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Part One: Like,
The endless book — exploring the online, offline.

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Design, Massey University, Wellington, New Zealand
The endless book — exploring the online, offline.

*To what extent can the affordances of social media be explored and embodied through the form of the book?*
Scope

In the context of this masters the term ‘social media’ refers primarily to Facebook and Twitter. These two currently dominate the landscape.

http://www.facebook.com/

http://twitter.com/

Facebook is a social networking portal providing a mashup of features such as email, instant messaging, image and video sharing. As the homepage states: “Facebook helps you connect and share with the people in your life.”

Twitter on the other hand encourages constant “linking out” to anywhere and anyone. Twitter is typified by rapid responsiveness and immediacy. The homepage reads “Follow your interests. Instant updates from your friends, industry experts, favourite celebrities, and what’s happening around the world.”

Their amalgam under the term ‘social media’ covers a number of diverse online affordances and provides the scope to classify them as exemplifying Web 2.0 in 2011/2012.
#Hashtags

Hashtags are used throughout this book in the same way they are used on Twitter. In a Tweet the hashtag symbol # is used before a word to indicate relevant keywords. Like a hyperlink, the colour of a #hashtag term differs from normal text to indicate visually that the term is active. In a Twitter search, clicking on a #hashtag shows you all other Tweets in that category. A search in this book can occur in the same spirit, however the location of a #hashtag keyword must be made in a physical and not electronic way.

#endless / #endlessness
Having or seeming to have no end or limit.¹

#book
A collection of sheets of paper or other substance, blank, written or printed, fastened together as to form a material whole.²

#offline
Not controlled by or directly connected to a computer or the Internet.⁴

#affordances
“An action possibility available in the environment to an individual, independent of the individual’s ability to perceive this possibility” — James Gibson⁵

#social media
A broad category or genre of communications media which occasion or enable social interaction among groups of people, whether they are known to each other or strangers, localized in the same place or geographically dispersed. Such media can be thought of metaphorically as virtual meeting places which function to occasion the exchange of media content among users who are both producers and consumers.⁶

#embodied / #embody
Give a tangible or visible form to (an idea or quality).⁷
Hypertext links are used throughout the text of this book, referencing HTML hypertext prevalent in the #online space. A hypertext word is underlined and takes on a different colour from the main body text. A hypertext word on this page specifies a term that the user might not know or has a particular meaning in the scope of this research. Definitions are sourced from the Concise Oxford English Dictionary (OED), the Oxford Reference Online (ORO) or from an author in the literature review. Other definitions are given on the page where the word is used: these hypertext words are not underlined.

In this book, the act of following a hypertext link is conducted by the user physically engaging with the pages instead of the machine retrieving them as is done online.

The terms on this page are not alphabetised but given in an order that makes sense to the narrative.

**hypertext**
a software system allowing extensive cross-referencing between related sections of text and associated graphic material.²

**user**
A person who uses or operates something [in this case the book].³

**post / posted**
Put up.⁴

**Web 2.0**
The second stage of development of the World Wide Web, characterized especially by the change from static web pages to dynamic or user-generated content and the growth of social networking.⁵

**ecosystem**
(Ecology) A biological community of interacting organisms and their physical environment.⁶

**performative**
Of or relating to performance.⁷

**self-reflexive**
containing a reflection or image of itself; self-referential.⁸
**How to**

**Part One**
This #book has a number of narratives and ways of being read:¹

1. Read the text in the coloured text boxes.

2. Read the images. Beneath the coloured text boxes are images relating to the text or the concepts being explored within the text. This offers a ‘visual narrative’.²

3. Each section of the text is colour coded (defined by the colour of the boxes) and has reference to a HTML cookie along the bottom of each page. This replaces the traditional folio (page number).

4. Numerous devices associated with the online environment are mimicked in the text in an effort to highlight their formal qualities and to #embodify the #affordances of #social media.³

5. The footnotes are used beyond the normal scope of an academic footnote. As each page must function as an individual set of ideas, the footnotes allow space for the context to be explored in depth and for other voices to appear.

6. Each page that uses footnotes starts with number one and continues numerically. This allows each page to be experienced individually.⁴

7. The last footnote on each page is labelled image and provides content or context to the images being used and their authorship (when they are not my own).

**How to experience this book**
Each user of this book has a number of ways they can interact with and experience this book:

**Part One**
As a traditional linear book in its bound form (adhered together like a post-it note pad).

**Part One + Two + Three**
As a physical manifestation of the affordances implicit in social media. Each page can be posted and interacted with (written on, stuck to a surface) as per Web 2.0.⁶

**Part Three**
SHARE: As the continuation of the conversation. Add your own ideas — join in, post, tweet, share, connect.
Experiments

Experiment 1
Experiment 1 was a workshop conducted as a design facilitation — investigating ideas of participation, collaboration, communities of practice (COP) and co-creation. In this experiment I observed how the participants interacted, what they interacted with and the physicality of the interactions (in particular the use of pen, paper, post-it notes, and movable tables).

Experiment 2
Experiment 2 investigated whether a number of #affordances associated with Facebook could be transposed from an #online environment into an #offline physical space. I was interested in whether the users would engage with Facebook, how they would interact, what they chose to interact with and the physicality of the interactions (in particular the use of pens, paper, post-it notes, sellotape or Polaroids).

Experiment 3
Experiment 3 was conducted in three parts.

Experiment 3.1
Experiment 3.1 builds on Experiment 2, and explores the use of a designed post-it note as a facilitated tool in a classroom situation. This experiment investigates what typographic approach allows users to understand the affordances inherent in the text on the post-it note.

Experiment 3.2
Experiment 3.2 expands on Experiment 3.1. The Like, post-it, share: notes are placed in a new space, without facilitation. The designated space, the toilet-to-toilet-door aimed to replicate the face-to-computer orientation necessary for #online interactions.

Experiment 3.3
Experiment 3.3 was a variation on Experiment 3.1 and 3.2, and explored the use of the Like, post-it, share: note within gender designated toilets and with the addition of a pen.

Experiment 4
Experiment 4 is The Endless Book. This experiment builds on findings from the earlier experiments (participation, interaction, online and offline, social media) and asks how these affordances can be mediated via the form of the book.
When there is a harmony between ideas and methods then it is no longer a process but an object. The two are seen and experienced together.

PAUL KLEE
Setting the scene

The intent of this Masters of Design is twofold: the first is an exploration of the form (and future) of the #book and the second an investigation of given #affordances of #social media. This project seeks to visualise contemporary approaches to #online communication, in particular social media, and explore those actions (affordances) associated with it — time, locality, endlessness — in a experimental and performative process mediated via the form of a book.

The journey of this Masters is #embodied in the physical object. The design of this book highlights the design process and research findings discovered over the course of this action research approach. This book is designed in the spirit of an artists’ book. Its formal properties (pull-apart, post, comment, perform) direct the user to interact with it and experience it. As Clive Phillpot writes, one innovation of an artists’ book is the use of the book’s structure to make meaning and/or the use of the book as object, which alludes to the form of a book. The term “book” is used loosely as a concept, where the idea of a book serves as a container for a system of ideas outside the book itself, as theorised by Marshall McLuhan in the 1960s. Ulises Carrión distinguishes an artists’ book as comprehensible without necessarily viewing the entire book: thus upsetting the linear narration implicit in a traditional book. They tend not to have a beginning, a middle and an end, but function sequentially or thematically.

Drawing on these traditions, this book plays with the idea of the artists’ book to foreground similar tendencies in social media: in particular that of nonlinear sequences, the idea of #endlessness, and the usefulness of the book as an object to be participated in. Finally, this book, when participated in, evolves into a ecosystem which serves as a metaphor for social media.
Setting the scene

A linking concept

Social / media / ecosystem — these three terms provide a useful linking framework for this research project and this book explores how they can be understood as a single term: “social media ecosystem”.

They are useful in this #book as three distinct terms that can be joined together in various arrangements and loops: social, social ecosystem, #social media, media, media ecosystem and finally as a social media ecosystem. The interweaving of these three terms forms the thematic basis of my project.

How can a social media ecosystem be represented and #embodied in the form of a book? This book offers an exploration of this idea while also providing the user with the ability to change or add their voice to the dialogue, in other words to participate.²

This concept of participation both embodies the inherent characteristics of Web 2.0 and draws on a strong tradition of participatory art that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, in particular the ideas of Fluxus and the development of Relational Aesthetics theorised by Nicolas Bourriaud in the 1990s.³

Through the narration of a number of experiments, woven together with my literary review, this book (as a narrative, a visual narrative, an object and a participatory performance) explores how the #online can be represented #offline so as to offer another way of looking at each space.

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1. The term ‘ecosystem’ literally means a ‘biological’ community of interacting organisms and their physical environment. I am using the term ecosystem to mean a community of interacting pages (and participants) and their physical environment (the performative ‘posting’ aspect) which together act as an ecosystem. The post-it note, in particular, is a form that allows for flexible and organic use.


3. Fluxus art and events elude straightforward definition. Ken Friedman writes that the Fluxus idea transcends a specific group of people or a specific place, however he does list the following 12 tenets as the main ideas of Fluxus: globalism, unity of art and life, intermedia, experimentalism, chance, playfulness, simplicity, implicativeness, exemplativism, specificity, presence in time and musicality. Ken Friedman, “Fluxus and Company”, Ken Friedman (ed.) The Fluxus Reader. (Chichester: Academy Editions, 1998) 244. Print. And Nicolas Bourriaud, Relational Aesthetics. (Dijon: Les presses du réel, 2002). Print.