

Canadian Concrete

featuring bill bissett / Blewointment, bpNichol / grOnk,
Barbara Caruso / Seripress, and jwcurry / Industrial Sabotage



bpNichol and Barbara Caruso. A panel from *The Adventures of Milt the Morph in Colour*. Seripress, 1972. A collaboration. Poem by bpNichol. Color image by Barbara Caruso.

Concrete Poetry in Canada

Steve McCaffery

[An excerpt from an unpublished essay, ca. 2011.]

It should be stated at the outset that Concrete Poetry in Canada did not emerge in the foundational decade of the 1950s. Those poems and documents (largely European and South American) as well as the majority of the avant-garde legacy remained historically unavailable in the formative years and hence unknown. Though a concrete orientated poetry in Canada can be traced back to the 1860s, its recent practice dates a century later to the 1960s. Unlike the Darmstadt Circle in Germany and the Noigandres group in Sao Paulo, Brazil, Canadian concrete poetry did not emerge as a group phenomenon; there is no centre of activity, no founding manifesto and all theorizing (if at all) was post facto.

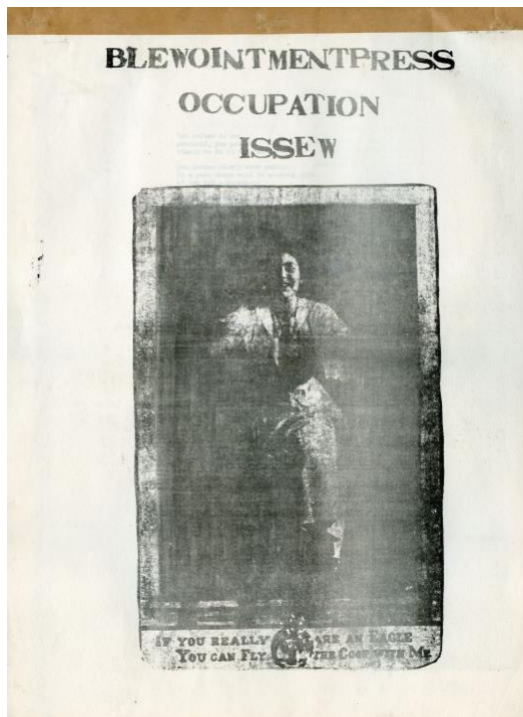
Its roots lie in the linked but varied idiosyncratic impetus of primarily two young poets: Bill Bissett (born 1939) and Barrie Philip (bp) Nichol (1944–88). To name the first generation of Canadian concrete poets beyond these two is to name a small number: Lionel Kearns (born 1937), Judith Copithorne (born 1940), David UU (David W Harris) (1948–94) in Vancouver, Andrew Suknaski (born 1942) and his Elfin Plot Press in Saskatchewan, David Aylward (born 1943) and John Riddell (1940–2016) in Toronto, with Steve McCaffery (born 1947) and Hart Broudy (born 1945) ushering in a Toronto-based second generation in the latter part of the 1960s. Yet of the poets mentioned above Kearns' contribution is a single poem,

Copithorne's is, in *strictus senso*, a calligraphic poetry, Aylward's exists in a couple of chapbooks, Riddell's used concrete techniques as a vehicle for visual effects with narrative ends in mind, and Broudy's was a hybrid practice of pictorial narrative and verbal-letter landscapes.

Emerging in the mid-sixties Canadian concrete poetry is best configured within a wider, international poetics of cultural unrest, expressed by many younger writers in a plurality of unorthodox literary forms around the world. More specifically, however, it arose out of a specific cultural need. A dominant, inward-looking, mythopoetic and largely nationalist aesthetic (expressed at its belligerent and stentorian in the prose of Robin Mathews) had been challenged in Vancouver by Tish, a young group of poets, founded in 1961 and largely gathered around ex-patriot American critic Warren Tallman. Embracing the new American physiologically-based poetics of projective verse, the Tish group offered a radical alternative to Canadian mainstream poetry: the pre-eminence of breath and the syllable in guiding poetic construction, the poem considered both as an open field and a high energy construct proved appealing to a younger generation of west coast Canadian poets. It was this initial ground-breaking intervention that facilitated the intervention of Canadian concrete-visual poetic practice and its articulation onto the wider, international movement to which Concrete Poetry aspired.

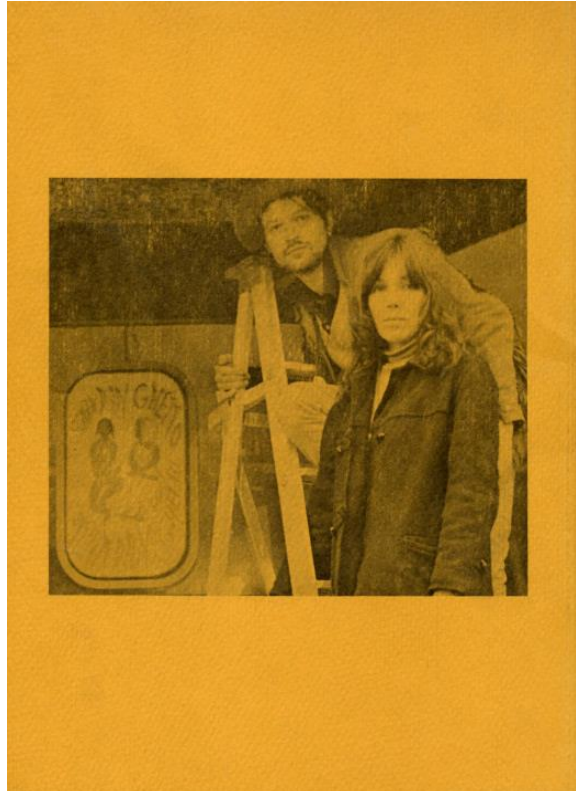
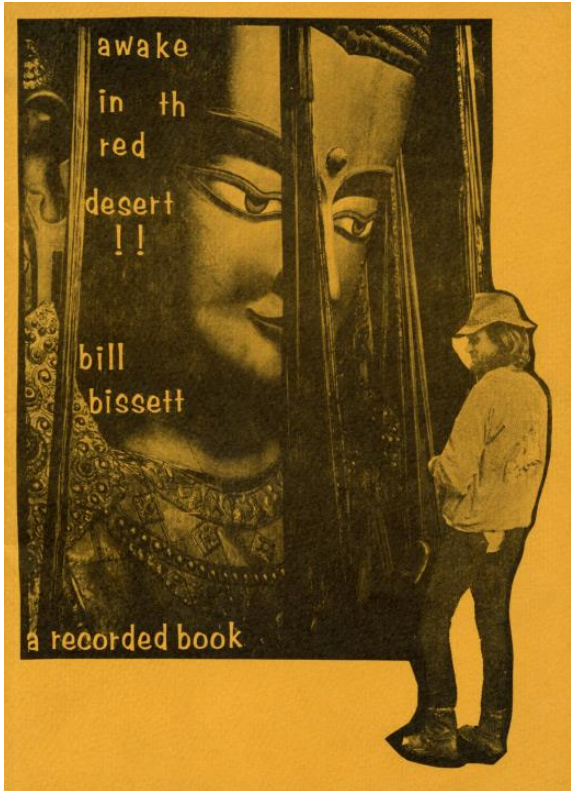
Selected Highlights from the Collection

bill bissett / Blewointment



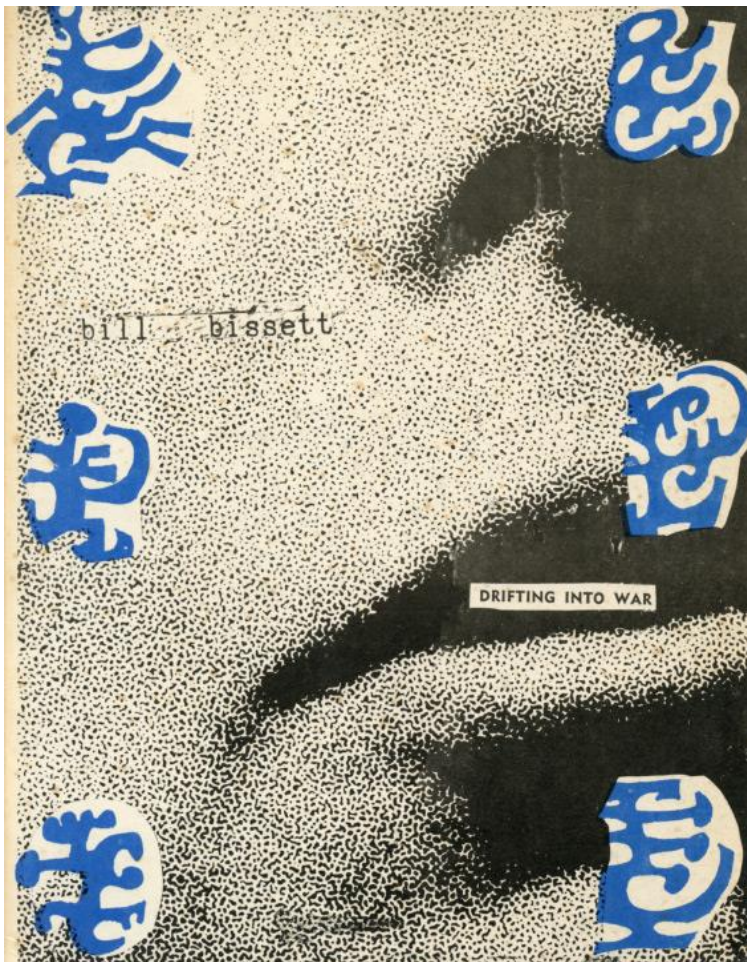
[bill bissett, ed.]. *Blewointment*, Occupation Issew. August 1970.

Front and back covers. Top-stapled wrappers with paper tape.



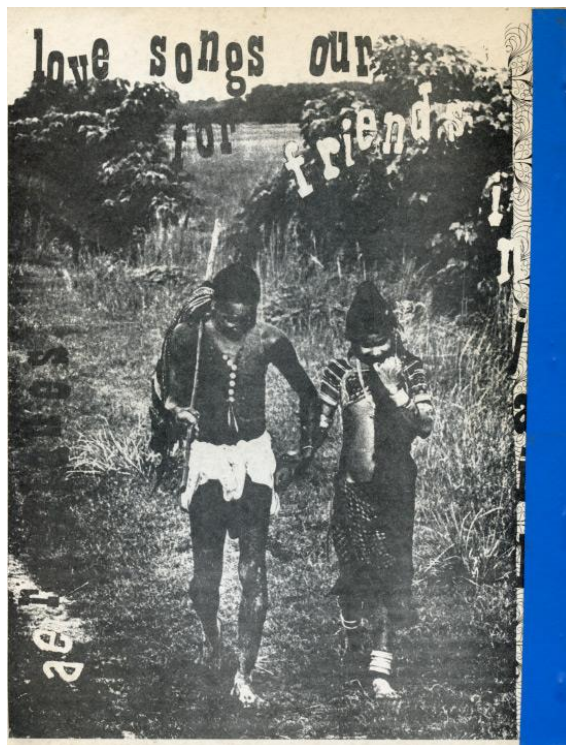
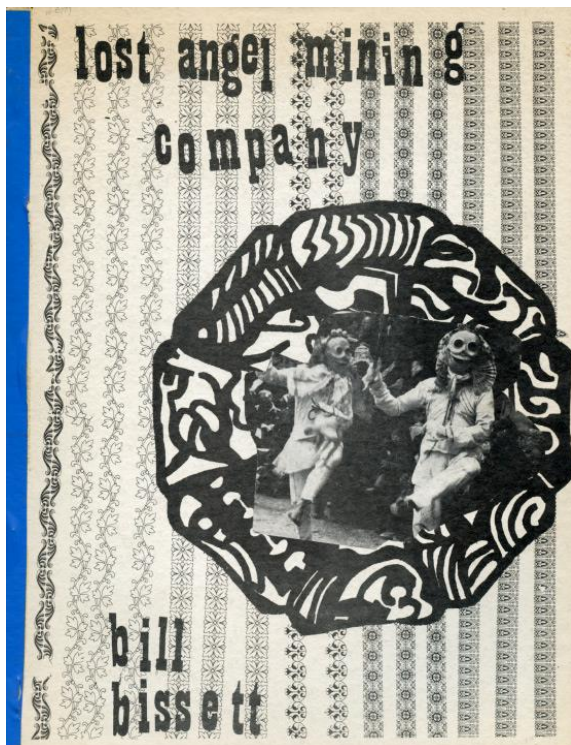
bill bisset. *awake in th red desert!* Talon Books and See/Hear Productions, 1968.

Front and back covers. Wrappers. This is from an edition of 500 copies



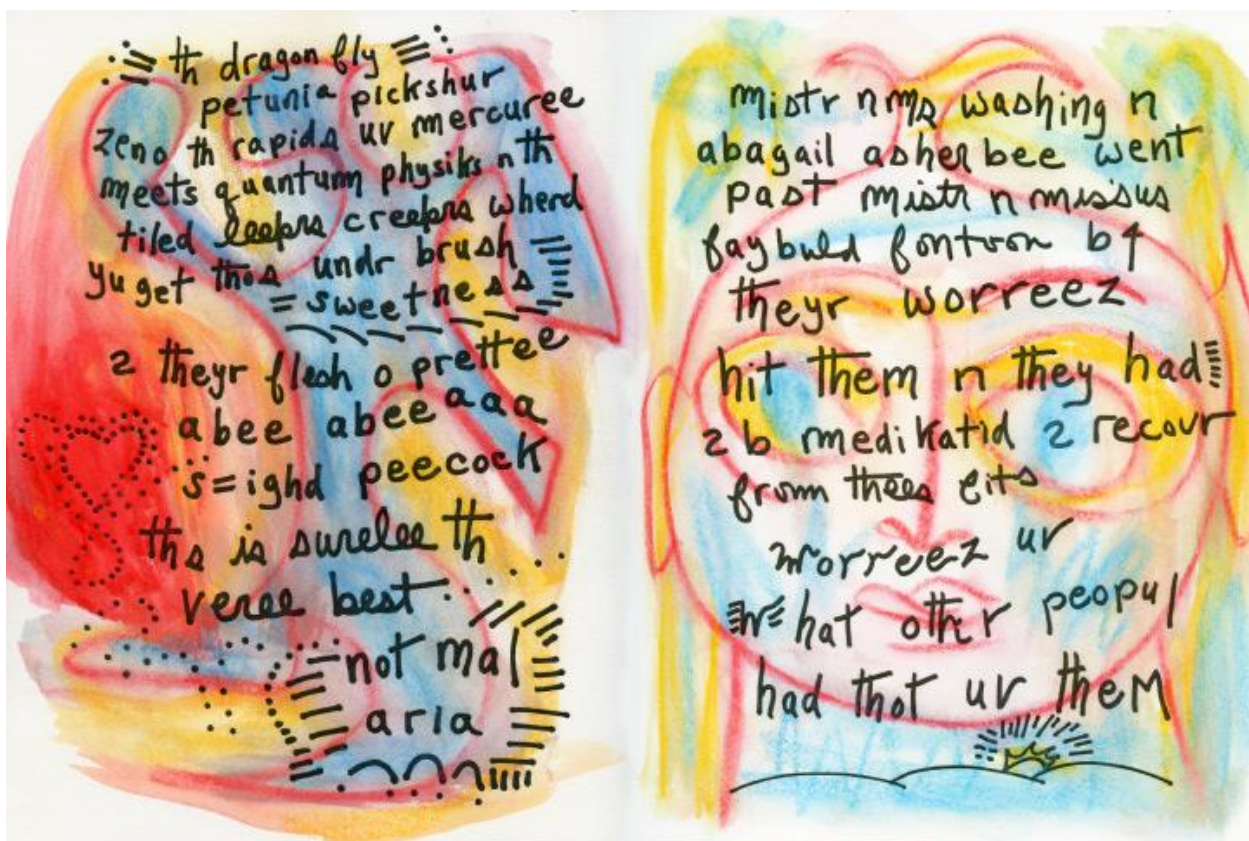
bill bissett. *Drifting Into War*. Talonbooks, 1971.

Wrappers. Inscribed by bill bissett to Steve Clay.



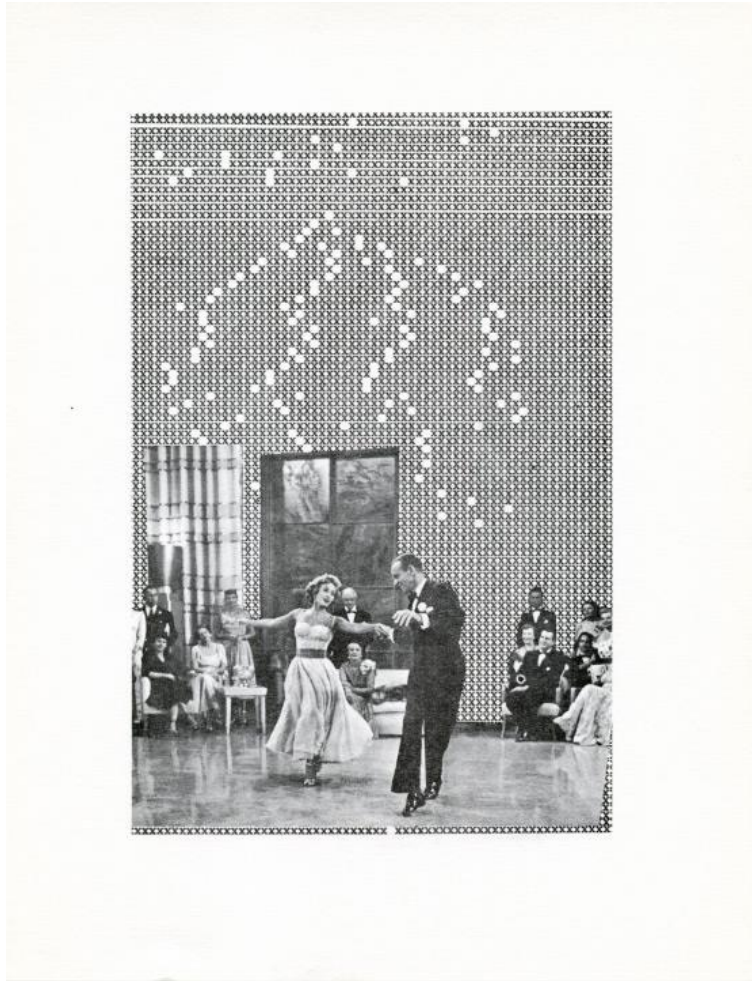
bill bissett. *Lost Angel Mining Company*. Blewointment Press, 1969.

Front and back covers. Stapled wrappers with tape over spine. This is from an edition of 500 copies. Signed by the poet.



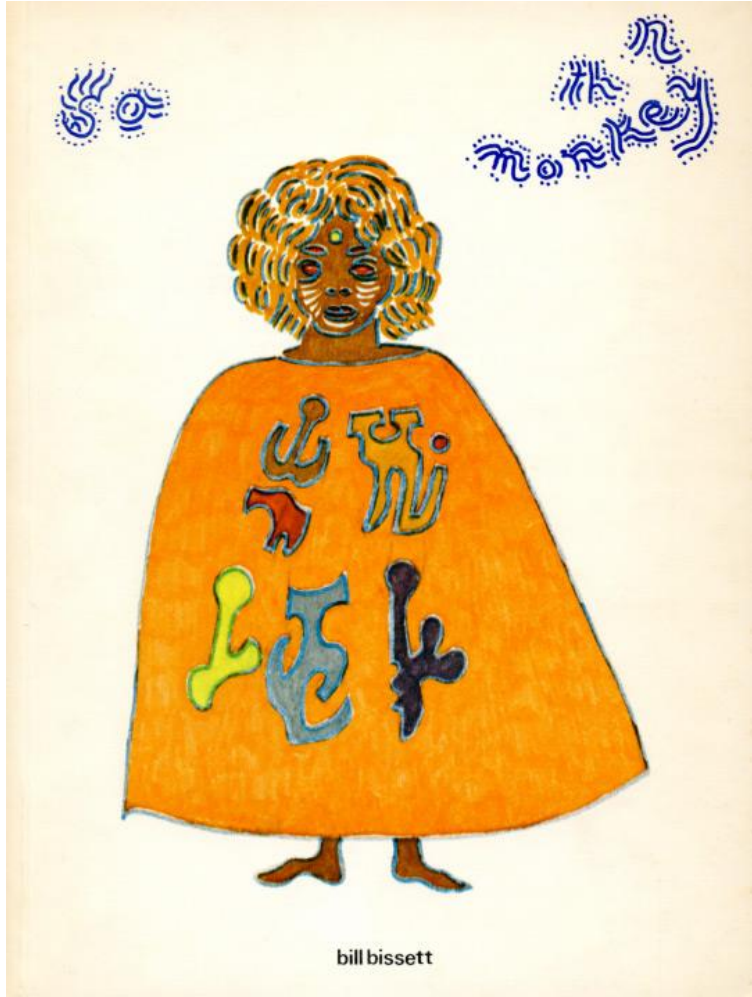
bill bissett. *Iunaria*. Granary Books, 2001.

Printed letterpress by Inge Bruggemann, then hand painted throughout by bissett. Bound in printed cloth over boards by Judith Ivry, contained in a cloth-covered clamshell box. Includes a CD of the poet reading the work. Edition of 42 of which 12 are hors commerce. Numbered and signed by the poet / artist. This is no. 5 of 12 hors commerce copies.



bill bissett. From *Ready for Framing*. Blewointment Press, 1982.

Loose sheets printed on one side in a printed envelope. This is from an edition of 300 copies.



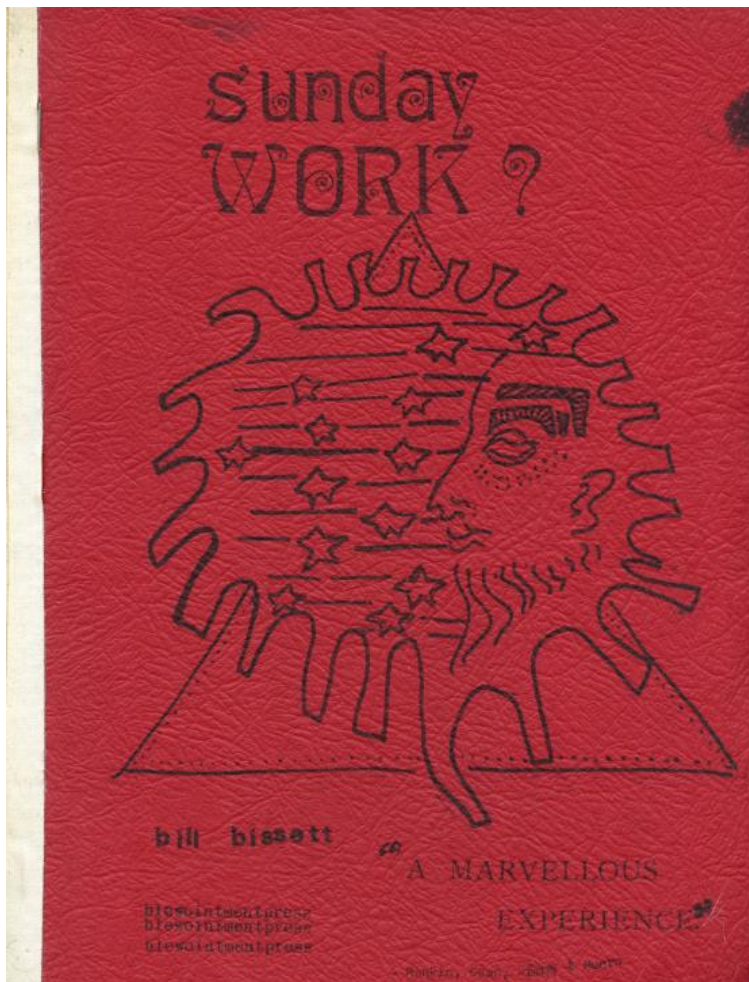
bill bissett. *sa n th monkey*. Blewointment Press, 1980.

Wrappers. "A bed time coloring storee pome book." This is from an edition of 500 copies. Inscribed by bill bissett to Steve Clay.



bill bissett. *Sailor*. Talonbooks, 1978.

Wrappers.



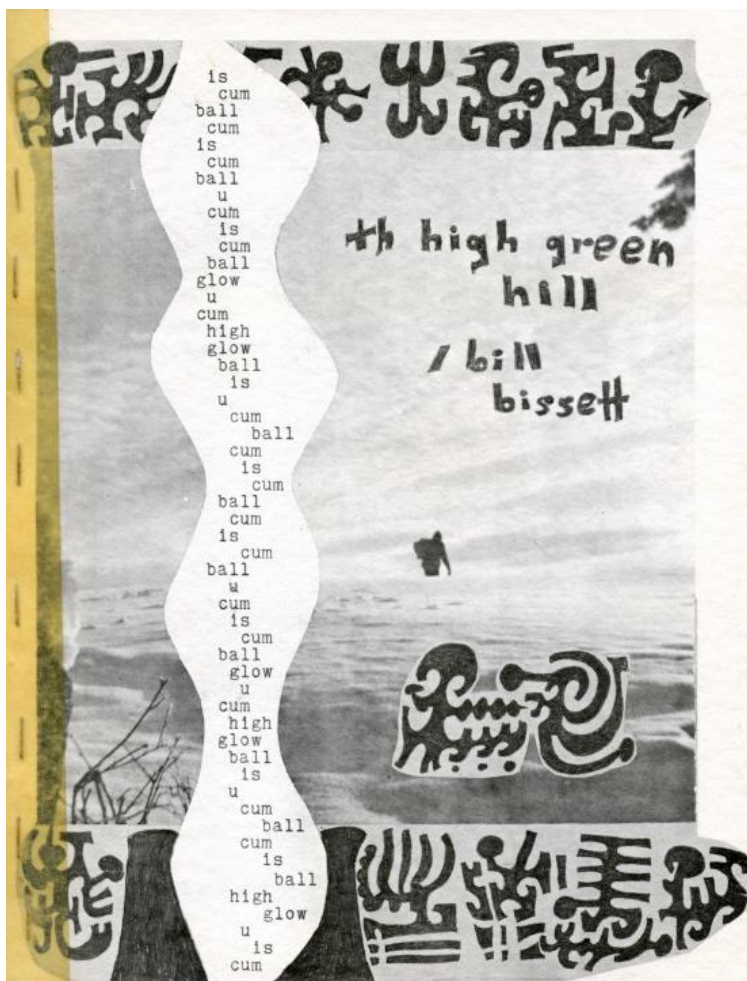
bill bissett. *Sunday Work?* Blewointment Press, [1969].

Side-stapled wrappers with cloth tape over spine. Poetry, collage, and artwork bound together. Believed to be from an edition of 500 copies.



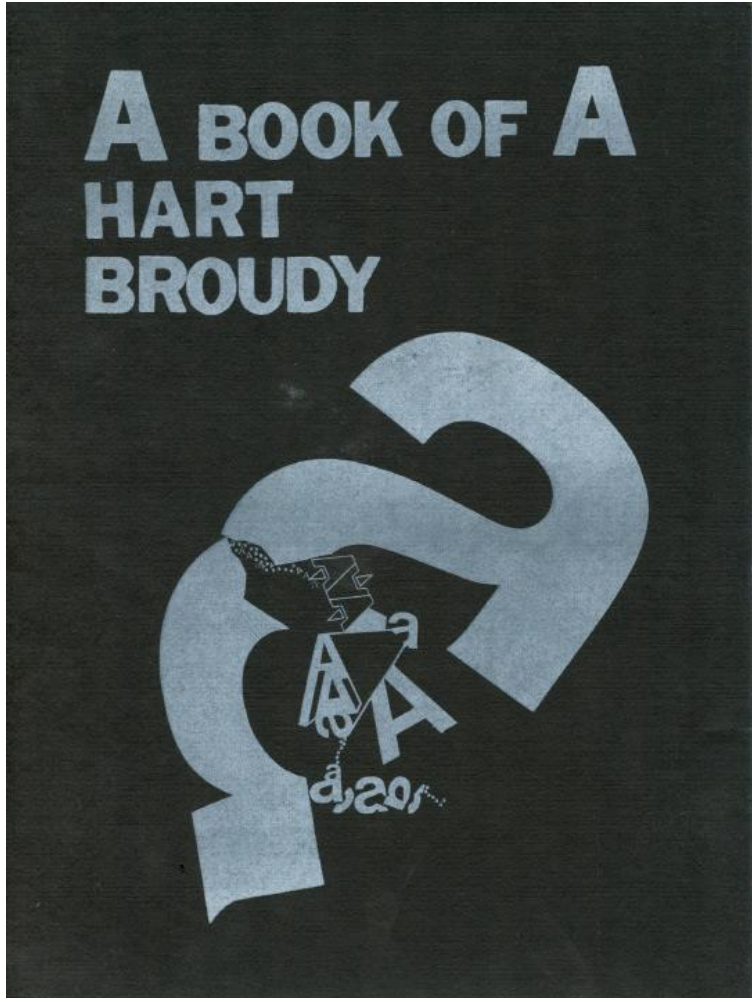
bill bissett. *th first snow*.
Blewointment Press, 1979.

Side-stapled wrappers. This is
from an edition of 350 copies.



bill bissett. *th high green hill*.
Blewointment Press, 1972.

One of three books and 11
broad sides comprising *ICE*.
Other books are *polar bear
hunt* and *words in th fire*. This is
from an edition of 400 copies.



Hart Broudy. *Language in Space: A Book of A*. Blewointment Press, 1974.

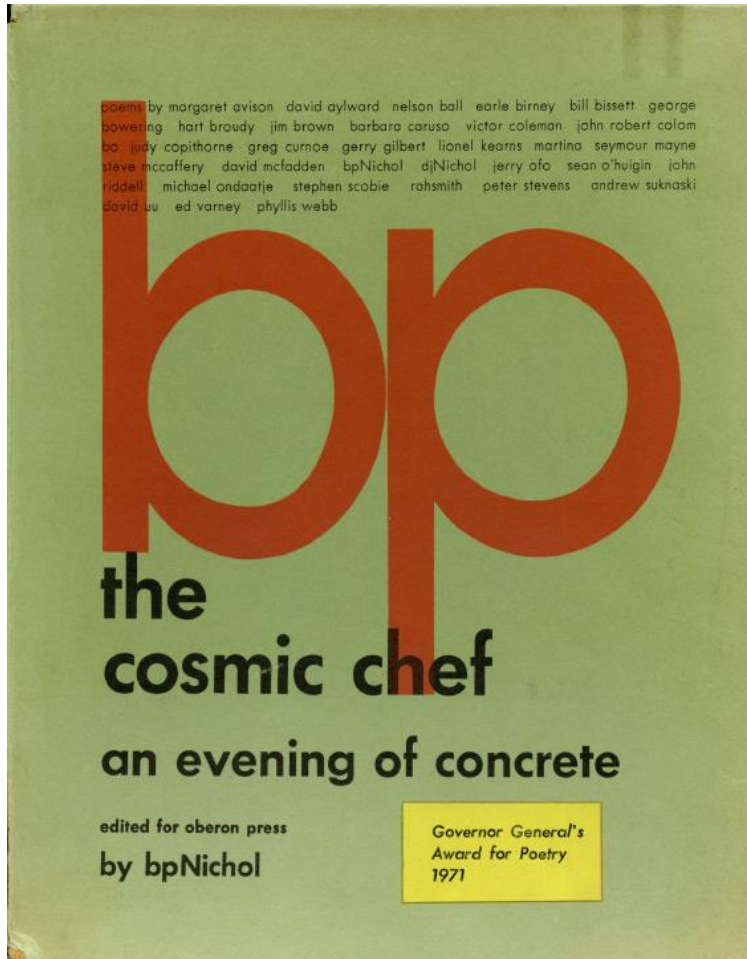
Wrappers. This is from an edition of 500 copies.



David UU. [David W. Harris]. *Pamplemousse: An Act*. Blewointment Press, [ca. 1968].

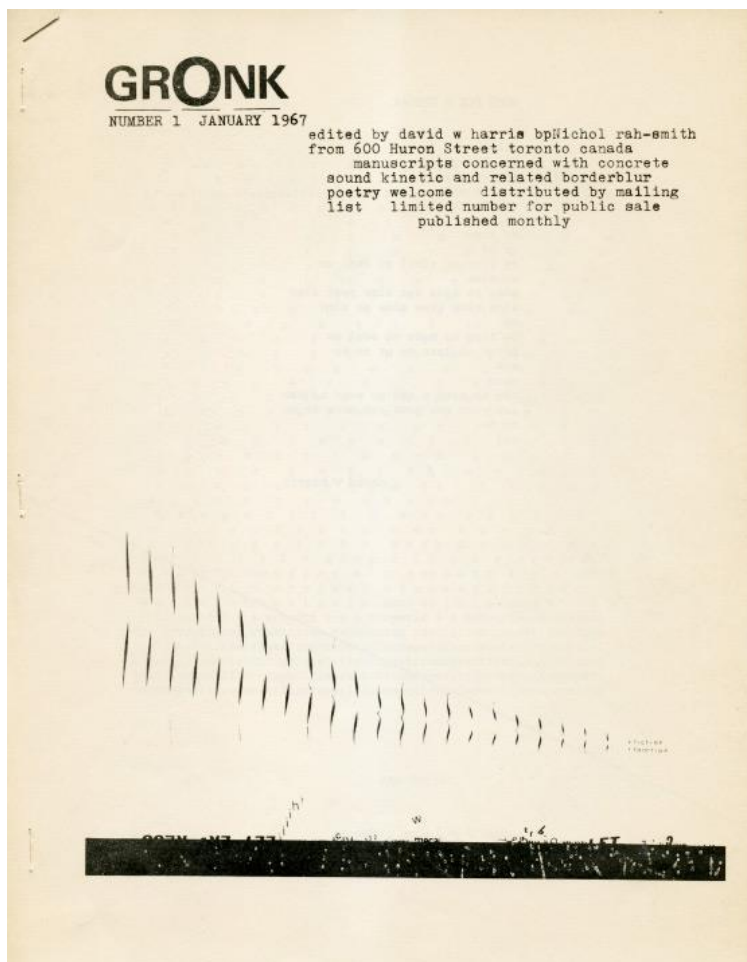
Side-stapled wrappers.

bpNichol / grOnk



bpNichol, ed. *The Cosmic Chef Glee & Perloo Memorial Society Under the Direction of Captain Poetry Presents an Evening of Concrete*. Oberon Press, 1970.

Unbound pages in printed box with hinged lid. This is no. 498 and is initialed by bp. Contributors include Margaret Avison, David Aylward, Nelson Ball, Earle Birney, bill bissett, Barbara Caruso, Steve McCaffery, bpNichol, and Michael Ondaatje among others.



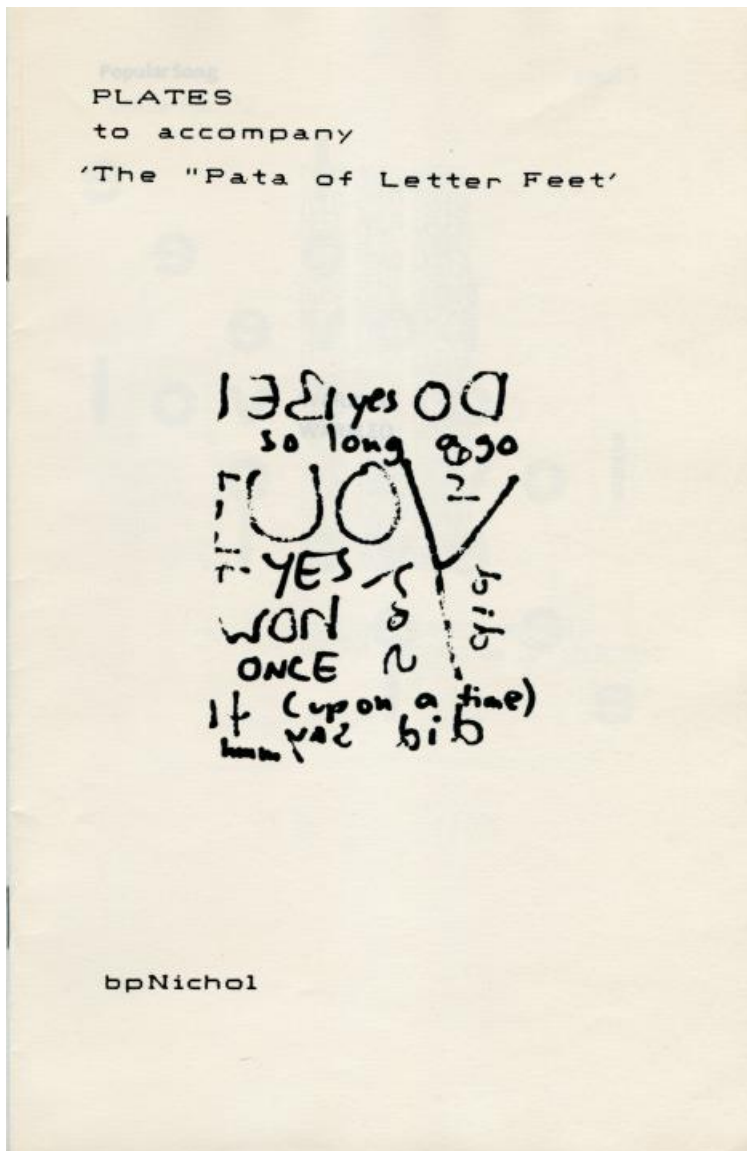
David W. Harris, bpNichol, and Rah Smith, eds. *grOnk*, [Series 1], no. 1. Jan. 1967.

Contributors are bill bissett, Jean-Francois Bory, Victor Coleman, Pierre Garnier, David W. Harris, bpNichol, Rah Smith, and D.R. Wagner. Cover by Jean-Francois Bory.



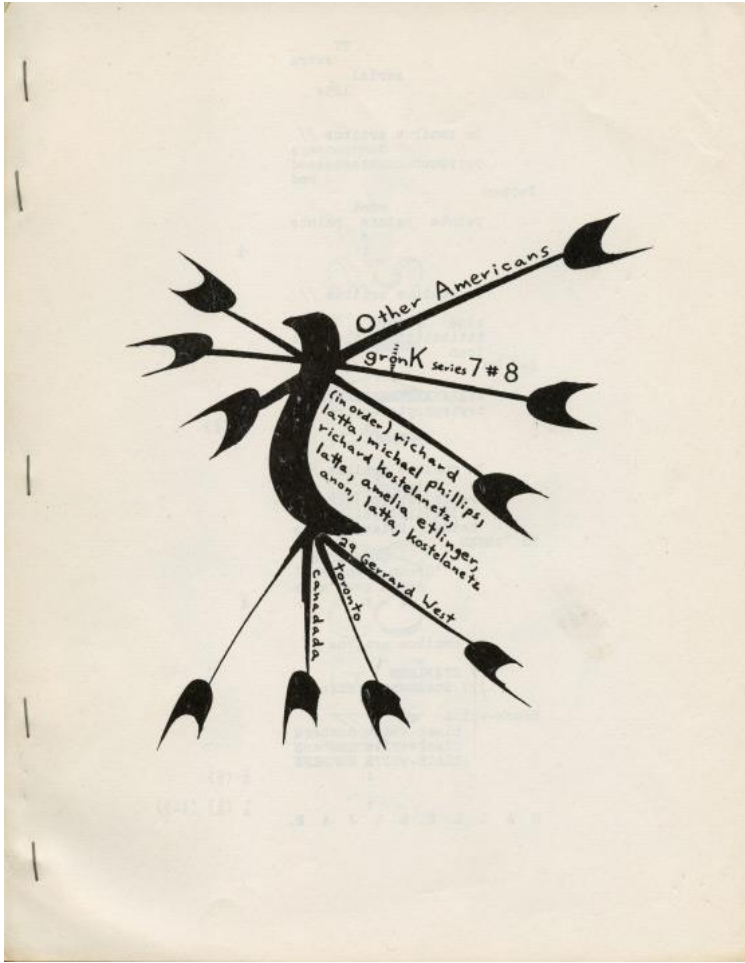
[bpNichol, ed.]. *grOnk*, Intermediate Series, no. 11. 1978.

Loose sheets in plastic folder. This whole issue publishes "Off'N'On Chains" by Opal L. Nations. Cover collage is by bpNichol. This is from an edition of 200 copies.



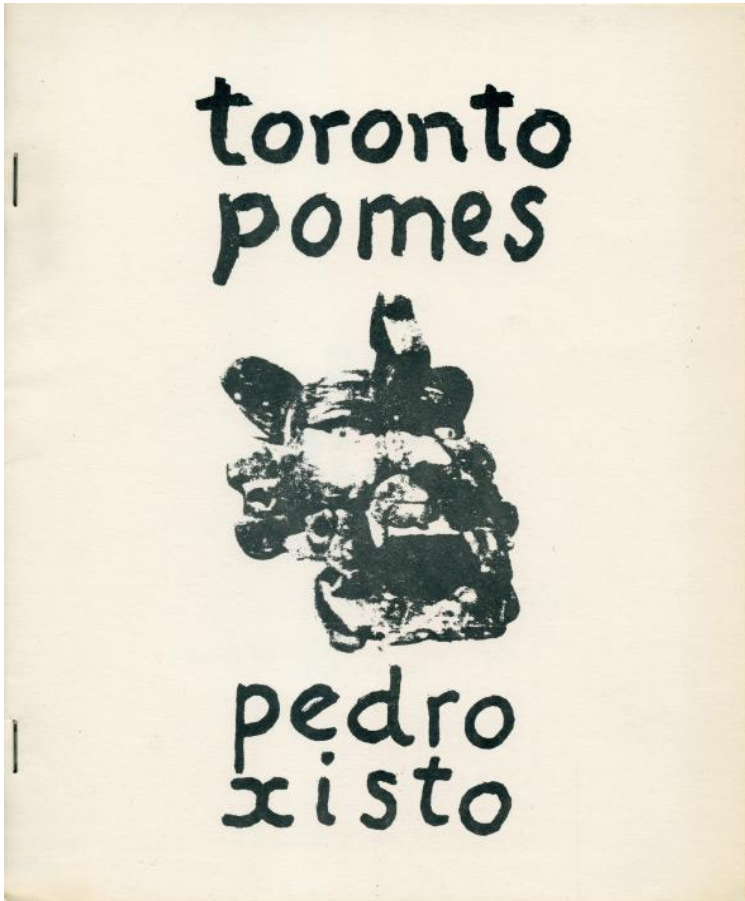
bpNichol. *grOnk*, Random Series, no. 4. Oct. 1984.

Saddle-stitched. This whole issue is devoted to publishing "Plates (to Accompany 'The "Pata of Letter Feet'" by bpNichol. This is from an edition of 50 copies.



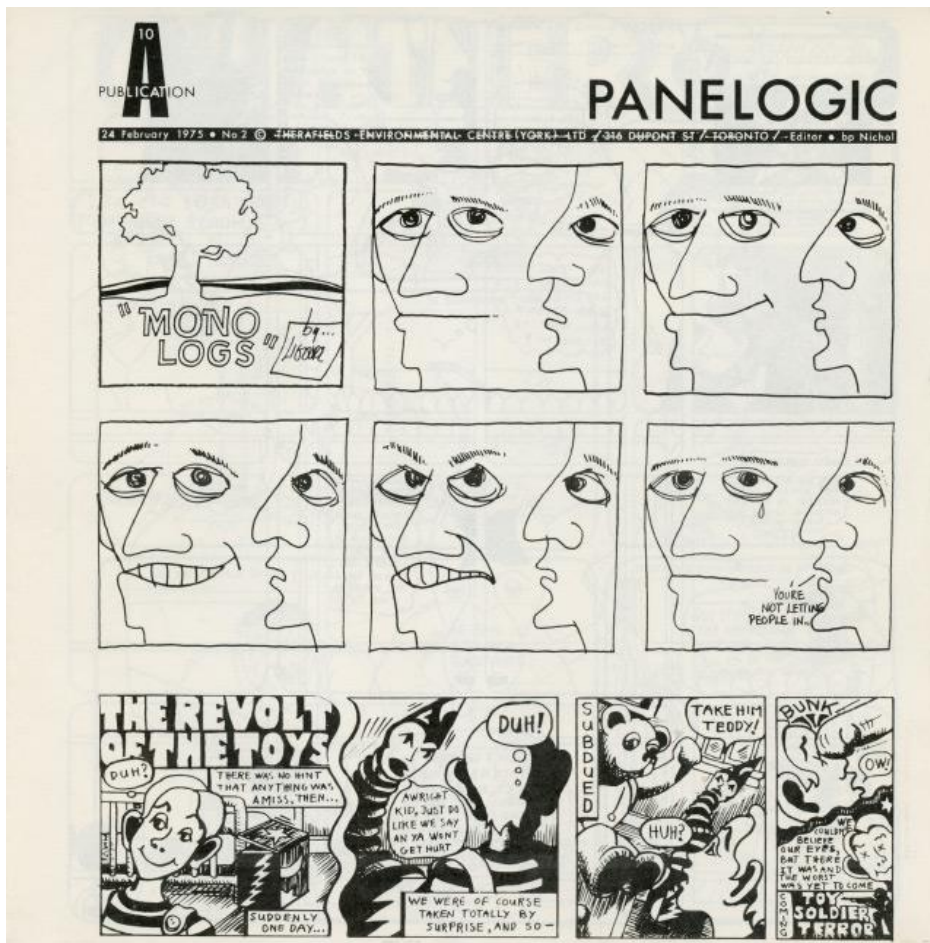
[bpNichol, ed.]. *grOnk*, Series 7, no. 8. [ca. 1971].

Side-stapled wrappers. This whole issue is devoted to publishing "Other Americans" with contributions by Richard Latta, Michael Phillips, Richard Kostelanetz, and Amelia Etlinger. bpNichol contributes cover lettering within a graphic by Richard Latta.



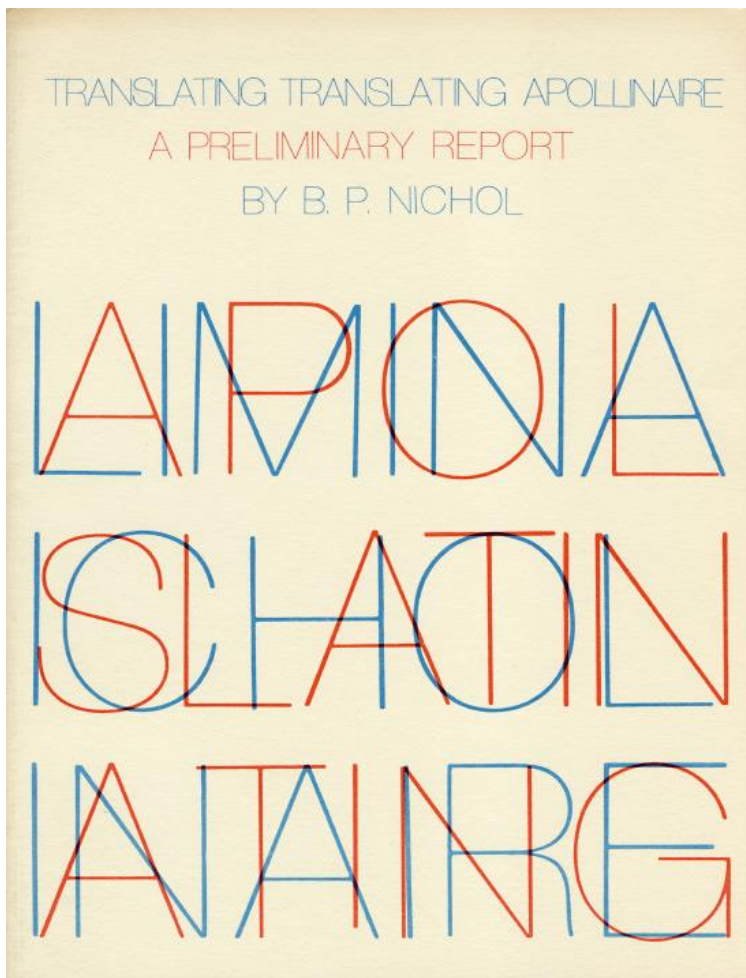
[bpNichol, bill bissett, David UU, Steve McCaffery, and other eds.]. *grOnk*, Series 8, no. 6. [ca. 1972].

Stapled wrappers. This whole issue is devoted to publishing "Toronto Pomes" by Pedro Xisto.



bpNichol,
ed. *Panologic*,
no. 2. Feb. 24,
1975.

Single sheet
printed on both
sides and folded
once to make
four pages.
Published by
Therafields
Environmental
Centre Limited.
Cover is by John
Ligoure (top) &
Gilles Morin.
Includes
bpNichol's
"Lonely Fred the
Cowboy Hero"
part 10.



bpNichol. *Sharp Facts: Some
Selections from Translating
Translating Apollinaire* 26.
Membrane Press, 1980.

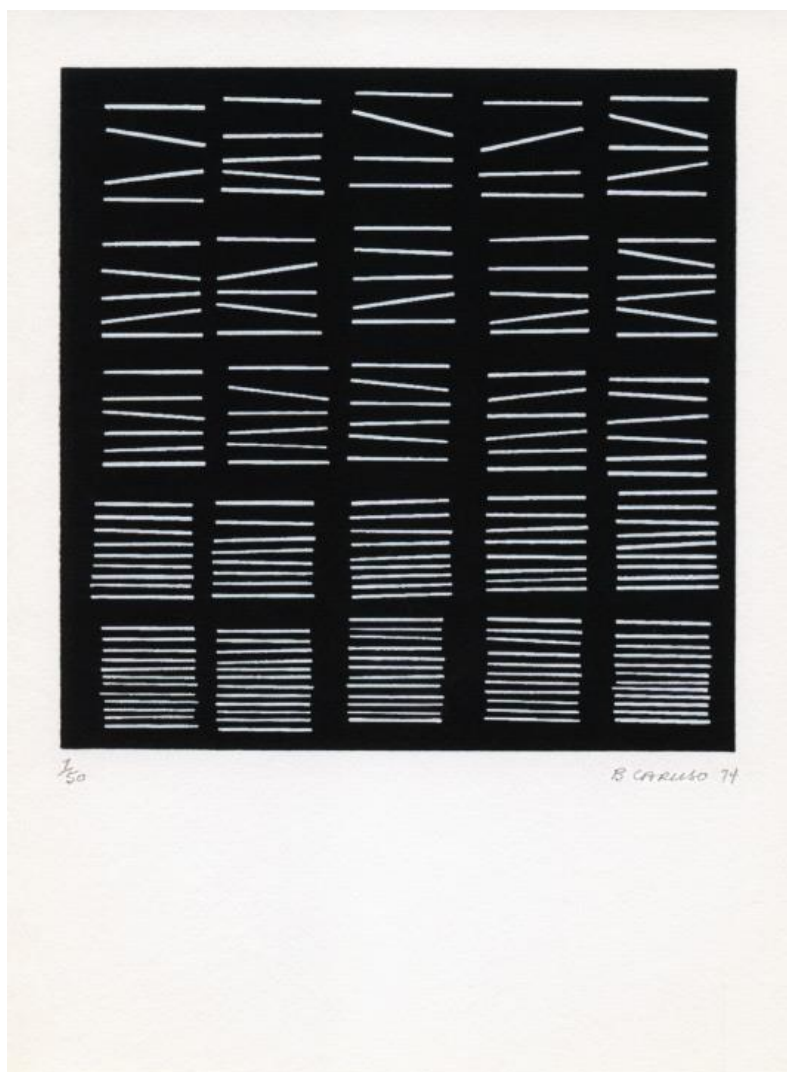
Wrappers.

Barbara Caruso / Seripress



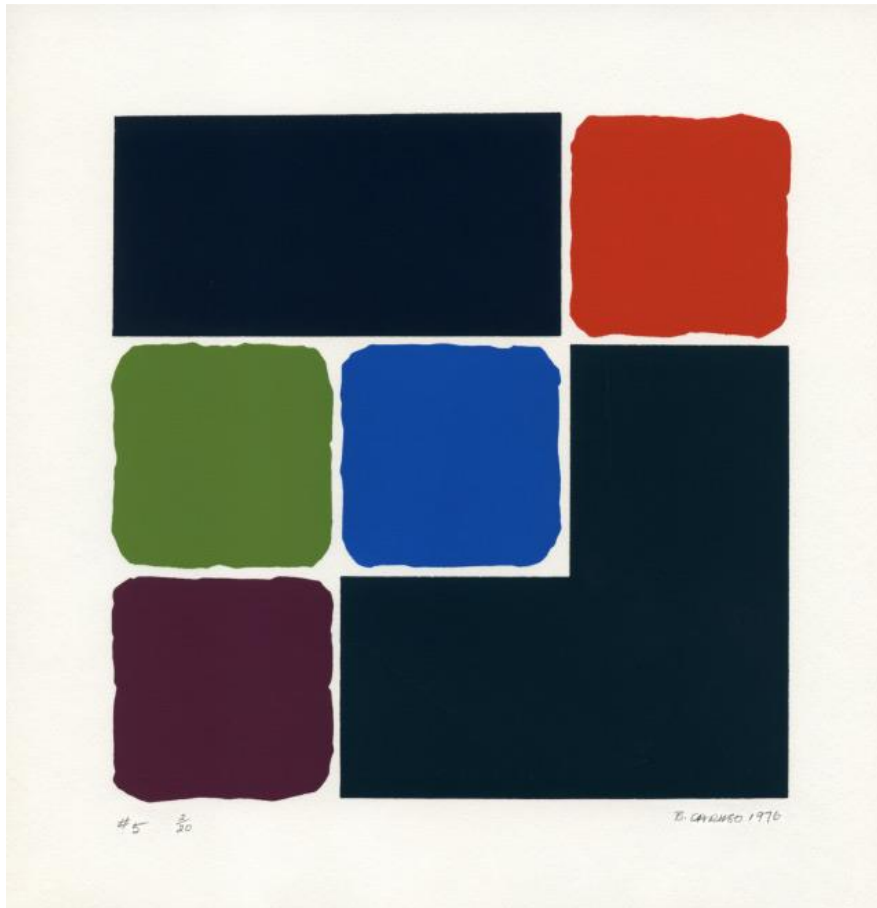
David Aylward. *Crossword*. Seripress, 1975.

The "crossword" alphabet was created by the author. Three leaves in a card folder. This is from an edition of 100 signed by the author.



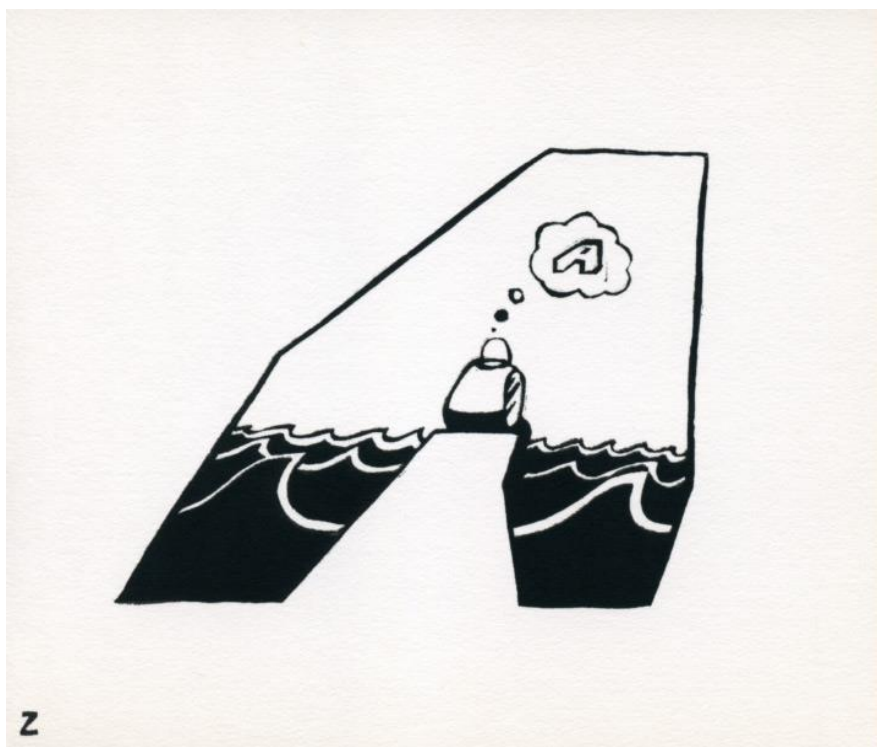
Nelson Ball and Barbara Caruso. *The Shore: A Poem*. Seripress, 1974.

A poem by Nelson Ball and two serigraph prints by Barbara Caruso. Three leaves laid into a card folder. The prints are signed and numbered by Barbara Caruso. This is no. 7 from an edition of 50 copies and is signed by Nelson Ball.



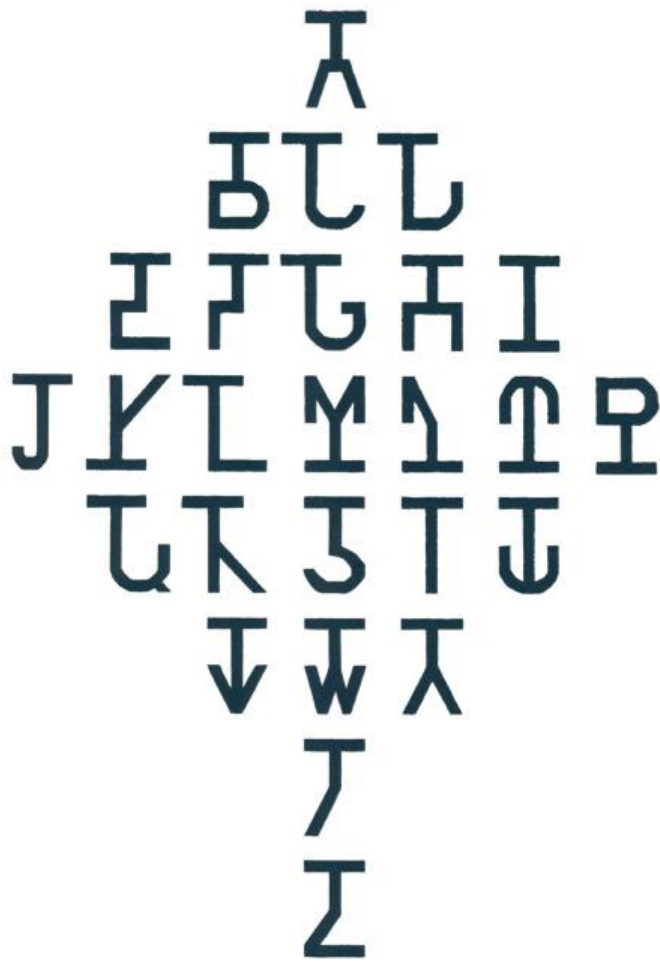
Barbara
Caruso. *Colour Lock,
Black Series.*
Seripress, 1976.

Eight serigraphs
printed in 5–7 colors.
Ten leaves in a
portfolio, in a slipcase.
Each print numbered
and signed by the
artist. This is no. 2
from an edition of 20
copies.



bpNichol. *Aleph Unit.*
Seripress, 1973.

Panel two from a
series of eight: "Aleph
Unit Opened." Twelve
leaves in a buckram
folder. This is no. 46
from an edition of 70
signed by the author.



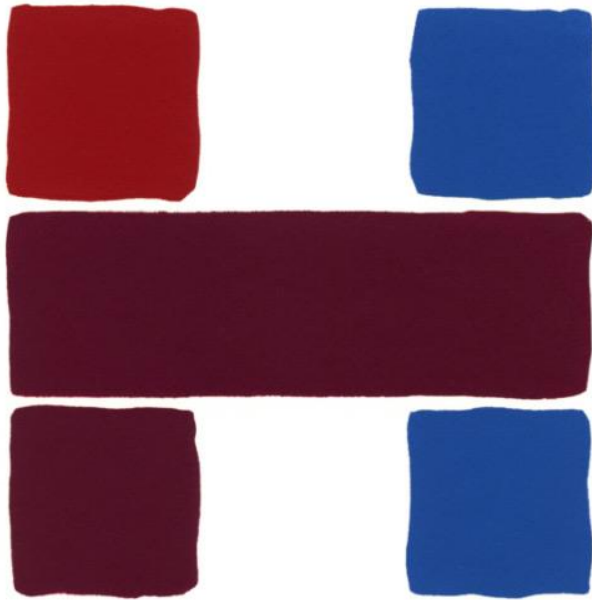
bpNichol. *Alphabet / Ilphabet*. Seripress, 1978.

Three leaves in a folder. Drawn and printed by Barbara Caruso. This is from an edition of 70 signed by the author.



bpNichol. *Door to Oz*. Seripress, 1979.

First panel from a series of eight. Ten leaves in a folder. This is no. 57 from an edition of 100 signed by the author.



bpNichol and Barbara Caruso. *H: An Excursion*. Seripress, 1976.

Panel from a serial poem silkscreen printed. Ten leaves in a folder. This is no. 36 from an edition of 60 signed by the authors.



bpNichol and Barbara Caruso. Pilot studies toward *The Adventures of Milt the Morph in Colour*. "And Yet?" (top) and "Oh" (bottom). Seripress, 1971.

There were 12 copies of "Oh" and 13 copies of "And Yet," all uncirculated. "Oh" is no. 4 from an edition of six copies signed and dated by Barbara Caruso. "And Yet" is signed by Caruso on verso.

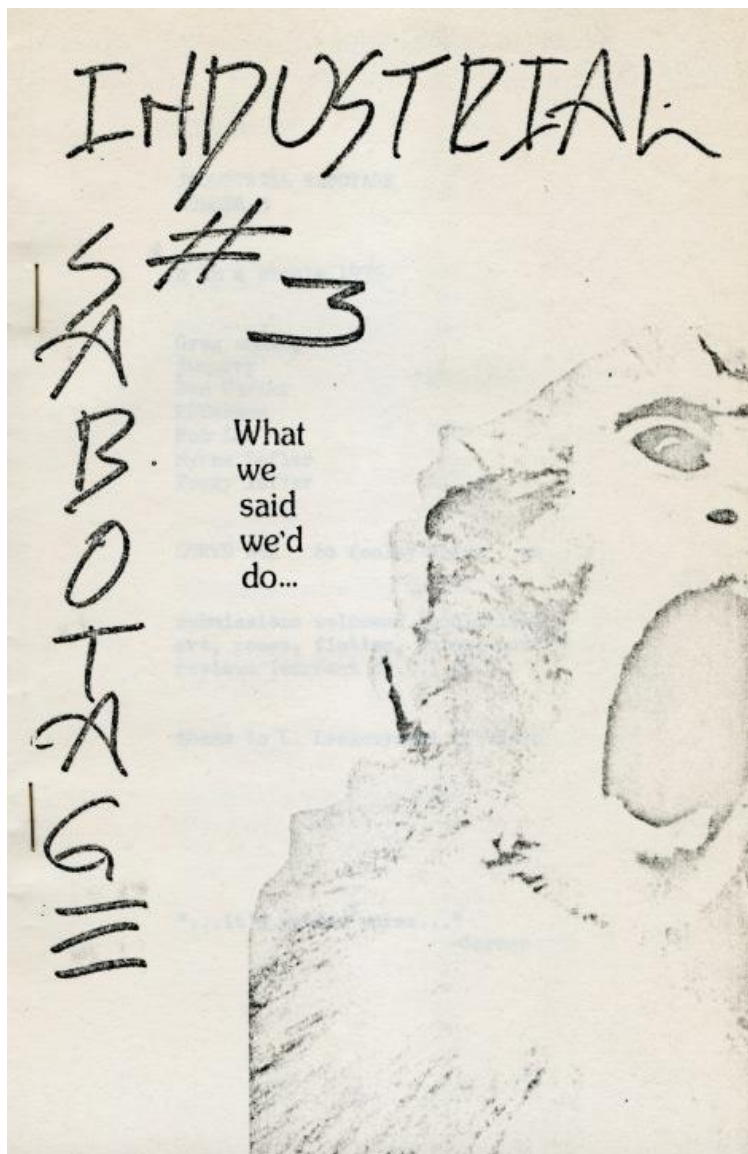
In addition to the pilot studies, the collection includes *The Adventures of Milt the Morph in Colour*. Seripress, 1972. Eleven leaves laid in a buckram folder. Of the eight serigraphs included, six are numbered and signed by the author and the artist, two are signed only by the artist, and all are dated 1971. The collection includes no. 3 of 25 and is signed by both bpNichol and Barbara Caruso.



Stephen Scobie. *Airwaves / Sealevel / Landlock*. Seripress, 1978.

A single leaf in a folder. This is from an edition of 100 copies signed by the author.

jwcurry / Industrial Sabotage



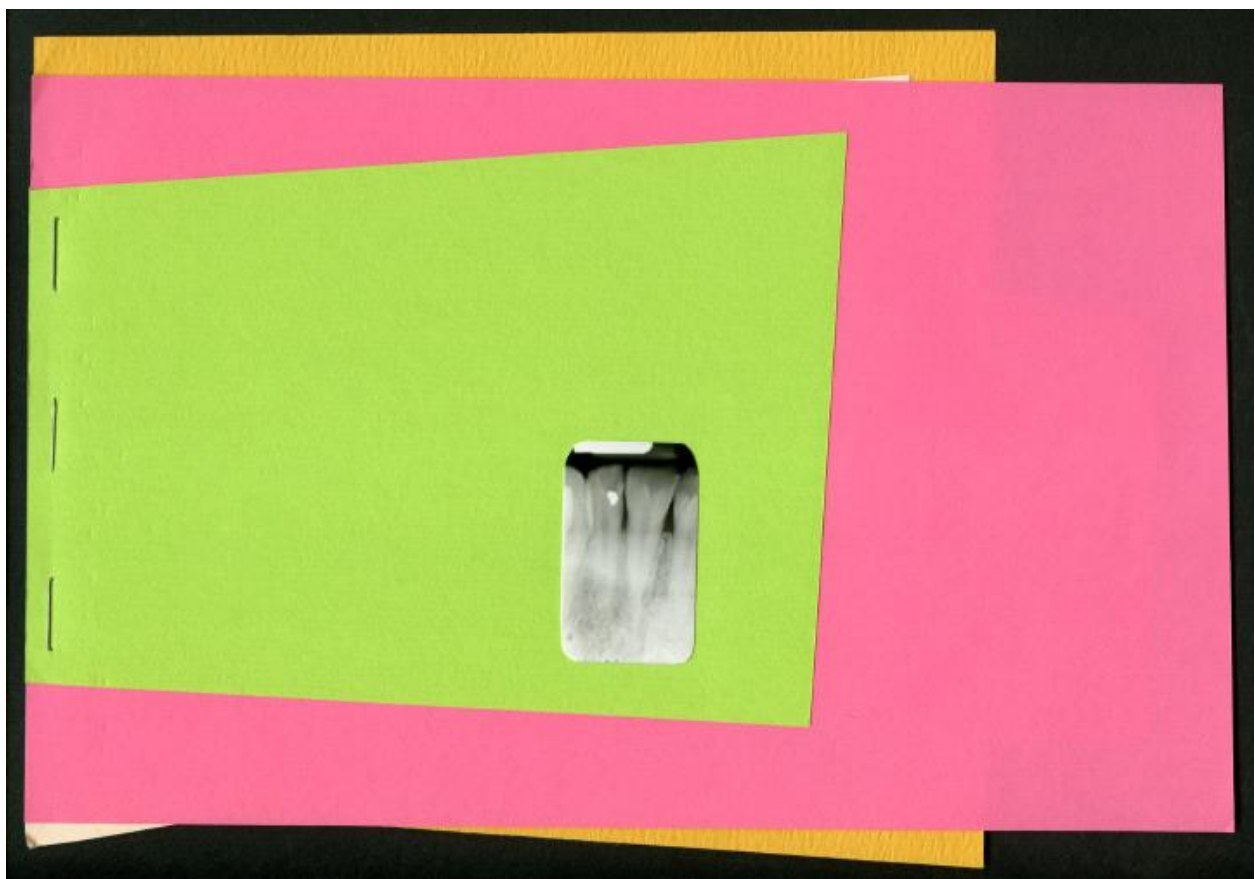
[jwcurry, ed.]. *Industrial Sabotage*, no. 3. 1979.

Side-stapled wrappers. Also issued as *Curvd H&z*, no. 8.



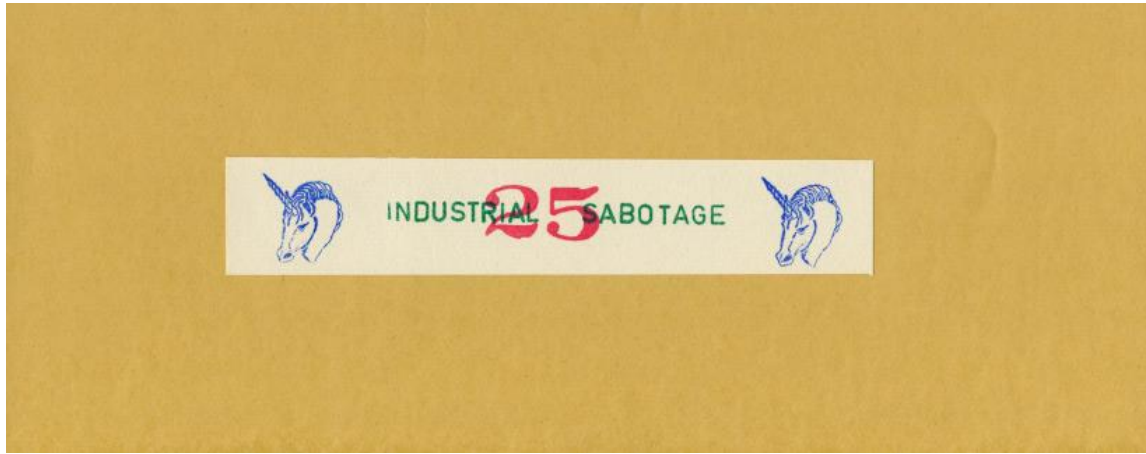
[jwcurry, ed.]. *Industrial Sabotage*, no. 13, March 1983.

Side-stapled wrappers. Also issued as *Curvd H&z*, no. 186, 1cent, no. 100, and *Toybox*, no. 3. Cover drawing by Joe Brouillette. Contributors include Joe Brouillette, jwcurry, Linda Davey, Mark Laba, bpNichol, Michael Ondaatje, Jim Shedden, and Steven Smith.



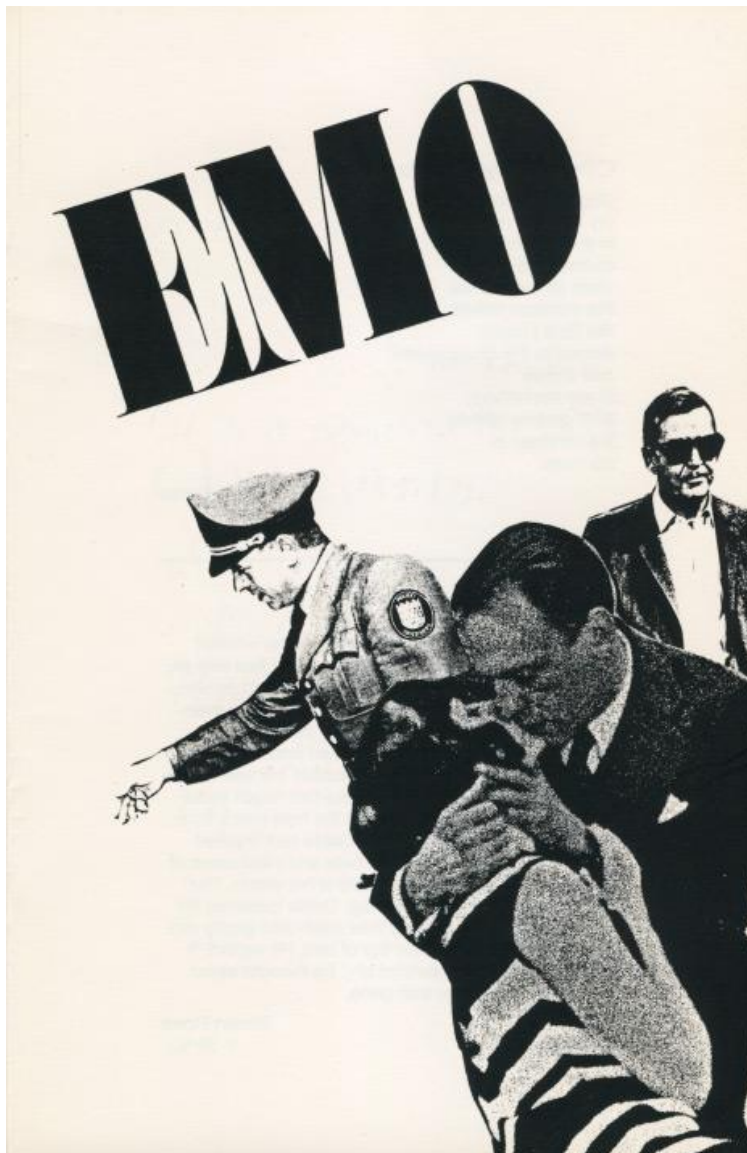
jwcurry and Mark Laba, eds. *Industrial Sabotage*, no. 21. Nov. 12, 1983.

Stapled wrappers. Also issued as *Curvd H&z*, no. 249. This a facsimile reissue of *Industrial Sabotage*, no. 12. This is no. 91 from an edition of 100 copies.



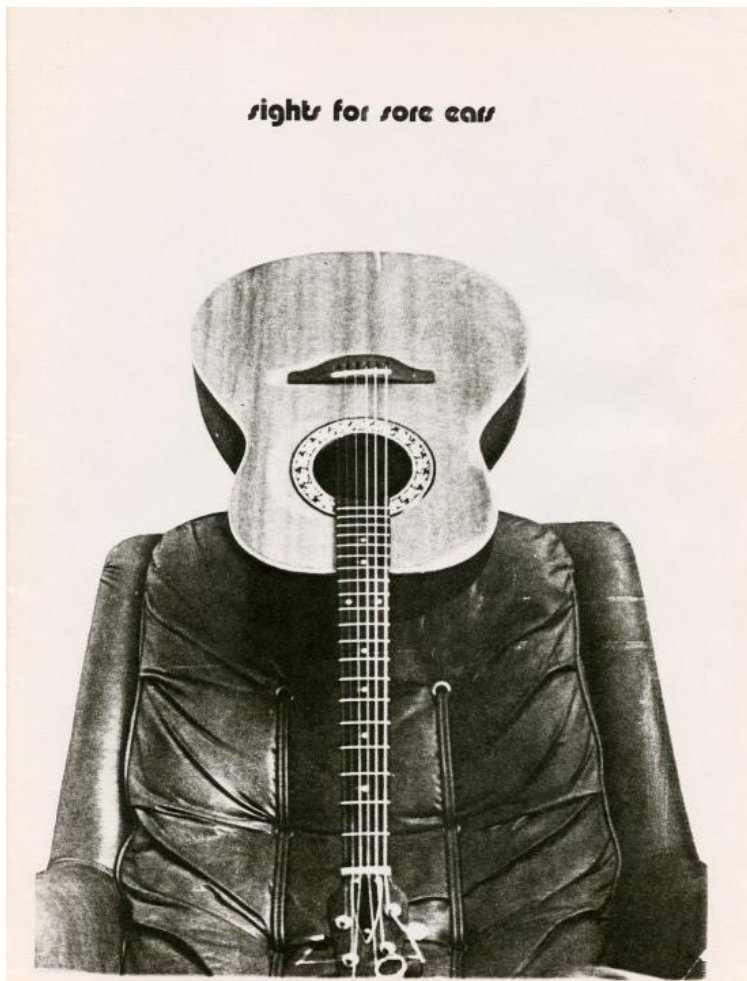
[jwcurry, ed.]. *Industrial Sabotage*, no. 25, Dec. 29, 1983.

Single sheet folded three times to make eight panels. Contributors are jwcurry, M.B.Duggan, LeRoy Gorman, Mark Laba, and Steven Smith.



[jwcurry, ed.]. *Industrial Sabotage*, no. 28, 1984.

Single sheet printed on both sides and folded to make a leaflet. Also issued as Coma Goats, no. 37, Curvd H&z, no. 298, Elvis Car, no. 2, and In Tents, no. 6. Cover by Lillian "Emo" Necakov. "[P]ublished on the occasion of the unwavering trepidation of four young primates reading at Kontakte on Toronto's fashionable Queen Street West October 27, 1984."



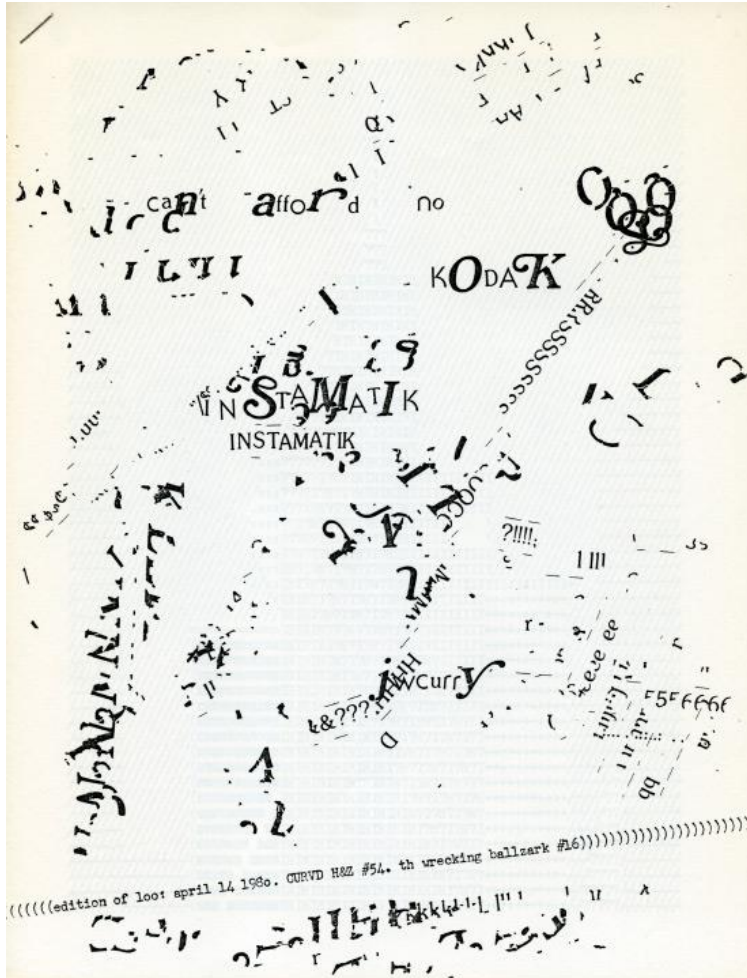
jwcurry, ed. *Industrial Sabotage*, no. 51. June 1991.

Loose sheets laid in wrappers.
Cover photograph by Chester Baker. Also issued as Curvd H&z, no. 423. This issue publishes "Sights for Sore Eyes" a collection of five scores.



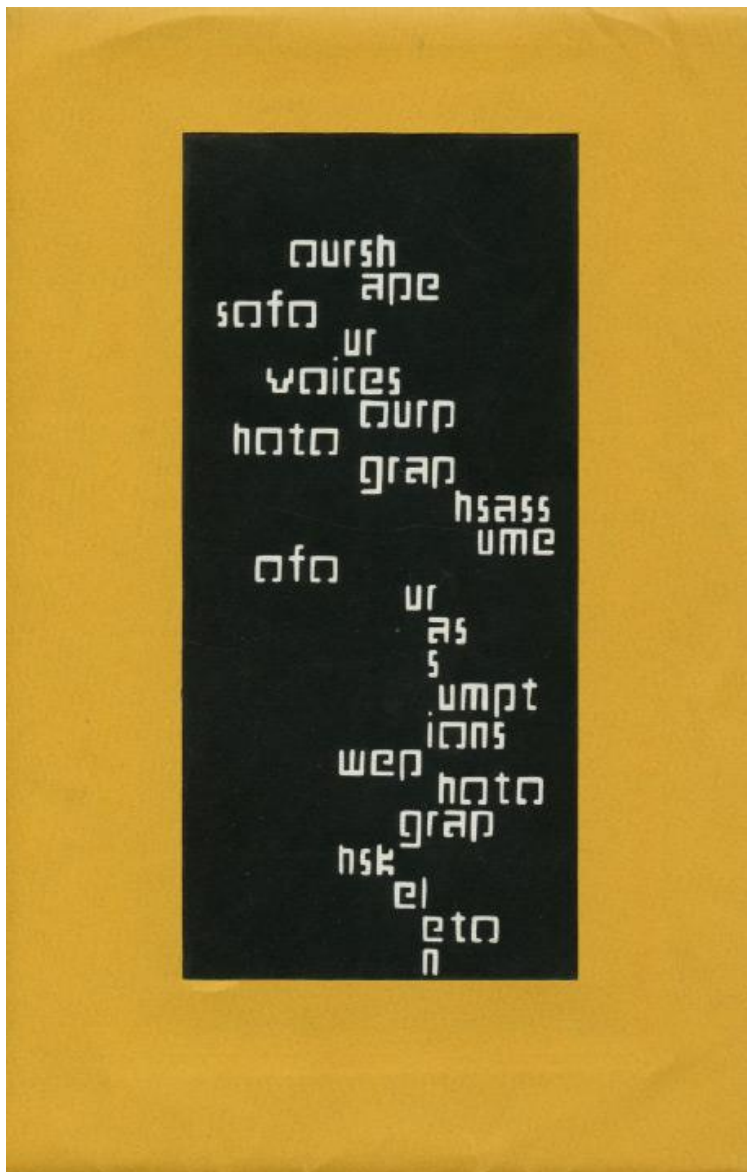
jwcurry. *BeRzeRkeR hyPeRgRaPheR*. Canadian Small Change Association, 2014.

Saddle-stitched. Photos and text by jwcurry. This is from an edition of 100 copies.



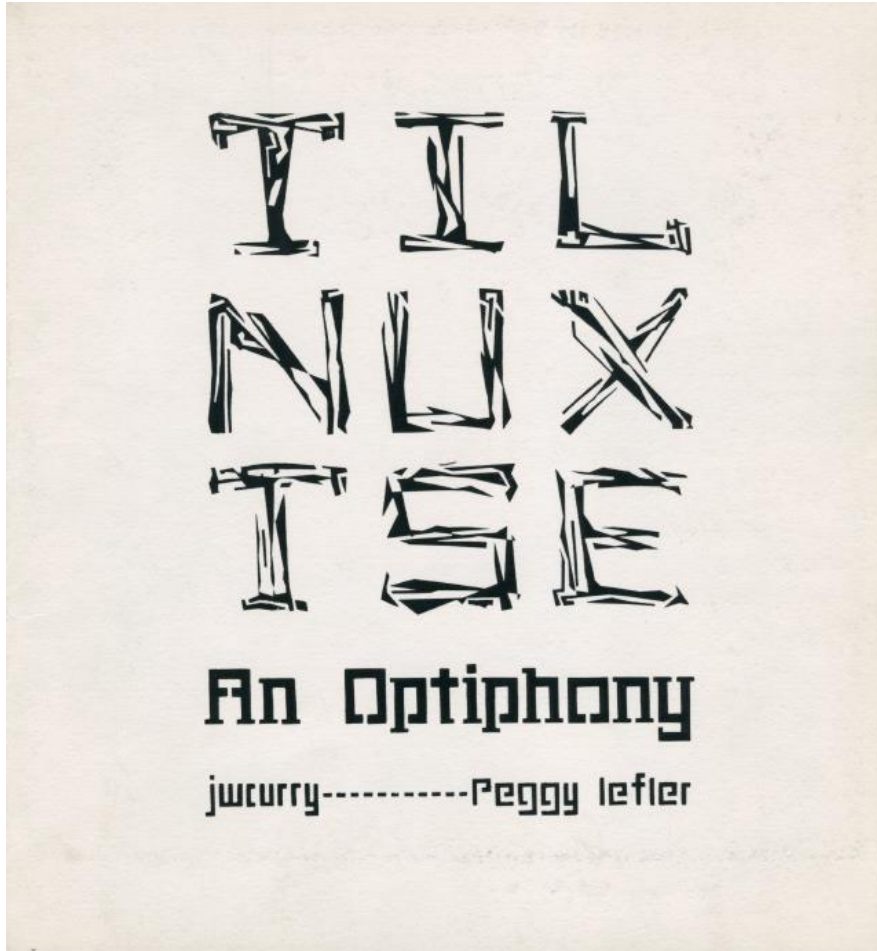
jwcurry. *Can't Afford No Kodak Instamatik Instamatik*. Curvd H&z, 1980.

Stapled upper left corner. Also issued as issued as Curvd H&z, no. 54 and Th Wrecking Ballzark, no. 16.



jwcurry, ed. *Running Head*. Underwhich Editions, 1983.

Loose sheets in a sleeve with an acetate window. Contributions by Mark Laba, Joe Brouillette, Peggy Lefler, bpNichol, George Swede and jwcurry. This is no. 38 from an edition of 50. copies. Each sheet is signed by contributor.



jwcurry and Peggy Lefler. *Til Nux Tse: An Optiphony*. Underwhich Editions, 1987.

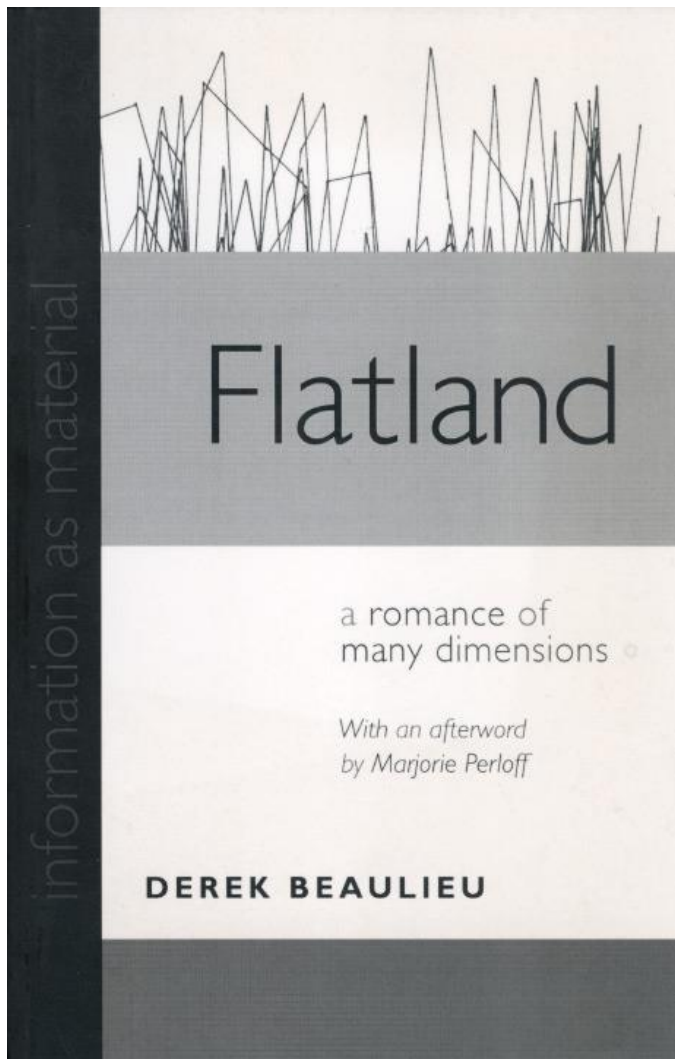
Folding silkscreen printed card with silkscreen print tipped in. This is no. 46 from an edition of 51 copies signed by jwcurry and Peggy Lefler.

Assorted Canadian Concrete



Shant Basmajian. *Spare Change: Poems*. [Old Nun Publications], [1972].

Saddle-stitched. Photographs by Richard Gabinet.



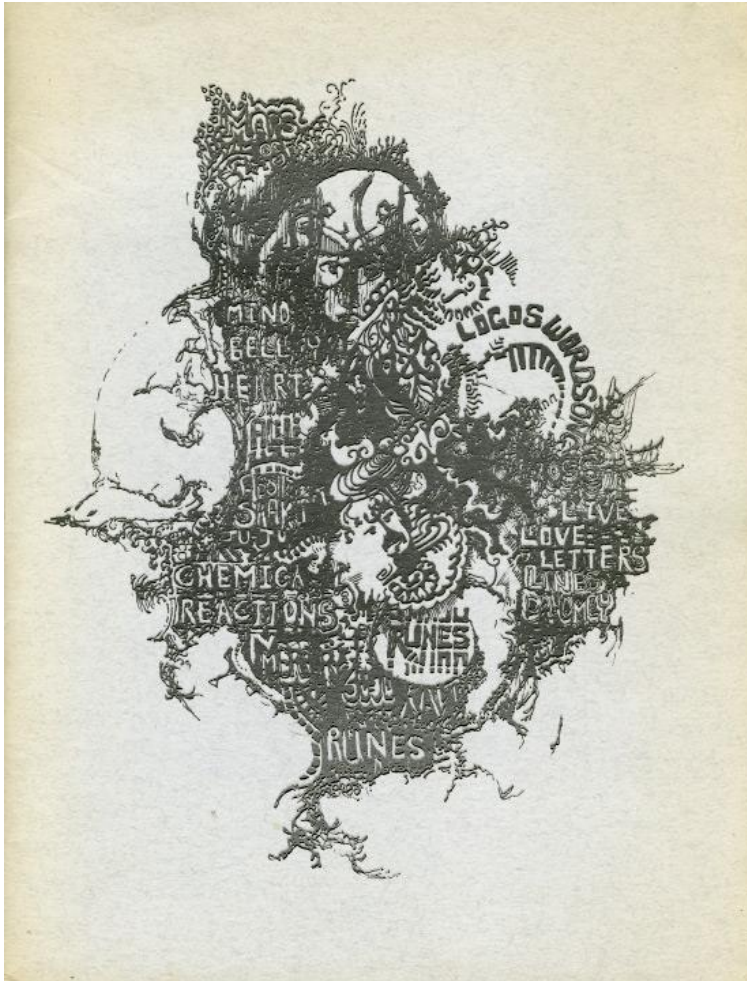
Derek Beaulieu. *Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions*. Information as Material, 2007.

Wrappers. Afterword by Marjorie Perloff. Inscribed by Derek Beaulieu to Charles Bernstein.



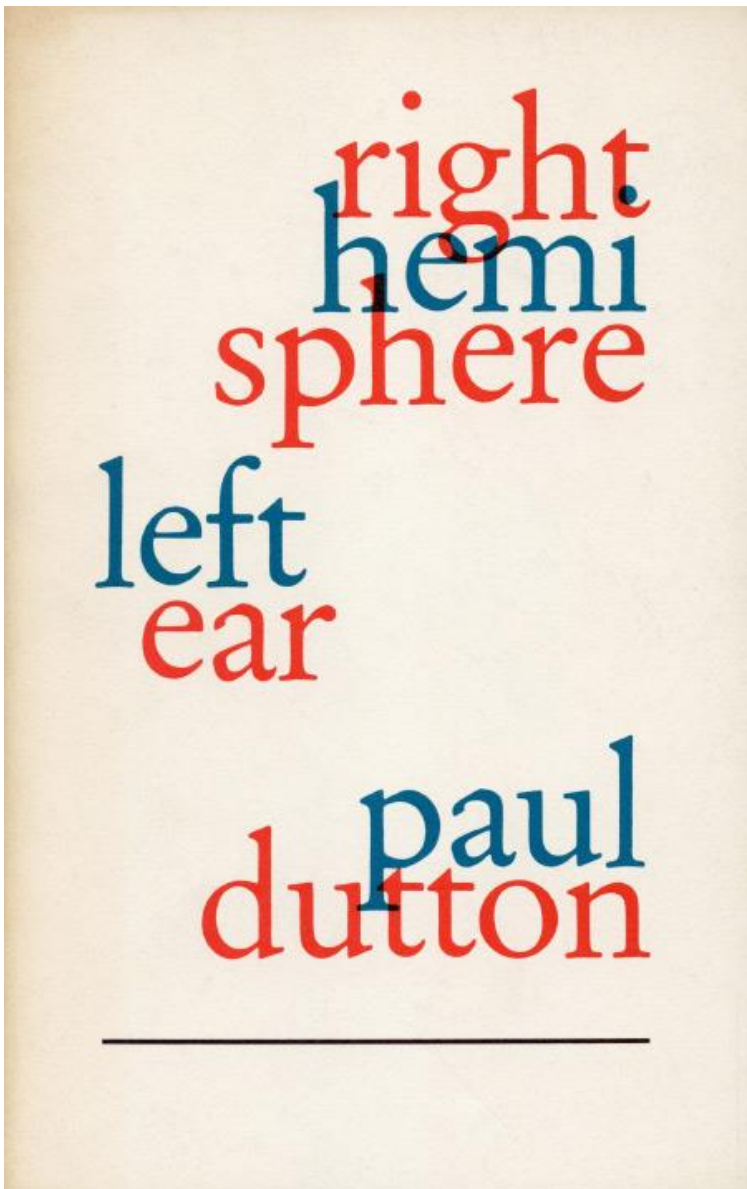
Derek Beaulieu. [Letraset]. Poster, 23 1/2 x 33 inches. N.p., [2010].

Poster, 23 1/2 x 33 inches.
Produced for Crimmitschau, Germany's Atomino Experimental Art Festival in an edition of 100 copies. The 1st 50 of which were to be hung throughout the city by Crimmitschau's Town Hall. The remaining 50 copies are signed and numbered. This is no. 23 from an edition of 50 signed copies.



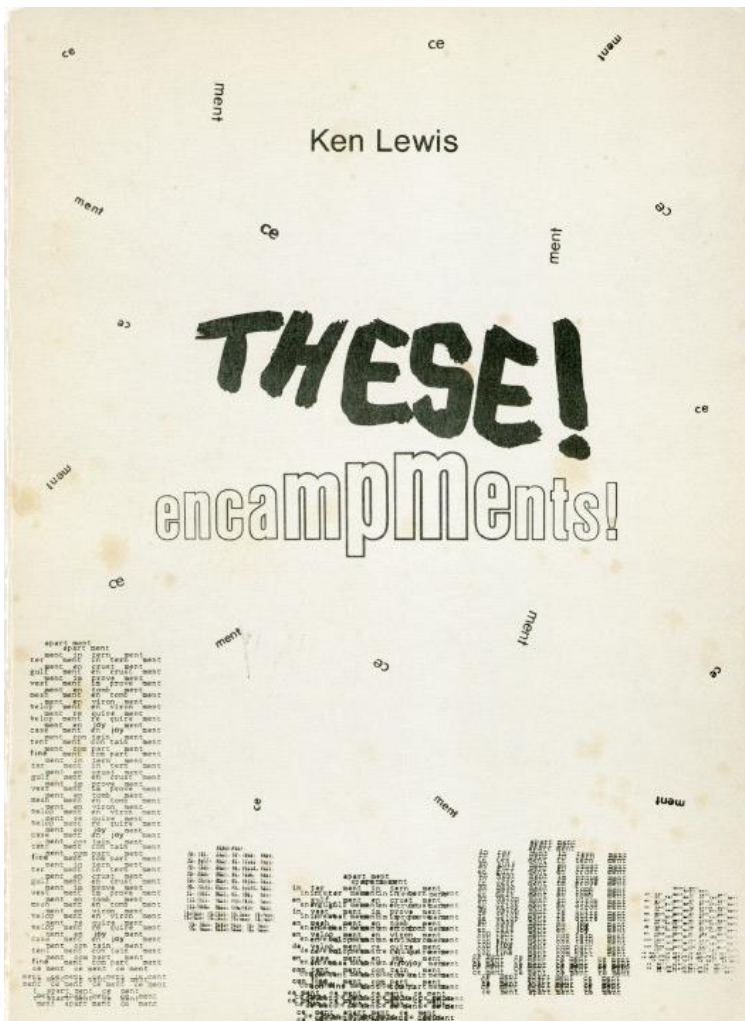
Judith Copithorne. *Runes*.
Coach House Press / Intermedia,
1970.

Stapled wrappers. This is from
an edition of 500 copies.



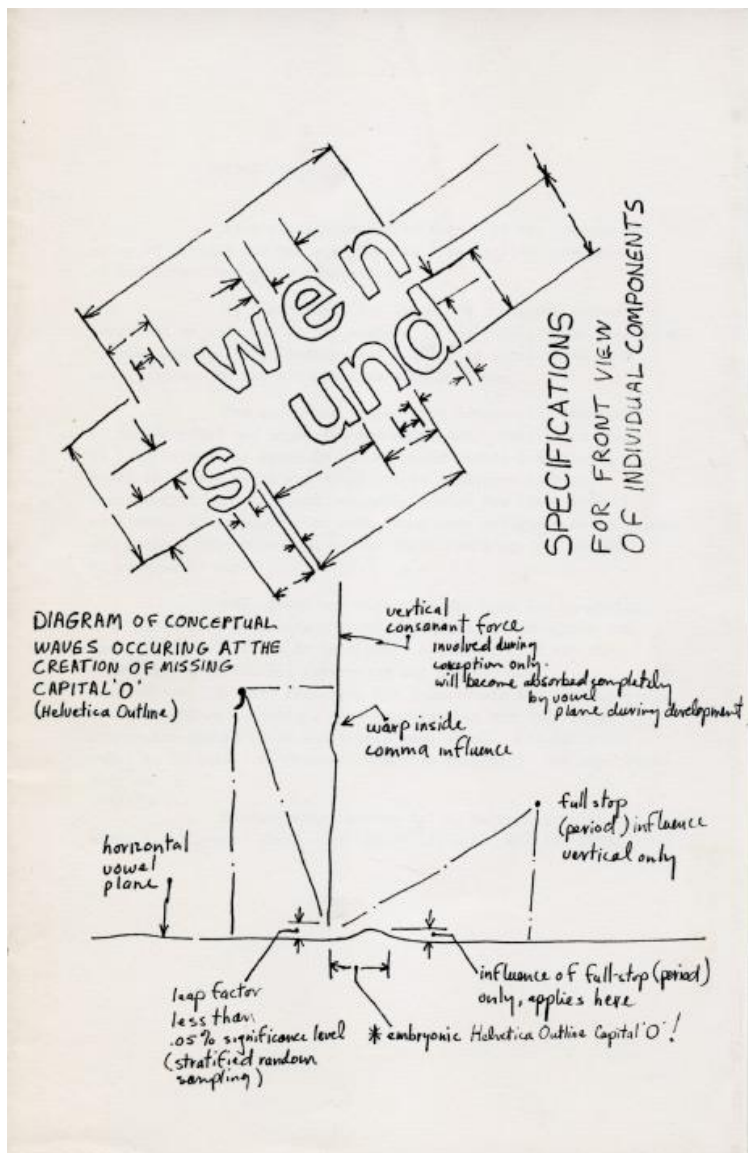
Paul Dutton. *Right Hemisphere,
Left Ear*. Coach House Press,
1979.

Wrappers.



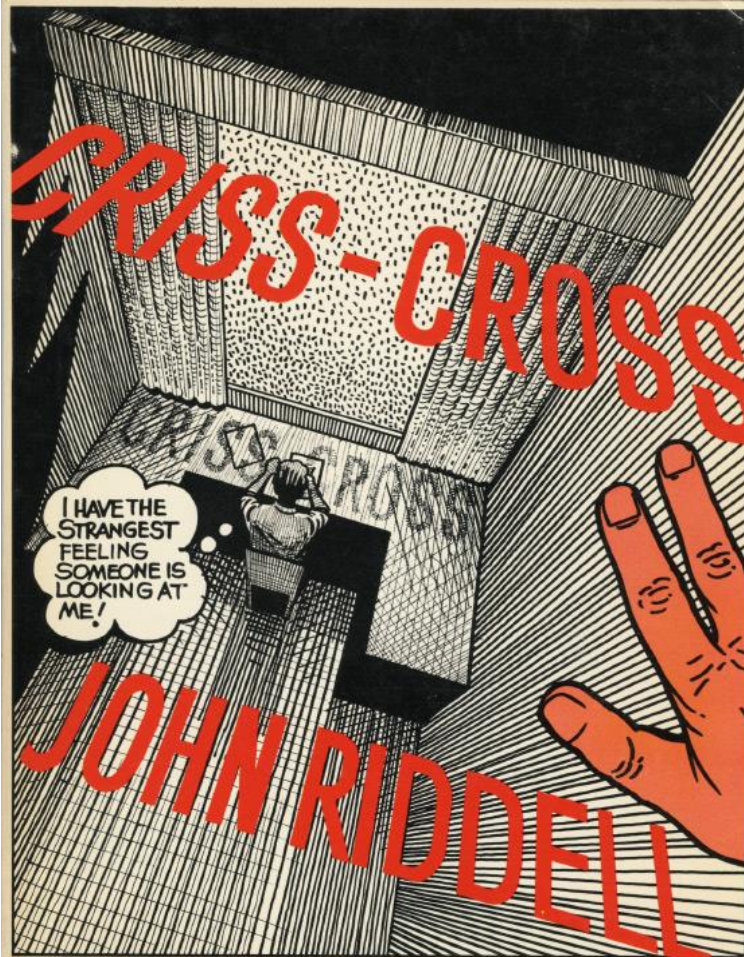
Ken Lewis. *These! Encampments*. The Quarry Press, 1982.

Wrappers.



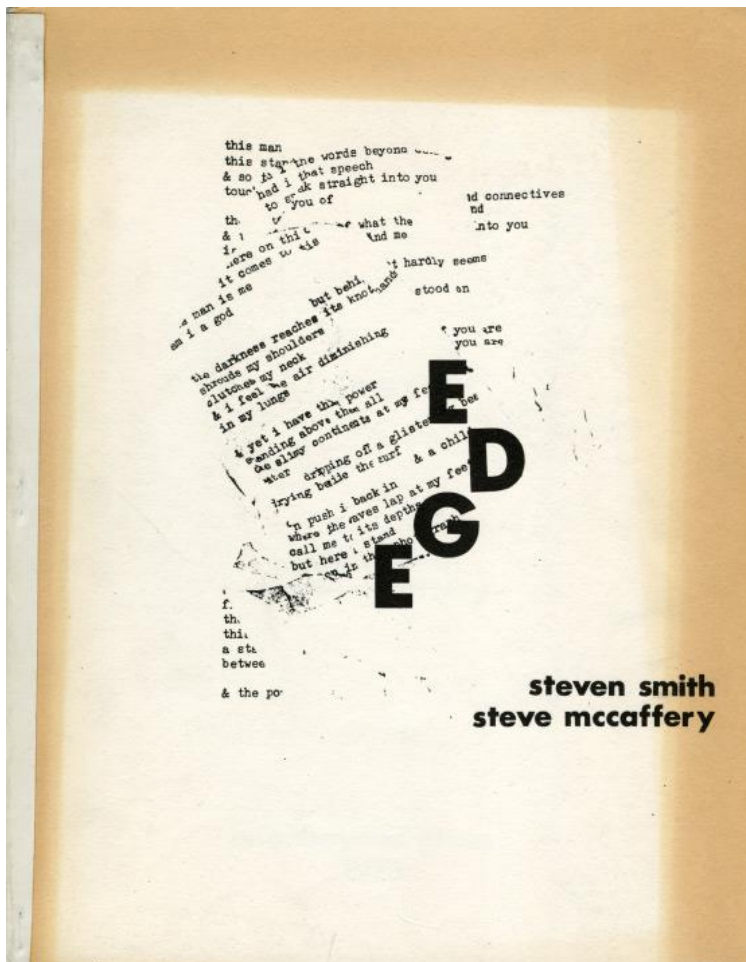
Owen Sound. *Specifications*. Wild Press, 1978.

Five loose pages printed on one side in printed wrappers. This is from an edition of 100 copies. Published on the occasion readings by the sound poetry group Owen Sound: Michael Dean, Steven Smith, Richard Truhlar, and David Penhale at Vivaxis, Toronto, May 12, 1978.



John Riddell. *Criss-Cross: A Text Book of Modern Composition*. Coach House Press, 1977.

Perfect bound. Review copy.
 Edited for the publisher by
 bpNichol.



Steven Smith and Steve McCaffery. *Edge*. Anonbeyond Press, 1975.

Side-stapled wrappers with tape over spine. This is from an edition of 100 copies. A “collaborative xerox composition” between Steve McCaffery and Steve Smith. This is McCaffery’s first book. Inscribed by Steve McCaffery to Jackson Mac Low.