How big a role do the three catalogue publications play within the overall framework of the dOCUMENTA (13)?

More than ever, books play a key role in the development of the ideas towards dOCUMENTA (13) — and I would even say that there is a part of dOCUMENTA (13) that takes place only in the publications. With the “100 Notes—100 Thoughts” series, Head of Department Chus Martinez and I decided to publish the work of writers and thinkers coming from different fields on a comparable stage to the one for the artists.

Volume 1 of the catalogue, The Book of Books, brings together and reproduces the entire content of the 3,000 pages of the 100 notebooks in addition to including references to all participants and their works in dOCUMENTA (13), introductory essays, a reading list, and the index to navigate the book. It is an enormous and slow process of thinking that is documented here and that is woven into the physical exhibition.

The Guidebook, vol. 3 of the catalogue, encompasses images and texts for all 180 artists who each created and contributed a page to this book. The agents as well as other writers drafted the short texts on the artists that are included in this volume. The spatial experience of walking through the exhibition is linked to the spatial concept I developed for dOCUMENTA (13), which I narrate here in print. Thus the book offers a walk through the exhibition. It also includes extensive information on the workshops, lectures, and conferences that constitute the Maybe Education and Public Programs of dOCUMENTA (13).
The Logbook, vol. 2 of the catalog, documents the exhibition not only through hundreds of images of the exhibition, but also by including interviews and a selection of emails that mark specific turning points in the development of the project. In these interviews, we discuss our involvement, the ideas, and the endeavor of being involved in making a documenta exhibition. In addition, this book reproduces numerous snapshots from my travels around the world and the encounters and views on the way.

How do the individual volumes complement one another?
The three volumes of the dOCUMENTA (13) catalogue richly complement each other: dOCUMENTA (13)'s The Book of Books gathers the core ideas primarily through the traces of writing and the printed page; the dOCUMENTA (13) Guidebook provides specific information on each artwork and the various venues, while The Logbook offers not only a visual walk through the exhibition, but also a close look behind the scenes of the making of dOCUMENTA (13) over the course of many years. None of this could have been done without Bettina Funcke, my wonderful head of publications, and her efficient team, and Hatje Cantz who believed in this project from the start.

When reading the thought-provoking array of notebooks, one gets the impression that they constitute the sum of a curator's experience. What prompted the idea for the notebook series?
Over two years ago, I began to wish to publish notebooks, that strange form of writing that is in between drawing and writing, and certainly demonstrates thinking in a prologue state, almost the secret hidden space of writing before it is truly written. Chus and I had the idea to include a large circle of radical thinkers from different fields and from different places into the process of developing dOCUMENTA (13) so that an important public platform for thinkers would be produced that would exist in parallel with the ones for the artists. We were excited that publishing the notebooks over the 18 months leading to the opening of the exhibition in Kassel in June 2012 would allow the public to anticipate the developing ideas for dOCUMENTA (13) as well as for the participants of dOCUMENTA (13) themselves to be inspired by them for their own contributions and their identification with the exhibition as a whole. The notebooks exist spatially as well as time-wise beyond the exhibition in Kassel, which is essential to my approach.

How do you proceed in your choice of subjects and texts for the notebooks?
I usually ask a potential author to tell me what the most crucial question, the most unresolvable problem, is according to them—and that often leads to an essay. Sometimes I ask several authors to address the same question; for example, I asked Judith Butler, Etel Adnan, and Michael Hardt to all three address the question of love and its potentiality. They each addressed it from a different perspective. Chus and I, as well as other agents such as Rene Gabri and Ayreen Anastas, or Marta Kuzma, or Raimundas Malasauskas, might invite authors to contribute essays, or in some cases I have paired an artist with a writer, such as Emily Jacir and Susan Buck-Morss, to do what they want within the limitations of the printed page, which has
often meant working with and responding to texts of their choice. We also invited scholars and artists to introduce and explain existing notebook pages of particular historical interest that are introduced with small notations to contextualize the material reproduced, such as in the case of Lars Bang Larsen introducing pages from Erkki Kurenniemi’s diaries.

All contributors have influenced my thinking on my way to dOCUMENTA (13). The various disciplines and lines of thinking express themselves in their own ways and interact in the different formats and ways of speaking, which is a central idea for dOCUMENTA (13). Topics and schools of thought range from radical sciences and technology, such as quantum physics, and their alliances with the oldest traditions to ecology, poetry, and local history. The archive and the artist book, collapse and recovery, all come together here.

What are the principal ideas or clusters of ideas underlying the notebooks?

The ambition is high, though it is important for the notebooks to be modest, too. There is a need for a new methodology in general, but also in respect to how we talk about art and why we look at art—the series states that we have to move beyond art to get to the core of art, that is, to address some of the larger questions we are facing today. We invite authors and artists to share their thinking as a process; we don’t want final truths or fully developed theses. We want to be able to witness how thinking emerges, how there is freedom in that process, how it is messy and poetic, and never final. But surely the political question—the role art can play in society and how art and thinking can react to knowledge capitalism and to the financial world and its injustices—is a thread running through both the notebooks and the exhibition. Another thread is the question of how we can imagine a less anthropocentric universe and world of thinking and active living, less centred on people only, and more concerned with the balance of agencies including the agencies of all animate and inanimate makers of the world.

That is why I am known for being the artistic director interested in the positions and perspectives of dogs—it’s true and I mean it very seriously, and not only those of dogs, also those of meteorites and objects, including artistic objects. The mystery of these things we call art— their perspectives rather than ours onto them!

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