Giving What You Don't Have
Cornelia Sollfrank in Conversation

Andrea Francke, Eva Weinmayr
Piracy Project

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[00:12]
Eva Weinmayr: When we talk about the word piracy, it causes a lot of problems to quite a few institutions to deal with it. So events that we've organised have been announced by Central Saint Martins without using the word piracy. That's interesting, the problems it still causes…

Cornelia Sollfrank: And how do you announce the project without "Piracy"? The Project?

E. W.: It's a project about intellectual property.

C. S.: The P Project.

 Andrea Francke, Eva Weinmayr: [laugh] Yes.

[00:52]
 Andrea Francke: The Piracy Project is a knowledge platform, and it is based around a collection of pirated books, of books that have been copied by people. And we use it to raise discussion about originality, authorship, intellectual property questions, and to produce new material, new essays and new questions.

[01:12]
E. W.: So the Piracy Project includes several aspects. One is that it is an act of piracy in itself, because it is located in an art school, in a library, in an officially built up a collection of pirated books. [01:30] So that's the second aspect, it's a collection of books which have been copied, appropriated, modified, improved, which live in this library. [01:40] And the third part is that it is a collection of physical books, which is touring. We create reading rooms and invite people to explore the books and discuss issues raised by cultural piracy.
[01:58] The Piracy Project started in an art college library, which was supposed to be closed down. And the Piracy Project is one project of And Publishing. And Publishing is a publishing activity exploring print-on-demand and new modes of production and of dissemination, the immediacy of dissemination. [02:20] And Publishing is a collaboration between myself and Lynn Harris, and we were hosted by Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design in London. And the campus where this library was situated was the campus we were working at. [02:40] So when the library was being closed, we moved in the library together with other members of staff, and kept the library open in a self-organised way. But we were aware that there's no budget to buy new books, and we wanted to have this as a lively space, so we created an open call for submissions and we asked people to select a book which is really important to them and make a copy of it. [03:09] So we weren't interested in piling up a collection of second hand books, we were really interested in this process: what happens when you make a

copy of a book, and how does this copy sit next to the original authoritative copy of the book. This is how it started.

[03:31]
A. F.: I met Eva at the moment when And Publishing was helping to set up this new space in the library, and they were trying to think how to make the library more alive inside that university. [03:44] And I was doing research on Peruvian book piracy at that time, and I had found this book that was modified and was in circulation. And it was a very exciting moment for us to think what happens if we can promote this type of production inside this academic library.

[04:05]
Piracy Project
Collection / Reading Room / Research

[04:11]
The Collection

[04:15]
E. W.: We asked people to make a copy of a book which is important to them and send it to us, and so with these submission we started to build up the collections. Lots of students were getting involved, but also lots of people who work in this topic, and were interested in these topics. [04:38] So we received about one hundred books in a couple of months. And then, parallel to this, we started to do research ourselves. [04:50] We had a residency in China, so we went to China, to Beijing and Shanghai, to meet illegal booksellers of pirated architecture books. And we had a residency in Turkey, in Istanbul, where we did lots of interviews with publishers and artists on book piracy. [05:09] So the collection is a mix of our own research and cases from the real book markets, and creative work, artistic work which is produced in the context of an art college and the wider cultural realm.

[05:29]
A. F.: And it is an ongoing project.

E. W.: The project is ongoing, we still receive submissions. The collection is growing, and at the moment here we have about 180 books, here at Grand Union (Birmingham).

[05:42]
A. F.: When we did the open call, something that was really important to us was to make clear for people that they have a space of creativity when they are making a copy. So we wrote, please send us a copy of a book, and be aware that things happen when you copy a book. [05:57] Whether you do it intentionally or not a copy is never the same. So you can use that space, take ownership of that space and make something out of that; or you can take a step back and allow things to happen without having control. And I think that is something that is quite important for us in the project. [06:12] And it is really interesting how people have embraced that in different measures, like subtle things, or material things, or adding text, taking text out, mixing things, judging things. Sometimes just saying, I just want it to circulate, I don't mind what happens in the space, I just want the subject to be in the world again.

[06:35]
E. W.: I think this is one which I find interesting in terms of making a copy, because it's not so much about my own creativity, it's more about exploring how technology edits what you can see. It's Jan van Toorn's *Critical Practice*, and the artist is Hester Barnard, a Canadian artist. [07:02] She sent us these three copies, and we thought, that's really generous, three copies. But they are not identical copies, they are very different. Some have a lot of empty pages in the book. And this book has been screen-captured on a 3.5 inch iPhone, whereas this book has been screen-captured on a desktop, and this one has been screen-captured with a laptop. [07:37] So the device you use to access information online determines what you actually receive. And I find this really interesting, that she translated this back into a hardcopy, the online edited material. [07:53] And this is kind of taught by this book, standard *International Copyright*. She went to Google Books, and screen-captured all the pages Google Books are showing. So we are all familiar with blurry text pages, but then it starts that you get the message "Page 38 is not shown in this preview." [08:18] And then it's going through the whole book, so she printed every page basically, omitting the actual information. But the interesting thing is that we are all aware that this is happening on Google, on screen online, but the fact that she's translating this back into an object, into a printed book, is interesting.

[08:44]
Reading Room

[08:48]
A. F.: We create these reading rooms with the collection as a way to tour the collection, and meet people and have conversations around the books. And that is something quite important to us, that we go with the physical books to a place, either for two or three months, and meet different people that have different interests in relation to the collection in that locality. We've been doing that for the last two years, I think, three years. [09:12] And it's quite interesting because different places have very different experiences of piracy. So you can go to a country where piracy is something very common, or a different place where people have a very strong position against piracy, or a different legal framework. And I feel the type of conversations and the quality of interactions is quite different from being present on the space and with the books. [09:36] And that's why we don't call these exhibitions, because we always have places where people can come and they can stay, and they can come again. Sometimes people come three or four times and they actually read the books. And a few times they go back to their houses and they bring books back, and they said, I'm going to contact this friend who has been to Russia and he told me about this book – so we can add it to the collection. I think that makes a big difference to how the research in the project functions.

[10:06]
E. W.: One of the most interesting events we did with the Piracy collection was at the Show Room where we had a residency for the last year. There were three events, and one was *A Day At The Courtroom*. This was an afternoon where we invited three copyright lawyers coming from different legal systems: the US, the UK, and the Continental European, Athens. And we presented ten selected cases from the collection and the three copyright lawyers had to assess them in the eyes of the law, and they had to agree where to put this book in a scale from legal to illegal. [10:51] So we weren't interested really to say, this is legal and this is illegal, we were interested in all the

shades in between. And then they had to discuss where they would place the book. But then the audience had the last verdict, and then the audience placed the book. [11:05] And this was an extremely interesting discussion, because it was interesting to see how different the legal backgrounds are, how blurry the whole field is, how you can assess when is the moment where a work becomes a transformative work, or when it stays a derivative work, and this whole discussion.

[11:30] When we do these reading rooms – and we had one in New York, for example, at the New York Art Book Fair – people are coming, and they are coming to see the physical books in a physical space, so this creates a social encounter and we have these conversations. [11:47] For example, a woman stood up to us in New york and she told us about a piracy project she run where she was working in a juvenile detention centre, and she produced a whole shadow library of books because the incarcerated kids couldn't take the books in their cells, so she created these copies, individual chapters, and they could circulate. [12:20] I'm telling this because the fact that we are having this reading room and that we are meeting people, and that we are having these conversations, really furthers our research. We find out about these projects by sharing knowledge.

[12:38]
Categories

[12:42]
A. F.: Whenever we set our reading room for the Piracy Project we need to organise the books in a certain way. What we started to do now is that we've created these different categories, and the first set of categories came from the legal event. [12:56] So we set up, we organised the books in different categories that would help us have questions for the lawyers, that would work for groups of books instead of individual works. [13:07] And the idea is that, for example, we are going to have our next events with librarians, and a new set of categories would come. So the categories change as our interest or research in the project is changing. [13:21] The current categories are: Pirated Design, so books where the look of the book has been copied but not the content; recirculation, books that have been copied trying to be reproduced exactly as they were, because they need to be circulating again; transformation, books that have been modified; For Sale Doctrine, so we receive quite a few books where people haven't actually made a copy but they have cut the book or drawn inside the book, and legally you are allowed to do anything with a book except copy it, so we thought that it was quite important so that we didn't have to discuss that with the lawyers; [14:03] Public Domain, which are works that are already out of copyright, again, so whatever you do with those books is legal; and collation, books gathered from different sources, and who owns the copyright, which was a really interesting question, which is when you have a book that has many authors – it's really interesting. Different systems in different countries have different ways to deal with who owns the copyright and what are the rights of the owners of the different works.

[14:36]
E. W.: Ahmet Şık is a journalist who published a book about the Ergenekon scandal and the Turkish government, and connects that kind of mafioso structures. Before the book could be published he was arrested and put in jail for a whole year without trial, and he sent the PDF to friends, and the PDF was circulating on many different computers so it couldn't be taken. [15:06] They published the PDF, and as authors they put over a hundred different author names, so there was not just one author who could be taken

into responsibility.

[15:22] We have in the collection this book, it's *Teignmouth Electron* by Tacita Dean. This is the original, it's published by Book Works and Steidl. And to this round table, to this event, we invited also Jane Rolo, director of Book Works (and she published this book). [15:41] And we invited her saying, do you know that your book has been pirated? So she was really interested and she came along. This is the pirated version, it's *Alias*, [by] Damián Ortega in Mexico. It's a series of books where he translates texts and theory into Spanish, which are not available in Spanish. So it's about access, it's about circulation. [16:07] But actually he redesigned the book. The pirated version looks very different, and it has a small film roll here, from Tacita Dean's book. And it was really amazing that Jane Rolo flipped the pirated book and she said, well, actually this is really very nice.

[16:31] This is kind of a standard academic publishing format, it's Gilles Deleuze's *Proust and Signs*, and the contributor, the artist who produced the book is Neil Chapman, a writer based in London. And he made a facsimile of his copy of this book, including the binding mistakes – so there's one chapter upside down printed in the book. [17:04] But the really interesting thing is that he scanned it on his home inkjet printer – he scanned it on his scanner and then printed it on his home inkjet printer. And the feel of it is very crafty, because the inkjet has a very different typographic appearance than the official copy. [17:28] And this makes you read the book in quite a different way, you relate differently to the actual text. So it's not just about the information conveyed on this page, it's really about how I can relate to it visually. I find this really interesting when we put this book into the library, in our collection in the library, and it sat next to the original, [17:54] it raises really interesting questions about what kind of authority decides which book can access the library, because this is definitely and obviously a self-made copy – so if this self-made copy can enter the library, any self-made text and self-published copy could enter the library. So it was raising really interesting questions about gatekeepers of knowledge, and hierarchies and authorities.

[18:26]
On-line catalogue

[18:30]
E. W.: We created this online catalogue give to an overview of what we have in the collection. We have a cover photograph and then we have a short text where we try to frame and to describe the approach taken, like the strategy, what's been pirated and what was the strategy. [18:55] And this is quite a lot, because it's giving you the framework of it, the conceptual framework. But it's not giving you the book, and this is really important because lots of the books couldn't be digitised, because it's exactly their material quality which is important, and which makes the point. [19:17] So if I would… if I have a project which is working about mediation, and then I put another layer of mediation on top of it by scanning it, it just wouldn't work anymore.
[19:29] The purpose of the online catalogue isn't to give you insight into all the books to make actually all the information available, it's more to talk about the approach taken and the questions which are raised by this specific book.

[19:47]

Cultures of the copy

[19:51]
A topic of cultural difference became really obvious when we went to Istanbul. A copy shop which had many academic titles on the shelves, copied, pirated titles... The fact is that in London, where I'm based, you can access anything in any library, and it's not too expensive to get the original book. [20:27] But in Istanbul it's very expensive, and the whole academic community thrives on pirated, copied academic titles.

[20:39]
A. F.: So this is the original Jaime Bayly [*No se lo digas a nadie],* and this is the pirated copy of the Jaime Bayly. This book is from Peru, it was bought on the street, on a street market. [20:53] And Peru has a very big pirated book market, most books in Peru are pirated. And we found this because there was a rumour that books in Peru had been modified, pirated books. And this version, the pirated version, has two extra chapters that are not in the original one. [21:13] It's really hard to understand the motivation behind it. There's no credit, so the person is inhabiting this author's identity in a sense. They are not getting any cultural capital from it. They are not getting extra money, because if they are found out, nobody would buy books from this publisher anymore. [21:33] The chapters are really well written, so you as a reader would not realise that you are reading something that has been pirated. And that was really fascinating in terms of what space you create. So when you have this technology that allows you to have the book open and print it so easily – how you can you take advantage of that, and take ownership or inhabit these spaces that technology is opening up for you.

[22:01]
E. W.: Book piracy in China is really important when it comes to architecture books, Western architecture books. Lots of architecture studios, but even university libraries would buy from pirate book sellers, because it's just so much cheaper. [22:26] And we've found this Mark magazine with one of the architecture sellers, and it's supposed to be a bargain because you have six magazines in one. [22:41] And we were really interested in the question, what are the criteria for the editing? How do you edit six issues into one? But basically everything is in here, from advertisement, to text, to images, it's all there. But then a really interesting question arises when it comes to technology, because in this magazine there are pages in Italian language clearly taken from other magazines.

[23:14]
A. F.: But it was also really interesting to go there, and actually interview the distributor and go through the whole experience. We had to meet the distributor in a neutral place, and he interviewed us to see if he was going to allow us to go into the shop and buy his books. [23:31] And then going through the catalogue and realising how Rem Koolhaas is really popular among the pirates, but actually Chinese architecture is not popular, so there's only like three pirated books on Chinese architecture; or that from all the architecture universities in the world only the AA books are copied – the Architectural Association books. [23:51] And I think those small things are really things that are worth spending time and reflecting on.

[23:58]
E. W.: We found this pirate copy of *Tintin* when we visited Beijing, and obviously compared to the original, it looks different, a different format. But also it's black and

white, but it's not a photocopy of the original full-colour. [24:23] It's redrawn by hand, so all the drawings are redrawn and obviously translated into Chinese. This is quite a labour of love, which is really amazing. I can compare the two. The space is slightly differently interpreted.

[24:50]
A. F.: And it's really incredible, because at some point in China there were 14 or 15 different publishers publishing *Tintin*, and they all have their versions. They are all hand-drawn by different people, so in the back, in Chinese, it's the credit. So you can buy it by deciding which person does the best drawings of the production of *Tintin*, which I thought it was really… [25:14] It's such a different cultural way to actually give credit to the person that is copying it, and recognise the labour, and the intention and the value of that work.

[25:24]
Why books?

[25:28]
E. W.: Books have always been very important in my practice, in my artistic practice, because lots of my projects culminated in a book, or led into a book. And publications are important because they can circulate freely, they can circulate much easier than artworks in a gallery. [25:50] So this question of how to make things public and how to create an audience… not how to create an audience – how to reach a reader and how to create a dialogue. So the book is the perfect tool for this.

[26:04]
A. F.: My interest in books comes from making art, or thinking about art as a way to interact with the world, so outside art settings, and I found books really interesting in that. And that's how I met Eva, in a sense, because I was interested in that part of her practice. [26:26] When I found the Jaime Bayly book, for me that was a real moment of excitement, of this person that was doing this things in the world without taking any credit, but was having such a profound effect on so many readers. I'm quite fascinated by that. [26:44] I'm also really interested in research and using events – research that works with people. So it kind of creates communities around certain subjects, and then it uses that to explore different issues and to interact with different areas of knowledge. And I think books are a privileged space to do that.

[27:11]
E. W.: The books in the Piracy collection, because they are objects you can grab, and because they need a place, they are a really important tool to start a dialogue. When we had this reading room in the New York Art Book Fair, it was really the book that created this moment when you started a conversation with somebody else. And I think this is a very important moment in the Piracy collection as a tool to start this discussion. [27:44] In the Piracy collection the books are not so important to circulate, because they don't circulate. They only travel with us, in a way, or they travel here to Grand Union to be installed in this reading room. But they are not meant to be printed in a thousands print run and circulated in the world.

C. S.: So what is their function?

[28:08]
E. W.: The functions of the books here in the Piracy collection are to create a dialogue, debate about these issues they are raising, and they are a tool for a direct encounter, for a social encounter. As Andrea said, building a community which is debating these issues which they are raising. [28:32] And I also find it really interesting – when we where in China we also talked with lots of publishers and artists, and they said that the book, in comparison to an online file, is a really important tool in China, because it can't be controlled as easily as online communication. [28:53] So a book is an autonomous object which can be passed on from one hand to the other, without the state or another authority to intervene. I think that is an important aspect when you talk about books in comparison with circulating information online.

[29:13]
Passion for piracy

[29:17]
A. F.: I'm quite interested in enclosures, and people that jump those enclosures. I'm kind of interested in these imposed… Maybe because I come from Peru and we have a different relation to rules, and I'm in Britain where rules seem to have so much strength. And I'm quite interested in this agency of taking personal responsibility and saying, I'm going to obey this rule, I'm not going to obey this one, and what does that mean. [29:42] That makes me really interested in all these different strategies, and also to find a way to value them and show them – how when you make this decision to jump a rule, you actually help bring up questions, modifications, and propose new models or new ways about thinking things. [30:02] And I think that is something that is part of all the other projects that I do: stating the rules and the people that break them.

[30:12]
E. W.: The pirate as a trickster who tries to push the boundaries which are being set. And I think the interesting, or the complex part of the Piracy Project is that we are not saying, I'm for piracy or I'm against piracy, I'm for copyright, I'm against copyright. It's really about testing out these decisions and the own boundaries, the legal boundaries, the moral limits – to push them and find them. [30:51] I mean, the Piracy Project as a whole is a project which is pushing the boundaries because it started in this academic library, and it's assessed by copyright lawyers as illegal, so to run such a project is an act of piracy in itself.

[31:17]
This method of doing or approaching this art project is to create a collaboration to instigate this discourse, and this discourse is happening on many different levels. One of them is conversation, debate. But the other one is this material outcome, and then this material outcome is creating a new debate.