

Thomas Hvid Kromann

## Bog, objekt, bogobjekt. Vedr. visse excentriske materielle afvigelser fra normalbogen

Man kan, med den belgiske litterat Georges Poulet, tale om *bogens transparens*: Når man tager bogen i sine hænder og for alvor dykker ned i læsningens koncentrerede tilstand, så forsvinder bogen, den bliver 'usynlig', den er ikke længere en materiel realitet (det er den i materiel henseende, om end den ikke perciperes sådan), men en serie af ord, af billeder, af idéer.<sup>1</sup> Transparensen betyder ikke, at læseoplevelsen er blottet for interaktion, altså en envejsmodtagelse fra et statisk værk til en passiv læser, blot at interaktionen som oftest ikke anes på grund af læsningens velkendte praksis. I andre tilfælde, f.eks. når skriften står for småt eller gnidret i en billig paperback, lægger man mærke til det materielle underlag, der er betingelsen for det verbale eller visuelle indhold. Den samme opmærksomhed, om end en positiv af slagsen, kan et stykke veludført boghåndværk modtage.

En anden og helt bevidst obstruktion af det transparente finder man i visse af kunstnerbøgerne, der nærmest er en slags bogobjekter, idet de på forskelligartet vis tematiserer og problematiserer selve bogmediet, det vil sige bogen bliver en kommentar til det at være bog. Som oftest praktiseres denne metapraksis gennem afvigelser fra normalbogens norm, f.eks. gennem en manipulation af bogryggen eller siderne i bogen, hvorved man *ser* bogen og sanser den igangværende håndgribelige omgang med dette objekt; ser, hvordan den materielt set er gestaltet; ser, hvad der burde have været eller plejer at være – uanset om der er tale om en parodisk, humoristisk eller endog destruktiv version.

Disse værker befinder sig ofte mellem det, der entydigt er en bog (normalbogen), og det, der tydeligvis er noget andet. Måske med en let hældning til det første, altså et *bogobjekt*, ikke et *bogobjekt*. Strengt taget er der ingen grænser, og dog: En bog kan være lavet af alt, men ikke alt kan være en bog.

Historien om disse 'materielle afvigere' kan historisk set anskues fra mindst to forskellige vinkler: som del af en boghistorisk udvikling og ud fra en separat bogobjekthistorie, der finder sted inden for kunstens rammer.

Hvad er en bog? En "bog" opfattes normalt således: "et antal beskrevne eller trykte papirark (blade), som er foldede, samlede og hæftede langs deres ene kant, således at de udgør en helhed; denne helhed er normalt forsynet med et omslag eller bogbind". Således lyder den encyklopædiske beskrivelse. Imidlertid kan "bog" også anskues som de variable former, "bogen" har haft gennem tiden: fra kileskrift på lertavler, hieroglyffer på papyrus og skrifter på pergament samt rullefor-

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## Book, object, book-object. Regarding certain eccentric material deviations from the ordinary book

We can, with the Belgian scholar Georges Poulet, talk of the *transparency of the book*: when we take a book in our hands and really dive into a concentrated state of reading, the book disappears, it becomes "invisible", it is no longer a material reality (it is not perceived as such, at least) but simply a series of words, images and ideas.<sup>1</sup> This transparency does not mean that the reading experience is devoid of interaction – i.e., simply a one-way reception from a static work to a passive reader – but any interaction that occurs is usually not discernible due to the very familiarity of the act of reading. In other cases, when the writing is too small or blurred – in a cheap paperback, for instance – we do notice the material foundations through which the verbal or visual content is presented. The same awareness, albeit more positively, can be elicited by a piece of well-executed book craftsmanship.

Another, and quite deliberate, obstruction of the transparent can be found in some artists' books, which are almost a kind of book-object in that they try in various ways to thematise and analyse the book as a medium; that is to say, the book becomes a commentary on the nature of being a book. This meta-practice usually takes the form of deviations from the typical book's norms: for example, through a manipulation of the spine or the pages of the book, whereby one *sees* the book and senses the ongoing tangible interaction with this object, sees how it is materially configured, sees what it ought to have been, or what it usually is – regardless of whether the object in question is a parody, humorous or even a destructive copy.

These works often find themselves between that which is unmistakably a book (the ordinary book) and that which is clearly something else – perhaps leaning slightly more towards the first: i.e. a *book-object*, rather than a *book-object*. Strictly speaking, there are no limits, and yet: a book can be made of anything, but not everything can be a book.

The story of these "material deviations" can, historically, be seen from at least two different perspectives: as a part of the historical development of books, and from a separate history of the book-object taking place within an art framework.

What is a book? A "book" is usually understood as follows: "a number of written-on, or printed, sheets (pages), which are folded, collated and fixed along one edge so that they form a whole; this whole is usually supplemented by a cover or binding." In this way the written matter reads encyclopaedically. However, "book" can also be viewed according to the variable forms "the book" has had over the years: from cuneiform on clay

1 Jf. Georges Poulet: "Criticism and the Experience of Interiority" i: Richard A. Macksey & Eugenio Donato (red.): *The Structuralist Controversy: The Language of Criticism and the Sciences of Man*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972, pp. 56-72.

1 See Georges Poulet: "Criticism and the Experience of Interiority", in Richard A. Macksey and Eugenio Donato (ed.): *The Structuralist Controversy: The Language of Criticism and the Sciences of Man*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press (1972) pp. 56-72.

tablets, hieroglyphics on papyrus and writings on parchment and scrolls, which were superseded by codex. Gutenberg's art of book printing (print with removable metal type) stabilised the book in a form we have known now for 500 years, and which has only recently begun to transform itself because of the digitisation of text (ignoring some of the experimental forays into, for example, making books on CD-ROM). This meant that the "book" can also be used to denote text-based content in tablet format (for example, Apple's iPad or Amazon's Kindle reader). (Fictional) literature can change its material platform without losing the specifically literary, its literariness, although the literature clearly undergoes a transformation during this process. However, it is open to discussion whether the "book" is a meaningless term today, because the "book" is no longer bound to the old medium's codex format, but rather is bound to an immaterial content, or whether the "book" is a historically unique form that cannot be separated from its material content, because it is its own material content.

We will not enter into that discussion here, but simply note that the history of the book as a medium is characterised by transformation and progression. When we reuse formats or techniques that belong elsewhere in the history of books – the scroll, for example, as the artist Cecilia Westerberg did in her frieze *Sommerrejsen* ("The Summer Journey", 2012), inspired by older scroll books, such as Johan Thomas Lundbye's *Rejse i Billeder* ("Journey in Pictures", 1847) – there is an anachronism at play, but a vital anachronism, in that the organisation of the scroll format makes other organisations of the material possible.<sup>2</sup> New media are living alongside the old, and this coexistence transforms the context of the old media. Nevertheless, all media convergences lose something when a form is consigned to oblivion; not everything is absorbed by the new formats. The scroll book replaces the seriality of the book medium with a continuum, a writing surface in time, but especially in space. One cannot jump around in a book, or scroll back and forth or have the entire book open at once. A side-issue in relation to the historical development of the book is the tradition of material deviation within the framework of art: the avant-gardes, from the Italian futurists to Fluxus and on to more contemporary experiments. The Italian futurists did not only want to set the

mer, der afløses af kodex. Gutenbergs bogtrykkerkunst (tryk med løse metaltypen) stabiliserede bogen i en form, som vi har kendt i 500 år, og som først for nylig, hvis man ser bort fra eksperimenterne med bøger på blandt andet cd-rom, er begyndt at forandre sig på grund af digitaliseringen af skriften. Det har medført, at "bøger" tillige anvendes som betegnelse for skriftbaseret indhold i tablet-format (f.eks. Apple's iPad eller Amazon's Kindle reader). (Skøn)litteratur kan godt skifte materiel platform uden at miste det specifikt litterære, litterariteten, om end litteraturen selvsagt undergår en transformation i denne proces. Derimod står det åbent for diskussion, om "bogen" er en meningsløs betegnelse i dag, fordi "bogen" ikke længere er bundet til det gamle mediums kodexformat, men derimod til et immaterielt indhold, eller om "bog" er en historisk unik form, der ikke kan løsrives fra sit materielle indhold, fordi den er sit materielle indhold.

Her skal ikke åbnes for den diskussion, blot konstateres, at bogmediets historie er præget af transformation og progression. Når man genanvender formater eller teknikker, der hører hjemme andre steder i boghistorien, f.eks. rulleformen, som kunstneren Cecilia Westerberg gør det i sin billedfrise i *Sommerrejsen* (2012) med inspiration fra ældre rullebøger såsom Johan Thomas Lundbyes *Rejse i Billeder* (1847), er der nok tale om en anakronisme, men en vital anakronisme, idet rulleformatets organisering muliggør andre organiseringer af materialet.<sup>2</sup> Nye medier lever sammen med de gamle, og denne sam eksistens forandrer konteksten for de gamle medier. Al mediekonvergens til trods efterlades noget, når en form overlades til glemslen; ikke alt opsuges af de nye formater. Bogrullen erstatter bogmediets serialitet med et kontinuum, en skriftflade i tid, men særligt i rum. Man kan ikke springe rundt i bogen, men ruller frem og tilbage eller kan lade hele bogen være åben på én gang.

Et sidespor i forhold til den boghistoriske udvikling er traditionen for materialeafvigelse inden for kunstens rammer, den avantgardistiske, fra de italienske futurister over fluxus til nutidige eksperimenter. De italienske futurister ville ikke kun slippe ordene fri, men eksperimenterede også med bogmediet, ikke mindst i Fortunato Deperos *Depero futurista* fra 1927, F.T. Marinettis *Parole in libertà. Olfattive, tattili, termiche* fra 1932



Cecilia Westerberg:  
*Sommerrejsen* (2012) 3,5×11×4,3 cm

<sup>2</sup> In the history of books there are also so-called "eccentric" books, which differ from normal ones in manner and appearance through their inclusion of so-called "novelty devices". These anomalies are known in children's literature, where they disappear eventually as the child learns to read and moves towards pure text: i.e., from a toy to a potentially transparent medium. But these novelty devices have also been used in scientific works, where they often have a pedagogic-didactic function. An early work is Raymund Lullii: *Ars Generalis* (1306). For a description of such techniques and examples, see Gay Walker: *Eccentric Books*, New Haven: Yale University Library, 1988.

<sup>2</sup> Inden for boghistorien er der også såkaldt "eccentriske" bøger, der afviger fra det almindelige i opførelse og udseende gennem deres integrering af såkaldte "novelty devices". Disse anomalier kender man inden for børnelitteraturen, hvor de forsvinder, efterhånden som barnet selv lærer at læse og går mod den rene skrift, dvs. fra et legetøj til et potentielt transparent medium. Men disse novelty devices har også været anvendt i videnskabelige værker, hvor de som oftest har en pædagogisk-didaktisk funktion, et tidligt værk er Raymund Lullii: *Ars Generalis* (1306). For en beskrivelse af teknikker og eksempler, se: Gay Walker: *Eccentric Books*, New Haven: Yale University Library, 1988.

og Tullio D'Albisolas *L'anguria lirica (lungo poema passionale)* fra 1934. Disse værker har det maskinelle og industrielle i centrum. Hos Depero blev siderne, der bestod af typografiske eksperimenter, holdt sammen af to metalbolte. Hvorimod siderne i Marinetti's værk ikke var af papir, men af metal, og hvis titel betonedede lugtesansen, det taktile og termiske; faktorer, der principielt indgår i den håndgribelige omgang med normalbogen, men som her bliver tydelige på grund af det ændrede materialevalg. Albisolas bog er også af metal og interessant nok illustreret af kunstneren Bruno Munari, der skulle blive en af det 20. århundredes store eksperimentatorer, ikke mindst materielt set, inden for børnebogen.

En anden praktiker, der spillede en central rolle for 1960'ernes avantgarder, var Marcel Duchamp. Duchamp eksperimenterede i formater, såsom den langsomt destruerede bog (*Livre malheureux*, 1919), en bryllupsgave til søsteren Suzanne, som Duchamp havde instrueret i, hvordan hun skulle hænge bogen op på sin altan i Paris, hvorefter det skiftende vejrlig langsomt ville nedbryde bogen. Andre værker af Duchamp, der bevæger sig i det bogmodificerende, var kufferten med miniatureværkerne (*Boîtes-en-valises* fra 1941) og surrealisternes katalog med det påmonterede kvindebryst (*Prière de toucher* fra 1947). I 1960'erne ser man bogobjekter mange steder, også hos fluxus-bevægelsen, f.eks. George Brechts *Water Yam* (1963) og *Fluxus Anthology I* (1963).

Det formentligt tydeligste institutionelle gennembrud for eksperimenterne med selve bogmediet blev Documenta VI i 1977 i Kassel, hvor der var en separat afdeling under overskriften "Bücher". Allerede ved den forrige Documenta havde der været en lille sektion af bøger, men denne gang præsenteredes hele spektret af samtidskunstens eksperimenter, både de konceptuelle værker og de, der blev sammenfattet under titlen "Metamorphosen des Buches". Valget af ordet "metamorfose" indikerede eksperimenter på det materielle plan, og dermed markeredes en forskel til kunstnerbøgerne, især de amerikanske og konceptuelle af slagsen, hvor der netop ikke var tale om excentriske værker, men derimod værker, der i materiel henseende mindede mest muligt om den almindelige bog. Documenta VI er også symptomatisk for den spaltning, der sker mellem kunstnerbøger (artists' books) og den såkaldte 'bogkunst' (book art) efter de tværæstetiske 1960'ere. Sidenhen har kunstnerbøgerne og bogobjekterne<sup>3</sup> levet i separate reservater, der grænser op til hinanden og kun delvist overlapper.<sup>4</sup> En tilsvarende opdeling eksisterer også på dansk grund, hvor man på den ene side kan iagttage samtidskunstens anvendelse af bogen, på den anden side kan se, hvordan bogen bliver anvendt inden for bogkunsten (hvis navn forvirrende nok også dækker det traditionelle håndværksmæssige aspekt omkring bogproduktionen), der er tæt knyttet til især det engelske *book art*-miljø. Forskellene er tydelige, både i institutionel sammenhæng, men også æstetisk, mellem 'kunstværket i bogform' som et kunstnerisk

words free; they also experimented with the book as a medium, not least in Fortunato Depero's *Depero futurista* from 1927, F. T. Marinetti's *Parole in libertà. Olfattive, tattili, termiche* ("Words in Freedom: Olfactory, Tactile, Thermal") from 1932 and Tullio D'Albisola's *L'anguria lirica (lungo poema passionale)* ("The Lyric Watermelon: A Long, Passionate Poem") from 1934. These works put the mechanical and industrial centre-stage. With Depero the pages, which consisted of typographical experiments, were held together by two metal bolts, whereas the pages in Marinetti's work were not of paper but of metal, and its title emphasised the sense of smell, the tactile and the thermal – factors which are a fundamental aspect of the tangible interaction with the normal book but which are here made all the more obvious because of the modified material choices. Albisola's book is also made of metal and, interestingly enough, illustrated by the artist Bruno Munari, who was to become one of the twentieth century's great experimenters in children's books, not least in terms of their material properties.

Another practitioner who played a central role for the 1960s' avant-gardes was Marcel Duchamp. Duchamp experimented with formats, such as the slowly degrading book *Livre malheureux* (1919), a wedding gift to his sister Suzanne, whom Duchamp had instructed to hang the book up on her balcony in Paris, after which the changing weather would slowly destroy it. Other works by Duchamp that deal with book modifications are the suitcase with miniature works (*Boîtes-en-valises*, from 1941) and the surrealists' catalogue with the attached female breast (*Prière de toucher*, from 1947). The 1960s saw book-objects appearing in many places, such as in the Fluxus movement: for example, George Brecht's *Water Yam* (1963) and *Fluxus Anthology I* (1963).

The clearest institutional breakthrough in experiments with the book as a medium was probably Documenta VI in 1977 in Kassel, where a separate section was organised under the heading "Bücher". Already at the preceding Documenta there had been a small section set aside for books, but this time the entire spectrum of contemporary art experiments was presented: both the conceptual works and those that were summarised under the title "Metamorphosen des Buches". The choice of the word "metamorphosis" indicated experimentation at the material level, and thus marked a difference from the artist's book, especially the American, conceptual examples, which were not really intended as eccentric works, but works which in their material aspects reminded one most of ordinary books. Documenta VI is also symptomatic of the divisions that exist between artists' books and the so-called book art from the intermedial 1960s. Since then, artists' books and book-objects<sup>3</sup> have lived in separate territories, adjacent to each other and only partially overlapping.<sup>4</sup> A similar division also exists in Denmark, where, on the one hand, we can see contemporary art's use of the book and on the other we can see how the book is used within book art (whose name confusingly enough also covers the traditional

3 Sidstnævnte f.eks. repræsenteret i *1,000 Artists' Books. Exploring the Book as Art*, Quarry Books, 2012.

4 Sameksistensen af kunstnerbøger, bogobjekter og bogskulpturer kunne man se på den store udstilling "Blood on paper" på Victoria & Albert Museum i London i 2008. For teori og eksempler på bogkunst, se hhv. Garrett Stewart: *Bookwork. Medium to Object to Concept to Art*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011 og Eileen Wallace: *Masters: Book arts. Major Works by Leading Artists*, New York: Lark Crafts, 2011.

3 The latter, for example, represented in *1,000 Artists' Books. Exploring the Book as Art*, Quarry Books (2012).

4 The coexistence of artists' books, book-objects and book-sculptures could be seen at the large exhibition "Blood on Paper" at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London in 2008. For theory and examples of the art of the book, see respectively. Garrett Stewart: *Bookwork. Medium to Object to Concept to Art*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press (2011) and Eileen Wallace: *Masters: Book Arts. Major Works by Leading Artists*, New York: Lark Crafts (2011).

craftsmanship aspects of book production), which is closely linked to the English *book-art* scene in particular. The differences are clear, both in an institutional context and also aesthetically between “the art work in book form” as an artistic project that takes place within framework of the book medium and “the book as art work”, as an artistic project where the construction of actual books or a more metaphorical use of the word “book” is being considered.<sup>5</sup>

In the Danish context I would highlight Henrik Have and Mogens Otto Nielsen in particular, because of their long and varied practice, which embraces both the art work in book form and a more hybrid field. Have’s experiments with the book-object were conducted over a period of ten years, starting from the late 1960s, whereas Mogens Otto Nielsen’s practice ran from the 1970s on until it was documented in the book *Bog objekt* (“Book Object”, 1998).

Both artists took part in the 2012 exhibition “Artist+Book” at Kunsthal Nord in Aalborg, which straddled the field from regular books (Jørn Særker Sørensen’s painter books and Lasse Krog Møller’s artist’s books) to book-sculpture (Bruno Kjær’s painted white books that were torn by projectiles) to various forms of text-sculpture (Gudrun Hasle’s wall writings, Henrik Have’s posters, sculptures and clothing, Morten Søndergaard’s word pharmacy and Charlotte Grum and Nina Kleivan’s torn pages in glass filled with Atamon, a Danish preservative). Finally, there were Mogens Otto Nielsen’s book-objects and his table filled with paraphernalia for manual book production (scraps of paper, spiral spines, assembly machinery etc.), where visitors could create their own (Mogens Otto Nielsen-?)artists’ books.

One can distinguish between books that *are* books and objects that perhaps have certain structural or physical features in common with books but aren’t actually books, including book-sculptures, book-installations or other formats where the “book” aspect is only figurative. Examples of the latter would be Erik Thygesen’s “Roman i rum” (“Novel in Space”), which was shown in Denmark and Sweden in 1968, an exhibition where Thygesen illustrated the greatly expanded concept of the novel he was working with at that time,<sup>6</sup> through the hanging of various objects on cords in a non-linear narrative. This was really an accumulation of material, not a book. Other examples of “fake books” could be Torben Ribe’s oversize books (from 80 to 160



Henrik Have:  
*Sun after Lunch* (1971) 21×15 cm

projekt, der finder sted inden for bogmediets rammer, versus ‘bogen som kunstværk’ som et kunstnerisk projekt, hvor det er bearbejdningen af konkrete bøger eller en mere metaforisk anvendelse af ordet “bog”, der er tale om.<sup>5</sup>

I en dansk sammenhæng vil jeg især fremhæve Henrik Have og Mogens Otto Nielsen på grund af deres mangeårige og varierede praksis, der falder både inden for kunstværket i bogform og i et mere hybridt felt. Haves eksperimenter med bogobjektet falder fra slutningen af 1960’erne og ti år frem, hvorimod Mogens Otto Niensens praksis løber fra 1970’erne og frem, til den bliver dokumenteret i bogen *Bog objekt* (1998). Begge kunstnere deltog i 2012 på udstillingen “Artist+Book” på Kunsthal Nord i Aalborg. En udstilling, der bevægede sig på tværs af hele feltet, fra regulære bøger (Jørn Særker Sørensen’s malerbøger og Lasse Krog Møllers kunstnerbøger), over bog-skulpturer (Bruno Kjær’s hvidmalede bøger,

der var sønderrevne af projektiler) til forskellige former for tekst-skulpturer (Gudrun Hasles vægskrifter, Henrik Haves plakater, skulpturer og klæder, Morten Søndergaard’s ordapoteke samt Charlotte Grum og Nina Kleivans afrevne sider i glas fyldt med atamon). Endelig var der Mogens Otto Niensens bogobjekter og hans bord fyldt med remedier til manuel bogproduktion (papirlapper, spiralrygge, samlemaskine m.m.), hvor besøgende kunne lave deres egen (Mogens Otto Nielsen?)-kunstnerbog.

Man kan skelne mellem bøger, der *er* bøger, og objekter, der måske nok har visse strukturelle eller materielle fælles træk med bøger, men ikke er egentlige bøger, heriblandt bog-skulpturer, boginstallationer eller andre formater, hvor der kun er tale om en “bog” i overført betydning. Eksempler på sidstnævnte kunne være Erik Thygesen’s “Roman i rum”, der blev vist i Danmark og Sverige i 1968, en udstilling, hvor Thygesen eksemplificerede det stærkt udvidede romanbegreb, han arbejdede med på det tidspunkt,<sup>6</sup> gennem ophængningen af diverse genstande i snore i en ikke-lineær narrativ. Her var tale om en materialeophobning, men ikke en bog. Andre eksempler på similibøger kunne være Torben Ribes bøger i overstørrelse (fra 80 til 160 cm høje), der med hjemmelavede titler af pseudo-faglitterær proveniens, f.eks. *untitled (Considering Bingoism and Gravity. Essays)* fra 2008, ændrer skalaforholdet mellem bogen og mennesket og samtidig gør bøgerne til ob-

5 See my article “A Tradition of Danish Artists’ Books” in this book.

6 See Erik Thygesen: “Med patronhylstre, smykkeskrin, peberbøsser som fortællere. Om environment-romanen”, in *ta'* no. 6, 1968, pp. 22-29.

5 Jf. min artikel “En tradition af danske kunstnerbøger” i nærværende bog.

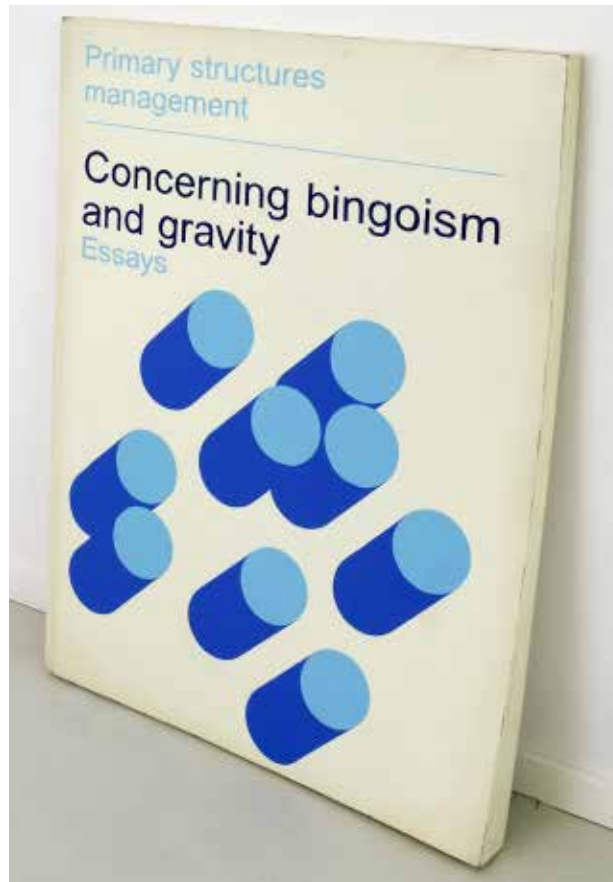
6 Jf. Erik Thygesen: “Med patronhylstre, smykkeskrin, peberbøsser som fortællere. Om environment-romanen” i *ta'* nr. 6, 1968, pp. 22-29.

jekter, kunstobjekter. En bog kan være lavet af alt (f.eks. Marinetti's jernplader), men ikke alt kan være en bog (f.eks. Thygesens roman i rum eller Ribes kæmpebøger).

Hvornår holder en bog op med at være en bog? Hvilke materielle betingelser ligger til grund herfor? Konceptet "bog" skal være bibeholdt på et overordnet plan, måske nok manipuleret, dvs. det er ikke en betingelse, at der er ryg eller papirsider, men den skal *være* bog, ikke kun kaldes bog, dvs. (af)læsningen er central, også selvom der ikke står noget på siderne.

I det følgende vil jeg koncentrere mig om bøger, der *er* bøger. Inden for disse "rigtige" bøger kan man iagttage forskellige typer manipulation af henholdsvis siden, bogryggen og omslaget. Det materielle er centralt, men der er ingen skelnen mellem unika, små oplag og masseproducerede bøger, de maskinelt fremstillede eller dem, der er udført i hånden.

*Siden* kan manipuleres eller bearbejdes på mangfoldig vis. 1960'ernes tomme bøger, præget af periodens minimalisme og konceptuel kunst, var en opfordring til læseren om at bidrage (Vagn Steen: *Skriv selv*, 1965), en zenbuddhistisk intetheds-kontemplation (Hans-Jørgen Nielsen: *vedr. visse foreteelser*, 1967) eller helt blå sider (Per Kirkeby: *blå, tid*, 1968). Vagn Steens *Et godt bogøje* (1969) havde et udstanset hul i bogen, hvilket på humoristisk vis blev anvendt i bogens projekt med at involvere læseren, både i en leg med sproget, men også med læsningens umiddelbare omgivelser. Hos Per Højholt blev papiret erstattet af plastic i digtsamlingen *Punkter* (1971), der var holdt sammen af to metalringe. Det nye materiale plastic havde et futuristisk skær og forvandlede læsesituationen – materialets transparens ophævede så at sige læsesituationens transparens! (rummet blev synligt gennem den enkelte side, skriften flød sammen, når siderne lå i lag) – og så var der, som forfatteren selv sagde i et tv-program fra perioden, tale om "Danmarks reneste bog" – den kunne nemlig tørres af med en våd klud! En anden, der har eksperimenteret med alle dele af bogens bestanddele, er Mogens Otto Nielsen, der har lavet ganske mange værker af forskelligartet materiale, hvilket gør dem til taktile oplevelser, for eksempel i den modificerede bog, hvor en række genstande fra korkpropper til muslinger er klæbet ind på siderne, hvorved bogen ændrer form; på grund af materialeakkumuleringen buer den og giver lyde fra sig, når genstandene kommer i kontakt med hinanden. Eller hans *Hvide digte* (1999), hvor siderne er klippet op, ikke ulig Ray-



Torben Ribe:  
*untitled (Considering Bingoism and Gravity. Essays)* (2008)  
106×79×4 cm

cm tall), which with home-made titles of a pseudo-non-fictional provenance, such as *untitled (Considering Bingoism and Gravity. Essays)*, from 2008, changed the relationship of scale between book and man while at the same time turning books into objects: art objects. A book can be made of anything (for example, Marinetti's iron plates), but not everything can be a book (for example, Thygesen's novel in space or Ribe's giant books).

When does a book stop being a book? What material conditions lie behind it? The concept of "book" must be retained at an overarching level, even if it has been manipulated. In other words it is not a prerequisite that there should be a spine or paper pages, for example, but it should *be* a book, not just be *called* a book; i.e., the reading of it is key, even if there is nothing on the pages.

In the following I will concentrate on books that *are* books. Within these "real" books one can observe various kinds of manipulation

of, respectively, pages, spine and cover. The material is central, but there is no distinction between one-off, short-run and mass-produced books, those produced mechanically or those made by hand.

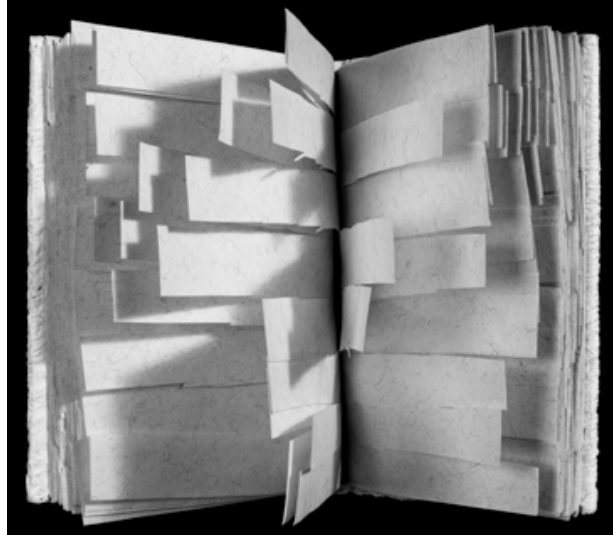
The *page* can be manipulated or arranged in many ways. The empty books of the 1960s, characterised by the minimalist and conceptual art of the period, were an invitation to the reader to contribute (Vagn Steen: *Skriv selv* ("Write", 1965), a Zen Buddhist contemplation of nothingness (Hans-Jørgen Nielsen: *vedr. visse foreteelser/en brødbog* ("concerning certain phenomena/a white book", 1967) or completely blue pages (Per Kirkeby's *blå, tid* ("blue, time", 1968). Vagn Steen's *Et godt bogøje/A Hole Book* (1969) had a punched hole in the book which was used in a humorous way in the book's project of involving the reader, both in a play on language and also through the reading's immediate surroundings. With Per Højholt paper was replaced by plastic in the collection of poems *Punkter* ("Points", 1971), which was held together by two metal rings. The new material of plastic had a futuristic glow and transformed the reading experience – the material's transparency removed, so to speak, the transparency of the reading situation! (The room was visible through each page. The writing flowed together when the pages lay on top of one another – and then, as the author himself has said in a TV programme from the period, it could be viewed as "Denmark's cleanest book" – it could even be wiped clean with a wet cloth!) Another artist who has experimented with every element of the book's components is Mogens Otto Nielsen, who has made

several works from diverse materials, turning them into tactile experiences: in the modified book, for example, where a number of objects, from cork stoppers to mussels, are attached to the sides, so that the book changes shape; due to the accumulation of material, it bends and makes a noise when the objects come into contact with each other.

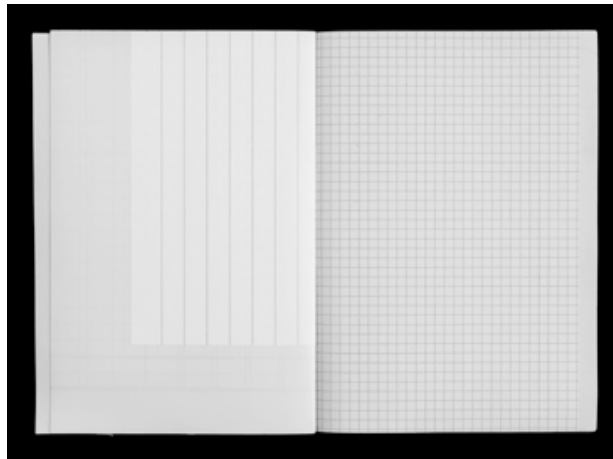
Or there is his *Hvide digte* ("White Poems", 1999), whose sides are cut up, not unlike Raymond Queneau's *Cent Mille Millions de Poèmes*, from 1961, only without lines of verse and beyond readability – bought as a poetry book by Mogens Otto Nielsen's wife but transformed by the artist to ... yes, to what exactly? A poetry book's poetry generator? A fluttering material object? In 2001 Carina Randløv published the pop-up book *Twist*, which was a kind of spatial catalogue for an exhibition and an, as it were, three-dimensional display of the exhibition itself. Materially, *Twist* is relatively simple, not least in relation to the often more refined versions of the same pop-up technique in children's books, produced and assembled in China and printed in huge quantities, making all manner of refinements possible.

Of the current works that experiment with the pages of the book, I would like to highlight Åse Eg Jørgensen's *Kompendium 1-7*, Konrad Korabiewski and Litten's *Påvirket som kun et menneske kan være* ("Affected as Only a Human Can Be", 2010) and the artist group TTC's *Papir* ("Paper", 2010). Åse Eg Jørgensen's *Kompendium* series (seven issues, 2010-12) is a meta-reflection on the pages of the book: what happens when reprints are made from other books in a new format (nos. 1 and 2, 2010), when the book is composed of (reproduced) types of paper from a paper business in the Czech town of Ústí (no. 3, 2010), when paraphernalia from book production are reprinted in a book (no. 4, 2011), when various kinds of lined paper or paper for mathematical calculations (the original sheets, not reproductions) constitute a book (no. 5, 2011 and no. 6, 2012), or when papers of varying format, colour and type are collected in a book that is not empty, but neither does it have any content in an ordinary book-related sense (no. 7, 2012)?

No clear answer is necessary, but the materials point away from the book and towards the practices with which the specific paper types are associated. Konrad Korabiewski and Litten's



Mogens Otto Nielsen:  
*Hvide digte* (1999) 18,5×13,5 cm



Åse Eg:  
*Kompendium nr. 7* (2012) 21×14,8 cm

mond Queneau's *Cent Mille Millions de Poèmes* fra 1961, bare uden sonetlinjerne og hinsides læsefunktionen – købt som poesibog af Mogens Otto Niensens kone, men forvandlet af kunstneren til, ja hvad, en poesibogspoesigenerator? Et flagrende materielt objekt? Carina Randløv udgav i 2001 pop op-bogen *Twist*, der var en slags rumligt katalog til en udstilling og så at sige en tredimensionel udstilling af samme. Materielt set er *Twist* temmelig simpel, ikke mindst i forhold til børnebøgerne ofte raffinerede versioner af samme pop op-teknik, produceret og samlet i Kina og trykt i masseoplag, der muliggør helt andre raffineringer.

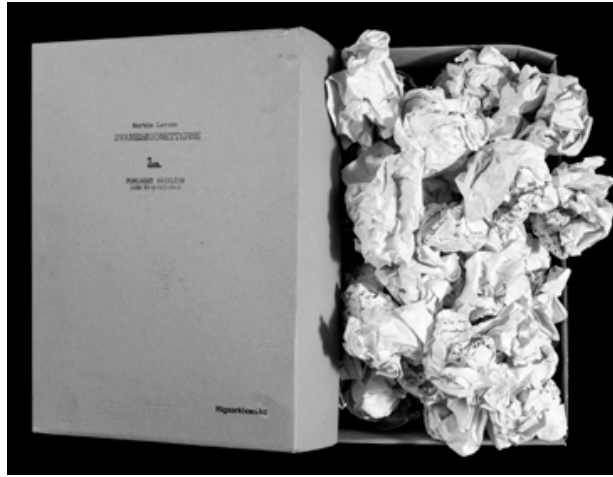
Af aktuelle værker, hvor der eksperimenteres med bogsiden, vil jeg gerne fremhæve Åse Eg Jørgensen's *Kompendium 1-7*, Konrad Korabiewski og Litten's *Påvirket som kun et menneske kan være* (2010) samt kunstnergruppen TTC's (Telefon til Chefen) *Papir* (2010). Åse Eg Jørgensen's *Kompendium*-serie (syv numre, 2010-2012) er en metarefleksion over bogsiden: Hvad sker der, når der genoptrykkes fra andre bøger i et nyt format (nr. 1 og 2, 2010); når bogen er sammensat af (reproducerede) papirtyper fra en papirhandel i den tjekkiske by Ústí

(nr. 3, 2010); når remedierne til bogproduktion optrykkes i en bog (nr. 4, 2011); når henholdsvis forskellige typer af linjeret papir eller papir til matematiske udregninger (de originale ark, ikke reproduktioner) udgør en bog (nr. 5, 2011 og nr. 6, 2012); eller når papirer i varierende format, farve og type samles i en bog, der ikke er tom, men heller ikke har et indhold i almindelig bogmæssig forstand (nr. 7, 2012)? Et entydigt svar skal ikke gives, men materialerne peger ud af bogen og på de praksisser, som de specifikke papirtyper er forbundet med. Konrad Korabiewski og Litten's *Påvirket som kun et menneske kan være* (2010) er derimod proppet med indhold: En bærbar multimedieudstilling udformet som en bog, hvor man kan tilslutte høretelefoner, og hvor bladning af siderne iværksætter, via et magnetsystem, mikrosensorer og en indbygget MP3-trigger, skiftende lydflader, der akkompagnerer bogens collager skabt af et varieret materiale. Bogen har 82 upaginerede sider, hvor et væld af teknikker er repræsenteret: maleri, fotografi, fotocollager, linoleumstryk, transparente plasticsider med skrift eller med maling, approprieret skrift m.m. Nogle af collagerne ligner grangiveligt flere lag af materiale, men er her i realiteten trykt

i ét niveau, hvorimod tredimensionelle elementer optræder i form af nogle antropomorfe former i forskellige farver og bryder med sidernes vante rektangulære form.<sup>7</sup> I TTC's udgivelse *Papir* (2010) er der tale om en kollektiv udforskning af papiret som materiale.<sup>8</sup> Kunstnere, kunstgrupper, galleriejerere og forlag fik tilsendt fire forskellige slags papir at arbejde med.

Bogryggen kan der også manipuleres med. Det kunne være et bevidst forsøg på at obstruere bogmediets indbyggede serialitet (dvs. at ting er skrevet og skal læses i en bestemt rækkefølge), hvorfor man ved obstruktionen inviterer tilfældigheden indenfor i værket. Det kan også være for at kunne inkludere tredimensionale genstande eller være en kombination af begge. I Martin Larsens *Svanesøsonetterne* (2004) fungerer værketets rigsarkivæske som en slags masseproduceret skraldespand for en hoben sammenkrøllede papirark, et *work-in-progress*, der stoppede på vej mod den intendede mestersonet, hvorved litteraturen bliver til en ophobning af materiale, som tilføjer et privat aspekt ved udgivelsen og lader det stå åbent, i hvilken rækkefølge værket skal læses. En anden type boks er 'plasticposen', f.eks. i *ta' BOX* (1969-1970), der udsprang af den udvidede kreds af kunstnere omkring Eks-skolen. Dette kunstnertidsskrift i *assembling*-traditionen havde en seriel struktur (tidsskriftet udkom i alt fem gange), men der var ikke garanteret et ensartet og stabilt indhold, hverken de enkelte numre imellem og heller ikke mellem de enkelte eksemplarer af hvert nummer, idet indholdet ikke var fikseret og derfor kunne forsvinde. En anden variant af manipulering med bogryggen er leporelloen, der som bogrullen etablerer en flade, der er væsensforskellig fra bogsiden. Nutidige kunstnere som Christian Vind (bl.a. *Looser Leporello*, 2005), Jesper Fabricius (*Sometimes I Feel Happy*, 2002) og Åse Eg Jørgensen (*Udflugter*, 2004; *Udflugter med bil*, 2006; *Udflugter i Havana*, 2006; og *Udflugter med tog*, 2010) har arbejdet med formatet eller varianter af dette. Egs leporelloer er lidt specielle, fordi der for eksempel i *Udflugter* er tale om syv leporellobilleder, der er limet i et zigzag-foldet omslag og dermed bliver udflugter i mange retninger. Et ældre eksempel på anvendelsen af leporello-formatet er Poul Gernes' leporello fra 1967-1968, en bog på 110 sider med sort-hvide tryk opklæbet på karton.

Omslaget er bogens ansigt udadtil (medmindre bogen står i reolen). Asger Jorn og Guy Debords bearbejdnings af det almindelige bogomslag er velkendte: *Fin de Copenhague* (1957), hvor forsiden udgøres af et aftryk fra en dansk avis i omslagets



Martin Larsen:  
*Svanesøsonetterne* (2004) 25×33,5×8,5 cm

*Påvirket som kun et menneske kan være* (2010) is, by contrast, stuffed with content: a portable multimedia exhibition designed as a book, into which one can plug headphones and where browsing through the pages sets off, via a system of magnets, micro-sensors and a built-in MP3 trigger, changing soundscapes which accompany the book's collages, created with diverse materials. The book has eighty-two unnumbered pages, where a wealth of techniques are represented: painting, photography, photo-collage, linocuts, transparent plastic pages with writing or painting, appropri-

ated writings etc. Some of the collages look exactly like several layers of material, but in reality they are all printed at the same level, whereas three-dimensional elements occur in the form of anthropomorphic shapes in various colours that break with the normally rectangular shape of the pages.<sup>7</sup> The TTC's production *Papir* (2010) is a collective exploration of paper as a material.<sup>8</sup> Artists, art groups, gallery owners and publishers were sent four different kinds of paper to work with.

The spine of the book can also be manipulated. This could be in the form of a deliberate attempt to obstruct the inbuilt seriality of the book medium (i.e., the fact that things are written and mean to be read in a particular order) whereby, through obstruction, randomness becomes an integral part of the work. It could also be in order to include three-dimensional objects, or a combination of both. In Martin Larsen's *Svanesøsonetterne* ("Swan Lake Sonnets", 2004) the work's cardboard box from the public records office functions as a kind of mass-produced rubbish bin for a heap of crumpled sheets of paper, a *work-in-progress* that stops before completing the intended master sonnet, during which the literature becomes an accumulation of material that adds a private aspect and leaves open to question just how the work ought to be read. Another type of box is the "plastic bag", for example, in *ta' BOX* (1969-70), which emerged from the extended circle of artists around Eks-skolen. This artists' magazine, in the tradition of assembling magazines, had a serial structure (the magazine was published a total of five times), but uniform and stable contents were never guaranteed, either between the individual editions or even between the individual copies of each issue, because the content was not fixed and could therefore disappear. Another variation on the manipulation of the spine is the leporello, which like the scroll book establishes a surface that is fundamentally different from the page of a book. Contemporary artists such as Christian Vind (*Looser Leporello*, 2005, among others), Jesper Fabricius (*Sometimes I Feel*

7 For an unfolded analysis, see Thomas Hvid Kromann: "Mmm! Eeeii!! Åh-å-hh! Danske kunstnerbøger i digitaliseringsens tidsalder" i: *Den blå port*, nr. 87, 2011, pp. 62-75.

8 Elk (US), Niels Lomholt (DK), JSBJ (FR), Jesper Fabricius (DK), Marten Damgaard (DK), Michal Kozłowski (PL) & Peter Larsen (DK), Emancipa(t/ss)ionsfrugten (DK), Christian Vind (DK), Asher Penn (CA), Jimmy Limit (CA), Kristoffer Kjærskov (DK), Alexander Martinez (US), Piotr Lakomy & Honza Zamojski (PL).

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*Happy*, 2002) and Åse Eg Jørgensen (*Udflugter* (“Excursion”, 2004); *Udflugter med bil* (“Excursion by Car”, 2006); *Udflugter i Havana* (“Excursion in Havana”), 2006; and *Udflugter med tog* (“Excursion by Train”, 2010)) have worked with the format, or variations of it. Eg’s leporellos are somewhat special as with, *Udflugter* for example, where seven leporello images are glued into a zig-zag-folded cover and thus become journeys in many directions. An earlier example of the use of the leporello format is Poul Gernes’s leporello from 1967–68, a book of 110 pages with black-and-white prints mounted on cardboard.

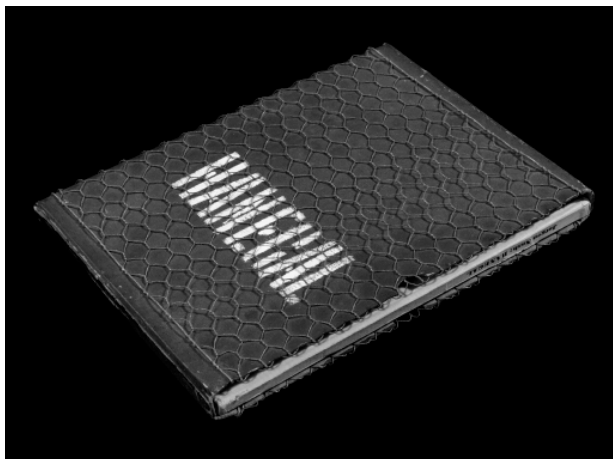
The cover is the face of the book (unless the book is stacked on the shelf). Asger Jorn and Guy Debord’s reworkings of the standard book cover are renowned: *Fin de Copenhague* (1957), where the front is made up of a print from a Danish newspaper in the cover’s blue-grey cardboard matrix. More aggressive than this is *Mémoires* (1959), with its cover of coarse sandpaper that threatens its adjacent fellow items, or supporting surface. Less known is the (very likely inspired by Jorn and Debord) chicken wire covered slip-case of Jørgen Nash’s *Hanegal* (“Cockcrow”), a so-called “Gallic Poetry Album” from 1961, where Nash’s poems were supplemented by illustrations by J. V. Martin and drawings by Nash himself. The cassette is quite rare today because, unlike the coarse cover of *Mémoires*, and even though it is an equally integral part of the book, it was actually separate from the contents of the pages.

When the material properties of the book change, a new light is thrown upon the book. In an era of the immaterialisation of writing (or rather re-immaterialisation, as it has merely found new media platforms to exist on), it may seem nostalgic or even fetishistic to not only insist on the normal book but to reinforce, perhaps even distort, those aspects of the book that characterise it as a book: the pages, the spine, the cover. Perhaps. Conversely, it appears that if we look-feel-sniff-think about it, the book is an object, an object placed in a world in which it can interact with: the book as perception tool, sometimes in the service of art, eccentric or insignificant, stable or changing.

blå-grå matricepap; mere aggressiv er *Mémoires* (1959) med dens omslag af groft sandpapir, der truer andre artsfæller eller underlaget. Mindre kendt er den med hønsenet betrukne (og sikkert af Jorn og Debord inspirerede) kassette til Jørgen Nashs *Hanegal*, et såkaldt “Gallisk Poesialbum” fra 1961, hvor Nashs digte blev suppleret af illuminationer af J.V. Martin og tegninger af Nash selv. Kassetten er ret sjælden i dag, fordi den modsat *Mémoires*, om end den er en lige så integreret del af bogen, rent faktisk lader sig skille fra indholdssiden.

Når bogens mediematerielle betingelser forandrer sig, kaster det et nyt lys på bogen. I en periode præget af skriftens immaterialisering (eller rettere: re-immaterialisering, eftersom den blot finder nye mediemæssige platforme at befinde sig på), kan det synes nostalgisk eller måske ligefrem fetichistisk ikke kun at insistere på normalbogen, men at forstærke, ja måske endda at for-

vrænge de sider af bogen, der kendetegner den som bog: siderne, bogryggen, omslaget. Måske. Omvendt viser det sig nemlig, hvis man ser-føler-snuser-tænker efter, at bogen er et objekt, et objekt stedt i en verden, som den kan interagere med: bogen som perceptionsredskab, nogle gange i kunstens tjeneste, excentrisk eller uanselig, stabil eller foranderlig.



Jørgen Nash:  
*Hanegal. Gallisk Poesialbum* (1961) 27,5×21,5 cm