

The Book List



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powerHouse Books

When it comes to photo books, only the larger houses—think Abrams, Chronicle or Thames & Hudson—have the budgets to promote their books. But as Erik Kessels of KesselsKramer notes, “I don’t think they make the most out of these budgets. In most cases the smaller publishing companies dare to take more risk with their limited budgets.” One such smaller company is Brooklyn’s powerHouse books. The combination of their sales and distribution staff and their tireless senior vice president, Sara Rosen, earned the company several mentions from our respondents for their marketing and sales prowess. “I would put them at the top of the list in terms of doing the most with what they have,” says Todd Bradway, of D.A.P. Brian Paul Clamp, director of Chelsea gallery CLAMPART, recalls that it was “unbelievable how much press [powerHouse] was able to get for [Brian Finke’s book *Flight Attendants*], and how well-distributed it ended up being.” Throw in their output and backlist, their publishing workshops and annual portfolio review, and the powerHouse Arena, their massive headquarters/bookshop/event space, and one thing is for sure: powerHouse ain’t just a name.



COURTESY POWERHOUSE BOOKS

Above, left: Craig Cohen, Sara Rosen and Daniel Power of powerHouse Books. Above: Spectators admire an exhibit at the powerHouse Arena. Below: Self-publishing his book led David Schoerner to create Hassla Books.

SOME PHOTOGRAPHERS TURN TO SELF-PUBLISHING WHEN THEY CAN'T FIND A COMMERCIAL PUBLISHER WILLING TO TAKE A CHANCE ON THEIR PROJECT, BUT OFTEN SELF-PUBLISHING IS A WAY TO MAINTAIN CONTROL.



David Schoerner



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Photographers Who Self-Publish

Few developments have had a greater impact on the appreciation of the photo book as an art object than the proliferation of self-published books. The so-called “artist’s book,” often crafted by hand and printed in small quantities, dates back to the early Twentieth century, when avant-garde painters and poets produced illustrated manifestoes. Since the 1960s, artist-photographer Ed Ruscha’s self-published travelogues have continued to influence a generation of photographers who have taken to producing their own works in book form. Some photographers turn to self-publishing when they can’t find a commercial publisher willing to take a chance on their project, but often self-publishing is a way to maintain control of every aspect of book production, from cover design to the choice of binding. Produced without input from an editor or sales department, self-published books can at times be self-indulgent (several of the publishing insiders we interviewed said that self-published books prove how valuable a good editor can be) but at their best, a self-published book is a singular expression of a photographer’s vision. Having successfully published their own works, some of the most notable self-published photographers, like Jason Fulford of J&L Books and David Schoerner of Hassla Books, have launched their own publishing companies in order to apply the same care and craftsmanship to works that are produced and distributed to a wider audience. □