



The Role of the Photography Book in Your Career

Part III in our continuing series prepares you to submit work to a short list of potential publishers. By **MARY VIRGINIA SWANSON** and our Editor, **DARIUS HIMES**

IN OUR LAST ARTICLE, we asked you, the photographer, to begin a process of inquiry into the role a photography book could play in your career. Research is the cornerstone to that process and to those ends we asked publishers themselves to talk about their vision and project acquisition methods. Those publisher profiles continue at the end of this article.

As your research advances, you will undoubtedly identify a select handful of publishers that you would like to approach. The discussion at hand will do two things. First, help you prepare a packet to be sent to this 'short list' of potential publishers, and secondly, point you in the right direction for meeting publishers face to face.

The packet of materials you send to a publisher is their first encounter with you and your work. As you've seen from the publisher profiles, submissions come in many forms, but most publishers want a coherent project that is easily viewed and presents an awareness of the audience and marketplace.

There is no one formula for submitting your work to a publisher for consideration. Every company will have its own review procedures, and we encourage you to follow their stated submission guidelines to the letter. They may not want to be responsible for a box of 80 original museum-quality prints, for example. It is likely that whomever you submit your work to will not be the final decision maker, so submitting something that can be easily shared with colleagues is imperative. While we recommend a CD-ROM for most cases, again, check the stated guidelines of publishers.

Keep the following points in mind: a website may work fine for a "first look," but it may not be to your advantage if ultimately a group of 10 must gather around a small computer screen to enter into a dialogue about your project. While some publishers will welcome a book dummy or other form of book mock-up, complete with layout and design considerations in place, know that this creative phase of a project is often the most interesting for

Starting from the far left: detail from *Judy, Mt. Sterling, Kentucky*, by Joan Lifftin, published in *Drive-ins*, Trolley Books, 2004. Detail from *Study 5, 1984*, by Michael Kenna, published in *Real/Life Power Station*, Nazraeli Press, 2004. Detail from *Bernice, Louisiana. Population 1,809*, by Paul Shambroom, published in *Meetings*, Chris Boot, 2004. Detail of *Valley of the Shadow of Death, 1855*, published in *Roger Fenton*, by Yale University Press, 2004.

the publisher. Being flexible and open to changes is something you should communicate from the outset.

If you have had your work seen in print previously—in magazine, exhibition catalogue or book format—be sure to let your targeted list of publishers know that. Exposure in any of these formats helps build name and image recognition among the industry. These pieces, along with exhibition announcements, an artist statement, and critical reviews of your work should be included with your submission materials. Be sure to clearly indicate which, if any, of the materials you provide may be retained, and which must be returned (provide SASE; do not use stamps if package weighs over 16 ounces). The materials you allow them to keep on file should be easy to store and serve as visual reminders of your project, with your contact information readily accessible within.

And remember, once you submit the work, do not call, email or otherwise pursue a reaction to the submission; have patience with the process. You don't want to be remembered for your lack of courtesy—you want to be remembered for the strength of the work.

WHERE TO MEET PUBLISHERS

Attending an event where you can meet the publishers personally affords you the opportunity to begin a relationship which could result in a contract. Portfolio review events are a terrific opportunity for you to meet face-to-face with publishers and have a 20-minute meeting about your project. Review Santa Fe, in New Mexico (www.santafecenterforphotography.org, deadline for application February 11, 2005 event dates July 8-10, 2005), has traditionally had a strong showing of American publishers, while FotoFest, in Houston, offers a broad range of international publishers (www.fotofest.org, event dates March 2006). A favorite event in England is the Rhubarb International Festival of the Image (www.rhubarb-rhubarb.net, Birmingham, July 2005), a must if you feel your work would have an audience in Europe.

Do your homework before attending the event by visiting the websites of publishing industry reviewers and look at their products first-hand. Again, make a 'short list' of who you would like to speak with. Don't forget that your photography career should be multifaceted; try to speak with a range of professionals in addition to publishers. Remember, it is your responsibility to follow up with your new contacts and to keep the relationship alive.

Our next installment will deal exclusively with the elements of a contract, followed by an article on promotion of your title before and after the finished product is in your hands. Lastly, we will present case studies with photographers and their books.

SURVEY THE FIELD OF PUBLISHERS

Gigi Gianuzzi, Founder/Publisher of Trolley Books

Vision: We give voice to artistic vision, bringing issues and work of historical importance that might otherwise go unnoticed to the public attention. Integrity, for the work, and quality, for the books, are our two main guidelines.

Audience: Our audience consists of people with a curiosity about what is really happening in the world, and that includes photography, art, design and politics.

Quantity: We publish about 10 books per year. An average print run is 3000 copies but this varies according to publication and the potential for sales.

Acquiring Titles: There is no specific procedure for submission. I prefer to look at very raw material, often looking at work that hasn't been edited. This gives me the chance to work quite closely with the artist and the book designer from the very beginning all the way through to the end of the project.

Future Projects: In the next six months we will be publishing 5 books: *Cycles* by Ilkka Uimonen, a breathless set of photos about life in Palestine by the Magnum photographer Uimonen. A book by Carrie Levy entitled *51 Months* which focuses on a daughter's relationship with her imprisoned father and his consequent absence in the home. *The God Particle* by Nick Waplington. Our first photographic book with Waplington tackles the subject of high level physics and the search for Higgs' so-called God Particle. *A Journey in Sight* by Jarret Schecter. Our second book with Jarret is a documentary about problems faced in the Third World, particularly in Africa in regards to the lack of medicine available to treat easily curable strains of blindness. *Metamorphosis* by Philip Jones Griffiths. Philip Jones Griffiths returns to Vietnam to study the effects of the war on the population of Vietnam.

To contact Trolley: info@trolley.net

Chris Pichler, Founder/Publisher, Nazraeli Press

Vision: I've never consciously worked from the perspective of a particular vision, other than that of the simple enjoyment I derive from putting pictures together in book form. In retrospect, however, I realize that books published at certain times had some connection with "real life." For instance, during the time my wife and I started looking for a house, we published *Isolated Houses* by John Divola, and *House Hunting* by Todd Hido. As I became more interested in, and knowledgeable about, the country of Japan, we began publishing many books by Japanese photographers, as well as Michael Kenna's book on the subject, *Japan*. Recently, we seem to be publishing a

lot of books about dogs...

Audience: I think, and hope, that the audience for our books represents a broad cross-section of society. We know that many books are purchased by serious collectors; but we also tend to sell a lot of books at the SPE Conference, for example, which is attended by students on very limited budgets. Clearly, our books are not mass market products. I have no interest or aptitude in competing for the attention of the "popular culture." We market all of our books the same way: by inclusion in our sales catalogue, working closely with independent booksellers and museum stores, and attending art and photography shows.

Quantity: We are currently publishing around twenty-five titles per year. Print runs vary drastically; our One Picture Books are always published in editions of 500 copies, while major monographs can run to 8,000 copies in the first printing. But generally, our books are printed in editions of 1,000 to 2,000 copies.

Acquiring Titles: We receive hundreds of unsolicited proposals each year, but it's very rare that we are able to publish books submitted out of the blue. For one, at any given point we are at least one year out in terms of existing commitments. We do make a sincere effort to look at, and respond to, all the proposals we receive each month. Our preferred formats for looking at work are CD-ROMs and color copies—items that do not need to be returned—as well as a brief text about the project.

Future Projects: One of the most exciting projects for me, personally, is an artist's book by Joseph Mills we are publishing early next year entitled *Loves of the Poets*. Seeing the one-off book he created, which we are taking as our starting point for the published version, was truly a revelation. I didn't want to give it back! But the next best thing is going to be able to make a copy for myself and for a few thousand other people. That really is the magic of publishing.

To contact Nazraeli: 526 E 16th Street, Tucson, AZ 85701

Patricia Fidler, Arts/Architecture Editor, Yale University Press

Vision: As a publisher at a university press, I look to acquire books that make a significant contribution to the literature on a certain photographer, theme, topic, chronological period in art history, etc. Having said that, the books can be large or small in their ambition. What is essential in my acquisition strategy is whether a book's content presents significant new or important information. To this end, YUP collaborates with a number of major museums on exhibition projects, including The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. I also try to acquire an interesting mix of titles, from historical to contemporary. I love the process of creating photography books, and we aim to publish photography books that are carefully edited, beautifully designed, and produced to the highest standards.

Audience: The market for photography books is interesting and challenging, and it varies greatly from title to title. We do have a core market of academics—which can range from photo historians to art historians to historians, depending on the topic—

collectors, curators, etc. We also strive to reach buyers who are frequent visitors to museums and who respond to photography more than other art forms (i.e., photographers themselves). We also tailor the marketing for each book according to the full range of potential audiences that it might reach.

Quantity: We originate about 3-4 new photography books per year, to which we add our buy-in and distributed books (from museums and other publishers). The total is around 6 books/year. Print runs range from 1,500 to 7,500 copies..

Acquiring Titles: I find new projects by working with museums, talking to people in the field, and by listening to advice from those who are more knowledgeable than myself in the field. I also try to seek out new artists whose work is making a mark in the contemporary art world. When an individual is interested in submitting a proposal, we ask for a book proposal (which, if well conceived and articulated, makes a big difference in my thinking) and some sample images. If we are interested in pursuing the project further, we will request additional text and visual material.

Future Projects: We will be publishing a retrospective catalogue on the work of William Wegman (Spring 2006) in association with the Addison Gallery of American Art; a book on platinum prints by Irving Penn with the National Gallery of Art, Washington; a book of newly commissioned photographs that explore the complexity of Jewish identity with the Jewish Museum in New York. Other books being explored are monographs on Frederick Sommer, Henri Le Secq, and Minor White. To contact Yale: Yale University Press, PO Box 209040, New Haven, CT 06520

Chris Boot, Publisher, Boot Editions

Vision: I try to do books that move the story of photography forward in some way, whether by working with contemporary photographers whose pictures add something new to the medium, or by making books that throw new light on to the history of photography. The starting point of a project is always a body of work or an idea that excites me; then I think I stand a chance of being able to excite other people.

Audience: Simplistically, the audience for any given book is the audience for the featured photographer, although with each project you are hoping to bring new audiences on board.

Quantity: This year I published 8 books. A first print run is usually small, averaging about 3-4000 copies.

Acquiring Titles: I ask people not to send in unsolicited book dummies or prints in the first instance, but to email a website link or send in a CD, with a brief outline of the project. In most cases, projects don't result from cold calls, though that can happen.

Future Projects: I'm working on a major book for fall 2005 called *Things As They Are*, written by Mary Panzer, which looks at the last 50 years of photojournalism on the printed page. It treats photojournalism as an industrial artform, in its original context. I think the time is right for it.

To contact Chris Boot: info@chrisboot.com