

IRMA BOOM : Interview video <REC. 17 August, 2026>



Q1. Is there anything in Book Activist that you particularly like readers to notice or to spend time with?

A1.

I think if you look at the exhibition Book Activist, it is nice to be open and to see that activism is not always doing this, but that it can, can also be in a soft way. And, and I think that is interesting, and I hope people notice it. The whole exhibition is of course a form of book activism. It is all about, that the printed word has a certain value, and that's important to, to realize.

Q2. Is there a particular part of the exhibition space that you especially love?

A2.

What I love is that there are two parts. There's the part with the models and, and where the video is displayed, and where the Ellsworth, Ellsworth Kelly, sheets are, printed sheets are. And then from that space you walk to the, in a sort of corridor to the... You pass the wall with Book Activist with all the, the sheets, the print sheets from the, from the, from the mini book. And that you then go to the other space where the final books are displayed. So, and, and that's very nice. So that's not one, one big exhibition you experience, but you do it basically in, in two or almost, three parts, or four parts because there's also the video. So, I think that is really nice, so there's a lot to discover. The soft pink that enveloped exhibition space made a particularly strong impression on me.



Q3. What led you to choose the pink for the space?

A3.

Well, to choose the checkerboard, I think that is important. It's based on my visit, 20 years ago to Katsura Palace. And in one of the garden pavilions there's this wonderful, yeah, I think sliding, doors with the, with the checkerboard, but then in, in blue and in, and in white. And for, blue was, I think, too strong because blue is, is, a color which absorbs a lot. And I thought this super light pink is also friendly. That's the opposite almost of activism. So, I thought that was an interesting, thing to do.

Q4. When in the process did you decide to introduce the checkerboard?

A4.

I felt that the checkerboard pattern was effective, effective way of bringing the quotations and messages into the, to the text. Well, I just answered the text, the checkerboard, indeed, could serve as a sort of grid, but that was never the first intention. But I'm very happy that it worked like that. So again, that you divide things in parts makes it, for people easy, to read.



Q5. What was the idea behind it, and what did wrap it would convey?

A5. Funny question. So, what I really like is that, because it's, it's not the final books, it's, it's the models? So that is, that's another, experience than the, than the final books. And it's good that it looked differently, although also placed in a checkerboard like, like the, the vitrines of the final books, they are also placed in a checkerboard. So, the whole exhibition is placed on, based on the checkerboard from Katsura Palace. And the models, well, in a way, I wanted to have, it, with plexiglass frames. But, at some point, that couldn't happen. And then I thought, because I also have a gallery in Amsterdam called In Werk. And in the gallery, we use a lot of this wrapping material. And then I thought maybe it's nice because the books are anyway not finished. Maybe it's nice that you see sort of unfinished material that looks like, just like wrapping. Like, if you, send a pallet of books to Japan from, from the Netherlands, then they also wrap it in this, plastic. And I have loads of these things for the gallery. And suddenly I thought, "Well, if we cannot have the plexiglass sides, then, let's, wrap it in plastic." And I actually think it's a very good idea, and it works really well. And it's also a different experience, so you know that you're looking at something else.



Q6. What were you particularly mindful of when thinking about the works should be presented?

A6.

While it was a shame that visitors couldn't physically touch the work, the exhibition nevertheless felt more intimate and approachable than in a typical gallery show. Well, the books I've shown on the... Are of course the books, I like. I've made 550 books, and I think this book, this exhibition shows the sort of highlights. And also what is important, variety. Because every project for me is new, and it's, and it's good that, that you... And, and so, and all, projects are different. So, every book I make is very specific, so it looks differently. So, I think that you can see that in the exhibition is for me important. And of course, it's the books I like. And, yeah, that you cannot touch the books, yeah. that's, such a nice, thing about, making books. You can buy them in a store. So basically, main- mainly the books, you see in the, in the space, in a way you can buy, so you can touch. And yeah, and that's the whole thing of exhibiting material. If everybody would go through books, I have no book anymore, so that's impossible. And in a muse, yeah, you can never touch a painting, so why touch a book when it's, when you exhibit it? So, go to a bookstore and, or go online and find the books, and then you can, touch it. Yeah, that's ... So, and, and that's why I always, if I do an exhibition, want to have a bookstore so that you can buy the books, and I think you could buy a few books.

Q7. "What inspired you to turn these misprints into a part of the exhibition, the prints, passed across the brick wall?"

A7.

Well, in a way, what, what I like to, to show is, how the book is made. That's in the first place why I wanted to show the, the, the prints because you see, that is on a quite a big sheet, and its very thin paper. And, and I wanted you to experience it because when the book is bound, it, of course, you feel, you experience the, the thin paper, but on the wall it is, , because of the wind or because you walk, along it, it's, it, you can see it, , waving almost, and that's what I like very much. That was in the first place, and of course, to cover the brick wall because we, we, or, we wanted to have a, a clear, connection from the one space to, to the other space. So, so to, to cover the brick wall with the sheets was, very beautiful. And there are, correct files, but also not correct files. I think that the whole fact of the misprint is, is very interesting. And that is something, you, ... It's, it's good that you are aware that something when it's not perfect has a beauty of its own, and that's basically what I, wanted to say. So, the per- another perception of beauty is, sometimes the misfit.

Q8. "The story behind the Kelly printed works are the pro- and the process of bringing them into being was especially fascinating. Do you see yourself continuing to explore self-publishing in the future?"

A8.

Yeah, it can happen, but I really like to work with, in a commission so that somebody gives me a problem. And sometimes, it happened now a few times that I, think of a project, what I want to do. But the Kelly book, I'm such a... I think Ellsworth Kelly is the, the international artist I like the most. So I'm, it was for me a sort of must, to make this book about the only art piece I own. So the art piece on the front, that is shaped, that is a small work, is an art piece I own, and I based that whole book on that one art piece. So that is, it's a homage to, to Ellsworth Kelly.



Q9. Through this publication and exhibition, did you discover any interesting similarities of different differences between Japanese, Dutch and Japanese approaches to book design and graphic design?"

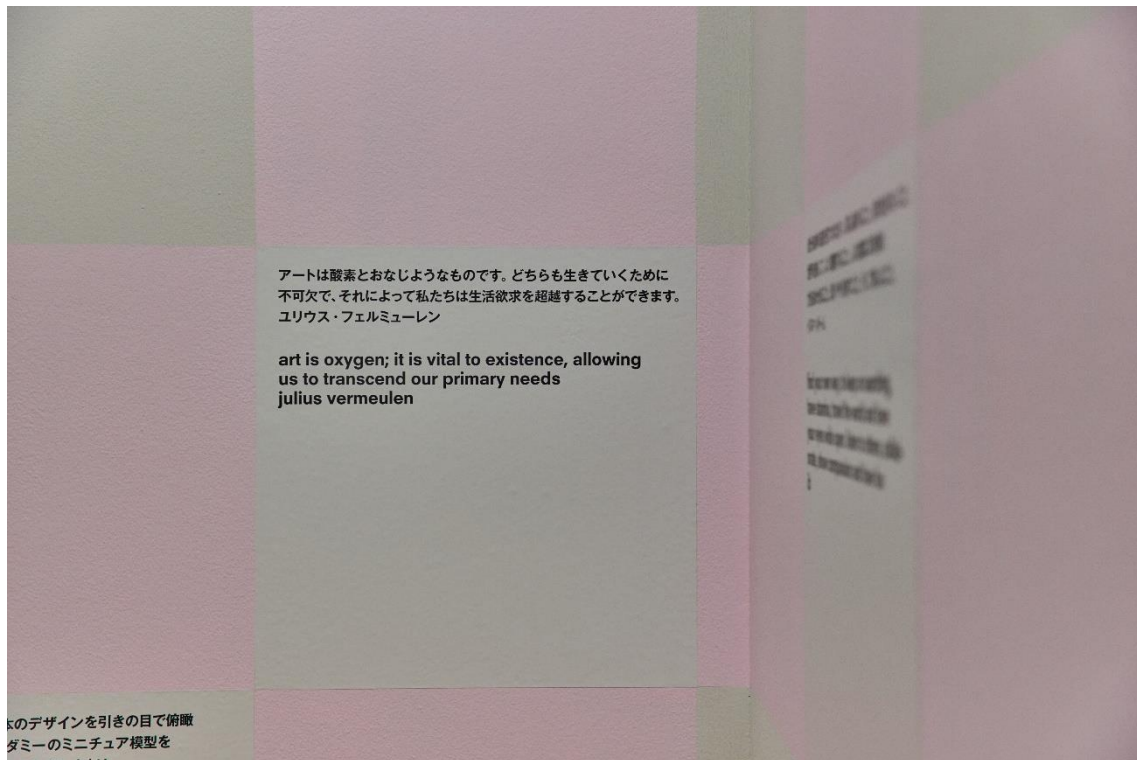
A9.

Of course, there are. I see myself a little bit more as a, yeah, a very, very conceptual designer. That's why all my books are different. And, my books are not per se, very, very precise. I, I see a book, so that's another, as a, as an, as a conveyor of, information, so a, a container of thought. And, yeah, and Japanese design, of course, has the same, but is, I don't really want to make a difference because we're in one world and, and we're all one people. So why make a difference? But I see that the Japanese are striving for, the ultimate perfection, and that's what I can learn from, that, that, to see how you can make things perfect. And, that is the main thing. But further, I think for, without a difference, yeah, we live in different cultures, so there are a little bit different approaches, but not, hugely, I think.

Q10. Julius had a quote that says, 'Art is oxygen.' What does a book mean to you personally?

A10.

What kind of presence does it have in your life?" Well, what I like about books is that it's a democratic, multiple. Books are about, sharing. , books are my life. , I cannot do without books, so for me, making books is a, is an essential ingredient of being. And, and of course, in the first place, Julius was my, was my oxygen. He was my biggest critic. He helped me a lot with, with difficult, projects and how to approach it and to think in, in a different perspective. So, for me, he was absolutely my, my oxygen when, art was for him oxygen. But the way he, worked with or, or thought with, with me about projects was crucial, and I miss that, a lot.



Q11. Were there any places in Ginza that you particularly enjoyed or kept coming back?

A11.

Now, what the, what the big thing is, I love Japan. I love the culture, I love the people, I love the food. So it's, it's so nice to, to be in Japan and, , and to be amongst, , , the Japanese people who are really taking care of you and are really trying to do the best, and I think that i- in general is, why I liked it and why I stayed 10 days, and I really want to come back because we should get the show traveling. And, yeah, so it's in general, I like Japan, I like Tokyo, I like the Japanese people.



Q12. Finally, is there anything you would like to say to readers, visitors to the exhibition, and fans in, Japan?

A12.

Well, what I hope is that, that the book, that you could see the, the love for the analog book. Books are an integral part of our, knowledge and culture. And, never somebody questions, "Why are you still, as a, as an artist, making paintings, oil paintings?" But if you make books, I had so many times the question, "Why do you still make books?" Well, books are an integral part of our, our being, and it, it is the unchangeable, what, what..., the, a book is unchangeable, to have this piece in your hand, what is a sort of evidence of, what happened, in the past, but... And that's, an interesting part, part, that you don't make books for the past, but you make books for the present and for the future. So it is interesting to, to have this, the certain text, and statements, and thoughts printed, so that means that it, it stays there. And, of course, internet is all about sharing, but the book is also about sharing. Before there was internet, the book was basically the internet of, of the early days. And, so it's all about, sharing, and that's what I like about, making books. It... And a, and a book, could be, almost an object. That's how also in the beginning of bookmaking, books were made as a, as a piece. And, because I make every book very specific, all the books become pieces. So, I hope that people, without, seeing it, but they, that they experience that the analog book is our culture, shared culture. And, and the models I show is that there's not simply just a book, but the book is, it's a thought, how it's made. It's an idea. And that's why I think, it's important to show the models, that you see that there's a lot of thinking behind, the book. And, and if you see a book, that, that there's a whole, a thought process. So, I hope that people, visitors, experience, this, and of course, that they enjoyed it, because that's also very important, that you enjoy going to the exhibition and that you, that you feel the same love I have for books, and that's what I want to share.

Thank you very much. Arigatou gozaimasu.

English Translation : Ema Otobe

Exhibition 『ブック・アクティビスト』 Irma Boom: Book Activist

Date : Jun 5, 2026 (Fri) – August 23 (Sun)

Venue : ATELIER MUJI GINZA Gallery1・2



イルマ・ボーム Irma Boom

She is a bookmaker based in Amsterdam. She has created over five hundred books. Her experimental approach often challenges the conventions of traditional books in both physical design and printed content.

Photo by Anton Corbijn