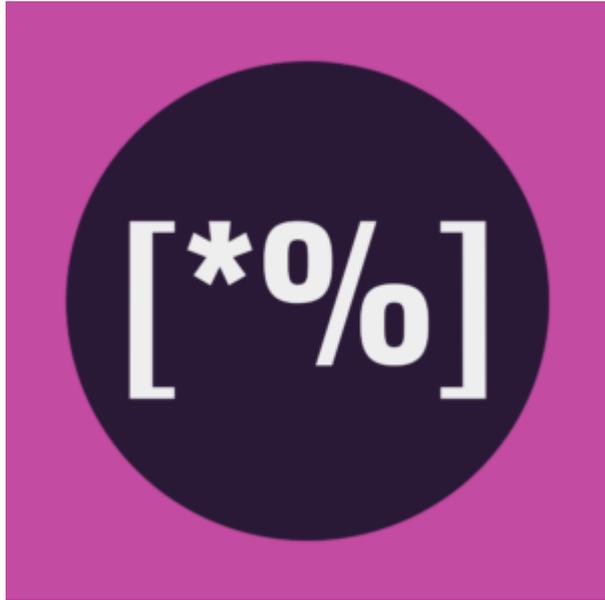


# F\*%K IF I KNOW//BOOKS

written by Entropy | April 13, 2021



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*Interview with FIIK//BOOKS co-conspirators Mary Hope Whitehead Lee, Claudia Nuñez de Ibieta, and Ryan Greene*

*How did F\*%K IF I KNOW//BOOKS start?*

summer 2019. northern sonoran desert. occupied akimel o’odham [pima] and pee posh [maricopa] lands – aka phoenix, az.

ryan greene [[F\\*%K IF I KNOW//BOOKS](#) co-conspirator] was feeling down. looking for some glimmer. reached out to his friend chawa magaña at [palabras bilingual bookstore](#) to see if she’d be up for making a bilingual zine out of her poem “america, you’ve got a lot of work to do” [which is inspired in a round-about way by the collection [sucede que yo soy américa](#) edited by [nicole cecilia delgado](#) at [la impresora](#)]. ryan had heard chawa read the poem a couple times at open mics. was excited to work with her to translate it into [her] spanish. she said yes. when ryan asked what they should call the zine, chawa shrugged and said “fuck if i know ...”. just like that, her zine became [F\\*%K IF I KNOW: VOL.1](#) and the shimmering contours of a phx-based publishing project began to emerge from the dreamscape.

since that fateful summer shrug, things have continued to grow and morph: the project shifted its name from F\*%K IF I KNOW to F\*%K IF I KNOW//BOOKS; new authors/translators/artists were folded into the [FIIK//BOOKS family](#); and what was once an “i” became a “we” with [mary hope whitehead lee](#) and [claudia nuñez de ibieta](#) joining ryan as co-conspirators in FIIK//BOOKS scheming & dreaming.

from the beginning and through it all, we've received tangible, material, and moral support from our community, including from [raquel denis](#), who has helped co-imagine the project since its pre-birth and chawa magaña who has continued to champion our authors and provide a home for our books at palabras.

*Tell us a bit about F\*%K IF I KNOW//BOOKS. What are your influences, your aesthetic, your mission?*

*un libro es como un abrazo  
o una danza  
tomo una mano del libro  
y luego la otra  
y juntxs  
vamos*

this poemlet [written by co-conspirator claudia nuñez de ibieta] speaks to the heart of what FIIK//BOOKS is about. there's an intimacy that's activated [or visibilized] when making books by hand together. there's a warmth and a joy in that relationship ... to the text, to the author, to your co-makers, to the book itself. we believe it's worth our time to attend to that warmth and joy. to celebrate our community. their poems. their lives. in some small way to extend an invitation to co-create an archive. to remember that our poems were/are here. that we, too, were/are here. together.

for a more concrete answer to your question re: mission/aesthetic, here's a modified version of some of the [contextual info on our website](#):

*F\*%K IF I KNOW//BOOKS is a phoenix-based, phoenix-focused publishing project that creates collaboratively-designed, hand-made, limited-run books by undersung local authors/artists. we are committed to exploring how creative approaches to bookmaking [both in print and digitally] can foster cultural cross-pollination, constructive disruption, and community [re]formation. who and how we publish is central to our politics. increased access is central to our ethics. our definition of "book" is loose at best, and we expect it to continue shifting. we welcome the flux.*

this notion of cultural cross-pollination is at the root of our work [and play!]. we're committed to intergenerational, interlingual, and intercultural publishing. to extend the plant-based metaphor, we think of ourselves as book-farmers. heck, [yaxkin melchy](#) talks about his poems as seeds. [nikky finney](#) talks about her journals as hotbeds. what then, is a press but a garden, a farm? here, then, is our ecological ethic: *anti-monoculture. locally-focused. invested in the health of our soil. indifferent to the promise of yieldyieldyield.* importantly, we are ready to celebrate growth within the garden and without – in medians, kitchen windows, anywhere light shines – wherever the bloom, expected or not.

when it comes to designing our books, we're committed to putting love and care into both their physical and digital forms. this, we feel, is a way to extend love toward our authors and their poems. also, we're interested in

books that may not look like books – [flexagons](#), [scrolls](#), [turntables](#), and more! we want ppl who may not [think they] like poetry to feel welcomed into our books. excited. engaged. more than anything, though, we want our books to circulate. to be ripped and re-glued. smudged and handled. not to sit in rare book rooms or in glass cases ... no. absolutely not.

as to our influences, it is a pure and end-stop fact that F\*%K IF I KNOW//BOOKS would not exist without the [Cardboard House Press Cartonera Collective](#). ryan learned to make books for the first time with giancarlo huapaya and maggie messerschmidt from cardboard house press [CHP], and then later met several FIIK//BOOKS authors/artists/translators [including co-conspirators mary hope and claudia] through the cartonera collective. CHP's support, mentorship, and encouragement have been boundless. we use their paper cutters to cut our paper after all. our debts are gloriously binding.

more broadly, we are deeply influenced by the cartonera movement which began in argentina in the early 2000s with [Floísa Cartonera](#) and which has since jumped from country to country and continent to continent around the world. we also draw inspiration from innovative community-rooted publishers like [nicole cecilia delgado](#) at [la impresora](#) [and [atarraya cartonera](#), etc. etc.], and [yaxkin melchy](#) at [cactus del viento](#) [and [2.0.1.3 editorial](#), etc. etc.]. lastly, our understandings of multilingual art-making, language justice, and so much more have been shaped by [jen/eleana hofer](#) and [jd pluecker's](#) decade-long collaboration via [antena aire](#). we're beyond grateful.

*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?*

ahhh, we're so excited! this year, already, has been a source of hope in turbulent times. we just released a scroll of instagram collage poems by [shaunté glover](#) called [a series of journal entries disguised as poetry: written by a lesbian](#). we also published a triptych, brochure broadside of poems by [june powers](#) called [not the same](#) to celebrate her triple book launch of self-published poetry collections in february. also also, we re-released a re-designed zine version of co-conspirator mary hope whitehead lee's collection of poetry and collage called [nuclear waste](#).

on the near horizon, we've got a couple "suns" poking their heads out. we're getting ready to release a möbius strip, micro-zine by [amber mccrary](#) featuring poetry + collaged family photos called [to change and be the five fingers of her](#) ... we're thrilled ☐ also, we've been in conversation with [rashaad thomas](#) about publishing a collection of his #failedpoetry insta-poems. we're all huge fans of rashaad, so it feels like a gift to be able to celebrate his work. on the event side of things, we're working on coordinating our second annual translation celebration, bocallage//collagemouth 2.0, which will center four womxn writing from puerto rico with poetic and musical curation by FIIK//BOOKS contributors [marlyn cruz-centeno](#) and [félix castro](#). you can check out the recording of our first bocallage//collagemouth celebration [here](#)!

further into the fuzzy dreamscape, we have a couple projects in the works

that haven't yet settled into their final form. first, co-conspirators claudia and mary hope are working on a collaborative ekphrastic creation that puts claudia's "email hugs" in conversation with mary hope's collages in order to celebrate the power of creative community to provide much-needed connection during this past year of disconnection and disorientation. second, we're at the early stages of planning for a sequel to a bidirectional, bilingual collection we published last year which we called [4M BOOKS: VOL. 1](#). third, we just got some funding to create a roving, open-air book lab which will allow us to develop a car-portable set-up with all of the supplies we need to safely make books outdoors around phoenix in public space with our community. finally, we are planning to do some form of 4-wheeled celebration of local youth poetry using the hot-pink-spray-painted truck that belongs to our friend, and FIIK//BOOKS contributor, [vida de jesus lopez](#). by covering the truck in hand-scrawled poems, we're hoping to make sprawland traffic something to look forward to.

outside of all this ... the three of us are working on two collaborative translation projects. first, a collection called márgenes [objeto editorial, 2016] by tamara grosso, a poet, editor, and bookseller from buenos aires. We are also collaborating with our friend j gan on the translation of an as-of-now-untitled poetry zine by arath muela, the partner of our friend, and FIIK//BOOKS contributor/zoom event logistics wizard, [antonieta carpenter-cosand](#). it's a wild swirl of poems that's bringing us a lot of joy! we're not sure where these two translation projects will eventually live, but we're 100% certain that it's a gift to work on them together right now.

*We used to ask, "What about small/independent press publishing is particularly exciting to you right now?" We're still interested in the answer to that, but we're even more interested to know what you think needs to change.*

none of us had made a book until we made a book. then, well, we'd made one! anyone can do it. there's a magic there ... a shared superpower. that's part of what excites us about small press work – especially diy/dit, community-rooted, community-accountable publishing [*shoutout to editoriales cartoneras and zinesters around the world!*]. we're inspired by ppl in our community like [amber mccrary](#) at [abalone mountain press](#), denise dominguez at [pachanga press](#), chawa magaña at [palabras bilingual bookstore](#), and charissa lucille at [wasted ink zine distro](#), all of whom are doing critical cultural work in the literary world of phoenix and beyond! we're also continually grateful to the work of [cardboard house press](#), whose [cartonera collective](#) is what made F\*%K IF I KNOW//BOOKS possible. we're honored to be part of this meshed web of community and there's no shortage of hope to be found!

ultimately, we believe deeply in the power & possibilities of small/independent presses. what's distressing is when the access-prioritized spirit of this work gets tainted [or rather, remains tainted] with commercialization and credentialophilic prestige-seeking. in other words, we're concerned by [and skeptical of] the prize-mesmerized professionalization we see shaping the contours of small/independent press publishing. we're angered by the persistent entrenchment of patri@[read "patriotic-", read patriarchal-]-whiteness + tokenization of *otherness*. as

translators ourselves, we're hopeful for a future with more multilingual literature, and we're tired of waiting. also, once and for all, we're ready to allow our literary imagination[s] to soar beyond the dreams of *new york, awp, mfa programs, our books in university course catalogues* etc. there's more out [t]here. there has been ... will be ... always.

*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 F\*%K IF I KNOW//BOOKS?*

we aren't a non-profit. we aren't a for-profit. we just make books and we share them. in many ways, we're an extended group art project. importantly, we take a relational rather than transactional approach to our literary cultural work. if our books become fetishized art objects priced as luxury items, we've fucked up, lost our compass. our physical books are cheap and also have digital cousins that are available for free. if the cost of our physical books is too much for you, we're flexible and can figure out something that's doable. the goal is for our books to be *written by* our community and *circulated through* our community. anything pulling us away from that goal is suspect gravity, a shimmery distraction.

to answer your question more practically, we work small and move slowly. we design our books/website/ephemera with free software and we use cheap materials. sometimes we rescue trash and incorporate it into our designs. we print small batches of books at a time using self-serve printers at local copy stores. occasionally we use friends' home printers. everything is assembled by hand. once we sell some books, it pays for the next batch. most of our books cost less than \$5/copy to make. some cost less than \$1/copy. we work individually with our authors to see what \$\$ arrangement feels best to them. generally, anything we make over production costs goes directly back to the author[s]. sometimes we apply for artist grants to support our costs [supplies & compensation for authors/translators/etc.]. most of the time we just do our own thing – printing & folding & stapling & gluing & cutting & sharing & scheming & dreaming. slowly. surely.

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***Recent releases from F\*%K IF I KNOW//BOOKS:***

