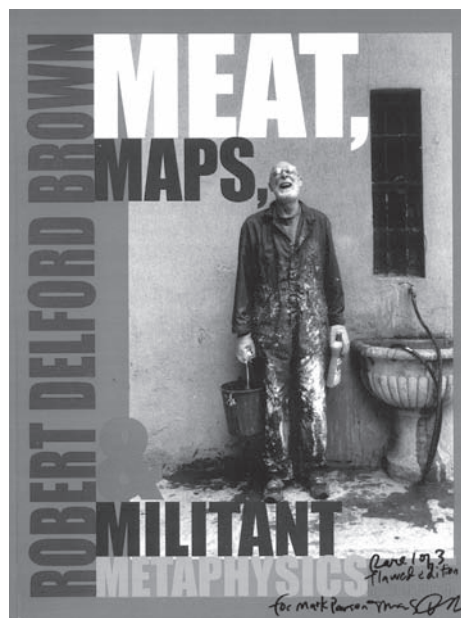
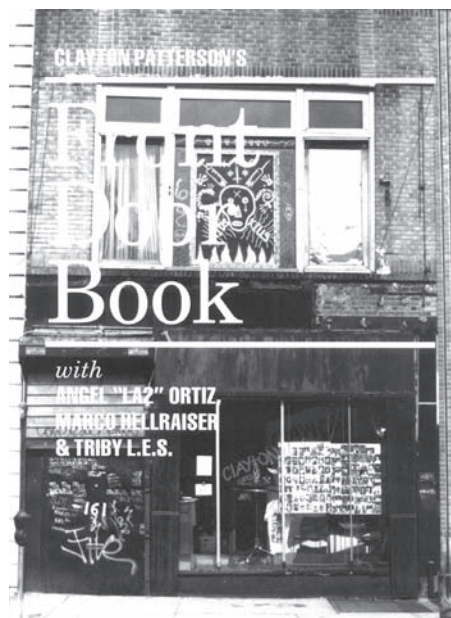


# Print Creations

## Comic & Zine reviews Mark Pawson



When I first visited New York in the mid-1980s the Lower East Side (LES) seemed to be sporadically dotted with small street-level windows full of photos, prints, drawings, and other interesting objects. These ad hoc displays looked intriguing but it was hard to tell if they were notice boards, entrances to galleries, shops and studios, or just the creatively decorated front window of someone's apartment? Having read Clayton Patterson's *Front Door Book*, I discovered that the storefront at 161 Essex Street was at various times a gallery, shop, studio, workshop, community notice board, and home. For 30 years it's been the headquarters of artist and activist Clayton Patterson, who's tirelessly documented his neighbourhood in photographs and on video. His 3½ hour videotape of the 1988 Tompkins Square Park Riot led to as much controversy in New York as the 2009 capturing of Ian Tomlinson being attacked by riot officers in the City of London did in the UK. Clayton Patterson's front door photos were a long term collective portrait of his neighbourhood. From 1985 to 2002 each week he took hundreds of photographs of local residents in front of his graffiti encrusted front door, displaying a selection of them the next week on the constantly changing Hall of Fame notice board in the front window. This large format, full colour book reproduces 300 front door photos of families, workers, teens, courting couples, bowery bums, and kids who look far too young to be out on the street on their own. Patterson also managed to charm the local tough guys and bad boys into flashing smiles for his camera. Spanning a period during which the LES, once generally considered by outsiders as a drug- and crime-ridden no go area, had been 'cleaned up' and succumbed to the pervasive forces of gentrification and hipsterization, skyrocketing rents mean that many of the predominantly Hispanic LES locals in Clayton Patterson's photos have been displaced forever. The photos are accompanied by Patterson's extensive reminiscences of 30 years as a socially engaged LES resident, of a 1980s career as a hat designer making distinctive baseball caps embroidered all over with vibrantly coloured urban tribal symbols, and curator of tattoo and outlaw/outsider art exhibitions, together with oral history recordings and interviews with local characters like graffiti artist LA2 (who was Keith Haring's mentor and collaborator for a significant period of Haring's brief career and has largely gone unrecognised and unaccredited). *Clayton Patterson's Front Door Book* is a rare gem of a book, crammed with a wealth of information and seldom heard voices.

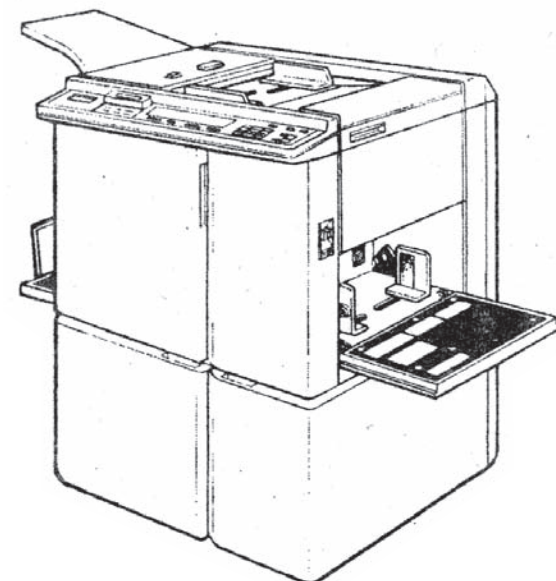
Robert Delford Brown (RDB) was another maverick New York artist, his provocative 1960/70s works received widespread attention at the time but have been largely forgotten since. After not selling any work from his first gallery show in 1952

he torched the lot, then hung out with painter Ed Moses and curator Walter Hopps in LA. RDB moved to New York in 1959 just as several major art movements were starting to emerge. He seems to have participated in almost every aspect of the avant-garde scene and somehow upset many of the other participants by always pushing the limits and being a little bit too extreme and 'out there'. The scope of his work included pop art, assemblage, conceptualism, happenings, performance, fluxus, mailart, installations, appropriation, readymades and artist's books. **Robert Delford Brown: Meat, Maps & Militant Metaphysics** is an affectionately compiled 156 page scrapbook of RDB's reminiscences, photos, articles from several notable critics, extracts from his books, press clippings and other ephemera, meticulously assembled by Mark Bloch shortly before Robert Delford Brown died in March 2009. Just a few examples illustrate how prescient RDB's work was: *The Meat Show* (1964) was an installation of 6,000lbs of raw meat hung against yards of sheer white fabric in a walk-in refrigerated locker, giving the effect of a butcher's boudoir, admission was 75 cents and the 3 day show received international press coverage. *Ideal Self Portrait* (1966) was a reconstructed portrait of the artist made by a professional photo retoucher who worked from a mangled passport photo of RDB. His tinted photographs series (1965-72) were laboriously hand tinted large scale photo enlargements of Victorian pornography and photos from medical text books intended to be more shocking than Warhol's *Death and Disaster* paintings. *The First National Church Of Exquisite Panic Inc.*, legally founded in 1968, was his very own 'whatever the heck I want it to be' fake religion which issued numerous goofy manifestos and doctrines and appointed its own saints. More recently he organised the collaborative collage events *Sacred Action Glueings*. Robert Delford Brown was too much of an iconoclast to be part of anyone else's scene or movement, he was his own happening.

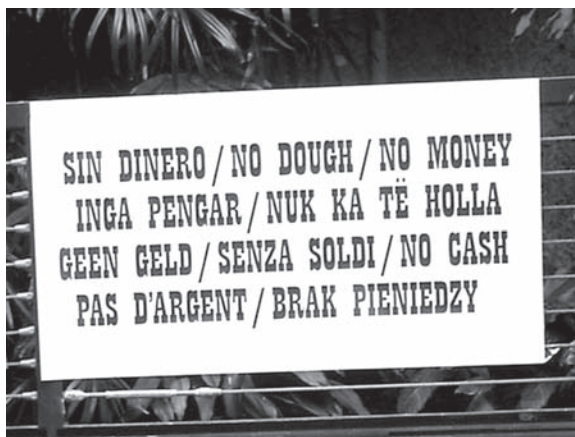
Graffiti on subway cars crosses the city once or twice before being buffed off with acid and high pressure water jets. Freight train graffiti can travel across a whole continent, coast-to-coast for years, slowly being eroded by the sun and rain. **MOSTLY TRUE** is a compendium of railroad graffiti, hobo culture and trainhopping lore, a retro-styled miscellany of over 50 years of writings, press clippings, interviews and photos, looking at traditional odd-jobbing migrant hobos and their modern day eco-punk counterparts, railwaymen who use chalk or paintsticks to embellish hundreds of wagons a day with their quickly executed flowing sketches and pseudonymous tags, aerosol brandishing upstarts, and contemporary street artists exploring the heritage and predecessors of their mark-making activities. **Mostly True** explores the multiple layers of freight train graffiti,

which is complicated and enriched by successive generations of moniker-mongers with pennames being bequeathed and borrowed, infamous graffiti tags being re-drawn, imitated and adapted. There's a photo album of train tagging by San Francisco artists Barry McGee and the late Margaret Kilgallen, who subtly blended their street tagging and painting styles with traditional freight train graffiti formats, plus an interview with railwayman Buz Blurr (a.k.a. Colossus of Roads) who has for 35 years sent his drawings travelling simultaneously via the railway and international postal art networks. The romance of freight train tagging and mysterious identities of some adherents is clearly what attracted **Bill Daniel** to the subject. He's accumulated a wealth of source material over 25 years of research and by juxtaposing the old and new, genuine and fake materials with no clear distinction he's careful to leave some of the mystique intact for readers of this book, as it says on the cover: **Mostly True**.

There seems to be a new wave of printers and publishers in the London getting their inky hands on stencil printers – recently I've picked up copies of **The Incidental**, a daily newsletter produced during the London Design Festival, and a booklet accompanying the **History Of Irritated Material Exhibition** at Raven Row which were both printed using this method. Digital Stencil Printers are low-cost, good quality, high-speed, eco-friendly printers. They're easy to use and are particularly suited to print runs of 100-1,000. They're the modern descendents of the duplicators and mimeograph machines made by Roneo and Gestetner. They look like photocopiers, but inside the greige plastic exterior is a drum of liquid ink and mechanism which automatically cuts a plastic stencil and wraps it round the drum. Japanese company Riso is the market leader with their range of Risograph machines – in recent years



the print quality has improved substantially and range of suitable papers has increased. Knust Stencildruk in Nijmegen, Netherlands, have been the acknowledged masters of stencil printing since the 1990s. I've printed a couple of my own books there, but for some reason Stencil Printers have taken a while to catch on in the UK. Digital Stencil Printers are relatively affordable making it possible to own the means of production. South London-based anarchists **Shortfuse Press**, with links to the long running **56a Infoshop**, recently printed **Everyone to the Streets**, a booklet of texts and communiqués from the 2008 Greek Uprising. They've had their Risograph for a couple of years and it's great to see that they've recently been joined by two East London groups with stencil printers – Ditto Press in Dalston and Landfill/Manymono in Hackney both seem to be focused on the art, design and illustration side of things. They both offer printing services and also sell their own publications and prints. There's been a significant increase in small press and self-publishing activity in the UK over the last 3-to-4 years, digital Stencil Printers are ideally suited to producing this type of material and I'm excited to see a new wave of small print shops appearing. I've enjoyed travelling to the Netherlands and staying to make books but the thought of being able to walk 15 minutes up the road in east London and do a small print job in an afternoon looks very attractive...

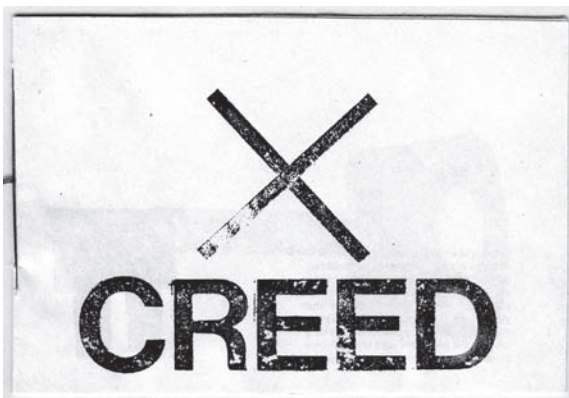


"London's first **Barterama**, the printed matter swap fair" was a one day event that took place as part of the 2009 **Radical Nature** exhibition at the Barbican. I wanted to take part, but for someone who for over 15 years has made their living, in part, from selling things at bookfairs this was going to be a challenge! At bookfairs there's always a small amount of trading between stallholders, which is part of the atmosphere, but compulsory bartering with anyone and everyone was going to be interesting. I packed an assortment of books, zines and badges plus a few things I just wanted to get rid of, but left the silkscreened limited edition £65 books at home. I didn't want to come back with a big pile of junk that I'd swapped for just out of politeness, so decided to mainly swap for books that I knew I'd read. There were about 18 stalls in the luscious tropical Barbican Conservatory, the only bookfair I've been to where there was a risk of getting parrot droppings on your books! There were plenty of graphic designers alongside donations from the Barbican Library and several publishers and bookshops who'd had stock cupboard clearouts. It looked like a jumble sale had collided with a bookfair, with old and new books, treasure and trash all mixed up together. The selection of stalls was enlivened by the late arrival of illustrator Jane Smith who brought along a selection of old board games, brightly coloured paper ephemera and collectible Barack Obama election campaign memorabilia. Through the day different trading strategies and tactics emerged, ranging from the equitable "One of mine for one of yours?", the economic value based "This is worth £10, what've you got that's worth £10", the cheeky

"Can I swap this book I just got at the stall over there and aren't really interesting in for something much better off your table?", and the desperate "Please just take some of these things away!" Some of most interesting exchanges were with visitors who didn't really know what to expect but had entered into the spirit of things by grabbing a few unwanted items off their bookshelves: "Yes I'll trade for the book you self-published about drawing", "No I really do not want to swap for a set of The Clash cocktail coasters!", "Well if you really haven't got anything at all to trade with, how about a black coffee from the cafe?" For those with long memories it's ironic that this small attempt at establishing an alternative economy took place in the shadow of the Barbican Business School's former location. **Barterama** was one of the most unique and enjoyable events of last year and has also importantly created a useful template which can be used for future exchange only events.



**Village Pub Cinema** by **Henry Ireland** is a tiny, rough-as-nails lino print book which tells a charming one sheet of paper one sentence story, and uses the foldout centrespread for a clever cinematic reveal. It looks like he was in such a hurry to make the book that he ripped up a kitchen floor tile, carved the images and text with a bread knife, and then printed it with axle grease! I may have over emphasized slightly. He's definitely been along to the art supplies shop and he probably knows who Frans Masereel is. What drew me to this book is the rawness and sense of urgency it conveys, reminiscent of Billy Childish's early books and prints.



**Creed** by **Kris Skellorn** shares the small format and rough edged black and white aesthetic of **Village Pub Cinema**. On a first glance at the cover stamped with a bold black cross I wrongly assumed that **Creed** was a product of the abstinent Straight Edge brand of 'Punk'. Inside the creditcard-sized booklet **Kris** lists his personal system of beliefs and principles in seven sections: Truth, Passion, Knowledge, Honour, Vigilance, etc. Short succinct paragraphs, each accompanied with a single hand drawn graphic: Key, Pill, Book, Samurai Sword, Hourglass. It seems eminently reasonable

in tone and manages to avoid preaching or bossiness, showing careful consideration by the author. Stating your creed seems a profoundly unfashionable thing to do these days, an outdated format a bit like publishing a handbook on manners and etiquette. But in an age of vacuous corporate Mission and Vision Statements it strikes me as quite a brave act to put yourself on the line in this way – I wouldn't have the courage to do it. Clayton Patterson also includes his personal credo in **Front Door Book**. Hmm, maybe this is a new trend that's somehow passed me by and everyone's doing it these days?



Book trade labels are the small printed labels which old booksellers used to stick inside the endpapers of books that passed through their hands. Fraser Muggeridge studio have published a small foldout poster that reproduces 80 vintage book trade labels, an instant collection of these small functional embellishments which neatly combine the booksellers address and decoration – all the examples are shaped like open or closed books. Printed in an appropriately old fashioned black, red and navy blue colour scheme, it's essential eye candy for image junkies, graphic design geeks and antiquarians alike.

## Info & orders

**Clayton Patterson's Front Door Book**  
www.oh-wow.com  
patterson.no-art.info

**Robert Delford Brown: Meat, Maps & Militant Metaphysics**  
www.panmodern.com

**Mostly True**  
www.billdaniel.net  
www.microcosmpublishing.com

**Stencil Printers**  
shortfuse@alphabetthreat.co.uk  
www.dittopress.co.uk  
www.landfilleditions.com  
www.extrapool.nl

**Barterama**  
www.occasionalpapers.org

**Village Pub Cinema**  
www.folksy.com/shops/hrjireland

**Creed**  
kris.skellorn@gmail.com

**Book Trade Labels From Around The World**  
pleasedonotbend.co.uk  
www.sevenroads.org