

Books as Artworks

Artists who make or break books

Artist Books

Unlike an art book, catalog or monograph that tend to showcase artworks created in another medium, the term 'artists' books' refers to publications that have been conceived as artworks in their own right. These 'projects for the page' are generally inexpensive, often produced in large or open editions, and are democratically available. The book is a medium that allows an artist's work to be accessible to a multitude of people in different locations at any given time.

While artists' books can take many forms, there are a few elements that are common across the practice. Understanding a book as an artwork invites a reflection on the properties of the book form itself. Much like any act of reading, an artists' book is a physical experience that allows a connection with the medium that – while social in its implications – is individual and personal. The artists' book invites us to hold it and turn through its pages. Whether the contents are visually or linguistically based (often a mix of both), physically moving through an artwork implicates notions of sequence, repetition, juxtaposition, and duration. The interplay of text and images, as well as considerations of printing process and the design of the book, allows for many exciting possibilities within narrative, media, and meaning that are specific to the artists' book alone.

Artists' books (or **book arts** or **book objects**) are [works of art](#) that utilize the form of the book. They are often published in small editions, though they are sometimes produced as one-of-a-kind objects.

William Blake (1757-1827)



Artists have been involved in the production of books in Europe since the early medieval period (such as the [Book of Kells](#) and the [Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry](#)), but most writers on the subject cite the English visionary artist and poet [William Blake](#) (1757–1827) as the earliest direct

Books such as [Songs of Innocence and of Experience](#) were written, illustrated, printed, colored and bound by Blake and his wife [Catherine](#), and the merging of handwritten texts and images created intensely vivid, hermetic works without any obvious precedents. These works would set the tone for later artists' books, connecting [self-publishing](#) and self-distribution with the integration of text, image and form. All of these factors have remained key concepts in artists' books up to the present day.

The first forerunner to contemporary artists' books is probably the British artist William Blake, who worked in the late 1700's and early 1800's. Blake was a poet, painter and printmaker. He wanted to integrate his visual and written work. While Blake produced traditional format books, he was radical in his desire to integrate the text and visuals on each page. He developed a new printing method that allowed for this integration. What is especially notable about Blake is his role as a predecessor of the sentiments expressed by book artists of the 1960's. Blake was "seeking a means of bringing the production of illustrated texts under his own control so that he could become his own publisher, independent of commercial publishers and letterpress printers." This independence is key to the creation of an artist's book.

William Blake's etching process

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=96LUAaaPqRc>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RAhjaAGjTw>

William Blake bio

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q2_VxFQtiiY
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4IH-6R0XaGc> (short)

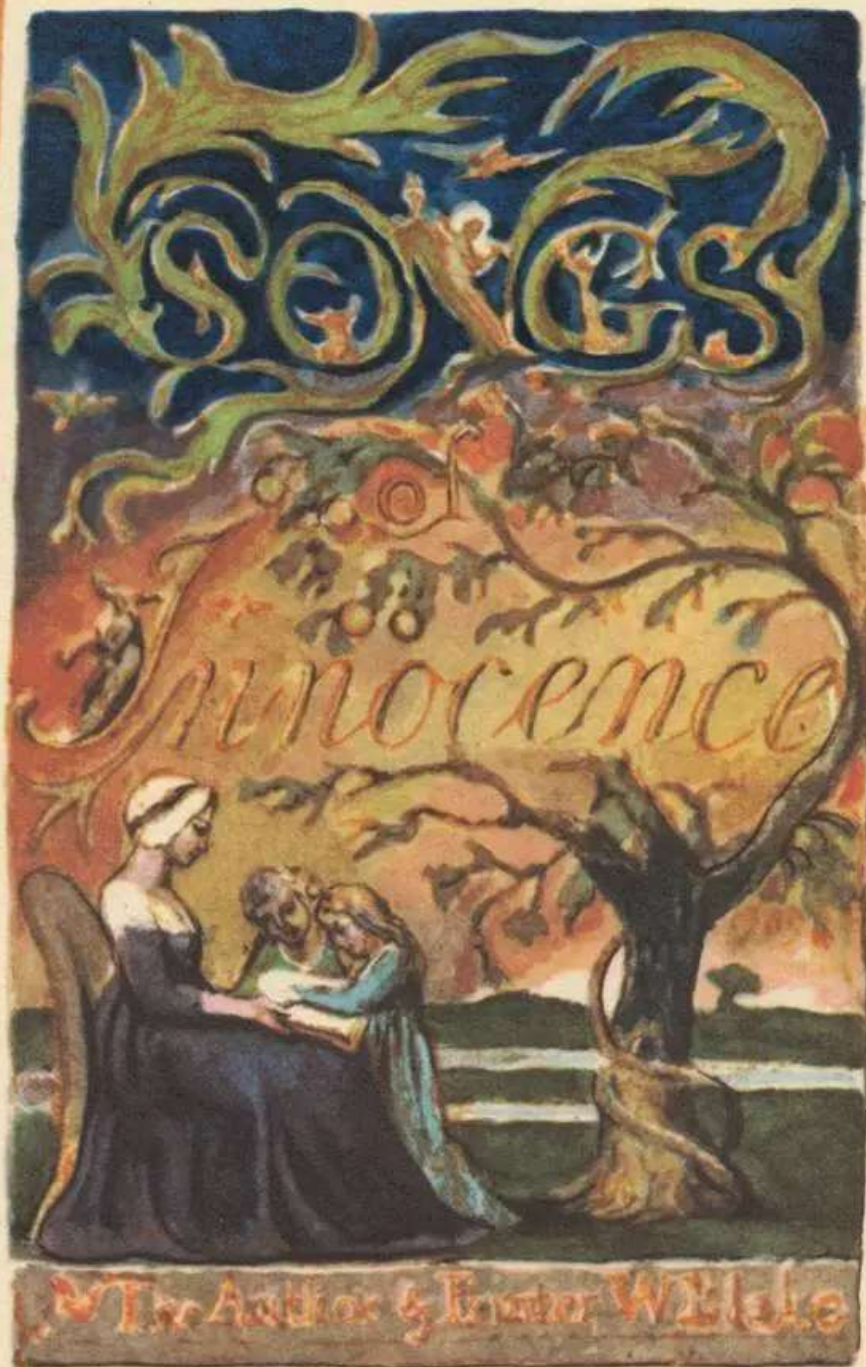


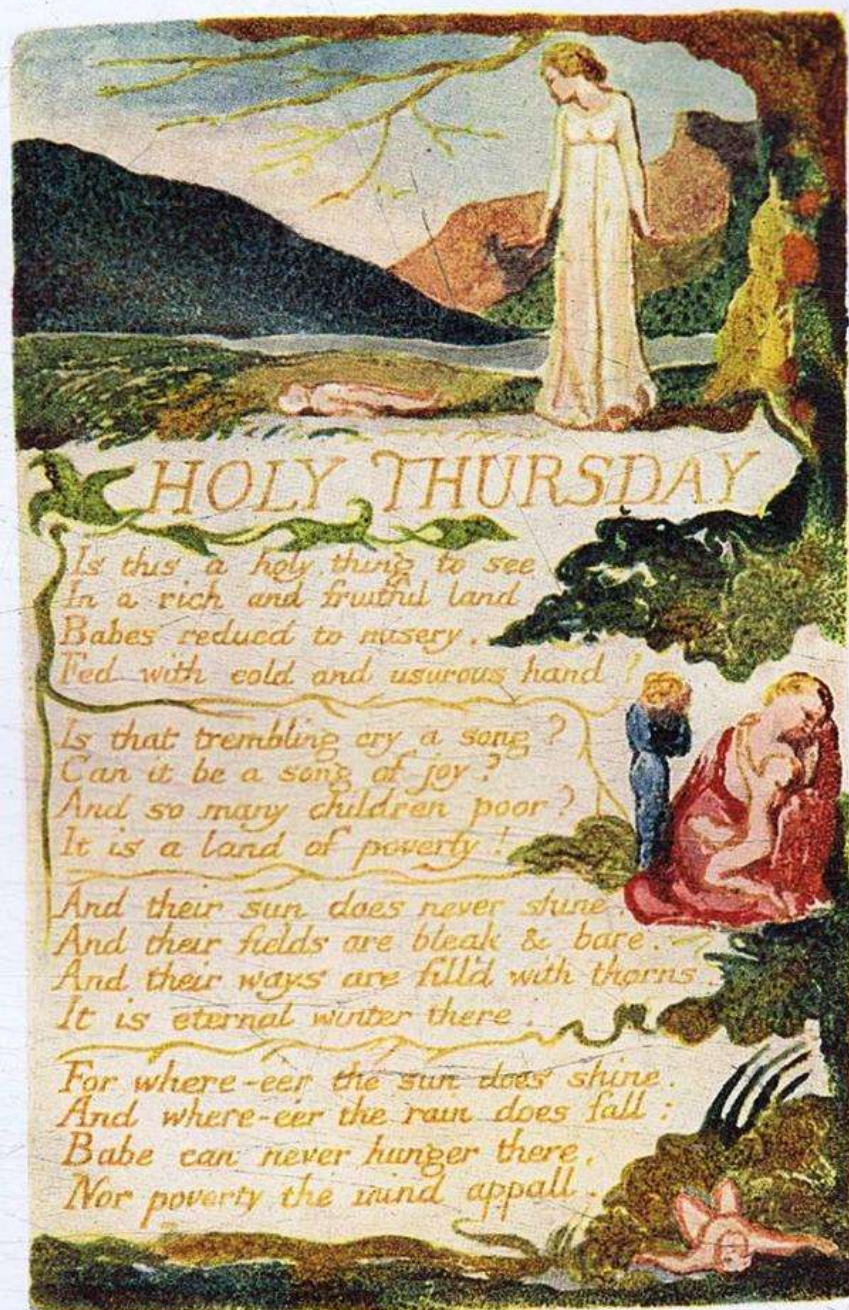
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Tyger Tyger burning bright,
In the forests of the night:
What immortal hand or eye,
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?











HELL Canto 14 MB





Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (1876-1944)

Filippo Tommaso Emilio Marinetti was an Italian poet, editor, art theorist, and founder of the [Futurist](#) movement. He was associated with the [utopian](#) and [Symbolist](#) artistic and literary community [Abbaye de Créteil](#) between 1907 and 1908. Marinetti is best known as the author of the first [Futurist Manifesto](#), which was written and published in 1909.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5NzgSJCZ7g4>

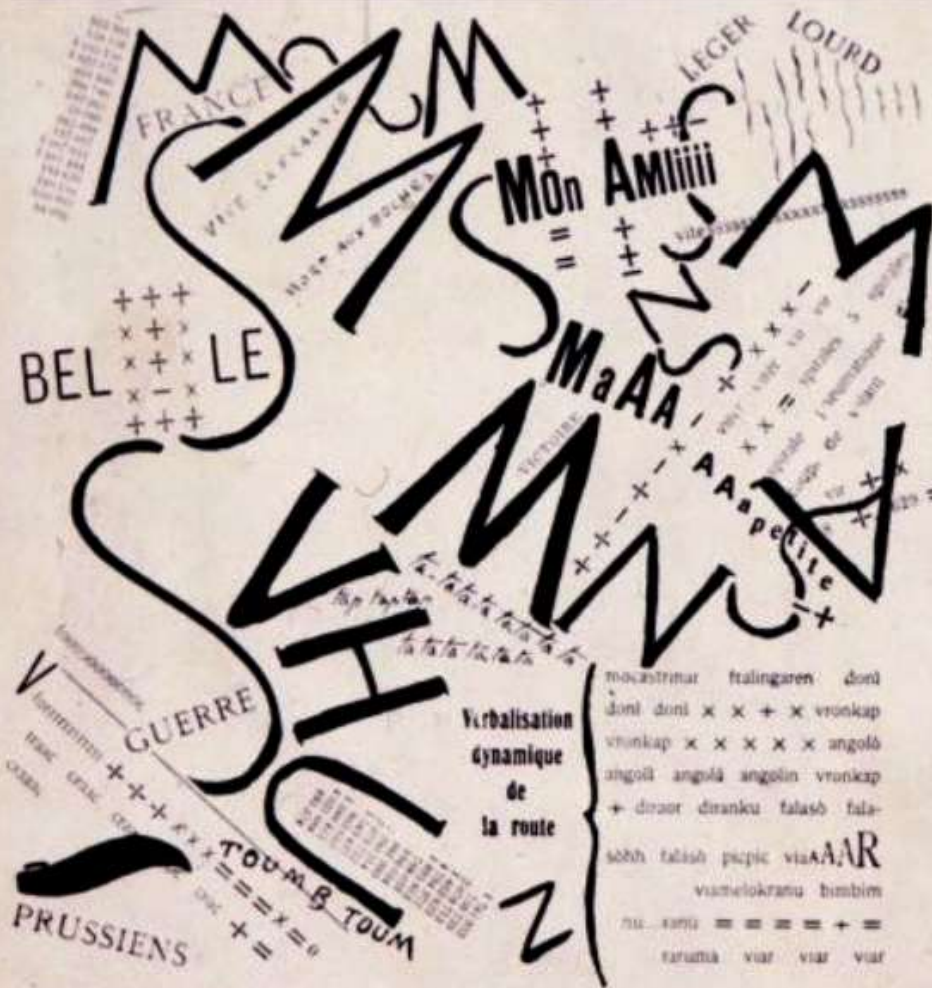
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YFPIP9NxU30> (futurism—use this)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NZHpmJvU7sM> (futurism)



PAROLE CONSONANTI IN LIBERTÀ

Dal catalogo di prossima pubblicazione: "I PAROLIBERI FUTURISTI..":
ALDO BRUNA, DELLA DETTURA, DOCCIONI, DUZZI, CAMPIGLIE, CANGULLO, CARRA, CAVALLI, BRUNO CORRA,
D. CORRENTI, M. DEL GUERRA, DELLA FLORESTA, L. FOLGORE, A. FRANCHI, C. GIOVANI, GUIZZIDONO, ITTAR,
JANNELLI, MARINETTI, ARMANDO MAZZA, PRESENZINI, NATIOLI, RADIENTE, SETTIMELLI, TODINI, ecc.



MARINETTI, *parolibero* - Montagne + Vallate + Strade x Joffre

F. T. MARINETTI FUTURISTA

**ZANG
TUMB TUMB**

ADRIANOPOLI OTTOBRE 1912

TUUUMB IN LIBERTÀ
PAROLE TUUUMB TUUUMB TUUUMB TUUUMB

EDIZIONI FUTURISTE
DI "POESIA"
Venetia, 41 - 191

EDIZIONI FUTURISTE
DI "POESIA"
Corso Venezia, 41 - MILANO
1914

SCRA Brr Rrraa NNG

Ho scoperto
il vetro fibre
mentre lavoravo
il Mont Cervin
E.T.M.

poa piig
Poonh
Piling

futurista

GRAAA
TRAC
SIMULTANEA ESPLOSIONE
Guerra ai
tedeschi
verdi
compa qui
foralato

FUTURISMO

FUTURISTI!
VENTE TUTTI il
d a IGLIA
ricordo
della

15 Aprile a ROMA!

DI VIA MERCANTI,

prima vittoria del Fascismo
sul nemici d'Italia,

visitate la Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista

glorificandone il
D U C E

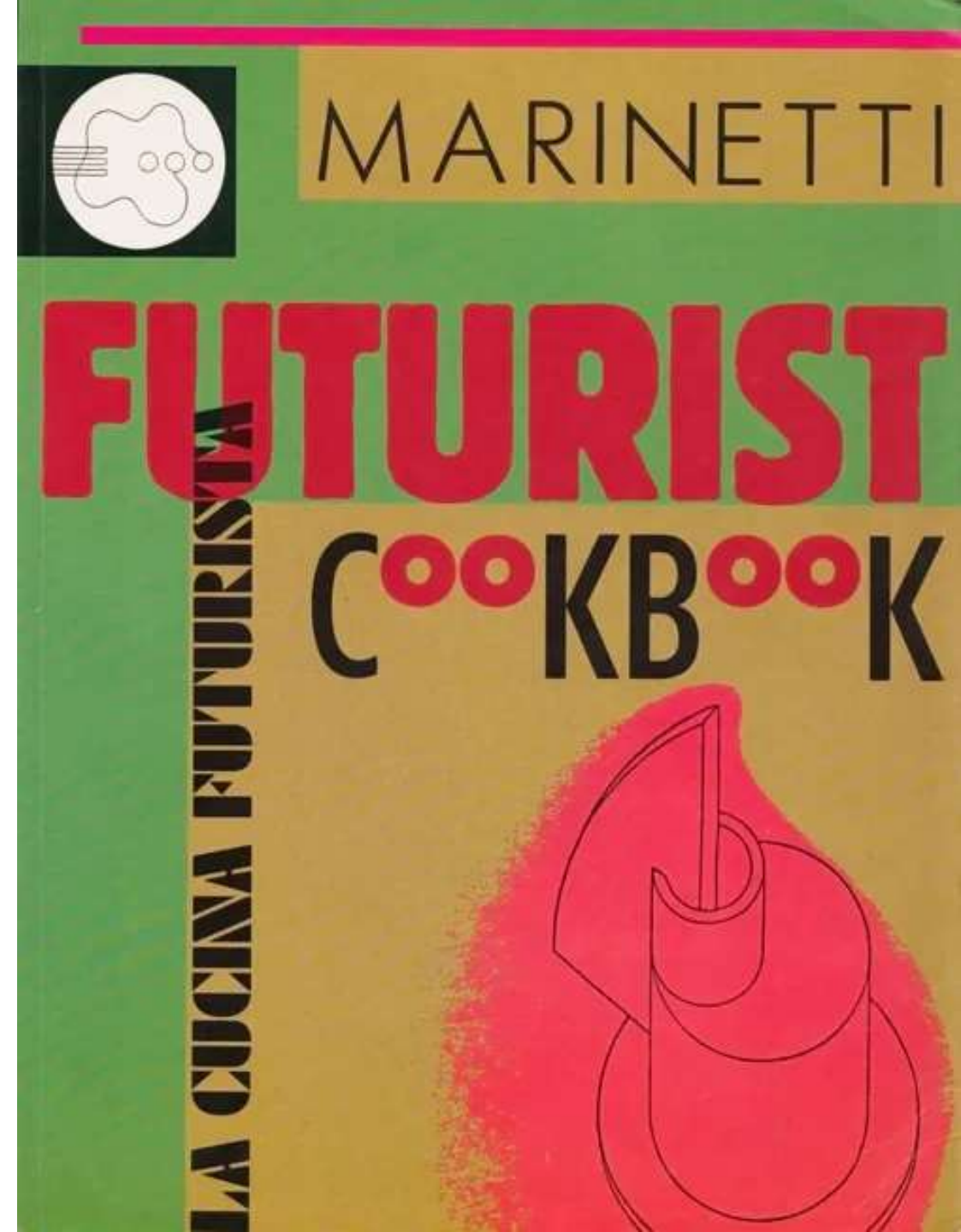
meraviglioso e

L'AR
virile
dinamica
gioconda
e tagliente
con cui è stata espressa

la sua anima ardita futurista.

F. T. MARINETTI





Dieter Roth (1930-1998)

Dieter Roth was a Swiss artist best known for his [artist's books](#), [editioned prints](#), [sculptures](#), and works made of [found materials](#), including rotting food stuffs.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XVe5hd81IU&t=102s> (16 minutes)



DITER ROT
LITTLE TENTATIVE
RECIPE
EDITION HJ MAYER

28





Contemporary Book Artists

Artists Books can be flat, sculptural, interactive, personal, public, narrative, abstract, linear, disjointed, printed, painted, and/or scratched. They can be elegant calligraphy on translucent handmade paper, or they can be made of trash. They can be large installations or private tiny journeys. In the words of Suze Woolf, one of the artists in this show, the Artist Book “...is a vessel for messages...”

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eC4fLk-Xeel> (off the book PBS)
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KOQi_xo6Aug&t=19s (MIT)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bvIBPKtuw6Y> (Africa)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6AQExETrsc> (artist book collection Linda Lear CT College)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zS1ocg2SoCU>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lw2Kjfztsaw> (Frost art museum)

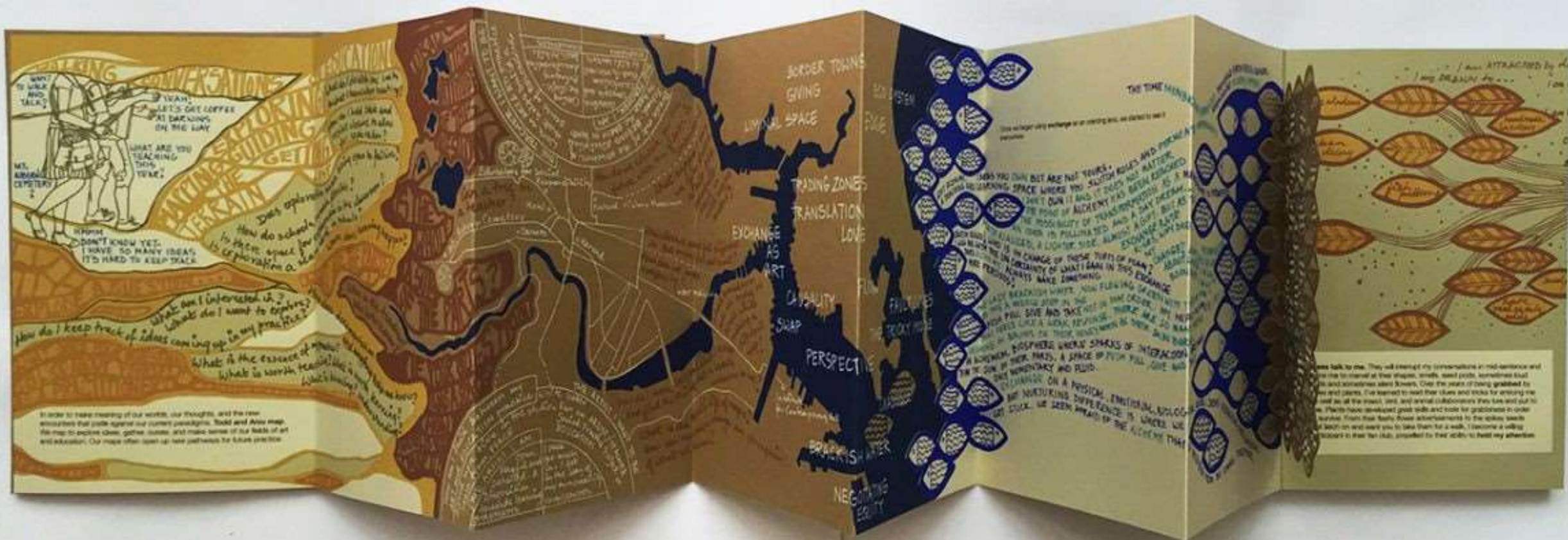














C.B. Sherlock

Minneapolis book artist C.B. Sherlock discusses how an artists' book uses tactile, visual, and text elements to extend the meaning of written works.

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5SdXLKdp2cE>







Kerry McAleer-Keeler

I'm an artist who wishes to tell you a visual story











We were all immigrants once.

"I never considered a
difference of opinion

in *politics*,
in *religion*,
in *philosophy*

as cause for withdrawing
from a friend."

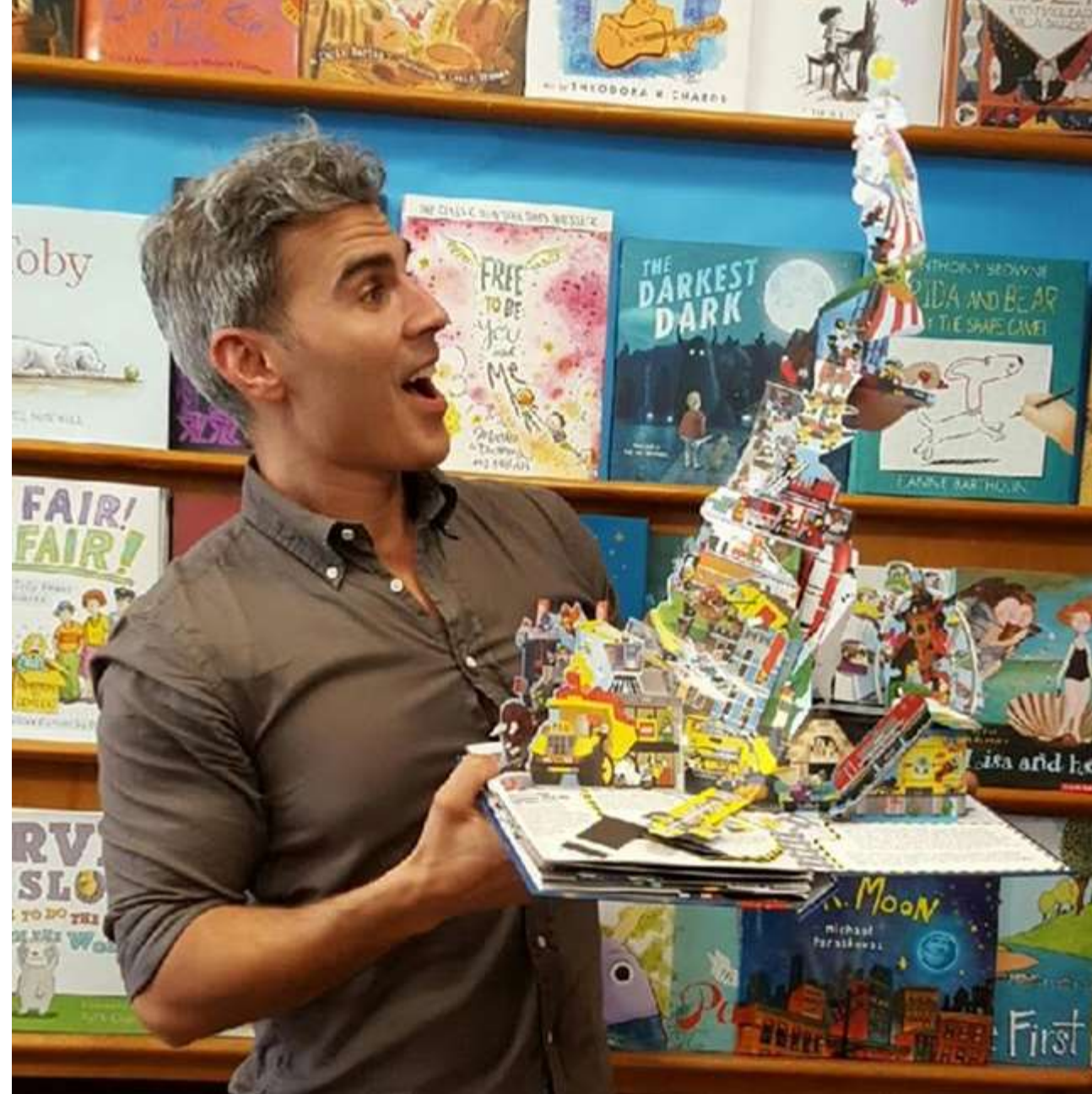
- Thomas Jefferson



Matthew Reinhart

Matthew Christian Reinhart is an American writer and illustrator of children's pop-up books and picture books. His most recent books include *Frozen: a Pop-up Adventure* and *Lego Pop-up: A Journey to the Lego Universe*

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qIV4sEyK8Jw> (pop-up book artist)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O6JFYMJMQZ0>





The dawn was beginning to break when Mowgli
alone to meet those dangerous things called
Mowgli pushed his way through the gate. When the
Mowgli opened his eyes, he pointed to show
The man and his people crowded around him.
a hundred people crowded around him.
a woman called "He has
like your boy."





ETERNAL VILLAINS

With demons and sorcery, the powerful sorceress Medusa and her serpentine minions, the daughters of Poseidon, frightened the bravest and looting villages. The city would send her and her minions from the land with demands which were "never" or "nothing." After the work of civilization, Medusa's death through a hero's quest, her looking in the shadows, more powerful than anything, her mind and her ability to control the fate of the gods.

Medusa's Story

Medusa's story was written in the Greek mythological world, but it is a story of a woman who was turned into a monster by a god.

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Felicia Rice

Felicia Rice (born 1954) is an American book artist, typographer, [letterpress](#) printer, fine art publisher, and educator. She lectures and exhibits internationally, and her books can be found in collections from [Special Collections, Cecil H. Green Library \(Stanford University\)](#) to the [Whitney Museum of American Art](#) (New York) to the [Bodleian Library](#) (University of Oxford). Work from the Press is included in exhibitions and collections both nationally and internationally, and has been the recipient of numerous awards and grants.

- <https://www.craftinamerica.org/short/book-artist-felicia-rice>







M. L. Van Nice



In 2005, Van Nice created an installation for NMWA of an imaginary library, *The Library at Wadi ben Dagh*, in praise of the masterpieces of world literature, allowing viewers to experienced Shakespeare, Baudelaire, Proust, Lewis Carroll, and James Joyce, as three-dimensional book-sculptures. Van Nice's art represents scholarship combined with a whimsical and unbound imagination.

Swiss Army Book was inspired by the Swiss army knife, "a tool so ludicrously elaborate, as to include toothpicks, saws, bottle openers, etc.," muses artist M. L. Van Nice. She constructed a number of tiny folios growing out of the main body of the book to articulate the idea that knowledge derives from previously accumulated wisdom. Through the display of partly burned pages, the artist demonstrates the fragility and vulnerability of books. Van Nice believes that writing is a never-ending process. To facilitate a rewriting of *Swiss Army Book*, she provides a handcrafted typewriter and an actual pen nib.

The text in this unique artist's book is rendered in Van Nice's meticulous calligraphy of illegible signs. The structure and symbolism of *Swiss Army Book* challenge the viewer on both visceral and intellectual levels.





Science and the Artist's Book



Type Writer Art

- <https://mymodernmet.com/james-cook-typewriter-art/>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kyK5WvpFxqo>

Julie Chen



Chen has achieved prominence by creating conceptually sophisticated works that combine traditional techniques, such as letterpress printing and hand bookbinding, with modern technologies such as photopolymer plates and laser cutting.^{[3][4]} She is known for pushing structural boundaries of the artist's book with a range of architectural and sculptural forms. At the same time, her work is praised for its high standard of production and emphasis on the artist's book as a tactile experience.^{[5][6][7]} Victoria Steele, the former Brooke Russell Astor Director of Collection Strategy for [New York Public Library](#), remarked that the "physical form" of Chen's work "reinforces the concept and text." Chen investigates the "complex experience" of book arts through her work as an artist and educator.^[8]

During her time as a student at Mills College, Chen founded Flying Fish Press, publishing limited-edition artists' books. Chen typically works independently but has also produced books collaboratively with fiber artist Nance O'Banion and book artists Barbara Tetenbaum and Clifton Meador.

- <https://www.craftinamerica.org/artist/julie-chen>
- <https://www.craftinamerica.org/short/book-artist-julie-chen-on-her-process>
- <https://flyingfishpress.com/>

After the birth of Jesus, the ostrich came to the stable and gave the baby a gift of sand. Mary understood that this was the most heartfelt gift this creature could give and treasured her for it. Later, the martyred ostrich became St. Ostrich. In her incarnation as the Virgin of Guadalupe, Mary urged her to begin visiting Mexico. Since Mexico already had many holy places, she only visited the jungles. Ostriches were not well known in Mexico so it was very hard to gain acceptance. She would pass out her precious sand for the people but they were baffled by something that just looked like clean dirt and was useless for growing anything.

Witnesses remembered this strange apparition and an oral tradition was born. As time passed, people began to make requests to communicate St. Ostrich, her visitations and her interventions to save people from disasters, illnesses, downings, mad dogs, murders. For other saints there is a tradition of giving a painting of each intervention to that saint's church. But as one of the lesser known saints, there was no church dedicated to St. Ostrich, so paintings of her interventions were placed in residences in people's homes.



THE MARTYRDOM OF ST. OSTRICH

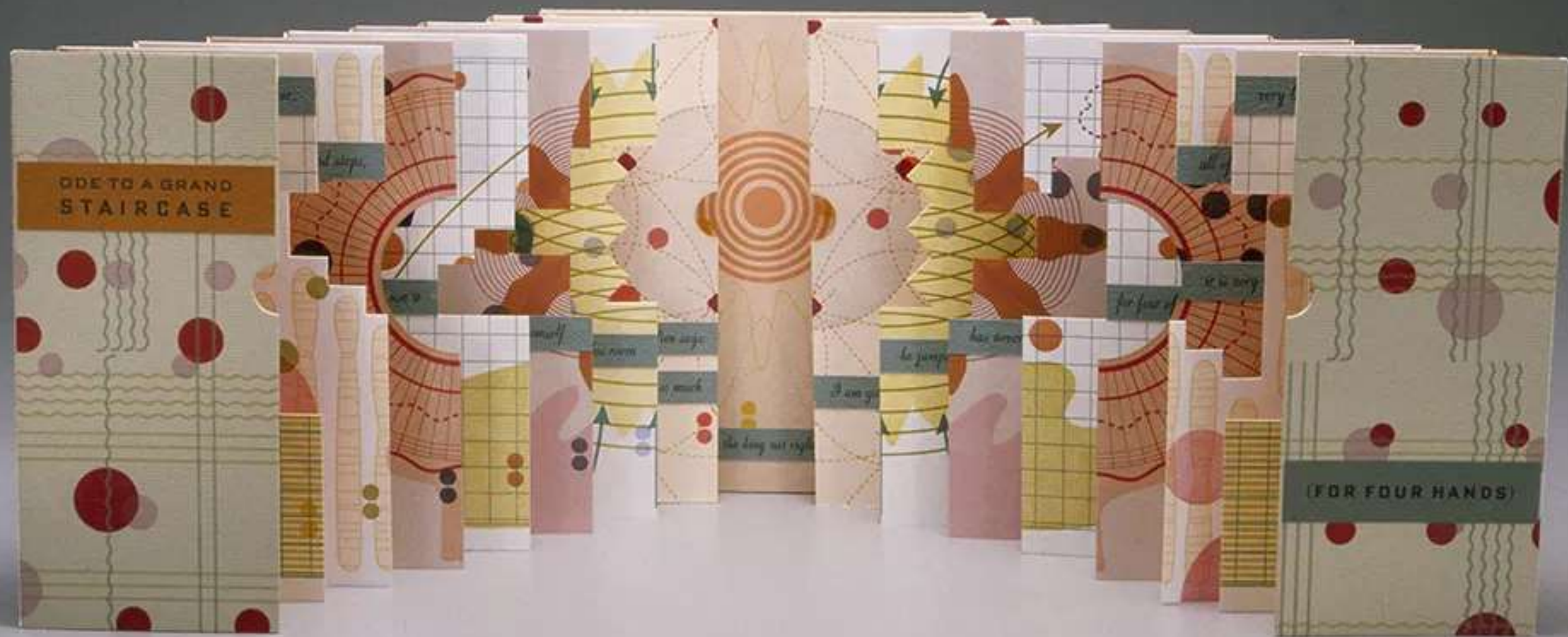
Devastated by people's dislike of her most precious gift, the ostrich entered a convent as a novice. But the food lacked texture and the garden, though beautifully looking, lacked sand. Her continuous effort to introduce sand led the sisters to cast her out. Bound in faith to her calling, she travelled the world offering sand as her unique form of blessing.

Her martyrdom was swift: Thrown into an empty swimming pool by evil men, she dove for the bottom in an effort to bury her head, as was her habit. Since there was no sand, this action broke her neck and she died. She was awarded the Martyr's palm, putting her on the path to beatification as a saint.

Greater than the gently wings into the peaceful wings and feathers into the ostrich which taught her rest in the earth and moment there is dust and forgetful that the food may crush them, or that the cold hand may break them. She is fast and against her party men, at length they were not here: her bones a bit more without her. Because God built, departed her of wisdom, neither built, he imparted to her understanding.

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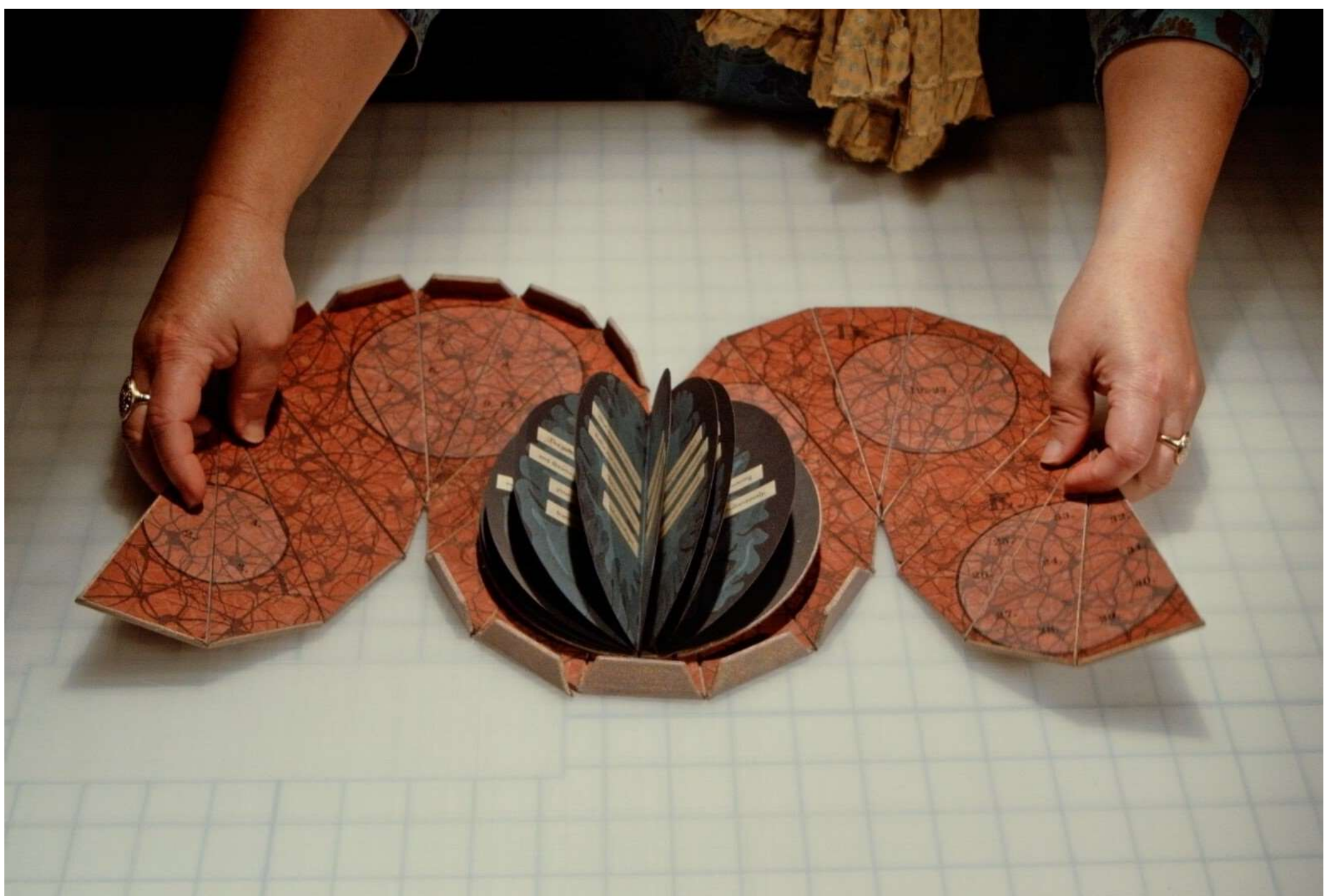
ODE TO A GRAND
STAIRCASE

(FOR FOUR HANDS)













Shirley Sharoff

The artist's books of Shirley Sharoff cover three entirely different subjects: the creation of the universe, the great wall of China and the exploration of language and image of the procession. Her method, however, remains the same: to find the idea which is at the heart of the text and express it visually in an overall conception of box, typography and "illustration". The "big bang" in *OVI*, the unfolding *Great Wall* and the graphic entrance into *Procession* are all examples of her vision.

- <https://books-on-books.com/category/book-art-book-arts/book-art/structures/page/2/>



When shall
we stop
reinforcing the Great
Wall with
new bricks?
o make

這偉大
而可詛咒
的長城

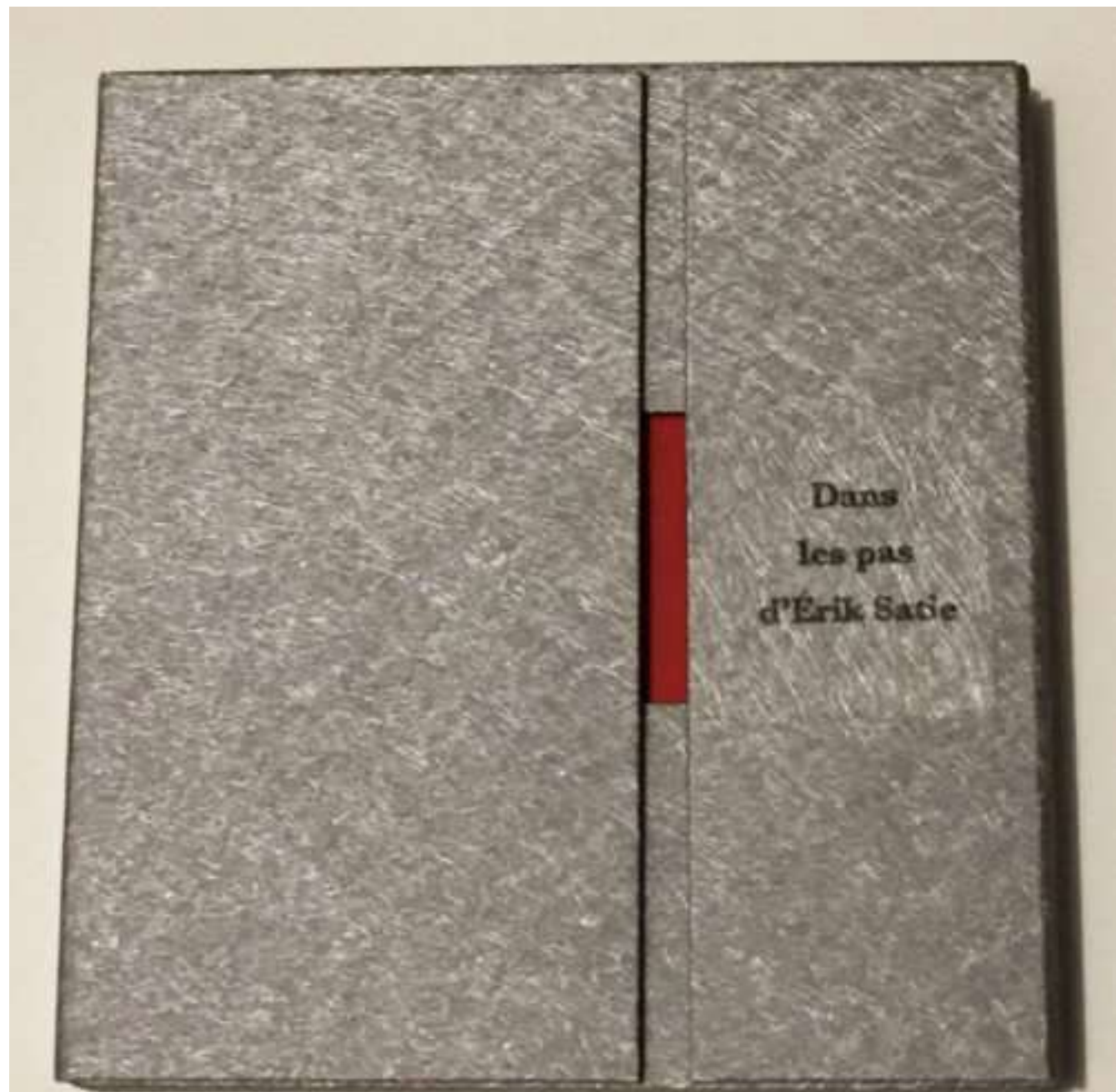
other
gave me
They

rules
nose

These have combined to make

When shall
we stop
reinforcing the Great
Wall with
new bricks?









Helen Douglas

- <http://weproductions.com/handprinted.html>
- <https://books-on-books.com/tag/helen-douglas/>

Assignment Suggestions...

- <https://books-on-books.com/2018/09/24/bookmarking-book-art-hedi-kyles-the-art-of-the-fold-how-to-make-innovative-books-and-paper-structures/> (the art of the fold—how to book)
- Create a continuous artwork on a scroll or an accordion fold. It can be single or double-sided. It can incorporate text (a poem or quote, perhaps), but doesn't need to. Think about the container or cover for your work.
- Modify an existing book (for example, an old text book or dictionary)
- Create a pop-up or fold-out piece.