The first ‘art’ job I ever had was for a now-defunct space called Lake Galleries, the first Toronto venue (that I was aware of) to dedicate itself to conceptual art. It was an offshoot of the antiquarian bookstore D&E Lake, which remains active today. My first curatorial project ever was compiling a slim catalogue for the store, of artists’ records, and records designed by artists.

One of the resources I used was a book they had in their second story office called *Broken Music*. I asked to buy this book from them, and the owner Don Lake said “I can’t sell that book. That book *makes* me money”.

The record catalogue became the impetus for an exhibition by Roger Bywater at Art Metropole, which became my second arts employer. They too had a copy of *Broken Music* on the office shelf and I also pleaded with them to let me buy it, and was told no. It was too valuable a resource to part with.
Both of these jobs paid very little, so the three hundred dollar price tag on the secondary market for the 1989 out-of-print book meant I was resigned to never owning it. I would check Ebay as often as possible, in the hopes of finding an affordable copy, but an autobiography with the same title meant scrolling through pages and pages of sellers with buyer’s remorse from purchasing a memoir by Sting.

One year we went to the Berlin Art Fair for Art Metropole, bringing mostly multiples, some artists’ books and a small flip-display of CDs. On the second day of the fair a woman arrived and seemed to beeline to the audio works. She quickly and expertly filtered the good from the bad, and made a pile to purchase.

Sizing up her selections, I exclaimed “Who are you?”.

She quietly introduced herself as Ursula Block. Excitedly, I said “Oh, very nice to meet you, you produced the best book on sound art ever published. Please sell me a copy!”

Like Lake and Art Metropole before her, she declined, with a demure shaking of her head. “I no longer have copies for sale.”

We spoke for a few minutes before she stopped, her eye catching a book behind me on the shelf. She asked about it and I said “That’s the second best book on sound art ever published”.

She enthusiastically flipped through it, and promptly proposed a trade.

We scheduled an appointment for us to visit Gelbe Musik, a record store she had been running since 1981 (it closed a few years later, in 2014). The store felt a bit out of the way, and seemed fairly unassuming from the street, but inside had an incredible selection of records (I bought as many as I could carry) and also a space for very small sound art exhibitions.

While wondering how there could possibly be enough interest in Artists Records to sustain a store dedicated only to them, a few customers trickled in - on a Monday, when they were usually closed. Both of them made purchases. It was pretty heartwarming. I attributed it to the strength of her reputation.

Ursula was followed around the store by her pet terrier, who (by no coincidence, I’m sure) closely resembled Nipper, from the HMV logo (and the painting by Francis Barraud titled His Master’s Voice, which provided both name and graphic to the record store chain). She went to a cabinet in the office area and pulled out a sealed copy of Broken Music, and handed it over.

For the price of the Art Metropole book Sound by Artists (minus my employee discount) I finally had a pristine copy of a book I had wanted for years.
It didn’t take long for the volume to begin to show signs of wear. Like Jon Hendrick’s *Fluxus Codex*, the book was regularly consulted and frequently scanned. There was soon a real danger that the spine would give out.

The news that Primary Information (already with a stellar track record of essential facsimile reprints of difficult-to-obtain texts) were set to produce a reprint was most welcome. I’m surprised it took me this long to order a copy (the donation of 100% of the proceeds to Black Lives Matter last month made it a very easy decision).

*Broken Music* was one of the first books published on the subject of artists’ records and remains the most comprehensive. It includes essays by both Block and Glasmeier, as well as Theodor W. Adorno, Jean Dubuffet, Milan Knizak, László Moholy-Nagy, Christiane Seiffert, Hans Rudolf Zeller and dealer/publisher René Block (husband of Ursula). Perhaps most essential is the 200-page bibliography of artists’ records, including works by Vito Acconci, Laurie Anderson, Joseph Beuys, Marcel Duchamp, Jack Goldstein, Hans Haacke, Joe Jones, Martin Kippenberger, Anna Lockwood, Yoko Ono, Nam June Paik, Michael Snow, Jean Tinguely, Ben Vautier, Yoshi Wada, Andy Warhol, Lawrence Weiner and many others.

Like the Art Metropole2 book I traded for it, *Broken Music* also features a flexi-disc, a recording of the Arditti Quartet performing Milan Knizak’s “Broken Music”, the book’s namesake.

Available from the publishers for $30 (a tenth the price of the secondary market price a few years ago), *Broken Music* is an essential book for anyone interested in artists' recordings and audio art. Order your copy [here](#).

1. It quickly branched off into many other things, including a distasteful exhibition of court drawings from the trial of serial killer Paul Bernardo, which led to my brief appearance on an episode of the American tabloid ‘news’ show *Hard Copy*.

2. *Sound by Artists* (also recently reprinted after being worth around $300 on the secondary market) also includes a flexi-disc record, by Christian Marclay. Unlike the Knizak disc in *Broken Music*, Marclay’s cannot be played, as it is bound into the book.
Smyth, David

Title: Revolutions Per Minute

Contents: "Falling Stars" (Beginning), "Falling Stars" (Conclusion), "W in the D". "Left Right"

2 LPs, 33 RPM, 1975, Chatham Square New York No. LP 1009/10

Cover: b/w, gatefold, with a text by Michael Snow

Snow, Michael [C/S]

Title: 1016 NEW YORK EYE and EAR CONTROL

Contents: Don Dwan, A Y. IIT

Firm: Albert Ayler (tp), Don Cherry (tp), John Tchicai (as), Roswell Rudd (tb), Gary Peacock (b), Sonny Murray (d)

30cm, 33 RPM, 1966, ESP-DISK, New York ESP 1016

Cover: b/w, design Michael Snow

This music was recorded on July 16, 1964 by New York artist Michael Snow for use as the soundtrack of his film entitled New York Eye and Ear Control. The music was recorded prior to the production of the film.

MICHAEL SNOW
MUSICS FOR PIANO, WHISTLING, MICROPHONE AND TAPE RECORDER

(After consideration in writing the text which you are now reading, it occurred to me that the words "microphone" and "whistling" might just be a bit redundant. More refined is a combination of the two, with perhaps a hint of the "scream". Another place this might better be approached was at an intersection of vision and music.

But recording itself has recently gone through some subtle and important changes which might - ought to - will alter the above-mentioned form of aural belief. From being an instrument of documentation, sound recording has become a musical instrument in itself. Recording has become as much a process of creation as of memorization.

Excerpt from cover)

Snow, Michael

→ The Artists' Jazz Band

Sobieralski

→ Poor Nathan

Sonnier, Keith [S]

Title: Air To Air

Contents: 33cm, 33 RPM, 1975, limited edition of 1000, Gemini G.E.L. Los Angeles

Cover: b/w

Sordide Sentimental [F/S]

Music: Thrashing Gristle

Contents: We hate you (Little girls). Five knuckle shuffle

232
Die besten Tonabnehmerpatronen (as sind auch immer die teuersten) arbeiten für gewöhnlich selbst bei der niedrigsten für sie angegebenen Auflagekraft noch einwandfrei, sofern sie in Tonarmen höchster Qualität verwendet werden. Bei der Festlegung der Auflagekraft für einen Tonabnehmer ist es im allgemeinen am günstigsten, mit dem höchsten zulässigen Wert zu beginnen und schrittweise die Auflagekraft so lange herabzusetzen, bis die Einstellung gefunden ist, bei der die Patronen in dem verwendeten Tonarm am besten arbeiten. Bevor man diese Einstellung endgültig belässt, führt man zweckmäßigerweise noch eine Überprüfung mit der am schwierigsten abspielenden Platte des eigenen Repertoires durch; es ist diejenige mit der lautesten und orchestermäßig am stärksten belasteten Passagen etwa z.B. das „Dies Irae“ im Requiem von Berlioz.
Toebosch, Moniek

Title: I Can Dance
Cover: b/w, design: Moniek Toebosch

Toebosch, Moniek

Title: DUTCH "DIFFICULT" MUSIC

Tödliche Doris

Title: Die Tödliche Doris

Toniutti, Giancarlo

Title: La Mutazione
Contents: part A - the tree, part B - Nakrose
Format: 30cm, 33 RPM, 1985, BROKEN FLAG, Udine BPV 6

Topor, Roland

Title: The Golden Years