

**Lessons of the Backlist:
A Curatorial and Editorial Analysis of the Vancouver
Art Gallery's Catalogues 1967–2022**

by
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Abstract

The Vancouver Art Gallery is a cultural heritage institution that organizes and presents art exhibitions, holds public programming and publishes art catalogues, among other activities. This report examines the Gallery's publishing activities to showcase and analyze the relationship between curating and editing at the institution and includes a glossary of related art and publishing terms that helps create a shared environment between the two disciplines. The different themes, formats and styles of publication throughout the institution's history and their significance are also studied. Through the years, the Gallery's publications have served as means to uphold its mission and values; build and maintain relationships with local artistic communities; and engage with the Gallery's diverse audiences. Publishing, then, is an endeavor that advances the Gallery's—and any other institution's—vision for both the present and future.

Keywords: art publishing; museum and gallery publishing; art catalogues; curating; editing

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Glossary

Alt-text	Short for “alternative text.” A short descriptive text that accompanies an image to be read by screen readers. It is hidden from regular navigation. ¹
Art book	An umbrella term for any book about the arts, usually with photographic reproductions and with a documentary purpose. ²
Artist’s book	Book made by an artist intended as a unique work of art. ³
Book art	“The idea of the book as a work of visual or tactile art, beyond its textual value.” ⁴
Caption	Text that accompanies an image with credits and can include a brief description of it or give contextual information. ⁵
Catalogue	Not to be confused with a marketing catalogue used by traditional publishers to sell their new lists. A catalogue (also called exhibition catalogue) is a publication tied to an art exhibition, that usually includes scholarly essays about the works, biographies, list of works, reviews, interviews, and high-quality photographs of art works and the exhibit installations.
Creative industries	“Industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property [which] include advertising, architecture, the art and antiques market, the performing arts, publishing,” among others. ⁶

¹ “Guide to Image Descriptions,” AccesiblePublishing.ca, <https://www.accessiblepublishing.ca/a-guide-to-image-description/>

² “Art book,” *The Oxford Companion to the Book* (Oxford University Press, 2010).

³ Des Cowley, Robert Heather and Anna Welch, “What is an artist book?,” State Library Victoria, <https://blogs.slv.vic.gov.au/our-stories/what-is-an-artist-book/>.

⁴ “Book art,” *The Oxford Companion to the Book* (Oxford University Press, 2010).

⁵ “Guide to Image Descriptions,” AccesiblePublishing.ca, <https://www.accessiblepublishing.ca/a-guide-to-image-description/>

⁶ Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, *Creative Industries Mapping*, 2001, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/183544/2001part1-foreword2001.pdf

Contemporary art	Loosely used to describe art of the present moment or the recent past. It is not tied to a specific moment in history or artistic movement. ⁷ Not a synonym of modern art.
Dust jacket	Detachable outer paper cover with flaps that wrap around front and back covers as well as spine of the book. Typically used on hardcover editions and originally developed to protect the binding from the elements but is now used for marketing and design purposes. ⁸
Heritage institutions	Also commonly referred to as GLAMs (galleries, libraries, archives and museums), heritage institutions are establishments that safeguard and exhibit objects and records of cultural, historical or educational value in order to preserve collective memory. ⁹
Newsprint	Cheap, low-quality paper usually used to print newspapers and advertisements. ¹⁰
Open access	Freely available, digital, online information, scholarship and publications with fewer or no copyright restrictions. ¹¹
Picture research	“The selection, procurement and collection of illustrations of all kinds” ¹²
Retrospective	A type of exhibition and its publication that takes a comprehensive and historical look at the career of an artist or the development of a movement over a period of time.
Survey	Similar to a retrospective, a survey exhibition and publication samples works to provide an overview of an artist, movement, genre, discipline, or artistic community in a specific location. It does not

⁷ “Contemporary art,” in Michael Clarke, ed., *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Art Terms* (2 ed.) (Oxford University Press, 2010).

⁸ “Dust Jacket,” *The Oxford Companion to the Book* (Oxford University Press, 2010).

⁹ “Canadian Industry Statistics,” Government of Canada, <https://www.ic.gc.ca/app/scr/app/cis/summary-sommaire/7121>.

¹⁰ “newsprint,” Cambridge Dictionary, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/newsprint>.

¹¹ “Open Access Publishing: What is Open Access?,” Cornell University Library, [https://guides.library.cornell.edu/openaccess#:~:text=Open%20access%20\(OA\)%20refers%20to,the%20users%20and%20the%20authors](https://guides.library.cornell.edu/openaccess#:~:text=Open%20access%20(OA)%20refers%20to,the%20users%20and%20the%20authors).

“Open Access Movement,” UNESCO, <https://en.unesco.org/open-access/open-access-movement>.

¹² Giles Clark and Angus Phillips, *Inside Book Publishing*, 5th ed. (London: Routledge, 2014), 202.

necessarily include the historical aspect necessary for a retrospective.

Travelling exhibition

Also called touring exhibition, an exhibition held in two or more different venues. It should feature at least 25% of the objects displayed in the original exhibition to ensure continuity of the exhibition while allowing hosting institutions the flexibility to organize and complement the exhibition with their own collections.¹³

Tombstone

Wall label that accompanies an artwork that lists only artist (if known), title of the piece, method and material of production, date of creation and credit line.¹⁴

Visual culture

The tangible, or visible, expressions by a people, a state or a civilization, evaluated from several disciplines, like art history, social sciences and humanities.¹⁵

Visual literacy

Set of competencies and abilities that allow individuals to “find, interpret, evaluate, use, and create images and visual media. Visual literacy skills equip a learner to understand and analyze the contextual, cultural, ethical, aesthetic, intellectual, and technical components involved in the production and use of visual materials.”¹⁶

¹³ Touring exhibition, Arts Council England, <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Museums%20and%20galleries%20tax%20relief%20FAQs%20-%20touring%20exhibition%20definition.pdf>.

¹⁴ Collections, “Writing on the Wall,” *Index— Harvard Art Museums* (May 5, 2015), <https://harvardartmuseums.org/article/writing-on-the-wall>.

¹⁵ Lauren Schleimer, “Visual Culture,” *Art in Antiquity*, Joukowsky Institute for Archeology, https://www.brown.edu/Departments/Joukowsky_Institute/courses/artinantiquity/7158.html.

¹⁶ “Visual Literacy,” Central Connecticut University Elihu Burritt Library, <https://libguides.ccsu.edu/c.php?g=736311>.

Chapter 1.

Introduction

The Vancouver Art Gallery (“the Gallery”)¹⁷ is a not-for-profit museum¹⁸ founded in 1931. Currently, it is Western Canada’s largest visual arts institution with more than 12,000 artworks in its care. The Gallery’s main activity is the organizing and showing of art exhibitions, although it also publishes catalogues, presents a variety of public programming, and sells and rents art.¹⁹ The Gallery also owns the rights of reproduction to some, but not all, the pieces in its collection, which grants the institution the ability to display and reproduce them in print and digital media. Additionally, the Gallery collaborates with other institutions to lend pieces and negotiate rights of reproduction for other institutions’ publications.

Throughout its history, but especially since the 1990s, this institution has given special attention to art produced by Indigenous Peoples of Canada and Asian artists in British Columbia, Canada and abroad. The focus on Asian art led to the creation of the Institute for Asian Art (IAA) in 2014.²⁰ It is also committed to displaying a wide array of pieces from the larger spheres of visual culture, design, and architecture.²¹ The Gallery is funded by its visitors, members, individual and corporate donors, foundations, and several national, provincial and municipal institutions, like the Canada Council for the Arts, the British Columbia Art Council and the City of Vancouver.²² Its publications have at times been supported by foundations including The Richardson Family, the Gallery’s

¹⁷ Although many locals to Vancouver and British Columbia refer to the Vancouver Art Gallery as “the VAG,” “the Gallery” aligns with the internal documents and style guide followed at the institution.

¹⁸ In Canada the terms “gallery” and “museum” have been used interchangeably, which is why many institutions that are actually museums, have gallery in their names. In most other places, they mean different things. A gallery is a commercial enterprise that represents artists and exhibits and sells their art. A museum is an institution that promotes cultural education through art exhibitions. The general public also tends to use these terms as equivalents.

Julien Delagrangé, “Introduction: What is the Difference Between an Art Gallery and a Museum?,” Contemporary Art Issue, <https://www.contemporaryartissue.com/what-is-the-difference-between-an-art-gallery-and-a-museum/>.

¹⁹ Art Rental & Sales is a not-for-profit program operated by the Vancouver Art Gallery to support emerging artists from British Columbia and the Gallery’s operations.

Art Rental & Sales, Vancouver Art Gallery, <https://artrentalandsales.com/>.

²⁰ “About the Institute of Asian Art,” Vancouver Art Gallery, <https://www.vanartgallery.bc.ca/asian-art>.

²¹ “About,” Vancouver Art Gallery <https://www.vanartgallery.bc.ca/about>.

²² Ibid.

Visionary Partner for Scholarship and Publications, and the Jack and Doris Shadbolt Endowment for Research and Publications.²³ Catalogues document and preserve the exhibitions, produce scholarship about the collection and disseminate knowledge to the public, which makes publishing an activity that records the institution's history.

The Gallery has had several homes in downtown Vancouver since its opening. Since 1983 it has been housed in a former courthouse building, leased by the City of Vancouver. A 2004 planning process revealed the need for more exhibition and public programming space, and since then a new goal to expand the Gallery space was set in motion. The designated land for the new Vancouver Art Gallery is on Cambie and Georgia, a few blocks east from the current location, although construction of the new building has not started yet.²⁴

My professional placement at the Vancouver Art Gallery ran from June to September 2022. Since the Gallery does not currently have a publications team, I was part of the Curatorial Department but my role was closer to that of a publishing assistant. The Gallery extended my contract and I remain in this position at the time of writing (January 2023). I provided support to the Director of Publishing and Content Strategy, a new title within the institution, in diverse tasks. I researched topics of interest for the Gallery—like accessible digital publishing and archival and conservation standards in museum and gallery publishing—and crafted recommendations for digital publishing and programming based on the Gallery's needs. I also performed editorial tasks, like copyediting, proofreading, and revising layouts and proofs for digital publications and the exhibition catalogues published in the fall and winter of 2022.

The Gallery has edited its own exhibition catalogues for decades, but also heavily collaborates with both local and international co-publishers. The frequency of publication depends on the shows held, since the number of exhibitions varies each year and not all exhibitions have catalogues. There are many aspects that influence the final publications and their production process, which include the format of publication, whether it is co-published with a trade publisher or another gallery or museum, and the budget for the publication. Although publishing catalogues is a significant part of the exhibitions it

²³ Stephanie Rebick, ed., *Modern in the Making: Post-War Craft and Design in British Columbia* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 2020) p.249.

²⁴ "History," Vancouver Art Gallery <https://www.vanartgallery.bc.ca/history>.

organizes, the Gallery has not had a consistent editorial team. There have been part-time Publication Coordinators, but always as part of the Curatorial Department and not a branch solely for publishing. This is starting to change as the Gallery reorganizes its departments after the Covid-19 pandemic; there are plans to create a publishing team under the new Director of Publishing and Content Strategy in the near future. This shift signals the support from the directives of the institution for its publishing activities to become more relevant within the Gallery and exploit their capacity to reach new and international audiences.

When discussing the Gallery's activities, it is essential to differentiate the audiences it targets. Not everybody that goes to the Gallery will be a possible buyer or reader of the catalogues, and not everybody interested in the catalogues will be a recurrent visitor of the exhibitions. Understanding the different audiences that the Gallery has for each of its activities helps explain differences in the editorial decisions for the catalogues' content and format.

For the development of this report, I chose forty of the approximately 150 catalogues the Gallery has published since 1967. The selection is a significant sample of the trends and interests of the Gallery's publications through this timespan. After I realized that simply grouping them by time period or date of publication did not yield any distinguishable patterns, I decided to lay them all out. Through the process of organizing all the books in the same space, I started to identify relations between them and picked out the ones that referenced or built upon one another. This was not a straightforward process, and I changed my mind several times before deciding on the final forty exhibition catalogues. A historical run-through of these catalogues also evidences the different ways the Gallery both innovates and looks back on its own exhibitions and catalogues to portray art and visual culture and engage the different communities in which the Gallery is immersed.



Figure 1. Twenty of the forty catalogues selected for this report. Left column (top to bottom): *955,000*, *Jan Wade: Soul Power*, *West Coast Lokas*, *Mannersm: A Theory of Culture*, *Pacific Vibrations*, *The Uncanny: Experiments in Cyborg Culture*, *We: Vancouver*, *Douglas Coupland: everywhere is anywhere is anything is everything*, *Modern in the Making: Post-War Craft and Design in British Columbia*, *Vancouver Collects*, *Robert Davidson: Eagle of the Dawn*. Right column (top to bottom): *Cabin Fever*, *Jin-me Yoon: About Time*, *Vancouver Special: Ambivalent Pleasures*, *Visions of British Columbia*, *Geoffrey Farmer: The Surgeon and the Photographer*, *Baja to Vancouver: The West Coast and Contemporary Art*, *Picasso: The Artist and his Muses*.

This report starts with an overview of the relationship between curating and editing and how they intersect in the Gallery. The three following chapters break down the diverse ways in which the Gallery has published its catalogues since 1967 to the present; first dividing them by publishing process, then by theme and lastly by format. The sixth chapter reviews the Gallery's organizational structure and how it relates to its publishing practices and the report wraps up with conclusions and considerations for future publishing professionals.

Chapter 2.

Curating and Editing in a Gallery or Museum

The words *curating* and *editing* are often used interchangeably, particularly in online environments and by people who are neither professional curators nor editors—people who “curate” Spotify playlists²⁵ or influencers who “edit” their wardrobes,²⁶ for example. There are various definitions of curating and editing are, especially since these are not static disciplines or practices; they evolve in time, as they are exercised by different individuals, and change with industry and market trends and institutions’ missions and goals, among other factors.

The following definition of *curating* blends the practice of curating with its effects on viewers of exhibitions:

[Curating] extends beyond the care and exhibition of the artifacts to the “care of the souls” of the persons who look to the museum for knowledge and understanding. Drawing again on the suggested linguistic connection of the term “curator” to *curare* suggests that the curator may exercise considerable influence on the viewers’ understanding of art.²⁷

Editing is even harder to define succinctly, as there are many smaller tasks and internal divisions of what it means to edit a publication. Broadly speaking, editing can be described as “finding works to publish [...] and steering each one through the serpentine pipeline of the publishing house into the marketplace, tending to the author’s needs (and psyche) along the way.”²⁸

In theory both are concerned with the careful selection, organization and display of “content”—whether artworks, objects or texts—but in practice curating and editing are two distinct activities, especially in a gallery or museum setting. Curators and editors

²⁵ Damian Keyes, “Spotify Playlist Curators: How to Find Them,” <https://www.dk-mba.com/blog/spotify-playlist-curators>.

²⁶ “How to edit your wardrobe to make getting dressed easier and more enjoyable,” CBC <https://www.cbc.ca/life/style/how-to-edit-your-wardrobe-to-make-getting-dressed-easier-and-more-enjoyable-1.5862324>

²⁷ Curtis L. Carter, “Overview,” *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, 2 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

²⁸ Peter Ginna, “Introduction. The Three Phases of Editing,” in *What Editors Do: The Art, Craft and Business of Book Editing* (University of Chicago Press, 2017), p. 3.

perform several everyday tasks—reading, researching, revising, for example—that shape the practice of their respective professions. These are two separate roles, with related and transferable abilities that give way to collaboration. The partnership between curators and editors becomes imperative to the successful creation of both exhibitions and publications in a heritage institution.

2.1. What is Curating?

The concept of curation as we know it today has existed and evolved for more than two thousand years.²⁹ It comes from the Latin *curare*, which means “to care,”³⁰ but as curatorial practice has evolved, so have its meanings and implications. The two main tasks involved in curating are caring for and preserving a collection—which includes acquiring pieces for the collection—and organizing objects for display, thereby creating exhibitions accessible for both leisurely and educational purposes.³¹ Curators research, evaluate and select pieces before acquiring them or featuring them in exhibitions, to ensure they contribute to their institution’s collection or are relevant additions to a show.

Curating also concerns the relationships with and connections between artists, artworks and institutions.³² The curator, by displaying artworks created by different artists, creates juxtapositions between them to further their theme for the exhibition at a given institution, which also becomes an influencing factor on how the visitor understands an art show, an artist or an artistic movement.

Since by definition curating involves selecting and rejecting pieces of art, it can be perceived as discriminatory. Biases and preconceptions of “real art” or who is a “real artist” have often relegated minorities and left them outside the hegemonic artistic canon³³ and the gates of galleries and museums—the Gallery is actively working to

²⁹ Janet Marstine and Oscar Ho Hing Kay, “Curating as a relational practice” in *Curating Art* (London: Routledge, 2021): 1–6.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Nelson Goodman, “Art in Action,” *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, 2 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

³² Marstine and Ho, “Curating as a relational practice,” 1.

³³ Ibid., 2.

remedy its lack of representation especially of Black artists³⁴ in its permanent collection and exhibitions. Nevertheless, all curators have inherent interests, informed by their academic backgrounds, professional development, personal interests and institutional affiliations.

Curating in a gallery or museum setting, then, consists of active collaboration between curators and artists to organize, interpret and showcase pieces that speak to each other about or around a specific subject and that represent the vision of the institution where the exhibition takes place.

2.2. What is Editing?

Much like the curatorial profession, editorial tasks can be divided into two main categories: selecting the manuscript and altering it to fit a specific public. Editors have been part of the publishing process of all types of texts since the late 1400s.³⁵ With time, the professionalization of the editorial practice has evolved into various roles, each in charge of a specific stage—acquisition of manuscript, development of text, copyediting the final version, overseeing the production—of the editorial side of the publishing process.³⁶

In a commercial trade publishing house, editorial work is usually divided as follows: acquisition editors read and evaluate submissions to be added to a publisher's list or commission an author to write on a given topic; developmental editors work closely with authors to build and organize the manuscript, transforming it from a draft to a publishable text; and line and copy editors³⁷ iron out the spelling, grammar and language of the book to make it clear and cohesive, always keeping in mind the final reader.³⁸ In a cultural heritage institution, where publishing books is only one of the activities

³⁴ *Annual Report 2020–21* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 2021), <https://vancouverartgallery.pressreader.com/vancouver-art-gallery-annual-report/20210630>.

³⁵ Susan Bell, *The Artful Edit* (New York: Norton & Company, 2007), p. 3.

³⁶ Ginna, *What Editors Do*.

³⁷ Not all publishers separate line and copy editors into two different roles.

³⁸ Ginna, *What Editors Do*.

undertaken, these editorial roles may not be as distinct and not necessarily performed by different people.

Additionally, depending on the genre of the book and the type of publisher, greater or fewer tasks will be part of the editorial process of the manuscript. For example, academic publications go through a process of peer review³⁹ and non-fiction publications go through fact-checkers; editing fiction generally does not require either of these stages. Conversely, the acquisition of manuscripts is not the same in a trade publisher as in a museum or gallery setting. Content depends on the exhibitions that are being organized, as the published catalogues will be companions to the art shows. For certain publications, the editors might consider commissioning new essays⁴⁰ or acquiring the rights to reproduce previously published works, in whole or in part.

Editors continue to oversee the process after the editorial stages of the publishing process are done. The final draft is then ushered into layout and design, the stage when a designer will shape the text into the final publication. Although editors are not the ones performing this task, they provide feedback on the graphic style and choices of the designer; editors can ask designers to change a font, increase line spacing, or rearrange images, for example. Visual aspects like typography selection, cover design, and bookbinding technique give the readers contextual clues of what they will find inside book and enhance the reading experience by creating a dynamic relation to the physicality of the book and not just the text and images in it.⁴¹ These characteristics will be addressed further in Chapter 5.

Once the whole manuscript layout is complete, the final stage of text editing, proofreading, takes place. Parallel to these processes, the editor also collaborates with the marketing team to elaborate a promotional strategy. The editor acts as an advocate for the book and its author(s), making sure both design and marketing are aligned to the spirit of the publication.⁴²

³⁹ Gregory M. Britton, "Thinking like a Scholarly Editor," in *What Editors Do*, 46.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 44.

⁴¹ Joana Drucker & Philip Auslander, "Lexicon (5)," *Performance Research* 7, 1 (2002), 101–102, DOI: 10.1080/13528165.2002.10871836.

⁴² Clark and Phillips, *Inside Book Publishing*, 222.

This outline of the editorial process of a manuscript applies to most trade publishers, but academic publishers, cultural heritage institutions and other non-traditional publishers might have slightly different editorial activities. Regardless of genre or institution, to successfully edit a manuscript, editors have to cultivate the relationships with their authors, creating the trust needed to shape that initial text into a published book and deliver it to an expecting audience. Editing, then, is a process of mediation between the writer and the audience, with the editor acting as an intermediary.⁴³

2.2.1. Editing Art Publications

In addition to the previously outlined editorial process, which applies to most types of publications, editing art entails more steps to properly display artworks on the page or the screen. Exhibition catalogues are only one of the genres that make up the vast category of art books, which also includes catalogue raisonnés, and photography and architecture publications, for example.⁴⁴ The Gallery also publishes brochures and newsletters, but the bulk of its publishing activities consists of exhibition catalogues. As picture-heavy publications, catalogues convey meaning visually⁴⁵ through not only their design and materiality but their image selection and positions as well. These publications require visual literacy abilities from readers for them to fully absorb the composition.

When dealing with an illustrated publication, editors must use verbal and visual tools to make its significance shine through the page.⁴⁶ The selection of images, their sequence and size “produce a symbiotic relationship between words and illustrations in which neither element can function without the other and in which each set of elements strengthens the meaning and reinforces the impact of the other.”⁴⁷ An additional task to the editorial process is picture research,⁴⁸ including clearing image rights, which means

⁴³ “Introduction,” in Professional Editorial Standards 2016, Editors Canada, <https://www.editors.ca/publications/professional-editorial-standards-2016>.

⁴⁴ “Art books,” *The Oxford Companion to the Book*.

⁴⁵ Deb Aaronson, “The Pink Should be a Surprise,” in Ginna ed., *What Editors Do*, 216.

⁴⁶ Jan V. White, *By Design: Word-and-Picture Communication for Editors and Designers* (New York and London: R. R. Bowker, 1974).

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ For additional insight into the minutia of picture research, I recommend another Master of Publishing project report, *Treasure hunting and storytelling: The role of picture research in publishing Simon Fraser University's institutional memory* by Cassandra McCarthy (Simon Fraser University, 2021).

getting permission from the owners of the reproduction rights to include the artworks—and photographs of the exhibitions in the case of catalogues—in the publication.⁴⁹ Proper credits and captions must also be included, which depending on citation style may differ from publication to publication.

The most important aspect of editing catalogues is displaying the featured works and photographs in a deliberate way, that will guide the reader along the story told through the images and supported by the accompanying texts.⁵⁰ The treatment and framing of these images receive also alters the way the reader experiences them.⁵¹ For example, cropped and zoomed images can convey the importance of detail, while full-bleed images can give the readers an opportunity to explore the page.

As previously mentioned, editors are still part of the design process, helping develop and approve design concepts and sample page layouts. Essential aspects of an art book—photography, colour correction and image preparation, for example—are in the hands of photographers and designers, but editors oversee every step and approve final versions, making sure, for instance, that images have the requisite for the type of publication: print or digital.⁵²

Printed art books have a high production value and require high-quality images and printing processes which also means they tend to have high prices.⁵³ Paper selection is a key factor for art publications, as the weight, opacity and colour of the paper can affect how the images print and look on the page. Traditionally, art books were printed on glossy, white paper and hardcover editions, but this trend has waned, with other formats now common. The importance of images when editing art also increases the importance of quality control at the printing stage, requiring in turn production editors,⁵⁴ in charge of overseeing the printing process and approving the printer proofs.⁵⁵

⁴⁹ Clark and Phillips, *Inside Book Publishing*, 202.

⁵⁰ Aaronson, “The Pink Should be a Surprise,” 216–217.

⁵¹ Valerie Holman, “The Art Book” in Simon Ford (ed.) *Information Sources in Art, Art History and Design* (Munich: K. G. Saur, 2001), p. 72.

⁵² Aaronson, “The Pink Should be a Surprise,” 217.

⁵³ Clark and Phillips, *Inside Book Publishing*, 109.

⁵⁴ Some publishing houses benefit from having production editors, but this position is most common in institutions that publish heavily illustrated books.

⁵⁵ Adrian Bullock, *Book Production* (London: Routledge, 2012), 93.

Publishing art books requires visual literacy to ensure both text and images are being displayed in a legible and enticing manner. In many cases art books are read leisurely as the images invite the reader to take time on each page, which can sometimes be at odds with the well-researched and academic nature of the texts in scholarly art books.

2.2.2. Editing Scholarly Texts

Like art books, scholarly texts are a big category that encompasses several genres, including monographs, essay collections or biographies, and can be about any subject or discipline, such as history, geography, literature or art. Scholarly art publications can be categorized as both scholarly publications and art books, and come from a few sources⁵⁶ that can be grouped as follows: university presses like Harvard University Press, commercial trade art publishers like Phaidon, and heritage institutions like the Vancouver Art Gallery.⁵⁷

Commercial art publishers and cultural heritage institutions publish a wide array of texts and not all of them are of academic rigour. Scholarly texts are not only well-researched, but also considered to come from authors with expertise or authority in the subject matter. In most instances, academic publishing entails a process of submissions from authors and includes peer-reviewing and acceptance or rejection of an article or book.⁵⁸ In all cases, “the scholarly editor is also looking for books that will contribute to the development of a scholarly field.”⁵⁹

Scholarship in museum and galleries involves research and writing by the curatorial staff—or guest curators and other invited writers—on the exhibitions or collections of the institution.⁶⁰ Rigorous research and accurate referencing are key elements that determine the contribution of the new academic publication to its field. The Gallery bases

⁵⁶ Ginna, in *What Editors Do*, 6.

⁵⁷ It is worth noting that not all of the Gallery’s exhibition catalogues are scholarly publications.

⁵⁸ Adrian Bullock, Chris Jennings, & Nicola Timbrell, “academic,” *A Dictionary of Publishing*. Oxford University Press, 2019. Retrieved 13 Oct. 2022

⁵⁹ Gregory M. Britton, “Thinking like a Scholarly Editor,” in Ginna, *What Editors Do*.

⁶⁰ Aaronson, in Ginna, *What Editors Do*, 216.

most of its style guide on the *Chicago Manual of Style*, while retaining some of its own guidelines for exhibition didactics and image credits in their publications.

Scholarly publications have specific editorial processes that are not common in the publishing of other genres. Peer-reviewing, referencing and citations have to be taken into consideration for production timelines and layout design. The additional information in scholarly texts—image captions, footnotes, bibliography, also called editorial apparatus—complicates the design and layout of the publication.⁶¹ Art books maintain the aesthetic presentation of their exhibition through their layout and design while including all the necessary parts of the editorial apparatus clearly and legibly.

Editors of scholarly catalogues also have to consider open-access publications since the free dissemination of academic writing has become a growing concern for both the publishing industry and cultural heritage institutions.⁶² The recent push towards open-access publishing focuses on the availability and accessibility of trust-worthy online information that usually comes from experts in academia and other institutions that produce scholarly publications such as galleries and museums.⁶³ The gradual—but not total—shift towards digital scholarly art publications is democratizing access to knowledge of art history and art criticism, which used to be reserved for academics or the few consumers who could afford the high prices of art books.

2.3. How Editing and Curating Intersect

In practical terms, every exhibition requires the writing, editing and copyediting of its didactics, tombstones, descriptions and marketing material, while every art book requires curation of its texts and artworks. But the intersection of editing and curating goes beyond the execution of these practices. These occupations mirror each other, as they both entail making connections: curators strive to connect different artwork with each other; editors focus on making connections within a text through literary devices or

⁶¹ G. Thomas Tanselle, "Some Principles for Editorial Apparatus," *Selected Bibliography* 25, 1972, 46.

⁶² Effie Kapsalis, "The Impact of Open Access on Galleries, Libraries, Museums, & Archives," Smithsonian Institute, 2016, 3, https://siarchives.si.edu/sites/default/files/pdfs/2016_03_10_OpenCollections_Public.pdf.

⁶³ Adrian Bullock, Chris Jennings, & Nicola Timbrell, "open access," *A Dictionary of Publishing*. Oxford University Press, 2019. Retrieved 13 Oct. 2022.

academic citations; and both strive to connect an audience—visitors, readers—to the result of their work, whether an exhibition or a publication. Both curating and editing require an additional level of understanding and care when dealing with dead creators, since the connections and alterations made to the work might not represent the original intent of the artist or author, who are not alive to be part of the process. Because of this, research skills and critical thinking become key competencies for editors and curators alike.

Catalogues become one of the only ways to document and, in a way, continue displaying site-specific installations after exhibitions are disassembled. Because of this, curators are deeply invested in these publications, making sure that their vision and theme for the exhibition is executed in the catalogue. In galleries and museums, that usually translates into the curators acting as editors as well, selecting photographs, commissioning essays or reviews, and approving cover and layout designs.

Editors also become sorts of curators, especially when working with artistic disciplines or anthologies and collections. The careful selection and organization of how the content is going to be read and displayed throughout the book resembles the curatorial process. Claire Macdonald—editor, curator, and cofounder of the arts journal *Performance Research*⁶⁴—explains it succinctly:

In a sense it is editing which is the more practical and curating the more conceptual, but the one cannot work without the other. Editing curated work into the pages of a journal is, on reflection, about a different kind of authorship on the part of the editor. Editors are facilitators more than anything else, but curating suggests the opportunity to care for the body of the publication in its material form, and to attend to its visual and tactile qualities as well as its content.⁶⁵

Editing into a printed book films, three-dimensional artworks, performances and other pieces that require the visitor to move around, listen and engage physically can be challenging, as it is important to convey—or try to—that same feeling through the page. This challenge can be tackled with collaboration between curators and editors.

⁶⁴ “Claire Macdonald,” The Center for the Humanities, <https://www.centerforthehumanities.org/programming/participants/claire-macdonald>.

⁶⁵ Claire Macdonald, “Committing to Paper,” *Performance Research* 4, 3 (1999): 60–63, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13528165.1999.10871694>.

In the case of the Gallery, curators are an example of how editing and curating can merge into one position. In the timeframe covered in this report, Doris Shadbolt, Daina Augaitis and Bruce Grenville stand out as key figures who have significantly contributed to the Gallery's publishing activities in creative ways and from senior or leadership roles. Analyzing the catalogues' content and format does not necessarily reflect the human labour involved in their production and the ways in which curatorial and editorial tasks combine under the purview of the same person. Shadbolt⁶⁶, Augaitis⁶⁷ and Grenville⁶⁸ were art curators first and foremost, but they also advanced the Gallery's publications activities in both content and form.

Now, Stephanie Rebick, previously Associate Curator, is Director of Publishing and Content Strategy, moving from a curatorial role to a brand-new publishing position in the institution. This new position marks a shift in the professionalization of the editorial practices at the Gallery and the creation of a team that will focus solely on the Gallery's print and digital publications, making sure to follow the same mandate of their corresponding exhibitions.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Doris Shadbolt was Senior Curator and Associate Director at the Gallery, where she worked for more than 20 years. During the late 1960s and '70s, she worked closely with notable writers and art critics like Lucy Lippard and John Coplans to create popular exhibitions and catalogues. By the time of her death, she was credited with changing perceptions about Indigenous art through her exhibitions and publications ("Passages," *Maclean's*, January 12, 2004, p. 14.) and of elevating Emily Carr's oeuvre from the regional to the national art stage. (Robin Laurence, *Lion in Winter: a Governor General's award crowns a lifetime of arts advocacy for Doris Shadbolt*, *Canadian Art* 17, 2, Summer 2000, p. 40.)

⁶⁷ Daina Augaitis worked for more than 20 years in the Gallery, during which time she was Chief Curator/Associate Director and Interim Director. During her time leading the Curatorial Department, she managed to create long-lasting relationships with trade publishers, which are still regular collaborators of the Gallery. Her curatorial vision translated into the page and strengthened the publishing activities of the institution. ("Daina Augaitis to step down as Chief Curator/Associate Director at the Vancouver Art Gallery," *Galleries West*, January 27, 2017, <https://www.gallerieswest.ca/news/daina-augaitis-to-step-down-as-chief-curatorassociate-direct/>.)

⁶⁸ Bruce Grenville was Senior Curator and worked at the Gallery from 1997 until his recent retirement in 2022. He pioneered the Gallery's approach to design and visual culture, blurring the lines that separate fine art from popular culture and seemingly ordinary objects. His perspective and eye for execution gave new meaning to and created relations between ceramic houseware and landscape painting, architecture and literature, technology and comics, to name a few. He was also supportive of the Gallery's investment into digital and open-access publications.

⁶⁹ The Gallery has also published some collection catalogues, print publications meant to highlight the collection holdings and not tied to a specific exhibition, but these books are not part of this report.

Chapter 3.

How the Gallery Publishes its Catalogues

The Gallery has a rich history of publishing,⁷⁰ having published an average of five exhibition catalogues every year for more than twenty years.⁷¹ Although the contents of these publications have varied throughout the years, they usually include:

- critical essays;
- short biographies;
- a brief note or introduction from the curator(s) of the exhibition;
- a foreword from the director of the institution;
- high-resolution images from the works used in the exhibition and installation images of the exhibition itself.

topographies: aspects of recent B.C. art (1996), *Raven Travelling: Two Centuries of Haida Art* (2006), and *Modern in the Making: Post-War Craft and Design in British Columbia* (2020) are representative of the Gallery's publications' content, which include the previously mentioned sections and show how their organization within the publications has shifted with time.

There are two types of exhibitions held at the Gallery: travelling exhibitions organized by other institutions and the Gallery's own exhibitions. Both types of exhibitions have accompanying catalogues, but in the case of travelling exhibitions that are not organized by the Gallery, the catalogue is bought at a discount from the organizing gallery and sold in the Gallery Store. In these cases, the Gallery is often not involved in the editing and production of the publication.⁷² When the Gallery oversees the publication of the

⁷⁰ The first exhibitions in the 1930s and 1940s organized by the Gallery were shorter—two or three months instead of six to nine—and they were all accompanied by brief catalogues, no more than 32 pages, stating the artists and specifications of the art pieces displayed. These catalogues slowly evolved to include more texts and information, eventually becoming a genre of art book. The resources required to produce these catalogues mean that not all exhibitions are accompanied by a catalogue, but all the major shows have their own publication.

⁷¹ Due to the challenges brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic, the Gallery reduced the number of exhibitions and publications in 2020 and 2021.

⁷² *Yoko Ono: Growing Freedom and Uninvited: Canadian Women Artists in the Modern Moment* are two recent examples of travelling exhibitions at the Gallery. In the latter case, *Uninvited* was organized by the McMichael Canadian Art Collection and later shown at the Gallery. The Gallery bought copies of the catalogue from the original institution and is selling them through the Gallery Store. The *Yoko Ono* catalogue is currently sold out at the Gallery.

Cheryl Sim and Gunnar B. Kvaran, *Yoko Ono. Growing Freedom* (Montreal: Hirmer Publishers and Phi Foundation for Contemporary Art), 2019.

catalogues, there are two main ways in which the process is organized. The first is the Gallery as sole publisher, in which case the Gallery assumes all production costs, hiring freelancers, commissioning content when necessary and managing suppliers, while doing part of the work in-house and keeping all revenue generated from the sale of the catalogues. The second instance is when the Gallery collaborates with a co-publisher, in which case the Gallery shares costs, labour and revenue with a co-publisher that can be a publishing house or another arts institution.

3.1. Gallery as sole publisher

When the Gallery acts as sole publisher of its catalogues it is responsible for every step of the process, from concept to printing, both in terms of budget and personnel. In many cases, tasks like copyediting and design are outsourced to third-party contractors. Most mid-sized galleries or museums do not have a whole in-house editorial team or publishing department, so curators end up overseeing the editing and publishing of their exhibition's catalogues. As such, copyeditors, designers and other book professionals are hired as freelance support for the publication process. Freelancers are indispensable for most publishing houses and the Gallery is no exception, as it has relied on their work to compensate for a lack of in-house publishing staff.

The main benefit for the Gallery when it acts as sole publisher is the creative freedom of making all decisions in-house, which might allow more of an innovative approach to the final publication. An early example of this is the catalogue *Personal Film: Content and Context*⁷³, from 1974. The creative decisions that diverge from the norm are very simple: the book is designed in landscape and has its spine on top, making it so that its wide pages are turned upwards instead of sideways. A recent example of a catalogue published solely by the Gallery is *The Surgeon and the Photographer*,⁷⁴ a 2015 catalogue on the artist Geoffrey Farmer. This thick hardcover book is made up of high-

Sarah Milroy, *Uninvited: Canadian Women Artists in The Modern Moment* (Vancouver: Figure 1 Publishing and the McMichael Canadian Art Collection,) 2021.

⁷³ Tony Reif, ed., *Personal Film. Content & Context* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 1974).

⁷⁴ Geoffrey Farmer, *The Surgeon and the Photographer* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 2015).

The exhibition brief and publication information can be consulted here:
<https://www.vanartgallery.bc.ca/exhibitions/how-do-i-fit-this-ghost-in-my-mouth>.

quality photographs of Farmer's mixed-media sculptures. It has minimal text, just a short acknowledgement from Farmer and his own annotations on each piece.

3.2. Co-Publishing

The Gallery works with two types of co-publishers: other galleries or museums and trade publishing houses. These two types of collaborators differ in small but significant ways. In the case of co-publishing with other art institutions, costs are shared and decisions are made in collaboration, but one of the entities is usually responsible for the production of the catalogue. When museums collaborate on an exhibition, the show and its catalogue will be on display and sold, respectively, at both institutions. In many cases, the collaboration is with international institutions, mostly in the United States and Europe, giving the catalogues larger and more diverse audiences than the catalogues published solely by the Gallery.

The Gallery has a long history of co-publishing catalogues with other museums or trade publishers, as can be evidenced by the publications *955,000*,⁷⁵ co-published with the Seattle Art Museum in 1970, and *Form and Structure in Recent Film*,⁷⁶ co-published with Talonbooks in 1972. In recent years, it has worked with specific trade publishers, most notably, Figure 1 Publishing, Douglas & McIntyre and Information Office, all Vancouver-based publishing houses with a focus on art books. Galleries and museums usually team up with trade publishers that publish their own art books because, as mentioned in Chapter 2, editing art requires different skills than editing non-illustrated texts.⁷⁷

Since the late 2000s, co-publishing has become the standard practice for the Gallery's publications because it allows catalogues to reach wider audiences and centralizes outsourced work. The Gallery plans its exhibitions at least one year in advance, which allows enough time to plan, research and assemble both the exhibition and its catalogue. The publishing industry works on a similar timeline, which means work on the

⁷⁵ Lucy Lippard, ed., *955,000* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery and Seattle Art Museum, 1970).

⁷⁶ Dennis Wheeler, ed., *Form and Structure in Recent Film* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery and Talonbooks, 1972).

⁷⁷ Although this is the norm, there have been instances of collaboration between non-art publishers and the Gallery, like the catalogue *The Uncanny: Experiments in Cyborg Culture*, co-published with Arsenal Pulp Press in 2002.

exhibition and publication should be simultaneous. With this timeline, the Gallery creates a pitch to send to the trade publishers it usually collaborates with to see if they would be interested in co-publishing and distributing in the publication. The proposal includes an overview of the exhibition and its themes, artist(s), the dates of the exhibition and the publication specs⁷⁸ and contributors. During this proposal phase—and regardless of whether there is a co-publisher attached to the project or not—the Gallery starts working on and licensing the contents—essays, photographs, artwork reproductions—of the catalogue simultaneously.

Publishing with trade houses has several advantages. The Gallery can streamline the process, as it does not need to hire individual freelancers, but works with the publisher's in-house talent instead, although this varies depending on the publication. In some cases, the co-publisher will hire freelance copyeditors if they do not have available in-house talent, but it is their responsibility and not that of the Gallery, which allows the Gallery staff to focus on picture research or exhibition-related tasks. In other cases, the Gallery will already have a studio or designer for the publication and simply needs a co-publisher with which to share production and printing costs. Another important benefit is that a trade publisher offers more marketing and sales channels than those of the Gallery. Normally, the Gallery sells its catalogues through the Gallery Store, both in-person and online. On the other hand, with a trade publisher, catalogues are more likely to find a larger audience, as they will likely be found in both chain and independent bookstores. A wider reach means more sales, but, as one might expect, co-publishing means sharing not only labour and expenses, but also revenue.

Trade art publishers usually have a specific aesthetic or style for their publications and co-published catalogues are no exception.⁷⁹ This can be evidenced in two catalogues co-published with Information Office.⁸⁰ *Cabin Fever*,⁸¹ from 2018, and *Jan Wade: Soul*

⁷⁸ The word “specs” is an abbreviation of “specifications,” which in this case refers to the format, dimensions, number of pages, approximate publication date of the catalogues.

⁷⁹ Identifying the Gallery's own aesthetic style is harder since design choices have not always been in the same hands and depend on the theme, artist(s) of the exhibition and the curator(s)' vision.

⁸⁰ For additional insight into the relationship between trade art publishers and cultural heritage institutions, I recommend another Master of Publishing project report, *Investigating Existing and New Models of Distribution in Canadian Art Book Publishing* by Emma Walter (Simon Fraser University, 2021).

⁸¹ Jennifer Volland, Bruce Grenville, and Stephanie Rebick, eds., *Cabin Fever* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery and Information Office, 2018).

Power,⁸² from 2022, have very different materialities⁸³, but they share the same signature typeface of Information Office publications.



Figure 2. Comparison of *Soul Power* (2022) and *Cabin Fever* (2018).

Collaboration with trade co-publishers provides a cost-effective avenue to reach wider audiences while producing high-quality publications that engage the Gallery's artistic community. Although full creative control over its publications is ideal, the Gallery is more concerned with making sure its catalogues reflect the mission and values of the institution and become available to the community it serves.

⁸² Rebick, *Jan Wade: Soul Power*.

⁸³ These two catalogues differ in trim size, format, number of pages and price. *Cabin Fever* is a 320-page hardcover edition with 410 illustrations, of which 190 are in full colour. Its dimensions are 9.5 x 7 inches and it retails for CAD \$55. *Soul Power* is a 176-page softcover edition with a removable cover and exposed binding with more than 150 full colour illustrations. Its dimensions are 6.7 x 4.7 inches and it retails for CAD \$35.

Chapter 4.

Recurring Themes in the Gallery's Catalogues

The Gallery has more than ninety years of history as an arts institution in Vancouver. Since its founding in 1931, it has been intent on engaging with the artistic community in the city, and the whole province of British Columbia, through exhibitions, public programming and art publishing.⁸⁴ Being in a port city that also borders the United States, its relationship with American, immigrant and international artists has also been a fundamental part of its engagement. The contents of the Gallery's catalogues advance the Gallery's mission and reaffirm its values.⁸⁵ The themes of exhibitions and catalogues are not only determined by worldwide trends in the art scene—like the influx of Conceptual Art in the 1960s and '70s—but also by the vision of the curators, the greater political and social landscape of Vancouver and the constant redefinition of what art and design encompass.

After trying to group catalogues according to time period, it became evident that the Gallery routinely works with the same topics (Fine Art, Design, Indigenous and Asian Art and Art about BC) but with different approaches, so retrospective exhibitions and surveys would build upon the Gallery's own history. For this reason, a division by theme or topic is more conducive to understanding the interests and intentions of the Gallery. It is worth mentioning that these divisions are not mutually exclusive, and that most catalogues could fit in more than one category, which reaffirms the previous assertion that the same topics are rehashed with different approaches, and this cyclical and evolving process can create diverse and new understandings of the same artist, movement, concept or identity.

4.1. Fine Art

This first selection might seem obvious, but it is important to state that not everything exhibited in a gallery or museum was or is traditionally considered art. This section will

⁸⁴ "About," Vancouver Art Gallery.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

be about the fine arts, a “term that came into use in the 18th century to describe the ‘higher’ non-utilitarian arts”⁸⁶ created primarily for aesthetic reasons,⁸⁷ which at the time meant painting, drawing and sculpture, and now includes photography and multimedia installations, to name a few.

The Gallery has published catalogues that depict Baroque, Renaissance, modern and contemporary art, among other movements and styles. Many of the artists and paintings in these categories are widely recognized and studied around the world, so part of the curators’ job is to find new ways or perspectives to showcase them, which will be reflected in the catalogue as well. The 2010 catalogue *The Modern Woman: Drawings by Degas, Renoir, Toulouse-Lautrec and other Masterpieces from the Musée d’Orsay, Paris*,⁸⁸ for the exhibition of the same name, is a publication that consolidates drawings of women by nineteenth-century French artists, and the first time a drawing exhibition from the Musée d’Orsay travelled anywhere. *Picasso: The Artist and his Muses*,⁸⁹ published in 2016, features paintings by the artist of six women and retraces their importance in his personal life and their impact on his professional career. These two examples were published in collaboration with other museums and galleries, which helped foster international relationships and situate the Gallery in an international art landscape as a point of contact in Canada.

To maintain its position as a representative of Canadian art, the Gallery is constantly building upon its permanent collection with donations and purchases. In 1985, for example, in celebration of and after several significant donations to the Gallery by John Ronald Longstaffe over the span of six years⁹⁰, the exhibition and catalogue *Selected View: The Longstaffe Collection 1959–1984* were produced to display and pay homage to the longstanding relationship with Longstaffe and the acquisitions of Canadian art from his personal collection. In addition to national art, the Gallery is interested in

⁸⁶ “Fine Arts,” Oxford Dictionary of Art & Artists (Oxford University Press, 2015).

⁸⁷ “Fine Art” The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Art Terms (2 ed.) 2010.

⁸⁸ Isabelle Julia and Thomas Padon, eds., *The Modern Woman: Drawings by Degas, Renoir, Toulouse-Lautrec and other Masterpieces from the Musée d’Orsay, Paris*. (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery and Musée d’Orsay. 2010).

⁸⁹ Katharina Beisiegel, ed., *Picasso: The Artist and his Muses* (Vancouver Art Gallery, Black Dog Publishing and Art Centre Basel, 2016).

⁹⁰ Sean Rossiter, “Ron Longstaffe: The Vancouver Art Gallery’s Patron Saint,” Canadianart (December 1, 1984), <https://canadianart.ca/features/ron-longstaffe-vancouver-art-gallery/>.

bringing to Vancouver internationally renowned artists and popular movements, as the catalogues *Los Angeles 6*⁹¹ and *New York 13*⁹², edited by curators John Coplans and Lucy Lippard, respectively, demonstrate. These two catalogues from the late 1960s act as collective memory of the exhibitions they were made for and capture for posterity the history of the Gallery and the artists that have been exhibited in it, whether temporarily on loan or as part of the permanent collection. Lippard has been an important figure in the Gallery's history, especially given the institutional embrace of Conceptual art.

4.1.1. Conceptual Art

Conceptual art, as defined by Conceptual artist Sol Lewitt in 1967, is art in which the concept or idea behind the piece is more important than its execution.⁹³ Although the term was used in the early 1960s by artist Henry Flint—and continues to be used now as a description for contemporary artworks—Conceptual art consolidated as a movement that spans from the late 1960s to the mid-1970s.⁹⁴ As an important international art movement, the Vancouver Art Gallery held several exhibitions, both group and individual, that added to the larger conversation about Conceptual art.



Figure 3. The 955,000 catalogue, composed of over 300 index cards.

⁹¹ John Coplans, ed., *Los Angeles 6* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 1968).

⁹² *New York 13* features pop art pieces by Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein.

Lucy Lippard, ed., *New York 13* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 1969).

⁹³ LeWitt, "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art," *Artforum* 5, 10, Summer 1967, pp. 79–83.

⁹⁴ "Conceptual art," Tate Museum, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/c/conceptual-art>.

955,000,⁹⁵ the catalogue created by Lucy Lippard for the exhibition of the same name, features approximately 300 index cards created by the artists that participated in the exhibition, in which they describe their pieces. Each artist decided how to represent their art and the result is a stack of cards that do not have a particular order or uniform aesthetic. The idea behind this catalogue was that readers could reorganize the index cards however they wanted and even dispose of the ones in which they were not interested. By making the index cards ephemeral, Lippard reiterates that Conceptual art favours an idea over its end result.

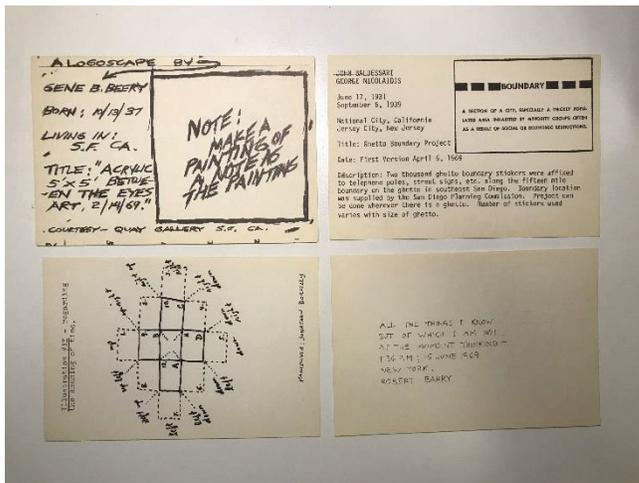


Figure 4. Four index cards that represent the diversity of style within the 955,000 catalogue.

Another catalogue for a Conceptual art exhibition is *Language + Emotion + Syntax = Message*, for a solo exhibition of Les Levine. This catalogue was published two years after the exhibition was displayed⁹⁶ due to changes in the Gallery's staff.⁹⁷ Evident from the title, Levine's work was constantly geared towards the message of his pieces and not necessarily their durability or artistic distinction or prowess.⁹⁸ This catalogue has four different pieces on Levine—including an interview with the artist—, his style and

⁹⁵ Lippard, 955,000.

⁹⁶ It is common practice for catalogues to be published to coincide with their exhibition's opening, but in few instances it is not possible. A more recent case is the *Vancouver Special: Disorientations and Echo* catalogue, which, due to the pandemic, budgetary restrictions and supply chain and distribution delays, will be published after the ending of the exhibition. It can be inferred that these catalogues would be less popular with Gallery Store customers after the exhibition is closed but given the contents both Les's catalogue and *Disorientation and Echo* would still be socially and culturally relevant at their respective times of publication.

⁹⁷ Willard Holmes, Alvin Balkin, and Ardele Lister, eds., *Language + Emotion + Syntax = Message* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 1976).

⁹⁸ "Les Levine," National Gallery of Canada <https://www.gallery.ca/collection/artist/les-levine>.

approach to art. Its format and layout closely resemble that of a magazine, with a three-column grid and titles in line with text.

In 2012, the Gallery published *Traffic: Conceptual Art in Canada 1965–1980*, a catalogue that accounts for more than ninety Canadian artists that were part of the movement.⁹⁹ This retrospective catalogue aims to reconcile Canadian artists with the Conceptual art movement, since at the time their practice was not as celebrated. Similarly, traditional notions of art have inhibited curators from including and displaying design and visual culture pieces in a gallery or museum setting.

4.2. Design

Design, architecture, fashion and popular culture contribute to our understanding of the world, promote multicultural awareness, foster interdisciplinary research, and engage wider communities, which are all part of the Gallery's mission and values.¹⁰⁰ For this reason, the Gallery also invests resources in exhibitions and catalogues that divest from fine arts and focus on these topics.

The Uncanny: Experiments in Cyborg Culture,¹⁰¹ co-published with Arsenal Pulp Press in 2002, is one of the most ambitious catalogues produced in this subject area. It includes essays and excerpts on the relationship of man and machine, technology and culture and features photographs, video stills and artworks that showcase the pervasiveness of the cyborg figure in popular culture and beyond. *The Uncanny* is heavily influenced by Japanese culture and creativity, which also signals the commitment of the Gallery to incorporate non-Western perspectives into its publications and exhibitions. Graphic design and visual art also contribute to the shaping of society and collective memory. The 2014 catalogue *Douglas Coupland: everywhere is anywhere is anything is everything* surveys his visual art production since 2000 and showcases

⁹⁹ Grant Arnold and Karen Henry, eds., *Traffic: Conceptual Art in Canada 1965–1980* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery and Douglas & McIntyre, 2012).

¹⁰⁰ "About," Vancouver Art Gallery.

¹⁰¹ Bruce Grenville, ed., *The Uncanny: Experiments in Cyborg Culture* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery and Arsenal Pulp Press, 2002).

Coupland's view of what it means to be Canadian.¹⁰² A mixture of installations, sculptures and prints are portrayed next to essays by curators and historians that evaluate Coupland's trajectory and his significance in the Canadian art scene.

Industrial design and architecture have also been the subject of exhibitions in the Gallery. *Cabin Fever* showcased the pervasiveness of the figure of the cabin in literature, popular culture and the North American relationship to nature. The catalogue includes photographs of artworks and installations adjacent to "cabin culture" and different cabins and explanations of their architectural composition; blueprints and assembly manuals; and poems and fragments of writings by authors like W. E. B. Du Bois, Henry David Thoreau and Jack Kerouac.¹⁰³ Similarly, *Modern in the Making: Post-War Craft and Design in British Columbia* highlights furniture, fashion and houseware design in the 1950s.¹⁰⁴ This catalogue includes photographs not only of the objects and artworks but also of the people who made them and their processes. The catalogue also aims to bring to light the different ways modernization negatively affected Indigenous communities while commodifying—and in some cases appropriating—their art and culture.

4.3. Asian and Indigenous Art

The history of the Vancouver Art Gallery—and that of most Western galleries and museums—is very centred on European hegemonic artistic movements and aesthetics,¹⁰⁵ but the Gallery is committed to changing this by exhibiting pieces by other communities and cultures, like Asian and Indigenous artists, and working with the communities to be respectful of their processes and practices. One area that particularly affects the Gallery's publishing activities is honouring the different languages and alphabets of each community. Reclaiming space in the art world comes with recognition of names and spellings foreign to the English language, which means, among other

¹⁰² Daina Augaitis, ed., *Douglas Coupland: everywhere is anywhere is anything is everything* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery and Black Dog Publishing, 2014).

¹⁰³ Volland, Grenville and Rebick, *Cabin Fever*.

¹⁰⁴ Daina Augaitis, Allan Collier, and Stephanie Rebick, eds., *Modern in the Making: Post-War Craft and Design in British Columbia* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery and Figure 1 Publishing, 2020).

¹⁰⁵ Grant Arnold, "A Presence in Every Part," *Vancouver Special: Disorientations and Echo* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 2022), p. 122.

considerations, hiring translators and foreign language copyeditors,¹⁰⁶ budgeting accordingly and scheduling extra time for these editorial steps. The catalogue *Vancouver Special: Disorientations and Echo*¹⁰⁷ is an example of this, as it features Indigenous, Black, Asian and Latino artists. There was special care given to the copyediting and proofreading processes to ensure all names of people, places and artworks were written out correctly in their respective languages. Given the current social and political landscape in Canada and the West, questioning how cultural heritage institutions and creative industries contribute to or fight against discrimination has become more important than ever.¹⁰⁸ The following catalogues illustrate the Gallery's efforts to build upon its own history and relationship with Asian artists and local Asian communities through its publications.

The catalogues *Here Not There*¹⁰⁹, which portrays pieces by five Vancouver-based Chinese artists, and *home and away: Crossing Cultures on the Pacific Rim*¹¹⁰, which features five Asian artists and one American artist's performance in Brazil, interpret the concepts of globalization, immigration and the shifting conceptions of nation and belonging. These catalogues published in 1995 and 2003, respectively, are early examples of the Gallery's commitment to the representation of and collaboration with the Asian artistic community of Vancouver and Canada.

*Unscrolled: Reframing Tradition in Chinese Contemporary Art*¹¹¹ is the first catalogue published by the Gallery after the creation of the IAA, which aimed to "stimulate discourse and produce scholarship... that expand on the considerable role of tradition in Chinese contemporary art on several generations of artists."¹¹² With photographs of

¹⁰⁶ I was able to doublecheck Spanish language spellings for *Disorientations and Echo*, and a French and a Korean copyeditor were hired for *About Time*.

¹⁰⁷ Grant Arnold, Phaniel Antwi, Christian Vistan, and Jenn Jackson, eds., *Vancouver Special: Disorientations and Echo* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery and Information Office, 2022).

¹⁰⁸ The Gallery is actively working on recognizing the importance of often underrepresented artists and its efforts culminated in the creation of the IAA in 2014 and the creation of the Elder in Residence program in 2021.

Annual Report 2021–22 (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 2022).

¹⁰⁹ Grant Arnold and Gary Dufour, eds., *Here Not There* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 1995).

¹¹⁰ Bruce Grenville, and Deanna Ferguson, eds., *home and away: Crossing Cultures on the Pacific Rim* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 2003).

¹¹¹ Diana Freundl and Carol Yinghua Lu, eds., *Unscrolled: Reframing tradition in Chinese Contemporary Art* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery and Black Dog Publishing, 2015).

¹¹² Bartels, Kathleen. "Director's Foreword," in *ibid.*, 9.

several of the exhibition's installations, reproductions of paintings and interviews with the featured artists, *Unscrolled* represents the Gallery's commitment to incorporating new perspectives on art history into academic research and scholarly publications.

Recently published, *Jin-me Yoon: About Time*¹¹³ is the companion catalogue to the exhibition of the same name that opened in October 2022. This is Yoon's first solo exhibition at the Gallery and a survey of the past decade of her career. The catalogue, on the other hand, includes essays that reflect on her over 30-year career and her relationship to land and decolonization as a Vancouver-based Korean immigrant. Yoon is in constant conversation with the art of the Indigenous Nations of the Lower Mainland region of British Columbia.

The Indigenous Nations of this region have a rich artistic history and the Gallery recognized this early with the exhibitions *Arts of the Raven* in 1967 and a Bill Reid retrospective in 1974¹¹⁴—which does not mean that the Gallery has not engaged in colonial attitudes or that a process of unlearning and recognition of past failings are not necessary. The Gallery is making a conscious effort to feature and elevate Indigenous artists in its exhibitions and to create space for Indigenous artistic traditions, customs, crafts and culture.¹¹⁵ In 1993, the Gallery published *Robert Davidson: Eagle of the Dawn*, a “long overdue”¹¹⁶ recognition of the practice of Davidson and his contributions to Haida art. The catalogue features high-quality photographs of his carvings and culturally significant artefacts like pendants and bracelets, and reproductions of his prints. Another more recent example of an ambitious celebration of Indigenous art is *Raven Travelling: Two Centuries of Haida Art*,¹¹⁷ from 2006. This catalogue aims to reframe Haida art in the context of its creators and their homeland and to celebrate the resilience of this traditional artistic expression in spite of colonial threats.

¹¹³ Diana Freundl and Zoë Chan, eds., *Jin-me Yoon: About Time* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery and Hirmer Publishing, 2022).

¹¹⁴ Ian Thom, ed., *Robert Davidson. Eagle of the Dawn* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery and Douglas & McIntyre, 1993), ix.

¹¹⁵ Vancouver Art Gallery, Annual Report 2021–22, p. 17.

¹¹⁶ Thom, *Robert Davidson. Eagle of the Dawn*, ix.

¹¹⁷ Peter Macnair, Daina Augaitis and Marianna Jones, eds., *Raven Travelling: Two Centuries of Haida Art* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery and Douglas & McIntyre, 2006).

Dana Claxton is an Indigenous artist and curator with a decades-long career. Her practice is a multidisciplinary mix of performance, photography and video. She references her Lakota culture and Western technologies and popular culture to “address the ongoing impact of colonialism on contemporary life while eloquently articulating Indigenous histories, world views and spirituality.”¹¹⁸ The catalogue *Dana Claxton: Fringing the Cube* provides a look at her career and her impact on Indigenous representation in the artistic landscape of North America.

4.4. Conversations with British Columbia

As Western Canada’s largest cultural heritage institution, the Gallery is concerned with displaying and celebrating the artistic community of Vancouver and British Columbia. This local community is not only made up of artists, but also includes private collectors and philanthropists, creative industry professionals, art critics, arts educators and students, and the Gallery’s members and visitors. *Vancouver Collects* was conceived with the idea of celebrating the generosity of private collectors towards the Gallery, as many of them have donated pieces to the Gallery’s permanent collection.¹¹⁹ The catalogue depicts only one piece per collector but shows each artwork in the domestic spaces of the collectors to give an additional layer of context.¹²⁰ Thirty years after the original exhibition, the *Vancouver Collects* catalogue acts as a snapshot of the larger, private art scene of the city, the aesthetic trends and the personal interests of the collectors who opened the doors of their homes to the Gallery.

Part of the Gallery’s vision¹²¹ is engaging not only with its local community but with other cultural hubs that surround it. That was the objective of *Baja to Vancouver: The West Coast and Contemporary Art*, an exploration of contemporary art in major North American cities along the Pacific Ocean. As Baja California is part of Mexico—and the state of California has a large population of Mexican immigrants—the catalogue features bilingual sections in both English and Spanish, highlighting the relationship between art,

¹¹⁸ Grant Arnold, ed., *Dana Claxton: Fringing the Cube* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery and Figure 1 Publishing, 2018), 13.

¹¹⁹ *Vancouver Collects* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 1992) 5.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹²¹ Vancouver Art Gallery, “About.”

culture and language. This exhibition and catalogue produced in collaboration with three other museums questioned the notion of “regional” divisions “expanding them beyond considerations of national identity”¹²² and positioned the Gallery not only as a Canadian heritage institution but as part of a larger West Coast artistic community.¹²³

Visions of British Columbia: A Landscape Manual was edited in the context of the 2010 Winter Olympics held in Vancouver.¹²⁴ This catalogue celebrated the art and literature of the region through pieces from the Gallery’s permanent collection—which represented artists like Emily Carr, Robert Davidson, Gathie Falk and Jack Shadbolt—and texts about the province written by both local and international authors. Instead of regular catalogue texts, each artwork is accompanied by—or placed in conversation with—a piece of writing about the province, effectively framing the juxtaposed perspectives of artists and authors. The print catalogue not only reflected the exhibition but also provided the opportunity to include literature,¹²⁵ building upon the visual art and creating a book that would appeal to a wider audience, especially during a time when an influx of tourists and media coverage was expected in Vancouver.

In 2016, the Gallery developed the concept for a series of exhibitions¹²⁶ called *Vancouver Special*, which would survey contemporary art in the region with the guiding question of what makes Vancouver’s artistic landscape unique.¹²⁷ So far two iterations have been held at the Gallery, the first one, *Ambivalent Pleasures*, that same year, and the second one, called *Disorientations and Echo*, in 2021. These exhibitions are meant to showcase both new and established artists in the Vancouver art scene. *Ambivalent Pleasures* focused on surrealist, abstract and conceptual practices,¹²⁸ while *Disorientations and Echo* grappled with the Gallery’s history of colonization and discrimination, and featured Asian, Black, Latinx, Indigenous and queer artists, with

¹²² Ralph Rugoff, Matthew Higgs, Toby Kamps, Lisa Corrin, and Daina Augaitis, eds., *Baja to Vancouver. The West Coast and Contemporary Art* (Vancouver Art Gallery, CCA Wattis Institute of Contemporary Art, Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, Seattle Art Museum, 2004) 6.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Bruce Grenville and Scott Steedman, eds., *Visions of British Columbia: A Landscape Manual* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery and Douglas & McIntyre, 2010), 1.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 6.

¹²⁶ The exhibition *How Soon is Now?* (2009) had a similar concept, but was not developed into a series.

¹²⁷ Daina Augaitis, and Jesse McKee, eds., *Vancouver Special: Ambivalent Pleasures* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery and Black Dog Publishing, 2017), 12.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 8.

essays by the curators that reflected on the social and political landscape of the recent years.¹²⁹

Each theme elevates the Gallery's history and commitment to the province's art and culture from a distinct point of view. With this last example it becomes more evident that these categorical divisions bleed into each other and that divisions, even when well-defined, can be permeable. Fine Art, Design, Asian and Indigenous Art and Conversations with British Columbia are umbrella categories that easily encompass most of the Gallery's catalogues and show the institution's commitment to engaging its communities.

¹²⁹ Grant Arnold, Phaniel Antwi, Christian Vistan, and Jenn Jackson, eds., *Vancouver Special: Disorientations and Echo* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery and Information Office, 2022).

Chapter 5.

Formats and Styles of the Gallery's Catalogues

The Gallery's exhibition catalogues throughout history have had many formats and styles: some are big hardcover editions; others, smaller softcover books, and some even some diverge completely from the typical bound book. There are also additional differences within these larger categories: hardcovers with or without jackets, creative editions that have loose pages and others formatted like a newspaper, to name a few. These differences in publications depend on several factors, like the vision of the curator(s), editor(s) or designer, or the budget and publication date.

Additionally in recent years, cultural heritage institutions have invested resources into digital publishing with two purposes: making art and its study more accessible to the general public to strengthen their online communities¹³⁰ and building their individual brand awareness and online presence to encourage new and returning visitors back into their in-person spaces. These digital spaces act as complements to—not substitutes for—physical places and interactions.¹³¹

The decision of which type of catalogue to produce for each exhibition is never arbitrary and serves to emphasize the message of the exhibition as well as appeal to different audiences. The collective imagery of art books—large-format, thick, hardcover books with full-colour images and little text, commonly referred to as coffee-table books—has positioned them as markers of wealth and status.¹³² This restrictive idea of what art publishing entails is changing, as institutions adopt more digital publications, which increase international engagement and provide resources to researchers and

¹³⁰ Bjarki Valtýsson and Nanna Holdgaard, "The Museum as a Charged Space," *The Routledge Handbook of Museums, Media and Communication* (London: Routledge, 2018), p. 159–60.

¹³¹ Hannah Lewi et al., "Introduction," *The Routledge International Handbook of New Digital Practices in Galleries, Libraries, Archives, Museums and Heritage Sites* (London; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2020), p. 2.

¹³² Megan Benton, "Sizzle and Smoke: Iconography of Books and Reading in Modern American Advertising," *Publishing History*, 28 (1995): 78.

historians,¹³³ without relegating print books, as those serve as keepsakes of an experience and mimic “owning” art.¹³⁴

5.1. Artists’ Books

The terminology used to describe the intersection of publishing and art is confusing, and definitions vary depending on the discipline from which they are taken. Art books, book arts, artists’ books, book-objects are all different things, even if closely related to one another, so the “general consensus is that there is no one definition.”¹³⁵ This section will refer to artists’ books as a type of publication that takes “the structure of the book beyond everyday expectations”¹³⁶ and is intended as a work of art in and of itself.

Several of the exhibition catalogues published by the Gallery fit into the category of an artists’ book. For instance, *955,000* by Lucy Lippard was created by photocopying and reproducing index cards customized by the artists featured in the exhibition. The stack of index cards can be organized and rearranged indefinitely, making the reader an active creator of the catalogue. The execution of this catalogue further reaffirms the concept behind the exhibition and the intent of the editor and curator. This catalogue can also be considered a pointed strategy to democratize art through inexpensive “multiples,” popular among conceptual artists at the time,¹³⁷ as it was sold inside envelopes for \$3.¹³⁸ In the same vein, the catalogue *Four Places: An Whitlock, Liz Magor, Gathie Falk, Allan Detheridge*¹³⁹ is held together inside a paper folder, with an envelope for each artist.

¹³³ Tim Jones and David Simpson, “Websites as a publishing platform,” in *The Routledge International Handbook of New Digital Practices in Galleries, Libraries, Archives, Museums and Heritage Sites.*, p. 355.

¹³⁴ Sarah Anne Hughes, “Contemporary publishing by national museums and art galleries in the UK and its future,” *Art Libraries Journal*, 40.

¹³⁵ Kathy Bohlman, “Book Art Resources: The Term Artists’ Books,” Yale Library, <https://guides.library.yale.edu/c.php?g=295819&p=1972525>.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Cowley, Heather and Welch, “What is an artist book?”

¹³⁸ “Introduction,” *955,000*, <https://web.archive.org/web/20151110053426/http://projects.vanartgallery.bc.ca/955000/introduction/>.

¹³⁹ Alvin Balkind, ed., *Four Places: An Whitlock, Liz Magor, Gathie Falk, Allan Detheridge* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 1977).

Inside each, there are loose pieces of paper in different sizes with writings, poems, interviews and photographs.

Pacific Vibrations was an eclectic exhibition featuring performance and installation pieces. It was conceived as a ten-day free festival. Its catalogue was edited to resemble a newspaper—unbound pages folded together in a specific order—with the locations and times of the performances. Easy to carry and economical to produce, *Pacific Vibrations* served not only as the catalogue for the exhibition, with reviews and photographs, but also as a marketing tool to promote the performances.¹⁴⁰ Similarly, *We: Vancouver* was an exhibition that set out to showcase the diverse art practices and ideas that shape the city. The catalogue consists of seven manifestos written by some of the artists featured in the exhibition and printed in unbound newsprint broadsheets. A red paper band holds them together. Copies of these manifestos were pasted throughout the city,¹⁴¹ effectively spreading the messages of the artists and also acting as advertising material for the exhibition.¹⁴²



Figure 5. *We: Vancouver* catalogue, composed of broadsheets held together by a red paper band.

Mannersm: A Theory of Culture is edited to look like a magazine and featured a pop art-inspired rendition of the *Mona Lisa*.¹⁴³ This catalogue's editorial and design decisions

¹⁴⁰ Marguerite Pinney and Willard Holmes, eds., *Pacific Vibrations* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 1973).

¹⁴¹ Bruce Grenville and Kathleen Ritter, eds., *We: Vancouver* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 2011).

¹⁴² There was also a microsite that served as a digital catalogue for the exhibition, but it is no longer available online.

¹⁴³ Jo-Anne Birnie Danzker, ed., *Mannerssm: A Theory of Culture* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 1982).

reflect the topic, engaging in critiques and analyses of art and print culture not only from its words but through its format as well.

Catalogues that are also artists' books can have several purposes—marketing of the exhibition instead of acting as a souvenir, for example—but their true *raison d'être* is to entice the reader to not only read their words but most importantly to interact with their materiality.

5.2. Softcover Catalogues

Another format in which the Gallery publishes is softcover catalogues. These, as their name implies, are bound in flexible paper with different finishes.¹⁴⁴ Softcover catalogues can be bound with stitches or with glue,¹⁴⁵ depending on the size, thickness and aesthetic desired by the designer and approved by the editor.

West Coast Lokas by artist, writer and musician Al Neil is perfect bound with glue and looks like a typical 5 x 9 short softcover novel—a nod to the artist's writing career and the importance of language in his artistic work—which makes it relatively thin and small compared to most of the Gallery's catalogues. This publication features photographs of the installations he created for the exhibition, plus a biography and writings by him about the concept of the exhibition.¹⁴⁶ Both *Forms of Realism Today: Federal Republic of Germany*¹⁴⁷ and *Luminous Sites: 10 Video Installations*¹⁴⁸ are also perfect bound. *Forms of Realism Today* slightly resembles a magazine because of the paper selection and the dimensions. *Luminous Sites* is in landscape format, meaning that it is bound on the

¹⁴⁴ The different finishes include glossy, matte or textured paper, cutouts, embossing, debossing and other decorative details added to the cover.

¹⁴⁵ There are different styles and techniques of bookbinding, but these can be generally grouped within the categories hardcover or softcover. The Gallery's softcover catalogues are usually perfect bound, and the hardcover editions are usually sewn.

¹⁴⁶ Al Neil, *West Coast Lokas* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery and Vancouver Community Press, 1972).

¹⁴⁷ Thomas Grochowiak, ed., *Forms of Realism Today: Federal Republic of Germany* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 1980).

¹⁴⁸ Daina Augaitis and Karen Henry, eds, *Luminous Sites: 10 Video Installations* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery and Vanguard Publications, 1986).

shorter side of the book. Even though these three catalogues are softcover editions, they differ enough to evoke different types of trade publications in the mind of the reader.

Softcover editions can have flaps, folded inwards into the book, to give the book a more elegant design, a sturdier cover and more space for texts, like a summary of the exhibition or a biography of the artist. Catalogues with flaps maintain the luxurious feel of a coffee-table book without the extra cost and weight. *The Artist and his Muses* and *Visions of British Columbia* are two popular examples; both could have been hardcover coffee-table books, but the fact that they were published in softcover made it easier to travel with them and thus made them more appealing to tourists.

*Jan Wade: Soul Power*¹⁴⁹ and *weak thought* are two smaller softcover catalogues with creative approaches to the format. The former is stitched and its cover is detached, exposing the binding and acting more like a dust jacket; the latter features a cut-out of the word “weak” in its title. Small design and production details like these can enhance a catalogue while still making it cheaper to produce than a coffee-table book.



Figure 6. Exposed binding of the *Jan Wade: Soul Power* catalogue.

5.3. Coffee-Table Books

Coffee-table books are the most common format for art books across the publishing industry as a whole. They are hardcover editions, heavier than their softcover

¹⁴⁹ Stephanie Rebick, ed., *Jan Wade: Soul Power* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery and Information Office, 2022).

counterparts, usually large format, with high-quality glossy paper and full-colour images, which makes them expensive to print and in turn gives them a higher price point than softcover catalogues. Given the ratio of images to text,¹⁵⁰ these books are considered for casual reading or perusing,¹⁵¹ while the content is usually academic and thus heavily references other authors, art historians and critics.

These lavish catalogues are associated with prestigious artists and well-known movements, so it can be inferred that the format itself affords a degree of legitimacy to its content and its buyer—mostly because their high price means less people are able to buy them. This general conception can be a good reason to publish catalogues by minorities in this format, equating their artistic practices to those of household names and mainstream success. *Eagle of the Dawn*, *Fringing the Cube*, *Unscrolled* and *About Time* are catalogues of Indigenous and Asian artists published as coffee-table books by the Gallery. The decision to publish these catalogues in hardcover—thus making them more expensive to purchase than softcover counterparts—becomes a symbolic endorsement by the Gallery of the artist(s) featured.

Outside of fine arts, fashion, architecture and visual culture in general also benefit from full-bleed, full-colour, full-page images, as large-format reproductions of 3D elements—*haute couture* dresses, furniture, installations—help immerse the reader in the exhibition and perceive the materiality of the pieces in greater detail. Given the subjects they feature and the art pieces reproduced on their pages, *The Surgeon and the Photographer*, *Cabin Fever* and *everywhere is anywhere...* are three coffee-table books that exemplify the relationship between luxurious production and perceived value of the content. Hardcover catalogues are an indulgence for art and book collectors alike, especially considering inflation, the rising costs of living and decreasing disposable income for most people.¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰ In the Gallery's hardcover catalogues images make up at least 50 percent of the printed pages.

¹⁵¹ Kathleen Walkup, "coffee-table book," *The Oxford Companion to the Book* (Oxford University Press, 2010) DOI: 10.1093/acref/9780198606536.001.0001.

¹⁵² "Distributions of household economic accounts for income, consumption and saving of Canadian households, first quarter of 2022," Statistics Canada, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/220803/dq220803a-eng.htm>

5.4. Digital Publications

In contrast to the costs related to coffee-table books, digital publications can offer an alternative source of information and enjoyment of the arts, usually without a cost to the reader and a reduced investment from institutions. Educational and non-profit scholarly institutions are experiencing a push for open access scholarship and museum and galleries have opted to participate¹⁵³ by making public domain artworks available online, publishing catalogues and articles on their websites, and organizing virtual tours and exhibitions. The Vancouver Art Gallery is no exception.¹⁵⁴ Digital publications will help the Gallery build its online presence within the larger museum publishing landscape.¹⁵⁵

Between 2006 and 2014, the Gallery produced 12 digital microsites and catalogues. One of these publications consisted of a microsite dedicated to Lippard's *955,000* exhibition—with images of the catalogue, the works exhibited and photographs taken at the time of the exhibition—in 2012. This publication is no longer available on the Gallery website but some pages of it can still be accessed through the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine. As a result of the loss of this microsite, the Gallery wants to make sure investments both in time and resources will be long-lasting, so open-source publications are the best bet to ensure that content can survive online and be referenced for years to come. For this reason, the Gallery has decided to work with Quire, an open-source static site publishing tool developed by Getty.¹⁵⁶ Quire was specifically designed for “scholarly and visually rich publishing,”¹⁵⁷ which makes it a perfect software for art books produced by cultural heritage institutions and university presses. It has already

¹⁵³ “Open Access Repository: Enhancing Research In Cultural Organisations,” Tate, <https://www.tate.org.uk/research/features/oa-repository-pilot>; “The Met Makes Its Images of Public-Domain Artworks Freely Available through New Open Access Policy,” Met Museum, <https://www.metmuseum.org/press/news/2017/open-access>.

¹⁵⁴ The Gallery has partnered with Google Arts & Culture and the Art Canada Institute to publish the exhibitions *Douglas Coupland: everywhere is anywhere is anything is everything* (<https://artsandculture.google.com/story/TgWh7r1-aH8dlw>) and *Jan Wade: Soul Power* (<https://www.aci-iac.ca/online-exhibitions/jan-wade-soul-power/>).

¹⁵⁵ Tim Jones and David Simpson, “Websites as a publishing platform,” *The Routledge International Handbook of New Digital Practices in Galleries, Libraries, Archives, Museums and Heritage Sites* (London; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Fancis Group, 2020), p. 356.

¹⁵⁶ “What is Quire?,” Quire, <https://quire.getty.edu/about/quire/>.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

been used by the Minneapolis Institute of Art, the Boston Public Library and Duke University.¹⁵⁸

Quire offers common website characteristics, like responsive design, search engine optimization and embedded external content, as well as functionalities that prove to be especially useful for scholarly art publications, like deep zooming with International Image Interoperability Framework (IIIF), automatically generated citations, linkable footnotes and endnotes, conversion into pdf and ebook formats, among other features.¹⁵⁹ Currently in development with this new tool, *Edith Heath and Emily Carr: From the Earth* is a mix of virtual exhibition and catalogue. It features photographs of the exhibition and the texts that accompanied the pieces. This exhibition and catalogue are part of the Gallery's pursuit of recontextualizing Carr's oeuvre, a pivotal part of the institution's permanent collection. This will be the Gallery's first digital publication using Quire so the learning curve for this software has been steep and development has taken longer than anticipated, but the Gallery is committed to open-access publications and will continue to utilize this tool for upcoming digital catalogues.

Part of the mission of the Gallery is making sure that they are reaching a wider audience.¹⁶⁰ Having online content helps create a relationship with potential visitors that might not be in Vancouver or British Columbia as well as with other curators, art historians and academics from related fields. Additionally, accessibility features offered by online publications—like text-to-speech, alt-text and descriptive captions—help the Gallery reach people with disabilities that might not otherwise have access to written content. Fostering an inclusive environment and cultivating an international audience online can also result in more in-person visitors and a far-reaching, diverse, collaborative community.¹⁶¹

Publications in different formats attract and engage different segments of the Gallery's target audience to ensure they all find a catalogue to fit their wants and needs. The Gallery's future is being built upon four pillars, one of which is fostering community and

¹⁵⁸ "Community Showcase," Quire, <https://quire.getty.edu/community/community-showcase/>.

¹⁵⁹ "What is Quire? Features and Functionalities," Quire, <https://quire.getty.edu/about/quire/#features--functionality>.

¹⁶⁰ "About," Vancouver Art Gallery.

¹⁶¹ "Art Opens," Vancouver Art Gallery, <https://www.newvanartgallery.ca/>.

learning.¹⁶² Open-access publications provide a digital hub available to the Gallery's community that is not local to Vancouver and advance the mission behind the new "Art Opens" philosophy.¹⁶³

¹⁶² *Annual Report 2021–22*, Vancouver Art Gallery.

¹⁶³ "Art Opens," Vancouver Art Gallery, <https://www.newvanartgallery.ca/>.

Chapter 6.

The Organizational Structure of the Gallery

The Gallery’s goal to foster communication and its communities includes its own workers. In addition to the Curatorial Department, many more people within the Gallery have supported the Gallery’s publishing—and continue to do so—from different departments and at different stages of the process. Collaborative efforts between various departments within the Gallery aid in the production, distribution and sale of the institution’s exhibition catalogues. Considering the model to track the production processes of a book (Publication > Manufacture > Distribution > Reception > Survival) proposed by book historians Thomas R. Adams and Nicolas Barker,¹⁶⁴ editors at the Gallery work closely with the Photo Imaging team during the publication and manufacture stages of the process—to ensure images have the correct quality for printing and rights of reproduction are acquired if not held by the Gallery—and the Marketing and Communications Department and the Gallery Store in the distribution and reception stages, to adequately promote and sell the exhibitions catalogues.

This past year has seen many changes to the Gallery, as it is currently under a reorganization and hiring process to align itself with the needs that have arisen after the Covid-19 pandemic and the plans for the new Gallery. In addition to the two new positions of Director of Public Engagement and Learning and Director of Strategic Communications and Branding,¹⁶⁵ the Gallery has also created a new role, Director of Publishing and Content Strategy, to strengthen its publishing activities and unify its content production.

6.1. Sales and Marketing

Sales and marketing are important aspects to the widespread reach of the catalogues and to increase the visitors to the Gallery. Currently, the Gallery sells its catalogues in

¹⁶⁴ Thomas Adams, and Nicolas Barker, “A New Model for the Study of the Book,” *A Potencie of Life: Books in Society*, ed. Nicolas Barker (London and New Castle, DE: The British Library and Oak Knoll Press, 2001), p. 5–43.

¹⁶⁵ “Gallery News,” Vancouver Art Gallery, <https://www.vanartgallery.bc.ca/media-room>.

the online and in-person Gallery Store, located on the first floor of the building, outside of the main exhibition spaces. It also sells art books and catalogues by other publishers, both by cultural heritage institutions and trade publishers, creating internal competition for the Gallery's own publications. The Gallery Store sells more than art books; it carries merchandise that aligns with the institution's identity,¹⁶⁶ like notebooks and stationery, games and puzzles, art supplies, jewellery, artworks, and Gallery merch, like water bottles and masks, among others.¹⁶⁷

A well-stocked store attracts visitors who might not only buy something at the store but also a ticket to visit the exhibitions. The store manager selects the merchandise to be sold and collaborates with the Curatorial Department to shepherd to the Gallery Store the concerted number of copies of each exhibition catalogue, which can vary from show to show. It is hard to say exactly how much profit the Gallery makes from the sale of its catalogues, as the bulk of the costs are covered by the Curatorial Department's budget and the revenue is accounted for in the retail operations.¹⁶⁸ The Gallery understands the value in its publishing activities beyond just being a source of income. It recognizes exhibition catalogues as a necessary documentation of its shows and as a tool to foster relationships both with other institutions through library exchanges, and with guest curators, artists and other special visitors and members of its community.

When the Gallery co-publishes with a trade publisher it gains access to its established readership, marketing tools, social media reach, retail environments, and distribution and shipping channels, guaranteeing a wider reach for the catalogue than the one the Gallery can provide on its own. For example, *Modern in the Making* and *Fringing the Cube* are available in Figure 1's online store as well as in regular bookstores. *About Time* was available for pre-order on Hirmer's—the co-publisher with headquarters in Germany—online store and on the University of Chicago Press website, which distributes Hirmer's books in North America, before the book was done printing. The sharing of costs and the access to a wider public are the main reasons the Gallery is

¹⁶⁶ Emily Cameron, "Exhibit and point of sale: negotiating commerce and culture at the Vancouver Art Gallery," *Social and Cultural Geography* 8, 2, 2007, pp. 551–73.

¹⁶⁷ Gallery Store, Vancouver Art Gallery, <https://shop.vanartgallery.bc.ca/>.

¹⁶⁸ Vancouver Art Gallery Report 2020–21.

now releasing most of its print catalogues with a co-publisher. Of course, sales become a non-issue for future open-access catalogues published online.

The Marketing Department at the Gallery is not focused on promoting only the catalogues, but the institution as whole. This means that catalogues become part of marketing campaigns, though their sale is rarely the exclusive goal. The website is also a marketing tool, used to promote the exhibitions and programming, sell tickets and memberships and inform visitors of the Gallery's hours and special news, among other transactional uses. Eventually, the website will become not only a marketing tool but a publishing platform as well, that will capture and retain visitors and readers. Having online publications is part of the publishing activities of the Gallery but also contributes to the mission of engaging communities and promoting scholarship on Canadian art. Publishing and marketing within the Gallery are two pursuits that assist each other in reaching their individual goals.

6.2. Publishing Department

As previously established, the Vancouver Art Gallery carries out several activities related to the display and promotion of art, one of which is the publishing of catalogues that accompany their exhibitions. As part of a larger system of activities, and being dependent on the research, assembly and display of exhibitions, catalogues have not had their own dedicated team that works solely towards their publication; the Curatorial Department of the Gallery has been the one in charge of ensuring publications are produced. However, the roles of Publications Coordinator and Curatorial Assistant for Publications have existed throughout the years within the Curatorial Department, but only as temporary contracts or part-time positions. And although these positions within the Gallery provided support to the editorial and managerial tasks of publishing books, the curators were still in charge not only of their exhibitions but also of acting like editors to the companion catalogues.

Publishing and editing can be learned through hands-on experience, but the added time commitments and tight budgets can end up relegating the production of the catalogues to a lesser priority, elongating timelines and pushing back release dates. Ideally, exhibition catalogues are published and ready to be sold when an exhibition opens, but

this is not always the case.¹⁶⁹ Publishing professionals in roles like Editorial or Publishing Assistants or Publications Coordinators can play an important part, supporting curators and shepherding the production process along.

When I first started my professional placement, the Gallery was—and still is—undergoing a process of internal restructuring. In an effort to support their publishing activities, the new senior management role Director of Publishing and Content Strategy was created with the hopes of building an entire team around it. This new role was filled in July 2022 by Stephanie Rebick, previously Associate Curator at the Gallery, who was already acting as Managing Editor or Publications Coordinator—depending on the needs of each book—for all exhibition catalogues. The Gallery will create permanent publishing roles to support the Director of Publishing in the administrative and editorial tasks related to the production of print and digital publications, which will also include newsletters, social media profiles and the Gallery’s mobile app and its website. This new area is also conceived to collaborate more closely with the Marketing and Communications teams to make the Gallery’s brand cohesive and boost awareness and visits to its digital channels. As this reorganization process is still ongoing, the new positions for editorial and publishing activities have not yet been posted. In the meantime, the Curatorial Department continues to support the production of the exhibition catalogues.

¹⁶⁹ The Covid-19 pandemic brought specific challenges to staffing, budget and production timelines, delaying the publication of many 2021 catalogues.

Chapter 7. Conclusions

Exploring art, design and visual culture through unexpected and creative approaches can bring new meaning to famous works or shed light on previously ignored pieces and artistic communities. Undergoing this exploration through publications also reveals the profound connections between curating and editing. My original selection of catalogues shifted as I balanced collective and solo exhibition catalogues, themes and formats, third-party collaborators and in-house talent.

The greatest takeaway from this process of analysis and classification is that there are so many more lessons to learn from the backlist, depending on the point of view, theme and scope of the study. The categories I focused on are not mutually exclusive or all-encompassing, and so many catalogues were left out of the curated selection. The Gallery is waiting for artists, researchers, students, historians and critics to study its history and archives through the lenses of race, gender and identity; popular culture and new media; and design and technology, to name a few. Going back and looking for clashing points of view or common conceptions can be a good process not only to find new perspectives but also to realize what is missing and why, and how to complement what is already there. It is clear that the Gallery has given importance not only to the content but the format of its catalogues. Although this has not changed, the practice has necessarily evolved to professionalize the makers of those publications, leading to the creation of the Director of Publishing and Content Strategy position and its eventual editorial team.

There are myriad national and international social, environmental, political, economic and technological aspects—that do not fall within the scope of this report—that can negatively or positively affect the publishing activities at the Gallery, like paper shortages, shipping delays, inflation, grants and donations, interinstitutional collaborations, and special events. Additionally, the pandemic and social unrest of the last couple of years have also influenced the approach to curating and editing, as evidenced with *Disorientations and Echo*, prompting conversations about who is represented, how often and why in the Gallery's collections, exhibitions and publications. The 2020–21 Annual Report recognizes that Black artists are underrepresented in the permanent collection and the Gallery has started to correct its course with the acquisition

and exhibition of more artworks by Black artists.¹⁷⁰ As I wrap up this report, I come to the realization that it is impossible to separate the catalogues from their exhibitions because they act as extensions of the message crafted by the curators and hopefully go on to have a greater reach after the exhibition has been disassembled.

7.1. The Possibilities of Digital Publications by Galleries and Museums

The Gallery has a traceable history of going back to revisit and reinterpret art, artists and movements it has previously exhibited or that are part of its permanent collection, as evidenced by the catalogues *Traffic* and *Fringing the Cube*, among others. Digital publishing offers a new avenue to continually create content towards this goal without necessarily investing a lot of resources. Highlighting the permanent collection and placing it in conversation with current affairs, contemporary movements and trends, and new acquisitions will also benefit from a digital platform that can be continuously updated and consulted.

The Gallery is trying to position itself among bigger and better-known European and North American galleries and museums like Tate and the Chicago Institute of Art by contributing to discussions of Canadian and BC art and artists in online and open-access publications. Given this push, the Gallery is also in the process of reimagining what its website will become, not only as a marketing tool but as an online publication platform. Digital publications offer interactive and user-friendly ways to captivate online and in-person visitors. Deep zooming, navigable timelines, and accessibility features are only some of the possibilities offered by digital publications. Using both Quire and its website as outlets for its publications, and collaborating with other organizations for virtual exhibitions, provides the Gallery with many creative opportunities towards fulfilling its mission. For this strategy to be effective, the Gallery must invest in a publishing team and their professional development and keep fostering relationships with other tech and digital publishing companies.

¹⁷⁰ *Annual Report 2020–21*, Vancouver Art Gallery, 13.

7.2. Considerations for Publishing Professionals

Working in the cultural heritage sector comes with its own unique challenges and rewards, but museum and gallery publishing provide a rich environment to learn and craft books. This industry can feel small and narrow, but publishing does not have to be limited to literature or to working for trade publishers, since there are many independent publishers, cultural heritage institutions and university presses that are also part of the publishing environment.

Additionally, the art publishing world has room for and encourages relationships and multifaceted collaboration with authors and literary works that can appeal to newcomers and aspiring publishing professionals. In more concrete terms, the Gallery's own *For All Time: The Shakespeare First Folio* exhibition, organized in collaboration with the University of British Columbia Library, treated the four Folios as art to be displayed and representative cultural heritage artefacts to be studied. Another way to bridge the gap between working for a museum and working for a trade imprint is the publishing of catalogues that feature significant literary works or fragments like *Cabin Fever*, *Visions of British Columbia* and *The Uncanny*, to name a few previously mentioned in this report. Art and literature, then, are inevitably intertwined.

Working in a museum or gallery creates opportunity for international collaborations that open professional doors and expand personal perceptions. Additionally, there are trade publishers that also focus on publishing art books, like Phaidon and Taschen—two of the biggest international art book publishing houses—or Figure 1 and Information Office—two of the local co-publishers of the Gallery. Just as there is more than one sector to work in, publishing also has more than one career path to take. Interdisciplinary collaboration and complementary abilities are becoming more sought after in the field. Designers, writers and editors are all part of the publishing value chain, but so are marketing and sales professionals, photographers, image rights specialists and cultural policy workers. Publishing professionals are entering a richer field than they realize, if only they dare to look around.

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