Publish and Be Damned?
continent. visits independent publishers fair.

Bernhard Garnicnig

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I love books for many things, but I despise them for introducing a physical limit to the free circulation of knowledge (compared to the Internet). At least, that’s what I had always thought.

continent. is an online journal aiming at, among other things, breaking with the established paradigms of how academic work has to be published in order to be respected among relevant peers. I’m the engineer behind the current version of continent., making it work and keeping it running since began in 2010. We provide an online platform for knowledge to circulate, beyond the limitations of institutional attachment or distribution of physical volumes. And regardless of not having a physical publication ourselves, and being a trans-national endeavour with core members spread across three continents, we had the honour to join the Publish Or Be Damned fair and conference of Northern European independent book publishers at Index Art Foundation in Stockholm, Sweden. The place was bursting with exceptional volumes made by some of the most interesting publishers in the European north. The encounter changed the way I think about such books: these editions are designed, engineered and crafted to a level of sophistication that they begin to hold more than just their informational value printed. They convey and communicate a form of tactile knowledge and pleasure, and this completely changed my perspective on the matter.

Because continent. had not materialised yet and only appeared in the form of social events (such as those in Basel, Boston, New York, or Zürich), we could not offer any such tactile pleasures to those visiting our booth. Given this, my solution was to turn continent.’s participation into a spectacle of simulation. With so many important figures of the independent publishing world present, we staged a series of imaginary book-launch moments for the camera. Presenting a first quasi-materialisation of continent. in the form of a book, or rather, the hypothetical extrapolation of our red square shape from our logo into a red 30x30 cm slate.

Thanks to all those that participated. Your presences enabled continent. to visualise what it would be like if we had a book, and had been published within the honorable circle of these fine publishers. Soon the day will come where this will become reality. Thanks to all who joined the fun and didn’t mind me showing these to the rest of the world. I’ll publish them here, for them not to perish, even if I shall be damned.
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