Beyond the Text: Artists’ Books from the Collection of Robert J. Ruben

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Introduction

The formation of this collection of artists’ books, of which this is a sampling, began in 1953 when Robert Ruben, never having so much as heard the phrase “artists’ book,” was drawn to purchase, for 2 guilders (reduced from 4.50) Robert Ziller’s 1946 Wij maken Geschiedenis (We Make History). The graphics were dramatic, but even more compelling were the illustrations, which instead of serving to complement the text as one expected, did something new: they challenged the text. The next book, added a year later, and still in innocence of artists’ books, was Patchen’s Sleepers Awake on the Precipice (1946), in which the story was conveyed through an explosive use of type, with invented forms, diagrams, line drawings and scale disruptions as part of the textual continuum. Over the next two decades a number of non-traditional books, broadsides, pamphlets and other printed materials were added.

While attending a professional meeting in San Francisco in 1989, Robert was walking down Union Street and entered Califia, a bookstore, and met the proprietor Edwina Legget. It was then and there that he came to recognize and appreciate the artists’ books domain, which became a focus of his bibliophilic quest. That week he added the first deliberately collected artist’s book; Claire Van Vliet’s Dido and Aeneas (1989) and others came home to join Wij maken Geschiedenis and Sleepers Awake on the Precipice. Since then, works have been added on the basis of subject, form and esthetic, with some emphasis on social and environmental issues and/or the work of particular artists.

Today’s artists’ books reach far back to traditions rooted in the past. Finely produced scrolls from antiquity with painted illustrations of Classical literature, Celtic and Byzantine manuscripts holistically designed and painted by monks in monasteries, Romanesque and Gothic illuminated Bibles and Books of Hours, Arabic books, Persian, Indian and Central Asian illuminated manuscripts, Chinese secular and religious scrolls, Japanese books hand and block printed, Mayan codices: what an array of beauty! Contemporary artists’ books also draw significantly on printed codices that were esthetically and typographically experimental and reaching; prominent among these are Laurence Sterne’s The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman (1759–67), and Blake’s Milton a Poem (c. 1811).

Codex books, though immensely varied, are fundamentally narrative and linear, even when they are artistically embellished. Works that tend to be characterized as of the visual arts, such as paintings, graphics, and sculpture, characteristically can be taken in almost immediately by the viewer’s eye (though not necessarily fully comprehended), or in the case of a three-dimensional sculpture, several continuing views.

Artists’ books, drawing upon both of these modes, evolve in a space/time continuum that is likely to be in part linear, as in a codex, and at the same time carries the possibility of immediate apprehension that we generally expect in works of visual art. They are, to varying degrees, both. Creators of artists’ books use type, materials, movements, colors, transparencies, contrasts of texture, and more assertive three-dimensionality to convey information in the broadest sense. Artists’ books do not have embellished texts: taken as a whole, they are the text.
While artists’ books go beyond the traditional codex in their wide ranging use of materials to achieve their artistic ends, we should say, as lovers also of the codex, that the range of artistic decisions and solutions that ultimately give form to a finely made codex may go far to bridge the gap between codices and artists’ books—but of course, definitions are always constructs, tentative though useful as long as their permeable “edges” are held in mind.

Some artists’ books arrive on our visual doorstep bearing, primarily, humor, while others—all in mixed degrees—convey intellectual challenge, or emotions such as awe or joy. Some are embassies from the dark side of human experience. The assemblage of materials in artists’ books is characterized by craftsmanship and artistry that heighten alertness and relax resistance, thus opening the door to a deeper understanding of the full range of human experience.

Artists’ books may be accordion, codex, scroll, box book (including those with multiple books within the box), pop-up, or tunnel. They come in every variety of mixed media; they may have previously known texts, new texts, or no text at all; they may be totally new creations in the material sense or altered objects; the subject matter may be political, argumentative, or humorous, and is ultimately infinite; and they may be unique, limited edition, or mass produced. We have selected the books for this exhibition to provide examples of many of their characteristic forms and media, always with an eye to high quality.

Special thanks are given to those who have aided in the formation of the collection, and engaged us in stimulating conversations in which we have together enlarged and sharpened our understanding and appreciation of artists’ books: Elmer Adler, Gillette Good Griffin, Edwina Legget, Erica Doctorow, Priscilla Juvelis, Angela Lorenz, Deirdre Lawrence, and Julie Melby.

The creators of this catalog and exhibition are deeply indebted to the work of three outstanding professionals in the field. George Ong provided an acute line-by-line edit of the manuscript that greatly enhanced the strength of the text, while also snatching us from the brink of errors. Any errors that may remain are completely our own responsibility. The photographs are the work of Robert Lorenzon, who brought to the visual recording of each artist’s book the determination and patience to express fully its essence and beauty. Jerry Kelly, through his brilliant design, gave life to the book: he heightened the clarity of the text and discovered the path to its visual allure and essential message.

To all those who have helped us, to the Committee on Members’ Exhibitions ably and cooperatively chaired by Szilvia E. Szmuk-Tanenbaum, and to The Grolier Club, which provides the means and venue for precious and deeply appreciated intellectual stimulation, we offer our most profound and continuing appreciation.

YK and RJR December 2009
New York, NY
RONALD KELLER (1930–)  

Three Poems from *The Bridge*  

Three poems by Hart Crane from his collection *The Bridge*, illustrated and designed by Ronald Keller.  
New York: Red Angel Press, 2004, 8/100, signed, poetry on Saunders Waterford paper and title page and illustrations on Sekishu, bound in beige linen with painted silver lines, text hand set and printed letterpress in American Garamond 648 for poetry, Garamont Italic for text and Caslon 471 for title, 11½” (opens to 42”) x 8” x ½”.  

Writers and artists have often celebrated the Brooklyn Bridge, completed in 1893, as a great symbol of modernism. Hart Crane, too, was captivated by its soaring dynamism, and his long poem, *The Bridge*, is one of the most famous and influential visions of the great structure, spanning Brooklyn and Manhattan “... across the harbor, silver-paced / As though the sun took step of thee ...”  

First published in 1930, *The Bridge* is comprised of 15 short poems, the first of which is titled “Proem: To Brooklyn Bridge.” In addition to “Proem,” Ronald Keller chose to also include “Cutty Sark,” eighth in the series, and “Atlantis,” the last poem, but he altered the sequence so that “Proem” concludes the book.  

The first poem, “Cutty Sark,” is illustrated with an oblique view of the bridge’s signature Gothic arches and suspension cables; for the second poem, “Atlantis,” Keller opens up to a two-page spread with radiating suspension cables, the arches in imposing frontal view. The illustrations for the first two poems are relief printed, but for the final poem, “To Brooklyn Bridge,” the artist shifts to the third dimension in a four-page, 42”-long construction that conveys a climactic appreciation and understanding of the whole. Moving through the book, one reaches a visual crescendo; thus one understands why the artist chose to place the all encompassing “To Brooklyn Bridge” last.  

PAUL JOHNSON (1928–)  

Back to a Remembered Time  

Manchester, UK: Paul Johnson, 1995, unique, commissioned by Robert J. Ruben and inscribed to him, 17” (opens to 34”) x 17” x ½”.  

Paul Johnson is an artist and author who creates artists’ books as well as textbooks about the book arts, especially for school children, as exemplified by his works *Literacy Through the Book Arts*.
This pop-up, 12½” high, shows a complex house like form made up of many windows, entrances, and restive spaces, all with a dazzling range of colors. Opening its kaleidoscopic wings, the viewer opens to a sense of joy — perhaps a return to a time of pleasant memories.

The book was commissioned on a visit to Manchester in the fall of 1994. At that time, Johnson was the founder and director of Book Art Project initiated at Manchester Metropolitan University, funded by the Crafts Council of Great Britain and the Gulbenkian Foundation. Johnson was contacted about a possible book purchase but time was of the essence since he was to leave that next morning to teach book arts to children on islands in the South Pacific. A meeting was held that morning at 0600 at his home, which had an interior décor with color effects not dissimilar to this book — the walls were literally painted with the colors on these leaves, broken up and equally vibrant. At that time the commission for Back to a Remembered Time was agreed upon. Many months later, upon Johnson's return from the South Pacific, he produced the book and sent it on to us in New York.

STEVEN J. BERNSTEIN (1950–1991)

Strip Poker

Appellation Controlée, À Seattle —
Domaine Des Cieux Gris, Negociant
À New York, U. S. A. Flockophobic
Press Sole Agents, Mis En Bouteille
Exclusivement Par A. S. C. Rower,
NY, 1991, 103/200, glass bottle with
cork and lead seal and paper, signed,
h. 12”, diam. 3”.

Steven J. Bernstein was a writer and performance artist of the American West Coast underground. Among his well known recordings are the album Prison and the song “A Little Bit Of Everything (That Brought Me Down To This).”

Strip Poker is a witty work of double entendre with profound meaning. Inside the bottle is a poem printed on a continuous “strip” of paper — hence one association with the archetypal sexual teaser game. Further, to read the poem, one needs to uncork the “wine bottle.” The artist embeds in the essential form, a bottle, a humorous and multilayered melding of sexual mystery, titillation and intoxication.

Since no one has ever opened the bottle, the poem has never been read, a situation that recalls the ancient rites of Dionysos, god of wine; initiates were sworn to silence about his mysteries, secrets never revealed throughout the entire course of antiquity (nor to this day). One can peer in, though: looking through the glass, the poem appears to have been written entirely in capital letters, erect and tall (though who can say what’s hidden behind the folds?) As in many works inspired by Dada and Duchamp, the fundamental form, the bottle itself, is a conceptual compression of male and female.
Although the complete poem exists, as far as is known, only inside the 200 bottles, two fragments available on the internet seem congruent with the visual imagery. Deuces rolled like cannonball tape peeling her naked behind like a peach on the sink room table atmosphere of bleach and agitated steam. There is strip poker and strip poker— you get naked and then you get more naked. [http://www.vialibri.net/item_pg/3979641-1991-bernstein-steven-jesse-strip-poker.htm July 18, 2009]

KENNETH PATCHEN (1911–1972)

Sleepers Awake on the Precipice

New York: Padell Book Company, John Felsberg, Inc., 1946, edition of 3,500, 6½” x 9¼” x 1¾”.

Kenneth Patchen was a seminal American poet and novelist, rooted in the avant garde examples set by Dadaists, Beats, and Surrealists, but often finding inspiration farther back in time. He was active in artistic expressions ranging from poetry readings to jazz accompaniment to his later experiments with visual poetry, as in Sleepers Awake. Superficially, the book appears to be a “regular” hardbound codex until one turns the pages. In addition to conventional paragraphs and punctuation, Patchen, in the tradition of Laurence Sterne’s experimental novel The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman (1759–67), liberates typography, press ornaments, punctuation marks, images, diagrams, and arrangement of type on the page from the expected to the intrinsically expressive, from the linear to the holistic, intensifying the emotional content. Patchen’s techniques and devices, extraordinary in the 1940s, have become widely accepted, and form substantial aspects of the creative repertory of artists’ books today.

As a pacifist, Patchen spent three years during World War II in prison. This experience finds many reflections in Sleepers Awake, published at the end of the war, such as in this passage, which ends with a play on the words so long.

“… for my money, poet and killer can’t be used to describe the same person,” the stranger said.
“Something along that line occurred to me in prison.”
“How much’d you get?” I asked, watching the stranger disappear through a small hole in the ceiling.
“Three years.”
“Because you refused to break one of God’s commandments.”
“Yeh. So long, Best. Think about that tolerance angle.” (p. 74.)

SUSAN WEIL (1930–)

Meta Mor for the Moon

Etchings by Marjorie Van Dyke and Vincent Fitzgerald, The Printmaking Workshop, painting and collage by Susan Weil and Vincent Fitzgerald, calligraphy by Jerry Kelly, letterpress by Kelly-Winterton Press, silkscreen
In her large scale works with which she began her career, Weil experimented with three dimensional paintings and mixed media, with the figurative and with the abstract, and she has carried over this sense of freedom to her artists’ books. For eleven years, she maintained a daily notebook of drawings inspired by passages of James Joyce. *Meta Mor for the Moon* springs in part from this dedicated interest; the title is a pun referring to Joyce’s metaphorical uses of the moon as in *Ulysses*: “… Not bad for a Fairview moon. She was humming. The young May moon…” (*Ulysses*, Chapter VIII – Lestrygonians –http://www.quotesandpoem.com/literature/literaryworks/Joyce/Ulysses/8 July 24, 2009)

The book introduces us first to a silvery interpretation of the waxing and waning of the moon. Past the title page, it takes up the division of the moon into quadrants, each introduced by its named topographies. Weil transforms the schematic representation of the quadrants with lettered titles into poetic expressions of what those topographies — “Bay of Rainbows,” “Tycho,” “Sea of Tranquility” — evoke.

*Meta Mor* is an example of the artist’s book as fine art object, a tradition rooted in the first codices and earlier. In its evocation of the moon, it’s rich in shine and gleam, sensuous colors, fine papers, cutouts, variety, and labor intensive handwork.

LINDA SMITH (1949– )

House of Cods
Poems by Carol Schatt.
Phoenix, AZ: Picnic Press, 1996, 33/50, handset Optima foundry type, relief line engravings, and Gyotaku fish impressions printed on a variety of Mexican, Philippine, and Thai handmade papers, signed by Linda Smith and Carol Schatt, 11” (opens to 22”) x 11⅞” x ½” (opens to 10½”), self-boxed.

The title is a play on words based on a homonym of “cod” for “card,” used to call attention to an issue deeply important to the creators: the status of our cod fisheries, fragile as a house of cards. The material of the box is corrugated cardboard, like a fish box. The cover image is a colored rubbing of a small dead cod, repeated so as to suggest a sequence of a fish dead and yet somehow swimming. Opening the book brings to life the pop-up construction, a commercial fishing boat named “The Joker's Wild,” a wild card as ironic substitute for wild cod. The boat’s windows are curtained or misted over so, we suppose, those within don’t see their precarious position atop a house of cards, a house that snags its own nets before they can reach the fisheries below. On this house of cards, the proud King and Jack lie sidewise, only the Joker is upright.

Told from the point of view of a fish, the poem describes a human atavistic longing for the sea, and the human depredation of fish stocks. “You found us all, / and then the haddock and then the halibut / and then the salmon.”
The poem lifts its narrative to a spiritual level as the fish finds in the whale an expression of its own martyred story: “He had sung to his mates through the vast seas, / But you never heard his message. / He was our Jesus.”

TATANA KELLNER (1950–)

71125: Fifty Years of Silence, Eva Kellner’s Story

Translated from the Czech by Tatana Kellner.
Rosendale, NY: Women’s Studio Workshop, 1992, 34/40, die cut by Raylance Printing, signed, 12” x 19½” (opens to 39”) x 2”.

Tatana Kellner made two artists’ books of similar format, one devoted to her mother, the other to her father, about their lives, and experiences in a concentration camp, during World War II. Exemplars of both are in the Robert J. Ruben collection; on exhibit is the one with her mother’s story.

Etched into the plain pine box with a slide-off lid, such as that used for Orthodox Jewish funerals, is a replica of Eva Kellner’s concentration camp number. Inside, a lifelike three dimensional image of Eva Kellner’s forearm and hand, with the inked tattoo embedded in the pink, naturalistic skin, as the arm and hand are embedded in the text, die cut around the arm. Turning the pages reveals more and more of the story, and more and more of forearm and hand to the final full paper cast at the end.

On the back of every other leaf is Eva Kellner’s handwritten personal story, from her life as a free individual in Prague to her internment, to her liberation — the blue ink put to a new use, to serve as witness. The translucent sheets allow images of the concentration camps to glimmer through, like memory. These alternate with the printed English translation. Behind this easily readable account, and standing in poignant contrast, are back images of smiling faces, early 20th century dress, informal family photographs. (http://wsw.hvi.net/php/details.php?ID=155 July 26, 2009).

JOEL BROUWER (1968–)

Lt. Shrapnel

New York: Artichoke Yink Press, 2001, 2/30, illustrations by Scott Teplin, paper handmade by Paul Denhoad, handmade paper covers (hemp, flax, and shrapnel), with camouflage and red velvet, covers stitched and dog tags assembled by Amy Kaverman, designed and printed letterpress by Patrick JB Flynn, typeset in
Karnak monotype at Woodside Press, Brooklyn, NY, boxes by Mark Wagner, production designed, bound and published by C. K. Wilde, signed, 12½” x 10¾” x 11¼”.

Shrapnel is not an inevitable product of firing a weapon — it had to be invented, and the person who did so was a lieutenant serving in the American Revolution, Henry Shrapnel. Brouwer's poem, the text and inspiration for this book, is an ironic toast to the patriotic lieutenant. The poem begins,

Here’s to Lieutenant (eventually General) Henry Shrapnel, Inventor in 1784 of a shell designed to burst Above the enemy’s head and so return to earth Not in the traditional singular plop, but a swarm of Hissing steel bits, each with force enough to pierce Flesh simply as a drill bit twisting through butter.

The box is rough pine, a coffin with a stamped star of a dead soldier. Wrapped in U. S. Army camouflage fabric, the cover focuses on that highly personal part of a uniform, the pocket, which holds dog tags, a photo written on the back, and a pencil for writing home. The designers think of the book as the body of a soldier, the pages encased in gauze, with the paper holding shrapnel like the skin of a soldier damaged in battle.

In structure, materials and text, this artist’s book is a meditation that rises to anger about man’s inhumanity to man.

ROBERT ZILLER

Wij maken Geschiedenis (We Make History)

Amsterdam: Het Hollandsche Uitgevershuis, 1946, 8½” x 6½” x ¾”.

On each set of the recto pages in this octavo, published at the end of World War II, Nazi statements are confronted by graphics conveying the artist’s understanding of the underlying truth. Sometimes this takes the form of sarcastic portraits of Nazi leaders. For example, a drawing of a sanctimonious appearing Himmler, the Gestapo chief, with a wrinkled brow and bureaucratic eyestrain, is juxtaposed with his words in Dutch:

Als het noodig, blijkt, zal ik duizenden Tsjechen doodschieten. En als dat niet helpt zal het geheele Tsjechische volk worden uitgeroid.

If it turns out that it is necessary, I will shoot thousands of Czechs, and if that does not help, the whole Czech people will be eliminated.
Elsewhere the artist expresses his point of view through a sardonic comparison of words with an image, an expressionistic personal interpretation. We read:

*Concentratiekampen zijn geen schande, integendeel, zij zijn een sieraad der beschaving. Hier worden verwaarloosde wezens opgevoed voor het werkelijke leven met de strengste vriendelijkheid.*

_Fraenksche Tageszeitung._

*Concentration camps are no disgrace, on the contrary they are an ornament of civilization. Here neglected beings are educated for real life with the most severe kindness._

_Fraenksche Tageszeitung._

Translations of the Dutch text into English are courtesy of the Brinkman family in a letter to RJR, Summer 1955.

Facing the text, beneath a menacing shadow, is a pair of hands roped at the wrist, onecontracted, the other extended, conveying rage, agony and helplessness.

FRANS MASEREEL (1889–1972)

**Remember!**

_Berne: Herbert Lang, 1946, 130/950, printed by R. Suter & Cie, Berne, photography by Ateliers Busag S. A., Berne, 12½" x 18½" (opens to 37½") x ½"._

Masereel, a Belgian artist, created _Remember!_ towards the end of World War II while living in Avignon in Vichy France. The suite of 26 page size drawings, most of which carry the date 1944 or 1945, records the atrocities, mass murders, concentration camps and institutionalized sadism of World War II, while hitting hard with a vision of the horrors of all wars and man’s inhumanity to man. In this double expressive purpose, it recalls its great forbear, Goya’s _Disasters of War_, the suite of etchings which, with similar passion and specificity, enlarges the Napoleonic wars in Spain to a painful, grim universal plane. Masereel’s works are characteristically illustrated by woodcuts with jagged, expressionistic cuts, but _Remember!_ is rendered in sweeping curves as if, driven by the urgency of telling his story, the artist had no time for angles.

Masereel’s pioneering graphic books without words, such as _Passionate Journey (My Book of Hours)_ , issued before World War II, are octavos that depict humans in a hostile political and social context with a Kafkaesque helplessness and ambiguity; rendered through black and white woodcuts in the German Expressionist mode, the figures are semi-silhouette and flat. The experience of World War II fueled a departure to the large format and use of drawings, as well as the sense of immediacy given by the Michelangelesque physicality of the figures.
SUSAN JOHANKNECHT (1955–)

Waste Incant

Newark, VT: Janus Press, 2007, edition of 150, plastics including acrylic slipcase, illusion polycarbonate and flexible vinyl from Rowland Technologies, CT, Barcham Green, cambersand and cairo papers from Hayle Mill, UK, computer preparation by Ellen Dorn Levitt, printed by Andrew Miller-Brown, binding executed by Audrey Holden, printed in black and silver, 7¾” x 11½” x ½”.

The book, in its acrylic case, is a statement about the storage of nuclear waste in plastic. The line drawings are derived from illustrations in children's textbooks, redrawn to show a disrupted nature. The toxic wastes, listed partially alphabetically, are printed on both sides of the embossed paper, each page separated by a plastic sheet. The unstable and hence inappropriate and hazardous use of plastic to contain toxic waste is emphasized by the diverse deformations of each of the plastic sheets.

How fascinating that the book is immaculate and glamorous while its topic — waste — implies what's dirty and distasteful. The ironic disjunction dramatizes the tension between the allure of easy labor, magical communications and other seductions of our high tech culture and the tarnished other side of the coin, deadly byproducts with tenacious half-lives. The book uses the very products it condemns. We can't do without it, can we?

LOIS MORRISON (1934–)

Endangered Species

[N.p.], 1999, Chinese calligraphy by Jenifer Tsao, 6/25, color copied and printed with a Gocco printer onto Magnani Pescia, Fabriano Ingres Cover Heavyweights, Crosspoint Synergy and Passports, and Strathmore Drawing 400 papers, gone back into with Pigma pens, dry mounted and glued, Zurich Calligraphic typefaces and author's script, signed, 8¾” x 6¼” (opens to 50”) x 1”.

The book, covered in black and gold fabric, is encased in a golden silk purse, suggesting it holds something precious. And, indeed, that's true because children are inside. Opening the book unfolds a series of five exotic pop-up flowers, what one thinks of as endangered species in the ordinary sense, but the flowers hold images of children who are highly endangered, whether they live in favelas,
squatters settlements, in Brazil, are child soldiers in Uganda, children threatened by infanticide in China, victims of war in the Balkans, or young African American victims of drug addiction and violence in the inner city. The book contrasts poignantly the wondrous flowering of youth with a devastating denial of that promise. And since children are our future, the implication is that human beings are, themselves, an endangered species.

Pop-up books are often thought of as children’s books; here, the artist has created a “pop-up children’s book” that carries a plea for children in the deepest sense.

JULIE CHEN (1963–)

Panorama

Berkeley, CA: Flying Fish Press, 2008, 9/100, bound charcoal gray cloth over boards with title printed in black on gold paper, demi-lune gold and red paper at front hinge, housed in gray cloth box with magnetized flaps, title printed front of box in black on gold paper, printed letterpress from wood blocks and photopolymer plates by Julie Chen and Alan Hillesheim, assembled by Julie Chen, Erin Latimer and Kimi Taira, signed, 9½” x 20¼” (opens to 60”) x 1¼”.

Panorama seeks to heighten awareness about the fragility of our earth’s capacity to support life in the face of climate change. It employs words, images, ingenious techniques and the seduction of beauty to a common end: increased perspective — spatial and intellectual. Past a panorama of rocks, and of a town, the book opens with a double-page spread of a stunningly constructed pop-up perspective of horizontal layers that represent, moving outward, the surrounding spheres: troposphere, stratosphere, mesosphere, thermosphere (400+ miles out). The book, having sent us in a single glance and at the speed of light to the farthest reaches, reminds us that, “The breathable atmosphere that surrounds the earth comes to an end roughly 6 miles above sea level.”

The second double-page panorama takes us from the rocky surface of the earth into its deepest fiery reaches. Surrounding vortices of extinction, we are told, “If each species that is committed to extinction by the year 2050 corresponded to a single word listed in the Oxford English Dictionary, you would have to read through the entire list of entries nine times in a row to represent them all.” Thus the artist’s words work in synergy with her images to carry us to new perspectives. [http://www.flyingfishpress.com/gallery_panorama.html July 28, 2009 – Julie Chen]
ANGELA LORENZ (1965–)

Bologna Sample

Verona: Stamperia Valdonega, 1992, 41/50, paper produced by Cartiere Fedrigoni, color squares hand painted and in watercolor and glued individually on acid free paper, signed, 10” x 10½”, extends to 52” x ½”.

Using the small square format of paint color swatches on hand in any paint store, Lorenz hand paints with water colors the hues she’s discovered on the walls of 179 buildings in the ancient city of Bologna, each labeled with its address. Thus she leaps from the contemporary and standardized to the wayward processes of history, from the mechanized to the labors of the human mind and hand over time.

The colors in this book, sweet as they appear, are a palimpsest of change, from Medieval red brick through painting and repainting in pigments that are hardy or ephemeral, protective or destructive, vibrant or the bleached white of stucco, all the way to current demands for restoration to the original — with all the arguments and uncertainties about what is “original” that follow along. In what is traditionally known as Bologna red and Modena yellow, she locates “in any moment an infinite number of oranges and ochres.”

Bologna Sample raises awareness about history and the moment, and of the contrast between conceptual expectations and perceptual realities. Cognizant of the changes in light, atmospheric inflections, the effects of reflections and the flux within each viewer, knowing the impossibility of defining color in any absolute sense, she strikes out beyond uncertainties to provide a thoughtful and sensuous delight.

MARCIA CIRO (1955–)

Lock

[N.p.], 2001, 7/12, archival inkjet on Weber Valentine and Mohawk papers, signed, 7½” x 5” x 14” x ¾”, extends to 20”.

Lock is a synoptic meditation on the Three Gorges, historically one of China’s most famous scenic sites, often rendered in great classical Chinese scrolls, and now the site of the world’s largest hydroelectric dam. The book is a product of Marcia Ciro’s visit to the Three Gorges in 2001, during the dam’s construction. The dam submerges under 175 feet of water much of the landscape and several ancient sites central to the development of Chinese civilization, while providing flood control and vast power generation. The locks enable shipping but the project “locks out” inhabitants and visitors from ever again seeing the beauty of the Three Gorges. The hexagonal movable sections of Lock are bound by rigid interruptions, conveying the series of the dam’s locks and enabling a kind
of viewer’s voyage on the controlled river. On the outer long sides are panoramic photographs of the construction of the dam in the context of its surroundings. On the inner face of the long sides are photographs of the now inundated green countryside, reminiscent of classical Chinese landscape scrolls. On the ends of the hexagonal sections are photographic images of former inhabitants, blurry as memory; flanking these, and on the center dividers are crisp photographs of what one sees today, including the view from a boat navigating the locks. The box, awash with photographic images of the flowing Yangtze River, carries notations from a tourist guide on the effects of the new dam and recalls the traditional beauty of the Three Gorges region.

CHARLES HOBSON (1943-)

Magritte’s Bucket

San Francisco: Pacific Editions, 1995,
3/10, assembled with the assistance of Melissa Gill, buckets: board, copper wire, bamboo, brass tubing; text paper: windsong; typefaces Swing and Cantoria, signed, h. 2¼” (scroll extends to 62”), diam. 3¾”.

Hobson spins this artist’s book from a rumor that the 20th-century Surrealist Rene Magritte, learning of Isaac Hawkins’ attempt in the 18th Century to determine longitude by keeping track of high and low tides, found the measuring of tides with a bucket as poetic or elusive as capturing rain or clouds in his paintings. According to the text by Hobson, a Surrealist in his own right, “Magritte’s studio contained two buckets. One day he tried to measure the height of the tides using the two buckets, one filled with clouds and one filled with rain, but the wind and the tide kept changing and he couldn’t tell whether the tide was high or low, or whether he was here or there or if the buckets held meaning or poetry.”

The book consists of two buckets, with handles, with silvery lacquer exteriors (the smaller brighter than the larger), and interiors lined with pastel monotypes derived from passages in Magritte’s paintings. The smaller bucket, its interior blue toned with clouds and rain, is labeled “here” on the bottom, and the larger, with the brighter landscape and set at an angle in its hatbox-like lid, is labeled “there.” A paper coil fits inside the large bucket, the small bucket fitting inside so that when the small bucket is lifted out by the handle it catches a tab and lifts the coil out for reading. An accompanying miniature artist’s book includes the text on the scroll, additional monotypes, physical facts about the book, and explanations about its inspiration in the conjunction of Hawkins’ and Magritte’s “measuring of the tides”.

MARTHA A. HALL (1949–2003)

Voices – Five Doctors Speak July 7–16, 1998

Orrs Island, ME: [N.p.], 2001, 3/12, signed, 6⅜” x 9⅜” x ¾”.

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This book progresses, page by page, from first diagnosis to palliative care, through a woman’s experience with cancer of the breast. The physicians think or speak in words, each in his own type font, while the woman’s responses are graphic images. Compassionate objectivity meets helpless anguish. Doctors and patient are partners, united in a dance of death.

“Do you want to speak to me on the phone or in person?” a doctor asks. A taut open hand, its overlong thumb pointing toward an over short future, is the only answer. There are moments of hope: “Your bone scan is fine. Your CT scan is fine,” with the actual scans as graphics, ghostly and skeletal whatever they may show. But things take a turn for the worse. “In order to live, you must live with the fear of dying,” is followed by a tiny, pocketed artist’s book within the book, a gift for friends, illustrated by a dancing skeleton. At the end the doctors join voices in all the fonts that have individualized them, in a page filled with the chorus of “I’m sorry. I’m sorry.” The woman’s experience cannot be found in words.

MINDELL DUBANSKY (1954– )

The Candy Button Book

New York: [N.p.], 1996, 4/20, candy button pages and neoprene binding, wood and metal Victor mousetrap by Woodstream Corp., Lititz, PA, text printed in Monotype Corsive on HP LaserJet IIP plus printer, photocopied on polyester film, 2¾” x 12½” x 1¾”.

A memorial to a friend lost to AIDS who had made a candy button book that was eaten by mice.

“…my friend Susan told me that Don had died of AIDS. The news broke my heart and I couldn’t help thinking that no one would ever again have the pleasure of knowing that sweet fragile man and his candy button book.”

Mice destroyed Don’s original candy. Now the Victor mousetrap will prevent destruction — death.

LYNNE AVADENKA (1955– )

The Uncommon Perspective of M.E.J. Colter

Huntington Woods, MI: Land Marks Press, 1992, 55/100, shaped paper for this edition, made by Kathryn Clark and designed by Lynne Avadenka at Twinrocker, is made from cotton rag, earth from New Mexico, beaten straw and burlap, Barrett paper case, printed letterpress on Frankfurt cream paper, Kennerle old style type composed by Harold Berliner Type
Mary Elizabeth Jane Colter was the architect of many of the now famous buildings on the south rim of the Grand Canyon, including Hopi House, Hermit's Rest, Lookout Studio, and Desert View. The book reflects the colors and textures of the land, the turquoise associated with the region, and Colter's architecture; fully open, it forms a pueblo shaped structure. Avadenka has written three booklets, “locked doors,” “foundation” and “opaque windows,” tucked into the book in slipcases shaped like stairs, suggesting a pueblo’s multi-storied architecture. The booklets tell Colter’s story.

Avadenka asks in “locked doors”

*Why would it be so difficult to learn about this woman? When her buildings are still standing, when they are an inseparable part of a visitor’s experience of the Grand Canyon, why is her name nowhere to be found?*

She follows these questions with white space on the page (a pause?), and then:

*Quick, name a woman architect.*

This book brings an “uncommon perspective” to those questions.

**REIN JANSMA (1959–)**

**Stairs**

New York: Joost Elfers, Stewart, Tabori & Chang, ARTobjects, 1999, made in Holland, 10¼” x 7½” (opens to 15”) x 1¼”.

Opening the pages of this book brings into formation ten differently designed stairways. What a play of possibilities is revealed! Symmetries and asymmetries, continuous treads and interspersed landings, white on white, matter and void — negative and positive spaces run riot! Yet each stairway seen as a sculptural whole yields a perfect, classic balance. These are not the fancies of an M. C. Escher but, equally fascinating, of a practicing architect who deals on a regular basis with how things go up and down and stay where they’re put in the real world. After the experience of *Stairs*, these utilitarian structures take on a new brilliance.

Rein Jansma is a prominent contemporary Dutch architect. His firm, Zwarts & Jansma, has designed, among many significant structures, the Dutch Pavilion at the 1992 World Exhibition in Spain, and the facade of the Rembrandt House restoration in Amsterdam.
SUSAN KIEFER HUGHES

A Landscape of Edna St. Vincent Millay Sonnets

Oakland, CA: California College of
Arts and Crafts, 1987, second edition,
8/25, Rives BFK, Arches Cover
Black papers, Moriki lining, set in
Garamont Light, signed, 16” x 6½”
(opens to 36”) x ½”.

The landscape, woodcuts printed in black with white, is bleak in its coloration and rich in its detail
and expanse, bringing out essential truths about Millay’s poetry, somewhat morbid but filled with
vitality. Each page holds one of six sonnets hidden in the New England landscape, like Millay
herself, not obviously accessible, until its tab, shaped like a tombstone, is pulled out at the top,
opening the sonnet for the reader like a window.

The landscape is continuous, but inflects with the imagery of the sonnet on its page. The fifth
sonnet:

I shall go back again to the bleak shore
And build a little shanty on the sand,
In such a way that the extremest band
Of brittle seaweed will escape my door
But by a yard or two; and nevermore
Shall I return to take you by the hand;
I shall be gone to what I understand,
And happier than I ever was before.
The love that stood a moment in your eyes,
The words that lay a moment on your tongue,
Are one with all that in a moment dies,
A little under-said and over-sung.
But I shall find the sullen rocks and skies
Unchanged from what they were when I was young.

CLAIREE VAN VLIET (1933–)

Sanctae Hildegardis: Circulus Sapientiae (Circle of Wisdom)

Newark, VT: Janus Press, 2001,
41/120, pulp paintings and color
sheets by Claire Van Vliet with
Katie MacGregor, covers by Katie
MacGregor, Twinrocker Lilac Wind
and Barcham Green RWS, Nefertiti,
Renaissance IV and Dover papers,
pop-ups executed by Audrey Holden,
This work celebrates the 900th anniversary of the birth of Hildegard von Bingen. Hildegard was a leading intellectual of her time — a physician, prioress and diplomat. The book focuses on her as a visionary, and the text, including the CD, on her work as a composer. An enclosed booklet contains a free English translation of her hymns. The inner cover lettering is in Hildegard's secret alphabet.

The pages open as an accordion. The Latin texts of twelve of her songs are printed below seven pulp paintings with the particular intensity of color of that technique; on each painting is a vibrant pop-up, their imagery inspired by the drawings Hildegard made in her manuscripts. The designs above are related to the words of the text below. The visual experience is immediate and powerful, and conveys the emotional and spiritual effects of the songs.

The first, “O virtus Sapientie,” offers some insight into her conception of her Circulus Sapientiae. Wisdom is a central figure for Hildegard; her three wings, represented as a pop-up in the artist's book, may refer to the Trinity.

O virtus sapien
tie,
O Wisdom’s Power
que circuiens circuisti,
orb within widening orb!
comprehendendo omnia
all, all you gather up inside you
in una via que habet vitam,
From the one road's rush they make,
tres alas habens,
your wide three wings,

quarum una in altum volat
one that streams toward heaven's height,
et altera de terra sudat
one that earthward toils,
et tercia undique volat.
and one that allwheres beats.
Laus tibi sit, sicut te decet,
Wisdom, what praises should yours be,
O Sapientia,
be they yours, be they yours.
JIM MACHACEK (1945–) and SIBYL RUBOTTOM

**O is for Opera**

San Diego: False Bay Editions, Bay Park Press, 2006, calligraphy design by Judythe Siecke, set design page drawings by Stephen Hendrickson, signed by the authors, 19/45, printed letterpress on Velata paper using mostly Bernhard Modern type and photopolymer image plates, 9½” x 6¾” x 9½” (opens to 46”) x 2”.

In a wine-red silk covered box with a gold “O,” surrounded by a baroque lining, is an alphabet book from *Aida* to *Die Zauberflöte*, complete with programs, opera glasses and an intermission at Café Intermezzo, where a collaged plate of delectables awaits, including caviar toasts, gateau de marrons, champagne, and more. Six opera houses are illustrated, the one in Sydney as a pop-up.

Each opera in this accordion is illustrated with a pop-up; *Aida* features a three-dimensional pyramid and a processional march of wild animals, including an elephant, giraffe, lion and bear (and the Met only has horses!). For *Madame Butterfly*, portions of the libretto are printed on delicate Japanese papers, and there’s a view of the harbor at Nagasaki. *Die Zauberflöte*, with a volvelle that as it rotates, provides glimpses of the Queen of the Night and her domain. Uniquely, the colophon doesn’t end the book: it’s followed by a post-show party with confetti and champagne.

**ALFREDO JAAR (1956–)**

**A Hundred Times Nguyen**

Stockholm: Fotografiska Museet I Moderna Museet, 1994, 12” x 8” x ¾”.

Alfredo Jaar photographed this young Vietnamese girl while investigating refugee detention centers in Hong Kong.

“During the course of one of my visits to the Pillar Point Refugee Centre, I was followed by a little girl. She would not speak to me but only followed. At one point, I asked for permission to photograph her. She agreed. I took five photographs of her, one after the other, at intervals of approximately five seconds.”

The book is composed of five slightly different views of Nguyen, each set repeated twenty times. Her expressions of inward joy and pleasure in being photographed are firmly imprinted by the repetitions of these similar but not identical images. The poignancy of these portraits of innocence is heightened by the context of the Vietnam War as a token for all wars. Although reluctant to speak directly to Jaar, Nguyen Thi Thuy did write down her name for him, and it is to her the book is dedicated.
EDWARD H. HUTCHINS (1948– )

Flights of Fancy
Mount Vernon, NY: Editions, 2002,
1/15, sponge stenciled with pigment
ink on Rosaspina Bianco, signed, 6½" x 6½" (extends to 36") x ¾".

When opened to the full 36", three mobiles of fanciful animals are suspended, transcending their natural abilities: a fish flies, a bird swims, and a pig dances. Each set of facing pages raises a question: if these animals can, in our thoughts, go beyond what’s expected of them, what remarkable possibilities might that open up for us humans? In its gentle, charming way, Flights of Fancy symbolizes the ability of the human spirit to rise above any and all obstacles, and encourages us to make the voyage.

As in many of Hutchins’ books, serenity and humor join a call to aspiration, conveyed through more than 60 sponged-stenciled images in soft but saturated combinations of readily pleasing colors, as well as the delicacy of the structures and curvilinear appeal of the figures.

DANIELA DEEG (1969– )

The Book of Warnings
Rosendale, NY: Women’s Studio Workshop, 2001, 21/50, silkscreen printed, handbound, signed, 8" x 6" (extends to 15") x ½".

In its use of popular imagery, saturated color and silk screen technique, this book has the look of Pop Art. Deeg composes The Book of Warnings from familiar signs covering the gamut from Alert, Alarm, and Beware of the Dog to more intense threats of lightning, flooding, electrocution and poison. Generally, things get worse. The overlays never mask the signs’ content or familiarity. Among all the current hazards is a two-page spread in old script of dire religious warnings. Just when you think she might run out of things to fear, she comes up with another and, ironically, brings out a smile.

In contrast to Pop Art, however, Deep has a specific, philosophical point to make concerning the problematic flooding of our visual environment with warning signs. She states the premise at the start: our extraordinary human ability to anticipate is a double-edged sword. The same skill that lets us plan and to some extent control the future also leads us to anticipate disasters; hyperapprehensive, we become not only masters but “slaves of future events.” How ironic that this is one hazard for which there is as yet no sign.

Yet another irony ends the book. A red EXIT sign on the final page informs: “Emergency Exit Release located at base of window at next forward facing page” [italics added].
JEAN McGARRY (1952–)

Human House

New York: Flockophobic Press, 1990,
designed by A. S. C. Rower, art by
Holton Rower, 97/200, printed by
Zeechow Press, Inc., signed by Jean
McGarry, Holton Rower, A. C. S.
Rower, 13” x 6¾” (opens to 20”)
x ¼”.

This bright glossy Chinese menu, the cover in red and gold, with what could almost be taken for a
dragon, lets you order from among seven poems dealing with the human condition: “Terrain,”
“Retreat,” “Old Time,” “Works,” “Growth,” “Song,” and on the back, “Circulate.” Reading down
the columns to choose your meal, you read a poem, each line of poetry with its order number and
price: “The crisis of flesh” is $5.95. Among the higher priced items, THE LINE WAS WOUND and
lunch opened in the basket is $11.25. WASTE OF STUBBLE is priced in season. There are free flowing
green ink drawings — male, female, fish? — someone's been doodling on the menu.

The Human House has a delicious menu and lots of choices, and — considering what you get — the
prices seem reasonable.

STEPHANIE BROOKS (1970–)

Tax Forms Enclosed 1040EZ 1040A 1040

[N.p.], 1996, 11” x 8½”.

The artist uses a format all-too-well known, the IRS tax form, as a vehicle for reporting a different
type of net worth: ethical, psychological, and subjective. As one of the two certainties of this world,
these alternative forms allow for a consideration of beliefs, ideas, emotional states, apologies, kind
gestures, regrets, mild depression, positives offsetting negatives.

On form 1040 EZ, Income Tax Return for Single and Joint Filers With No Dependencies,
these inquiries are under “Inventory”:

Line 1. “Total number of positive attributes (include values, characteristics, beliefs,
selfimprovements, and positive outlooks).”

Line 2. “Total number of negative attributes (include all character defects, inadequacies, and
negative outlooks).”

Line 3. “Emotional compensation (see page 14).”
Line 4. “Add lines 1, 2, and 3. This is your adjusted gross. If less than 9,230, see page 15 to find out if you can earn credit for the amount on line 7 [which is the ‘total number of kind gestures and other unselfish moments for this tax year’].”

Thus, with three official looking forms in a cream white envelope, the author provides a metric of existence.

SARAH PLIMPTON (1936– )

The Over and Over, poems

New York: Manhattan Graphics Center and the Grenfell Press, 2002, 9/20, aquatints printed by Peter Pettengill in Hinsdale, NH, title printed letterpress on paper label on cover of wrapper and box spine, loose folded sheets of Arches paper gathered in a handmade pulp paper black wrapper, box by Claudia Cohen, signed, 11½” x 8” (opens to 16”) x ¼”.

Sarah Plimpton has written the poetry and designed, illustrated and printed the book: thus The Over and Over is an artist’s book in a notable holistic sense, with every facet conceived, planned and fulfilled by the artist. The poems are short, lyrical, and unpunctuated; each reads like a single sentence, an aperçu physically grounded. The abstract aquatints, in tones of grey and mauve, accompany each poem, with a large double-page aquatint in the center. The signature poem, “The Over and Over,” embodies a breeze and in it conveys a day:

face up
with red paint
holding fingers
in the door
a slight draft
moves
back and forth
swings to open
cries with its hinge
the over and over
until it was dark
MAYAN WOMEN

Incantations

A collective work of Taller Leñateros, the “Woodlanders Workshop,” in the highlands of Chiapas in San Cristóbal de Las Casas in southern Mexico, 2005, edition of 4,444, 10” x 10” x 2”.

Incantations is the first book created completely by Mayan people in nearly five hundred years, since the Mayan libraries were burned by the bishop of Yucatán. Over 150 people, from all contemporary Mayan walks of life — “... prayer makers, soothsayers, sorceresses, dyers, diviners, hired mourners, spinners, etc...” — collaborated as writers, illustrators, and papermakers, working with Taller Leñateros, the “Woodlanders’ Workshop,” a cultural society and school of books arts for the Mayan people.

The poems are in the Mayan language Tzotzil with English translations. Where do the poems come from? The Mayan women who produced them have many answers, all suggesting a connection with the past: they say they learn their poems from books that their ancestors show them in dreams, books written by the Earth, the Moon, or the Sun every day. The women to whom ancient books appear in dreams, and who understand the ancient poetic language, no longer spoken, are called Tz’ib’olontonil, “Those who have Writing in their Hearts.”

The book represents a monumental task, a handmade creation, multiplied by the edition of 4,444. The 100,000 silk screen prints were produced by 6 Mayan artists over 6 years. The paper was handmade from “… corn husks, gladiola stems, heart of maguey, palm leaves, recycled women’s cotton huipil blouses, banana trunks ...,” the masks for the cover of the book from “… old cardboard boxes, corn silk, rabbit skin glue tar, camphor leaves, and instant coffee.” Incantations was thirty years in the making.

Some titles of the poems provide a glimpse of everyday subject matters of particular concern to women: “I am a woman my woman” — “Antzun ti antzun”; “Planting a tree” — Sventa ta jtz’un te”; “Words to bring down fever” — “Smakobil K’Ok” and “So the baby will talk” — “Svenat Uma.” The final poem reads:

We are happy, sacred paper,
sacred book,
sacred words,
sacred paintings,
You’ve come out in another language
called English,
the tongue of the white folks
who have blonde hair.
Don’t scold us, book,
be of one heart,
sing and dance,
because you are going to travel faraway
to another land.

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ABD ALMARDY ABIED

My Game

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Jamal Hamed and Mohamed Hamed, [n.d., but ca. 2003], 4” (extends to 30”) x 6½” x ½”.

This sturdy, glossy, Islamic child’s sport book exemplifies the artist’s book as a vehicle for children’s education and entertainment. It unfolds as an accordion, and each double page opens to a pop-up image of a different sport, with the Arabic text giving the rules of the sport below: soccer, boxing, basketball, volleyball, tennis, table tennis, diving, and bicycling. Soccer, boxing, basketball and bicycling take place in front of a cheering crowd rendered in silhouette.

One reads:

Volley Ball

The team is six players and every team tries to throw the ball by hand over the net into the other side of his opponents. It is illegal to bounce the ball so that it touches the ground more than three times. The players must not touch the net by hand or body. There is no exact time limit for a game. A game has five quarters. A quarter is finished if a team scores fifteen points. The game is over when one of the teams scores and wins three quarters.

The translation is by Anthony Eltabie.

LARRY MILLER (1944– )

Genetic Code Certificates

[N.p.], 1992–1993, nine certificates, each 11” x 9”.

In reacting to the legal case of Moore v. Regents of the University of California, Larry Miller, part of the Fluxus movement, takes on a vital contemporary issue: patenting the genetic code. John Moore’s spleen had been removed at UCLA Medical Center in treatment for leukemia; subsequently he discovered that his physician and a researcher had patented his spleen cells (U. S. Patent 4,438,032), and negotiated highly lucrative agreements for the commercial development of the cell line and products derived from it. Moore sued; the case was argued in California Supreme Court which determined that Moore had no property rights to his own body tissue nor any profits made from them. The Court’s opinions center around definitions of property and precedents dealing with property. (Dorothy Nelkin and Suzanne Anker: The influence of genetics on contemporary art. Nature Reviews / Genetics Volume 3 / December 2002 | 967–971)

Miller expresses his view of these property issues by creating a website with a series of Genetic Code Certificates available in English, Spanish, French, Polish, Japanese, Italian, Danish, and German, along with a “Sale Document” — downloadable free of charge — on the web at http://www.onlyonelarrymiller.com/copyright.htm.

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The genetic certificate reads, in part:

*do hereby forever copyright my unique genetic code, however it may be scientifically determined, described, or otherwise empirically expressed. Any reproduction, regeneration or facsimile duplication, whether in whole or in part ... is universally prohibited ...*

The sale certificate reads in part:

*Born a natural human... and having proclaimed universal copyright to my unique genetic code... do hereby sell and transfer to... and assign forever all copyrights and permissions to my unique genetic code... for the sum of_________

Many believe that DNA should not be patented because its discovery was made with public funds and it belongs to all. Further, while patenting may seem in the short term to stimulate investment in biomedical research, its ultimate effect denies information and material to trained, dedicated biomedical researchers, and thus is antagonistic to science and to the betterment of human lives.

**ROCCO SCARY (1960–)**

**Your Very Own Personal Escape Route**

North Caldwell, NJ: [N.p.], 2006,
unique, handmade Gampi paper,
oxidized metal, mixed media,
6” x 9” x 35”.

Scary's thick, dogeared books, worn and seemingly fatigued, evoke the sense of memory and passage of time, and express an identification with and sense of loss about his native New Jersey. He writes about real estate development that is destroying the region's character and history. “No single location, nor its attached memory, whether it is centered in the suburbs, open land or that of an established city, is safe from the developers’ plan”. (http://www.artslant.com/global/artists/show/15651-rocco-scary August 18, 2009).

The sense of devastation in *Your Very Own Personal Escape Route* goes even beyond the inroads of real estate development, and looks forward into fear as well as backward into memory. Given the burned skyscraper landscape on the first page, with its ravaged Emergency Shelter Guide, the escape seems to be from an event of massive destruction. Memories of the World Trade Center bombing coalesce with an imagined nuclear disaster. The book takes us to the cataclysmic.

The book continues as a foldout. Guides for escape are unofficial, handwritten, desperate, tucked into slots interspersed in New Jersey maps and photos, and of the tone, *I may not survive but perhaps this will help you make it.* One reads, “Go to the bridge you are now leaving the city — don’t look back.” The final message is “west two days 3.5 miles into the winery woods find the old standing house. This is your new home — for now.”
ANGELA LORENZ (1965– )

Binding Ties

Bologna: Sintesi Edizioni, 1997, 1/30, signed, 17” x 5” (extends to 17”) x ¼”.

The book is encased in an envelope of the kind used to package neckties, with outline maps that allude to connections between natural resources found in colonial areas of the world and industrial products which depend on them. The accordion format opens on one surface to facsimiles of six striped British regimental ties: 17th/21st Lancers, Royal Corps of Signals, Colonial Police, Irish Guards, Calcutta Light Horse, and Kenya Police; there’s a swatch of Gurkha Brigade fabric on the envelope’s fold. These are related to four commodities, seen on the reverse, obtained from the colonies in which the regiments served. Pullouts at the top bring lines of text into place at the ties’ cut out white stripes. The text, loosely rhymed, reflects on indigenous life before and after colonization and exploitation of native resources.

In this book, in which every detail is conceptually related, the title reflects on the interrelationships of the images and words, and the physical, economic, political and intellectual connections that circle the world and travel through time.

JAN HENDERIKSE (1937– )

Broadway

New York/Rotterdam: A Jan Henderikse – Uitgeverij Bébert Edition, 1983, New York City bus map included as companion piece, 4½” x 16½” (extends to 154”) x 1”.

Through photographic images taken from dawn to sunset on the summer solstice, this book travels through Manhattan south to north via Broadway, starting at Bowling Green, capturing an image of each intersection looking both north and south, and ending at Spuyten Duyvil Creek. The route that today is Broadway began as an Indian trail, and was well in place when the Dutch purchased the island of Manhattan. With New Amsterdam established at the southern tip of the island near the green swath that was their cattle market, the Indian trail became their main route — the Dutch named it “Heerestraat” — for traveling through the thick woods to the island’s north end — which they named Spuyten Duyvil. Three hundred fifty-seven years later this route was followed by Dutch artist Henderikse, taking photographs and making it his own. It takes awhile, especially when one is stopping to take two photos at ever corner: Henderikse photographed Broadway on the longest day of the year, giving him maximum time to make it from Bowling Green, along Heerestraat, all the way to the rough waters of Spuyten Duyvil. Henderikse lives in Breukelen.
KVĚTA PACOVSKÁ (1928– )

Unfold/Enfold

San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2004, 10” x 10” (opens to 12”) x ⅔”.

The author invites you to make yourself small and enter through a ¾” octagonal opening in the first page, recalling Alice entering through the rabbit hole, and indeed this is a wonderland of mixed media fantasy. The two sided accordion is a cornucopia of cutouts, pencil drawings, ink drawings, collage and pop-ups forming 100 different images. Each page holds a surprise, and each stirs the imagination in a different way. Some pages are dense, some are minimal, some are figural — imaginary animals, for instance — some are abstract, some are three-dimensional, some slick, and some a mixture of all possibilities. Scribbles mingle with the precise. The book is vibrant with color and shine. Among all the visual and tactile variety, there is one mood — joy.

Pacovská is a well known illustrator of such children’s books as The Little Flower King, The Little Match Girl, Midnight Play, and others.

EDWARD H. HUTCHINS (1948– )

Whatta Pie

Cairo, NY: [N.p.], 1991, 21/24, signed, 4½” x 11½” x 3½”.

This triangular slice of pie comes, like true take-out, in a shaped plastic clamshell; in its twelve horizontal slices, the artist plays visually and verbally with twelve variations on the theme of “pie”: The Upper Crust, Easy as Pie, Mom & Apple Pie, Pizza Pie, Chicken Pot Pie, Math Pi, Finger Pie, Pie in the Sky, Blackbird Pie, Funeral Pie, Printer’s Pi and Sweetie Pie. Each piece of the pie carries a complementary image — foldout, collage, movable cutout, or volvelle — on one surface and a text on the other that together bring out the artist’s view of various matters, sometimes political or social, sometimes personal.

The slices vary in thickness, techniques of illustration and added materials. Math Pi has the diagram and formula for pi, with notations in a pseudo oriental script on one side and on the other: “I found a student’s notebook in Cambodia during the Vietnam war. Every page was indecipherable except for the formula for pi. It was something else we had in common.”

Printer’s Pi has a scramble of letters and symbols on one side and on the other: “Rumor says that the devil invented printing to curse the world with transposed letters, mismatched type, faulty punctuation & ‘printer’s pi’ — jumbled type that has to be resorted by size and style.”

Sweetie Pie, at the bottom, has sugar candies attached on one side, and a charming, daintily handwritten vulgarity on the other.
THOMAS MCEVILLEY (1939–)

Diogenes: Defictions

Berkeley, CA: Editions Koch, 1994, lead edition, one of 50, Christopher Stinehour hand lettering, printed letterpress from zinc engravings onto soft lead plates by Peter Koch, housed loose in a glazed ceramic box created by sculptor Stephen Braun, 6¾” x 4½” x 1¾”.

_Diogenes: Defictions_ takes the postmodern insistence on the independence of text from context a step further: it invents a context.

This pseudo ancient relic purporting to convey the wise words of Diogenes, the Cynic philosopher of the famous lantern, is even provided with an archaeological provenance, the dump in ancient Corinth, the city where Diogenes may have been born. And it looks veritably ancient, a box seemingly weathered by 2300 years in the earth, in which are lead tablets with cryptic statements, printed in a seemingly ancient font specially designed for _Diogenes: Defictions_ in 1994. The text is written by Thomas McEvilley, a contemporary American scholar and man of letters. The tablets, which can be arranged in any order, hold twenty-one short philosophical utterances — performance pieces McEvilley composed using the traditions that have come down in history about Diogenes. McEvilley has caught Diogenes' voice:

*When he was captured by pirates and put up for sale, the auctioneer asked him what he could do. “Govern men,” he replied, and told the crier to call it out, in case anyone wanted to buy a master for himself.*

*When asked who would carry his body out for burial he said, “Whoever wants my room.”*

NANCY GARRUBA (1951–)

Not Altogether True Not Altogether False

Bethesda, MD: Women’s Center, 1983, edition of 300, 3½” x 6¼” x ¼”.

_Not Altogether True Not Altogether False_ uses a favorite trope among artists’ books, the altered common object. A check book is, after all, a most common form of the book. Here, 26 checks in their folder, filled out in Gurruba's handwriting, complete with notations, and drawn on the First Women’s National Bank, provide an autobiographical running account, touching on her personal relationships, profession and independence. The checks’ background is a pattern of the female symbol repeated to suggest many women reaching out to one another. An endorsement on the back of each check relates to the payee, with comments stamped “true,” “false,” or “not altogether true not altogether false,” the last stamp a statement of status of the artist's life, “in progress.”
The first check, #126, is to the author's mother with the notation, “For loan repayment,” and a message, “Please cash this me mom”; the endorsement: “As young girl I was never taught that I should be able to support myself”; a red stamp:

*NOT ALTOGETHER TRUE*

*NOT ALTOGETHER FALSE.*

The personal and fiscal biography develops with the endorsement of the next check, another loan repayment: “As a young girl I was taught that I should supplement my husband's income or be self-supporting in case of widowhood or divorce”; the red stamp, “TRUE.”

The endorsement for Check #144 to her physician for her annual checkup (pun intended?) reads: “I love what I do so it's pointless to think of changing a system that values MBA’s more than artists”: “FALSE.”

DIANNE WEISS

A Carousel

Mill Valley, CA: Figment Press, 1988,
40/100, hand colored illustrations,
signed, 2” x 3” x ½” (opens to
diam. 5”).

Homage to the carousel: this book opens with a ticket of admission. Extending it fully gives you a full round of the miniature carrousel, 5” in diameter. There are eight horses, a camel and a zebra. Polychrome mirrors behind each animal reinforce the fanciful and exciting ambiance of the carousel experience. The book includes a brief written history of the American carousel and is in itself a three dimensional pictorial history: each of the ten panels shows an historically accurate image of the steed, referenced and often dated. It's a book to bring out a smile, like a carousel ride.

EMILY MARTIN (1953– )

My Twelve Steps

Iowa City, IA: Naughty Dog Press, 1996, edition of 100, 6” x 6” x 1”.

This book is a turn-around on the twelve steps of the Alcoholics Anonymous program — it’s what someone close to an alcoholic would say to give himself or herself some healthy distance. The stick and string lift needed to enter the book proclaims the theme of *hands off* since it allows you to open it from a distance: you don't have to touch it if you don't want to; involvement with the alcoholic's struggles can be kept a hand's length away. Each of the twelve steps within holds an inhibitory admonition: it starts with, “you can't tell me that you are sorry”; it ends with “you can't ask me to keep you alive.”
The book is not signed and within the book itself, all indications as to author, publisher or edition are sedulously avoided, albeit these can be otherwise discovered. The book is viewed as anonymous, like the participants in the twelve step program of Alcoholics Anonymous.

SARAH PETER (1949–)

Pen in Hand, Writers on Writing

New York: [N.p.], 1996, 27/125, binding co-designed and produced by Daniel Kelm, Easthampton, MA, signed, 6¼” x 4¼” x ¾”.

Reading words typically requires that they take a visual form and the pen has been — at least until recently — a common instrument to achieve this purpose. This clip pen, however, is filled not with ink but with words themselves. The pen is held in a striped, button down shirt pocket with a protective plastic liner. Opening it at the hinge reveals a narrow codex with an author’s name and pertinent quotation on each of the twenty facing pages; the first by Dorothy Parker, “He is a writer for the ages — the ages four to eight”; “Biography lends to death a new horror,” Oscar Wilde; “History will be kind to me as I intend to write it,” Winston Churchill; and, “Income tax returns are the most imaginative fiction being written today,” Herman Wouk. The pocket also holds a diagram of the parts of the pen, the pocket and the shirt, with helpful directions on how it all goes together.

WARJA HONEGGER-LAVATER (1913–2007)

William Tell

New York: Museum of Modern Art, Junior Council, 1962, printed by Leonardi Offset-Reproduktionen, Zurich and Basler Druck-und Verlagsanstalt, Basel, edition of 4,000, 5” x 3½”(opens to 40”) x ½”.

This totally pictorial book by Warja Honegger-Lavater, a Swiss artist, is one of the first books of the 20th Century to be categorized as an “artist book.” It was published a year before Twentysix Gasoline Stations, the first artist’s book by the American artist Edward Ruscha.

Drawing upon a story rooted in the 13th Century, Honegger-Lavater has created a parable of Switzerland’s struggle to remain independent of Germany during World War II. To enable translation of this 20th-century hieroglyphic, the book begins with a table of the pictographs that identify the characters and narrative elements. The Swiss patriot William Tell is a blue circle; the Austrian bailiff, Tyrant Gessler, is a compound of a black rectangle topped by two red triangles — his hat, a narrative focal point, has a symbol all to itself, a large red triangle; Swiss citizens are brown circles, those bending to the tyrant reduced by a quarter, like a big bite taken out of an apple; the apple itself
is a gold circle with a red center, target-like. The story in this accordion book unfolds. One sees the initial state of oppressive order maintained through sharp triangles, Gessler's red hat looming above all; the circular advent of Tell's resistance to Gessler's tyrannical order; Tell's emotional reaction to Gessler's punishment — that Tell shoot an arrow at the top of his own son's head; the glorious apple shot through with the arrow; excitement in a great mélange of colors and abstract forms and the new order that emerges in which hard edges are contained and the circles come proudly into their own. The circles are all full now: no more bended knees.

ANTONIO FRASCONI (1919– )

A Literary Bestiary


In each of the twenty-six woodcuts in this alphabet bestiary, Frasconi’s image of the animal is embedded in the initial letter of its name in English. On the left-facing page, in script, is a quotation about the animal, usually literary but occasionally jocular and anonymous, of great range, often raising a smile, always leaving one with a sense of impact.

It begins with Shakespeare: “My Oberon! What visions have I seen! / Methought I was enammour’d of an ass.” Mark Twain: “I believe that our Heavenly Father invented men because he was disappointed in the monkey.” Herman Melville: “A whale ship was my Yale College and my Harvard”.

JENNY HOLZER (1950– )

Survival Series

Buffalo, NY: Albright-Knox Gallery, 1991, multiple, 7¾” x 6” x ½”.

This pencil box is one iteration of Holzer’s Survival Series, a key work of deconstruction created in a variety of media and venues mainly during the years 1983–1985. These short, composed sentences were executed primarily in public spaces with high visibility such as buildings and billboards using large neon and LED signs and light projections, as well as on T-shirts, condoms, bronze plaques, and other surfaces.
The pencil box within the *Survival Series* contains twelve unsharpened pencils with erasers contained in a cardboard box.

Six messages are each printed twice in shiny red among the pencil set.

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YOU ARE TRAPPED ON THE EARTH SO YOU WILL EXPLODE
WHAT URGE WILL SAVE US NOW THAT SEX WON'T?
PROTECT ME FROM WHAT I WANT
MEN DON'T PROTECT YOU ANYMORE
THE BEGINNING OF THE WAR WILL BE SECRET
THE FUTURE IS STUPID
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The text of *Survival Series* can appear anywhere the words are likely to be read, in any medium and, as on the pencil box, in any order. The liberation from context heightens the impact while creating an uncertainty about the purpose. These discontented, gnomic sentences seem a call to action, but what that might be is as elusive as any single context for the work. The pencil box, that familiar object, carries Holzer's *Series* to a format that while less dramatic than the large scale examples is democratic, socially acceptable, enduring, mass produced and accessible to individuals. We wish it looked more like a real pencil box but then, from the artist’s point of view, that might have provided too much comfort.

**BÉATRICE CORON (1956– ) and GAËLLE PELACHAUD (1962– )**

**Figures of Thoughts Formes de Pensées**

New York and Paris: [N.p.], 2004, printed on Arches and Hahnemüle papers, signed, 8” x 5½” (opens to 45”) x ¾”.

The obverse opens into four complex, diverse, delicately cut pop-up structures, each related to the bilingual text hand printed on it. On the flat reverse, four white cutout designs silhouetted against dark blue are each related in form to the construction on its other side.

The obverse has a text that explores phonetics, puns and associations of ideas in French and English. The reverse, without a text, is animated by human figures, sunken on this side, embossed on the other, engaged in a dynamic interplay with the structures that here seem confining. The figures are within and without, they run towards and run away, they morph into the structures themselves. Perhaps most important, on the far right the human walks in a barred cage, and emerges on the far left walking freely.

The two sides convey a tantalizing duality; the color contrast leads one to think of night and day. Without pressing the ambiguities too hard, one can sense that the dark side is the realm of searching while the white side represents the clearer region where thoughts have found their forms, thanks, perhaps, to the valiant efforts of the little figures struggling past entanglement.
SHAWN SHEEHY (1966–

Counting on the Marsh: A Nighttime of Numbers

Chicago: Paperboy Press, 2001, 7/10, set digitally in Caslon Antique, printed letterpress from polymer plates on handmade abaca/cotton sheets, illustrations monoprinted onto overbeaten abaca sheets using linoleum blocks and a Washington press, covers of handmade cotton board, signed, 8¾” x 11” x 1½”.

In Counting on the Marsh, ten fan shaped pop-ups convey the fragility of the marsh ecosystem, the variety of its inhabitants, and its fluctuating atmosphere. The artist has brought several aspects of his life into the book: a newspaper article about the marsh’s delicate natural balance that inspired and troubled him, a collection of Scherenschnitte (German cut paper art), his experience as a teacher working with concept books, and memories of his youth in the northwest Indiana marshland.

The book begins with one lone oak in the browns and yellows of twilight. As dusk deepens toward night, creatures sturdy and delicate make their cautious appearances — stags, snails, dragonflies, turtles, birds and mosquitoes — until ten herons fall asleep, while the cattails rustle. Subtle illustrative details and the arrangement of the type harmonize with the creatures of the moment.

JAN VOSS (1936–

Fussnoten

Berlin: Rainer Verlag, Zurich: Edition Stähli, 1975, 59/200, signed, 14” x 11” x 1¼”.

This graphic novel is a melding of adventure, travelogue and stream of consciousness, conveyed though pages of drawings that follow one man’s existence. Although superficially it seems a conventional codex, the artist alters scale, perspectives, and the figure’s relation to gravity, thus engaging the viewer in movement in and out, up and down, and through time. Close focus, panorama, and abstract conceptions, whole views and partial, follow and replace one another, as in life.

The title, Fussnoten, has double meaning. One steps into the book following drawn foot prints; then, as the book moves through time and space, the footnotes lead to more, like a scholar’s footnotes.

Jan Voss has produced numerous types of artists’ books, including flip books and alphabet books. No matter what the genre, his books characteristically include elements that interlock, intersect and are otherwise interlinked by lines, drawings and fragments of drawings. Voss is the proprietor of Boekie Woekie, a store for books by artists in Amsterdam at Berenstraat 16.
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