

# Actual Size

LOS ANGELES

## **PRINT IMPRINT**

March - April 2012

*Take a book, and you will find it offering, opening itself. It is the openness of this book that I find so moving. A book is not shut in by its contours, is not walled up as in a fortress. It asks for nothing better than to exist outside itself, or to let you exist in it.*

- Georges Poulet, *Interiority and Criticism*, 1970

*Print Imprint* is a publication project in partnership with *Once Emerging Now Emerging*, Cirrus Gallery's four-part exhibition in conjunction with *Pacific Standard Time*. *Print Imprint* seeks to develop an intimate relationship and conversation between artworks from the 1970's and 80's, and current artworks produced by emerging and mid-career Los Angeles artists. Participating artists include Ali Bailey, Scott Benzel, Guy de Cointet and Larry Bell, Cayetano Ferrer, Katie Herzog, Laura Owens, Ed Ruscha, and Barbara T. Smith. The artists' responses to the concept and form of the book will take many physical forms, including prints, paintings, slide projections, musical composition, and sculpture. Actual Size will produce a limited edition book to document these responses.

Since the turn of the 20th century the artist's book has served as an important medium for artists to disperse and explore their visions. The proliferation of print media enabled artists to disseminate their images and ideas outside of a traditional gallery or museum. The book functioned as a container for the art manifesto, keepsake of ephemeral practice, an intimate way to engage with the viewer without the physical presence of the artist, enabling innovators to form global communities. In the 1970's, rejecting the detached objectivity of the prevailing New Criticism, theorists began to focus their attention on the reader's response. Stanley Fish observed in *Surprised By Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost* (1972): "Meaning is an event, something that happens not on the page, where we are accustomed to look for it, but in the interaction between the flow of print (or sound) and the actively mediating of the reader-hearer." Georges Poulet, in his lecture *Interiority and Criticism* (1970), described the moment when the writer/artist and reader/viewer encounter one another inside a book.

Placing a book in the open hands of the viewer is like handing a passenger the steering wheel. L.A artists, desiring to eliminate the distance between the framed image and the art spectator, invite the viewer in by offering their work in the tactile form of a book. This gesture became a particular theme in Los Angeles in the late 1960's early 1970's. Artists like Ed Ruscha, Barbara Smith, Larry Bell, and Guy de Cointet created limited run artist books that document their conceptual investigations, from the fascination of the repetitive road trip to the decoding of mathematical messages.

While a book of images opens up a world to the viewer, the form also posits serious challenges for both visual artists and curators. Art books, designed to be handled, are eventually destroyed by wear and tear, or even careful use. For this reason rare books are usually displayed in well-lit glass vitrines, inhibiting the reader from experiencing the contents. In libraries and galleries, valuable books become preserved relics, displayed in an encased state. In contrast to this, in *Print Imprint*, artists will present their art as an “open book” in the gallery setting.

Actual Size Los Angeles is collaboratively operated by artists and curators Lee Foley, Justin John Greene, Samia Mirza and Corrie Siegel. The current Actual Size location at 741 New High Street in Chinatown opened in April 2010. Actual Size has hosted over 25 exhibitions and curatorial interventions and worked with over 90 artists. Actual Size collaborates with established and emerging artists to encourage situations that activate the exhibition and engage the public. Projects curated by Actual Size have been profiled by the L.A. Times, Mousse Magazine, and Flash Art International.

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Gallery Hours: Sat- Sun 12:00- 5:00pm; Weekdays by appointment.  
Follow Actual Size Los Angeles on Twitter and Facebook for event details.

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