

The art catalogue as a cultural product

The catalogue, as publishing object, is an autonomous cultural product, or a product with a high degree of autonomy, in relation with the accompanying exhibition. It generates its own relations with production, circulation and consumption. Given the complexity and richness of this unique publishing piece, the catalogue and the “art *book-catalogue*” will allow the study of the institutional system in publishing production and the visual arts system. This will be related to the written production in three different moments: before the exhibition, when sharing the space with the exhibition and after the exhibition, after it “survives” it.

Catalogues progressively migrated from the art world to the publishing world. Said migration is produced by two reasons: the increasing complexity of the art system and its insertion in the economy. Thus, the catalogue evolves until it acquires a more complex format that is currently in use, the “art *book-catalogue*”.

We consider that book disciplines have not thoroughly approached the issue of publications and catalogues of art exhibitions, only as a source and document for other studies or to work on reading images. Catalogues have been and are underrated objects, but they merit consideration from the perspective of book history.

Therefore, how can book’s social history include and study art publications in general, and “art catalogues” in particular, to talk about the society in which they were produced? How one can work in an interdisciplinary manner with book Social History, Art History and Art Sociology to arrive at some conclusions that, in fact, would be a starting point to provide the art *book-catalogue* and the art catalogues with the status of art objects and cultural artifacts?

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