

Photobooks: The Contemporary Democratic Multiple

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Abstract

Ed Ruscha's *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* is considered to be the first artists' book and is categorized as a "democratic multiple". This paper aims to prove that despite book scholars' conclusions that the democratic multiple no longer exists, that it survives today as what we consider to be the "photobook". The fluidity of artists' books, democratic multiples, and photobooks is discussed. *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* is analyzed in terms of Robert Darnton's communications circuit, scholarly research is examined to place Ruscha's work in context, and a survey conducted by the author is analyzed to prove that photobooks are more well-known as a book format than artists' books and democratic multiples.

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Photobooks: The Contemporary Democratic Multiple

Since the onset of artistic expression, artists have dabbled with displaying their work in the book or codex format. However, the first artists' book, as classified by book scholars such as Clive Phillpot and Johanna Drucker, was created in the 1960s. The book referred to is *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* by Ed Ruscha.¹ This work is composed of twenty-six black and white photographs of gasoline stations and includes very little textual information on each page. *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* will serve as a case study throughout this paper. Sections of this paper include: Theoretical Focus and Rationale for the Study, Historical Context, Methods of Data Collection, Analysis and Discussion, and Summary. Appendices are included at the conclusion of the report which includes various photographs, tables, and figures.

Photobooks: The Contemporary Democratic Multiple attempts to enhance the conversation around the photobook and prove how those books classified as photobooks can be considered a modern or contemporary reincarnation of the democratic multiple artists' book. With my research, I try to prove this classification and highlight the fluidity that exists among artists' books, photobooks, and democratic multiples. Throughout this paper, I will analyze a small study I conducted related to the book as artform, highlight scholarly research based on existing conversations, and analyze a recent exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA)². Historic literature is analyzed and discussed including works by Johanna Drucker, Lucy Lippard, Martin Parr, Ian Walker, Clive Philpot, and more, to place the conclusions within historic context. These different methods of research will aid in analysis of the classifications given to

¹ Ruscha is pronounced "Roo-SHAY" not "Russia" as noted in Andrew M. Goldstein's *Artspace* article.

² *American Surfaces and the Photobook*, curated by Philip Parente, MoMA Library Collections Coordinator

Twentysix Gasoline Stations by various institutions and individuals, helping to prove that photobooks can be considered the “new” democratic multiple based on the photographic format utilized by Ruscha in the 1960s.

Theoretical Focus and Rationale for the Study

Previous scholarly research and conclusions have been drawn regarding the status of *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* as a democratic multiple, photobook, and artists’ book. The goal of this paper is to compile many of those studies and works into one document so that an analysis and conclusion can be made regarding the work’s status in the present context, as well as the status of other photobooks and artists’ books which are considered democratic multiples.

A list of resources consulted can be found in the paragraphs below, along with the *Bibliography* found at the conclusion of this paper. Many of the sources consulted for this study included those of notable scholars in the artists’ book field including Johanna Drucker, Lucy Lippard, and Clive Phillpot. It also draws on the information gathered by experts of the photobook including Martin Parr and Stephen Shore. The Museum of Modern Art was consulted due to its recent exhibitions regarding the photobook and photographer Stephen Shore.

The goal of this paper is to prove that the democratic multiple still endures, rather in the categorization as photobook due to the plethora of technological advances that exist today to print cheap books with photomechanical reproduction techniques. Many articles were consulted to understand the fluidity among the categorization of artists’ books and photobooks. Those which proved most useful include Lucy Lippard’s *Artist’s Book Goes Public* (1977), Mary Tasillo’s *Context is King* (2009), Tony White’s *From Democratic Multiple to Artist Publishing: The (R)evolutionary Artist’s Book* (2012), Johanna Drucker’s *The Myth of the Artist’s Book as a Democratic Multiple* (1997), and Clive Phillpot’s *Twentysix Gasoline Stations that Shook the*

World: The Rise and Fall of Cheap Booklets as Art (1993). Other articles consulted include Douglas Crimp's *The Contest of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography* (1989), Brandon Graham's *Shifting Artist Book Distribution Models* (2010), and Kevin Hatch's *Something Else: Ed Ruscha's Photographic Books* (2005).

Due to the abundance of information that exists for a seminal artist such as Ed Ruscha, it was important to focus only on his bookwork *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* rather than his other artworks or artists' books. Many of these articles categorize Ruscha's work as an artists' book or democratic multiple, while few consider it to be a photobook.

Another goal of this study is to analyze *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* in terms of Robert Darnton's communication circuit. Ed Ruscha was vocal about his use of the book to garner a larger audience to interact with his work outside the gallery setting, debunking the myth of artists' book functioning as *livre d'artiste* or as what can typically be considered "art".³ Ruscha has been quoted in many of the works that I analyzed, as well as much of the information became repetitive as I expanded my search for resources. I hope that this paper will enhance the study of Ruscha's *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* by presenting a succinct account of how the work proves democratic multiples are still in existence today as photobooks.

Methods of Data Collection

I first became aware of the term "democratic multiple" while reading Johanna Drucker's book *The Century of Artists Books*. Chapter 4 of this book discusses democratic multiples as a categorization for artists' books, the technology typically used to print these types of cheap books, and examples of works that can be considered democratic multiples. Drucker mentions

³ Phillpot, C. (1993). Twentysix gasoline stations that shook the world: The rise and fall of cheap booklets as art. *Art Libraries Journal*, 18(1), 4-13.

the scholarship of Clive Phillpot when she talks about Ed Ruscha's *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* being the first book created by an artist to be considered an artists' book, but is further classified as a democratic multiple because the first printing of this book had 400 copies and used photomechanical reproductive processes. I decided at this moment that the focus of this paper would be on democratic multiples and placing it in the context of Lucy Lippard's notable quote⁴, "One day I'd like to see artists' books ensconced in supermarkets, drugstores and airports and, not incidentally, to see artists able to profit economically from broad communication rather than from lack of it" (6541). In further focusing my research, I decided to use *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* as a case study that the democratic multiple existed in contemporary times as what many people know as the "photobook." This conclusion is evident based on the documentary style photographs that are included by Ruscha in his seminal bookwork, as well as the photographic sources which conclude similar findings.

After defining the type of artists' book I was focusing on, as well as a case study, I researched articles to find anything related to "democratic multiples" and *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* using the online Rutgers University Library database. This search resulted with seven articles, many which needed to be requested and digitized by librarians for use with Rutgers Interlibrary Loan and Article Delivery Services.

Once I consulted the articles, I did a general internet search for anything related to democratic multiples or *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*. While conducting this general search, it was necessary to search multiple times using different formats for the number "twentysix" including: 26, twenty-six, and twenty six. Though the cover of Ruscha's book clearly spells the number as one word, not each source which includes information written about this book follows

⁴ Lippard, L. R. (1977). Artist's book goes public. *Art In America*, 6540-41.

the written or numeric format. This difference is evident in how Drucker writes out the term in her work as “twenty-six”.

Through this internet search I discovered that the University of Texas’ Harry Ransom Center received the archive of Ed Ruscha in 2013. This material is different from Ruscha’s graphic archival material that was acquired by the Legion of Honor in San Francisco in 2001. The Ransom Center Magazine hosts an online blog where they posted three articles related to the Ed Ruscha archive with specific information related to *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*. One of these blog posts included a digital image surrogate of an article promoting *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* and stating that it was published by Wittenborn & Company of New York. Knowing that the Museum of Modern Art holds the George Wittenborn, Inc. papers, I made an appointment to see the information that sounded relevant in accordance to the finding aid. The information held in their archive was not helpful or specific to the topic I was searching as I anticipate the material in Texas would be. One shortcoming of this paper is that I could not physically visit or see the material in Texas aside from what was highlighted on the Ransom Center Magazine’s blog.

When I concluded that the archival information I was searching for was located in Texas, I expanded my research to other books which may have included information related to Ruscha and photobooks. A general book search lead me to find three notable books which included information about *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*. The most illuminating was Patrizia Di Bello, Colette Wilson, and Shamooun Zamir’s book of essays titled *The Photobook: From Talbot to Ruscha and Beyond*. An essay in the book by Ian Walker was most helpful in placing *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* in the realm of not just democratic multiple, but photobook. Other books which supported the idea of democratic multiples as photobooks were found in *The Photobook:*

A History by the notable Magnum Photos⁵ photographer Martin Parr and *Artist/Author: Contemporary Artists' Books* by Clive Phillpot and Cornelia Lauf. It should be noted, ironically, that a bulk of my findings in Parr's book were found in a chapter titled *Appropriating Photography: The Artist's Photobook*.

Book research was further enhanced by finding two other works which included information regarding the artists' book as democratic multiple. These included *No Longer Innocent: Book Art in America 1960-1980* by Betty Bright and *Artists' Books: A Critical Anthology and Sourcebook* edited by Joan Lyons. Bright's work included specific mention of *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*, while Lyons' work included two seminal works by Lucy Lippard and Clive Phillpot.

In order to enhance my idea that the democratic multiple style of artists' book can be considered the contemporary photobook, I conducted a small, voluntary survey from March 24-April 21, 2018 to see how people would respond to questions related to this area of study. The full survey can be found in Appendix A of this paper. The questions prompted respondents to define the terms democratic multiple, artists' book, *livre d'artiste*, and photobook. Respondents also gauged their knowledge of various scholars and artists in the field including Johanna Drucker, Lucy Lippard, Ed Ruscha, and George Wittenborn. The results of this survey can be found in Appendix A.

The survey can present bias as I posted it to my personal social media pages in order to garner responses. The social media outlets included Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn.

⁵ Magnum Photos is an international cooperative of documentary and fine art photographers whose main goal is described on their website by notable founding member, Henri Cartier-Bresson: "Magnum is a community of thought, a shared human quality, a curiosity about what is going on in the world, a respect for what is going on and a desire to transcribe it visually."

Many people who interact with my LinkedIn account and Instagram account include professional coworkers who work in the arts and library fields. On the opposite spectrum, my Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram accounts include acquaintances who may not have any prior knowledge of this specific area of study. One respondent commented that they felt like a loser on a *Jeopardy!* episode. On the contrary, someone commented that based on the individual scholars and artists mentioned in the survey questions, it was “an amazing look into publishing and dissemination of art and print production.”

Finally, as an intern at the Museum of Modern Art in the archives department at the time this paper was written, I had the ability to visit the museum frequently. At the time of my internship there were two exhibits occurring in the museum and education buildings which enhanced my understanding of photobooks and helped me to conclude that there is fluidity among the terms “artists’ book,” “democratic multiple,” and “photobook”. These two exhibits were titled *Stephen Shore* and *American Surfaces and the Photobook* which was a supporting exhibition to the main Stephen Shore retrospective. The Stephen Shore exhibition included the photographer’s own photobooks which he created using print-on-demand technology, while the photobook exhibition included many of Shore’s other photobooks, along with supporting works such as Ed Ruscha’s *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*. Photos of *American Surfaces and the Photobook* can be seen in Appendix B. Photographs of inner content of the book *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* are not included in this paper as the work is still under copyright.

Historical Context

It is important to both identify Ed Ruscha as a working artist as well as identify the genre of democratic multiple within artists’ books. Ed Ruscha is a visual and book artist who dabbles in printmaking, photography, painting, and filmmaking. Ruscha was born in Nebraska in 1937

and was heavily influenced by the Pop-era artists of the time. In Bello, Wilson, and Zamir's book *The Photobook: From Talbot to Ruscha and Beyond*,⁶ Ian Walker identifies artists who highly influenced Ruscha as being Pop artist Andy Warhol, Conceptual artist Marcel Duchamp, photographers Walker Evans and Robert Frank, along with other pop and conceptual artists.

This work also notes an important essay written by artist Sol LeWitt⁷ in 1967 which identifies conceptual art as a practice: "In conceptual art the idea or concept is the most important aspect of the work. When an artist uses a conceptual form of art it means that all the planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair. The idea becomes the machine that makes the art" (2012, p. 114-5). Ruscha is quoted in multiple sources as saying that the title and idea for *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* came to him prior than taking the photos or devising the book.

The photographer Martin Parr wrote a book in association with Gerry Badger which discusses the history of the photobook. In volume II, Parr discusses how Ruscha was considered a Pop artist, but that categorization was always "dubious, telling only part of the story, and the artist's books also gave critics some difficulty" (2006, p. 133). Parr also notes that Ruscha had a "throwaway approach" which did not appeal to the "art photography clique" due to his treatment of photography as an artform, not a documentary or technical tool. Either way, Ruscha can be included in a group of vernacular photographers known as the "New Topographics". The work of the New Topographics was a photographic movement which focused on banal subjects and documented everyday life.

⁶ The essay in this book was written by Ian Walker, pages 111-128.

⁷ From Sol LeWitt's *Paragraphs on Conceptual Art*.

Ruscha used his books as “anti-art” as described by Lucy Lippard in her seminal essay *The Artist’s Book Goes Public*⁸: “The new artists’ books, however, have disavowed surrealism’s lyrical and romantic heritage and have been deadpan, anti-literary, often almost anti-art. Ed Ruscha’s *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* (1962) ... initiated the ‘cool’ approach that dominated the whole conception of artists’ books for years” (1977, p. 46). Johanna Drucker, another book scholar stated in her work *The Century of Artists Books*, that due to the cheapness of Ruscha’s bookwork—\$3 at the time of the first printing—he was able to circulate his work to a far greater audience. Drucker places this concept within the idea of the Fluxus artists of the 1950s and 1960s “which allowed art pieces to be staged anywhere, anytime, and by anyone” (2012, p. 77).

Drucker classifies and explains Ruscha’s *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* in her chapter on democratic multiples. The chapter starts out by saying that “it would be a mistake to ascribe a deterministic role to technological changes... But it is still essential to take into account the greater availability of inexpensive modes of reproduction ... in the United States and Europe in the period following World War II” (2012, p. 69). Due to the abundance and variety of photomechanical reproduction and printing tools, the democratic multiple was able to reach a larger audience and rid the artists’ book of its typical precious and expensive ideal.

Analysis and Discussion

In order to start the discussion of democratic multiples and analyze the resources found for this paper, it is important to note that the democratic multiple was a direct response to the precious artists’ book known as the “livre d’artiste”. Clive Phillpot’s *Twentysix Gasoline Stations that Shook the World* defines exactly what is meant by livre d’artiste within the artists’ book genre:

⁸ As quoted from Lyons’ edited work *Artists Books: A Critical Anthology and Sourcebook*.

Until about 1970 the term ‘artists’ books’ was used as a synonym for, or a translation of, the phrase ‘livres d’artiste’, or more precisely, ‘livres de luxe’, luxury editions. It was frequently understood to mean books containing pre-existing literary texts that had been illustrated or embellished by artists. These expensive books were published in signed and numbered, limited editions. The first time the term ‘artists’ books’ was used to include, modest, cheap, unlimited, booklets conceived by artists, was probably the occasion of the exhibition *Artists Books*, at Moore College of Art in Philadelphia in 1973. (1993, p. 4)

It is evident that Ruscha’s work *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* fit the concept of democratic multiple long before the concept of livre d’artiste was debunked. Ruscha’s work was published in 1963 and was considered to be the “paradigm” for cheap and accessible bookworks as art. Phillpot points out that Ruscha had not solidified his stance on livre d’artiste works prior to publishing the first edition of *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*: “Ed Ruscha numbered each of the 400 copies of the first printing! Here was the last hangover of the tradition of the luxury edition” (1993, p. 7). Phillpot goes on to state that Ruscha knew he made a mistake by 1965 and signed few of his bookworks after that one instance.

In a later work by Phillpot⁹, the author continues this assessment of Ruscha’s bookworks functioning as democratic multiples due to their open-edition, however “cheapness and numbers do not necessarily guarantee public access or public interest” (1998, p. 37). This thought is further compounded by Mary Tasillo’s article *Context is King* from 2009. Tasillo emphasizes that just because an artist produces a cheap and accessible book that is available in an open edition, it may not be of interest to the reader. Tasillo continues: “... if the content is

⁹ As part of *Artist/Author: Contemporary Artists’ Books* in the chapter titled *Books by Artists and Books as Art*.

impenetrable to anyone who doesn't like conceptual art games or Dada narratives, then you've killed whatever democracy you've built into the project" (p. 28). As mentioned previously, the idea of the democratic multiple was to get artists' books produced cheaply so that they could be available to a wider audience. In a 1997 article, Johanna Drucker states that "*26 Gasoline Stations* ... would never leap to the eye and hand of the casual shopper with the same easy rapidity as the *National Enquirer*" (1997, p. 11). This idea of the democratic multiple may underestimate the education and interest of the general public outside of the museum and gallery setting, but it also discounts those who may be interested in democratic multiples due to the process of their creation, such as the use of photographs, reproduction techniques, and inherent cheapness which makes them distinct from other types of artists' books, artworks, or bookworks.

The hierarchical classification of a book, particularly an artists' book, can be quite murky. Jacqueline Muñoz brings to light this difficult categorization in a blog post on the University of Texas' Ransom Center's website by quoting Johanna Drucker stating that a distinction of an artists' book includes: "books made as direct expressions of an artist's point of view, with the artist involved in the conception, production, and execution of the work." Furthermore, one would need to define their own acceptance and rationale for classifying an artists' book. Is "artists' book" an overall category with more specific classifications such as "democratic multiple," then "photobook" being the final, micro categorization? Or is "photobook" considered the macro category and the item further classified as an "artists' book"? Is a photobook even an "artists' book"? These are all thoughts that one needs to think about when classifying in the realm of artists' books as defined by publication process¹⁰.

¹⁰ By "publication process" I mean determining if the work includes any unique or monographic work within the book. Are all the images and text reproduced photo-mechanically? Does the author sign and number their books in an edition or are they all identical to one another?

Martin Parr has been a vocal critic of classifying books as artists' books, rather than photobooks. In Parr and Badger's *The Photobook: A History Volume 2*, Parr includes an essay in which he describes democratic multiples, specifically referring to them as photobooks: "These small, cheaply produced, roughly printed books, promising exactly what they say on the cover ... contain the driest, most calculatedly sophisticated photography. They deliver (like all the best photobooks) a complex polemic on the nature of the medium and its dissemination, using the most economical and minimal of means, and have been immensely influential" (2006, p. 132-3). Parr's classification, written plainly in this book about photobooks defines a moment in which we can definitively classify *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* as a photobook, without the allusion that it is also an artists' book.

This brings us back to the root of this study in which we are trying to prove that the democratic multiple still exists today in the form of the photobook. At its core, we have ascertained that a democratic multiple is a type of artists' book which is produced cheaply and made available widely, whether or not the public has the ability to consume the product at this digestible level. *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*, considered to be the first artists' book, also classified as a democratic multiple by Drucker, is our link to proving that the democratic multiple exists contemporarily due to how we define the photobook by process, access, and format.

In her book, *No Longer Innocent: Book Art in America 1960-1980*, Betty Bright makes note of the ways in which photography was used in the book format:

At the beginning of the 1970s, the photobookwork in the United States was dominated by a restrained Conceptual agenda that used photography in two ways: to document an ephemeral event, or, in the books of Ed Ruscha, to refuse any fine art appeal. Following

in the wake of Ruscha and others, Conceptual photobookworks quietly multiplied into an undeniable presence, confirmed by the exhibition *Artists and Photographs*, at the Multiples Gallery in 1969. (2005, p. 212)

It is important to focus on Bright's mention of photography used to "refuse any fine art appeal". At the time that Ruscha had published *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*, photography was shifting to be a fine art medium, while also remaining documentary and illuminating the work of photographers during the Photo-Secession¹¹ movement promoted by Alfred Stieglitz. Martin Parr touches on this again in his 2006 work:

...it should be noted from the outset that this seminal work, *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*, published in 1963, was a photobook. This point is most relevant when considering the artist's book, for in a recent essay on the subject Anne Thurman-Jajes estimated that half of all artist's books published are photobooks. This makes the artist's book—not just in terms of volume, but also of ambition and achievement—a crucial photobook genre, and indicative of the large and extremely varied field... (2006, p. 132)

Considering the contemporary classification of the democratic multiple as a photobook, we can look at the recent exhibition mounted at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in conjunction with the retrospective *Stephen Shore*. In the education building of MoMA, Philip Parente, Library Collections Coordinator, has mounted an exhibition titled *American Surfaces and the Photobook* to support the photographic works of Stephen Shore. This photobook exhibit included many of Stephen Shore's own photobook publications, but was enhanced by other

¹¹ Alfred Stieglitz coined the term "photo-secession" in 1902 in order to make the work of American fine art photographers relevant to similar movements of the time in Europe. The style of many photo-secessionists is called "pictorialism" which gives a paint and pastel feel within the photographic medium.

historical examples such as Ed Ruscha's *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*. Please see Appendix B for photographs of this exhibition. This exhibition is a prime example displaying how many people view works which could be considered democratic multiples as photobooks.

In conjunction with this paper I conducted a study in which I gauged the knowledge of an anonymous group of voluntary respondents. It is very obvious when looking at the results that many people know what photobooks are and equate them to what we would classically consider the democratic multiple. Similarly, people did not know what a democratic multiple was. One respondent of the twenty-eight total respondents defined democratic multiples as "previously a handmade or small run press publication/book made by an artist. Superseded now by on-demand digital printing". Though I will not discuss on-demand digital printing, this can be an easy way for artists and photographers to self-publish their work in the present day, thus making it cheap and accessible by removing the need for a publisher or printer. Only one person did not respond to the required question "How would you define the term 'photobook'?" while sixteen respondents abstained when asked how they would define a democratic multiple. We can conclude, from this short analysis of the study, that many people today are more familiar with the photobook, even in a historical context, than they are with the term "democratic multiple," though we can consider the photobook as a contemporary rendering of the democratic multiple.

When discussing book history, it is important to discuss works in terms of Robert Darnton's communications circuit. A graphic depiction of the circuit can be found in Appendix C. It is obvious that many of the characteristics seen in the example of *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* rely on the center functions of Darnton's communications circuit. These central functions include: intellectual influences and publicity, economic and social conjuncture, and political and legal sanctions. Given the disparity among potential readers of photobooks or

democratic multiples, intellectual influences are the most important factor in the acceptance of *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* as a successful democratic multiple or photobook. It is clear that Ruscha published his work using the typical model relayed in Darnton's communications circuit given that the time period was the 1960s and that his work is made up of photo-mechanically reproduced photographs. However, it is important to note that there was pushback from libraries. According to an ad¹² for *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*, the Library of Congress rejected the copy that was sent to them for inception into their collection stating that the book had an "unorthodox form and supposed lack of information". This rejection from a national repository for various types of books further places a divide between artistic expression and libraries.

An example of the divide between artistic expression in the book format has been highlighted by Ruscha and can be seen by the classifications given to the work by museums. The Metropolitan Museum of Art¹³ has an object record that can be viewed for the work *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* which places the book in the general museum collections rather than the library collection, as is also the case with the Museum of Modern Art¹⁴. In Bright's book, *No Longer Innocent: Book Art in America 1960-1980*, the author quotes Ruscha which illuminates this discrepancy further:

Every year I have at least two shows of my books in galleries and they put [the books] on the walls, because that's what they want. Though it's ok by me, it's not the same thing. They're easy to see, easy to accept because of the context they're in—you know what to

¹² This ad and original letter has been digitized by the University of Texas' Ransom Center as part of their archive of Ruscha's work.
<http://sites.utexas.edu/ransomcentermagazine/2013/11/13/in-the-archive-ed-ruschas-twentysix-gasoline-stations/>

¹³ Met Museum accession number: 1970.90.6

¹⁴ MoMA accession number: 706.2011

think, everything's spelled out for you. It's been on a gallery wall so it must be art. The way they're supposed to be seen, of course, is when someone hands someone else just one book at a time and place where they don't expect it. (2005, p. 120)¹⁵

This disparity is unfortunate since many artists chose the book format to escape the utilitarian format of their artwork hanging on a wall, rather letting it be consumed individually by the viewer on their own time. This thought process presented contemporarily by Ruscha is exactly what was meant in terms of the democratic multiple as stated by Lucy Lippard in 1977.

Summary

In this paper, I discussed the democratic multiple, compared it to *livre d'artiste* and artists' books, and tried to conclude that the photobook format can be considered the contemporary version of the democratic multiple. Through a study I conducted, voluntary respondents tried their best to define various terms related to this paper so that I could gauge the knowledge of the general public in this very specific area of study. After consulting many published studies, books, and articles related to *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* by Ed Ruscha, I found that there is fluidity among the terms "artists' book," "democratic multiple," and "photobook". Book scholars classify Ruscha's work as an artists' book and occasionally as a democratic multiple, while photographers and photography scholars classify the work as a photobook. There is further division between bookworks such as Ruscha's which exists between the museum and library communities.

There are many limitations to his paper which should be noted. I started out with a very expansive goal of trying to prove that the democratic multiple exists as the photobook in contemporary times. I attempted doing this while looking at a very popular and widely known

¹⁵ This quote first appeared in Henri Man Barendse *Ed Ruscha: An Interview*

example, Ed Ruscha's *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*. There is a lot of scholarship regarding Ed Ruscha, especially *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*, which I hadn't fully realized at the start of writing this paper. I fear that my paper is just another compilation of the widely-circulated interviews, books, and articles which exist and already support Ruscha's work.

Another limitation which was previously mentioned briefly is the price of *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*. When it was first published, the first printing cost \$3. The book has since acquired cult-like status due to its limited printings and prestige as an art object rather than a photobook or democratic multiple. Though it is considered an open edition, there is a finite number of books in existence as Ruscha has not begun a fourth printing of the work. Currently, *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* is available to collectors on AbeBooks.com with the lowest price¹⁶ for a Third Edition copy being \$750 US Dollars plus \$5 shipping. This highest price on the site for this work is \$20,000 for a First Edition printing that is number 141 of 400 printed copies. This copy includes free shipping.

Ruscha was quoted in Ian Walker's essay by saying he wanted to "get the price down, so everyone can afford one. I want to be the Henry Ford of book making" (2012, p. 125)¹⁷. While this thought directly supports the definition of democratic multiples, Walker states the irony of this case study by concluding that *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* is just as valuable as live d'artiste works now. I didn't fully realize how the case study of Ed Ruscha would nearly disprove my goal of classifying the photobook as a contemporary democratic multiple.

¹⁶ The prices in this paper for *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* were gathered from AbeBooks.com on April 14, 2018.

¹⁷ Bello, P. D., Wilson, C., & Zamir, S. (Eds.). (2012). *The Photobook: From Talbot to Ruscha and beyond*. NY: I.B. Tauris & Company, Limited.

In the future, it would be necessary to analyze print-on-demand technology and the circulation of zines. Other areas of focus could include the Printed Matter Art Book Fair which presents a venue for artists to sell their bookworks directly to the consumer. According to their website¹⁸, Printed Matter states that the focus of the Art Book Fair, held in New York and Los Angeles annually, is to provide “an important platform for artists and publishers to connect with audiences and circulate their work in a dynamic environment”. This could prove to be an even better example of the democratic multiple in existence today rather than *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*.

¹⁸ <http://nyartbookfair.com/about/>

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Appendix A

Survey Questions and Responses

Table 1: artists' books	
Do you know what "artists' books" are?	How would you define the term "artists' book"?
Yes	Book of artists drawings or book of artists completed works
Yes	The book as an object is a piece of artistic expression
Yes	An artists' book is a work created by an artist that may "read" like a book or closely resemble a traditional book structure. These books can be in any format, can be printed in limited runs, or be a single unique printing (i.e. a one of kind artifact).
No	A book put together by an artist filled with their works.
No	I would guess that it is a book full of art!
Yes	A book created by an artist meant to be viewed as an artwork or editions work, rather than a standard for-print publication.
No	Book containing an artist's work
Yes	Any item created by hand in the style of a "book" but not necessarily with the same type of contents as a book.
Yes	a book or book object made by an artist and often by hand
Yes	Handmade and/or very small-run publications designed and produced as works of art
Yes	A unique or limited edition textual art object
No	They are books about someone's art/intellectual property.
No	sketchbook
No	Books that focus on a specific painter, sculptor, etc...?
I think so.	Books artists make as art.
Not sure	When art is made in the shape of a book
No	Not sure
Yes	a handmade book, often hand-painted, hand-printed, mixed media production: one of a kind objects.
Yes	Monographs, catalog raisonne or similar, devoted to the work of art producers
No	unknown
No	I would assume it is a book that contains a collection of an artist's works
Yes	A book conceived/produced by artists.
No	Art in the form of a book
Yes	A book consisting of imagery, writing, or both relating to an artist's practice. Opposed to catalogs, artists books are often works of art in themselves.
No	-
Yes	a book meant to operate as a self-contained work of art
Yes	Books about and/or for artist and their craft
Yes	Made by or for a particular artist in order to show our market themselves and their art or statement.

Table 2: democratic multiple	
Do you know what "democratic multiple" means?	How would you define the term "democratic multiple"?
No	Not sure, I believe I might know what it is but not sure.
No	Guess: it's a reproduction of an original that is identical to the original (?)
No	Looking at the word and based on context, I'm thinking that this might have something to do with zines? Multiples implies many (i.e. pressings? printings?) and the use of democratic makes me think widespread, easy access, available.
No	Someone who voted democrat twice.
No	No idea...many of something democratic!
No	Do not know
No	No idea
Yes	A series of something, usually done cheaply and to be given away/sold directly by the creator.

No	nope
No	I wish I knew!
No	N/A
I think I do	Art by more than 1 artist in one book.
No	no idea
No	Trends seen across a group of people...?
No	Have no idea.
No	Choices
No	Not sure
I've heard of the term, but have forgotten.	I think it has something to do with the pages of books.
Yes	Previously a handmade or small run press publication/book made by an artist. Superseded now by on-demand digital printing
No	unknown
No	No idea
Yes	Popular from ca. 1970-1980, it belonged to the genre of artists' books (I think).
No	I'm not sure
No	N/A
No	-
No	n/a
No	Unknown
No	The opposite direction the GOP is headed.

Table 3: photobook	
Do you know what a "photobook" is?	How would you define the term "photobook"?
Yes	Book of photos, or an artists/photographer photos in one book
No	Guess: a book whose primary content consists of photographic images
No	I would think that this is a work where the primary contents or central medium is photos/works of photography
Yes	A book filled with photos.
Yes	A photo album type book with pictures, captions, and sometimes art
Yes	Similar to an artist's book, but comprised of photography rather than prints/pictures of paintings/etc.
No	Book of mainly photos?
Yes	Limited run books usually made from actual photos, or where there is little if any text.
Yes	a book or book object whose primary medium is photographs
Yes	Artist monograph whose main purpose is to bring together photographic images as an artwork
No	N/A
Yes	A book about photos
Yes	book oh photos not an album that people put photos into
No	A photographer's portfolio...?
Yes	A bound book of photos.
Yes	A book of a life through photos
Maybe	Book with photos in it
No	book with photos? or a facsimile of an original printing?
Yes	See above (previously democratic multiples) :-)
Yes	a book of photos
No	A book that contains photographs of an artist's works.
Yes	AKA a "coffee table book," this book is mostly made up of photos.
Yes	A book of photos meant to exist collectively as a work of art
Yes	Similar to an artist book, but the primary image material consists of photos.
Yes	A book containing a collection of photographs that fall under a certain category, or that have a common denominator.
Yes	a book typically consisting of mostly large-scale photos (little text)
Yes	A book of photos
Yes	Hobbyists and photographers self publishing of art books.

Table 4: livre d'artiste	
Do you know what "Livre d'Artiste" is?	How would you define "Livre d'Artiste"?
Yes	Life of Artist
Yes	It seems to translate as "artist's book" so same definition as stated above
Yes	These are a French trend of illustrated books that focused on original illustrations, c. early 20th c?. I think that these were much more like unique works of art unlike artists books which often use printing/replication as part of their creation. Livres were one of a kind and had the original paintings/drawings/collages in the finished project.
No	Life of the artist.
No	With the help of my 7th grader French student.... book of artists
No	Unknown
No	Artist book?
Yes	Books that contain original artwork
No	no
Not sure	I'm not sure how this is different from an artist's book.
No	N/A
No	Live Artist ... is my guess.
No	the artists' life
No	A look back on an artist's life...?
No	A book an artist makes as art.
No	Don't know
No	Not sure
Yes	artist book
Yes	Artist produced - or small press run - considered to be the work itself (Ed Ruscha gas stations as an example)
No	unknown
No	Life of the artist?
Yes	A book illustrated using the original etching plate the artist produced.
By translating the French, I surmise it is the same as artists' books.	Art in the form of a book
No	N/A
No	-
No	n/a
No	Artists book- literal translation
I think so	The oeuvre of the person's entire work.

Table 5: <i>Twentysix Gasoline Stations</i>
Have you heard of the publication "Twentysix Gasoline Stations"?
No
No
No
No
No
No
No
Yes
Yes
Yes
No
No
No
No
No
No
No
No
Yes
No
It sounds familiar, but no
No

No
No
No
Yes
No
Yes

Table 6: familiarity with individuals

Please rate your level of knowledge for the following individual: Johanna Drucker	Please rate your level of knowledge for the following individual: Lucy Lippard	Please rate your level of knowledge for the following individual: Ed Ruscha	Please rate your level of knowledge for the following individual: George Wittenborn
3	3	3	3
1	1	3	1
3	1	1	1
1	1	1	1
1	1	1	1
1	1	4	1
1	1	1	1
4	4	4	3
2	2	5	1
1	4	5	1
1	1	3	3
1	1	1	1
1	1	1	1
1	1	1	1
1	1	1	1
1	1	1	1
1	1	1	1
3	3	3	1
3	5	5	4
1	1	1	1
1	1	1	1
1	1	1	1
1	1	1	1
1	1	3	1
1	1	1	1
1	3	3	1
1	1	1	1
1	1	4	1

Table 7: comments

Do you have any comments on any of the individuals mentioned above?
They are all artists
Nope
I saw Johanna speak at a conference in October :)
No, I am unfamiliar with them.
Nope!
No
I've never heard of any of them
Love Ruscha
no
I need to look up the unfamiliar ones!
No
No
i'm sad to say i've never heard of them
No
no
No
I have not heard of them
no.

As a group an amazing look into publishing and dissemination of art and print production
unknown
N/A
I'm embarrassed that I don't know these individuals.
No
No
-
n/a
None
I never knew Ruscha didn't sound like Russia.

Table 8: demographic information				
What is your occupation? (optional)	What is your institutional affiliation? (optional)	What is your age range? (optional)	What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? If currently enrolled, highest degree received. (optional)	Do you have any further comments or questions? (optional)
HR Analyst	Bank	45-54 years old	Bachelor's degree	
Graduate student librarian	Rutgers	45-54 years old	Master's degree	
archivist	Rutgers University	25-34 years old	Master's degree	
Law enforcement officer.	John Jay College of Criminal Justice	25-34 years old	Bachelor's degree	
Stay at home mom, volunteer, and grad student	Grad student	45-54 years old	Bachelor's degree	Good luck with your paper!
Grad student/museum intern		18-24 years old	Bachelor's degree	
Student	Rutgers	35-44 years old	Bachelor's degree	
Librarian	urban public library	45-54 years old	Master's degree	sounds like a great topic
artist		18-24 years old	Bachelor's degree	no!
Digital archivist	Public library/archives	35-44 years old	Master's degree	
Art librarian	Bard Graduate Center	35-44 years old	Master's degree	No
Sales Professional		35-44 years old	Master's degree	
laboratory supervisor	pace university	45-54 years old	Bachelor's degree	
Artist (illustrator, graphic designer)	Self-employed	35-44 years old	Bachelor's degree	
Nonprofit Manager before retired	None	55-64 years old	Bachelor's degree	
Retired special education teacher		65-74 years old	Bachelor's degree	
Communications		25-34 years old	Bachelor's degree	
barista/unemployed librarian	Rutgers	45-54 years old	Master's degree	
---	---	---	---	
sales		25-34 years old	Bachelor's degree	
Mathematics Teacher		25-34 years old	Bachelor's degree	
Foreign language teacher/translator	Public Schools of New Hampshire	65-74 years old	Master's degree	This made me feel like a loser on a "Jeopardy!" episode.
Grad student, Social Sciences	Michigan Tech University	25-34 years old	Bachelor's degree	
		18-24 years old	Bachelor's degree	
Graphic Design		18-24 years old	Bachelor's degree	
		18-24 years old	Bachelor's degree	
Finance associate	UBS Financial	35-44 years old	Bachelor's degree	None
Photographer	The met museum.	55-64 years old	Bachelor's degree	My age demographic choice is too far past the median.

Appendix B

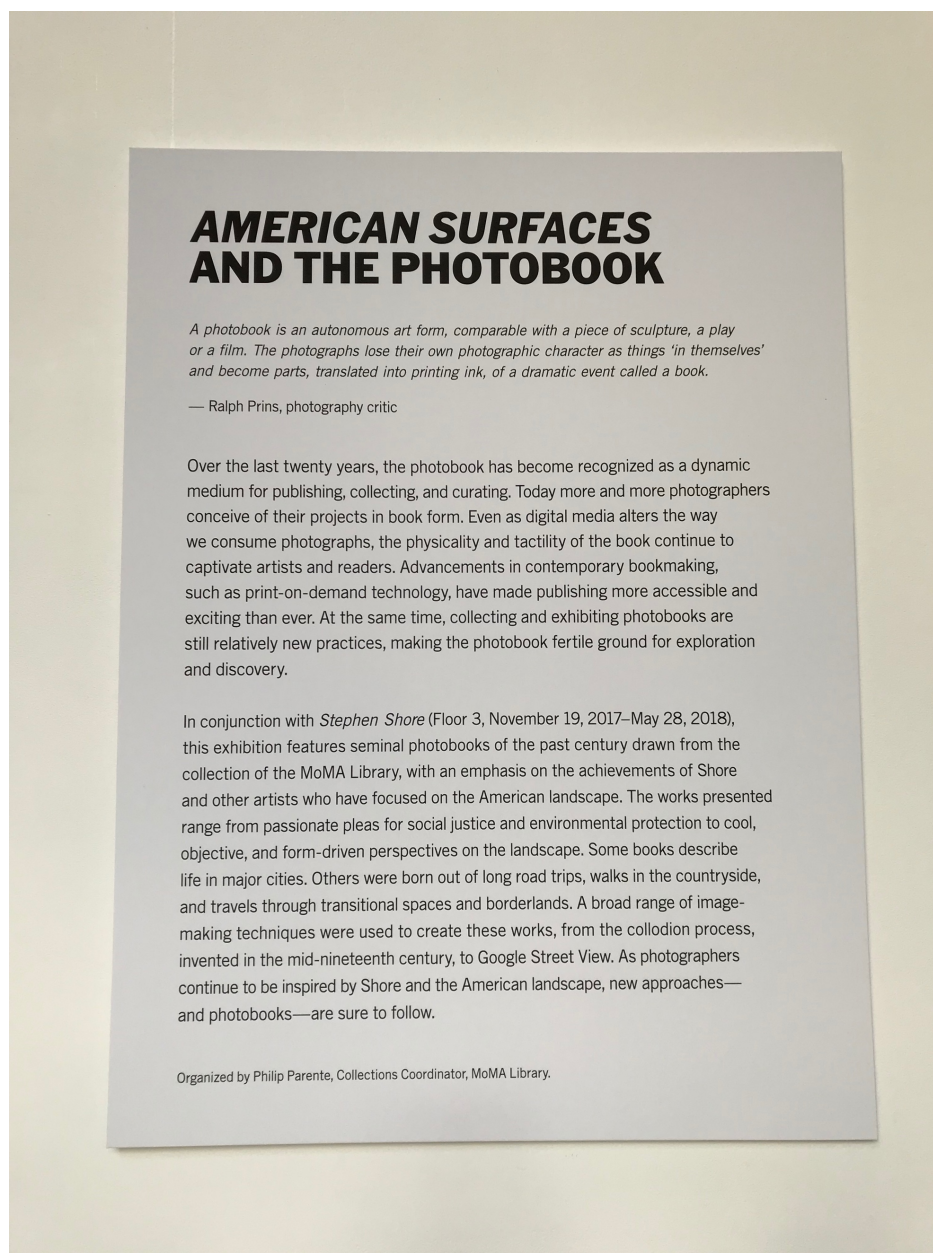
Photographs of the Museum of Modern Art exhibition *American Surfaces and the Photobook*

Figure 1 Title Wall for the Museum of Modern Art exhibition *American Surfaces and the Photobook*, curated by Philip Parente.

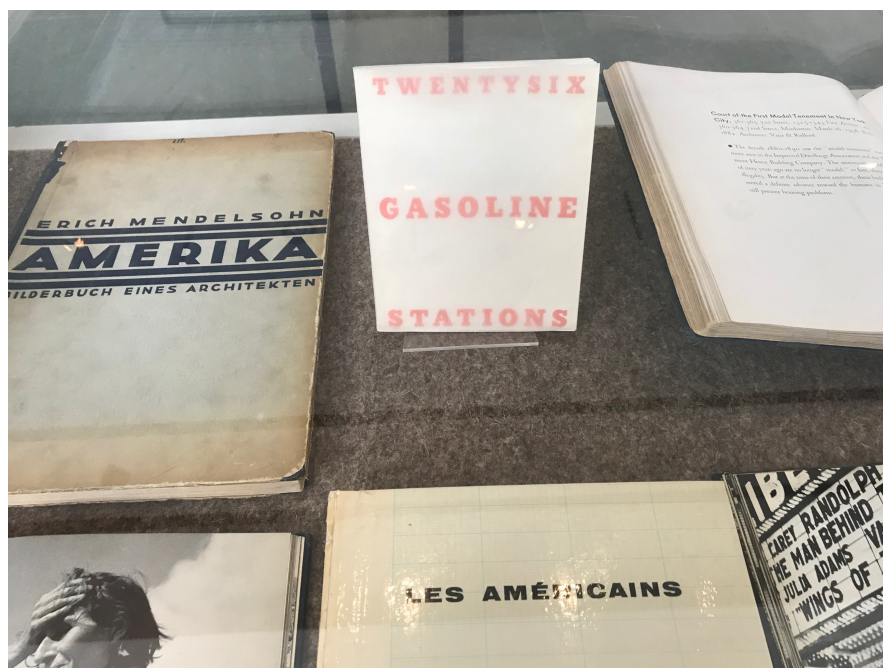


Figure 2 Twentysix Gasoline Stations by Ed Ruscha among other works in the exhibition.



Figure 3 Twentysix Gasoline Stations by Ed Ruscha among other works in the exhibition.



Figure 4 Twentysix Gasoline Stations by Ed Ruscha among other works in the exhibition.

Appendix C

Robert Darnton's Communications Circuit

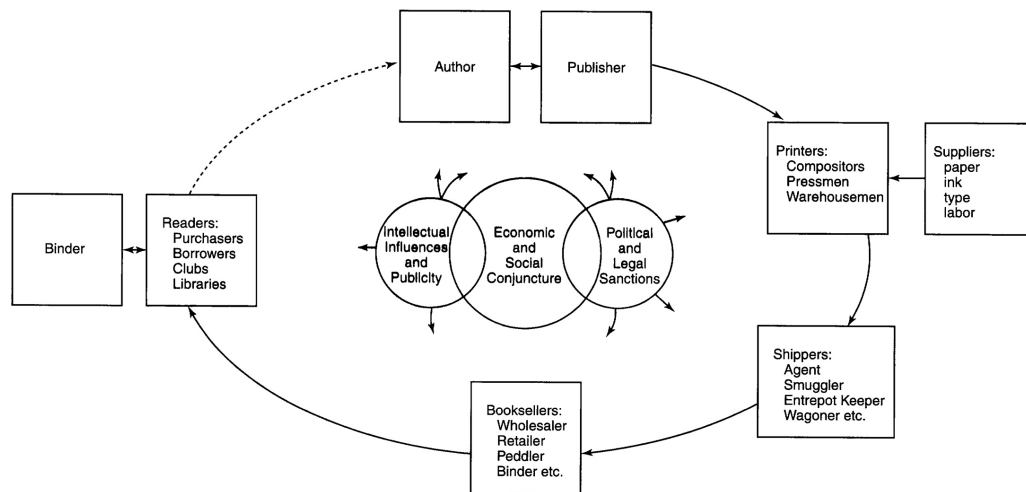


Figure 5 Robert Darnton's communications circuit.