

Reinterpreted Facsimile: N.E. Thing Co. Ltd. *Companies Act* (2020)



by Ryan Smith

A critical and process documentation thesis paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of *Master of Design*. Emily Carr University of Art + Design, 2020.

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Abstract

This thesis questions the definition of facsimile pertaining to artist's books and examines what information gets lost by adhering to it when remaking culturally significant texts. The primary case study is the physical republishing of *Companies Act* (1978), by the N.E. Thing Company — a rare book that summarizes a historically influential Canadian conceptual art duo. The aim of this thesis is to clarify the methodology and process used to reproduce this book and draw attention to its associated implications toward the field of print design. The standard logic of reprinting a manuscript generally follows the idea of *facsimile reproduction*, which is described by leading publishing authorities like Manfred Kramer as reproducing manuscripts as close to the original as possible. The aim of this thesis project is to expand on this concept by proposing the concept of a *reinterpreted facsimile* that adds contextual elements to the republished manuscript that would not exist otherwise. The case studies throughout this thesis have found that in at least this particular instance, Kramer's goal of exact verisimilitude has many shortcomings. The conclusion of my work explores and defines the idea of a reinterpreted facsimile that productively blurs the line between art and print design.

Keywords

print design, publishing, facsimile, reinterpreted facsimile, NETCO, N.E. Thing Co.

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Land Acknowledgment

This thesis took place at Emily Carr University of Art + Design and at Brick Press. Both are located on Unceded Territories of the xʷməθkwəyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and Səlílwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

Contents

2	Abstract
3	Acknowledgements
4	Land Acknowledgement
5	Contents
6	Glossary
7	INTRODUCTION
	Brick Press
10	The N.E. Thing Company (NETCO) and <i>Companies Act</i>
12	CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK
	What is Facsimile?
13	The Reinterpreted Facsimile
14	PRODUCTION-BASED CASE STUDY: THE PROCESS OF PRINTING A REINTERPRETED FACSIMILE OF N.E. THING CO. LTD'S COMPANIES ACT (1978)
15	Production Phase 1: Disassembling <i>Companies Act</i> (1978)
16	Production Phase 2: Page Scanning of <i>Companies Act</i> (1978)
17	Production Phase 3: Pre-Press Editing for Offset Plate-Making
17	Production Phase 4: Reproducing the Cover of <i>Companies Act</i> (1978)
21	Production Phase 5: On-Plate/Press Amendments to <i>Companies Act</i> (2020)
24	WIDER CONTEXTS AND IMPLICATIONS: N.E. THING CO. & INGRID BAXTER
	Contextualizing The N.E. Thing Company
33	Contextualizing Ingrid Baxter (Co-President, N.E. Thing Co.)
38	CONCLUSION: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FIELD OF PRINT DESIGN
40	APPENDIX: COMPANIES ACT (2020) PROCESS DOCUMENTATION
63	WORKS CITED
65	BIBLIOGRAPHY

Glossary

Artists' Book

A book that is an artwork itself.

DIY

Do-it-yourself

Facsimile Reproduction

An exact copy, as of a book, painting, or manuscript.

Offset Printing Press

A machine, as a cylinder press or rotary press, for printing on paper or the like from type, plates, etc.

Print Design

A design method related to print (books, printed material).

Printed Matter

A term for printed materials (most commonly on paper).

INTRODUCTION

Brick Press

Brick Press is a Vancouver-based publishing company that was co-founded by myself and Kelin Kaardal in 2012. Brick Press provides a platform for Canadian and international artists and designers and has published over 20 works from emerging practitioners. Brick Press relies on in-house production, and the majority of its work is produced using an A.B. Dick 9805 offset printing press. The physical production of this book project took place at Brick Press and it is the publisher of *Companies Act* (2020).

Brick Press books have a limited circulation within an artist book context, and are also sold online through our e-commerce website.¹ Brick Press has gained much of its experience through collaboration and has worked closely with many Vancouver artist-run centres and galleries such as the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, 221A, Catriona Jeffries, Unit/Pitt Projects and the Or Gallery and worked with artists such as Ken Lum, Dan Starling and Rebecca Brewer to name a few. We have also sponsored and exhibited in the Vancouver Art Book Fair annually since 2013. Brick Press is fully autonomous and self-sustained by providing commercial printing services and paying artists fees with income generated through book sales.

Creating a publishing imprint came from the desire to make self-published works more legitimate and early Brick Press works utilized copy shops such as Kinko's for their self-service photocopying and print-finishing facilities. Much of the preparation of these works were done at the Granville Island Emily Carr University campus using their library's computers, film-scanners and light-tables.² These early works of mine could be classified as DIY (do-it-yourself) zines.³ They were low-fidelity, cut and paste photo booklets composed of 35mm film photographs. The most important benefit of the DIY method was that it offered a high level of creative control and a lesser cost.⁴

The desire to have more creative control over printed works and complete them in-house led to accumulating printing machines of my own. Examples of these were photocopiers, Risographs, staplers, coil binding machines and paper cutters.⁵ These types of devices eventually took over much of my at-home

1. Our books can be found at stores such as READ Books and Or Galley in Vancouver, Printed Matter in New York and similar establishments internationally.

2. Many of my peers were attending ECU in the BFA program in-between 2010 and 2014. As a result, I spent much time at the university experimenting outside the standard academic programs and using its various facilities.

3. A zine is a low-fidelity, hand-made or DIY (do-it-yourself) publication. Its roots date back to the *fanzine* and movements such as punk.

4. The mantra of do-it-yourself remains important to Brick Press due to its economic viability. Lesser cost = more accessible. Lucy Lippard was an early proponent of the term, *the democratic multiple* which continues to inspire this notion. The term refers to artist's books as affordable objects that circumnavigate the museum/art market. Her article, "The Artist's Book Goes Public," from *Art in America* (Jan. - Feb. 1977) discusses these ideas, as well as introduces Printed Matter, a leading artist's book store that she co-founded with other like-minded individuals.

5. A Risograph is a digital offset duplicator (a high volume printer) from Japan. Rather than toner, like a photocopier, the machine prints on paper with soy-based liquid ink. A Risograph could be described as having a combination of photocopy and screen printing technologies. Risographs offers a user-friendly interface (similar to a photocopier) but add the dynamic of extra colours with interchangeable ink drums.

studio and consisted of all the machines necessary for start-to-finish book production.

The ability to produce printed works in-house requires operation and maintenance abilities for these types of machines. I have dedicated a significant portion of my design practice to learning these practical studio skills. This medium is a vital part of my design practice. I would come to understand that a greater knowledge of printing technologies, machine maintenance and book production methods resulted in a more informed design decision making process throughout all publishing projects. Since 2014, I began a mentorship with senior offset press operator, Robert Denholm, I have accumulated over 3000 hours of guided and unguided press time. The physical operation and maintenance of our offset printing press is the most critical part of my design practice.



Figure 1. Offset production studio at Brick Press, 247 Main Street, Vancouver, BC, Canada.



Figure 2. A.B. Dick 9805 offset press and Mitsubishi DPX plate maker. Image credit: Peter Hagge.

The N.E. Thing Company (NETCO) and *Companies Act*

“The Material in the N.E. Thing Co. Ltd. Book Can Be Used By Anyone, Anytime, Anywhere. Please Let Us Know When You Do This.”

— N.E. Thing Company. (N.E. Thing Co. *Companies Act* 6).

This thesis document supplements a reinterpreted facsimile edition of a scarce and out of print N.E. Thing Co. book prompted from its ambiguous copyright. The reprinting has made accessible for the first time in over forty years, this rare artist book with an edition of 500 copies distributed by D.A.P. and artbook.com in New York City with worldwide distribution. The book, described as a “compendium of company ideas,” *Companies Act* is an essential bookwork by the early Canadian conceptual art duo (N.E. Thing Co. *Companies Act* 5). NETCO was the product of two co-presidents, Ingrid and Iain Baxter. The company served as a vehicle to interrogate art, domestic systems, corporate strategies, and everyday life using photography, information technology, and installation-based artwork. Challenging the urban environment as the artistic centre and the idea of the singular unique artist, the Baxter’s located their studio at 1419 Riverside Drive, North Vancouver, a quiet locale, nestled on a river’s edge in an unassuming suburb. From this periphery they established their own centre from where to conduct their business operations.

N.E. Thing Co. was a North Vancouver-based collaborative duo that utilized an abstracted business model to act as a vehicle for their work. NETCO incorporated their company in 1969, which made a variety of artworks under a number of its corporate departments (N.E. Thing Co. *Companies Act* 1). They were best known for their conceptual practice and were active between 1965 and 1978. Although the “company” may not have succeeded from a monetary perspective, it did, however, blur the lines between parody and a new business model to produce critical artworks and ideas underneath their ever-changing umbrella of its business departments. These works were frequently recognized by leading art journals such as *Art in America* and *Canadian Art* and signifies that NETCO were contenders in the conceptual art world in the 1960s and 1970s.

The above copyright statement by NETCO offers a unique opportunity to create a conceptual design-work through a graphic designer’s lens. In this instance, the statement engages the reader, perhaps in the hopes of leading them to a

less-considered activity: to freely exchange and distribute the contents found within. In short, to redistribute. In this instance, a designer and publisher could carefully try to reproduce an exact facsimile of the original edition. However, when considering the group's unique copyright, this leaves room for interpretation, that in my opinion, is the desired response to it. Things like the appearance of physical age that the book has taken on over forty-two years and questionable appearances of sexism in written articles from the past offer a chance to reinterpret the work itself and acknowledge time and history.



Figure 3. *Companies Act* (1978).

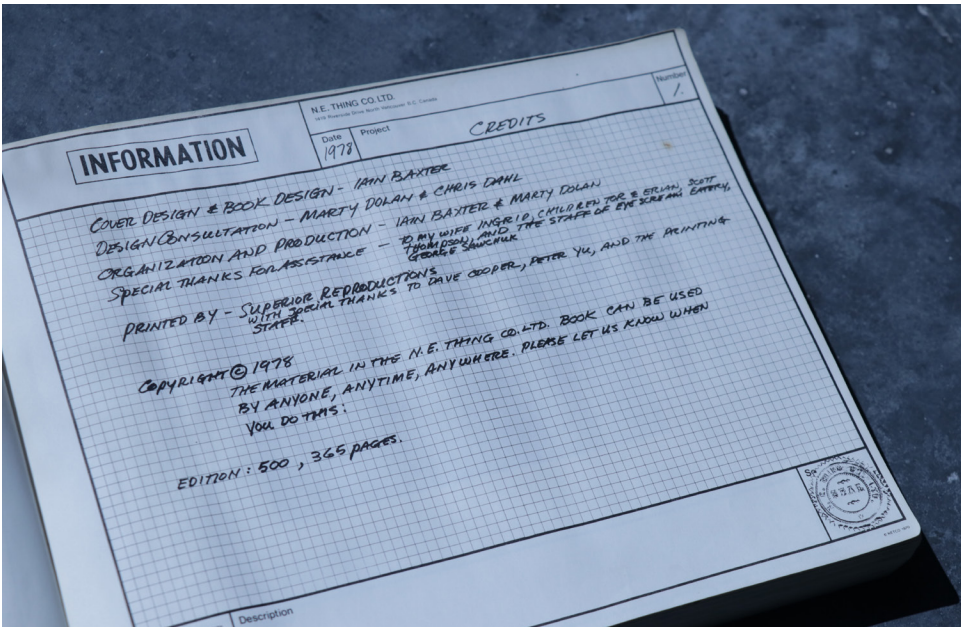


Figure 4. *Copyright* (1978).

CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK

What is Facsimile?

“In the field of facsimiles he was an important authority, for decades of greatest influence in determining what a facsimile is and what it should be.”⁶

— Dieter Röschel (Scorcioni)

Facsimile is a modern publishing practice that produces true surrogate reprinting of first-edition manuscripts deemed culturally or historically significant. The first contemporary facsimile in the history of the book dates back to Austria in 1697, although the desire to reprint texts dates back to the beginning of printing. Accuracy to colour tones, original layout, decoration, including every page, blank or not, a 1:1 reproduction to the highest degree ensures that facsimiles are suitable for scientific or artist research so that no further hardships to the original occur (Kramer).

Manfred Kramer reproduced essential manuscripts for generations at renowned facsimile publishing houses like Faksimile Verlag or Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt. The context of Kramer's interest is largely focused on preserving rare Austrian manuscripts from the 17th Century. For example, his research interests start with the first facsimile book reproduction in history: an Austrian manuscript titled “the Golden Bulle – reproduced in 1697 by the Frankfurt law historian Heinrich Günther Thülemeyer and Johann Friedrich Fleischer; based on King Wenceslaus' deluxe presentation manuscript” (Kramer). The focus was on accurately preserving and disseminating a self-contained physical body of knowledge. Kramer defines *facsimile* as follows:

“A facsimile edition is the photo-mechanical reproduction of a unique, practically two-dimensional model; it eliminates as much as possible manual copy work, reflects to the highest degree the inner and outer aspects of the original, incorporates all possible technical means available, guarantees the protection and preservation of the original, and is suitable for both scientific and artistic interests. A facsimile must act as a true surrogate of the original for research purposes and bibliophiles.” — Manfred Kramer (Kramer).

So, in many ways, Kramer's concept of facsimile is primarily focused on protecting unique book artifacts.

6. This quote refers to the late Manfred Kramer. This quote from Dieter Röschel (along with many others) in an online article by Giovanni Scorcioni provides insight to his significant contributions to facsimile book production.

Although Kramer's guidelines for verisimilitude through an exact copy are useful in many contexts, in some instances, non-exact copies that acknowledge the time passed on or historical context are also important. The issue of time and historiography seemed to be relevant to the reproduction of *Companies Act* (1978). What if the truth and authority of the original copy has problems with it? Thought differently, what can information be lost by bringing a book back to its original, off-press, 'Kramer' state? What can be gained through *actively* reinterpreting the facsimile as a part of a new process?

Through the lens of a graphic designer, these questions argue that adhering to these instructions will erase contextual layers built by time. This particular thesis argues that by reinterpreting what a facsimile is and can be, it can make first-edition manuscripts accessible and establish a conceptually unique reading experience. For this thesis, I refer to a facsimile edition that strives to reinterpret the original work through reprinting as a *reinterpreted* facsimile.

The Reinterpreted Facsimile

Through the many hours, days and years of conceptualization and experimentation of the *Companies Act* (2020) project, another critical consideration is the "exact how" this book will come to be. As defined by Manfred Kramer's 1986, "What is a Facsimile? The History and Technique of the Facsimile" essay, a facsimile, is the act of remaking a book that has been deemed important by creating a "true surrogate," suitable for scientific and artistic research (Kramer). By doing so, these surrogates preserve the original texts from further damage due to movement and handling. There are now many uses of the term facsimile. An example is as simple as using a Xerox machine to photocopy a document, but what Kramer defines as a true surrogate when referring to the remaking of books is quite explicit. He stresses the importance of recreating the book as accurately as possible, matching ink colours, paper stocks and most importantly, never omitting anything including pages, blank or not, to remake a wholly inclusive facsimile edition (Kramer).

This definition posed an inquiry when thinking of remaking N.E. Thing Co.'s original edition of *Companies Act*. The following will explain how I determined the method of production and made design choices to reproduce this book in its entirety as closely to the definition that Kramer has defined, all-the-while, adding intentional design elements to create anew. With this in mind and when thinking

back to N.E. Thing Co.'s practice, what opportunities exist within the facsimile-like process to include the hand of its new creator? Does the book's ambiguous copyright demand interpolation? I believe it does, and to an extent, believe the book making project to be an extreme or parasitic interpretation of the copyright through full appropriation.⁷

Where does one draw the line in creating a surrogate copy of a book? My particular copy of *Companies Act* is over forty years old and shows significant signs of wear, including yellowed pages, stained paper and a heavily cracked blue cover. It is an unlikely possibility to obtain a comparable paper stock to the original due to changes in the printing industry. However, it is possible to improvise with a contemporary paper stock and include existing stains on pages and the cracks on the book's cover through a scanning and editing process. Are these attributes important to this book's reproduction? Some would argue that restoration as close to what the original may have looked like is what Kramer would consider a suitable surrogate, but what gets lost when this happens? In other words, what value can we draw out of the four decades that have passed since the first edition was printed?

For this reason, I believe that Kramer's definition has shortcomings, like the erasure of time related to a book's age and perhaps the history that has taken place since a book's production. In certain instances, and the idea of a reinterpreted facsimile can fill in areas or revisit historiographical issues with the work. Find below a series of production-based case studies that were used to expand on the idea of *reinterpreted facsimile*.

PRODUCTION-BASED CASE STUDY: THE PROCESS OF PRINTING A REINTERPRETED FACSIMILE OF N.E. THING CO. LTD'S *COMPANIES ACT* (1978)

This book remaking took place at Brick Press, located at 247 Main Street, Vancouver, BC, Canada. The book was produced using an A.B. Dick offset press, the same printing method used in the 1978 edition.

The following sections below are a chronological summary of the most integral design case studies related to the production process of the reinterpreted facsimile edition of N.E. Thing Co.'s *Companies Act* (1978).

7. By this, I mean that, "using the material in the N.E. Thing Co. book" to me, is permission to remake and distribute as its publisher, a 1:1 abstracted re-edition of 500 copies of the 1978 text. Typically, one would expect a more laborious and strict process in remaking a rare bookwork. By remaking the book, I challenge the idea of authorship in relationship to the duo.

Production Phase 1: Disassembling *Companies Act* (1978)

The *Companies Act* (1978) disassembly took place in the Libby Leshgold Gallery at Emily Carr University in April 2019. The significance of the gallery itself in relation to the project is minimal, however its location and large, open floor space made it ideal to accommodate the area-consuming activity. The disassembly took place as a performance-based design method in response to a telephone conversation with Iain Baxter (Iain Baxter&) that took place on February 6, 2019 (Interview. Conducted by Ryan Smith, 6 February 2019). During the conversation, I had made mention of an upside-down and backwards page bound into my original copy of *Companies Act*, thinking perhaps the “error” was intentional. Further research involving cross-referencing other remaining physical copies of the book proved this was the case. The page documenting the “Art is All Over” (1971), 3-inch button, was intentionally collated improperly. The inquiry led to Iain recalling the collating process of *Companies Act* in 1978 (Interview. Conducted by Ryan Smith, 6 February 2019).⁸

In the original version of *Companies Act*’s case, the process required a warehouse in North Vancouver to create rows for each of the 359 pages, stacked 500 sheets high (the book’s edition size). Walking each aisle, and by hand putting each copy together. The effort took Iain several weeks and in the process, intentionally misplacing the upside-down and backwards page (Interview. Conducted by Ryan Smith, 6 February 2019). This revelation was deemed significant enough of a design decision that the “error” will appear in the new edition through Brick Press’s production process.

By filling the floor space of Libby Leshgold Gallery, I was able to visualize and comprehend the collating process that Iain had described. Aside from the action responding to Iain’s story, the action was quite literally a way to *use the material in the book* responding directly to N.E. Thing Co.’s 1978 copyright. Additionally, the book disassembly came from a need to prepare each page for scanning to create new working print files. The scanned pages can then be edited, then used to make offset plates, which will be used in the book’s reprinting.

This act perhaps served the bookwork the most in the sense that the disassembly process became an action that brings new elements into the work itself. The

8. Collating refers to organizing the order of printed pages of a book before it becomes bound to its cover.

transformation (destruction) of the original to create a new is highly significant as it breaks the work down, forcing its rebuilding. In essence, nothing from the original remains in the new edition, aside from the addition of the scanned pages.



Figure 5. *Companies Act* disassembly.

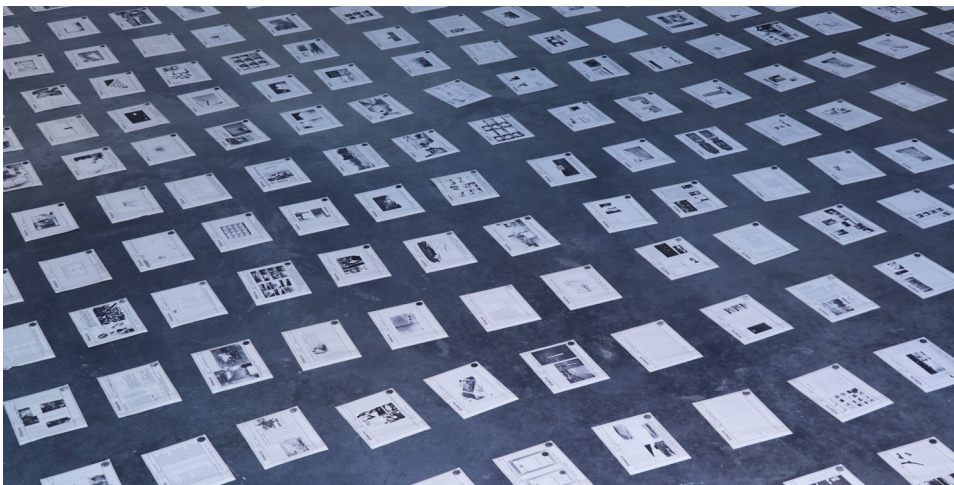


Figure 6 Disassembly crop-view.

Production Phase 2: Page Scanning of *Companies Act* (1978)

Once wholly disassembled, each of the 359 pages and the cover of the original edition of *Companies Act* were now ready for high-resolution scanning.⁹ The yellowed, stained pages to the eye of a pre-press designer were concerning. This is because initially, the contents were printed in black ink onto white paper. The aged, yellowed paper when in grayscale becomes a nearly solid page of ink as the yellowed paper reads as grey, therefore, not a blank background as originally produced. Beyond this, the book's edition with consistently grey backgrounds would require nearly ten-times the required ink to print.

9. Scanning the assembled book would have been burdensome due to its size (over 22" wide when opened) and weight.

At the same time, within these aged, yellowed pages, exists many attributes that have appeared on the pages during its lifespan. Things such as watermarks and coffee stains, and beyond attributes of age, printed elements that have appeared due to printer's errors and intentional errors. These elements make content editing difficult and time-consuming.

The choice to include these elements of age and wear required hours and days of careful, individual page editing so that the background was blank, as in the original pressing, but also carefully enough so that the contextual elements remain. As to why these markings are important, they fulfill the narrative of this specific book and clearly distinguish it alongside other copies that still exist. Through a printer and print-designer's lens, the editing process to preserve the aging plays a significant role in its visual communication and supports the conceptual second edition. The concept exaggerates the original, a crude, photocopy like edition, composed of copies of original photographs and in some cases, copies of copies. While an obvious effort is made to reproduce a usable and clear reproduction, it was important to include the aura of the photocopy within the collage-like pages.

Production Phase 3: Pre-Press Editing for Offset Plate-Making

Pre-press editing for plate-making is a necessary design element in publication design that occurs before sending files to print. This work requires much testing to ensure a proper layout, otherwise resulting in potentially thousands of dollars of wasted material.

In the case *Companies Act*, the consistent layout with a tight border is a cause for concern. Printing must allow for slight image movement on the page and, in this case, required a 2% decrease in size to ensure the reproduction's final trim does not cut into valuable content.

Production Phase 4: Reproducing the Cover of *Companies Act* (1978)

The cover-reproduction for the *Companies Act* (2020) edition for many reasons is the most exciting and vital element of the reproduction. It is the first thing that a potential reader sees, and this can draw them in or create interest. Secondly,

and notably, the book's cover is the only portion of the book that utilizes colour printing. This fact alone is significant. The added dynamic of colour, in my opinion, is of much importance.

The reproduction came with a significant challenge. Book covers protect a book's contents, and they are damaged easily. In the case of *Companies Act* (1978), my copy's cover was heavily cracked as one might imagine after forty-two years of wear. The most challenging problem to navigate was the sun-bleached portion of the cover, taking over the spine and about 1/4 of the front cover, denoting that the book sat unmoved in a direct sunlight location for an extended period.

The cracks from a designer's perspective are aesthetically substantial, the sun-bleached fading, however, is bleak and unattractive. The decision to eliminate the sun-bleach came from an understanding that the cover must look good while communicating this particular design-work's story.

The method used to achieve this was first, a high-quality scan, and then heavily editing in Adobe Photoshop. Image re-touching, clone-stamp, greyscale, threshold, levels, exposure, brightness and contrast, to name a few, were some of the many tools used to achieve a print-ready cover for metal, offset-plate production.

After much research, experimentation and consideration, the design decisions that resulted in the final cover were: 15pt C1S paper, single-colour offset, Pantone Blue 072 ink with UV coating, printed on a five-colour Heidelberg Speedmaster offset press, located at Planet Press in Burnaby, BC.¹⁰

10. 15pt C1S refers to a hefty weight of paper used for book covers that is "coated one side" (glossy on print-side, matte on the backside). UV coating is a varnish that is *flooded* (printed) overtop of large solids of the print to prevent ink smudging due to slow drying, oil-based inks, especially in colours like Pantone Blue 072 and Pantone Reflex Blue.



Figure 7. *Companies Act* (1978).



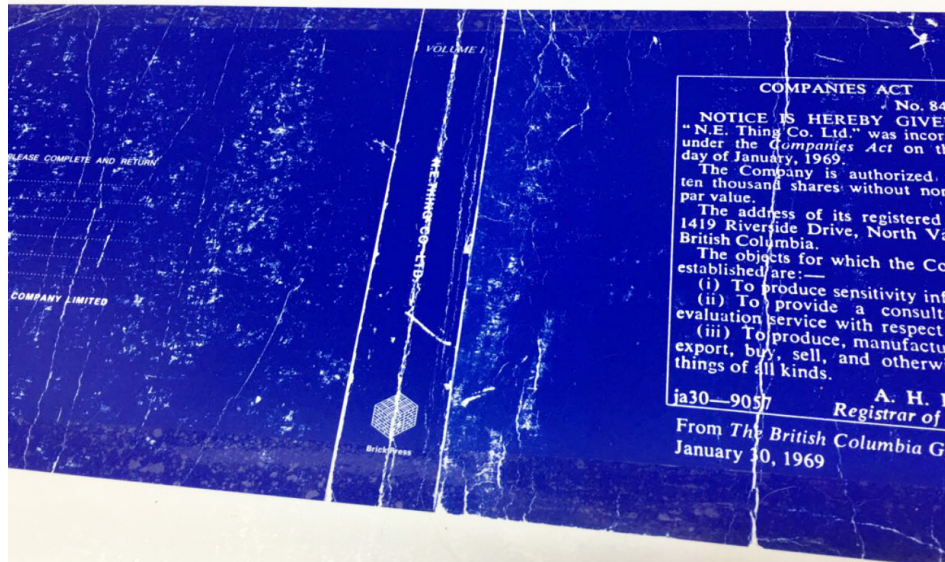
Figure 8. *Companies Act* (2020).



Your Story 18s



'N.E. Thing Co. Companies Act' (2020) Process Series:



Reprinted Copy of 1978 Edition Cover in Pantone Blue 072



Facebook



Highlight



More

Figure 9. Brick Press Instagram: *Companies Act* (2020) process series.

Production Phase 5: On-Plate/Press Amendments to *Companies Act* (2020)

This thesis includes historical and historiographical discoveries made during the book's production. Selected essays that I read cite sexism in the arts, particularly sexism directed to Ingrid Baxter (co-president of N.E. Thing Co.) that discredits her contributions to the group.¹¹ Spontaneous on-plate edits to articles cited in the essays mentioned above were made to intentionally, and harshly omit two of these instances. Examples like "The young Canadian married a pretty blond named Elaine and together they produced two children and the N.E. Thing Company Ltd." was physically scratched with a thumbtack, directly on the plate by me to read "The young Canadian married Elaine and together they produced two children and the N.E. Thing Company Ltd" (N.E. Thing Co. *Companies Act* 198).¹² Visible omissions like this are contained throughout the entire 500 copy edition, in solidarity with Ingrid Baxter (formerly Elaine Baxter), and in a sense, used the opportunity to reinterpret history.

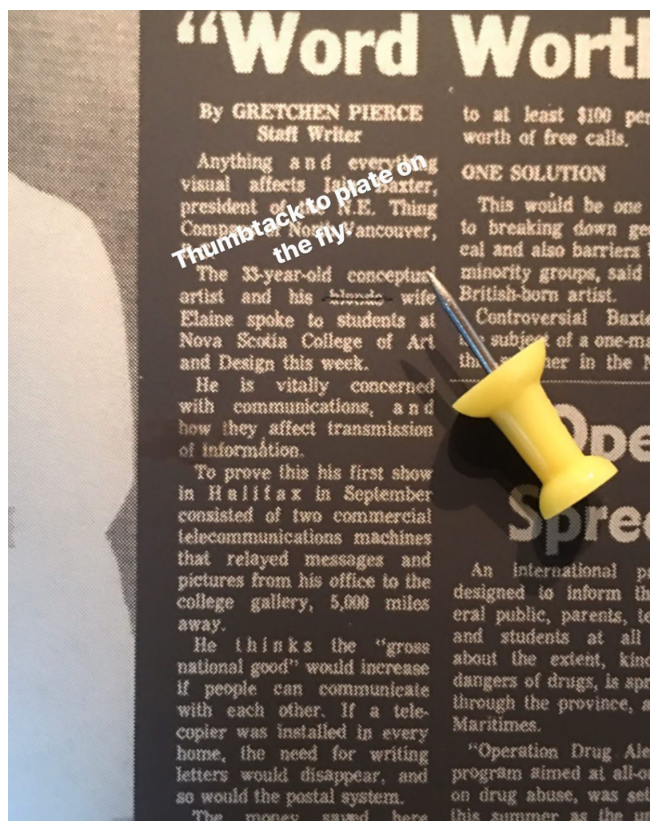


Figure 10. Offset plate and thumbtack (from another amendment that I made in the new edition).

11. Essays by Nancy Shaw and Leah Modigliani and a 2005 interview between Vancouver Art Gallery's Grant Arnold are just a few examples of her acknowledged unequal credit for her contribution to NETCO.

12. Scratching a plate accidentally is unrepairable. Mistakes in the past requiring plate remaking informed the design decision to amend (damage) directly to the offset printing plate.

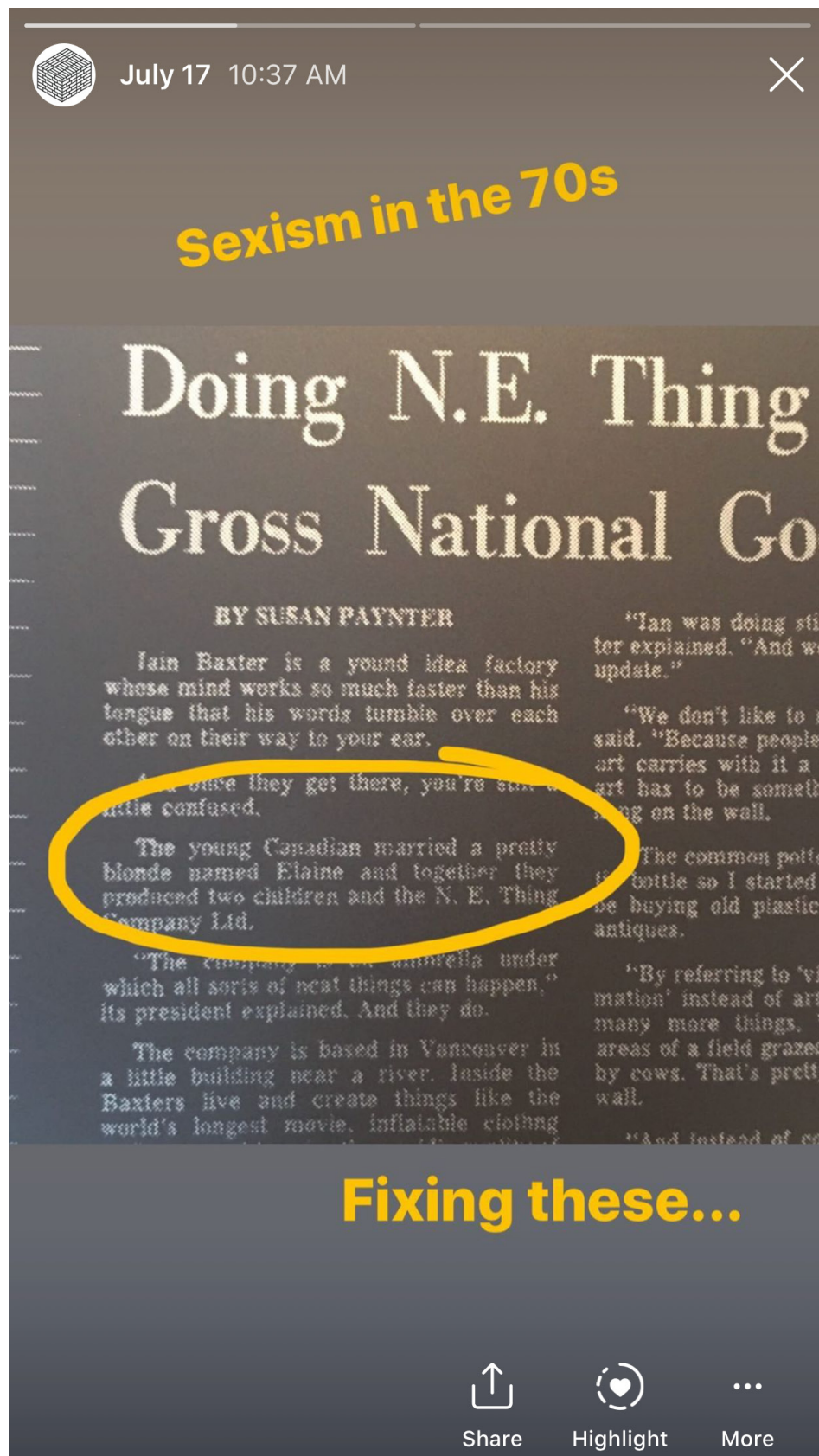


Figure 11. Offset plate prior to edit (as described above).



July 17 10:38 AM



Fixed.

Doing N.E. Thing F Gross National Goo

BY SUSAN PAYNTER

Iain Baxter is a young idea factory whose mind works so much faster than his tongue that his words tumble over each other on their way to your ear.

And once they get there, you're still a little confused.

The young Canadian married ~~Elaine~~ Elaine and together they produced two children and the N. E. Thing Company Ltd.

"The company is an umbrella under which all sorts of neat things can happen," its president explained. And they do.

The company is based in Vancouver in a little building near a river. Inside the Baxters live and create things like the longest movie, inflatable clothing

"Iain was doing still ter explained. "And we update."

"We don't like to said. "Because people art carries with it. art has to be some hang on the wall.

"The common tie bottle so I sta be buying old p antiques.

"By referring mation' instead many more areas of a fire by cows. Th x all.

"And in are people



Share



Highlight



More

Figure 12. Printed sheet with amendment (as described above).

WIDER CONTEXTS AND IMPLICATIONS: N.E. THING CO. & INGRID BAXTER

Contextualizing The N.E. Thing Company

“THE N.E. THING COMPANY has developed itself as a factory of ideas, which is far too preoccupied with the production and realization of new ideas to pay much attention to the archival end.”

— Jean-Christophe Ammann (N.E. Thing Co. *Companies Act* 4)

Throughout the studio-led bookmaking project, the appearance of a need to better understand the subjects of whom I am publishing led me towards a new discipline to me: art history. Many years of dedication and research would be required to truly unpack the N.E. Thing Company and their influences and counterparts. That said, it is integral to this thesis to provide a basic knowledge of the duo. Doing this thoroughly is more in the scope of a Doctoral Dissertation. However, some details help in understanding the *reinterpreted* facsimile.

I admired NETCO before the *Companies Act* (2020) edition, and that being said, a work of this magnitude requires that I, as the publisher and designer, have at least base knowledge of the group. Below I will write about significant and compelling works of NETCO in hopes that it further contextualizes this thesis document and highlights how reinterpretation becomes a useful tool.

The quote above is taken from Jean-Christophe Ammann’s letter, a former curator at Kunsthalle Basel, which prefaces the original *Companies Act* and indicates to the reader what volume of production NETCO involved itself—like reading *Companies Act*, fully understanding NETCO requires a considerable effort. NETCO’s contributions to conceptual art are significant, and this information provides insight into what motivated their productive years between 1965 and 1978.

N.E. Thing Co. was particularly influential in Vancouver’s art scene in the 1960s and 1970s. As Philip Leider (former founding editor of U.S. art magazine, *Artforum*) noted in his 1967 article, “Vancouver: scene with no scene” (1967), he describes NETCO as playing a pivotal role in the “scene with no scene” (“scene with no scene”). Although there was not a bustling international scene of contemporary art in Vancouver at the time, Leider’s assessment of it having no scene was an over-exaggeration: organizations like Intermedia, Image Bank,



Figure 13. N.E. Thing Co. on the cover of Philip Leider’s, “Vancouver: scene with no scene” (1967)

Video In, and The Western Front were all in the city at the time, and they were all actively producing their own “scenes”.¹³

N.E. Thing Co.’s recognition flourished with their *Art in America* (AiA) cover for the May-June 1969 issue, which gives a vital example of the group’s predominance in the American conceptual art scene (“*Art in America*”). Even today, reaching the cover of *AiA* is a feat of success typically garnered by artists affiliated with larger cities, let alone North Vancouver.

As Nancy Shaw has noted, the N.E. Thing Company was among the first artist groups in Canada to produce an artistic critique of everyday life (“Citing the Banal”). I imagine she made this statement acknowledging the topic’s prevalence elsewhere, especially in Europe, but that the group was among the first to think in this way in North America. It is accurate to say that NETCO followed the lead of their Situationist or Nouveau Réalist counterparts in this regard or were at least operating parallel to them.¹⁴ They did this by creating an extensive body of conceptual artworks through the creation of an incorporated company. The “company” operated under an abstracted business model, questioning what art beyond the canvas could be.

NETCO was the result of an extraordinary collaboration between Iain and Ingrid Baxter, which existed within a marriage and a business and involved raising a family. This uncommon combination required a progressive outlook on everyday operations. The NETCO co-presidents did this by conceiving a vast network of ideas involving ordinary places and objects that incorporated photography, site-specific performance, installation-based work and new technologies like telecopiers and graphic design, corporate identity and in some ways, their work blurred lines between art and corporate graphic design (N.E. Thing Co. *Companies Act*).

By 1978, this broad calling to question the everyday mundane resulted in what Ammann describes as a factory of ideas (N.E. Thing Co. *Companies Act* 4). The duo, similar to artists like Marcel Duchamp, had successfully blurred the definition of an artwork by prompting its viewers to recognize that in the right frame, anything can be art. Within a context of wider culture, linguists and theorists like Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault and others were actively ripping apart the concept of the authority of the author, which had a significant impact on interrogating the field of art through conceptual art practices and actions.¹⁵ By this

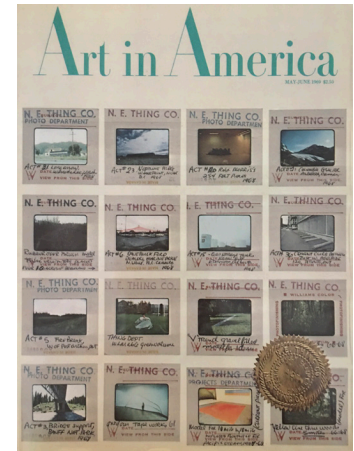


Figure 14. N.E. Thing Co.’s *Art in America* cover (1969)

13. Intermedia was founded in 1967 in Vancouver by Jack Shadbolt and Glenn Lewis and others. Image Bank was founded in 1970 by artists Michael Morris, Gary Lee-Nova and Vincent Trasov that worked extensively in mail art and other forms of questioning mass media. Video In Studios was incorporated in Vancouver in 1973, and was one of the earliest international video centres and one of Canada’s longest running artist-run centres. Western Front was also started in 1973 in Vancouver by eight artists that wanted to create, explore and exhibit new art forms.

14. For example, NETCO used the term S.I. extensively as an abbreviation for “Sensory Information” – this was a tongue-in-cheek reference to Situationist International, which also went by the same abbreviation.

15. For example, see Barthes, Roland. “The Death of the Author.” *Contributions in Philosophy* 83 (2001): 3-8.

point in their career, they had exhibited extensively throughout North America in several seminal exhibitions such as MoMA's 1970 *Information*.¹⁶ Within this exhibition, NETCO's contribution consisted of a Telex brand telecopier located in the museum. It printed out live transmissions being sent from North Vancouver, British Columbia, by the artists during the exhibition's opening. Ideas such as this questioned traditional art by appropriating, in this case, an ordinary office tool into a contextual setting that utilized its function to create a new outcome, veering it away from its original purpose. The installation was met with criticism by some, possibly wondering the intentions of the presumably expensive Telex brand telecopier in the New York museum, coincidentally located within the epicentre of America's economy. Could the work have been an advertisement for Telex? Did the Baxters infiltrate the museum? At the least, the work reinforced their influence from Marshall McLuhan, a famous media theorist from Toronto, Ontario. McLuhan observed the media and its use of new technologies such as television and the impact that advertising had in contemporary life. He authored several critical texts in the field of media studies, including *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (1962), which exposed the effects of mass media in society due to the advent of the printing press. This book coined the popular term "global village," referring to mass-communication and how it allows a village-like mindset to reach beyond a small community. (*The Gutenberg Galaxy* 31-44) This idea of technology spanning distance as a method of communication was very apparent in NETCO's work. Their numerous telegraph artworks can be seen as reflective of McLuhan's thinking—and both creatively used graphic design as a tool in their works. This use of emerging technology was only one of many examples of N.E. Thing Company referencing the author. The terms VSI (Visual Sensitivity Information) and SI (Sensitivity Information) are joint "departments" utilized by NETCO that also reflect McLuhan's influence.

A considerable body of work involving landscapes would become a focal and reoccurring theme used by the N.E. Thing Company. The 1968-1969 series of works titled "You Are Now in the Middle of an N.E. Thing Co. Landscape" located both in Southern California and Prince Edward Island, is an example of how the group transformed unused space (N.E. Thing Co. *Companies Act* 170). The installation-based works utilized signage composed of text(s) denoting similar phrases as the work's title. The signs were hammered into the ground on the sides of highways, claiming the aesthetic environment behind them and encouraged viewers who drove past to consider the undefined landscapes. To better frame the context of the NETCO landscape works (and much of NETCO's work),

16. Curated by Kynaston McShine, the former chief curator at the MoMA responsible for other notable exhibitions such as MoMA's 1999 Museum as Muse and the Jewish Museums 1966 Primary Structures.

Marcel Duchamp's readymades might be the best artworks to consider.

In 1913 Duchamp wrote a note: "Can one make works which are not works of 'art'?" That year, Duchamp assembled his first and most notable readymade *Bicycle Wheel*, consisting of an inverted bicycle wheel attached to a stool. With this work, Duchamp is addressing the way that art is *framed* between the artist's attention and the viewer's reception. In other words, Duchamp was interested in addressing the way things were framed as art (Girst). When looking at NETCO's work, this is perhaps Duchamp's greatest influence to the duo's oeuvre. NETCO too, frames art with tools of the industry, in their case, with things like stamps, grid paper and documentation techniques, both used objects from industry to provide a new perspective of how we look at things normally taken for granted. This concept not only offered a new aspect on these types of objects, it also shifted the perspective of contemporary art within Canada and abroad.

Another similarly compelling NETCO work sought to investigate the unmeasurable body of water in the immediate landscape of their North Vancouver headquarters. The 1967 work "Approximately 1,200,000 Gallons of Water" used sequential photography to track a floating stick (N.E. Thing Co. *Companies Act* 90). The photographs that document the stick's location aided in creating the mathematical equation used to determine the water-body's volume and the corresponding work's title. In a similar vein, 1966/68s "Chrome Poles Move," NETCO erected poles into an Alberta glacier to trace the snow melt's path (N.E. Thing Co. *Companies Act* 129). The diagram for the work shows a haphazardly sketched picture, which depicts poles standing upwards in snow and then scattered in a riverbed once the spring arrives. These two examples of artworks could have been mistaken for scientific research but could perhaps be boiled down to the idea that, "Art is All Over." This slogan was made as a 3-inch button, which could have been mistaken for a presidential campaign support flare in 1971 but could be the most straightforward way in beginning to understand the otherwise theoretically oriented practice of the N.E. Thing Co (N.E. Thing Co. *Companies Act* 233).

In their own country, NETCO rose to fame quickly due to their works, which were far different from the typical landscape painting of the Canadian wilderness ("Citing the Banal"). Early accounts of NETCO work involved using industrial plastics and, for some time, caused occasional controversy. Examples of the non-traditional works are a 1966 work made of inflated vinyl that won a \$500.00

prize from the Vancouver Centennial Committee. This work stimulated a *Vancouver Sun* article, which its headline read, “Fun’s Fun, But Not at \$500”. In another instance, on March 6, 1966, *Victoria Times* periodical, a headline reads “Display Mockery of Art, Gallery.” This article was about an installation composed of plastic objects in the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria (N.E. Thing Co. *Companies Act* 60-67). Both provide a sense of general public not ready to accept the conceptual medium as conventional art. These instances, in turn, might be another reason which made them essential to the history of their rise in Canada and America.

Although many more NETCO works are worth mentioning, two last works because they further highlight NETCO’s ability to reinterpret the everyday and invite others to rethink what would typically not be considered interesting. First, “Celebration of the Body” (1976) was held at Agnes Etherington Art Centre in Kingston, Ontario (N.E. Thing Co. *Companies Act* 282-287). This Olympic-themed exhibition organized by Iain and Ingrid Baxter was a primary example of using what they called VSI (Visual Sensitivity Information), where the group had extensively documented and examined the movements of the human body through photographs of athletes. The Baxter’s early athletic pursuits likely inform the idea of how a body’s movement can visually communicate through a picture. Can a photograph of a body engaged in sports—or movement in general—be defined as art? Do the photographs of movement provide the viewer with information? The exhibition coincided with the 1976 Canada Olympics, for which NETCO produced an official Olympic Games poster. It depicted several bodies as spelling out the word “Olympics.”

Much like “Celebration of the Body” (1976), a 1969 exhibition titled “N.E. Thing Co. Environment” at the National Gallery of Canada too is also notable within this context (N.E. Thing Co. *Companies Act* 146-157). The work spanned a month-long takeover of the gallery’s first floor, where the group strategically designed an “N.E. Thing Co.” environment. The office-like maze was so convincing that it prompted interested parties on several occasions to inquire if the prime office location was available to rent. A Telex telecopier placed in the exhibition sent live transmissions to other galleries such as the Paula Cooper Gallery in New York. The environment itself was an appropriation of an office setting that fit the NETCO’s obscure business model, which occurred only four years after Iain and Ingrid Baxter started the N.E. Thing Company.

It is also worth mentioning that NETCO was not alone in adopting and appropriating the aesthetics, technologies and role of corporate communications. The mindset of the industrial office was also of inspiration to several notable examples, including Artist Placement Group (APG), General Idea, and Mierle Laderman's 'Maintenance Art' document from 1969. Artists were actively exploring issues around labour and actions, and were investigating and playing with how media images and corporate authority was visually constructed (Allen).

N.E. Thing Company, thoroughly described, would take years of research due to their extensive and diverse body of work. However, an afternoon reading *Companies Act* provides useful and deep insight into the group's activities. For this reason, a new, reinterpreted facsimile edition of *Companies Act* has been deemed as an important bookmaking project.

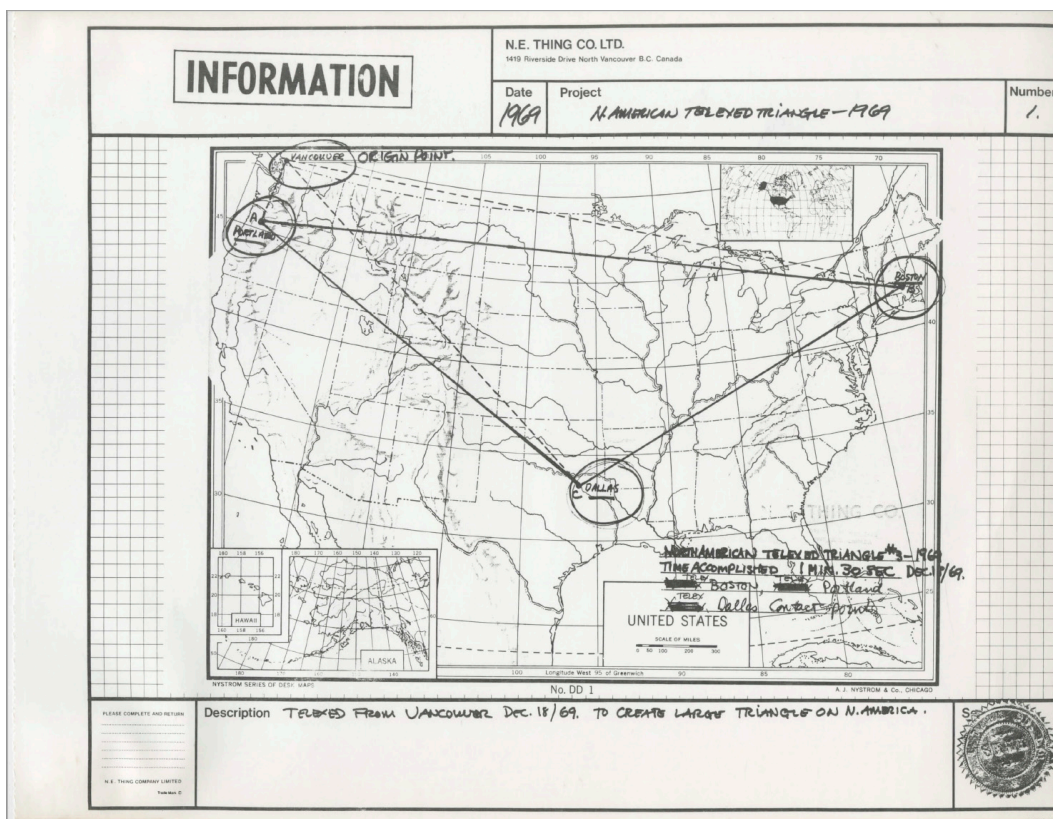



Figure 15. "N. American Telexed Triangle" (1969) Image: *Companies Act* (1978)

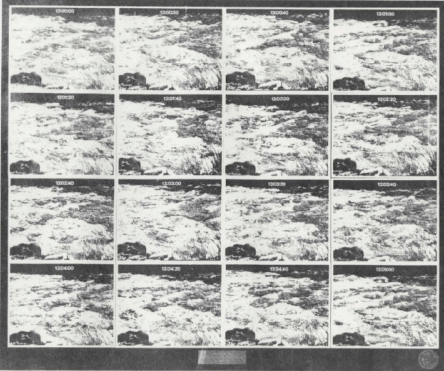
INFORMATION	N.E. THING CO. LTD. 1419 Riverside Drive North Vancouver B.C. Canada		
	Date 1969	Project N.E. THING CO. LANDSCAPE	Number 1



PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN	Description <i>Sign was placed in approved Landscape on Prince Edward Island. When a person comes upon this N.E. THING CO. sign the landscape included is all that one can see from this point to the horizon line.</i>	Seal
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Figure 16. "N.E. Thing Co. Landscape" (1969) Image: Companies Act (1978)

INFORMATION	N.E. THING CO. LTD. 1419 Riverside Drive North Vancouver B.C. Canada		
	Date 1967	Project APPROXIMATELY 1,200,000 GALLONS OF WATER - 1967	Number 1



PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN	Description <i>WORK DONE USING CAMERA TO DOCUMENT A DIFFERENT piece of H₂O. At precise intervals but from the exact same position. the resultant amount of H₂O = approx 1,200,000 gallons. Orson Seymour Ruess, North Vancouver, B.C. Collection: CANADA COUNCIL ARTS BANK.</i>	Seal
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Figure 17. "Approximately 1,200,000 Gallons of Water" (1967) Image: Companies Act (1978)

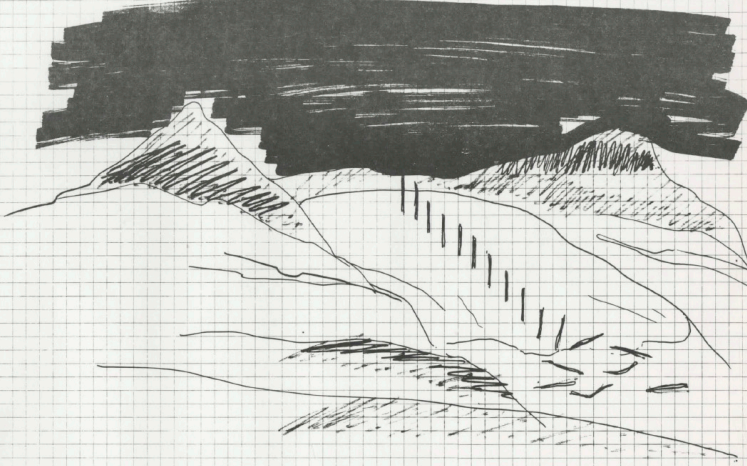

INFORMATION		N.E. THING CO. LTD. 1419 Riverside Drive North Vancouver B.C. Canada		Number 1.
		Date 1966/68	Project CHROME POLES MOVE	
				
PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN N.E. THING COMPANY LIMITED Toronto, Ont.	Description Chrome poles to be inserted into drilled holes into glacier to a depth of 50 ft. These poles are to be left in the glacier for the life of the glacier. When they are deposited don't twist at the terminal moraine, they are then to be fixed permanently in position and left to rot away.			See 

Figure 18. "Chrome Poles Move" (1966/68) Image: Companies Act (1978)


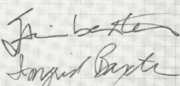


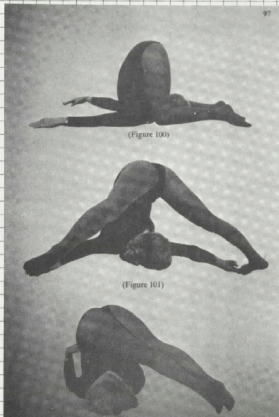
INFORMATION		N.E. THING CO. LTD. 1419 Riverside Drive North Vancouver B.C. Canada		Number 1.
		Date 1976	Project CELEBRATION OF THE BODY	
				
<p>THIS CELEBRATION OF THE BODY EXHIBITION IS ONLY THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG, PRESENTING ONLY A FEW OF THE MANY WAYS OF FOCUSING ON THE BODY ESTHETICALLY. UNFORTUNATELY, MANY VISUAL ARTISTS, DANCERS, MUSICIANS, AND BODY PERFORMERS OF ALL KINDS ARE NOT INCLUDED BECAUSE OF LIMITATIONS IN TIME AND BUDGET.</p> <p>HOWEVER, WE HOPE THIS CELEBRATION OF THE BODY EXHIBITION WILL OPEN NEW WAYS OF SEEING AND SENSING ONE OF THE MOST WONDERFUL CREATIONS EVER — ME AND YOU.</p> <p>  CO-PRESIDENTS N.E. THING CO. LTD. JULY, 1976 </p>				
PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN N.E. THING COMPANY LIMITED Toronto, Ont.	Description Project done for Olympic Games when they were held in Canada. "CELEBRATION OF THE BODY" AN N.E. THING CO. CONCEPT WAS DONE FOR AQUA STATION WATER CENTRE, DIRECTOR MICHAEL BELL.			See 

Figure 19. "Celebration of the Body" (1976) Image: Companies Act (1978)

INFORMATION		N.E. THING CO. LTD. 1419 Riverside Drive North Vancouver B.C. Canada		Number
Date	1976	Project	Celebration of the body - Kingston, ONT.	



(A)



(B)


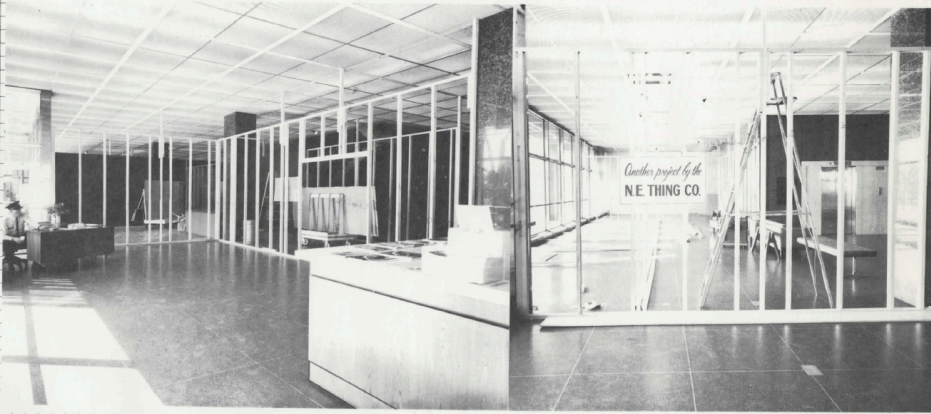
PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN:	Description (A) Jesse Owens jumping broad jump at 1936 Olympics. (B) Karen Ziebergoff performing Yoga.	
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Figure 20. "Celebration of the Body" (1976) Image: Companies Act (1978)

INFORMATION		N.E. THING CO. LTD. 1419 Riverside Drive North Vancouver B.C. Canada		Number
Date	1969	Project	NATIONAL GALLERY OF CANADA EXHIBITION	




PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN:	Description PRELIMINARY LAYOUT OF WALLS FOR N.E. THING CO. CORPORATE OFFICES AND DISPLAY AREAS.	
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Figure 21. "N.E. Thing Co. Environment" (1969) Image: Companies Act (1978)

Contextualizing Ingrid Baxter (Co-President, N.E. Thing Co.)

Reflecting to first discovering the collaborative duo's business activities, the *team* dynamic was the most compelling element that made their work exciting to me. Their approach was not common, but with it, they challenged perceived stereotypes of what it meant to be an artist. A component of this thesis document relates to Ingrid Baxter, as the current status of authorship between her, Iain Baxter & N.E. Thing Co. have been, and continue to be at odds. This relates to *Companies Act* because without hearing about this problem of authorship, the book would not visually describe this. In fact, I find *Companies Act* to be the opposite, a revelling celebration of collaboration. The issue of sexism is still relevant today and knowing that Ingrid Baxter has been written out, omitted and ignored in years following what began as an amicable separation takes away from their original approach that shaped NETCO.

Ingrid Baxter's role or lack of credit in the N.E. Thing Company has been in question in different essays like Leah Modigliani's Oct. 12, 2013 letter in *C-Mag* ("Letters to the Editor"), Nancy Shaw's "Expanded Consciousness and Company Types: Collaboration Since Intermedia and the N.E. Thing Company" in *Vancouver Anthology* ("Consciousness and Company Types" 91-109) and even in Ingrid Baxter's essay, "In the Wilds of the Art World: Riverside Drive" in *The Capilano Review's* issue 3.8/Spring 2009 ("In the Wilds of the Art World" 183). This finding became evident early on when speaking with colleagues about the project itself, often a brief mention of their separation. During a literature review of NETCO, an initial instance that brought the question of Ingrid's role forward as a significant point of historiography lay within the essay written by Nancy Shaw in *Vancouver Anthology*. She concludes the essay by noting that the Baxter's were aware of how their work was perceived, which is often focused on Iain as the driving force ("Consciousness and Company Types" 91-109). Despite this, they both acknowledged the equal importance of their efforts, although Ingrid's credit suffered significantly due to sexism and misogyny. In addition to her 1969 appointment of co-president of the N.E. Thing Company, Ingrid is documented as contributing considerable conceptual input to the group dating back to 1965. In an interview with Grant Arnold in 2005, Ingrid mentions that much of their evenings and lengthy car journeys, including driving across Canada thirteen times, were the group's ideas creation times, as they did not have an actual boardroom. She describes these as detailed discussions of concepts to be realized by

the company (Interview. Conducted by Grant Arnold, 2005).

In one essay, Ingrid's role is described as "administrative" (Lauder). Although the author does not discredit her as having a role in NETCO and does mention her throughout the numerous and in-depth essays, he has written about the company. In my opinion, this is a significant sexist historiographic error, and the term "administrative" is not the right way to describe her contributions. Ingrid does admit in her 2005 interview with Arnold that Iain physically created the majority of NETCO works. This part of the conversation between the two takes place after Arnold addresses the concern of authorship, and it is perhaps this reason that contributes to her less recognized role. The question of conceptual input versus physical making in art comes to mind. One could perhaps agree that the physical efforts in a conceptual artwork may not be as important as the idea itself. Another uncertainty with the nature of conceptual works within collaborations may be the "who thought of it first" dilemma. Ingrid addresses this notion in her 2005 interview with Grant Arnold and her essay in *The Capilano Review* (Interview. Conducted by Grant Arnold, 2005 / "In the Wilds of the Art World" 183). However, it can be assumed that the nature of the Baxter's family and business meant she was an integral part of nearly all N.E. Thing Co. works in some way or another and, in some instances, was the "thought it first," even-so, Iain still received majority credit.¹⁷

I argue that Ingrid's role was critical to the N.E. Thing Company. It is impossible to know if NETCO's work would have been as impactful without the conceptual input of Ingrid but at the very least, I suspect that it would have been drastically different. I also believe that the pinnacle of Iain Baxter's work was during NETCO, and his work that follows is understandably (or could be seen as) re-iterations of the N.E. Thing Company. How much input each person had does not matter—N.E. Thing Co. was the product of collaboration. The vibrant lives of Iain and Ingrid Baxter, which encompassed marriage and raising two children, running a "company" as co-presidents and making artwork together, undoubtedly influenced the group's outcomes. This dynamic involving Ingrid and a "business" run by a married couple, is likely what made N.E. Thing Co. so exciting to a curator and art historian such as Lucy Lippard. Lippard was not only one of the most active and prominent curators in New York, she had a penchant for supporting art that "expanded" the field of art to include a number of women artists and practices that did not easily fit into an overall patriarchal and commercial art world. Her contributions to art in the late sixties and early seventies included

17. Ingrid Baxter reveals that she and Iain agreed that the "word worth a 1/1000th of a picture" was a term that she coined, although, in multiple instances, it is credited to Iain.

several ground breaking exhibitions including 955,000 at the Vancouver Art Gallery (which included NETCO) which promoted the “dematerialization” of art most commonly referred to as Conceptual Art. Central to her activities was her writing and production of catalogues. She was a co-founder of Printed Matter, arguably the world’s leading organization dedicated to disseminating, understanding and appreciating artist’s books. With all this in mind, NETCO’s collaborative and conceptual nature and interest in printed matter, was central to her radical redefining of what art can be. This support would have great consequences for artists living in a place like Vancouver, which was viewed by many as an artistic periphery at the time.

Ingrid mentions that these authorship issues likely boil down to sexism in the arts in her interview with Grant Arnold in 2005 (Interview. Conducted by Grant Arnold, 2005). I conclude by arguing that this is a valid comment that has been addressed times over in many fields, not just art. A current statistic cites that 0.5% is the amount of recorded history that researchers have estimated is devoted to women’s stories (Sanders). This statistic is quite broad but grounds the critical discussions which can be traced back through multiple waves of feminist movements, all of which argued the ever apparent gaps in the equality between men and female-identifying people. When narrowing it back down in contemporary art, a recent article by Artnet cites that 11% of all acquisitions and 14% of exhibitions at twenty-six prominent American museums over the past decade were of work by female-identifying artists (Halperin).

Successful collaborative teams within the art world is generally a short list: Gilbert and George, Jeanne-Claude and Christo, Marina Abramovic and Ulay come to mind. Collaborative practices are relatively uncommon in the arts, which might explain some desire to identify the group through an individual. In an interview with Vancouver Art Gallery’s Grant Arnold, he discusses that the Vancouver Art Gallery itself had to amend N.E. Thing Co. works in their permanent collection in approximately 1995 due to the permanent collection works being credited to Iain Baxter alone (Interview. Conducted by Ryan Smith, 2019). Perhaps this uncommonness played a part in this error, but ultimately became questioned that NETCO works, as a single name, neither Iain nor Ingrid’s would suffice in crediting the works properly.

Looking at this issue in the contemporary provides insight into its continued

existence—a recent discovery of the lithograph print stamped by the N.E. Thing Company, titled *P+L+P+L+P=VSI/VSI Formula No. 10* (1970), is currently held at the MoMA and is credited to Iain Baxter& (formerly Iain Baxter). I question the credit as the work was produced in 1970, during which both Iain and Ingrid Baxter acted as NETCO's co-presidents. I have learned that efforts to reaccredit NETCO works to Iain Baxter& alone have been made via phone call to at least one predominant museum in recent years. I suspect that my discovery of the MoMA mis-credit brings to light that this issue may exist elsewhere, too.

The fallout between people in relationships who separate is all too apparent. According to statistics, roughly 39% of marriages end in divorce in British Columbia as of 2003 (Embree). How does this affect a working relationship between two business owners? How does this affect artistic collaboration? Did sexism add to the already adverse reality of a separation?

Discussing these findings concerning the new printing of *Companies Act* is vital because of researching the N.E. Thing Co. involves both Iain and Ingrid Baxter. Ingrid herself (along with Iain) has been a valuable source of inspiration to remake this particular work. Interventions on occasional plates to reinterpret history in the new edition of *Companies Act* is a very small action, however continued dialog in regard to her mis-credit remains important. Continued research into possible mis-credited NETCO work, requesting amendments to be made is at least one result of this project's research.

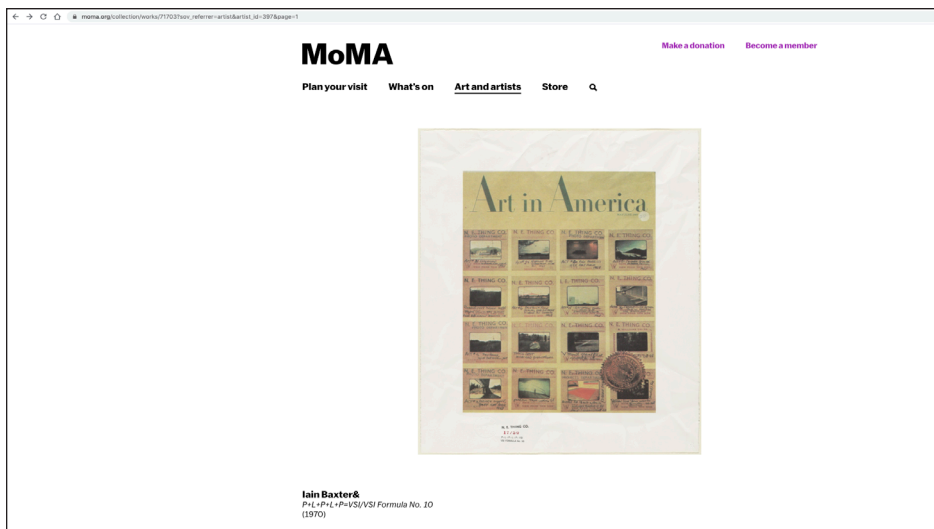


Figure 23. "*P+L+P+L+P=VSI/VSI Formula No. 10*" (1970), N.E. Thing Co.
Image: <http://www.moma.org>.

18. View the work in MoMA's collection here: https://www.moma.org/collection/works/71703?artist_id=397&locale=en&page=1&sov_referrer=artist.



Your Story 6s



N.E. Thing Co. 'Companies Act' (1978)

N.E. THING CO. LTD. 1419 Riverside Drive, North Vancouver, B.C., Canada V7H 1V6 Company founded in 1966. Head Office, above address. Co-presidents, Iain and Ingrid Baxter.		1964-6
INGRID BAXTER, Co-President, N.E. THING CO. LTD.		1966-71
NATIONALITY:	Canadian.	
BORN:	February 10, 1938, Spokane, Wash.	
MARRIED:	To Iain Baxter, 2 children, boy Tor, girl, Erian	
ADDRESS:	1419 Riverside Drive, North Vancouver, B.C.	
EDUCATION:	Bachelor of Arts Degree, Music, University of Idaho, 1960. Graduate Assistantship while working toward Master's degree in Physical Education at Washington State University. Masters Degree P.E. UBC, 1978	1972-No
TEACHING EXPERIENCE:	Taught grades 7, 8 and 9 (Physical Education and Music), Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, 1959. Lecturer, Simon Fraser University, 1968, taught synchronized swimming. Lecturer, York University, 1972, taught inter-disciplinary course. Guest lecturer at: York University; Simon Fraser University; Institute for Art, Venice, Italy; Slade School of Art, London, Eng.; Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Halifax; Banff School of Fine Arts.	1972-Ma 1972-73 1974
OTHER WORK EXPERIENCES	1950-55 Accompanist to "Three Fives" all girls singing choir, Spokane, Washington. 1953-55 Accompanist, North Central Senior High School Choir, Spokane, Washington. 1955-summer Modelled clothes, Bon Marche, Spokane, Washington. 1956-59 summers Lifeguarded Comstock, and Canon swimming pools, Spokane, Washington. 1957-58 Organist, Our Savior's Lutheran Church, Moscow, Idaho. Member, Varsity Tennis team, University of Idaho, Moscow, Idaho. Member, Hell Divers, University of Idaho, Synchronized Swimming team, Moscow, Idaho. Synchronized Swimming Coach, Spokane City Recreation Department, Spokane, Washington.	1952,53 54-summ 1955-spr and sum 1956-sum 1957-sum 1958,59-s
EXHIBITIONS & SHOWS:	Same as N.E. THING CO. list.	

This is very important.

1966-1978



Facebook



Highlight



More

Figure 24. N.E. Thing Co. chronology (1978) Image: *Companies Act* (2020)

CONCLUSION: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FIELD OF PRINT DESIGN

Returning to Kramer's concept of the facsimile is useful to bring this together into a conclusion. It gives others working in the design field of facsimiles some new tools and concepts. He has, of course, made a significant contribution to the field of facsimile publishing, but, his definition has overlooked things like the patina that books take on overtime and how that these aesthetic qualities in some cases add to a facsimile and that his guidelines for verisimilitude through an exact copy are useful in many contexts, but in some instances, like *Companies Act* (2020), a non-exact copy that acknowledges the time passed on or historical contexts is also important. In this book's context, the gritty photocopy-like quality compliments the original production method, a rough, yet useful form of publishing. Issues of sexism that may exist in historical texts are possible shortcomings that remain in facsimiles, too. By studying the facsimile, and determining specific areas that fall short of a new edition, I have defined a new facsimile, one that includes (or dis-cludes) elements important in the re-publishing of historically or culturally essential books.

In the *Companies Act* (2020), the new edition successfully takes on these new ideas about book reprinting. On September 22, 2020, the edition of 500 was released worldwide through the prominent artist book distribution company, D.A.P. and artbook.com and through Brick Press's website, brickpress.ca. Besides being accessible for the first time in over forty years, the new edition of *Companies Act* has responded to a new definition of what a facsimile is and can be and is also a valuable tool for researchers in the field of art history that are interested in the N.E. Thing Company.

By reinterpreting Kramer's concept of facsimile, through editing, graphic design and production, this project has become a new work that incorporates art and design. It makes the rare first-edition accessible and, at the same time, established a new story, stemming from the individual copy used for its reproduction. By including visual elements through design into the new edition, it departs with the idea that time passes, ideas remain. Therefore, in my opinion, successfully determined that facsimile production needs more flexibility as not to lose valuable opportunities in future book reproduction. I term this a *reinterpreted facsimile*, and through Brick Press I will be continuing to pursue this line of research and studio practice.

In addition, the revelation about Ingrid Baxter's historiographical minimization that has come about as a result of producing this reinterpreted facsimile holds much promise for future research. Moving towards a better understanding of Ingrid Baxter's mis-credit and ongoing sexism in the arts is something that I am keen to keep at the forefront of my research in the years ahead.

APPENDIX: COMPANIES ACT (2020) PROCESS DOCUMENTATION

Companies Act (1978) Disassembly Process

The disassembly process offered a unique opportunity to photograph the book before it was taken apart. Particular attention was given to cover markings.



Figure 1. Front cover markings.



Figure 2. Sun markings.

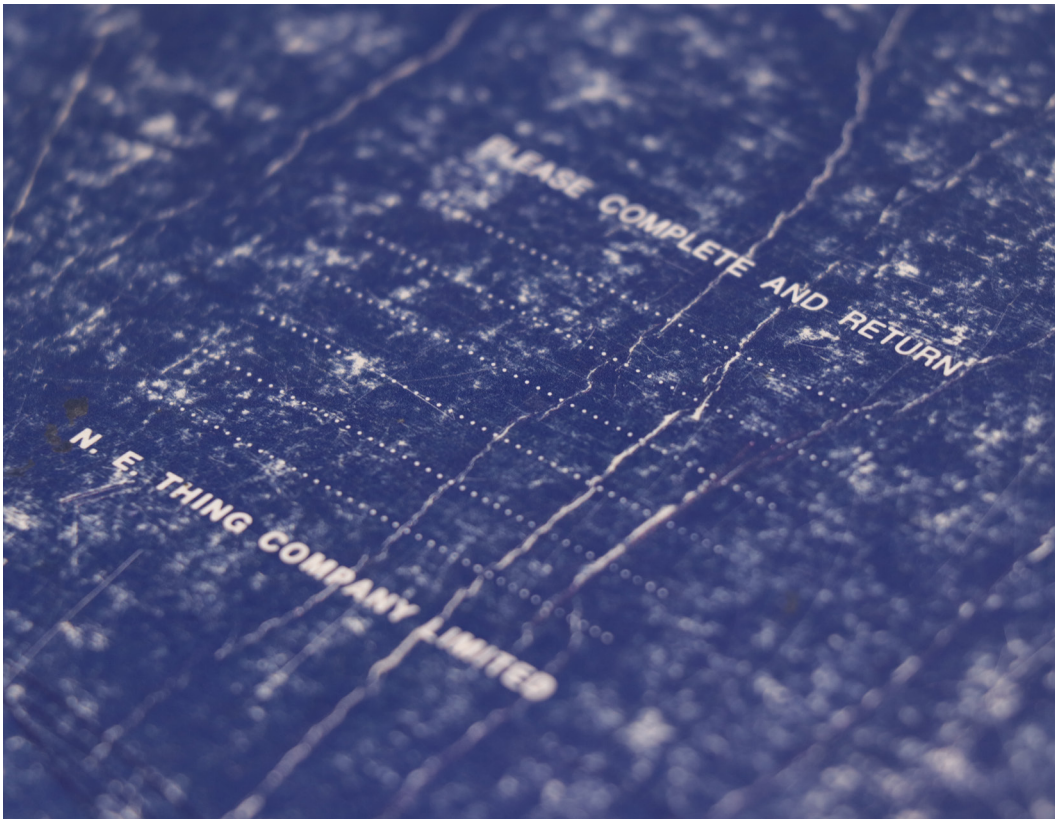


Figure 3. Back cover markings.



Figure 4. Markings.



Figure 5. Unknown bookseller's price marking (pencil marking made between 1978 and 2012).



Figure 6. Spine with signs of use.

Companies Act (1978) Coming Soon Posters

Selected full-page scans of *Companies Act* (1978) were enlarged to advertise Brick Press's upcoming facsimile reprinting using a large-format plotter. The posters were strategically hung in various locations throughout the Vancouver Art Book Fair that took place at Emily Carr University in October 2019.

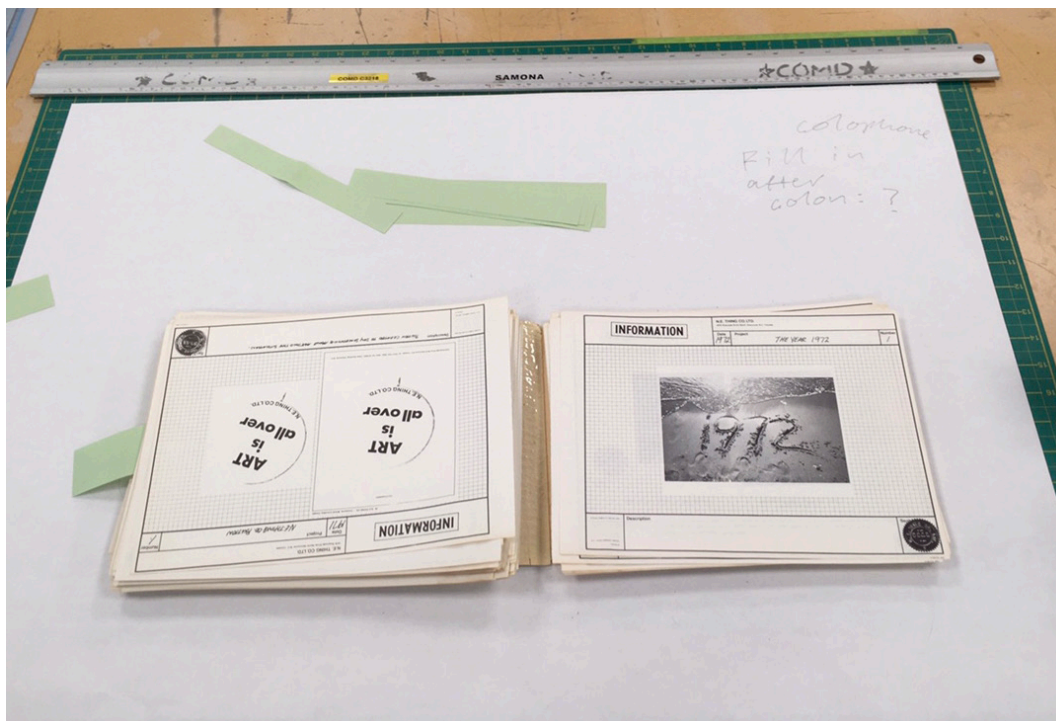


Figure 7. Pre-scanning selection process.

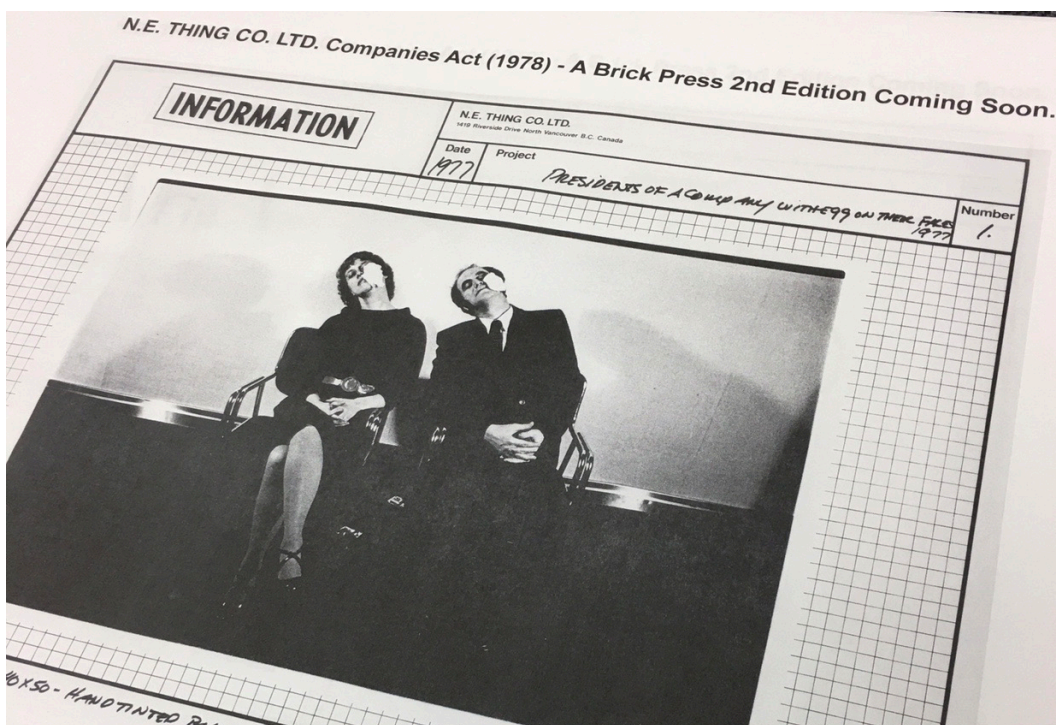


Figure 8. 3 x 3.5 foot page enlargement: Presidents of a Company With Egg on Their Faces (1977).



Figure 9. Selected large-format *Companies Act* (1978) pages hung behind Brick Press's 2019 Vancouver Art Book Fair exhibitor table (used as an impromptu introduction to the *Companies Act* facsimile project).

MDes 2020 Open Studio

Installation view of my MDes 2020 participation. The installation included the disassembled copy of Companies Act under a vitrine, large-format pages (coming soon posters), video-documentation of the disassembly process and a low-fidelity version of Companies Act for viewers to read.



Figure 10. Vitrine displaying selected pages/ disassembly video loop.



Figure 11. Disassembled cover under vitrine.

Preliminary Press-Checks

Spring 2020 press-checks (beginning of physical reproduction). Pictured: Selected pages for press-checks (chosen based off of content, ie. heavy-solid, photograph, photograph and text, text only etc.), example of problem in press-check reproduction and roller-pressure check.

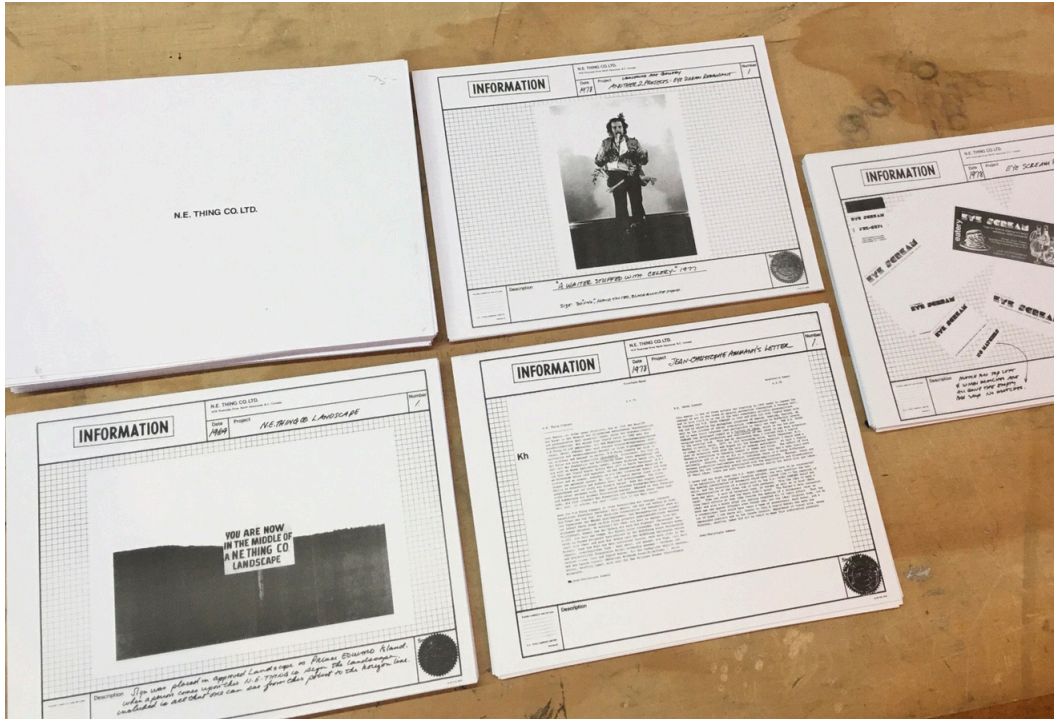


Figure 12. Offset press-checks to ensure each type of page content reproduces well prior to beginning production.



Figure 13. Roller-pressure check. The press rollers are inked up and “engaged” to the plate to determine if the lateral pressure is even. In this case, a successful test (note the even bead of ink across the printing plate).

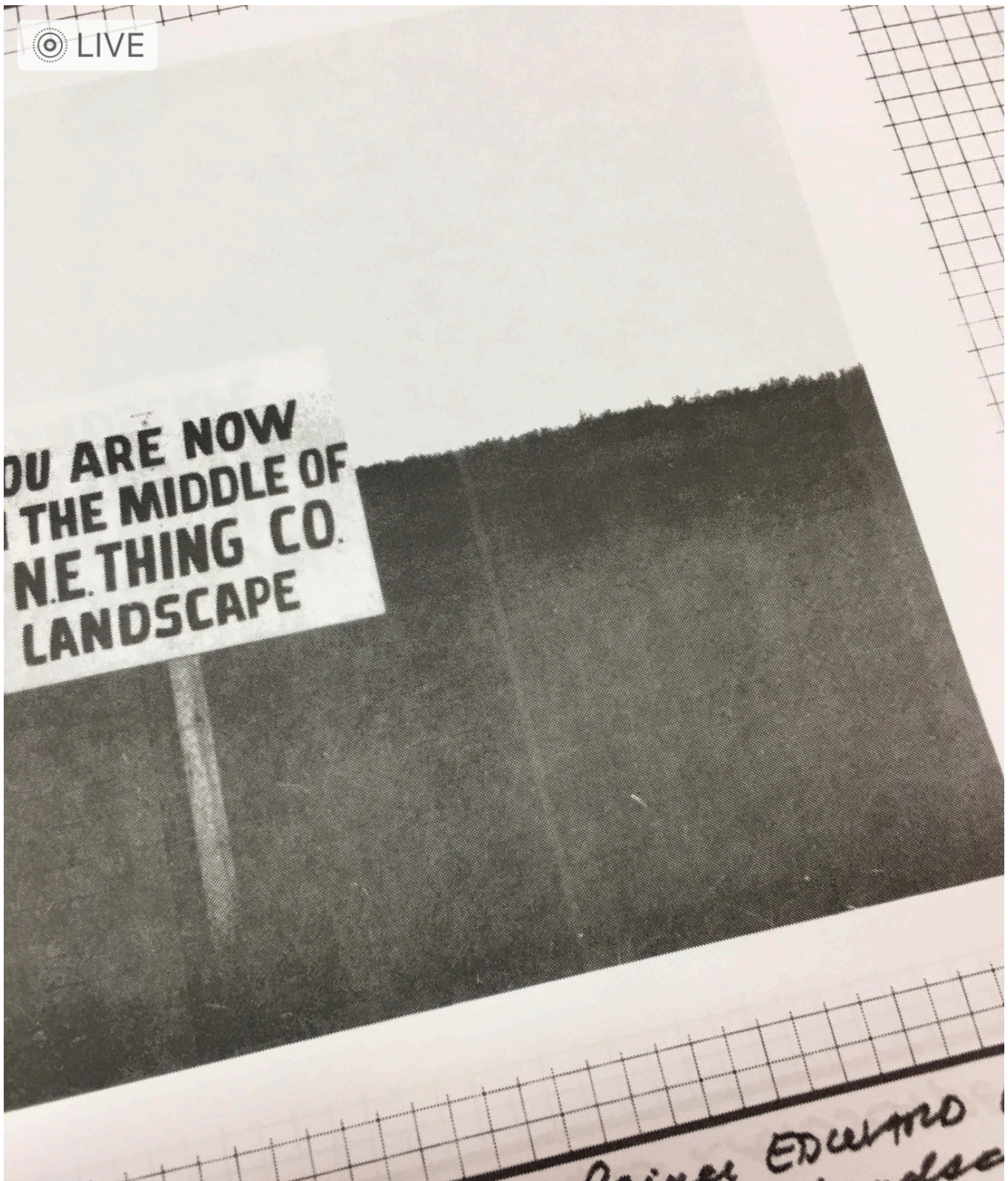


Figure 14. Problem area in reproduction (vertical line to the right side of sign). This marking could have been caused by a number of things, like, excess water in rollers, paper grain direction, halftone shape etc. The end result determined a need to print the letter-sized sheet of paper through the press short-grain (landscape), resulting in the issue no longer affecting the printed sheets.

One Metric Tonne of Paper

202,050 sheets of paper was required to print the 2020 edition of *Companies Act*. At top-speed, I printed roughly 5,000 sheets per hour. 362 pages (each a separate offset printing plate), in sets of 545 per to make an edition of 500 (plus overage) books. Typically, I printed 30-40 pages a day (16,350-21,800 sheets).



Figure 15. One pallet of paper used for printing the inside contents of *Companies Act* (2020).

Climate Control

Offset printing requires climate control. Examples of how climate affects printing are vast, some are: humidity and paper (paper absorbs moisture), a space that is too humid results in paper that will form “waves” from taking in too much water from the air, extreme cold, cold weather affects ink so much that it will not “attract” to an offset plate unless it (and the press rollers) are heated up and lastly, extreme heat, hot ink loses its viscosity, causing it to “tone” (ink spreading onto non-print areas of the plate, transferring to printed paper, making the printing unusable).

The production schedule of *Companies Act* (2020) was met with extremely warm temperatures in Brick Press’s studio. Despite a moderate, cool-air flow, the project required constant small-batch mixtures (4kg in total, mixed 100g at a time) of ink and varnish. Aqua Varnish by Van Son (a printing ink company based in Holland, NE) is a product that builds the “body” of ink. This is a fairly uncommon trick of the trade, but in a pinch will build the body of ink enough so that it does not tone the paper in press-rooms that lack adequate air-conditioning systems.



Figure 16. Ink, varnish and scale. The varnish has the consistency (and colour) of honey out of the fridge, requiring much effort to mix.

Offset

Offset printing is a lithographic printing process that relies on the principle of oil (ink) and water separating. This photograph taken in-between a plate switch is a useful visual reference to explain the process. Each page requires its own plate that is attached to a cylinder. On the plate, the print area (a positive image) attracts ink, the non-print area attracts water, which separate from each other, leaving only the print area with ink. Below the plate is a blue rubber blanket. Once inked, the positive print is engaged by a lever to transfer onto the rubber blanket (becoming a negative image), which then “offsets” off of the rubber blanket as a positive image onto paper that passes beneath. With each revolution that passes (each page printed), the press re-inks the plate for the next sheet, printing at speeds of up to 5,000 sheets per-hour.



Figure 17. Pictured: water fountain, plate with inked positive image, blanket with negative image and paper feed mechanism. Image: Page from *Companies Act* documenting NETCO's restaurant, EYESCREAM.

Plates

Offset printing plates are typically made from metal that is coated with light-sensitive chemicals and are exposed with photo-negatives (making a positive plate). Brick Press uses a modern plate-making process called CTP (computer-to-plate), a machine that makes print-ready plastic plates at a speed of two minutes per plate. During *Companies Act*, I would typically make 50 plates at a time at the beginning of the day then moving onto the press, which once setup, requires only a quick plate swap before moving onto the next page of printing.

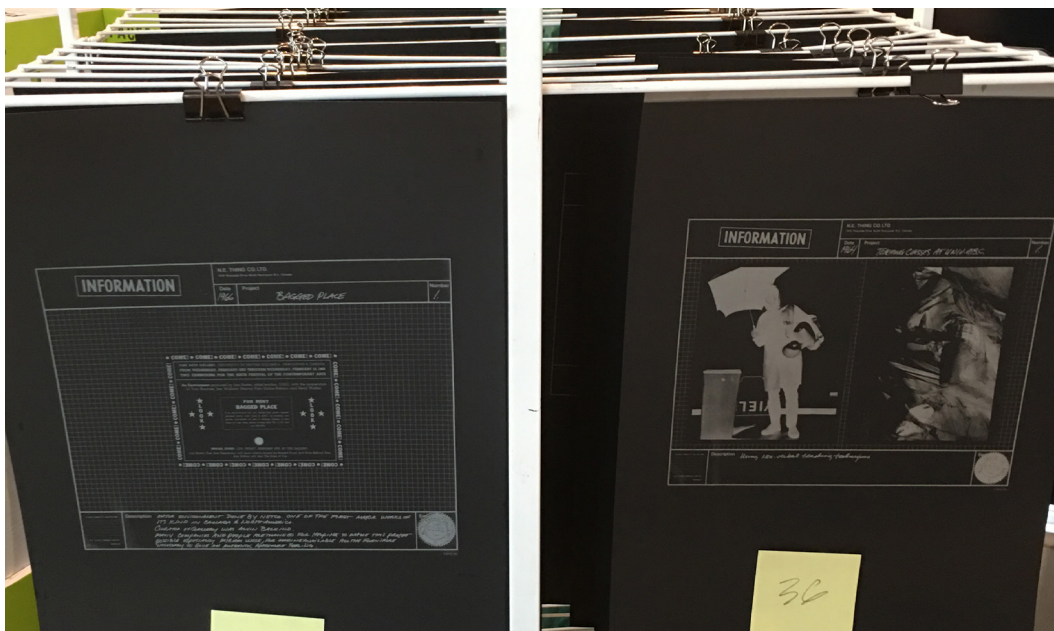


Figure 18. Plates ready to go on the press.

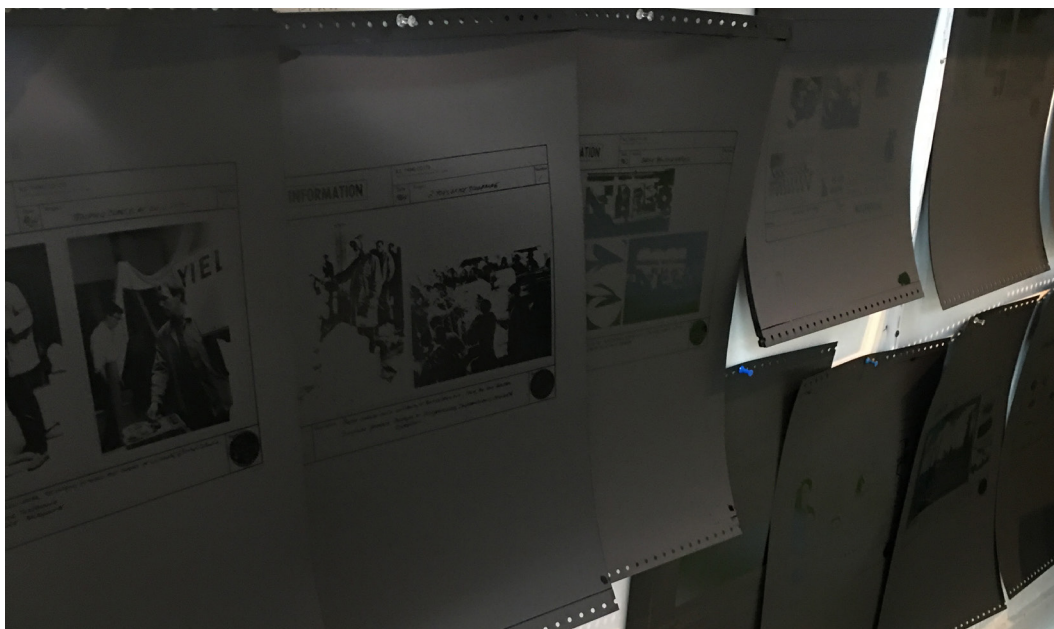


Figure 19. Plates after printing.

Volume Printing

The following photographs are visual representations of progress made during *Companies Act's* production.



Figure 20. Pages from the early to mid 100s. Once dry, re-boxed and organized for bindery.

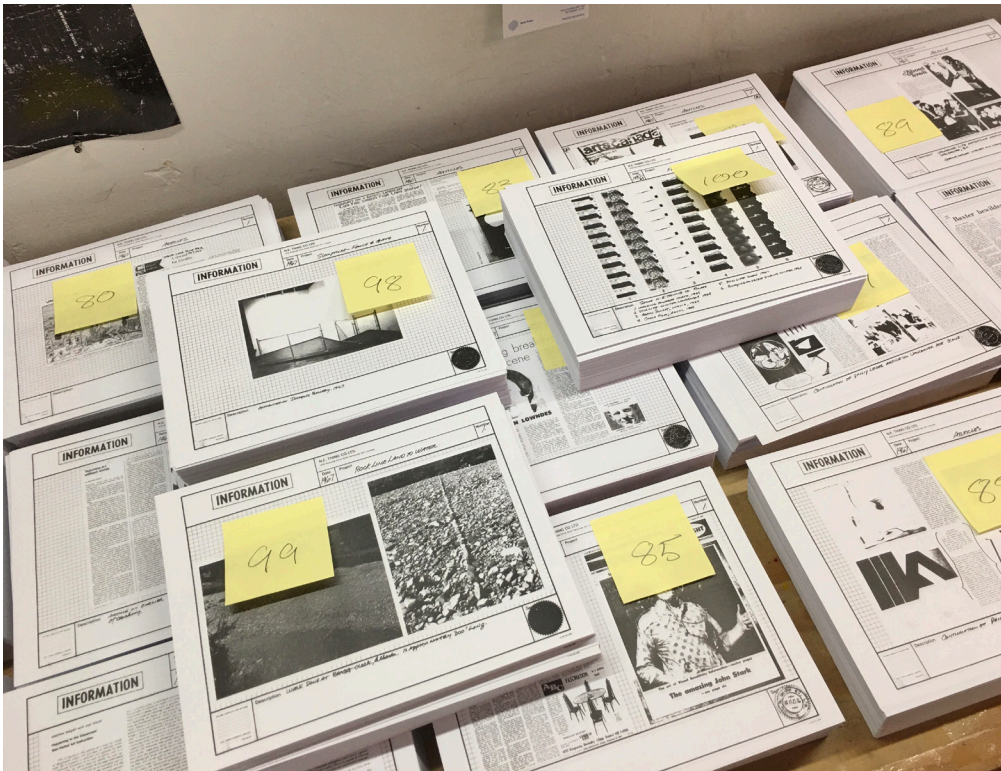


Figure 21. First days of printing.



Figure 22. Nearing the 200s.



Figure 23. One pallet shrinks, the other grows.

Inspections

On occasion, checking ink densities with a printer's loupe (10x magnifying glass) ensures correct ink flow.

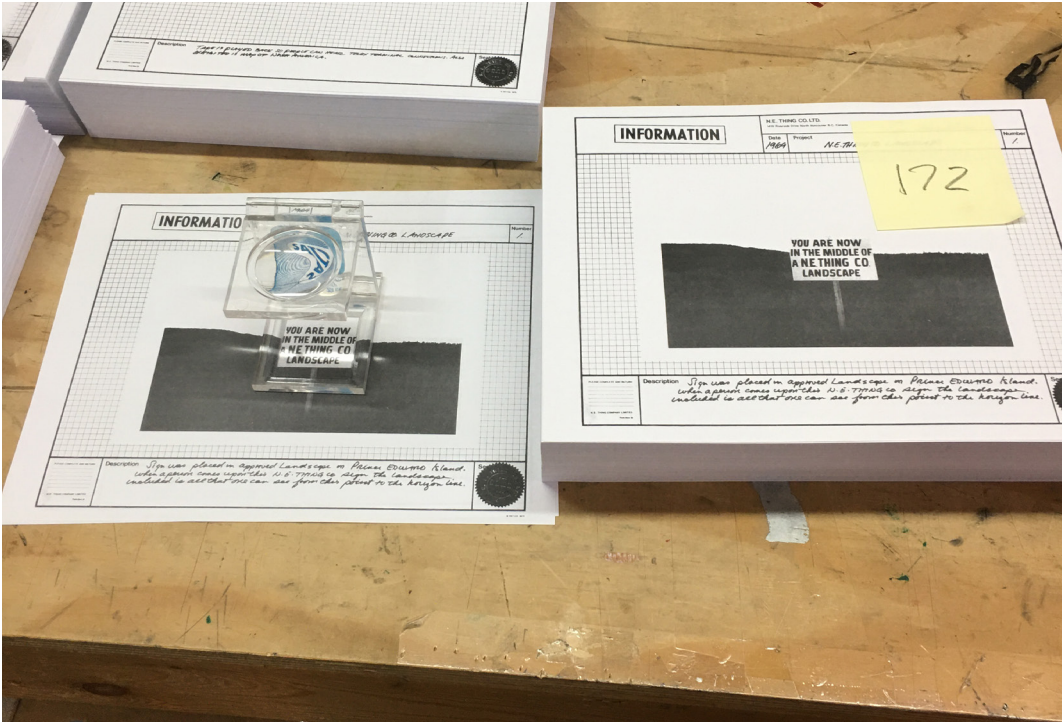


Figure 24. Ink density inspection.

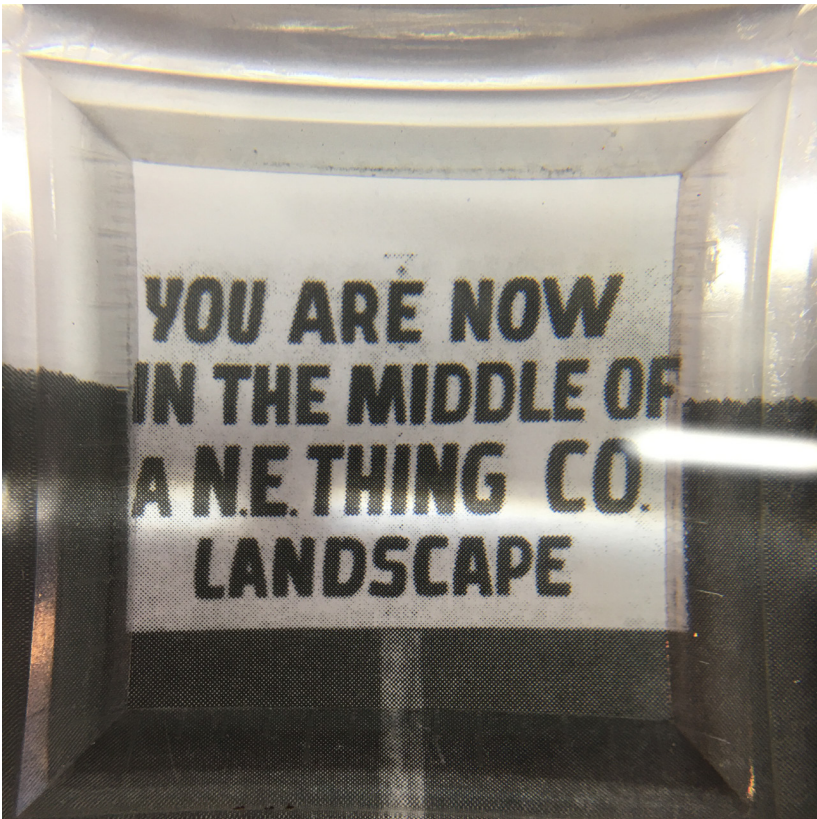


Figure 25. Loupe close-up.

One Empty Pallet



Figure 26. An empty pallet representing the end of the printing process.

Bindery

Bindery is the process that comes after printing in book production. Bindery includes tasks like: page collating (paginating before binding), binding (attaching inside pages to a cover). Once bound, the next step in bindery is finishing which includes tasks like book-edge trimming, shrink-wrapping and packing.

Companies Act's bindery process took place at Original Print Bind, a trade printing business that is owned by Moneca Kolvyn and is run as a two-person operation with her sister Mazel (who both began their career in the printing industry in their teens in the 70s at Superior Reproductions in Vancouver). Coincidentally, both worked at Superior Reproductions in 1978, the same shop that printed the original edition of *Companies Act* in 1978. To further contextualize this discovery (made by the sisters while leafing through pages during the bindery process), there were hundreds of print shops in Vancouver at that time.



Figure 27. Video-still of a bindery expert collating twenty-four pages at a time by hand. This method required fifteen sets of full shelves of twenty-four pages x545 sheets to be paginated, nearly 200,000 lifts, aided only by a rubber finger slip. *Hand-work* of this nature is an efficient, yet difficult skill learned only with years of practice.

The similarity of the pages in *Companies Act* made this “by hand” method more favorable than their ten-bin, automatic collator.



Figure 28. Two pallets of collated sets of pages. Each set is staggered for easy assembly.



Figure 29. Roughly sixteen stacks of collated “sets.” Each set contains twenty-four consecutive pages, once “married,” (assembled) they will be put into an industrial perfect-binding (glue-binding) machine.



Figure 30. Methodically stacked books from the perfect binder, ready for final trim, shrink-wrap, bar code and packaging.

Bar Code & ISBN



Figure 31. A shrink-wrapped copy of *Companies Act (2020)* with Brick Press's unique thirteen-digit ISBN (International Standard Book Number) barcode.

August 19, 2020

Marks end of production. The next steps prior to Sept. 22, 2020 (Brick Press and D.A.P.'s launch date) will be to photograph and scan a finished copy so that it can be added to Brick Press's website for presale purchase and lastly, market and distribute to Canadian vendors and university libraries.



Figure 32. A shrink-wrapped pallet of *Companies Act* (2020) books for Distributed Artists Publishers (D.A.P.).

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