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Troy print shop binds, ensures books' legacies

Print shop hopes to be glue in book lovers' community

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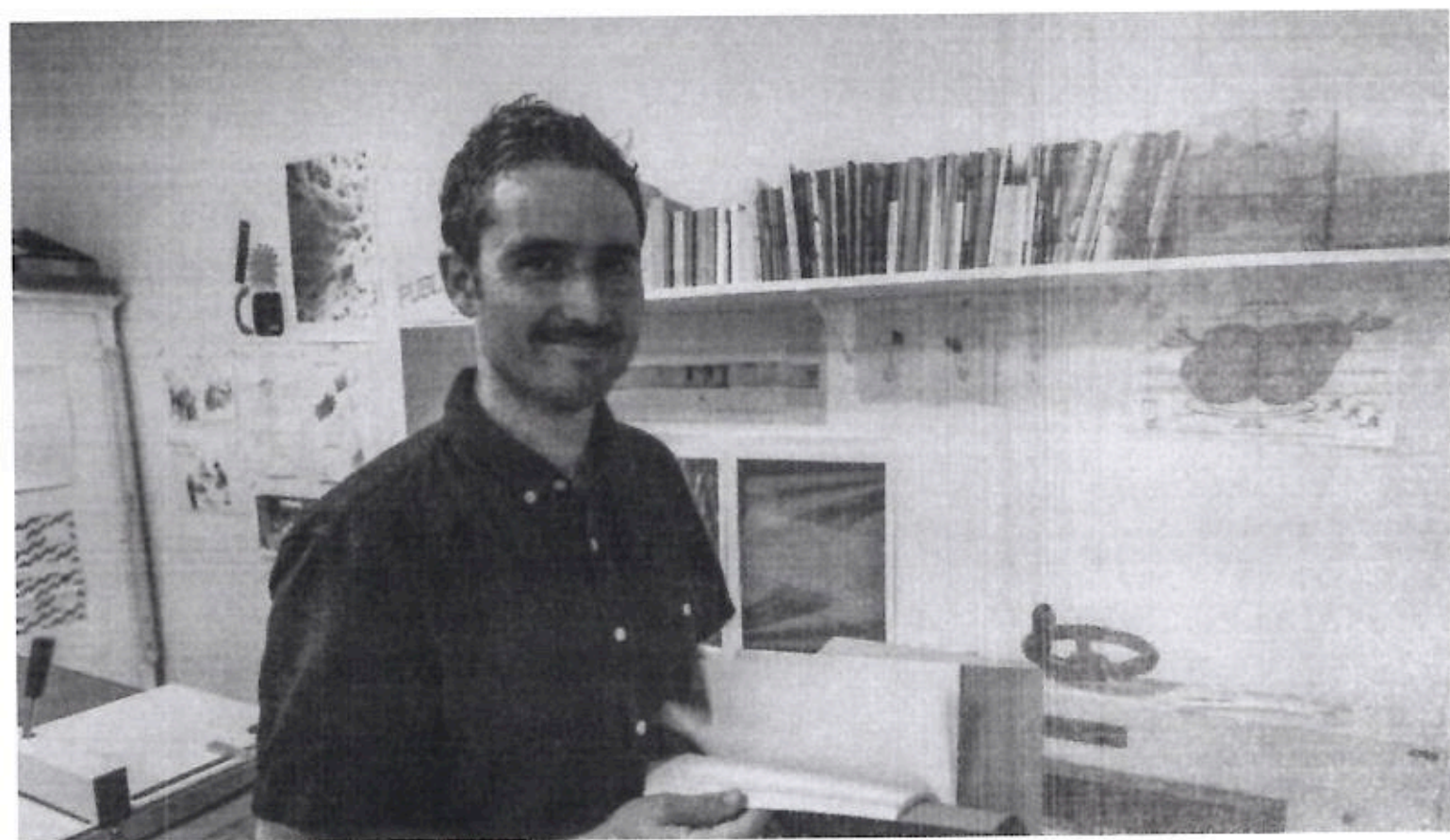




IMAGE 1 OF 11

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Peter Kiley of Publication Studio at his workplace Tuesday June 27, 2017 in Troy , N.Y. (Skip Dickstein/Times Union)

Stacks of neatly aligned pages sit on a broad work surface, each emblazoned with a title page. "Two Augusts in a Row in a Row," by Shelley Marlow, is about to receive its cherry red cover.

Patrick Kiley, the owner of Publication Studio Hudson in Troy, works singularly and with speed. Taking each "book block" and placing it into a binding machine, the book is bound within seconds. It takes him just hours to make hundreds of books.

Kiley uses a glue-binding process for these novels — of which he will make about 200 copies, called perfect binding — though he says, "It's certainly possible to do it imperfectly." He prints, trims and arranges the papers together, then uses Smead file folders to create thin covers that have hinge folds at the spine for easy page-turning. His perfect binding machine makes minuscule cuts on the book stack spine and applies a layer of glue to affix the book block to the cover.

A final trim to square the book's edges is the last step before the book is ready to be sold. Kiley's process is, "very lo-fi," he says, but that process is elemental to Publication Studio's existence. In 2016, he made about 5,000 books. He predicts he will double that number this year.

Kiley's print shop is one of several across the world — London, Sao Paulo, Glasgow, Rotterdam (Netherlands), Vancouver, Oakland, Minneapolis — started from the original Publication Studio in Portland, Ore. Publication Studio Hudson was founded in Hudson in January 2014 and had a short stint in Catskill before Kiley moved to Troy.

"(This is) pretty specifically whatever the opposite of a franchise is," says Kiley, noting that the offshoots of the original location developed from relationships to the owners of Publication Studio Portland. He says it's a network, all sharing ideas and practices (and a website), but "each studio is free to do whatever they want. They are tied together through purpose."

More Information

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That purpose, says Kiley, is to offer publication as a social act. "It's publication as opposed to publishing," he explains, adding that publication is "inherently political," and "less of a commodity," than the "commercial and hierarchical" nature of publishing.

Each Publication Studio has the ability to publish books for authors — not just print them — and Kiley partakes in that.

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"Choosing books is not a meritocracy. I go with what I like, a connection with the person. It's relationship-based," says Kiley. Whereas a publication relationship means the writer fronts the money for book production, publishing through Publication Studio Hudson is a 50-50 split of profits with the writer. Kiley pays for the printing costs and sells some of the books through his shop and social media platforms. Kiley has published everything from novels to art books to technical papers.

Kiley has considered expanding his bookbinding services through digital means, allowing him to invest in bigger equipment and mass-produce items, but "I never planned to be a manufacturer of anything. The whole idea of being a publisher would go by the wayside and I would become a cog."

A smaller production schedule allows Kiley to stay true to the philosophy surrounding publication.

"Books and reading become meaningful because we talk about them and organize around them. It's about the book having a private and public life." This holistic approach, as he calls it, is best

witnessed at a book rebinding party that Publication Studio Hudson offers on select Troy Night Out dates. (He expects to host another in August or September.)

People can bring in old paperback books to have them recovered in a new file folder cover. The binding is free, but donations are accepted, and Kiley hopes that the parties perpetuate, "pride in making and doing it well."

"There is potential in spaces like this to nurture and support municipalist action. National culture is really alienating. Places like this could serve as a gathering point. Down the road, I would love to open this up for 'zine culture, broadsheets, have people print posters for rallies. Do things that a private shop can do, but also activate people," says Kiley.

Currently, the space (on the corner of Second and Division streets) is also occupied by an artist, a sculptor and Flower Scout floral design service, but books remain the lifeblood. Kiley preserves the same accessible nature of print shops and publishers that people like David Hall and Benjamin Franklin popularized. "Here, it's like a fresh new thing if it feels like a new book again," says Kiley in reference to his binding parties, but the concept of publishing as a means of social agency and connection becomes new at Publication Studio Hudson, too.

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