

Social Media Narrative: Issues in Contemporary Practice

hosted by

The Rutgers Camden Digital Studies Center and Judy Malloy
and the Rutgers Camden DSC Class in Social Media Narrative: Lineage and Contemporary Practice
Facebook, November 16 - 21, 2016

Transcript: Joy Garnett #LostLibrary



Joy Garnett

[November 16 at 5:23pm](#)

hi all, happy to be here! I'm a painter and writer in Brooklyn, and I like to dwell on/in the spaces where things and processes collide. I'll start by pasting a link and text that describes my Lost Library project.

--> <https://joygarnett.net/lost-library/>

While weeding my personal library to move to a smaller apartment, I resisted the idea of selling my books or packing them away to be stored indefinitely. I decided instead to give them away, and to perform this act as a work *of art*. *That is how Lost Library (#lostlibrary) was born, a 'social media endurance performance' in Soho, NYC, during the summer heatwave of 2011.*

From June 19th to July 6th, I repeatedly put as many books as I could fit into two cotton tote bags and carried them from my third floor loft down to the street. I wandered in the heat, a bag on each shoulder, stopping to deposit books (in themed batches) in window wells or stoops. Each time I unloaded my books, I photographed them with my smartphone and tweeted the shot along with location coordinates. I tagged the images #LostLibrary and they posted simultaneously to Twitter, Tumblr, and Facebook. Some followers, as well as passersby, came to browse my books. Sometimes they tweeted a "thank you" photograph to show the world what books they chose. Some of them wrote blog posts about the experience and posted photographs of their finds.

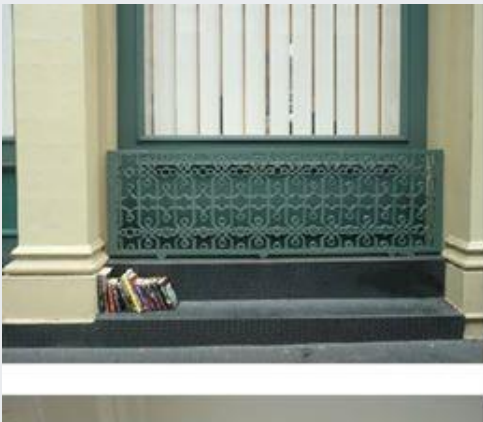
Lost Library was a project that instantaneously shared, documented, and enacted the age-old act of sharing books while pointing to our contemporary quandary over sharing in a world where, increasingly, licensing supplants ownership, and digital files replace analogue objects. Lost Library comprises both the advantages and drawbacks of immateriality, and asks us to consider what is lost as we forgo the heft of so much printed matter.



Comments



Judy Malloy Welcome to Brooklyn-based artist and writer Joy Garnett, talking about [#LostLibrary](#), a memorable performative project that merged real life with social media!



November 16 at 5:36pm



Judy Malloy Hi Joy, I'm happy to see you here!

November 16 at 5:36pm



Joy Garnett Hi Judy, thanks for having me!

November 16 at 11:00pm



Judy Malloy In addition to the wonderful combination of social media-disclosed gift-giving performative action, I think of [#LostLibrary](#) as in the lineage of the photography and language/early conceptual-based photography schools.

Eleanor Antin's series of photographs of 100 black rubber boots in various adventures -- 100 boots go to church, 100 boots attack a hillside, 100 boots go to a saloon -- come to mind, and for that reason I also see your books as on picaresque adventures across NYC.

In the early 1970's Antin used postcards of the photographs to bring her work to a wider audience. Do you have any thoughts on how contemporary social media has enriched such projects with access, image distribution, and the possibilities of interaction?

November 17 at 9:12am



Joy Garnett The loss of the library is re-couped through the gift, through a shared walk. But my relationship to social photography, my method of sharing and enacting the gift, is tentative if not embattled. If I'm a picaresque social photo-heroine, I know better than to trust the medium. There is an inherent contradiction; I revel in its hostile embrace.

One precursor to Lost Library and my earlier, longstanding photo-wanderings (<http://unmonumental.org>), is Smithson's Monuments of Passaic and his musings on entropy. But my photo-wanderings are more intimate, feminine, personal in their sense of loss and recovery. I think of feminist post-conceptualist photographers and their walks — Susan Silas and her devastating project Helmbrechts Walk, for instance. I think of Virilio's Grey Ecology, his belief that actual things are annihilated as everything is subsumed in our enslavement to speed. Perversely, I share my losses TO real-time in real-time.

And so, the book adventure is a picaresque and Romantic one; we are doomed. But I remain your ambivalent servant, an Analogue Native in a digital world, compulsively sharing the loss of the analogue through digital platforms, insisting on the gift as redemption. The losses are tangible, the advances are fugitive, the platforms are corrupt. The point, if one could ever follow through, would be to achieve an ecology of mind, a balance of ideas, of conduits, of things not enslaved to any given technological or anti-technological moment or movement.

But, as Smithson observed: "The false immortality of the film gives the viewer an illusion of control over eternity."

November 24, 2016 at 9:50am ·



ABOUT:

happy new year #unmonumental (Ingraham) Walking the city streets, I find things, mostly garbage, recently thrown...
newsgrist.typepad.com



Judy Malloy You write:

"But I remain your ambivalent servant, an Analogue Native in a digital world, compulsively sharing the loss of the analogue through digital platforms, insisting on the gift as redemption."

That is one reason why your work is so satisfactory in the sense of causing satisfaction. There are exceptions -- because it situates a woman's history in Gold Rush territory, I like for instance the idea of Deanne Achong and Faith Moosang's Lulu Sweet: a Gold rush tale in 8 acts, which guides the user along the Fraser River -- However, usually I don't want to explore an environment with a computer-mediated guide.

But I would have liked to have been online-image-led to discover the treasures of your book-gift intervention.

November 17 at 2:10pm



Aly Steered Straight Thank you for joining! I love the lost library concept. I am a lover of physical books and I hate how it seems like they might one day be weeded out. I love how the lost library contained physical books with a somewhat treasure hunt, photography, sharing with strangers, and so many different social media platforms. Do you think you will do something like that again?

November 17 at 11:39pm



Joy Garnett Thanks! Hopefully I won't be evicted again and have to relinquish parts of my library any time soon! "Like it" though is #unmonumental, which is posted simultaneously to instagram, twitter, tumblr, flickr and facebook. It's about the truly fleeting, abject beauty found in/on the streets.

November 19 at 9:11pm



Deena Larsen I like this idea--it is somewhat like <http://www.bookcrossing.com/>. I am intrigued by how many stories there are behind each book finding a new home--so many layers of meaning.

Welcome to BookCrossing
bookcrossing.com

November 19 at 8:42pm



Deena Larsen I would love a tradition where physical books had "note pages" in them for people to mark where and how they read, what the book meant, etc. I get my physical books from a library, as I live in a tiny home. And I wonder about the people who held them before I did.

November 20 at 11:22am



Deena Larsen I also put in margins in Marble Springs, and I have wanted ways to keep those margins and cross boundaries between people so they can share reading experiences.

November 20 at 11:25am



Deena Larsen I wonder what a good social media way would be to do that? Goodreads provides that book club feeling--but totally misses the Lost Library point--which is the experience of a physical object...

November 20 at 11:25am



Judy Malloy Thank you, Joy, for bringing [#LostLibrary](#) to this Social Media Narrative: Issues in Contemporary Practice panel.

In the comments Alyson writes:

"I love how the lost library contained physical books with a somewhat treasure hunt, photography, sharing with strangers, and so many different social media platforms."

Deena writes, "I am intrigued by how many stories there are behind each book finding a new home--so many layers of meaning."

I observe: "In addition to the wonderful combination of social media-disclosed gift-giving performative action, I think of [#LostLibrary](#) as in the lineage of the photography and language/early conceptual-based photography schools."

In response, you remind us of [#LostLibrary](#)'s roots in eviction and of another project in which you document elusive beauty in perilous street situations. Indeed, it is easy to overlook that what is for us a gift is to you is what the title indicates: a loss, a lost library.

"The loss of the library is re-couped through the gift, through a shared walk," you write. " But my relationship to social photography, my method of sharing and enacting the gift, is tentative if not embattled. If I'm a picaresque social photo-heroine, I know better than to trust the medium. There is an inherent contradiction; I revel in its hostile embrace."

This is the third class in which I have introduced your enduring [#LostLibrary](#) to students. Thank you again!

November 24, 2016 at 6:34pm



Joy Garnett Thank you, Judy, for teaching classes in which Lost Library finds new audiences and potential future iterations in the hands of different artist bibliophiles. Thanks for summing things up, and for reminding me that every loss can be turned into a gift. Maybe that's true of creative processes in general: they are regenerative, and often incorporate failures and loss.

November 24, 2016 at 6:53pm



Joy Garnett (without the gift - the art! - loss is just loss)

November 24, 2016 at 7:01pm