

dancing girl press

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Interview with Kristy Bowen, Editor

How did dancing girl press start?

In 2001, I had started an online lit zine, *wicked alice*, which was publishing women-centered writing. A couple years later, I got it in my head that I wanted something a bit less ephemeral than the web, something a little more solidly material. I did a trial run of one of my own chaps to work out the logistics of printing & assembly, and then in late 2004, released our first official title. It was hard getting submissions for the first couple of reading periods, but slowly things started happening. I went super basic, and in some ways, still run things the same way, like doing most of my layout and design in MSWORD (this helps because I can access things at any computer, be it studio, home, my day job in the library.) I'm sort of a control freak, so I do pretty much all of the layout work and a good portion of the design work (though sometimes I get help from the authors themselves or their artist/designer friends). There have certainly been a lot of developments that I've encountered in the years since that make things easier—booklet format, better two-sided printers, heftier trimmers. It's a learning process and 12 years later, I'm still learning.

Tell us a bit about dancing girl. What are your influences, your aesthetic, your mission?

My main initial goal with the press was to help rectify gender imbalance in the literary world, to increase the number of contributions by women in the greater general conversation that is American poetry. I guess I wanted to create another outlet from which those voices flow. At around the time I was thinking of starting dgp, there were all sorts of great micropresses sprouting up (Horseless, Bloof, Black Ocean, Octopus Books) and I felt like I wanted to do something like what they were doing, but with a sole focus on women's writing (though these presses do a damn good job of publishing women as well).

I also have always felt like there is this huge middle ground of work that falls between traditional lyric poetry and things like language poetry, conceptual writing, etc. Since that was the kind of work I gravitated to and was writing myself, I found myself wanting to put more of it out into the world—the sort of work that was still flirting with that lyric “I” but was doing it in surprising and innovative ways. My tastes in manuscripts have of course broadened throughout the years in all directions, and I’m also very interested in work that involves visual elements or surprising takes on what a “book” is. I love authors whose work is unlike anything I’ve ever seen before.

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?

We have a number of 2016 titles just about to hatch, including work by Nina Pick, Amanda Deutch, Marina Blishteyn, Danna Ephland, and LE Goldstein. Also a book that is a deck of paint chip inspired poems by Coleen Barry in a glassine envelope, called *The Glidden Poems*. I’m really hoping to get more books this summer that involve visual and book arts elements, as they are some of my favorite projects. I am also still working on a box project of mermaid-inspired poems that I’m hoping to have pulled together by this summer.

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

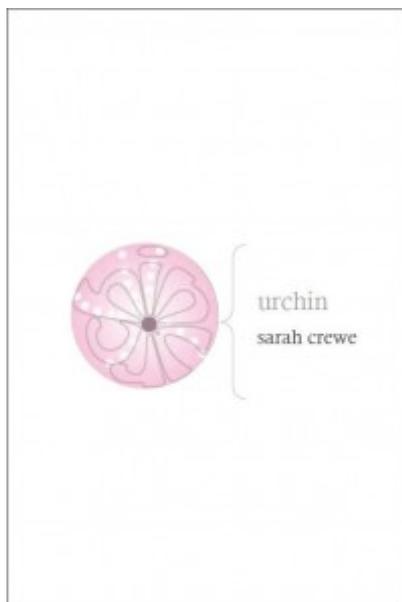
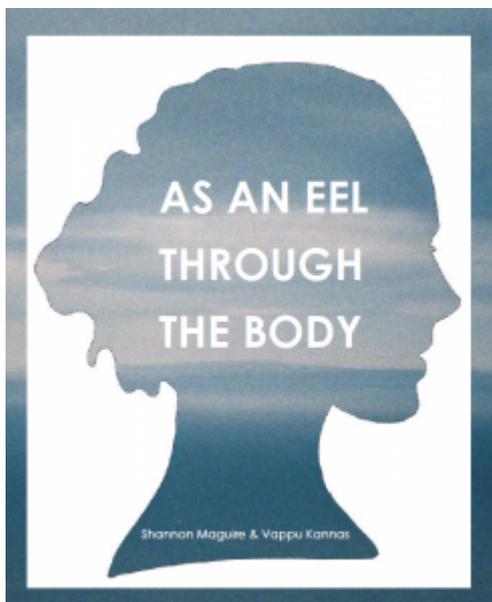
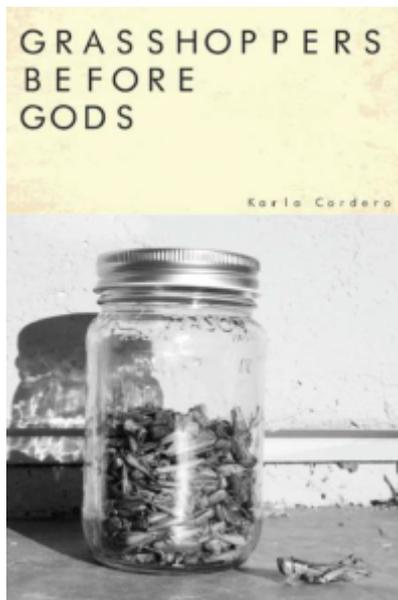
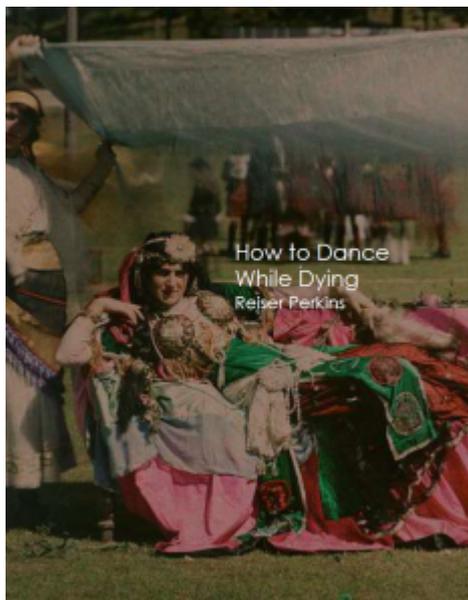
I think things like the internet and social media have opened things up so much more to people looking to either start their own presses/litmags or publish with smaller operations. There is still a lot of freedom though as a small entity than there is if you are, say, Random House or Knopf. You can take that chance on that completely unknown author or that very strange book. Maybe it sells, maybe it doesn’t, but there is a lot more risk-taking when the bottom line is not quite so foreboding.

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 dancing girl press?

I’ve always pretty much run *dgp* as an operation in which one book pays for the next, at least ideally, so I’ve purposely avoided things like reading fees and fundraising. Of course, in a perfect world, one book would pay for the next, but sometimes you sell very little. Sometimes, you sell a lot. In the early years, it was about funneling my own money to keep things afloat and occasionally we have a slow month and I have to kick in some personal income (this is mostly because we have a higher overhead with studio rental; otherwise, we could probably keep ourselves in staples and cardstock with what we make off books). Sometimes we’re flush. Sometimes, we even have a little extra to buy extra fancy paper or supplies. I pretty much only do the math at tax time, but we’ve usually cleared a few hundred bucks that gets rolled into the next publication season. My pie-in-the-sky dream is being able to make a living at this and pay our authors a small percentage, but

we're not quite there yet. Luckily, besides postage which is an ever-rising thorn in my side, I can keep costs down by doing all the work myself, looking for deals on supplies, etc. I also think things like reading fees limit your scope of potential authors in a bad way, allowing only those writers who have the luxury of an economic cushion to play.

Recent releases from dancing girl press:



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- [Review of *The Month In Which We Are Born* by Danielle Susi](#)
- [Review of *Spindrift* by Laura Madeline Wiseman](#)