

ARTIST BOOKS

Most of the books reviewed here are available at Printed Matter, at 195 10th Ave. (between 21st and 22nd St.), New York, NY 10011.

REFERENCE

Artist's Book Yearbook 2006-2007 is an amazing tool with artists' pages, articles, resource lists and an overall niche on the bookshelf of any library, collector's personal library, artist's library, or reference collection of anyone in the arts. This is not a picture book with full-color images. It is a reference tool with beautiful black-and-white images, the book having been designed by Sarah Bodman, known throughout the UK, Europe, the United States and soon Australia for great design, careful detail, and a passion for artist books, being one artist who has become a catalyst for change in the UK.

There is an emphasis on British artists, but there are articles about the Women's Studio Workshop, Boekie Woekie, books in the Prinzhorn Collection, Paolo Silveira's article on Brazil.

Included is a list of Artist Book Publishers, Bookshops and Galleries in the UK, International Bookshops and Galleries, Artist book centers, Collections and Archives in the UK and Eire, Organizations, Book Arts Websites, Artist Book Fairs, Conferences, etc., Bookbinders, Magazines, zines and Journals, and much more. Published by Impact Press at the Centre for Fine Print Research, University of the West of England, Bristol, 2005. \$26.50

The Pocket Paper Engineer: How to Make Pop-Ups Step-by-Step, vol. 1 Basic Forms (Glen Echo, MD, Popular Kinetics Press, 2005, \$24.00 plus postage) is a lively how-to workbook that guides the reader through the process of designing and constructing basic pop-up forms. Filled with do-it-yourself models and easy-to-follow visual and verbal instructions, each form is illustrated with a playful pull-out card that can be cut and assembled, then stored in a pocket within the book. Also included are instructions for creating your own pop-ups, tips and suggestions on their design, and discussions on paper, adhesives, and pop-up mechanics. This is a workbook for adults and children alike who are seeking some creative fun!

Based on Carol Barton's twenty years of teaching experience in the fields of bookbinding, dimensional design, and paper engineering, *The Pocket Paper Engineer* offers a unique approach to sculptural creation and functional problem-solving. The book's

do-it-yourself format allows the reader to quickly construct and comprehend basic pop-up mechanisms, then encourages experimentation and individual creativity by suggesting ways to adapt each pop-up form to one's personal artistic motifs. 6 x 9.5 inches, 68 pages, wire-O bound in hard cover. The book is a charmer, entitling the owner to enjoy learning by opening the book flat to any section. Suggested for teachers as well as dilettantes. Order from Popular Kinetics Press, 6005 Yale Ave., Glen Echo, MD 20812-1119 or from Amazon.com

Creating Artists' Books by Sarah Bodman (London, A & C Black 2004, £14.99) is a practical guide for visual artists who are interested in creating their own work in the artist book format. After a brief history of the genre, Bodman examines various methods and practical issues involved in making an artist book, illustrating each area with examples of work from a number of artists.

Chapters involve using text, collaboration between artists and writers, printmaking processes, digital output and computer-based books, making books with limited materials and equipment, unique books, altered books and archives, larger editions, using the book to document place and journey, multiples and zines, selecting paper and binding books, and display, marketing and exhibiting. Although geared to a UK audience, Bodman is universal in citing examples, using illustrations, and alluding to artists throughout the world.

Appendices include bookshops and galleries in the UK, international bookshops and galleries, Artist book centers, book arts collections and archives, organizations, artist book fairs and events, book arts websites, reference and contemporary book arts exhibition catalogs, journals featuring artist books, and bibliography.

BOOKWORKS

Doings: Assorted Performance Pieces 1955-2002 by Jackson Mac Low (New York, Granary Books, 2005, \$50.00 paper plus 60-minute audio CD of recorded performances) was a labor of love for the artist, Jackson Mac Low, who spent the last 3 years of his life putting this book into some semblance of order, along with his wife, Anne Tardos. Alas, he did not live to see its publication.

Recognized internationally as a master innovator for nearly five decades, Doings presents a comprehensive collection of the poet's handwritten, drawn, typographic

and musical notations—works composed through non-intentional methods and which operate simultaneously as visual art, literature and scores for performance. Jackson Mac Low was a dedicated artist, but more....perhaps America's most unknown experimental poet, except to a circle of connoisseurs, poets and artists alike.

This book includes detailed performance instructions as well as notes on the specific procedures of composition through which the works were created. This book is a contribution to the total oeuvre of Mac Low, since it emphasizes the visually arresting graphic, musical, and performative character of his own work, which has generally not been given a preponderance of page space heretofore. A kind of workbook, this publication brings forward this work replete with the poet's own commentary, performance instructions, and histories, along with the CD recording of live and studio performances of the works themselves.

If you do not know Mac Low, you will get to know him. If you know Mac Low, you will know him better. If you want to understand Mac Low better, then this is his book and his methods and products explicated by the artist/poet himself. Due to the ephemeral nature of most of his work, this is a gift for present-day scholars, poets, artists and experimenters of "the principal experimental poet of his time" as Rothenberg characterized Mac Low.

Doings is unlike any other book in your library or on your shelves, except that in hand it feels like another era past, one that you remember with great interest, but know that it is past Now we will see if Mac Low is for us now and in fact, for the future.

Schablone Berlin by Caroline Koebel and Kyle Schlesinger (Tucson, Chax Press, 2005, \$16.95 paper) has a dual purpose as an artist book and as documentation, presenting stencil graffiti from the streets of contemporary Berlin. The book consists of over 100 color photographs showing not only the graffiti, but also context within the borders of Germany's most international metropolis. The introduction examines the semiotic and performative aspects of stencil graffiti within the contexts of art history, media and urban anthropology. Bibliography. Available from Small Press Distribution or directly from Chax Press, 101 W. Sixth St., #6, Tucson, AZ 85701, www.chax.org

Suitcase Body is Missing Woman by Eva Weinmayr (London, Bookworks, 2005, £5.00, Chapbook no. 3) is a collection of newspaper posters - capitalized handwritten legends that condense complex realities

into three or four-line news splashes, much like soundbites on television. Charged with meaning, these headlines give little information; rather they are teasers without context, telling more about what could happen than what really has happened.

This reflects an English tradition of hand-made newsstand posters, which abbreviate the gripping story of a metropolis. The artist has collected these posters which show how words can demonize and manipulate reality. Shrinking a complex world into two, three or fourline banner headlines, these headlines provide essentially no information in their form of simple "out-of-context" teasers, but they are inventive, immediate and alluring. Appearing as if handwritten, authenticity is given to these soundbites. 40 pp., ed. 1000

See you when we get home: The Sunset Strip by Martin Gantman surveys the aesthetics of place, this place being Los Angeles. Documenting a series of postcards which Gantman has sent to various colleagues and friends in the Los Angeles area, sent from various places in the world, but using Los Angeles area color postcards. There are forty of the 80 cards sent in 2001-2 plus three essays. The book is divided into three parts: 1) Difference, 2) See you and 3) Getting home. Over a period of 3 years, the postcards have made their mark throughout the area. It is a conceptual piece, and you can travel with the artist in your head, knowing full well that you are completing the work of art by reading it. Order from Martin Gantman, \$20.00 for full-color. www.gantman.com

The Odalisque Suite by Martin Gantman (Los Angeles, 2004, \$20.00 softbound) starts with an essay: **The Seer Becomes the Seen: Issues of Gender and Authorship in the Female Nude** by Marlena Donohue accompanied by Gantman's images where the female body is replaced by the male gaze, where "in this carefully, witty, disturbing stitchery between genders, between the passive and the active, between object and subject, between the author and the authored" that the works come to life. Gantman contributes biographical details to give context to the issues he brings up in his art, especially about the male gaze which obliterates the female entirely. The study done in 1994 is still vibrant today with its reverberations in today's mores, morals and social ramifications of sexual disturbances and deviations. The discussion involves truths, deceptions and myths in this gender and sexual provocation. The bookwork documents the essay and illustrations and an essay also by the artist. Order from www.gantman.com

webAffairs by Show-n-tell with an essay by Allucquère Rosanne Stone (Boston, 18 publications, 2005, \$40) is an artist's documentary of an adult video web community. It is a big book (10 x 13 inches) in which the artist, Show-n-tell, tells her story through a series of screen shots and actual chat text. Done in a most aesthetic manner, Show-n-tell collects images of naked bodies juxtaposed with surrounding computer equipment. She experiments, asks for more sometimes, involves chat, live video and sex, which seems to be the best formula. This "community" is online 24/7 depending upon the geographical time of day. She documents almost like a street photographer but she finds herself in office spaces, living rooms, and even in bedrooms. Webcams are adjusted and the "subjects" are quite conscious of something that is going to happen. The pixels become part of all of this. The "secret language" has to be learned quickly, always in English with lots of mistakes, shortened words, lingo. The portraits are diverse, international, blatantly erotic at times. Meanwhile, interspersed with all of this are conversations with her husband about this project. Seduction is much the subject of the interventions.

She talks to the men while getting incidental information given by the webcams, i.e. their private spaces, photos of kids, the living rooms, the bedrooms. The transaction is photos of rooms vs. photos of her cleavage. Secrecy dominates—men hide their faces, everyone fearing that someone will discover that they are visiting an adult chat community, showing a need to connect even if they all try to hide.

Eventually she becomes a regular in the community and makes friends. People share their personal crises with her, as well as triumphs. As she documents other people in the room, she keeps noticing herself and starts taking pictures of herself. She also loves the fantasy games that everyone plays. Show-n-tell narrates many stories from the conversations she has transcribed, yet she remains an observer as well as a performer.

The electronic images she gathers in chat rooms are transformed as photographic stills in the book. So because there are limits in the technology, the image disintegrates into pixels which speak to a new sensibility in image making. The text also takes on an electronic accent. The members of virtual communities have transformed the English language by using acronyms that are incomprehensible to the outsider and yet are understood even by non-English speakers.

It's fun to see how each one in the community is conscious of how one looks on video, yet when she gets the image left on the monitor, most of the time there are decapitated bodies, genitals, tops of heads and cleavages. She experiments with others' clothes, bodies,

cleavages, etc. Conversations veer from public (sexual banter) to private (drama in one's life).

Wanting to have new experiences, she changes her name to "—" or dash, and she describes those new experiences watching men watching her. And other things that she does not appreciate.

Stone's essays, called "Dreaming Bodies" describes the Net as sharing certain characteristics that define its nature and enable its pleasures: one is self-organization, one is emergence, one is self-similarity or fractalism, one is healing, and one is dream. She amplifies.

So this artist book is a documentation of Show-n-tell's navigation through erotic virtual space. Electronically edited and graphically redesigned to dramatically communicate her story, this is a powerful documentation, interpretation, emotional play that could go wrong, but she controls the whole thing. Later, she is more interested in the stories, realizing that this project has transformed her, making her conscious of herself and her potential. This book, as all artist books, should be on your lap, not your shelf—and it may change you as well. Order from www.webAffairsBook.info

PERIODICALS

Works & Conversations #11 is devoted to Cowboy Arts during this period when "gay cowboys" makes mainstream entertainment headlines because of one film that may be up for an Academy Award. But this is Art and deals with ranch culture, rawhide braiding, cowboy poetry and song, horses and saddlemaking.

Editor Richard Whittaker attended the Elko Cowboy Poetry Gathering and reports on it extensively; Adam Jaheil's contribution of photos from "The Last Cowboy" which was on display at the Northeastern Nevada Museum in Elko are poignant images of horses and their numinosity. An interview with cowboy Jim Brooks is revelatory. Charles Reilly's small portfolio of photographs, as well as Michael Light's meditation on nuclear weapons in photographs. The major piece in this well designed journal is an interview with famed artist, Nathan Oliveira, painter, sculptor and bookmaker.

For more information, contact works + conversations, P.O. Box 5008, Berkeley, CA 94705. 3 issues \$26.00.

Arts&Leisure was issued on 1 October 2005 as a one-time project by Julieta Aranda and Carlos Moora at Art in General in New York City. Designed as a tabloid of 28 pages, the news is about art and art criticism.

A most illuminating article is one on "Unwritten Histories & the Digital Divide: On critics, archives, and networks" as moderated by Mariam Ghani. Cartoons, horoscope. The price at Art in General was 25 cents. It is a parody but one treating vital issues of the art world and art criticism today.