



Half Letter Press

Half Letter Press is a publishing imprint and an experimental online store initiated by Temporary Services. Temporary Services is a group of three people (Brett Bloom, Salem Collo-Julin and Marc Fischer). We have published booklets as an element of our collaborative work since 1998. We created Half Letter Press to publish and distribute book and booklet length works by ourselves and others. We are interested in using this endeavor to build long-term support and expanded audiences for people that work creatively in experimental ways. We are particularly interested in supporting people and projects that have had difficulty finding financial and promotional assistance through mainstream commercial channels.



Above: *Public Phenomena* by Temporary Services, Half Letter Press, 2008



HALF LETTER PRESS OFFERS WORK FROM:

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WE STRIVE TO BUILD AN ART PRACTICE THAT:

Makes the distinction between art and other forms of creativity irrelevant

Builds and depends upon mutually supportive relationships

Tests ideas without waiting for permission or invitation

Champions the work of those who are frequently excluded, under-recognized, marginal, non-commercial, experimental, and/or socially and politically provocative

Puts money and cultural capital back into the work of other artists and self-publishers

Makes opportunities from large museums and institutions more inclusive by bringing lesser-known artists in through collaborations or advocacy

Insists that artists who achieve success or renown devote more time and energy toward creating supportive social and economic infrastructures for others

SOME THOUGHTS ON STARTING A STORE AND SELLING OUR WORK:

1) In addition to giving away thousands of booklets and other items, we have sold our books and booklets for reasonable amounts for several years. We are not opposed to people selling their books, posters, CDs and other items related to their practice. We also recognize that there is a vast gulf between the \$2.00 booklet, the \$20.00 book and the \$2,000 print, or the \$120,000 installation.

Temporary Services' work has never had an obvious saleable outcome. We don't sell expensive relics from ephemeral projects or make giant documentary photos from events. We have never had, nor sought commercial gallery representation nor do we make any effort to engage with private collectors and patrons.

Creating speculative competition among artists, gallerists, and collectors has not helped art, only drastically limited what it can do in the world. If people make work with the intention to sell it being primary to its design and conception, this severely limits the kind of work they are willing to make, as they must appeal to the conservative tastes and concerns of people with money and power. It is perhaps unsurprising that commercial galleries and private collectors have had as little interest in us as we have had in them.

We have always preferred a situation where we directly represent ourselves to any audience that is interested in our work. In this way we have worked to create mutually supportive relationships with others that have always placed shared values and desires first and fiscal stability an extremely distant second. While we have enjoyed a certain amount of support from exhibition budgets and a select few grants and awards, this has never covered everything we have wanted to do. Lectures and workshops also help to pay the bills but after paying for necessary evils like rent on a storage space for production that we have no room for in our homes, not much remains to initiate new projects or to continue making more publications - so many of which we give away for free or sell for only a little more than the cost of printing them.

2) We believe that it's possible to run a store without compromising your politics and desire for our society to change in drastic ways. Some of our favorite online stores are run by anti-capitalists: Just Seeds and AK Press, for example. We all must survive in a capitalist society. There are abusive ways of making money that support this system, and there are ways of doing it that can counter how capitalism is structured. We observe creative methods for maintaining greater autonomy in one's cultural practice with great interest. This would include the band Einstürzende Neubauten, who left their record label and created a fan-based support network that has funded and directly influenced the form of their newest recordings. We also appreciate the journal *The Match!*, which has thrived through reader donations of cash and

stamps for over 40 years without even maintaining a bank account, much less the use of any computers or the internet. Micro-funding strategies that are currently being tested out in the arts by groups like Collective Foundation and InCUBATE have also given us much food for thought.

3) We are deeply frustrated with the lack of infrastructural support for experimental art practices in the United States. We cannot rely on government funding nor private grants to support "unmarketable" work. Some of this money is out there, but it doesn't nearly address the huge numbers of people working outside of the commercial gallery system. We also don't want to take funding from corporations seeking to white wash their bruised images. We would like to build up a source of funding for projects, books, spaces, and other necessary components of a healthy, thriving alternate option. This is one step towards building long term infrastructure.

Distribution for self-published artist's books has long been extremely limited. This becomes even more problematic when you tend to produce modest booklets rather than lavish monographs or signed and numbered limited editions. We enjoy fantastic relationships with stores like Quimby's Books in Chicago and Printed Matter in New York, but there are few outlets like these for publications like ours. Additionally, most of our publications are so inexpensive that once these stores have taken the percentage they need to continue doing their own important work, the proceeds that remain are generally extremely limited.

In addition to selling our own materials, we also use this store to assist in the distribution of books and materials by other artists in our extended network and by those whose work we feel is under-recognized and historically important. Many of these producers are in the same boat that we are in. We'd like to improve distribution and support not only for ourselves, but for others whose work shares a similar spirit.

Where possible, we buy wholesale copies of works directly from artists and pay for them upfront, rather than following a more common consignment model. Immediate wholesale purchases provide immediate support for artists to continue their work and puts the risk on us, rather than the producer, to find an audience for their work. We are also interested in bartering some of our publications with other publishers and distributors in the interest of helping each other get our publications into wider circulation.

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Printed in October, 2009



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