

Review: News by Thomas Flechtner

By Joerg Colberg
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Newspapers, the actual objects, are strange things: Just like fashion, they can be tremendously important today. And just like fashion, today's news will be discarded tomorrow, to be replaced with something new. Something newer. Unlike fashion, however, the news actually matter, so the comparison ends right there. (more)

(http://jmcolberg.com/weblog/2013/03/review_news_by_thomas_flechtner/)

Newspapers, the actual objects, have had a hard time recently, because making and distributing them costs money, and the corporations that run them (it's mostly corporations now) want to save money. Thus newspapers are in a largely self-caused crisis. The demand for news is higher than ever, but newspapers are in trouble. Think about it. No, really.

Newspapers, the actual objects, come with their own culture (I'm slightly generous with the term "culture" here, another sign of our times). Back in Germany, I used to buy the Saturday newspaper, which would be filled with all kinds of goodies, and spend the day reading it. Some people still do that, even though the majority of

people now wants their news for free and on some computer.

Newspapers, the actual objects, will get your hands dirty. Let's face it, the news are a dirty business. Or rather the news often are about a dirty business, whether it's politics or business itself, people making money off of other money, people passing laws to restrict other people's rights, ... So it would only seem appropriate that the reader would at least get their hands a little dirty. It's almost as if the dirt in the pages would literally rub off onto the reader.

Newspapers, the actual objects, are also highly unstable. The printing is usually fairly cheap, and the paper will dry out and yellow rapidly, unless you keep it carefully climate controlled. But who wants to do that? So you find an old newspaper, and it's yellow and bone dry. Unless it was kept in a humid area, in which case it might be moldy.

Newspapers, the actual objects, are thus almost alive. At least they're close to life. Paper is an organic substance. Pulling all of this together, Thomas Flechtner collected a large number of international newspapers in 2010, spreads seeds all over them, watered them, and exposed the seeds to the sun. The seeds would grow, just as the newspapers themselves would fade: The circle of life, literally, on top of the circle of the news.

News (<http://www.lars-mueller-publishers.com/en/catalogue-photography#news>), the book, contains reproductions of Flechtner's work. Strictly speaking, it might not be a book (if you want to be overly Catholic about what is considered a book). It's a set of newspaper-style publications that come in a box. It's pages of pages of the news fading away, overtaken by Nature itself, the often screaming headlines reduced to shades of their former selves, driving home the points made above.

Of all the recent newsprint publications, News (<http://www.lars-mueller-publishers.com/en/catalogue-photography#news>) might be the most obvious ones in terms of why it employed that form: It had to. But conceptual necessity aside, the book also brings the experience of seeing the cycle of life brought to the cycle of news to the viewer: a surprisingly engaging experience.

News; Thomas Flechtner; Portfolio 112 newspaper pages in box; Lars Müller Publishers; 2012

Conscientious

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