

Agrippa (a book of the dead)

A self-destructive collaborative artist's book by Kevin Begos Jr, William Gibson
and Dennis Ashbaugh (1992)

SYMPOSIUM, Thursday 18 and Friday 19 May 2023

Sir Victor Blank Lecture Theatre, Weston Library, Oxford

Hybrid format (in-person and online)

Organised by **Justine Provino**, PhD Candidate, Jesus College, Cambridge



*Dennis Ashbaugh, Unbound etching with traces of the 'disappearing image' of a Bell telephone advert
(detail) Bodleian Library, MS. Eng. b. 2160*



Centre for Material Texts
University of Cambridge <http://www.english.cam.ac.uk/cmt>

Thursday 18 May 2023, 2pm-6.30pm

- 2.00 Welcome and opening of the symposium -- **Chris Fletcher**
- 2.15 – 3.15 Hybrid book tour of the copies of *Agrippa* held in public institutions;
Moderated by **Chris Fletcher**
- Promotional Prospectus Kit* -- **Frances Mulhall Achilles Library, Whitney Museum of American Art**, presented by **Ivy Blackman**, Managing Librarian
- Deluxe edition copy 'Archive I'* -- **Bodleian Library**, presented by **Justine Provino** and **Chris Fletcher**, Keeper of Special Collections, Bodleian Libraries
- Artist's proof copy IV/X* -- **National Art Library, Victoria & Albert Museum**, presented by **Elizabeth James** Senior Librarian, Collections, National Art Library, Victoria and Albert Museum, **Catriona Gourlay**, Assistant Curator, National Art Library, Victoria and Albert Museum and **Douglas Dodds**, Independent Curator, Ex-V&A
- Deluxe edition copy 10/95* -- **Yale University Art Gallery**, Allan Chasanoff Collection, presented by **Gabriella Svenningsen Omonte**, Senior Curatorial Assistant in the Department of Photography
- Deluxe edition copy 12/95* -- **New York Public Library**, presented by **Leah Johansen**, Rare Book Librarian, Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Book Division
- Deluxe edition copies 28/95, 33/95 and 35/95* -- **Center for Book Arts New York**, presented by **Gillian Lee**, Librarian, CBA
- Small edition copy 77/350* -- **Bodleian Library**, presented by **Justine Provino** and **Chris Fletcher**, Keeper of Special Collections, Bodleian Libraries
- Small edition copy 152/350* -- **Zhang Legacy Collections Center**, University of Western Michigan, presented by **Susan Steuer**, Professor and Librarian for Distinctive Collections, Department Lead, Research Services, Zhang Legacy Collections Center
- 3.15-3.30 Break.
- 3.30 – 4.30 Roundtable with scholars who have worked on *Agrippa* since 1992
Speakers: **Quinn DuPont; Matthew G. Kirschenbaum; Alan Liu; Rollin Milroy; Justine Provino; Peter Schwenger**.
Moderator: **Caroline Bassett**
- 4.30-5.00 Viewing of *Agrippa Deluxe edition copy 'Archive I'* on display in the Weston Library exhibition, *Bright Sparks*
- Keynote: on Thursday evening **The D.F. McKenzie Lecture 2023** will be delivered by **Matthew G. Kirschenbaum**

Thursday 18 May, 5.00-6.30 **The D.F. McKenzie Lecture 2023**
Symposium keynote: *The New Nature of the Book: Publishing and Printing in the Post-Digital Era*

Speaker: **Matthew G. Kirschenbaum**

Books are not dead as was once feared. But they are not the same either. With digital processes and workflows now thoroughly integrated into the art and industry of publishing and printing them, books are altered by the post-digital moment in which we have arrived. Matthew Kirschenbaum's lecture will pay particular attention to questions of textual stability, a concern of publishers and readers since before the advent of printing. How stable are texts when the book is now manifest as a collection of digital assets, a network which only might, at times, assume the physical and tangible form of the familiar codex?

Friday 19 May 2023, 2pm-5pm

2.00-3.00 Panel on archival material about the Transmission event of *Agrippa*, 9 December 1992

Speakers: **Lauren Amazeen, John Maxwell Hobbs, Marc Scarpa, 'PseudoPhred', 'Rosehammer' and 'Templar'**

Moderators: **Chris Fletcher, Justine Provino**

3:00-3:15 Break

3:15-4:15 Panel on the link between book studies and book-arts

Speakers: **Gill Partington and Russell Maret**

Moderator: **Adam Smyth**

4.15-5:00 Closing remarks of the symposium and Q&A

Speaker: **Jason Scott-Warren**

The organisation of *Agrippa (a book of the dead)* has been supported by Alexandra Franklin (Coordinator, Centre for the Study of the Book, Bodleian Library); Christopher Fletcher (Keeper of Special Collections, Bodleian Library); and Jason Scott-Warren (Director of the Centre for Material Texts, Faculty of English, Cambridge)

Funded by: Arts and Humanities Research Council Open-Oxford-Cambridge Doctoral Training Partnership; Faculty of English, University of Cambridge; Centre for Material Texts Cambridge; Cambridge Digital Humanities; and with the generous support of Centre for the Study of the Book, Bodleian Library.

Speaker Biographies

Lauren Amazeen is a member of AICA International and a Visiting Tutor in MLitt Art Writing, Glasgow School of Art. She is a member of Hidden Objects Oxford, a contemporary arts & design project/study developed with the support of TORCH, Oxford University.

Caroline Bassett, Professor of Digital Humanities, University of Cambridge, Director of Cambridge Digital Humanities

Douglas Dodds, Independent Curator, Ex-V&A (www.douglasdodds.org)

Ivy Blackman, Managing Librarian, Frances Mulhall Achilles Library, Whitney Museum of American Art

Quinn DuPont is an Adjunct Professor at the UBC School of Information and Research Associate in Schulich School of Business at York University. Previously he was an Assistant Professor in the School of Business at University College Dublin. He has a PhD in Information Science from the University of Toronto

Christopher Fletcher is Keeper of Special Collections at the Bodleian, a Fellow of Exeter and a member of Oxford University's English Faculty. Before coming to the Bodleian, he was a curator of literary manuscripts at the British Library

Catriona Gourlay, Assistant Curator, National Art Library, Victoria and Albert Museum

John Maxwell Hobbs is a media consultant, internet pioneer, and BBC Scotland's former Head of Technology. He is the CEO of Streamline, a music technology startup.

Elizabeth James, Senior Librarian, Collections, National Art Library, Victoria and Albert Museum

Leah Johansen, Reference Archivist and Librarian in the Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Book Division, New York Public Library.

Matthew Kirschenbaum is Professor of English at the University of Maryland, where he is also co-founding director of BookLab, a makerspace for letterpress printing and the book arts. His work and interests range widely across digital media and culture as well as book history and the conditions of contemporary authorship and publishing. His most recent book is *Bitstreams: The Future of Digital Literary Heritage* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021); prior to that, he wrote *Track Changes: A Literary History of Word Processing* (Harvard University Press, 2016) and *Mechanisms: New Media and the Forensic Imagination* (MIT Press, 2008). Follow him on Twitter at @mkirschenbaum.

Gillian Lee is Librarian at the Center for Book Arts, New York

Alan Liu is Distinguished Professor in the English Department at the University of California, Santa Barbara. His publications include *Wordsworth: The Sense of History*; *The Laws of Cool: Knowledge Work and the Culture of Information*; *Local Transcendence: Essays on Postmodern Historicism and the Database*; and *Friending the Past: The Sense of History in the Digital Age*.

Recent essays include 'Toward a Diversity Stack: Digital Humanities and Diversity as Technical Problem' and 'The Meaning of the Digital Humanities.' Liu started the Voice of the Shuttle website for humanities research in 1994. He is founder and co-leader of the 4Humanities.org advocacy initiative, and Principal Investigator of the Mellon Foundation funded WhatEvery1Says project. He led the team that created The Agrippa Files website.

Russell Maret is a book artist, type designer, and author working in New York City. He began studying letterpress printing as a teenager before apprenticing with Peter Koch in Berkeley, CA in 1990. In the ensuing years he has published sixty-five books and manuscripts, ranging from typographic essays to books of smoke drawings. In 1996 Russell began teaching himself how to design letterforms, leading to a twelve-year study before completing his first typeface. Since then he has printed almost exclusively from typefaces of his own design. Russell has written and lectured widely on the intersection of technology, letter design, and the printed book. He is a fellow of the American Academy in Rome, a board member of the CODEX Foundation, and a former printer-in-residence at the Bodleian Library's Bibliographical Press.

Rollin Milroy's Heavenly Monkey is both a letterpress & binding studio, and the imprint for books produced there. Over the past two decades HM has published over 60 titles, with a particular focus on the history of printing and publishing. In 2015 HM issued a monograph (*About Agrippa: A bibliographic history of the infamous disappearing book*) by Milroy about the production and marketing of the physical object that was *Agrippa: A Book of the Dead*.

Gill Partington is Fellow in Book History at the Institute of English Studies. Her current research project – 'Page Not Found' – traces the outer limits and unexpected histories of the page. With Adam Smyth and Simon Morris she is one of the co-founders and editors of *Inscription – Journal of Material Text: Theory, Practice, History*. Her creative work has recently been exhibited as part of the Bodleian Library's *Sensational Books* exhibition, and at Shandy Hall in Yorkshire.

Justine Provino is a PhD candidate in English and at Jesus College, Cambridge. She researches the nature of books with the case study of the 1992 self-destructive artist's book *Agrippa* (a book of the dead) by the writer William Gibson, the artist Dennis Ashbaugh and the publisher Kevin Begos Jr. Justine is the recipient of a Collaborative Doctoral Award, shared between the University of Cambridge and the Bodleian Library, funded by an Arts and Humanities Research Council Open-Oxford-Cambridge Doctoral Training Partnership and a Cambridge Trust Scholarship. Prior to her current studies, she was Assistant Conservator at the Bodleian (2018-2019) and the Pine Tree Foundation Postgraduate Fellow in Book Conservation at the Morgan Library (2015-2017).

'**PseudoPhred**', '**Rosehammer**' and '**Templar**' are the pseudonyms of the hackers who made the covert cine-camera recording of the Transmission event of *Agrippa* at the Americas Society on 9 December 1992. Their identities have been kept secret since then and will be revealed at the symposium.

Marc Scarpa is an entrepreneur specializing in participatory media, founder and CEO of DeFiance.tv. He is responsible for the world's first 'netcast', *Agrippa - The Transmission*, in 1992.

Peter Schwenger wrote the first essay on *Agrippa* while it was still in the process of being published. He has authored six books on a variety of subjects, the most recent of which is *Asemic*:

The Art of Writing, published by the University of Minnesota Press. He is a Professor Emeritus of English, Mount St. Vincent University, and for ten years was Resident Fellow of the Theory Centre at the University of Western Ontario. He now lives in a cabin in the woods of Nova Scotia.

Jason Scott-Warren is Professor of Early Modern Literature and Culture at the University of Cambridge, a fellow of Gonville and Caius College, and Director of the Cambridge Centre for Material Texts. His most recent monograph is *Shakespeare's First Reader: The Paper Trails of Richard Stonley* (2019).

Adam Smyth is Professor of English Literature and the History of the Book at the University of Oxford, and A.C. Bradley-J.C. Maxwell Fellow and Tutor in English Literature at Balliol College.

Gabriella Svenningsen Omonte, Senior Curatorial Assistant in the Department of Photography, Yale University Art Gallery.