Kristian's graduate committee, it felt appropriate that he expand his skillset to include independent publishing and book arts. His familiarity with contemporary photographic publishing gave him a broad and sophisticated foundation for exploring his own image production and book making.

Considering the endless options that one might pursue with book making, we discussed formats and their hidden meanings. We scoured my sizable collection of books, publications, and zines to determine what structure might be appropriate for Kristian's work. We examined paper stocks by consulting the vast, up-to-date paper swatch books which I have invested considerable time and effort to make available to students. We determined a perfect bound book, with slipcase would best suit the content and methods of production.

The research significance of this project emerged via Kristian's engagement with the means of production. Kristian was forced to confront processes and production methods by bending the technologies involved to the rigors of his artistic output—where craft and attention to detail is paramount. Both the binding equipment (table-top, short run) and printer (RISO) were crafted for speed, predictable sizes, common, off-the-shelf paper stock, and less meticulous attention to details. Kristian's research on how to overcome these shortcomings was a process of its own, developed via his engagement of the RISOgraph community at large and desire and willingness to deconstruct preexisting procedures. Hacking into the best of the technology meant slowing down things that were designed for speed and working within confines of systems for one's unique purposes.

To create the book structures, we experimented with paper stocks, built dummies, and tested different book cloth options for the slipcase. We discussed how the addition of even modest front matter and back matter help round out a viewer's book experience. To facilitate creating the edition of slipcases, Kristian and I attended a training session at WVU's Lane Innovation Hub. Kristian used a laser cutter to cut the pieces for the slip cases with instant precision.

To conclude, this project deserving of the CCA Mentored Research Award as it allowed for massive amounts of exploration with technology that was new to the both of us. Once Kristian began printing imagery on the RISO, inquiries were researched, pursued, tested and put into practice. Far beyond the nuts and bolts operation of the RISO and binding machine—although a fair amount of tinkering took place—Kristian found ways to tirelessly work with ink on paper in a purposeful way. Free from working with traditional photo-centric substrates, a new world of commercial paper could be tapped into. This resulted in new, exciting developments that extended from experimentation to execution. Given the materials, (limited) studio space, and opportunity to tirelessly tinker with outcomes, Kristian overcame the limitations of the process to create a new body of work while learning new, valuable studio skills that otherwise would not be part of the School of Art and Design.

Thank you for your consideration,



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