

On Recycling

Each time you work with paper, you are automatically upcycling it

By Raffaella Guidobono

I prefer to use the verb upcycling instead of recycling, because paper takes on a brand new life every time it changes its status into an object to be seen or read. In explaining this, I am stating the purpose of the Detour collection of notebooks: to assemble and archive an array of unique artworks created on blank paper - born out of the vibrant energy behind the daily need to write, draw, perform, play music or conceive design, photograph, sculpt or develop an architectural idea.

With blank paper as the starting point, a contemporary landscape has been created, constantly shifting between 2D and 3D. This doesn't happen only on paper - it happens in the digital medium too. Speaking as a fan of the World Wide Web, I enjoy discovering the unpredictable talents able to score millions of viewers who tune in to watch the ordinary and suddenly find themselves watching something extraordinary. Here, I am promoting the sharing of knowledge and talent through 358 printed pages that show both emerging and established authors/creators, each given a Moleskine notebook, each working in their own private world, each ready to go public.

In our time we are what we like to share.

After a travelling show 10 years long, a tangible book was due (and an e-book version is on the way). This printed version is worth a visit to explore the "maps" generated by the journey I took with Maria Sebregondi. A book might be less dynamic than the physical artefacts, but it allows a deeper and longer-lasting means of access to the contents. And indeed to "Culture with a capital C", a phrase I recently found on YouTube in a wise and ironic Spanish tutorial introducing a book as an innovative tool that contributes to "the sharing and seeding philosophy".

I have a strong predilection for calligraphy, and for questions, which comes from my education. Shaped by the fluid graphic design of Zetalab studio, this book contains a large percentage of written notes and drawings. Therefore I strongly wished to include a contribution by Hans-Ulrich Obrist, whose conceptual framework of hundreds of interviews, artists' insights and talks about curatorial practice goes against the view that in the future this environment is going to dry up. Then I drew in excerpts from a novel entirely made up of questions - The Interrogative Mood by Padgett Powell - which works as a starting platform for discussion that should allow for the idea of failure behind success. The never-passé Paris Review, currently directed by its Editor-in-Chief Lorin H. Stein, whom I invited to contribute on the role of paper in the digital era, is one of the signs that the language of poetry will never die, even in the context of the World Wide Web. So we don't need to call for rescue measures: black letters on white paper still rock! Today lots of people feel the need to leave their "signature" and post online as things happen. Add in tweeting and uploading photos, and they probably get more than the predicted "fifteen minutes of fame". The good news is that many others are eager to look at those signatures. Famous or anonymous, it doesn't matter any more.

We have to re-start by asking ourselves the right questions.

That's why I also wanted to include excerpts from Professor Sennett's chapter about Ethics in his important essay "The Craftsman": a brief, effective text that should be taught in every college on the first day. Identifying our burning questions is a good way to

begin marking uncharted territories. To find some answers, I also added a contribution by Maurizio Ferraris for its dreamlike quality, because it derives from the Oulipian approach: going where the ordinary dare not go.

The key to this project was to embrace the diversity of media. I conceived the title “Detour” to suggest the idea of an alternative path to the usual. The archive contained in this book is a work in progress: it is forever growing in the storage space at the non-profit Foundation Lettera27. Eventually, the Detour archive will take the form of a library, in which all of the notebooks included will be catalogued and ordered. The exhibition’s inventory will expand over time, with the number of participating artists set to increase over the course of the coming exhibitions in a variety of locations.

Looking at all the works collected together in this volume is meant to open up and augment multiple understanding and experience. The multidisciplinary approach at the exhibition’s core brings together a variety of different types of creatives and presents them with an opportunity to publish their notes and images with no rules. Especially in the section Unconventional, added in the last release, with the contribution of Chefs, Perfumers and Interactive Design studios. Some notebooks make no attempt to relate to anything else in the name of Detour; in the same way the Rietveld Schroeder House was not just a static accumulation of rooms like other houses but opened up our minds to change, to a different idea of shelter, communication and how we position the essential elements around us.

Today my contribution towards saving the imagery of our planet’s inhabitants is to invite you to take a pen, a pencil, a marker, a cutter, a mouse, and upcycle by putting your thoughts on paper, treating it as a dynamic, fluid, open zone.

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