

Black Radish Books

written by Entropy | April 12, 2016



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Interview with Nicole Mauro and Marthe Reed, Editors

How did Black Radish Books start?

Black Radish Books has its origins in Nicole Mauro's desire to change the relationship between writers and publishers. Inspired by Susana Gardner's *Dusie Kollektiv*, 2004 Nicole invited a group of 16 writers, diverse in their approaches to experimental writing, to form a publishing collective. Taking a DIY approach, we pooled resources and talents. Everything was done in-house from copy-editing to layout and design, from promotion to web design and outreach. Everyone was involved in doing some aspect of the work for the press.

Tell us a bit about Black Radish Books. What are your influences, your aesthetic, your mission?

Black Radish's focus has always been on experimentation from as many vantages as there are writers to (re-)invent. Emblematic of our first books are Kathrin Schaeppi's *Sonja Sekula : Grace in a cow's EYE : a memoir*, David Wolach's *Occultations*, and Dana Teen Lomax's *Disclosure*, all fiercely innovative in thoroughly diverse ways.

BRB's founding occurred at a moment when a lot of people were interested in trying new platforms and modes of publishing. Even small press venues for new experimental writers were still not that common in 2004, though there is a heap of exciting presses publishing this work now—Action Books, Les Figues, Spork, Timeless Infinite Light, to name a short handful. In 2014, once we had our feet on the ground, we decided to open the press up beyond the initial collective. We were thrilled by the innovative urgency of the writers who came to us in that open reading period: writers such as Sarah Mangold, Valerie Witte, David James Miller, and Brittany Billmeyer-Finn, all of whom had Black Radish titles in 2015.

Can you give us a preview of what's current and/or forthcoming from your catalog, as well as what you're hoping to publish in the future?

Black Radish is completing the series of six books we selected for 2015-16 during that first open reading period. Jen Tynes' book *Hunter Monies* is just out with a gorgeous cover using a collage by Mike Sikkema, and Jesse Nissim's *Where they would never be invited* will be out this spring. In the summer we will publish Mark Lamoureux's second book *It'll Never Be Over For Me* and Kimberly Alidio's debut collection, *After projects the resound*. Eileen Tabios' *AMNESIA: Somebody's Memoir* and Marci Nelligan's *The Ghost Manada* in the fall will round out 2016 for Black Radish.

We have a newly founded Editorial Advisory Board, a group of incredibly generous, smart poets who have agreed to advise and support the press in its outreach to new writers. It is through their aegis that BRB has just selected four exciting new titles for 2017-18: *Elsa* by Angela Veronica Wong, *Anemal*, *Uter Meck* by Mg Roberts, *Forget It* by Anastacia Tolbert, and *Anyjar* by Jaimie Gusman. I would like to give a shout out to our Editorial Advisory Board members to whom we could not be more grateful: F. Douglas Brown, Norma Cole, Sueyeun Juliette Lee, Hoa Nguyen, Metta Sáma, Susan Schultz, Carmen Gimenez Smith, Eileen Tabios, and Orlando White. In 2017 will also be publishing a book by Carmen, a collaboration with artist Peter Fine, and our first foray into color. 2017 will be an exciting year for us!

What about small/independent press publishing is particularly exciting to you right now?

We love discovering new work, working with the writers, getting the word out, the intimacy that a small press has with its writers. I was just invited to write a bit about two of our new writers, exploring what drew us to their work. Helping to shape the conversation about contemporary writing is central to what makes small press publishing exciting. The community of writers we draw together through the press, the shared work of the press among the core collective, the midwifing of books we care about, all of these are what makes us passionate about Black Radish: making and sustaining a noisy, diverse, marvelous community of innovative writers. Black Radish collective members and our new poets are spread all over the country but making books together is almost as good as hanging out with them in a pub!

How do you cope? There's been a lot of conversation lately about charging reading fees, printing costs, rising book costs, who should pay for what, etc. Do you have any opinions on this, and would you be willing to share any insights about the numbers at Black Radish Books?

At Black Radish, coping means taking responsibility for what we want to make happen. Each member of the collective contributes directly to the funding of the press through annual dues, as well as supplying sweat equity. Recently we have shifted to having a designer to do interior layout for us, though everything else is in-house. After paying for SPD's services, we plow all sales back into the press to pay for printing, mailing, books fairs, conferences, and readings. At our first open reading period, we asked submitters to purchase a Black Radish title of their choice. That is as close to stipulating a fee as we have come; we are pretty opposed to the idea of contests and entry fees, as these serve as economic gate-keepers and that is not what we want to be doing. That said, the emphasis on the collective and

DIY means we make only six books a year. To go bigger would mean locating other sources of funding; grants are one way that might happen. For now, Black Radish will focus on bringing new writers into the conversation and building an audience for them. What could be better than that?

Recent releases from Black Radish Books:

