Contemporary Dialogues / Personal Philosophies

21.04.2020

The Book

The book, in its broadest sense, has been the primary means of organising, distributing and preserving information and ideas for the last 5,000 years.

The book's power lies in the audience it reaches.

The *International* Photobook

Photography's beginnings were in France and Great Britain, but since then it has become an universal language.

In the 19th Century the main territories publishing photo books were the **United States** and **Europe.**

In the 20th Century, **Japan** became an important centre for photography and many photobooks were published.

Photobook historians have considered there to be an **European-American-Japanese** axis, but significant books have been published elsewhere.

The Book as Protest

DADA

Our provocations, demonstrations and defiances were only a means of arousing the bourgeouisie to rage, and through rage to a shamefaced self-awareness.

Our real motive force was not rowdiness for its own sake, or contradiction and revolt in themselves, but the question (basic then, as it is now), "where next?"

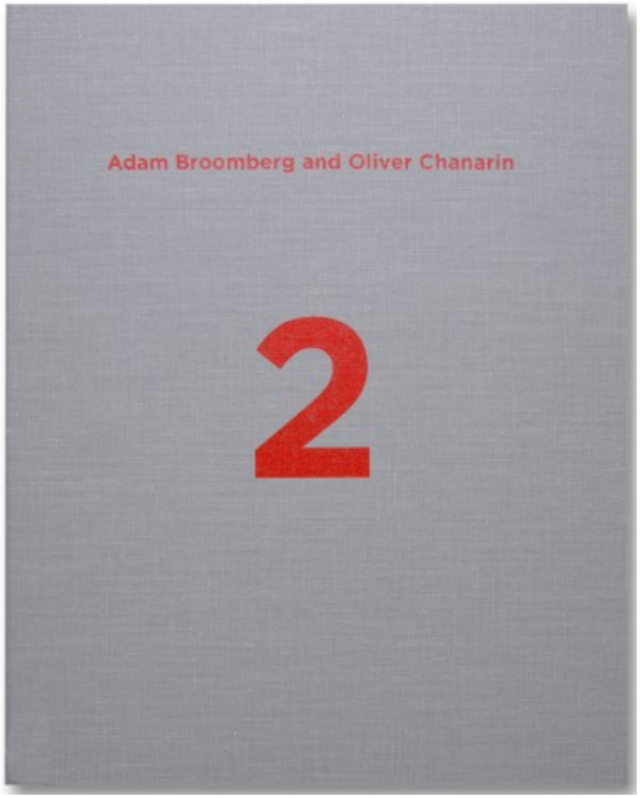
Hans Richter

Bertold Brecht – War Primer

As Brecht pointed out in his book War Primer (1955), once World War II was out of the way, the 'real' war – between Capitalism and Communism, between the United States and the Soviet Union – could begin in earnest.

If not fought with bombs and bullets (except in few places like Korea or Vietnam) – it was certainly fought with the mass media, with television, radio, films, press, music and **propaganda books.**

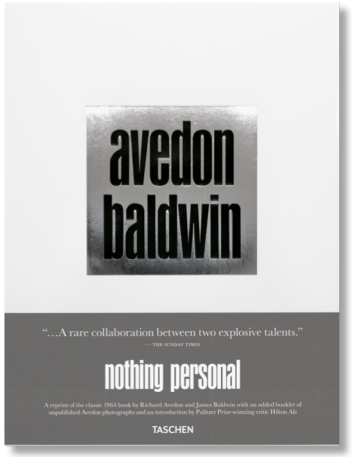
Eventually, consumerism won out.



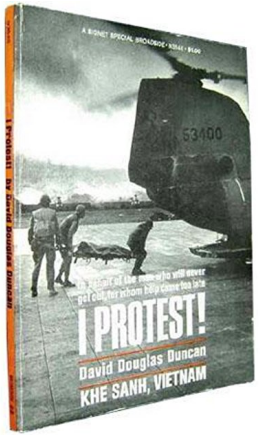
War Primer 2 "is the belated sequel." While Brecht's *War Primer* was concerned with images of the Second World War, *War Primer 2* is concerned with the images of conflict generated by both sides of the so-called "War on Terror".

America

Richard Avedon &
James Baldwin
Nothing Personal
(1964)



David Douglas Duncan
I Protest! (1968)



I Protest!

David Douglas Duncan 1968

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bzw-6obarLQ



Vietnam Inc.

When **Philip Jones Griffiths**' seminal book *Vietnam Inc.* (1971) was reissued in 2001, American writer Noam Chomsky wrote: "If anybody in Washington had read that book, we wouldn't have had these wars in Iraq or Afghanistan." The book, published the same year that *The Washington Post* published the leaked Pentagon Papers, laid out the horrific brutality of the Vietnam War, which built up, along with photographer's notes and essays, to a searing indictment. He described the effect of war on the country was as if "a mechanised monster had despoiled an innocent landscape".

Japan

Photobooks in Japan most prolific in the 1960s /1970s and were closely linked with notions of protest

Japan



Provoke

Provoke was a Japanese magazine which rejected glossy commercial imagery and the style of documentary photography. The Provoke era refers to its influence on photography made in post-war Japan

Takuma Nakahira * Yutaka Takanashi * Daido Moriyama

It set itself apart from the photojournalistic style of the day, looking for a more subjective voice and validation of the person behind the camera.

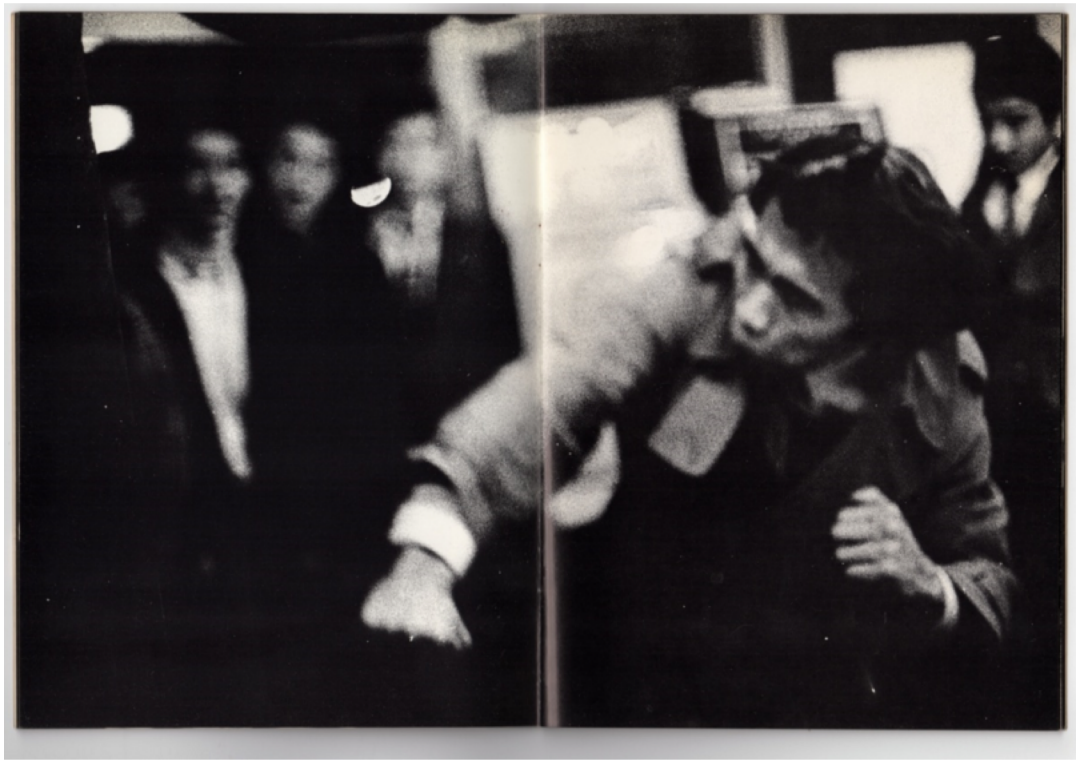
The images are often grainy and disorderly, reflecting the social and political upheavals taking place across the nation.

Today, when words have lost their material base—in other words, their reality—and seem suspended in mid-air, a photographer's eye can capture fragments of reality that cannot be expressed in language as it is. He can submit those images as a document to be considered alongside language and ideology.

This is why, brash as it may seem, Provoke has the subtitle, 'provocative documents for thought.'

-- **Manifesto of the Provoke Group** by Kohi Taki, Takuma Nakahira, Takahiko Okada, Yutaka Takanashi, and Daido Moriyama


五石木医院

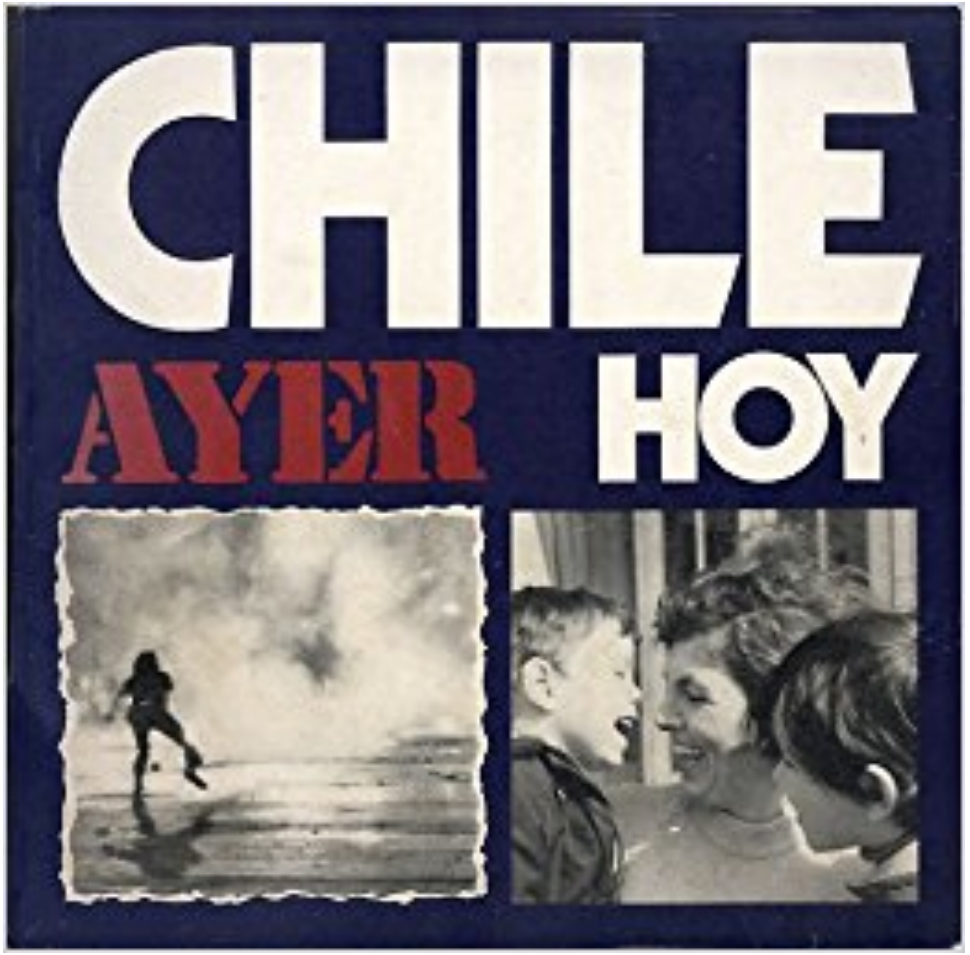




.. the Provoke photographers campaigned against a world of seeming certainty and ceased to ask **"What should we photograph?"** or **"How should we photograph?"**, instead asking more fundamental questions such as **"What is photography?"**, **"Who becomes a photographer?"** or **"What is seeing?"**.

-- from the article **"A Portrait of Takuma Nakahira"** (2005) on the ASX blog

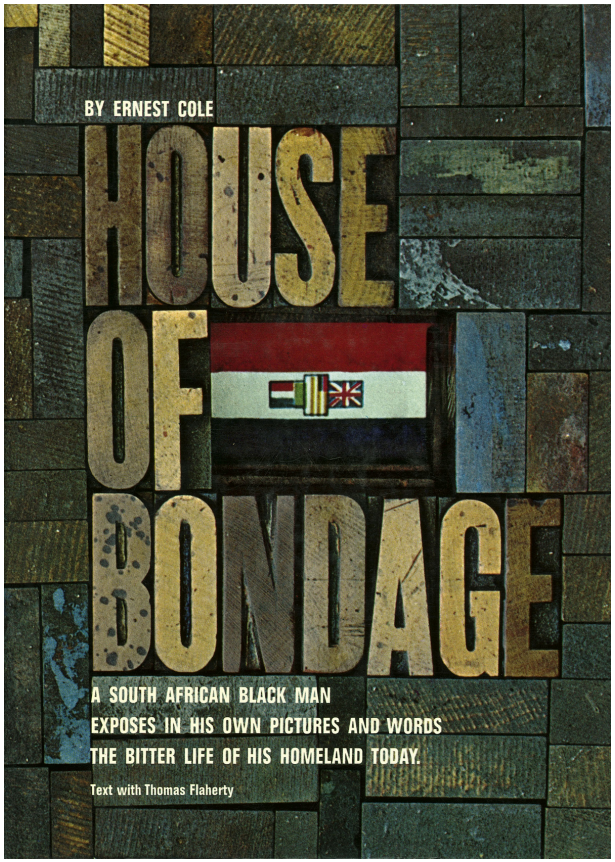
Chile Ayer Hoy



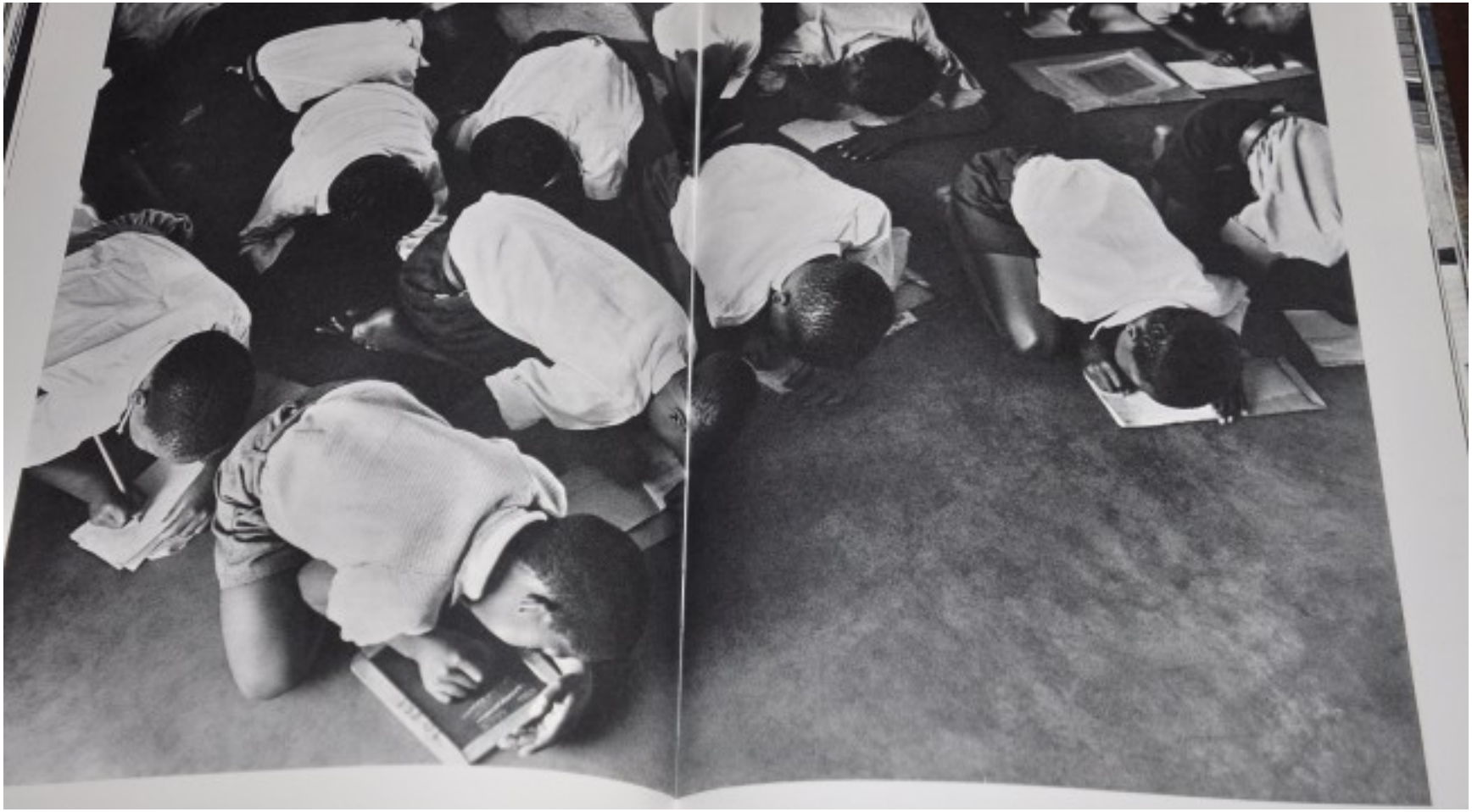
Chile o Muerte



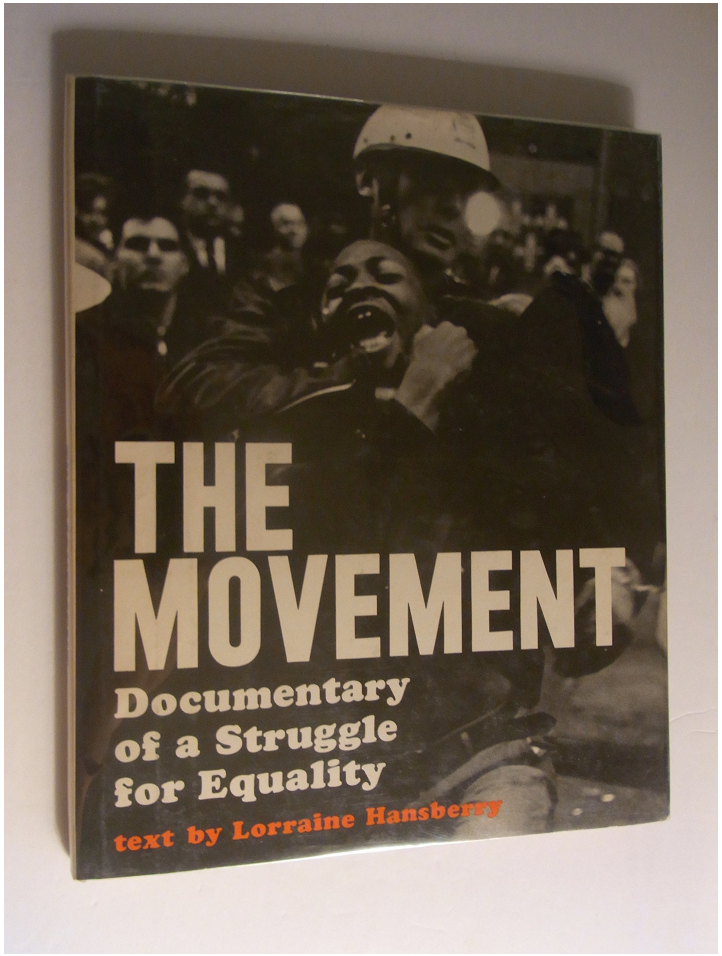
Ernest Cole



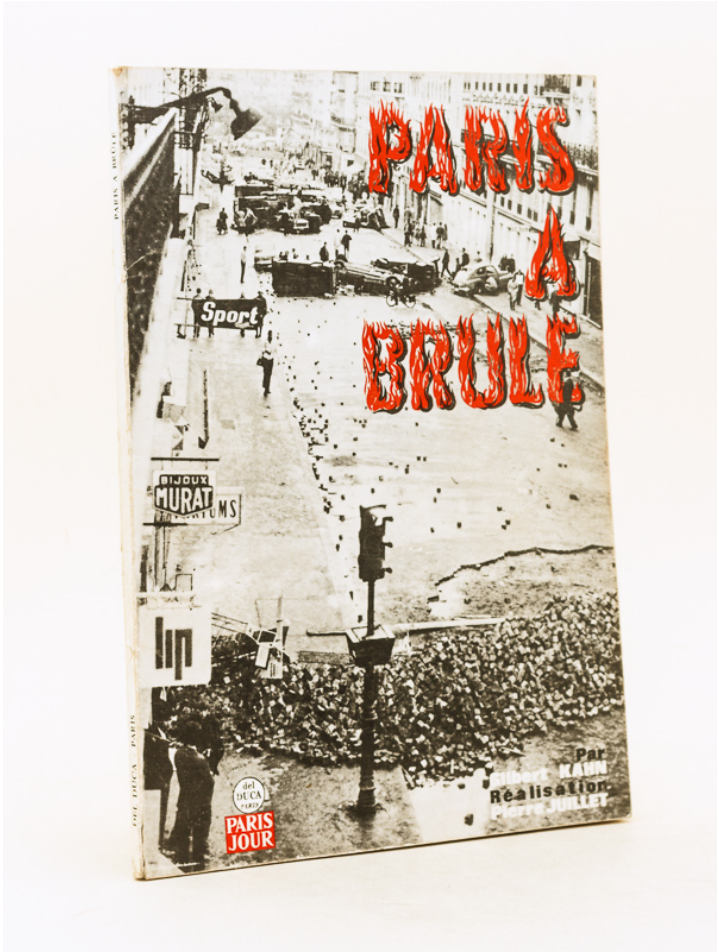
1968 – opened a window onto apartheid in South Africa



Danny Lyon and Lorraine Harrisburg



Paris was burning

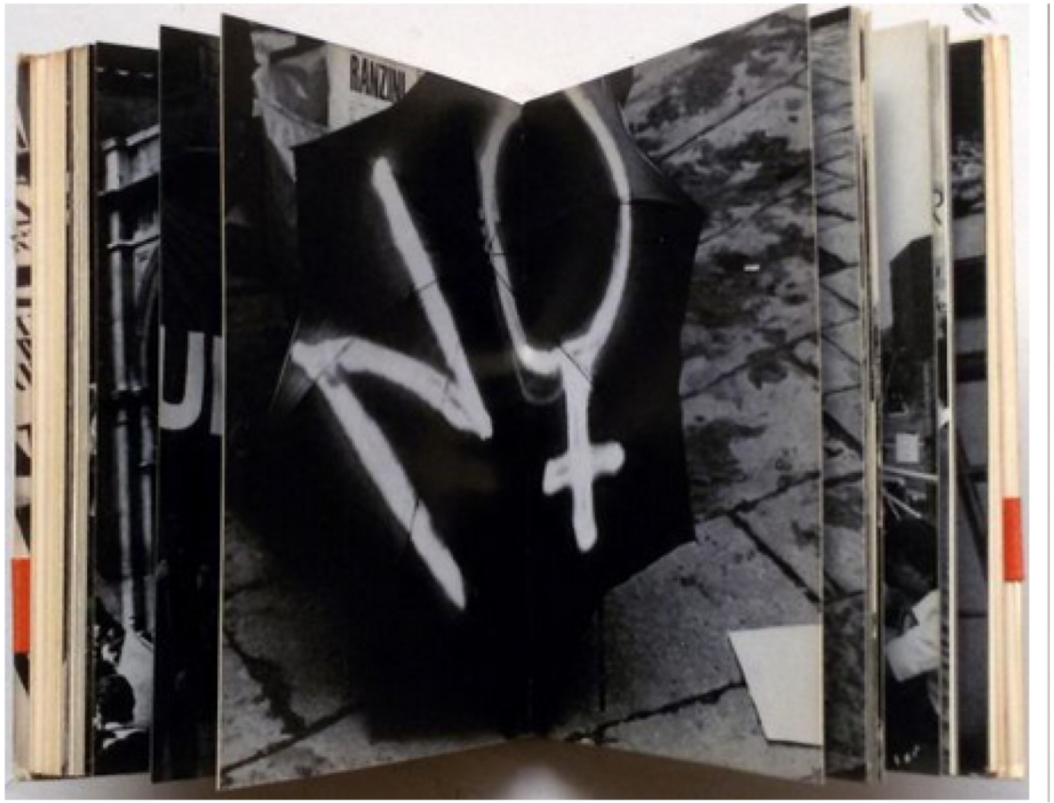


- Protest books were also made by those who were actively involved in protest groups
- amateur photographers
- Students

Like early ‘citizen reporters’

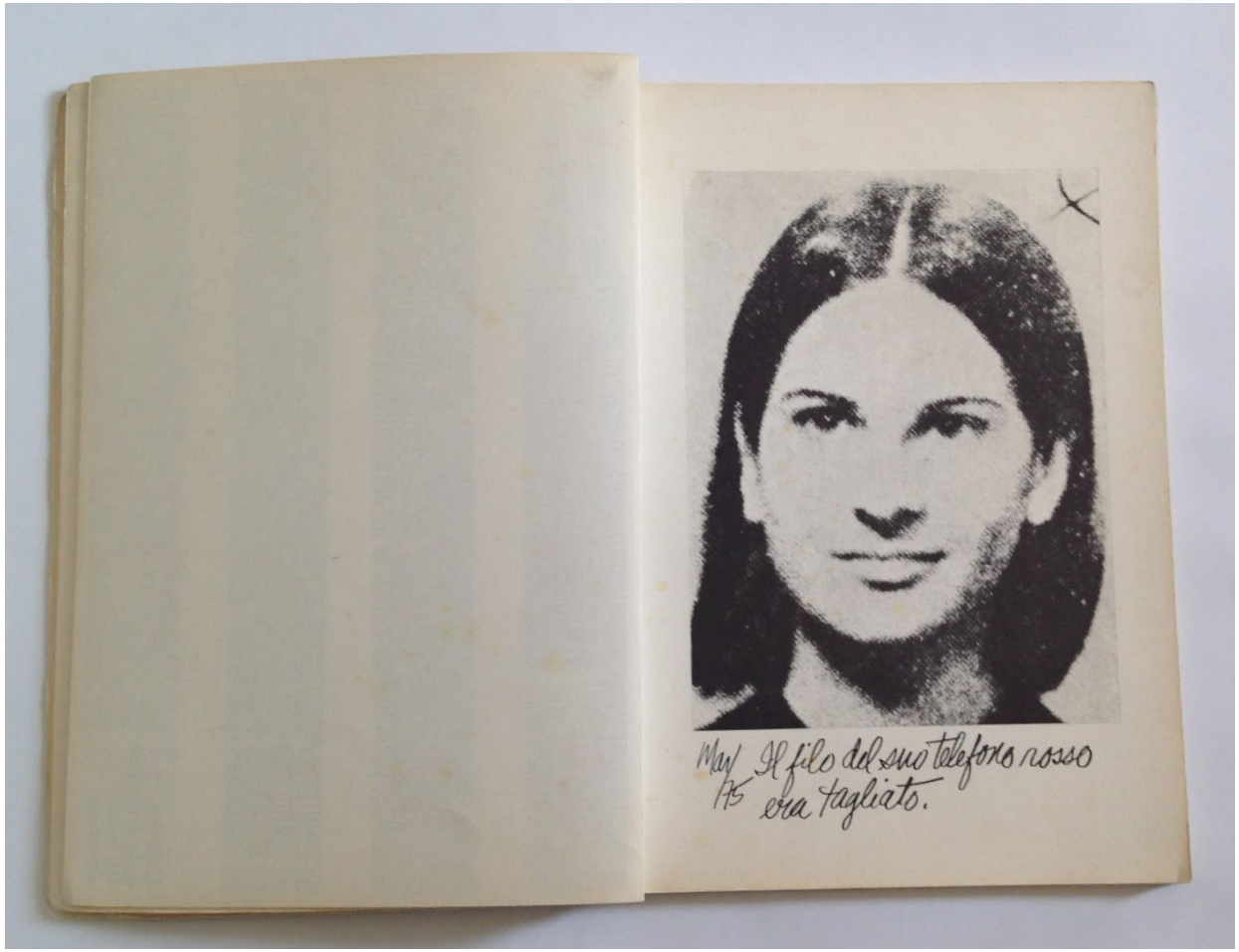


Immagini del no.
Fotografie di Paola Mattioli
e
Anna Candiani.



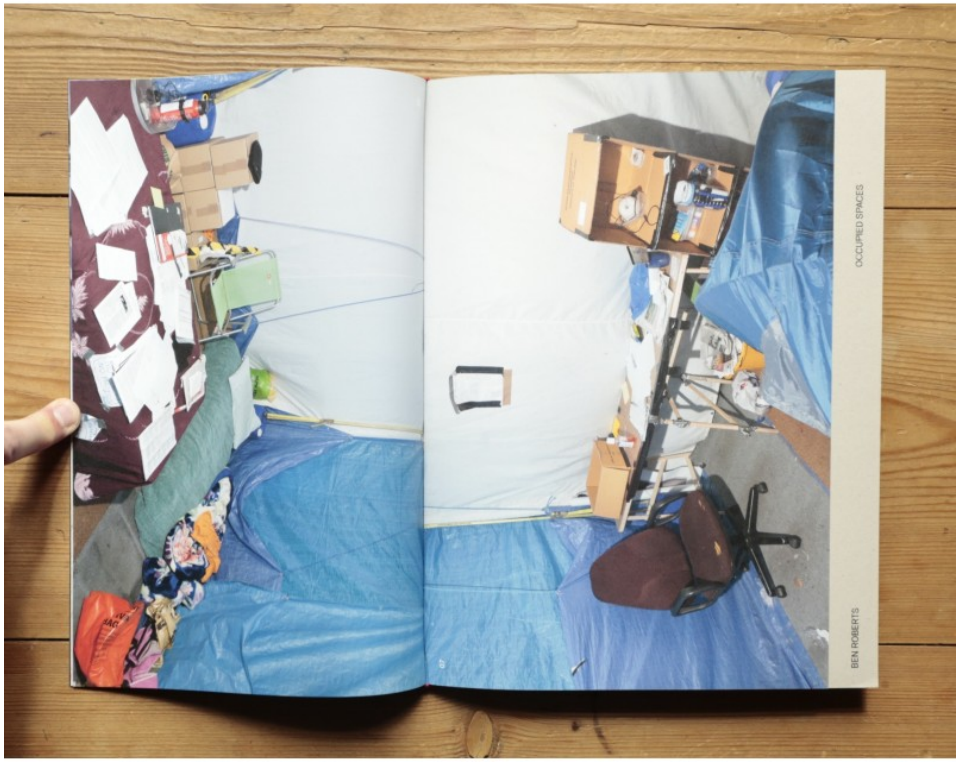
Documents the demonstrations of Italian feminists against a right-wing and Catholic attempt to repeal Italy's new divorce law at the start of the 1970s.

Un album di Violenza



Stephanie Oursler 1976

Occupied Spaces



Ben Roberts 2012

On Abortion

Laia Abril (2017)



"On Abortion is about as good as it can get, and I hope that more photographers will start working along this line of photobooks. [...] She establishes the new gold standard of the research-based photographic book."

– Jörg Colberg, CPH Magazine



When working on your book, consider the social, economic, political, and intellectual conditions of the time

- typography as well as style and syntax determine the ways in which texts convey meanings.

- Questions about who reads what, in what conditions, at what time, and with what effect = links with sociology.

Where are we now?

What defines the time we are living in?

The future is now...