

# Penny-Ante Editions

written by Entropy | May 19, 2015



*This is the forty-third in Entropy's small press interview series, where we ask editors about their origins, their mission, and what it's like to run a press. Find the other interviews from this series in our Small Press Database [here](#) and under the Resources tab at the top of the page.*

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## [Website](#)

Submission Guidelines: N/A

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## *Interview with Rebekah Weikel, Editorial Director*

*How did Penny-Ante start?*

Initially, "Penny-Ante" was used as the name of an informal arts journal. The first Penny-Ante journal, *Book #1*, was published in 2006; *Book #2* followed in 2007, and the final issue, *Three* in 2009. Each issue functioned as a type of depository for the found and otherwise forgettable, presenting a loosely directed collection of ephemera, art and text. Visual works, poetry, photos, handwritten letters, discarded writing, notes, trash, napkins, interviews, printed emails, and flyers were collected from individuals and put to page unedited. The result: a hoarder's exhibition or "some kind of preservation act," as one magazine referred to it.

These issues were released during the height of MySpace's popularity. People were turning into online profiles. MySpace "friends" were a new kind of currency. The dissemination of information was being sped up and the ways in which we experienced art and culture were changing. I wanted a piece of You to make still, commit to page; something that couldn't be altered, appropriated, or buried in an online bulletin board. The journals were an attempt to stop time. Additionally, I was interested in breaking up hierarchies; bringing together artists in various career stages and orientating their works horizontally.

After *Three* was published I felt the journal had run its course. "Penny-Ante" as a journal disappeared. I began to think about working under a new imprint or within a series with a very specific theme (later named the Success and Failure Series), but ultimately could not find the works I wanted, so the idea was shelved.

Time passed. I met Jarett Kobek in 2011 at the Los Angeles launch for his book, *Atta*. We discovered a mutual fascination with Axl Rose and a shared appreciation for Iain Sinclair and Stewart Home. I had read *Atta* prior to us meeting, and additionally, *Walt Disney: Hollywood's Dark Prince*, a trashy

Disney biography that Kobek had cited in an interview. *Walt Disney* arrived in the mail with a note from its eBay seller that said, "Nice choice!" It was a terrible book.

The evening we met, Jarett mentioned he had been reading transcriptions from celebrity sex tapes at various events and was considering a chapbook to further explore the idea. He gave me the tentative title for the project and I told him that evening I would publish it. The Success and Failure Series was launched nine months later by Penny-Ante Editions and Jarett's book—*If You Won't Read, Then Why Should I Write?*—was the first to be released in the series.

*Tell us a bit about Penny-Ante Editions. What are your influences, your aesthetic, your mission?*

Since the beginning, 2006, there's been an explicit reluctance to employ a mission statement.

Something comes to mind that resonates: In 2008, I drove to see Ian MacKaye speak at the E.P. Foster Library in Ventura. I grew up in the area and it was a library I had spent a lot of time in—a dinky place in need of new books, one without a ton of funding, in an area often overlooked by touring artists. I was genuinely thrilled to see Ventura considered by someone with a bit of a profile, so I went. I wasn't a huge Dischord Records fan growing up. I had a few Minor Threat and Fugazi albums, just like any other kid in the 90s, and I liked Tesco Vee, but other than that, the label seemed to cling too strongly to a "straight edge" identity, something I didn't really identify with.

In any case, he won me over that night. I can't say I felt completely congruent with his principles, but the man had very distinct ideas on how he wanted to run his business and life, all of which were fair enough. To get to the point though, he expressed his approach to Dischord with the phrase, "advertising without adjectives": Attempting to present the truth without too many embellishments or platitudes.

I've never wanted to outwardly define Penny-Ante beyond the obvious: "Penny-Ante is a book publisher and an art-based project company." It's fairly simple. The press acts in earnest to develop projects we feel deserve an audience. I don't think a further directive would do any service to the authors. All our authors are independent thinkers and unique personalities who speak boldly for their oeuvre; one of many reasons the press serves their efforts.

At the moment, we employ the Success and Failure Series, a series of books that takes contradiction as a recurring motif. So far the series includes works of poetry, fiction, non-fiction, and concept-driven text.

As for personal influences, there are many, but I'll keep it short and say *Serpent's Tail*, which had a transitional effect on my understanding of fiction; specifically, the High Risk Books series.

*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?*

Lynne Tillman's spoken word LP, *What Gets Kept*, was recently released. *Motion Sickness* was pivotal for me as a teenager as it was the first work of fiction I had read by a female author and loved. My father supplied the reading material in the home, most of which was written by men in the 19th and 20th century. My early public schooling also required a list of books to be read, all written by men (aside from Harper Lee). *Motion Sickness* was a nomad's tale, but one led by a female protagonist; introspective, and flirting with different identities; erotic but aloof to men and serious relationships. This was the first contemporary female character I had come across that I wanted to become friends with.

*What Gets Kept* features excerpts from a variety of Lynne's books that I had highlighted over the years. I've often returned to Lynne's books, these sections, to remember how great writing reads.

Masha Tupitsyn's *Love Sounds* catalogue is now available, which features essays by Masha, McKenzie Wark, Bertit Fischer and others, and was designed by Andrea Evangelista. The catalogue accompanies Masha's media work, *Love Sounds*, a twenty-four hour audio installation studying love in cinema. This is the third publishing project Penny-Ante has worked on with Masha, the first being her multi-media book, *Love Dog*, and the second being its digital addendum, *Like Someone in Love*.

We're currently working on a novella by Janice Lee tentatively titled, *Reconsolidation* which is the first text I received from Janice prior to the manuscript for *Damnation*, published in 2013.

*Reconsolidation* made me weep. I haven't encountered such an elegant take on death. I had made plans to publish it, but after looking at *Damnation*, ultimately felt the work responded better to *Love Dog*. So, *Damnation* followed *Love Dog*, the two books very much having a call and response relationship in my mind. *Love Dog* is diaristic and deals with grief as it unfolds *in time*. *Damnation* is static, focuses on the tedium of *time*; grief protracted. Both books respond to film.

Penny-Ante is also continuing work with Stewart Home on a twenty-fifth anniversary edition of *Defiant Pose* to be released in 2016 and is currently working with a selection of new authors and artists on books, as well as a periodical tentatively titled *Modern Behaviors*.

As far as what Penny-Ante is seeking to publish in the future: satire, criticism, concept-driven text, and artists' books. Our process is selective. At the moment, we only publish three to four books a year and choose projects based on their relationship to the current series, but saying that, I would encourage anyone who reads this to send us a manuscript or project pitch. Our website states that we do not accept unsolicited manuscripts, but that's simply because at one stage we received proposals for new age holistic guides to living and other off-base propositions.

*What about small/independent press publishing is particularly exciting to you*

*right now?*

Mostly based in Los Angeles, nearby friends and their publishing efforts continue to be exciting. Tosh Berman is a good friend, and I love his press, TamTam Books, and it's always a happy occasion to run into Hedi, Noura or Robbie of Semiotext(e) around town. I also love Siglio, another L.A. press, though I've only met Lisa Pearson a couple times.

The process of publishing a book can be extreme, and also very insulating. It's nice to come out of your hole once in a while and see these faces and have some exchange. Anyone that has gone through the process I think can find much in common with one another. There's a common ground there no matter what you publish. You're aware of what one another are up against. That's why I root for these friends, and quite frankly, most all small publishers.

*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 Penny-Ante?*

I personally see the costs incurred as a type of donation in support of our authors' careers and the community that's interested in their work; a community I'd like to see grow.

Penny-Ante's books do well for a small-scale operation. I'm constantly surprised and feel incredibly fortunate that the press is near funding itself. Saying that, there have been projects in need of further finance, and I am lucky to have other work in my life that has allowed the press to meet these demands.

*I'm also very interested in the name of the Success and Failure Series, the series in which most of your books are now published. What does this designation mean to you? What is it a response to?*



Tex by Beau Rice (Penny-Ante, 2014)

The series was initiated to welcome authors and artists pursuing revisionary and innovative forms to articulate an immanent response to popular culture and politics. Satirical and/or critical constructions that challenge convention, institutional thought and bureaucracy are also included.

The implications of "Success and Failure" can be unpacked differently through each unique project, while still operating as parts to a whole. I wanted to work within a series that used contradiction as a recurring motif; one that could build on itself, argue with itself; a series that could cannibalize itself or begin again.

The name "Success and Failure" implicitly acknowledges the contradictory nature behind the series. In my mind, the projects work beyond success or

failure. They're not bound by literary conventions, good taste, or marketability (and often times criticize capitalism), yet they are commoditized, thrust into a market, setting them up to inherently succeed or fail. It's a tough pill to swallow, but acts as a perfect example of the kinds of issues I hope to see the series tackle.

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### *Recent Penny-Ante releases:*



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### *Penny-Ante Editions on Entropy:*

[Review of \*UnAmerica\* by Momus](#)