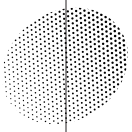
This is the script from Julie Cho and Erin Segal's December 4, 2019 conversation at the Women's Center for Creative Work. The conversation was originally billed as *On care, vulnerability and publishing practice*, although a more fitting title would have been *Dialogic, Relational, and Slow: Thick Press' publishing practice*. Julie and Erin did not follow the script precisely; an audio transcript of the presentation is available in the Southland Institute's archives.



INTRODUCTION
(To be read by Joe Potts of the Southland Institute)

Thick Press is a publishing practice that makes unusual books about care work. The press was founded by Julie Cho and Erin Segal, a graphic designer and a social worker.

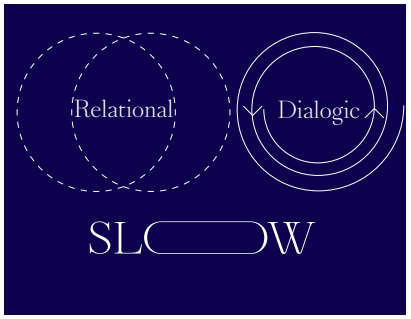
Julie has an MFA in Graphic Design from Yale School of Art. She is part of a three-woman graphic design studio called Omnivore, Inc. She also teaches graphic design at Otis College of Art and Design and cares for her two daughters.

Erin is a social worker and independent social work academic. She has an MSW from Columbia University, and worked for a decade in early intervention. After completing a PhD in social work in 2015 and serving as an adjunct professor at Catholic University and Smith College, Erin turned her attention towards caring for her two children, creative work, and direct practice with low-income senior citizens.

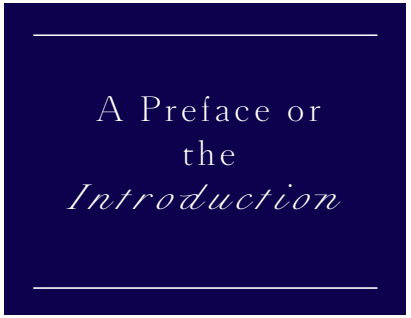
Thick Press evolved organically from the press' first title, *Recuerdos de Nuestro Pasado*. For both founders, Thick Press serves as a utopian imaginary, an alternative to market-driven spaces. In the spirit of emergence and collaboration, Erin and Julie do not publish pre-existing manuscripts. All Thick Press books come from an emergent process with collaborators. Thick Press has published two major titles, *Recuerdos de Nuestro Pasado* and *selfcarefully*. A third title, *Stages*: *On dying*, *working*, *and feeling*, is slated for publication in May. The press also has a series of zine-like books called *book*, *emerging*.

Although the Thick Press books are available from Thick Press' website, and, occasionally, at art book fairs, Erin and Julie are committed to distributing their books outside the creative community, and they consider "dissemination" an important part of their publishing practice. Julie and Erin have begun to characterize their practice as RELATIONAL, DIALOGIC, and SLOW, and this evening's presentation is a working-through of those three concepts.

Julie: Thanks, Joe, and thanks to everybody for coming out tonight. Before we get into RELATIONAL,DIALOGIC, and SLOW,



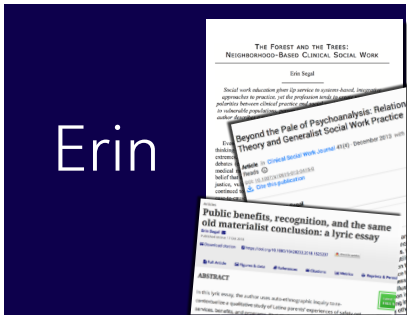
we want to tell you a bit more about ourselves, and offer an overview of Thick Press and the idea of "publishing as practice."



Erin: But first a little bit of housekeeping and background about this talk. So we had this "vision" of writing a script and "performing" it for you. And then making the script available to distribute as booklet. So through lots of conversations and emailing and editing, we did that. But what we didn't realize is that when we read it, there's this stilted quality, like, "Funny you should mention that, Julie!" So bear with us on that front!

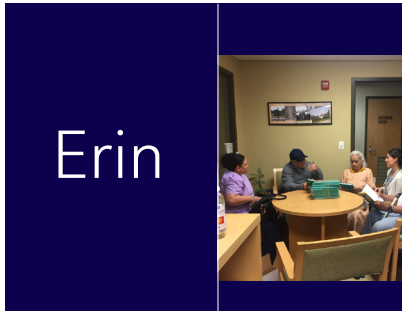
Julie: So we have about 90 minutes together tonight. We're going to start with an overview of Thick Press, and then move into RELATIONAL. At the end of RELATIONAL, we will have talked for about 30 minutes, so we're going to take a pause for questions and comments from you guys. And then we'll move into the other two concepts, DIALOGIC and SLOW. We didn't have time or space to flesh out SLOW, so we won't be talking about disability justice, as we had initially planned. We're hoping there will be time at the end for more questions.

Erin: So onto introductions. I'm Erin, as Joe mentioned, I'm mom to Nora and Teddy,



I sometimes publish about social work, and I've been practicing social work for about 20 years, with a break to get a PhD. I used to work in early childhood intervention; these days

I do group work and a little bit of case work just one day a week with senior citizens at the Bernice Fonteneau Senior Wellness Center, a day program for adults over sixty, in DC, where I live.



These are the seniors in my storytelling group, and

these are some of the members of a nature and craft group I now facilitate.

Julie: I'm Julie, mom to Yoona and Cleo. Graphic design was not something I learned in my undergrad. I studied History and Sociology and had a brief

stint in television before going to art school for a very long time.

I've been in practice for 12 years, working with two other women, Alice Chung and Karen Hsu in our design studio, Omnivore as Joe mentioned. We are in three locations, NYC, Portland, and here in LA.

We work with non-profit, cultural and educational institutions but also on occasion, for-profit businesses.

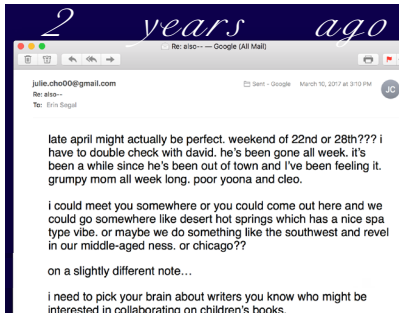
I also have a collaboration with Katie Hanburger called The Slow Season, where we make both self-initiated and commissioned work.

And I have been teaching for 10 years at Otis College of Art and Design in the undergraduate and graduate departments.

Erin: **So we've been friends for almost 30 years now. We met in high school**

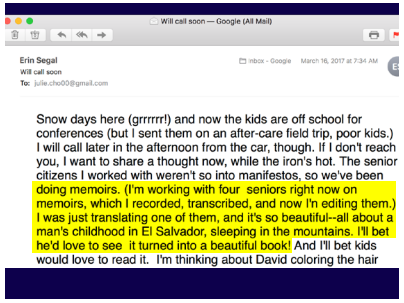
we stayed friends through college,

and through marriage and kids.



About two and a half years ago, we met up in the desert to hang out, convene...

Julie: **I think we both had just turned 40? It felt like a moment of pause and reflection.**



The idea for Thick Press emerged during this trip, when Erin told me about her collaborative memoir-making project

with four Salvadoran senior citizens.

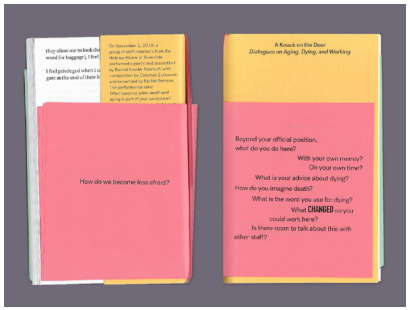
Erin: That project became *Recuerdos de Nuestro Pasado*, our first title and the beginning of our press.

Julie: Thick Press's second title, *selfcarefully*, written by Gracy Obuchowicz [O-BU-HO-ITZ] and designed and illustrated by Maria Habib, officially published last week, is about caring for self and other in a rocky world.

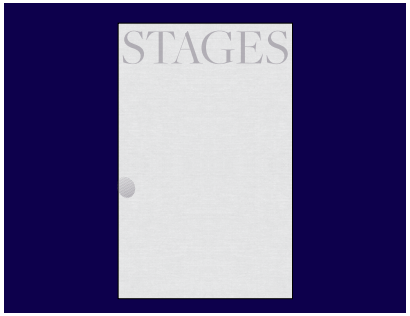
Erin: We also make author-less, zine-like booklets that give form to emerging work by practitioners, academics, and socially engaged artists.

That series is called *book, emerging*.

Julie: Sometimes those quickly-produced books give rise to longer titles, such as this one, about interviews with hospice workers about death and dying, which has led to our third major title, written by Rachel Kauder Nalebuff and slated for publication in the spring.

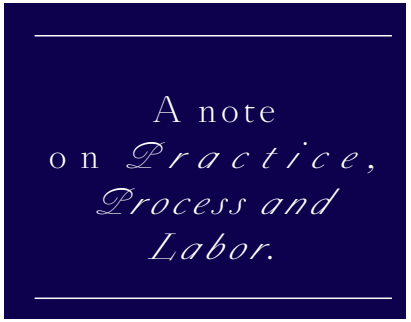


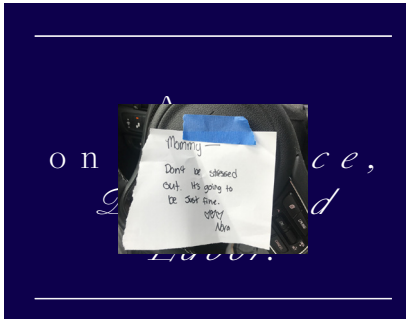
That book, called *Stages: On dying, working, and feeling*, contains Rachel's interviews with nursing home staff, interspersed with her own writings.



Julie: So here we are, two old friends, a graphic designer and a social worker,

building a publishing practice.



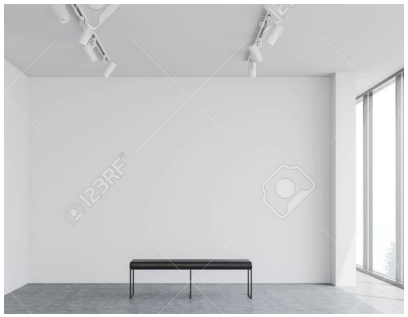


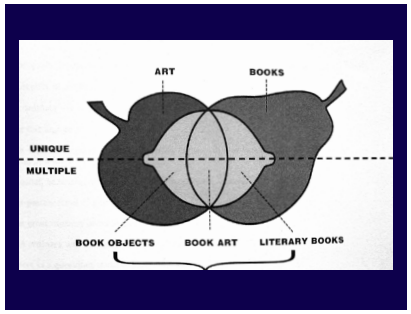
Erin: in the thick of it all, in the thick of all the other things we do. This idea of "publishing as practice" is something we've picked up from conversations we've had at the few art book fairs we've attended,

from books we've been reading,

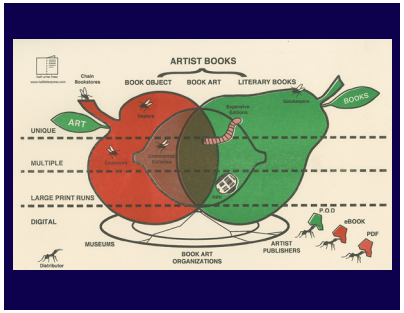
visits we've made to other publishers' studios, and yes, from other publishers' Instagram feeds.

Julie: And then we've had to refine all this together and in conversations with others, because even though we recognize the influence of artist publishing as a form of independent publishing, we aren't artists, and it's very important for us to exist outside of this context.



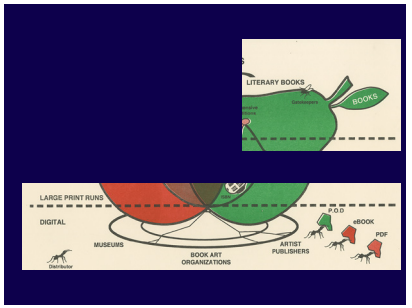


This image by librarian and art historian Clive Phillpot from the 1970s was an attempt at situating artist books or books as art within a space outside of traditional publishing. In 2015, Kione Kochi risographed this poster

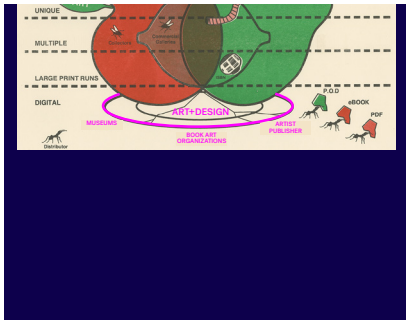


on behalf of our friends at Temporary Services to speak

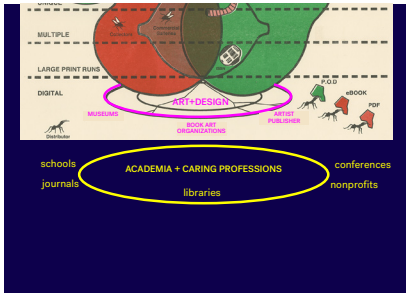
more to distribution, adding print runs and digital technology to the diagram. We operate as a small publisher, but our interest actually lies within these components of literary books, with slightly larger print runs for our larger titles



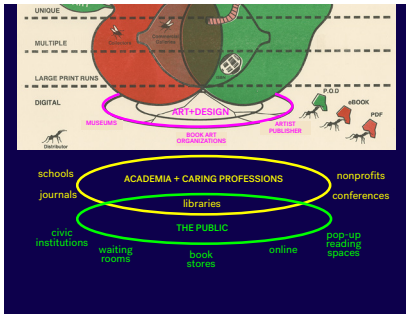
And where artist books only live within the museum/book art and artist publishing world,



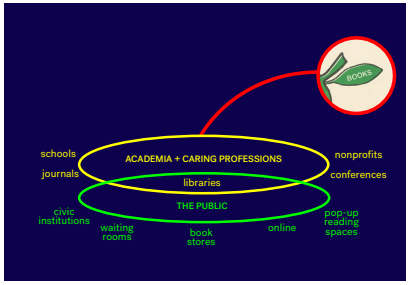
we aspire to distribute within academia and the world of professional care work.



We also aspire to either sell or share our books in public places: civic institutions, waiting rooms, bookstores, online, and in pop-up reading spaces.



In some senses, our publishing practice shares qualities with very traditional book publishing.



Erin: So what does "publishing practice" mean to us? I often use the term "social work practice"

"social work practice"

by which I really just mean my work with people, and how that work keeps evolving through experience and book learning.

—by which I really just mean my work with people, and how that work keeps evolving through experience and book learning. But I'm not as conversant as you are in this whole idea of "practice." Like, I was at a party recently, and I was trying to explain to a friend of a friend that Thick Press isn't a publishing company, it's a publishing practice, and I was doing a terrible job articulating that. So I've been meaning to ask you to remind me: what's a publishing practice again?

Julie: I think the question of what "practice" is, is an interesting one. When I was in grad school, we often were asked to think about what a graphic design practice would be for us after we graduated. And to be honest, I was totally confused by the terminology, I think in part because I came from a traditional university background, where learning is less focused on doing and more on "filling your brain with information." SO in art school, when ideas such as "practice" would come up, it was like, "What does that mean?"

"a graphic design practice"

a process; doing something over and over again; understanding that things might not be right on the first, second, third try.

In graphic design higher education particularly, there was a little bit of an identity crisis—like we weren't an art form, but we didn't want to see ourselves as a service either. We were asked about what our practice would be, which would somehow define purpose. As I graduated, and began to work and teach, it dawned on me, the word "practice" is actually what it literally is: a process; doing something over and over again; understanding that things might not be right on the first, second, third try.

"a publishing practice"

distributes content and investigates *the process*, of making and distributing this content.

Erin: When it comes to making books, I've been so impressed by all of your practices—the sketching, the various "rounds" of iterating, the way you loop in your design partners, the way you have mock-ups made, giving physical form to work…

I mean, those are all the kinds of things I was SUPPOSED to do when I was writing my dissertation, but somehow they seem to flow so much better when I see you doing them, maybe because book design doesn't come from such a lonely, ego-driven place as academic writing.

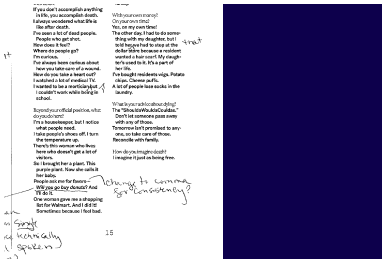
Julie: That's true. You do need many pieces to accomplish the final thing. But I do think that anything pen to paper, or mouse to computer screen :) is somewhat ego driven or maybe ego-defining. I feel so grateful for all the creative collaborations I have, including with you. I think I have something special with my studio partners and with Katie and with you in that I trust you all 100% and that I know your output is so good, thoughtful, and rigorous. I don't think that happens all the time. So the trust is natural and I welcome feedback and also with working towards a common goal (although it's not always easy, too).

Erin: So it's like, the work flows better when you have somebody—or more than one person—by your side whose feedback you trust? And when you feel like you're not working alone.

Julie: Yes! Also as a parent who has an "interrupted" process, it feels good to divvy up the work.

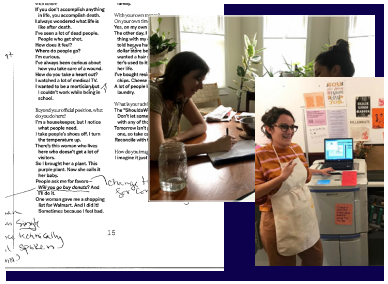
Erin: Totally! Although sadly, you and I don't quite benefit from that divvying up, because our functions don't usually

overlap. It makes me think we need to bring in more collaborators—I feel so grateful for Nora [Gallagher,] our copyeditor,

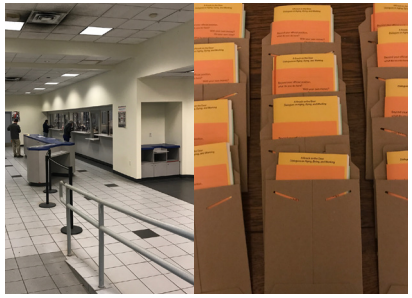


and I love that Maria [Habib] designed *selfcarefully*, and I keep wishing you had somebody to help enter the never-ending rounds of changes for *Stages*...

Julie: I felt really grateful for MJ [Balvanera] when she was part of our collaboration, too. She was definitely able to take on some of the design load as well.



Erin: Anyway, I think this whole idea of practice has been helpful for me because I'm just kind of grossed out by things like marketing and publicity—I don't think they're bad, it's just that I never saw myself doing them. I mean, nor did I see myself spending so much time at the US post office,



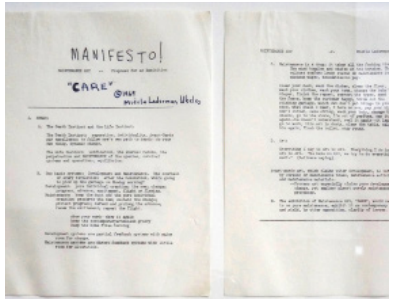
but somehow that aspect of the work feels kind of noble. So when I frame the publicity work in terms of our "dissemination practice," it becomes something I do day after day not really as a means to the end of selling more books, not brilliantly, not with ego. It becomes checking off tasks on a list. Until I start to get a bit disgruntled, then I call you in despair, and you tell me that I'm doing SO MUCH and I should just stop for a little while, so I do, and then suddenly I feel re-energized. Somehow, beyond just appreciating your support and trusting you, I find it incredibly motivating that you have such low expectations of me?

Julie: Ha!! Maybe it's not low expectations as much as it is my understanding of practice! Or an understanding and respect for THE LABOR.

Like, who does what? How do things get done? I think about that often when I teach my students or when I am working with my studio partners. In my studio, because we are so small, the idea of farming out labor is not as possible. You go from a big idea, which is important, to the actual execution, and all hands are on deck. And this idea of execution is so important to recognize as hard work, skill, craft and time.

I felt like learning about Mierle Laderman Ukeles' work related to the "art" of "maintenance" was pretty transformative in that it felt validating to understand work within this framework.

In 1969 she wrote this manifesto, calling out the separation between care work, like child-rearing, and art.



Together: clean you[r] desk, wash the dishes, clean the floor, wash your clothes, wash your toes, change the baby's diaper, finish the report, correct the

typos, mend the fence... and so on.

C. Maintenance is a drag; it takes all the fucking time (lit.)
The mind boggles and chafes at the boredom.
The culture confers lousy status on maintenance jobs = minimum wages, housewives = no pay.

clean you desk, wash the dishes, clean the floor, wash your clothes, wash your toes, change the baby's diaper, finish the report, correct the typos, mend the fence, keep the customer happy, throw out the stinking garbage, watch out don't put things in your nose, what shall I wear, I have no sox, pay your bills, don't litter, save string, wash your hair, change the sheets, go to the store, I'm out of perfume, say it again—he doesn't understand, seal it again—it leaks, go to work, this art is dusty, clear the table, call him again, flush the toilet, stay young.

Erin: Maintenance work is such a drag, as Mierle puts it, but I wonder if it's not inherently a drag; maybe it's just because it confers such low status in our society.

Julie: True true. The glamorous life doesn't entail taking out the garbage. On the other side, sometimes it also feels like getting stuck in the weeds, too, so you can't see the forest, which is really important, too.

Erin: But when we name the "maintenance work," when we make visible all this labor that calls out to be respected, I think it frees up space to see the forest when you're in the shower or whatever, because you're not obsessing about all the little things you haven't done yet. And the little things start to feel kind of sacred, in the same way that little rituals can, um, engender a sense of spirituality...

Julie: I think this speaks to the ideas that the press wants to make visible the invisible. The book as an object has an enormous power to make real, make permanent.

Erin: And in creating these books-objects, we make the world in the image of how we (and our collaborators) want the world to be.

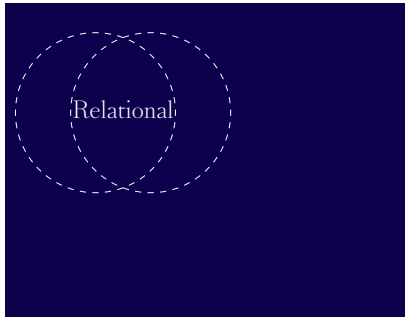
Which of course is always changing. But I guess it's easy for me to say that maintenance tasks feel sacred when I've chosen to perform them—it's different for somebody whose wage labor is maintenance work. It's different for somebody who feels undercompensated and overworked.

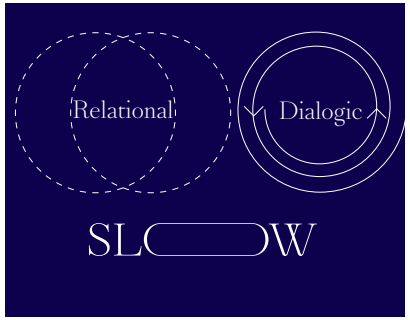
Anyway, Mierle's idea of "maintenance" seem like a good segue into discussing the three words we've identified. We've heard artist publishers describe their "practices" in terms of words like collaborative, collective, generous, vulnerable, tender, and emergent, and we often do the same.

collaborative
collective
generous
vulnerable
tender
emergent

It feels helpful to try on words. But the words that right now feel most relevant to our interdisciplinary practice are...

Julie: RELATIONAL, DIALOGIC, and SLOW. Should we take them one at a time?





CHAPTER

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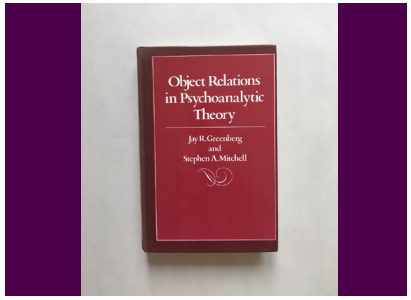
Erin: **I think so, but where do we start?**

Julie: **Let's start with relational, because it feels grounding and contextual.**

Erin: **Okay, so RELATIONAL is a big, flexible term that social workers have been using more and more over the last few decades.**

Julie: **Same with design and fine arts. Although I think in fine art and design, we've taken this idea without necessarily defining its essential meaning. So it's great to hear your perspective on it.**

Erin: **So I came to relationality through psychoanalysis, which is kind of ironic, because social workers who are concerned with the way our profession disciplines bodies through diagnosis, by the way social workers turn social problems like isolation into psychological problems like depression—those social workers tend to reject analytic theory. But what they don't always realize is that starting in the 1990s, there was a shift in psychoanalysis, what they call a relational turn. Is it okay if I get a little bit academic here?**

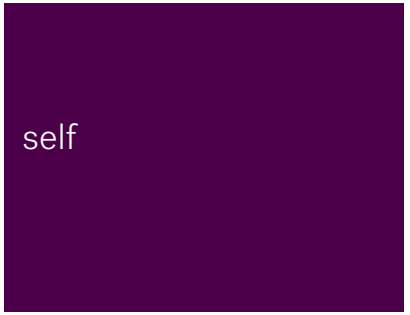


Julie: **Yes!**

Erin: **So the work of analysis used to be to excavate the past, to uncover the things in your development that went awry, internal drives that are getting expressed in maladaptive ways. And there was an assumption that certain structures and phases were typical, while others weren't. But increasingly, relational psychoanalysts are less interested in uncovering the past, and more interested in activating healing through their interactions with their patients. There is an assumption that as two people make meaning together, in a relational matrix, they mutually influence one another.**

Julie: **Relational matrix?**

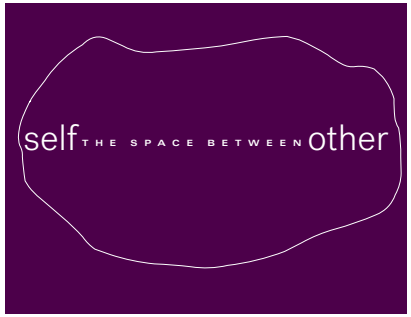
Erin: **Steven Mitchell describes the relational matrix as self,**



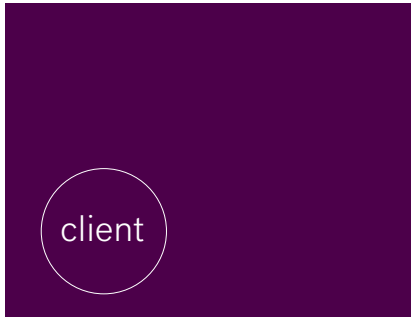
other,

and the space between,

creating a matrix.

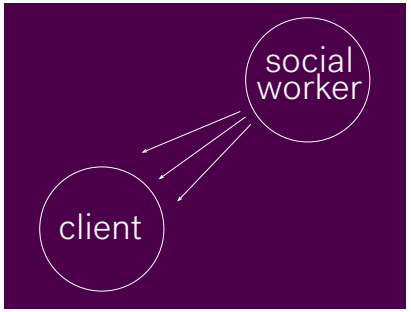


So you have a client.



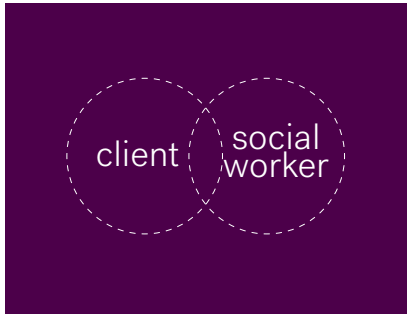
And you have somebody tasked with helping that client.

In traditional therapy or helping, there's a sense that helper can see the client as if from above, intervening on the client as a mechanic intervenes on a car.

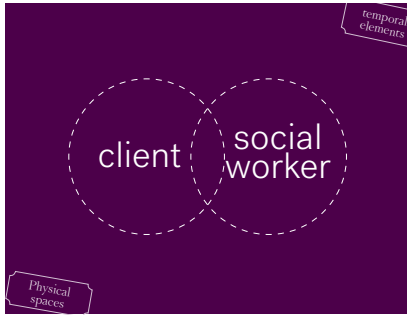


Instead, relationality assumes a matrix.

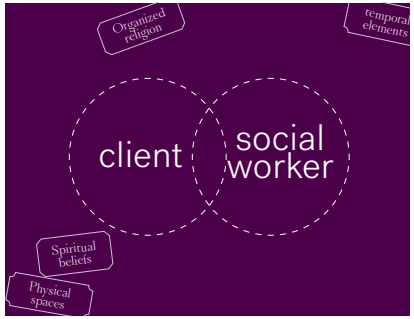
And it's a porous matrix.



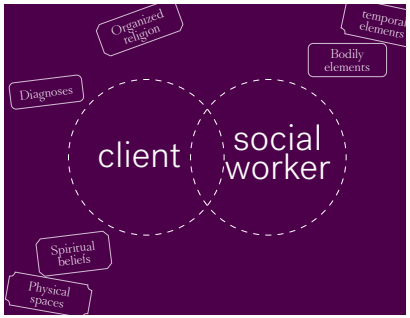
The whole world seeps in.



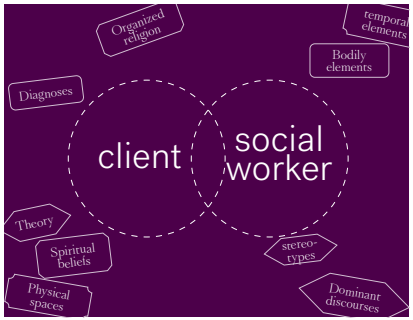
So many elements, so many constructs—



the physical world, the roles we're expected to play, ideas that are out there. These aren't just things we experience.

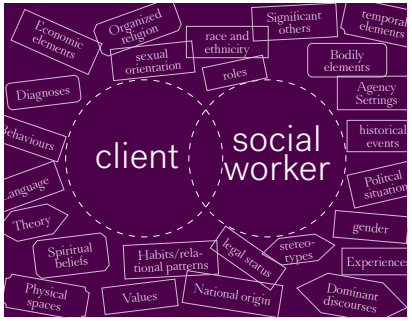


They're what form our very identities,



in every relation, but for our purposes,

in this relation between social worker and client.



So here you are, client and helper, together, in this matrix, making meaning of the client's world, trying to envision a better future, as the world seeps in.

Julie: It was so interesting to write out all those categories when I was making the slide.

Erin: Some of them came from a kind of relational qualitative research method I like called situational analysis, by Adele Clarke. And I think it's important to understand that Steven Mitchell and Lewis Aron didn't make up this idea. It's telling of how conservative my social work education was that I came to this idea through psychoanalytic theory.

I mean, my undergraduate education in the 1990s was not conservative, and it was through postmodern theory that I was exposed to the idea of social construction. But somehow, back then, post-modernism was always about things or theories being fragmented or constructed—not lives or selves. There wasn't much about this matrix thing, and there was always the feeling that I, the student, was a free agent, an atomistic

individual. Same with post-modern approaches to social work practice, which I learned in my MSW program, where there wasn't a lot of talk about decentering the worker—it was always about how we could use postmodern ideas to "intervene" on the client system. Yet relationality is an idea that's always been super-resonant to feminists who weren't exclusively socialized in what I guess we'd call settler cultures. And it's an idea that women of color poet-theorists like Gloria Anzaldúa, Audre Lorde and Paula Gunn Allen were working on both before and alongside this shift in psychoanalytic thought. Thanks to Chris Hoff, who is here tonight, for introducing us to Ana Louise Keating's book, which has this great quote:

Julie: "Beginning with their own embodied lives and context-specific experiences, Anzaldúa, Allen, and Lorde transform rigid, boundaried concepts of self-identity into transcultural, transgendered networks of subjectivity."

"Beginning with their own embodied lives and context-specific experiences, [Gloria] Anzaldúa, [Paula Gunn] Allen, and [Audre] Lorde transform rigid, boundaried concepts of self-identity into transcultural, transgendered networks of subjectivity.

As they resist rigid self-categorization, they define themselves in relational terms, and explore their interconnections with (or possibly, as) others, they enact threshold identities....

As they resist rigid self-categorization, they define themselves in relational terms, and explore their interconnections with (or possibly, as) others, they enact threshold identities…"

—AnaLouise Keating, *Transformation Now!: Toward a Post-Oppositional Politics of Change*, p. 106

I love the idea of "threshold identities",

threshold identities

like I am not 100% this or

100% that, but that I am on the edge. Like this image of my family from Colonial Williamsburg in Virginia.

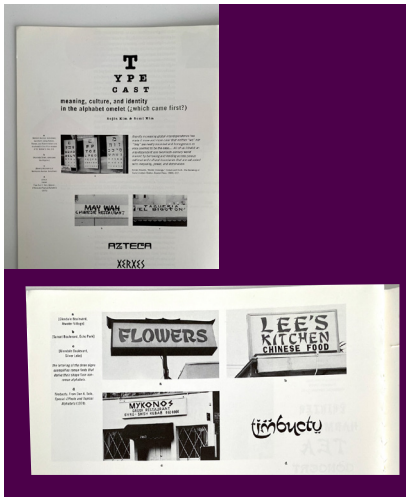
I have always felt that way. I know you have, too.

Living heteronormatively,
threshold identities
experiencing the world kind of queerly

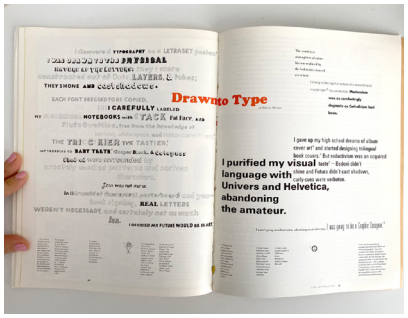
The way you describe relationality vs. post modernism resonates so much with me and brings such clarity to how I can critique my relationship with graphic design's (relatively short) critical history.

There was a moment in the 80s and 90s when graphic design educators, students, and practitioners became very influenced by the work of postmodernism,

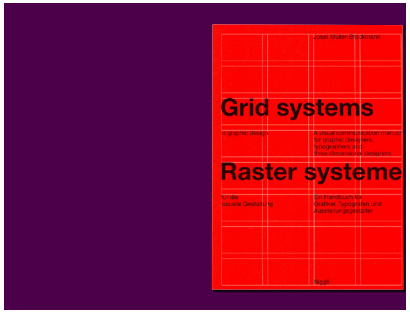
in particular the understanding that typography and image-making are visually constructed, social signs or codes that move fluidly between form and meaning, creating a kind of fragmentation of image and text. This did lead to some interesting moments where individuals were starting to talk about issues of identity, specifically cultural identity within design.



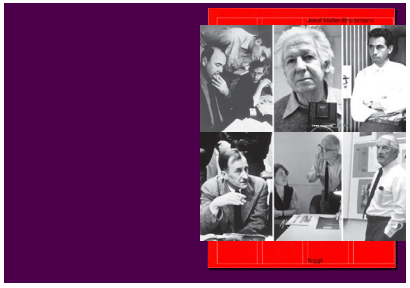
But at the core, postmodernism was a kind of manifesto and reaction to modernism.



I love the way Lorraine Wild writes about her modernist design education with a strict adherence to a grid system



or a single set of typefaces without reason as a kind of "habit" or "bizarre fraternity of rituals".

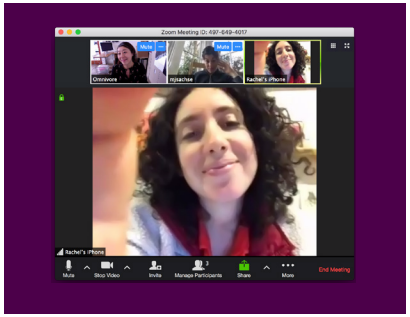


By that point modernist inspired education was meaningless to her in the same way in the early 2000s post-modernism felt meaningless to many of us. And ironically in school, there was still this pressure to feel like you were part of a "bizarre fraternity of coolness." I would hear stories of how designers came to graphic design through a particular subculture, the more obscure the better.

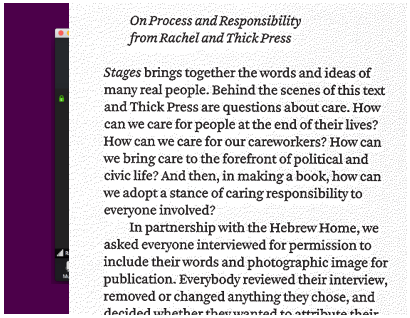
I didn't feel like that cool kid. Design was always about the artifact, less about the relating between us and the world.

I think critical graphic design still lives within these subcultures and sometimes it feels like a conversation of where you belong or don't belong. But if you belong to the edge, like most of us do, then you can think relationally, between you and not only the thing you're making, which is important, but also the person you are working with or even for... the other. I feel like that's the most radical thing we can do in design education. We can offer this framework of thinking as a gift.

Erin: And that's why we always talk about how the relationships—the collaborative process—matters SO MUCH.



As Rachel [Kauder Nalebuff] and I wrote in the "Note on Process" for *Stages*, "We believe books are as strong as their process."



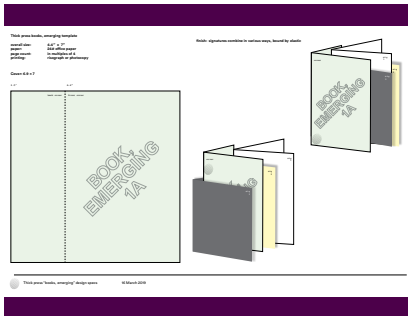
On Process and Responsibility from Rachel and Thick Press

Stages brings together the words and ideas of many real people. Behind the scenes of this text and Thick Press are questions about care. How can we care for people at the end of their lives? How can we care for our careworkers? How can we bring care to the forefront of political and civic life? And then, in making a book, how can we adopt a stance of caring responsibility to everyone involved?

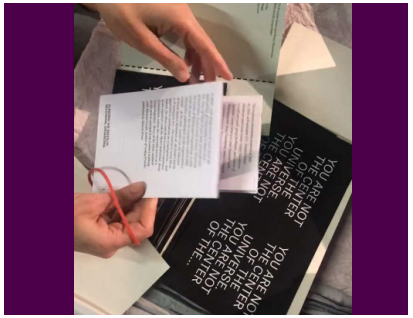
In partnership with the Hebrew Home, we asked everyone interviewed for permission to include their words and photographic image for publication. Everybody reviewed their interview, removed or changed anything they chose, and

This idea is so familiar to me, coming from group work, which is all about the group process, and not about imposing your will on the group. But when you're making an actual product that you expect people to buy, it starts to feel a bit more radical to talk about valuing process above everything else.

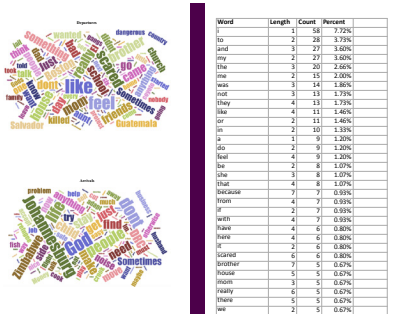
Julie: Relationality in graphic design practice speaks to a collaborative space that helps us understand the notion of practice better. It can also help us think about how the work itself is in flux—like in our *book, emerging* format where we think about intertextuality or an emerging text



that can be shuffled and reshuffled based on three distinct sizes of paper that hold three different types of text.

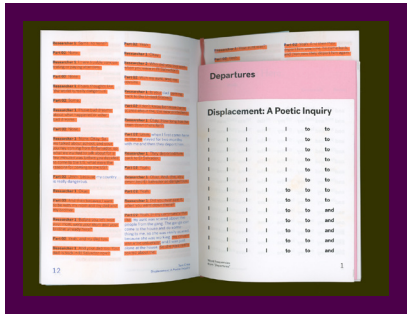


This kind of making is so nice because it goes back to notions of trust and the idea that together we can work through ideas a little more fluidly.
So in the "Displacement" *book*, *emerging*, we took this separated signature format, and Karen Hsu, my studio partner collaborated with Thomas Crea, a social work professor at Boston College, to help revisualize traditional research that he and his PhD students were conducting with refugees.



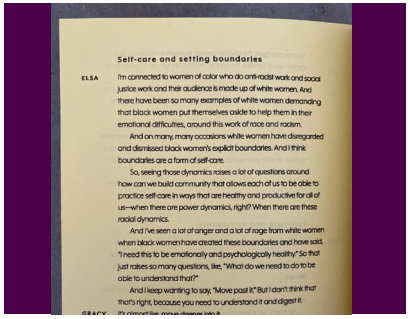
Word	Length	Count	Percent
i	1	58	7.72%
to	2	28	3.73%
and	3	27	3.60%
my	2	27	3.60%
the	3	20	2.66%
me	2	15	2.00%
was	3	14	1.86%
not	3	13	1.73%
they	4	13	1.73%
like	4	11	1.46%
or	2	11	1.46%
in	2	10	1.33%
a	1	9	1.20%
do	2	9	1.20%
feel	4	9	1.20%
be	2	8	1.07%
she	3	8	1.07%
that	4	8	1.07%
because	7	7	0.93%
from	4	7	0.93%
if	2	7	0.93%
with	4	7	0.93%
have	4	6	0.80%
here	4	6	0.80%
it	2	6	0.80%
scared	6	6	0.80%
brother	7	5	0.67%
house	5	5	0.67%
mom	3	5	0.67%
really	6	5	0.67%
there	5	5	0.67%
we	2	5	0.67%

Erin: Tom and his students were working with transcripts of interviews with migrants. Among other things, they were using software to analyze the frequency with which various words appeared in the interviews.



Julie: Karen then asked to get the raw data to use ideas of repetition to create an almost sound poem. This becomes less about IMPACT, more about lived experience. This kind of process was there to help explore alternate ways of thinking about research or an interdisciplinary research model. Tom then introduced the books to the classroom. The idea wasn't about finding a solution per se, but thinking about how design can influence content.

Erin: The sense of playfulness and the fluidity you're describing gives us permission to let go of storytelling, of nonfiction reporting—and even incorporate fragments of first-person texts into books, like we did with the interview series at the end of *selfcarefully*.

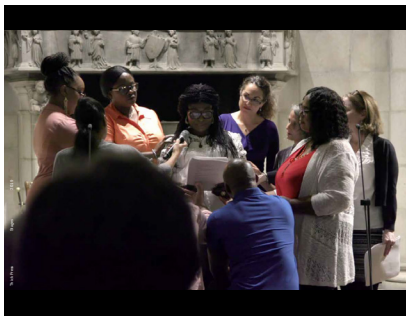


In the literary world, there's been an explosion of hybrid, genre-bending first-person literature, although most of it tends to be filtered through a primary author.

It remains to be seen whether people will actually be on board with the products—the books—that are emerging from our playful, relationship-oriented, author-blurring process... but I'm excited to see how people respond to the way that Rachel, in *Stages*, interspersed her own writing with her amazing conversations with nineteen staff members of the hospice.

Julie: I think Rachel's process was exciting to you as a social work practitioner because it dipped into some of the work you do, and recontextualized it within this creative space, with great care and intention.

I think we are still figuring out the connection between art/creativity and social work practice.



Maybe you can talk a little more about how you define social work practice in terms of relationality?

Erin: As a social worker who facilitates groups and helps people navigate social services, I consider relational practice to be all about reciprocity and connection.

Even if my role is to help somebody figure out if her rent increases are legal, I always say something like, "How is your arthritis today?" Part of my job is to solve a problem, but the connecting comes first. It also means that I focus most of my energy on group work, which I like less than casework because I find it tiring, but I believe in it, because there are just so many opportunities for relating, for connecting, for modeling care and regard,really, for manifesting democracy.

This is an image from an interview I did with Mary Ann, one of the seniors, for a book Julie and I are working on. Above all, I try to be curious and open. I try not to impose external meaning-making on the people I work with—especially when it comes to identity categories like gender and race. I can't get out from under all the social scripts, all the constructs that inform my interactions with my client, but at least I can practice self-awareness, which we call reflexivity.

Reflexivity
=
"human capacity to consider ourselves in relation to our contexts; and our contexts in relation to ourselves"

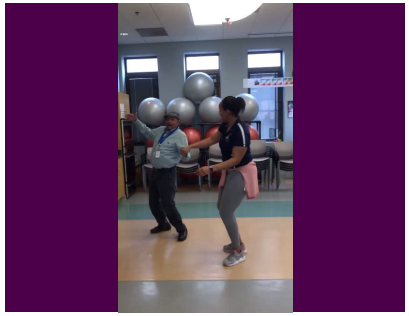
—Longhofer and Floersch, 2012. p. 513

I can recognize that the work is changing me, perhaps benefitting me. That brings me away from the idea that I am a savior—and that atomistic, it's-all-about-me notion of self.

Julie: I think the savior complex is super interesting because that is something that we question or talk about in creating a form around a lot of the content we produce. What does it mean to make books of others' lived experiences? The idea that a book is not closed but open and relational helps us understand our role in the process. And that idea that a book as object is relational but then there is the idea that the process leading up to it is relational as well brings me to past conversations we've had about me questioning the idea of "generosity" in relationality.

Erin: Like, when I see myself in the other, when I understand that there is no bounded self, what are the implications of that interconnectedness?

To some extent, there emerges an imperative to serve generously, to care, to give of ourselves to others.



Especially when we start with that pre-cognitive sense of interconnectedness, and then fill it in with our knowledge of a history of colonialism, racism, and gender oppression. I think that when you and I talk about generous practice, we're talking about that imperative to care... But while we're defining relationality, I think it's important to explain that generosity is not the same thing as relationality. Gracy teaches us that self-care is all about setting boundaries—for example, not saying yes to everything, having the self-integrity to speak out when, upon reflection, we don't agree with somebody. We can set

boundaries and still practice relationally. In those situations, we are practicing relationally simply because we are thinking about and naming the dynamics between self and other.

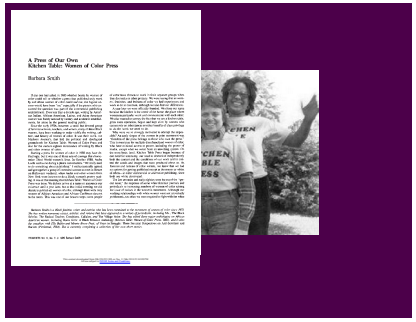
Julie: I think it's also complicated when experiencing relationality through the lens of identity—race, class, gender. So, for example, when mentioning the boundary-setting brought up in *selfcarefully*, I can't help but think that the "us" you mention is women.

Erin: Because you and I—and so many women we know—need help with boundaries, right?

And because Gracy has consciously adopted a big sister tone in the book?

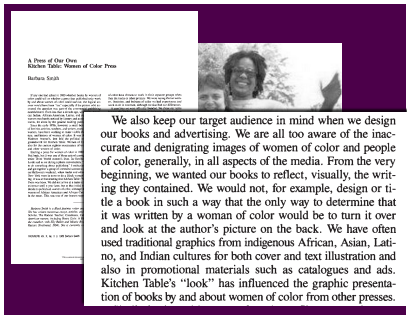
Julie: Exactly. As a designer, it makes me think of the work of Kitchen Table Press,

which was created by Barbara Smith of the Combahee River Collective. They created this press in the 1980s as a way to combat mainstream publishing's lack of representation of women of color. She wrote this piece to discuss the press' story and mission.


A Press of Our Own
Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press

Barbara Smith

As a designer, I am most drawn to this part of her text about how the graphic design functions for them:


A Press of Our Own
Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press

Barbara Smith

We also keep our target audience in mind when we design our books and advertising. We are all too aware of the inaccurate and denigrating images of women of color and people of color, generally, in all aspects of the media. From the very beginning, we wanted our books to reflect, visually, the writing they contained. We would not, for example, design or title a book in such a way that the only way to determine that it was written by a woman of color would be to turn it over and look at the author's picture on the back. We have often used traditional graphics from indigenous African, Asian, Latino, and Indian cultures for both cover and text illustration and also in promotional materials such as catalogues and ads. Kitchen Table's "look" has influenced the graphic presentation of books by and about women of color from other presses.

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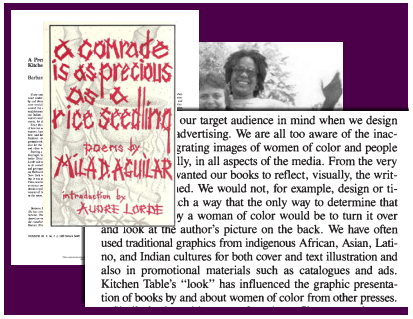
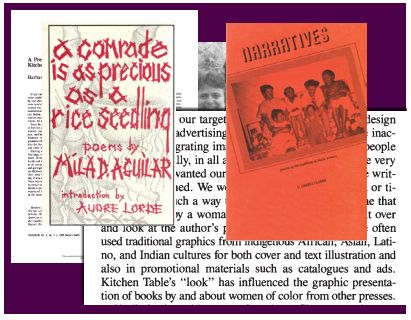


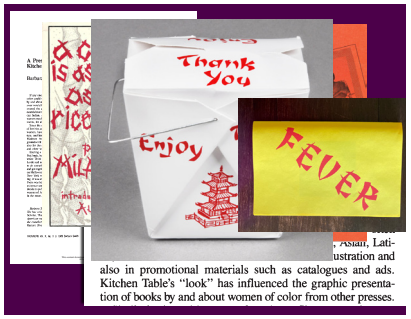


for both cover and text illustration and also in promotional materials such as catalogues and ads. Kitchen Table's "look" has influenced the graphic presentation of books by and about women of color from other presses." All these book covers were designed by designer Susan Yung.

This quote is so interesting in 2019, because it also butts up against the dangerous path of appropriation.

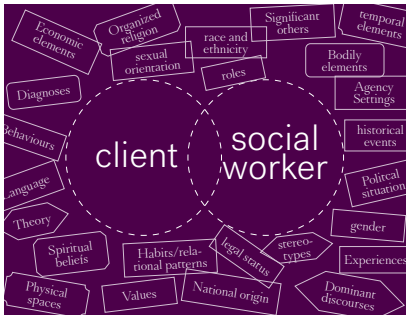
And I think the questions that I have are, how do we make connections or create spaces of fusion while recognizing or being aware of issues of appropriation. I think part of the answer is to determine how these case studies work for or against systems of power and oppression. This yellow zine, designed by Karen Hsu, a Chinese-American identifying female, re-appropriates the ubiquitous Chinese takeout

container typography and imbues it with meaning and power.

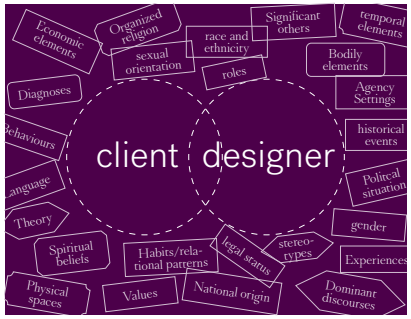


Erin: And to help us figure that out, we can focus on relationality, which reminds us that fluid, socially constructed categories (race, class, gender, ability) infuse EVERYTHING. They ARE the matrix.

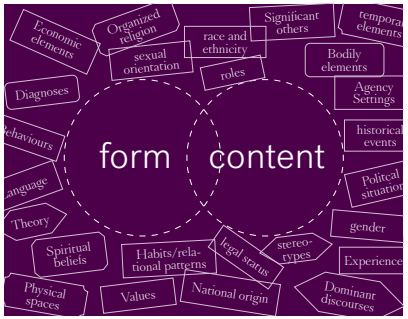
Julie: And we both exist in so many matrices—client/social worker,



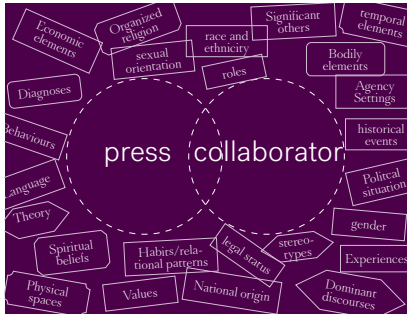
client/designer;



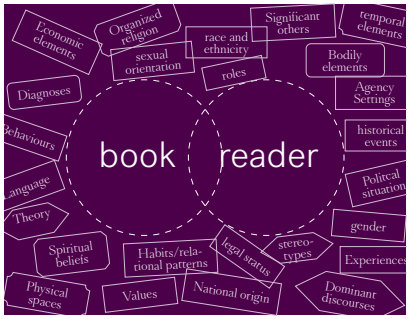
form/content;



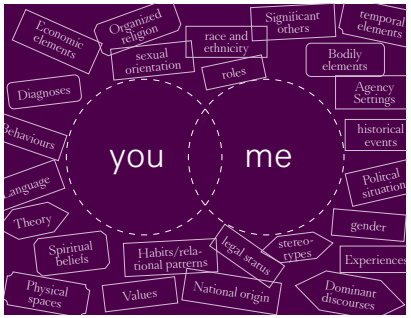
press/collaborator;



book/reader,

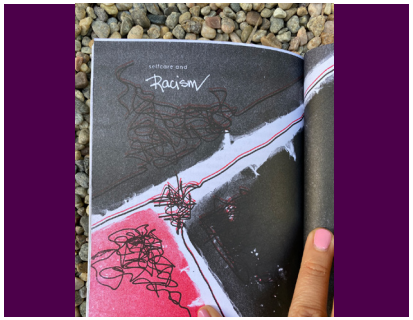


you/me, [pointing to the audience], you/me.

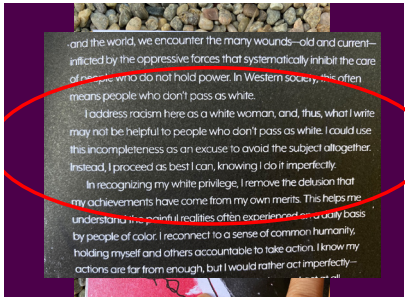


Erin: So during the editing of *selfcarefully*, we were very much guided by the relational idea that Gracy could only speak from her own social location, and that no matter how many caveats we put in, no matter how "woke" we became, there would be times when things Gracy wrote, things I edited, wouldn't sit quite right with readers in different bodies. That was how it was going to be, and we had to proceed bravely, hanging onto the idea (or the ideal) that it's possible—and important—to connect across different identity categories.

Julie: It's like that line in "self-care and racism" where Gracy says:



"I address racism here as a white woman, and, thus, what I write may not be helpful to people who don't pass as white. I could use this incompleteness as an excuse to avoid the subject altogether. Instead, I proceed as best I can, knowing I do it imperfectly."



Erin: I love that she says "pass as white," because I think here Gracy is hinting at this idea of identity as fluid and socially

constructed—the threshold thing. And somehow that move—which is very relational! —makes me feel hopeful about the possibility of dismantling structural racism.

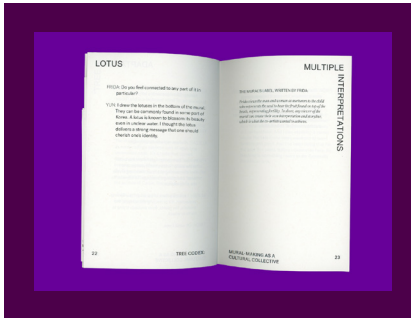
Julie: When we were working on the *book, emerging* "Tree Codex," with Frida [Larios] we also had similar conversations about how identity plays a part in graphic design and also in her process of making the mural.

Frida's work centers around an adaptation of the Mayan alphabet that she created in collaboration with a community in Honduras. As an indigenous activist, artist, and educator from El Salvador, Frida is particularly interested in how the glyphs create a kind of universal language. She worked with a group of students at the Carlos Rosarios International Public Charter School to create a mural based on these forms.

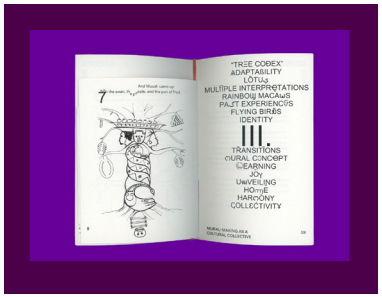
This conversation is documented in "Tree Codex." And the book was intended to document this process.

Erin: And in working with Frida to turn that process into Tree Codex, a challenge became: how do we hang onto the really beautiful hope for universal connection, how do we focus on inclusion and diversity—WITHOUT avoiding what we know to be true about oppression related to gender, race, class, and ability? And not just with respect to content, of course, but design-wise, too.

Julie: I think that whole design process was super-interesting in that it brought up so much design angst for me. Like, how do I make something for another designer? How do I communicate a kind of diversity without falling into the racist tropes of appropriation, or how do I even push against those things, too?



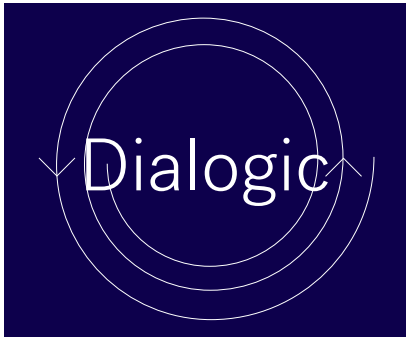
We had that one interesting conversation between us, where I was making choices to use Arial Unicode, which has one of the largest set of language characters represented but is traditionally seen as a default, unintentional choice because it lives on all our computers—and Frida wanted me to use something warmer or "more beautiful." She was pushing against what she perceived as "cold," where I was pushing against that very feeling she was having, wondering, "Why do we even need to have these assessments? What makes one person think something is cold vs warm or pretty vs ugly?"



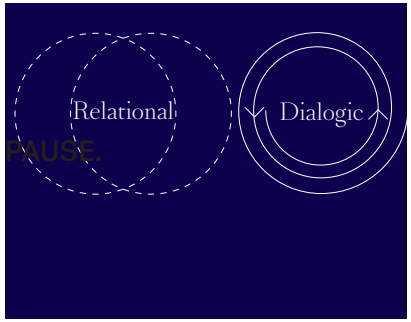
You and I then talked about how that particular *book, emerging* was partly intended to be a gift for the students. That making something for someone sometimes is about making something beautiful and not just about exercising a personal agenda. And I realized that that would be obnoxious. I always circle back to the notion of, what kind of book would I make for my parents? Or grandparents? Who don't know another language? What is that balance? I think when

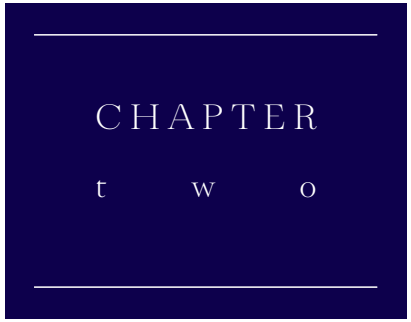
we talk about universality now, it's not about one language for ALL... this is problematic. If I design one kind of system we know now that someone, some group will inevitably be left out. I keep thinking or circling back to the process... and how do we allow for more conversation, margins of error? Spaces to fuck up, and to "practice resilience" as Gracy says in her book.

Erin: And the act of allowing for more conversations, more space to fuck up, and then to seek repair—that relates to our second word, DIALOGIC.



But first let's take a little pause for questions and reflections about relationality.





Julie: I became familiar with the idea of dialogic pedagogy from you and have reflected on it so much in my own practice.

Erin: I always think of the phrase "music and lyrics" when I think of our collaboration as dialogic. I don't know if that's even a real phrase

Julie: maybe just the title of a Hugh Grant movie

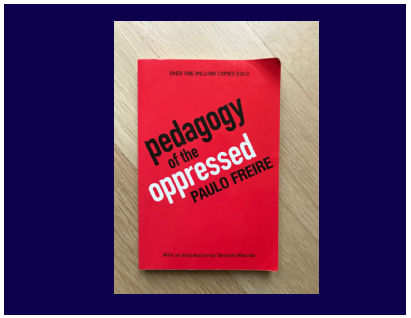
Erin: but it always pops into my head, and then I think "image and words." Somehow it helps me articulate my ideas so much better when you're asking me to text you photos from the senior center, or photos of the books I'm reading. . .and then when I see the words typeset, or I see the words you choose to highlight, or the way you graphically represent an idea, the ideas evolve, and then that new content keeps informing the design, and the design the content...

Julie: So dialogic practice is about an emergent practice of design, where answers aren't "fixed" and we're not "solving problems." Rather, we are co-creating through iteration where visual message and language/meaning converge. It also is about figuring out ways to disseminate the books that are not necessarily fixed either (going back to your hatred of all things marketing!).

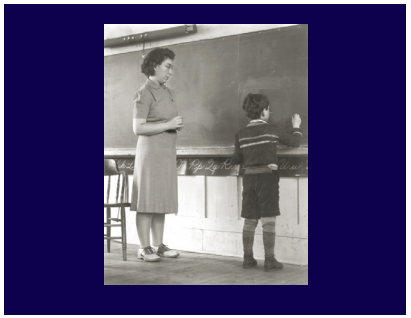
Erin: Right!

Julie: What is a good definition of dialogic pedagogy for you, in terms of your work?

Erin: I guess for me, I can't talk about dialogic work without talking about the Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire.



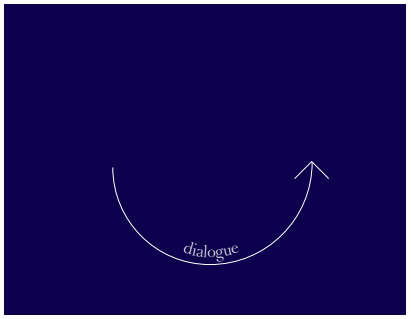
He was alarmed by what he called the "banking" model of education, where the role of the teacher is to "fill" the student with knowledge, just as one would fill a container with water.

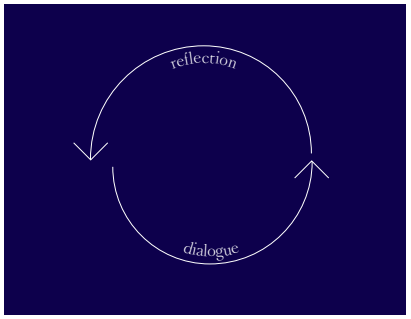


To him, "banking" objectified students, reinforcing oppression.

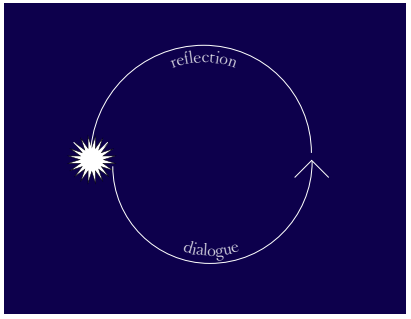
The way out, he believed, was through reflection in dialogue

with others.

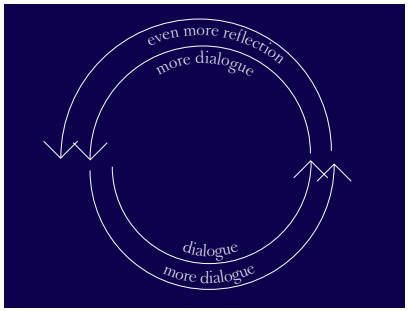




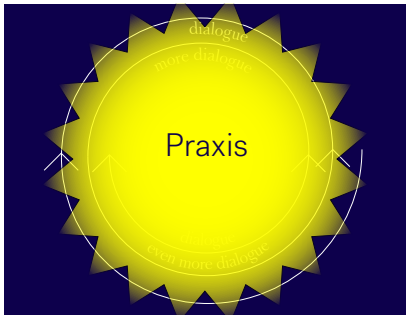
And reflections would lead to action,



which would then lead to more reflection.



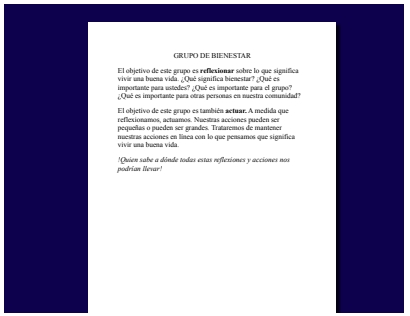
He called this praxis.



And in order to initiate reflective dialogue among the participants of his "culture circles" in the favelas of Brazil, he started with images. The groups then had conversations, and before they knew it, the members were seeing themselves as producers of culture—and they were reading.

Julie: Can you talk about the process of how your conversations with the seniors led to praxis (am I even using this term correctly?)

Erin: Totally, although in some ways my conversations with the seniors didn't lead to praxis in the traditional sense. I started a Freireian group with a few Spanish-speaking members of the Center.



GRUPO DE BIENESTAR

El objetivo de este grupo es **reflexionar** sobre lo que significa vivir una buena vida. ¿Qué significa bienestar? ¿Qué es importante para ustedes? ¿Qué es importante para el grupo? ¿Qué es importante para otras personas en nuestra comunidad?

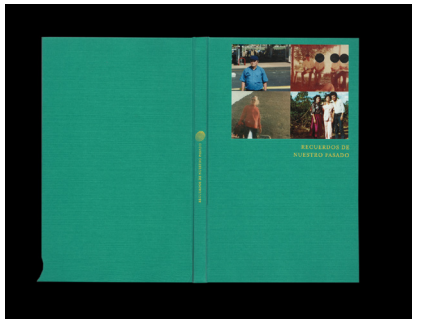
El objetivo de este grupo es también **actuar.** A medida que reflexionamos, actuamos. Nuestras acciones pueden ser pequeñas o pueden ser grandes. Trataremos de mantener nuestras acciones en línea con lo que pensamos que significa vivir una buena vida.

¿Quien sabe a dónde todas estas reflexiones y acciones nos podrían llevar?

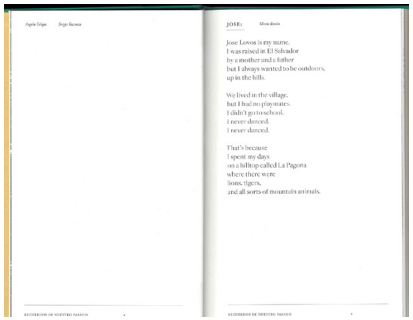
The idea was to define human flourishing and see what actions arose from our conversations. We had great conversations, but the seniors were basically like, "We're old, we've worked hard, we want to rest. Reflection is action." The group ended, and the wise program director was like, "You have this relationship with these people. And it feels important to keep it up. So how about engage in some memoir-collecting with them." She said this because the English-speakers had access to help with memoirs, but the Spanish-speakers didn't, and there is always a lot of talk at the Center about how to make the Center's various offerings more equitable.

So I started another group where we told stories for four months, and then at the end of the group, I recorded each person's story, transcribed it, and put it in a report cover.

The stories were so GOOD that I felt like we should do something with them.



Julie: **Do you mind if I read a little from the book?**



JOSE:

Jose Lovon is my nurse.
I was raised in El Salvador
by a mother and a father
but I always wanted to be outdoors,
up in the hills.

We lived in the village,
but I had no playmates.
I didn't go to school.
I never danced.
I never danced.

That's because
I spent my days
on a hilltop called La Pagona
where there were
lions, tigers,
and all sorts of mountain animals.

Erin: **But before we made the book you and I ended up in the desert...**

Julie: **... and I told you about the small press world and my experience making books with individuals who eschew the traditional publishing models. We thought about making a book and trying to publish it with one of those groups, but then we decided that we should start our own press. Also, do you remember that we also reflected on how we couldn't have started this press immediately after school? That we had to WORK before getting to this point also. That part of the dialogic space is also all the experience and living—the praxis!—we had to do to get to this point. We had to be over 40. Ha!**

Erin: **And so in this totally unexpected way, this book we all made together—and the distribution of this book—became the action that, upon reflection, we performed. And now, bizarrely, it's in an installation in the MoMa, which of course is good for our egos, but the seniors really couldn't care less; for them, the crowning moment**

You Are Invited!

Stories into Books:
Memoirs from the Bernice Fonteneau Senior Wellness Center

The Bernice Fonteneau Senior Wellness Center cordially invites you to the launch of the memoirs of 15 of its members.

These collected memoirs, compiled in two different books, take us through a journey of unique and inspiring life experiences.

Join us for this special event!

What: Launch '*Stories into Books*'
When: Thursday, July 19, 2018
10 am - 11:30 am
Where: Petworth Library
4200 Kansas Ave NW,
Washington, DC 20011

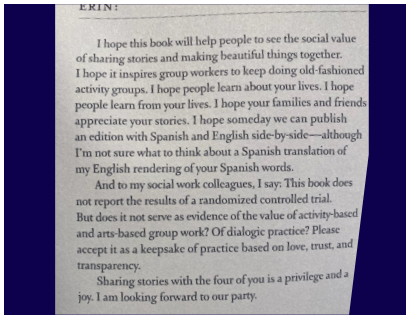
Please RSVP by July 13, 2018
at bbwcenter@gmail.com

was the book reading at their public library with their family members and some DC "dignitaries" present.

You could maybe say that the praxis that happened was between you and me. The seniors had made a very deliberate decision to go along for the ride, to allow somebody else to tell their life stories in the way they wanted to be viewed by the world, which was sometimes at odds with how I see the American Dream. The imperative to "decolonize"—whatever that means—is very powerful, and I did so much hand-wringing about whether I was stealing the seniors' stories, whether I was acting like a colonist,

Julie: **and then you wrote so beautifully in your process piece at the end of Recuerdos:**

"I stopped worrying when I remembered that we are always borrowing from each other, absorbing each other, taking each other in. You have given me voice, and I have found a forum for you to share pieces of your lives, and, as Gloria says, "we've shared so much together."



ERIN:

I hope this book will help people to see the social value of sharing stories and making beautiful things together. I hope it inspires group workers to keep doing old-fashioned activity groups. I hope people learn about your lives. I hope people learn from your lives. I hope your families and friends appreciate your stories. I hope someday we can publish an edition with Spanish and English side-by-side—although I'm not sure what to think about a Spanish translation of my English rendering of your Spanish words.

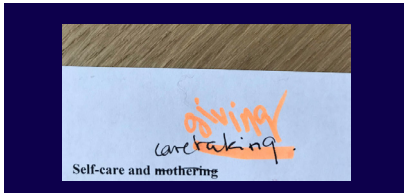
And to my social work colleagues, I say: This book does not report the results of a randomized controlled trial. But does it not serve as evidence of the value of activity-based and arts-based group work? Of dialogic practice? Please accept it as a keepsake of practice based on love, trust, and transparency.

Sharing stories with the four of you is a privilege and a joy. I am looking forward to our party.

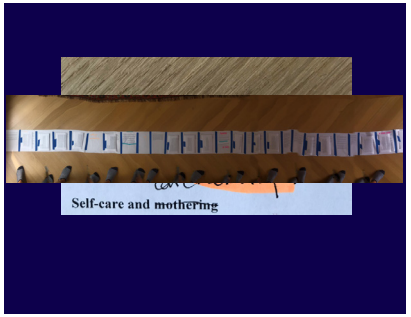
Erin: **And that relational, dialogic spirit that informed that first project is something we draw on in every single project, where we try to be super open-minded and see what emerges from our very specific collaborations with very specific others. Like, when Gracy and I came up with the list of topics related to self-care,**

Selfcare and fucking it all up
Selfcare and consumerism
Selfcare and the change of seasons
Selfcare and setting boundaries
Selfcare and soaking grains
Selfcare and vulnerability
Selfcare and perfectionism
Selfcare and kaizen
Selfcare and intimacy
Selfcare and eating a good lunch
Selfcare and reparenting yourself
Selfcare and oil
Selfcare and social anxiety
Selfcare and consumption
Selfcare and the sunrise
Selfcare and caregiving
Selfcare and the patriarchy
Selfcare and friendships
Selfcare and body image
Selfcare and your tongue
Selfcare and burn out
Selfcare and bedtime
Selfcare and the shadow
Selfcare and wanting to help
Selfcare and holding space
Selfcare and leadership
Selfcare and time to play
Selfcare and racism
Selfcare and the moon
Selfcare and community

you and I were thinking of it in a very textual way, like, this index of topics. But you encouraged me to let Maria do whatever she wanted—because you are envisioning Thick Press as a utopia for all designers, not a place for you to realize your vision! And Maria—who is totally on board with our emergent process—led Gracy and me in a session where we sort of free-associated about each topic.



And then we had another session where we laid all the topics on the floor to figure out the order .

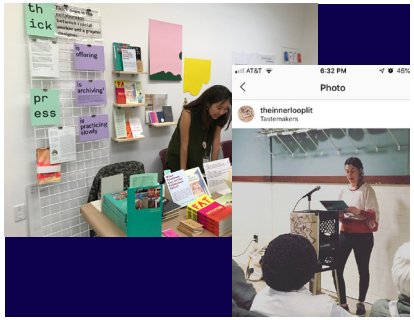


And then Maria went away for a little while—because we've realized that part of collaboration entails retreating, temporarily—and she came back with these incredibly soulful illustrations

unlike anything we could have possibly imagined...

Julie: totally... it's a kind of dialogic design process. I love it.

Erin: And the dissemination, too, becomes a site of praxis, where we act, we reflect, and then we act some more.
Like, it became clear that art book fairs



and website sales alone A) wouldn't offer us enough opportunities to disseminate our books and B) wouldn't allow us to reach people who don't know about the whole world of artist publishing. We reflected,

and then we decided to distribute our books through Small Press Distribution,

even though we had no idea how we were going to make the numbers work. And we STILL have no idea, but we're doing it, and we're doing it slowly, with just two books, soon three. If people buy from Amazon, we lose money! But we're trying the whole distribution thing, anyway, because we want to be able to hold readings at bookstores, we want our books to infiltrate the stream of commerce, even though we don't think of them as commodities. So, we're seeing where it all leads.

Julie: Dissemination is always a struggle for us, and I am acknowledging that you take on so much of that burden! I think as independent publishers, what is challenging is that we are not necessarily a PRESS, even though it's in our name.

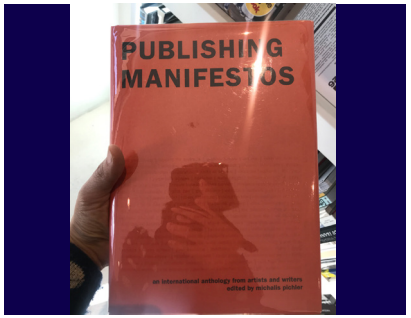
Many presses are part printer, part publisher. We don't control the means of production like many indie presses do who actually make their books in-house. But I think the idea of a press controlling all parts is actually not very dialogic/relational. We are emphasizing collaboration. And in that way, we sort of live between a more traditional publisher who makes literary books, and a renegade, art press who can make a zine and not care about how it is marketed/distributed.

Erin: And I love that we can be kind of hybrid: we have the major titles, where we play with more traditional modes of distribution, and then we have the zine-like *books, emerging* where we don't have to deal with anything we don't want to deal with. No money changes hands with collaborators, we sell them only for printing cost. But don't you feel like we're learning more from disseminating the more traditional books?

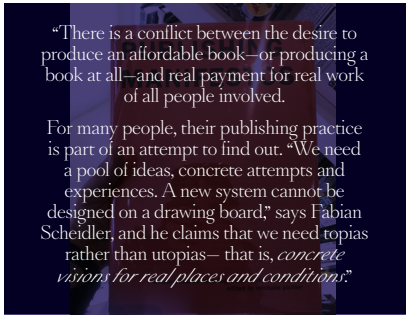
Julie: I joke that what is radical for me at this point in my career is that we are dipping into very traditional spaces of literary publishing, something I am not accustomed to. The idea that

we have to design/write press releases or print advance review copies or to make sure we need to send the books out to media outlets at least 4 months ahead of publishing is all new to me.

This more traditional space again goes back to the "who does what" and "how do folks get compensated for this work?" At the end of the introduction to the publishing manifesto book,



the editor writes:



"There is a conflict between the desire to produce an affordable book—or producing a book at all—and real payment for real work of all people involved. For many people, their publishing practice is part of an attempt to find out. "We need a pool of ideas, concrete attempts and experiences. A new system cannot be designed on a drawing board," says Fabian Scheidler, and he claims that we need topias rather than utopias—that is, concrete visions for real places and conditions."
—Publishing Manifestos

Julie: So I think this description of "concrete visions" leads us to our last word, SLOW.

Erin: I think we started using this word when I read an editorial by Yoosun Park and two other editors of a feminist social work journal called *Affilia*. They were concerned that the structures of academia don't support scholarship that pushes the envelope. They cite an article


ACME

**For Slow Scholarship:
A Feminist Politics of Resistance through Collective Action in the Neoliberal University**

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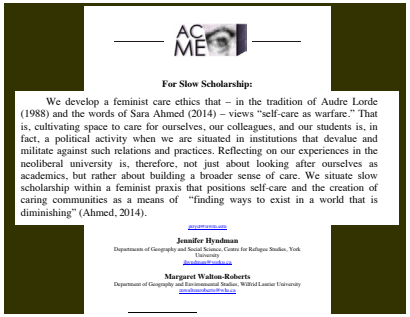
by a collective of geographers about the "slow scholarship" movement, which critiques


ACME

For Slow Scholarship:

We develop a feminist care ethics that – in the tradition of Audre Lorde (1988) and the words of Sara Ahmed (2014) – views "self-care as warfare." That is, cultivating space to care for ourselves, our colleagues, and our students is, in fact, a political activity when we are situated in institutions that devalue and militate against such relations and practices. Reflecting on our experiences in the neoliberal university is, therefore, not just about looking after ourselves as academics, but rather about building a broader sense of care. We situate slow scholarship within a feminist praxis that positions self-care and the creation of caring communities as a means of "finding ways to exist in a world that is diminishing" (Ahmed, 2014).

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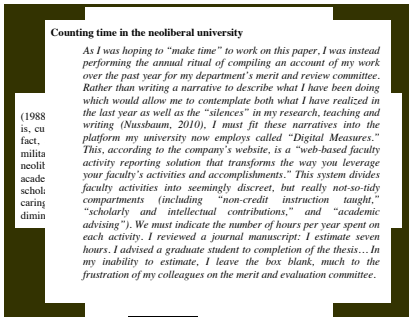
the neoliberal university's focus on productivity, and describes "slowing down"—waiting to answer emails, prioritizing family life, taking time to think—as a form of resistance.

Julie: Could we just take a quick second and define neoliberalism?


Counting time in the neoliberal university

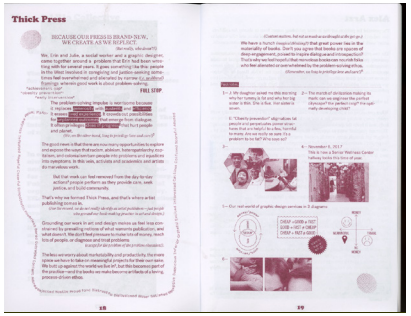
As I was hoping to "make time" to work on this paper, I was instead performing the annual ritual of compiling an account of my work over the past year for my department's merit and review committee. Rather than writing a narrative to describe what I have been doing which would allow me to contemplate both what I have realized in the last year as well as the "silences" in my research, teaching and writing (Nussbaum, 2010), I must fit these narratives into the platform my university now employs called "Digital Measures." This, according to the company's website, is a "web-based faculty activity reporting solution that transforms the way you leverage your faculty's activities and accomplishments." This system divides faculty activities into seemingly discreet, but really not-so-tidy compartments (including "non-credit instruction taught," "scholarly and intellectual contributions," and "academic advising"). We must indicate the number of hours per year spent on each activity. I reviewed a journal manuscript: I estimate seven hours. I advised a graduate student to completion of the thesis… In my inability to estimate, I leave the box blank, much to the frustration of my colleagues on the merit and evaluation committee.

Erin: So the slow scholarship geographers, in talking about neoliberalism, are starting with social structures: with the way that tenure works, with the way that business logic influences how universities operate. Like, the purpose of the university is less about the kind of dialogic, relational learning we've been talking about, and more about preparing a workforce. And for professors, tenure depends on metrics like how many articles you publish, or the scores of your student evaluations.

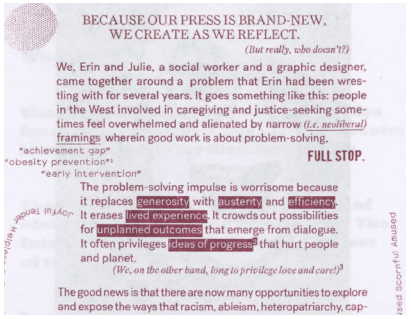
Julie: And you've talked a lot about the neoliberalization of care work, too.

Erin: That's something I've seen firsthand. I think it has accelerated over the course of my two decades as a social worker, but really this has

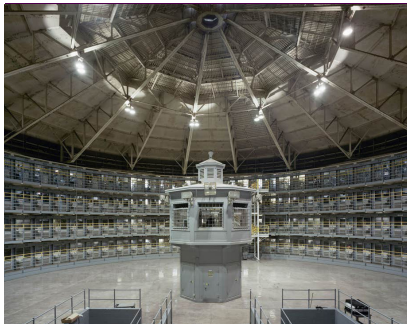
been a theme since the 19th century. We talked about it in that manifesto thing we did for Temporary Services.



Julie: Let me read a little bit from it: The problem-solving impulse is worrisome because it replaces generosity with austerity and efficiency. It erases lived experience. It crowds out possibilities for unplanned outcomes that emerge from dialogue. It often privileges ideas of progress that hurt people and planet.



Erin: Yeah, under neoliberalism, human services should be short-term and cost-effective. Care workers must be monitored to ensure that they are engaging in "best practices."



Care work becomes about fixing problems, not about moving resources to people or supporting them in their journey.

Julie: And what's that like for care workers?

Erin: I think people who go into care work are generally loving gentle folks who want to help people. But in the field, there's all this oversight, "quality control." Workers find themselves drowning in paperwork.

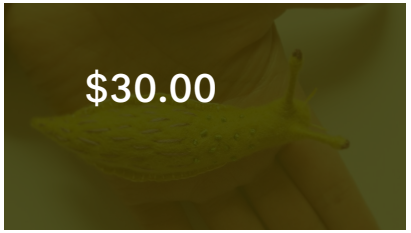
They can't get resources for their clients because there aren't enough supports like affordable housing. Or their clients are struggling with bills, but they're making slightly too much money to qualify for various benefits. Or they need long-term therapy to help them heal, but their insurance only covers a certain number of sessions of behavioral health services. So here you are, a caring person, who can't help people as much as you would like to. And you're spending time on all this stuff that doesn't feel like care. You feel alienated. You feel burnt out.

You need a beautiful book like *selfcarefully* in your life—but you don't even know you need it!

Julie: I think the idea of burnout is so real. I think that's why I was so excited about working on this project with you. That there needed to be a space to not have to be on deadline all the time (although we do have deadlines) OR that the feeling that you are working and working and working and at the end of the day, there are so many times when you just feel like the middle-person. Not that that is a bad thing, but that is where burnout can happen. When you work small or slow, things FEEL different.

Erin: Things feel more sacred. Softer. But I think when we talk about slowness, it's important to avoid being too precious. I always think about that that felted animal you saw at an art book fair?

Julie: It was a slug, and it was like this big, and it was $30 or something, at which I gasped.

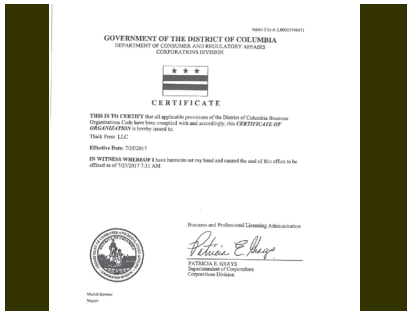


But she said that it took her a bajillion hours to felt the slug...

Erin: And it became a symbol of not fetishizing slowness, even though we sometimes see beauty in it...

Julie: But also, when that happened, we were laughing. I was laughing, because I was like, "This is the metaphor of our practice," like, "How are we going to be sustainable? Financially sustainable?"

Erin: And I feel like we have that conversation ALL THE TIME. We apply for funding, which we don't usually get. People are like, "What's your business plan?" And I'm like, "Well, we practice dialogically, so we're making it up as we go. And by the way, even though we're an LLC, we're not a business!!!"


GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AND REGULATORY AFFAIRS
CORPORATIONS DIVISION

CERTIFICATE

THIS IS TO CERTIFY that all applicable provisions of the District of Columbia Business Organizations Code have been complied with and accordingly, this CERTIFICATE OF ORGANIZATION is hereby issued to:

Thick Press LLC

Effective Date: 7/25/2017

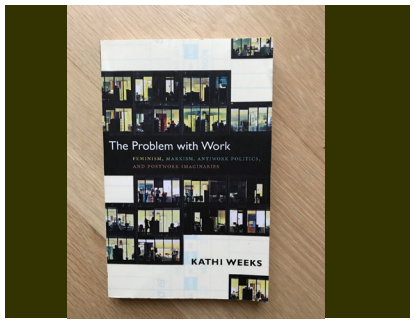
IN WITNESS WHEREOF I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of this office to be affixed as of 7/27/2017 7:31 AM

Business and Professional Licensing Administration

PATRICIA E. GRAYS
Superintendent of Corporations
Corporations Division

Julie: But then there is this feeling of "is this a hobby," or the feedback from my mom "Julie doesn't like to make money."

Erin: And I keep saying, we need to resist the urge to measure the seriousness or worthiness of our endeavor in terms of money. I am SO committed to the feminist post-work ideal of spending less time on wage labor or a singular career, and more time on caregiving, civic work, creative pursuits, and self-care.



That's how I aspire to live my life, and I have this perhaps magical conviction that if more people who are in a position to embrace slowness actually do it, then something in our culture will shift. I guess you could choose to live your life that way, too, because like me, you have the financial means...

Julie: Very true. I often feel insecure about scale or working small because I've been brought up with the notion that success equals working big. But I am learning to push against those feelings.

IT'S A VERY INSATIABLE FEELING.

It's a very insatiable feeling, sadly and is fueled by my second generation-ness that I need to prove myself or be seen in some ways, by being a woman, but also a rampant individualism that is in our world.

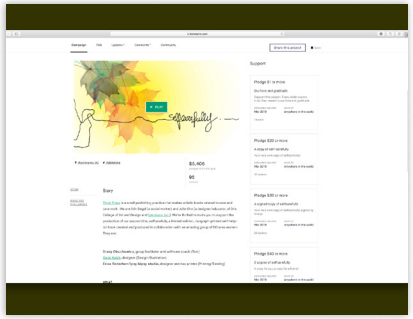
I think saying YES and embracing opportunity is GOOD, but when it starts feeling insatiable, it becomes complicated and tiring. I also want to note that I have the luxury of saying no to things because we are a 2-income household, whereas my partners are in different kinds of economic situations. Their YES is also complicated by other things. If you choose to live in a city and have a family and choose to take on the projects that we do, you HAVE to say yes to many things in order to financially sustain a life.

Erin: And because we want people to say YES to Thick Press projects, too, and we recognize that different people are in different financial situations, we haven't been one-size-fits-all about things like design or artist fees. For the major titles, we've had dialogue with each collaborator about money expectations, and we've been super-transparent and collaborative about contracts.

Julie: Totally. I think those are very difficult conversations. I think also there is the realization that we can't and or perhaps don't even want to make a profit off of these books. And we do have questions of who takes on the burden of production cost... is it the buyer? The publisher?

Private or public funding?

Erin: **And we've sort of landed on a combination of all, as well as crowdfunding.**

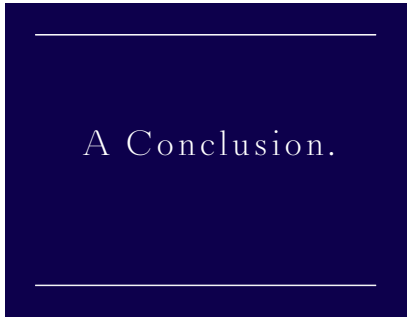


And what makes it all possible is this idea that if we do less, then we have fewer bills to pay. Small and slow allows us to operate the press on a shoestring.

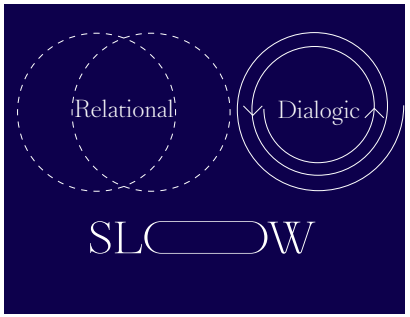
And I think the books themselves benefit from small and slow, too—I love that there are collaborators who we just keep checking in with, over many months, now years, and our ideas develop, and their work and our work forms in dialogue with the other work we're doing. It's kind of how I feel about my kids' dentist,

whom we see twice a year every year. And our relationships with them deepen, slowly over time. It's an amazing way to live a life.

Julie: **I think of the long-game always.**



Erin: **It's funny, I'm not very chatty, but somehow, when I'm in dialogue with you, I feel like I could go on and on. But I guess it's time to wrap up our talk about our relational, dialogic, slow publishing practice.**



Julie: **In the spirit of books as open, as relational, we're going to end with some open-ended questions for you to think about. I think we have a few minutes left if you have all have questions or anything to share.**