Ari Marcopoulos:
140 Books and a Video

Ari Marcopoulos: 140 Books and a Video is animated by the belief that his work sits firmly within the lineage of conceptual art bookmaking practices such as those of Sol LeWitt, Lawrence Weiner, and On Kawara. These practices position the book itself as a form of exhibition making; a way of allowing the relationship between the shape and size of the book and the weight and materiality of its paper stock to enter into dialogue with its contents. The books are the artworks. There is an emphasis on seriality and repetition; the same people, objects, places, and activities recur constantly across his oeuvre. Perhaps most importantly, there is also an emphasis on proliferation – Ari has made a lot of books, more books than it seems even possible to produce in a lifetime. Moreover, the book is the privileged artifact, not the physical exhibition; in many ways, the physical exhibition is a representation of the contents of the book. And within this specific lineage of conceptual art, there is an argument that Ari is its only photographer. To place him in that lineage is not to reduce his publications to pure form, they are also simply records of the work of one of the great photographers of the last 40 years.

In another sense, for Ari, the book also operates as filmmaking by other means. Many of the publications are made quite quickly and very close in time to when the photographs were taken; some were even laid in the order in which the photos were taken. The references are all there – to Godard, Bresson, and Kurosawa; there is the sense that Ari engages with a place through the filter of his memories of the films that take place in them. To that end there is a single video placed at the end of the gallery, a recording of Ari flipping through an Adobe InDesign file of his book *Black Snow*. The book itself – of the same name – sits on the table a few feet away from it. What could be more emblematic of the link between books and films in his practice?

This exhibition started as a seemingly impossible task – to create a complete bibliography of the publications of Ari Marcopoulos. While there are 201 publications listed in our bibliography and at least 140 works in this exhibition (our best guess is 180), we cannot say with any certainty how many publications Ari has published (and neither can he). Just like Homer's interminable 'Catalogue of Ships' or a Borgesian encyclopedia, we imagine that this bibliography is a list long enough to imply infinity; deliberately left open and unfinished because openness is the spirit with which all the work was made.

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