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BOOKWORKS

by

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Requirements for the Degree
MASTER OF FINE ARTS

MFA PHOTOGRAPHY PROGRAM
SCHOOL OF PHOTOGRAPHIC ARTS AND SCIENCES
ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
ROCHESTER, NEW YORK
March, 1983

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Date 6/7/83  Signature  Edith L. Freedman
"Alice was beginning to get very tired of sitting by her sister on the bank, and of having nothing to do: once or twice she had peeped into the book her sister was reading, but it had no pictures or conversations in it, "and what is the use of a book," thought Alice, "without pictures or conversations?"

Lewis Carroll
Alice's Adventures in Wonderland
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INTRODUCTION

In the winter of 1980-81, I began to make books for a Photographic Workshop taught at R.I.T. by Professor Charles Arnold, Jr. I had never made a book before, even though I had always enjoyed books. Until that winter I had never even heard of "artists' books"—unconventional books that often contain both visual and verbal information of a non-traditional nature. As I made my first books I realized that there were great possibilities for me there: I have been writing poetry for as long as I can remember and I have long been interested in combining my photographic imagery with my design skills.

During the spring and summer of 1981 I continued to make one-of-a-kind books on my own, with the support and the encouragement of Professor Arnold. These early books were crude, unfinished editions in which the ideas were strong but the presentation was far from polished. With an eye toward a more finished product, I took classes in Hand Bookbinding, Reproduction Photography, and Imposition.

My continued interest in creating books led me to Keith Smith, who teaches courses in bookmaking at the Visual Studies Workshop. During the quarter I studied with Keith I acquired a new appreciation for the uniqueness of the book format as an art form. Issues involving artist/audience interaction, narrative and non-narrative sequencing, pacing, and extensions of the book format into non-traditional applications were discussed at great length in the course.
After I completed my studies with Keith Smith, I took a good look at my first books. I was not taking a total approach to those books: I did not make much use of my graphic design skills and the use of typography was weak. I decided then that I would do a thesis project that would satisfy my desire to integrate my skills and interests as an artist, a photographer, a writer, and a designer.
DISCUSSION

The thesis work as a whole is not a documentation of one long process, developing one idea from start to finish through a series of books. Rather, each book developed independently of the others, although they do share some common issues when considered as a group.

Each book presented me with specific problems, both conceptually and technically. To discuss these issues in proper perspective, I will examine each of the books individually in this report. I will then place the books in the context of the thesis as a whole, addressing the issues that I feel are common to the entire group.

The Music Book

9 pages, 19 inches by 15 feet (accordion fold), black and white photographic paper, ortho film, rattail thread

Text: word definitions, selectively bleached
Images: birds, insects (ortho film)
Edition: one-of-a-kind

This book, a 15-foot long accordion-folded piece, is ostensibly about music: all of the words are terms from the field of music, and the five strings which hold it together represent the five lines of music notation. The book is also about structures, connections, communication, and the effects of light. The words have been selected from dictionary definitions to form new definitions within the context of the book. The five strings which link the pages of the book together are
similar to telephone lines, to which the birds in the book refer. The book was designed to be placed facing a window, so that the shadows cast on the text by the strings and the birds would change as the light outside changed.

Initially I was concerned that this book was not truly photographic, although I had used photographic materials and techniques to produce it. Eventually I came to realize that the real issues presented in the book were closely allied to those of photography: the nature of light, structures, and communication. The selection of key words from dictionary definitions were like the careful selections of images from a contact sheet, or the selection of shots from a live scene, placed in some sequential order.

The Nuclear Family or This is How I Keep House

10 pages, 5 1/2 inches by 8 1/2 inches (spiral bound), color xerox, black and white xerox, NitelLite paint; with black wooden display module, 16 inches by 16 inches, equipped with attached gloves, nightlight bulb, and strobe unit.

Text: excerpts from Nuclear Safety Commission Reports
Images: excerpts from General Electric booklet
Edition: 4

_The Nuclear Family_ is the only political book I have created. It did not emerge from any deep-rooted political sentiment. I had wanted to do a series of books which explored the various possibilities of presenting words and images in ink on paper. I wanted to get away from the standard use of
ink on paper, black on white. My first impulse was to use a clear, glossy ink, which could only be seen by reflecting light. My next idea was a book which incorporated text that had to be revealed by the viewer as s/he read it. Glow in the dark words and images were a natural extension of this train of thought.

The eerie greenish glow of Nite Lite Paint led me into the nuclear power idea. I planned to shoot images specifically for this book, but then I came across a booklet produced in the 1950's which extolled the virtues of the electric household. The naivete of the booklet and the serious nature of the issue of nuclear power seemed interesting and ironic when juxtaposed.

I built a mysterious-looking black box in which to display the book. To read the book, the reader has to put his/her hands into two rubber gloves attached to the sides of the box, thus never actually touching the book. Inside the box a flash unit can be activated by pressing a button: the flash causes the people in the images to glow for several minutes. This pseudo-scientific display reinforces the idea of nuclear radiation and contamination.

The Burn Book

16 pages, 4 1/4 inches by 5 inches (accordion fold), 8 halftone photographs (offset-printed), invisible ink, firecracker.

Text: invisible ink, which become visible when heated

Images: halftone photographs of the procedure of removing a match from a matchbox and lighting it

Edition: 100

It involves a very personal experience which I attempt
to universalize by making the reader an active participant in the message. Dealing with personal material is always risky, both in terms of revealing too much personal information and in terms of creating a trite and overly emotional message. My protection against knowing the reader's response was to print the text in invisible ink. The reader has to follow directions outlined in the imagery (which was offset printed) in order to reveal the text message. The directions are photographs of the steps involved in removing a match from a matchbox and lighting it. As the text is revealed, the reader is confronted with personal information--secrets--and has unwittingly become a party to those secrets.

Remnants

24 pages, 4 1/4 inches by 4 1/4 inches (saddlesewn), black and white Ektaprint

Text: none

Images: 2"x2" photographic images

Edition: 15

Initially created as a one-of-a-kind book, Remnants lost a great deal of its original feeling when it was reproduced. The original version was an arrangement of 2" photo squares, leftover pieces from old workprints which I had chopped up on a paper cutter. As I looked through these leftover pieces, I found that some interesting relationships between selected pieces emerged. The variety of the surface textures and colors added another dimension to the arrangement. The reproduction copies,
printed on a Kodak Ektaprint copier, lacked these surface variations, and thus were much less successful than the original volume.

Light Readings

16 pages, 4 inches by 5 inches (saddlesewn), clear varnish on white paper, screen printed

Text: quotations from various sources concerning vision and the nature of light

Images: high contrast photographs

Edition: 20

The conceptual basis for Light Readings emerged first from a desire to experiment with the relationship of ink to paper, in terms of visual perception. As the concept developed, the book became photographic: it not only incorporated photographic imagery, in addition, recording and reading with light became central to the book. The images are printed with clear varnish on dull coated stock. In order to read the text and see the images, the reader must tilt the book until it reflects the light.

Supermarket Story

40 images, assembled in a rectangular matrix of 5 images across by 8 images down, presented in a hanging vinyl case with pockets, 20 inches by 48 inches

Text: product names

Images: product packages on supermarket shelves

Edition: one-of-a-kind
The idea behind Supermarket Story came from the idea of hieroglyphics—pictures which communicate verbal information in a visual way. As I roamed the supermarket aisles in search of items which could be used to refer to other concepts, I noticed the names of the products on the shelves. Seen by themselves, they refer to finite concepts beyond the products. Seen in context with other product names, they begin to take on some other meanings. It is visual and verbal information, transformed into a verbal code, which then causes the reader to create a mental visual image of a situation.

Dream Book

20 pages, 8 inches by 8 inches(spiral bound), color xerox on acetate, black and white Ektaprint on tracing vellum, sewn to a satin pillow

Text: word definitions, black and white Ektaprint on vellum

Images: color xerox self portraits

Word definitions have always interested me: there are so many ways in which a single word can be defined. A word is defined by the use of other words, which also have many different meanings. It is their use in context with each other that makes us realize which sense of each word we are to assimilate into a concept. Looking for some concrete definitions of words like communication, expression, idea, image, and meaning has been an overriding concern in my bookworks. It is like a labyrinth without an end, a recurring dream that is always changing yet always the same.

-8-
The Yahtzee

18 pages, 12 inches by 20 inches (handsewn), haloid xerography, black and white xerox on tracing vellum, marbled rag paper, bound in bridal satin

Text: narrative sequence from a dream

Images: haloid xerox self-portraits from original black and white photographs

Edition: one-of-a-kind

My skills as a writer, designer, editor, photographer, printmaker, and bookbinder were involved to a greater extent in The Yahtzee than in any of the other books in the thesis. Generally the problems I confronted while creating this book were technical, not conceptual. The concept developed from a dream I had ten years ago. As the book evolved, I found myself approaching the communication of the dream in two ways: first, as a narrative to be read; and second, as a series of sensations to be experienced. It was with this in mind that I laid out the text, paying close attention to how each letter was placed on the page, and how that placement coincided with the image that could be seen beneath it. Colors for the marbling of the paper were selected to reconstruct the colors that I had experienced in the dream. The sequencing of the images, and their progression in body position and size are related to the feeling I had during the dream of both experiencing and watching myself experience the events of the dream.

Technically it was a difficult book to produce. After marbling the paper and making the haloid images, I had to use a dry-mounting method to bind the pages together. A wet-mounting
method, using wheat starch paste or methyl cellulose paste, might have caused the images to pucker and wrinkle. Traditional dry-mounting techniques which used heat were also out of the question, since applied heat could damage the fused haloid images. In addition to this mounting problem, I had decided to bind the book in bridal satin, which could not be moistened, as water or paste would stain it permanently. For all of these binding problems I used 3M Positionable Mounting Adhesive, which is advertised as archival.

THE THESIS

The books were first put together as a group for the exhibition, and it was then that I started to see some relationships between them, and some common issues were evident. In all of the books, the concept is at the core of the book: that is, content tends to take precedence over form. In general, however, the form was designed to be closely allied with the concept, which is an indication of my desire to communicate a clear and concise message in each book.

All of the books, with the exception of Remnants are concerned with the integration of word and image. There is also in most of the books an interest in the effects of light: reflected light, flash, daylight, firelight, phosphorescence, and spiritual light. It was not a conscious decision on my part to focus on these issues, but they are clearly central to my work and cannot be denied.
CONCLUSION

My initial proposal was to produce a series of limited edition and unique books which incorporated my words and images. The eight books that I produced for this thesis have demonstrated an exploration of various means of reaching this goal, using the skills I have acquired in photography, design, and bookmaking. I do not see it as a finite and closed chapter of work, but rather as a continuation of work I have produced and will probably continue to produce for the rest of my life.
APPENDIX A: Thesis Proposal
Bookworks

A Thesis Proposal Submitted
For Approval As
Partial Fulfillment of The Requirements
For the Degree
MASTER OF FINE ARTS

by
Edith Louise Freedman

MFA PHOTOGRAPHY PROGRAM
SCHOOL OF PHOTOGRAPHIC ARTS AND SCIENCES
ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
ROCHESTER, NEW YORK
February 5, 1982
Thesis Board Members:

Chairman: Professor Charles A. Arnold, Jr.
School of Photographic Arts and Sciences
Rochester Institute of Technology

Members: Associate Professor Bea Nettles
School of Photographic Arts and Sciences
Rochester Institute of Technology

Assistant Professor Heinz Klinkon
College of Fine and Applied Arts
Rochester Institute of Technology

Special Advisors: Mr. Werner Rebsamen
School of Printing
Rochester Institute of Technology

Mr. Robert Webster
School of Printing
Rochester Institute of Technology
Statement of Purpose

I intend to create a series of limited edition books which will incorporate my own words and images. I will use various photographic and typographic techniques to explore the possibilities for communication and expression in the book format.

Background

In the winter of 1980-81, I began to make books for a Photographic Workshop taught at RIT by Prof. Charles Arnold. I had never made a book before, even though I had always enjoyed books. Until that winter I had never even heard of "artists' books"—non-traditional books that often contain both visual and verbal information of a non-traditional sort. As I made my first books I realized that there were great possibilities for me there. I have been writing poetry for as long as I can remember, and I have long been interested in combining my photographic imagery with my design skills.

During the spring and summer of 1981 I continued to make one-of-a-kind books on my own, with the support and the encouragement of Prof. Arnold. These early books were crude, unfinished editions in which the ideas were strong but the presentation was far from polished. With an eye toward a more finished product, I took classes in Hand Bookbinding, Reproduction Photography, and Imposition.

My continued interest in creating books led me to Keith Smith, who teaches courses in bookmaking at the Visual Studies Workshop. During the quarter I studied with Keith I acquired a new appreciation for the uniqueness of the book format as an art form. Issues involving artist/audience interaction, narrative and non-narrative sequencing, pacing, and extensions of the book format into non-traditional applications were discussed at great length in the course.

After I completed my studies with Keith Smith, I took a good look at my first books. I was not taking a total approach to those books: I did not make much use of my graphic design skills and the use of typography was weak. I decided then that I would do a thesis project that would satisfy my desire to integrate my skills and interests as an artist, a photographer, a writer, and a designer.
Procedure

I plan to spend the spring and summer quarters of 1982 completing the work on this thesis. During the spring quarter I plan to do all of the initial work involved in creating the books: refining concepts, researching historical and contemporary artists' books, discussing my ideas with my thesis board, experimenting with various graphic arts techniques for reproduction, working on my poetry, and shooting photographs.

Summer will be devoted to producing the books: setting the type, doing the layout and paste-up work, shooting halftones, printing the editions and binding the final books. This will be accomplished with the assistance of Mr. Robert Webster and Mr. Werner Rebsamen of the School of Printing.

I plan to make limited editions of 10-20 copies of each book. The budget for this project is as yet undetermined, but every effort will be made to keep expenses to a minimum. I plan to do most of the printing myself, and discussions with my thesis board and Mr. Webster and Mr. Rebsamen will help me to determine the least expensive and most efficient ways to complete the project.

My thesis exhibition is tentatively planned for mid-October, 1982. I hope to have the studio/production portion of the thesis completed by early September. During the month of September I will assemble my daybooks for the written portion of the project, and will design the exhibition itself. The exhibition design is crucial because of the unique problems of exhibiting books in a gallery space.

After the thesis work is completed and approved, each book will be copyrighted and copies will be distributed to the RIT Archives, the Research Center at the Visual Studies Workshop, the Franklin Furnace Book Archives in New York, and to other contemporary book archives and exhibitions around the world.
Bibliography (Partial)


John Updike, *any and all short stories*
APPENDIX B: Exhibition Announcement
BOOKWORKS

an exhibition of recent work by

Edie Freedman

March 19-31, 1983 Reception March 25 at 8 pm
Photo Gallery Rochester Institute of Technology
APPENDIX C: Exhibition Installation
Installation

Light Readings

The Music Book

The Dream Book

Supermarket Story

The Nuclear Family

Remnants

The Burn Book
APPENDIX D: The Burn Book
Light Readings