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Alternative Voices: Artists’ Books, Comix, and Zines

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Alternative Voices: Artists’ Books, Comix, and Zines

An exhibition of contemporary work in the Watkinson Library

September 26, 2005 – January 15, 2006

Curated by Sally Dickinson, Special Collections Librarian

Watkinson Library, Trinity College, Hartford, Connecticut

**What is an artist’s book?** The term is a mystery to many and has been discussed exhaustively in the book arts world. The boundaries of the term are loose and can encompass many types of book-like objects. In its pure form, an artist uses the physical book as a vehicle for artistic expression. Structure, materials, images, and text, if used at all, are the pallet of the book artist, who explores them in unexpected ways. The creator’s eye is evident in all aspects of the book.

Artists’ books are usually printed in limited editions and constructed by, or under, the artist’s direction. One of a kind artists’ books are akin to sculpture. They inhabit a space somewhere between the art world and the sphere of the book. The experience of any artist’s book is an intimate one that involves the viewer in a personal journey through the eyes of the artist.

The Watkinson Library has over 100 artists’ books in a much larger collection of work related to the book arts, which includes private press books from the 18th to the 20th centuries, examples of early fine printing from the time of Gutenberg through the 17th century, and early manuscript Books of Hours. The Watkinson also collects secondary materials in the study of the book to support research in this collection.

This exhibition is arranged primarily by theme and secondarily by structure. Added to the large representation of artists’ books are examples of other contemporary alternative voices such as Art Spiegelman’s comic, *In the Shadow of No Towers*, and Karen Switzer’s zine, *Ker-bloom!* These works form a group that is innovative, visual, and outside the mainstream publishing industry. Some works are collaborations. Several have musical and audio components. They all present a personal vision through exploration of processes, materials, and form, that we are invited to share.
POLITICS AND
SOCIAL COMMENTARY

Inez v. Ketelhodt. *Bis 17.1. Bis 28.2.91 Bis ...
Number 19 of 50.
Sixteen folded photographs taken from a television
screen which document the Persian Gulf War are
interleaved with actual newspaper sheets running in
chronological order. Ketelhodt is a member of the
vital German book artists group, Unica T (“One-of-a-
kind”).

**Even the birds were on fire: 9.11.01.**
Number 119 of 150.
Letterpress pamphlet bound with grommets at head
with translucent fabric and mesh overlay. Personal
reactions juxtapose a running timeline of the events of

Published and edited by Sara Parkel. “Writings by:
Esther Smith, Marshall Weber, Peter Spagnuolo, Amy
Ferrara, Shane Beversdorf, Sara Parkel, child at
Battery Park. With excerpts of conversation on the
Pier 11 ferry ...” – colophon.

Marshall Weber. **Eleven.**
Limited ed. of 29 copies.
Photographs and text documenting New York City
in the weeks after 9/11. Eleven includes writing by
poet Ellis Avery, Judith Foster (director of a downtown
Manhattan public elementary school), journalist MT
Karthik, poet/chanteuse Jane LeCroy, poet/activist
Peter Spagnuolo, and Marshall Weber. A CD of
the texts, recited by their authors and composed by
Christopher Wilde, accompanies the book.

Art Spiegelman. **In the shadow of no towers.**
In: The Forward
Well-known comic artist and author of *Maus*, Art Spie-
gelman uses 10 large scale pages of comix paired
with vintage newspaper images to react to the events
of September 11 and its aftermath. The series was
published in several European newspapers but only
one in the U.S., The Forward, a NYC Jewish weekly.
On display are the first and last issues, September 6,

Fly. **Total disaster!**
“Fly was born in a dumpster – she lived in a whole
bunch of different places & lived a whole bunch of
different lives until she landed in New York City &
finally felt at home ...” Total Disaster! is the latest
of many self-published comix and zines from Fly. It
is a collection of strips, the first of which talks about
9/11.

Alison E. Williams. **Propaganda.**
Number 15 of 26.
A selection of quotations by members of President
George W. Bush’s administration and persons in the
motion picture industry, on the relationship between
Hollywood and the U.S. government’s drive to war.
Michael Kuch. **Common monsters of the United States, as observed & limned by Michael Kuch.**

Number 13 of 40 (25 books and 15 boxed suites).  
A collaboration of many artisans, Common Monsters letterpress text and etchings were printed by Art Larson at the Double Elephant offices in Hadley, Mass. “Beasts were colored by Michael Kuch. Satire is the last refuge of a patriot.” – colophon.

David Rees. **Get your war on.**

Printed in Canada, 2002.  
AP11 of 1000.  
Print version of the ongoing online comic Get Your War On.  www.mnftiu.cc/mnftiu.cc/war.html  
All proceeds from the sale of this book go to the Adopt-A-Minefield campaign for landmine relief in Afghanistan.

**SOCIAL AND PERSONAL COMMENTARY/PERSOHAL HISTORY**

Bill Burke. **Mine fields.**

Intensely personal, funny and disturbing collage of images from photojournalist Burke’s divorce and the horrors of the Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia. A copy of his travel diary is included.

Johanna Drucker. **History of the/my wor(l)d: fragments of a testimonial to history, some lived and realized moments open to claims of memory.**

1st trade ed.  

Johanna Drucker. **Narratology: historical romance, sweet romance, science fiction, romantic suspense ...**

Number 37 of 70.  
Letterpress from polymer plates, hand-finished with watercolor. Designed and set in Quark. Artist, scholar, and teacher, Johanna Drucker juxtaposes her ‘lived experience’ against the barrage of stereotypes that permeate our culture from women’s genre fiction and finds it almost impossible to separate the two.

**No seats on the party car.**

Poetry by Jack Lipez; photographs by Nicholas Zinner; design by Stacy Wakefield.  
No Seats on the Party Car is a collaboration among rock ‘n’ rollers who share a unique vision.
CONTEMPORARY LIFE
AND HUMOR

What is a zine?

Originating from ‘fanzine,’ a self-published alternative magazine of the late 1970’s to early ‘80’s, a zine is a small, affordable publication, published regularly or irregularly by the author, often autobiographical, usually in an edition of 25 to 1,000. A zine focuses on anything the author feels passionate about and is made by whatever means is available. It has evolved from a photocopied black-and-white format to a multiplicity of media and forms. (Courtesy of Marshall Weber)

Amber Gayle. My evil twin sister no. 3: ramble right.
Photographs and design by Stacy Wakefield, who is the identical twin sister of Amber Gayle. Their zine My Evil Twin Sister is published yearly. The sisters began Evil Twin Publications in 1994 as a vehicle for their books and zines.

Amber Gayle. Transient songs.
Poetry by Amber Gayle; photographs and design by Stacy Wakefield. Hand printed at the Knust printshop in Nijmegen, Netherlands.

Issue 1: number 178 of 250; issue 2: number 280 of 285.
Letterpress and photocopy zine.

by Emily K. Larned. Interested in the representation of the world by the arts & sciences, RedCharming seeks to show the strangeness of everything we assume to be ordinary.” – colophon.

Karen Switzer. Ker-bloom!
Oakland, Calif.: Artnoose, 1996- (bimonthly).
Issues 22-42; letterpress; bound by Booklyn.

“This zine was hand-set in real lead type & printed on a Vandercook SP-15 proof press. That snazzy typeface on the cover is Huxley Vertical.” – colophon of issue 22.


Wagner’s goal with Library in a Book is a combination of artist’s book and zine. It is reasonably priced, made by hand, and tackles some of the aesthetic concerns of the artist’s book.

Rita Valley. A world of danger: being a benevolent guide and compassionate set of instructions for consumers, students of life, and pilgrims along the way of Enlightenment.
[Bridgewater, Conn.]: Me Me Me Inc., 2002.
Number 5 of 50.

Photocopied, laminated collages. Valley’s work often focuses on the themes of recycling and the concept of self image. In A World of Danger she juxtaposes collages of recycled images with warnings that have become part of our lives as contemporary consumers.
**FINE PRINTING, STRUCTURE, CRAFT AND DESIGN**

Bert and Molly Eastman. *Their book of toys from India.*

Number 101 of less than 200.  
“This joyful book comes from the hand & heart of Bert and Molly Eastman, who collected it, then talked about it, made the lino-cuts, gathered the sparse information and thus made the tale.”

*Sixteen small portraits of Katherine made by her friends and colleagues.*

Number 68 of 135 numbered and 15 lettered hors commerce copies.  
Artist and printer Michael Russem and his dog Katherine share a special relationship.  This book was “printed to celebrate Katherine Russem’s recent recovery from a near-death experience involving a corncob & her small intestine …”  Some of Katherine’s friends include Robin Price, Michael Kuch, Lucien Baskin, Kurt Guhde, August Black, etc.

Angela Lorenz. *The theater of nature, or, Curiosity filled the cabinet.*

Trade edition.  
This concertina is a facsimile of Lorenz’s artist’s book on the first public museums in Europe, based on the cabinet of curiosities.

JoAnna Poehlmann. *The art of the peacock from A to Z.*

Number 9 of 50.  
“Handlettered in ink & rubber stamps … the book has been collaged with color copies of paintings, wood-cuts, scrap, postage stamps, jewelry, stitchery and other ephemera …” — colophon.

Carol J. Blinn. *Once upon a time by Frieda Fitzenmeyer.*  
“One upon a time there lived a happy duckling who had a vivid imagination …” so starts the series of little books written by Frieda Fitzenmeyer and brought to life by creator Carol J. Blinn, who designed, illustrated, printed, hand colored & hand bound the lot.  
Exhibited:  
*Once upon a time: Book one, two, four, five, seven, and eight.*

Carol Barton. *Vision shifts.*  
Number 126 of 500.  
An accordion-fold book with pop-up, cut-out windows, printed offset.  The moving cut-outs make vision shifts happen as we turn from one page to the next.

Julie Chen. *Life time.*  
Berkeley, Calif.: Flying Fish Press, 1996.  
Number 86 of 100.  
Letterpress printed from polymer plates; a circular tunnel book in a box that resembles a compass case.  To read the text you must enter the space of the concentric rings, which you maneuver to reveal the words.
Art Spiegelman.  
*In the Shadow of No Towers.*  

Angela Lorenz.  
*Soap Story: An Artist’s Book.*  
1999.

“All those deaths in auto accidents not all had been drivers out there,”

Ruth Laxson.

Wheeling.


Jim Lee.

Lonesome Rows.

1999.
Laura Davidson.

*Florence.*

2003.

Alan B. Govenar.

*Midnight Song.*

[Bologna, Italy]: Angela Lorenz, 1999.
Number 98 of 200.
Watkinson copy has text removed from soap bars and inserted into album; soap is retained intact in accompanying box.

Number 60 of 100.
“Designed, letterpress printed, built and mended by Margery S. Hellmann, with thanks to Bonnie Thompson Norman for her help in lifting the heaviest boulders.” – colophon.

Marc Anton. *The thread of meaning.*
Number 41 of 500.
A concertina with thread running through it, tracing the meander of our lives. Printed offset ... handbound by Linda Lembke at the Green River Bindery, Guilford, Vermont. (from the collection of Sally Dickinson)

Scott McCarney. *Far horizons.*
Number 123 of 500.
*Far Horizons* is folded accordion-style and printed on one side only. When the book is completely unfolded it creates a single poster-size image (54 x 71 cm.) resembling a quilt made of photographs taken by the artist. The book was produced as part Landscape/Land use, a collaborative arts project in Rochester, New York.

Mary McCarthy. *New England spring.*
One of a kind book.
A concertina with imagery in gouache and collage on Somerset paper; text hand written in rose-colored ink.

Jill Timm. *Crane legends.*
One of a kind book.
“These wonderful little fans were found in the back of a shop in Chinatown, Vancouver, Canada ... ”

**Nobody sees a flower.**
Miniature concertina, which when unfolded, creates a square 14 x 14 cm. with a quote by Georgia O’Keeffe. Watercolor illustrations. (from the collection of Sally Dickinson)

Susan Happertsett. *Bloemen.*
Number 43 of 89.
Esther K. Smith, art direction; Dikko Faust, letterpress, typography. *Bloemen,* or flowers, a “series of mathematical drawings, is based on the growth + decay patterns of sunflowers and the Fibonacci sequence.” – colophon.

Scott McCarney. *Memory loss.*
Edition of 500 hand assembled by the artist.
This accordion-fold structure, which resembles a Venetian blind, is about the experience of an accident victim who undergoes memory loss while undertaking physical therapy treatment. It can be read from several angles and directions to reinforce the disjointed perceptions of a memory loss.
Shin-Young Chung. *Der brief des koreanischen König Sejong an Johannes Gutenberg aus dem Jahr 1449 [The Korean King Sejong’s letter to Johannes Gutenberg from the year 1449]*.
Number 462 of 500.
Contribution of Shin-Young Chung for the competition, Love Letter to Gutenberg, organized by the Fachhochschule Mainz, Design Department, September 1999.

Middletown, CT: Robin Price, Publisher, 1996.
Number 12 of 60.
*Altar Book for Górecki* was inspired by the 1992 recording of Henryk Górecki’s Symphony no. 3 with Dawn Upshaw as soprano. The bird illustrations are from the Watkinson Library’s copy of seventeenth-century copperplate engravings by Francis Willughby. “Designed, printed & bound by Robin Price in an edition of sixty copies during the spring of 1996.” – letterpress leaf mounted in box.

Francis Willughby. *The ornithology of Francis Willughby.*
Table XI. Birds of paradise of severall sorts.

**TRAVEL – PLACE – MEMORY**

Number 13 of 39.
This large concertina is printed on both sides in layers of color from wood blocks using the reduction technique. It was designed, cut, printed, and bound by Jim Lee. The imagery in *Lonesome Rows* evokes the Connecticut River valley landscape and orchards near Glastonbury, Connecticut.

Number 100 of 200.
Johanna Drucker calls *Wheeling* a quintessential artist’s book. It combines several printing techniques, fuses text and image, shape, and a pop-up car to muse on the automobile and its place in our culture.

[Conn.: Bob Chaplin, 1996?]
Number 3 of 20.
Collected material and photographs “were transformed into the pages of this book using a Umax scanner, an H.P. Laserjet printer and Photoshop … hand tinted and hand bound in an edition of 20 … This journey was an opportunity for father and son to work together on a creative project …”
Marcia Ciro. *Getting there, being there.*
Number 12 of 25.
Tab accordion fold binding (a flag book). A checkerboard of images of the West with verbal reminders of the actions that accompany and amuse us on a road trip.

Number 25 of 100.
“This book was produced during a residency at Visual Studies Workshop as a part of ‘Landscape/Land Use,’ a collaborative arts project ...” – colophon.

Rina Swentzell. *Younger-older ones.*
Number 3 of 60.
“The book was designed and set in Gill Sans ... at the Weaselsleeves Press. The text was printed from polymer plates ... the graphics were composed in Photoshop by Janet Rodney from old family photographs ...” – colophon. *Younger-Older Ones* is a story of the people of the Santa Clara Pueblo and the pull between change and tradition. It is set against a backdrop of the landscape forms and sacred sites of the New Mexican desert.

Maureen Cummins. *The business is suffering.*
Number 29 of 50.
“The book was typeset in Franklin Gothic, silkscreen and letterpress printed ... and bound in the style of 19th century business ledgers.” This project was inspired by a collection of letters written to the slave trading company, R.H. Dickinson & Bros., of Richmond, Virginia, and documents the decline in the slave trade as a viable business in the South.

Number 31 of 35.
The photographs of Calico in southern California were taken by Jill Timm in 1973. The human figures were removed from their original settings to overlay the scenes of Calico, a boom town in the late 1800’s.

Shirley Jones. *Etched out.*
Number 14 of 40.
Written, illustrated, and printed by Shirley Jones. Six landscape prints and a concertina using etching and mezzotint techniques. An homage to the 400-year-old Welsh farming community of the Epynt, whose families were evicted from their homes in 1940 to make way for a firing range.
George Sand and Émile Zola. *Vues de Venise.*
Number 29 of 50.
Two letters with contrasting viewpoints and images, printed on either side of a double concertina structure; mezzotints by Judith Rothchild.

Clifton Meador. *Memory lapse.*
The book was imageset at the Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester, New York, and printed by the author at the Nexus Press. A personal reflection on the Solovetski Islands, the history of Russia, the Revolution and the Soviet era.

Number 128 of 350.
*Voices* was designed and produced by Andrew Hoym at the Arion Press. The photographs were taken by Karl Bissinger in 1949 while on assignment for *Flair* magazine. William T. Wiley created six etchings to illustrate scenes from the book.

Laura Davidson. *Florence.*
Number 144 of 500.
A tunnel book.
*Florence* is the first of a series of books by Davidson based on travel guides. The images were painted on Muirhead’s blue guides and Baedeker’s travel guide pages published in the 1920’s, then offset printed and bound by hand.

Larry Hanbrook. *Beijing heart: a Tiananmen story.*
Number 5 of 100.
The photograph illustrations are by Margaret E. Davis and printed by image and emulsion transfer techniques. *Beijing Heart* was bound in traditional Chinese xian zhuang (thread-bound) style. It is the story of Hanbrook’s trip to Beijing on the eve of the student protests in Tiananmen Square.

Kevin Major, Anne Meredith Barry & Tara Bryan. *Gros Morne time lines.*
Number 36 of 65.
Text by Kevin Major, linocut prints and drawings by Anne Meredith Barry, letterpress printing and binding by Tara Bryan. The project was created during an artist’s residency at Gros Morne National Park, Newfoundland.

Alan B. Govenar. *Midnight song.*
Number 72 of 123.
“The Root River Mill paper, made by Michael Nitsch, is comprised of old army shirts (Jim’s, from 1959) and abaca …” – colophon. A tribute to the Hmong people of Laos and their music, sung by the shaman Boua Xou Mua, once a soldier and mercenary for the French and the CIA.
Selected Bibliography


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