

Banoo Balliboi
Smriti Choudhary
Anne Covell
Samit Das
Meera Devidayal
Liz Fernando
Layla Gonaduwa
Kingsley Gunatillake
Radhika Hettiarachchi
& Shanika Perera
Samanta Batra Mehta
Sathyanand Mohan
Tanmoy Samanata
Zach Stensen
Jagath Weerasinghe
Deng Yifu



READING ROOM

An exhibition featuring
artists' books and altered book art.



CURATED BY AMIT KUMAR JAIN

PRESENTED BY TARQ IN COLLABORATION WITH
BLUEPRINT 12 AND COLOMBO ART BIENNALE

TARQ

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READING ROOM

Curated by Amit Kumar Jain

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ONE OF THE FINEST MEMORIES OF A COLLECTOR IS THE MOMENT WHEN HE RESCUED A BOOK TO WHICH HE MIGHT NEVER HAVE GIVEN A THOUGHT, MUCH LESS A WISHFUL LOOK, BECAUSE HE FOUND IT LONELY AND ABANDONED ON THE MARKETPLACE AND BOUGHT IT TO GIVE IT ITS FREEDOM...

WALTER BENJAMIN, ILLUMINATIONS

FREEING THE BOOK

The Book a traditional object,
which nevertheless is capable of
the most contemporary adaptation,
yet retains an aesthetic dimension

Mabel Kaufmann, *The Book as Art and Idea*

As a child I would sit with my grandfather for hours in what I used to call his 'book room.' That is where I learned to love the smell of books. I was taught not to fold over, or 'dog-ear' the pages of books to mark the page I stopped reading at, and discovered with fascination that silver fish could make the most beautiful patterns of tiny holes that sunk deep into the pages of a book. I learned the posture of reading old school: to sit upright, to hold the spine of a book and to slip my index finger under the page in readiness to turn over. Already, for my grandfather, and through him, for me – the book was art, with its accompanying practice, mode of engagement and embodied experience.

Perhaps that is why when Walter Benjamin writes of the collector of books unpacking his library, and he speaks of an accompanying mood that is not elegiac, rather that of anticipation, it feels almost as if he picked the most apt word to describe the sensory experience of confronting a book. This sense of anticipation, I feel, is the mood to be carried on into experiencing the book as contemporary art.

Art historian and critic Johanna Drucker is quoted to have referred to book art as "*the quintessential 20th century art form.*" The book as a form of artistic expression has been a part of evolutionary moments of contemporary art from Russian futurism to feminist art to conceptual art and performance art, and the number of artists using books as a medium in art is increasing. And yet, book art remains more on

the peripheries of contemporary art institutions, communities, practice and audiences – especially in the Asian region.

The premise of this essay is thus to consider the contemporary art positioning, and the many interpretations, of the book as an art object and its cultural and political agency. It seeks to find ways of understanding book art, and explore paradigms of reading, and interpreting work produced in this context. While the delineation of the book as art object is contextualised within a more global discussion – the project here is to extend the thinking to contemporary exhibition curation and exhibition making in the South Asian Region, bringing into focus the philosophy of the 'Reading Room.'

INSIDE THE READING ROOM

In its articulation, the 'Reading Room' engages the idea of an active, working studio (invoking book art histories in antecedent bookmaking practices – papermaking, illustration, binding and printing); it also evokes the inherently multi sensory, experiential dynamic of the book. The notion of the 'Reading Room' focuses the approach to the exhibition as one that considers the specific history of 'reading practice' associated with the book, its materiality, its proximity to everyday life and its suggestion of a kind of intimacy. It even goes so far as to suggest interaction, thus articulating – in the invitation to participate in art – a democratising principle.

Jules Prown recommends that, in art contexts, when objects are not available for physical investigation, perceptions regarding sensory aspects *"must be done imaginatively and empathetically."* This is important, she notes, because in most cases, books in exhibitions are often placed behind glass to protect them from damage that might occur from handling (in Burkhart, 2006, p.263). And so, in the 'Reading Room,' the possibility of 'handling' the work becomes a politic engaged with. This is only scratching at the surface of the site of resistance (which will be discussed in more detail later) that is the book in art.

EXISTENCE RENEWED: THE BOOK IN ART

In his essay *"Unpacking My Library: A Talk About Book Collecting,"* Walter Benjamin discusses the book from the perspective of the collector. He frames two interesting perspectives that can be drawn into an exploration of the practice of book art brought into discussion in this essay. First, his approach to 'ownership,' and second his expression of the 'renewal of existence.'

What is interesting to note is that Benjamin sees 'ownership' as one of the most intimate relationships that one can have with objects. Ownership, or perhaps more accurately, 'possession,' is the expression of a 'relationship' that exists between collector and object, "which does not emphasize their functional utilitarian

value – that is, their usefulness – but studies and loves them as the scene, the stage, of their fate" (1969, p.60). Taken into account in a consideration of book art, this is in a sense, an act of 'freeing the book,' in that it is given an expressive power beyond the traditional approach to the book. The book is given a new frame of reference by the artist. And, the invitation is to 'read' differently.

Benjamin goes on to suggest that for a 'true collector,' acquisition is the rebirth of a book. He also speaks of the element of the 'childlike' in this respect –

(...) For children can accomplish the renewal of existence in a hundred unfalling ways. Among children, collecting is only one process of renewal; other processes are the painting of objects, the cutting out of figures, the application of decals – the whole range of childlike modes of acquisition, from touching things to giving them names. To renew the old world – that is the collector's deepest desire (p.61).

This metaphor of a child's treasury contextualises the idea of the 'renewal of existence.' It, in effect, speaks of the possibility of reimagining the object – discussed in the hands of the child, but can be extended to acknowledge the premise of existence renewed for the book by the artist.

DEFINING THE ARTISTS' BOOK

The 'artists' book' functions as an art object; the term itself refers to works of art realised in the form of a book. Claire Bernstein describes artists' books as "*radical extenders of form rather than neutral vessels,*" which results in "*a vision of books as laboratories for the invention and performance of perceptual systems: new worlds carved out of the wilderness of human thought and language*" (in Burkhart, 2006, p.249).

Artists' books are typically understood as different from finely crafted books that demonstrate technical mastery; more often than not, the artists' book finds its most profound expression as the artists' sketchbook. Loosely framed, an artists' book is a work of art in its own right, conceived specifically for the book form (Lippard as cited in Burkhart, 2006, p.249). A point to note within the artists' book dialogue is that in the understanding of, and approach to the artists' book, the book form itself is intrinsic to the aesthetic of the work.

Clive Phillpot (1998) – the former director of the Museum of Modern Art Library – applies the phrase Mongrel Nature to the artists' book, explaining that they are "*distinguished by the fact that they sit provocatively at the juncture where art, documentation, and literature all come together*" (p.33). What is interesting about the phrase is that it, for one, brings into focus the many different histories of the artists' book. It also makes evident the fact that the artists' book works against a single

definition. There is, thus, no consensus on the definition of the artists' book, nor is there "*a single form, production method, or conceptual framework that embodies what an artists' book is*" (Burkhart, 2006, p.249). Consulting different sources indicate, however, that there are some fundamental parameters in place to approaching, engaging with and critically evaluating the artists' book as art practice.

THE BOOK AS AN ART OBJECT

It becomes evident then that the evolution of the book as an art object communicates a massive diversity in form, approach, content and style that can be found within this medium – and, in a sense, there is an emerging conceptual sense of how to consider, interpret, understand and critique the art form. Some critics (especially in art education contexts) offer categories that function as conceptual tools to better understand the collection of objects called the artists' book, and to convey the wide variation that exists within this context. These categories, advanced within the specific definition of the artists' book, can be extended to frame an approach to decoding the ways in which books function as an object that is "*artistically engaging*" and "*culturally relevant*" (Burkhart, 2006, p.254). The categories of reading, which are adapted from Burkhart's exposition of a suggested scope for interpretation, include: The book in its auratic nature, textual innovation,

conventions, appropriations, performative qualities, narrative, assemblage, documentation, 'democratic multiple,' activism and digitization (pp. 253-260).

Some books emanate a powerful aura because of their physical presence, and some artistic works emphasize this 'auratic' nature. With such work, meaning is conveyed sometimes through symbolic association that could depend on the history or the form of the book. Instances of 'textual innovation' can be read in books that optimize the expressive potential of words on a page; this is different from narrative, which will be discussed later. Engagement with structural aspects of the book can be considered under the category of 'conventions' – in addition to books that play with literary conventions, including expectations regarding image and text relationships. Some artists use 'appropriations,' to alter books in varying degrees, from simple highlighting to manipulating it until it is completely transformed. Methods of this kind of alteration include printing, cutting painting, masking, folding, shaping, layering and collaging (for example, see **Fig.1**).

Traditionally, the book has occupied a space as an instructive authority, and in some instances, the artistic engagement is with the element of directing action to create a more active role for the spectator; therein lives the 'performative' aspect of work. The 'narrative' (for example, see **Fig.2**) is the most pervasive aspect of the book genres – it is the form and voice of expression that can be read through the said, the unsaid

and the suggested of a text. Book artists tend to experiment with narrative structures as artistic comment, record or personal story. An 'assemblage' (for example, see **Fig.3**) is a compilation, which brings into either a two- or three-dimensional structure artwork, non-traditional artistic materials, objects, even found objects – creating a kind of artefact that can be read through its layering.

Book art that can be read as 'documentation' draws on journals and diaries – in some ways it is also a product of a modern art world in its close relationship with the documentary. The 'democratic multiple' stands in direct opposition to tome-like books that indicate the processes of hand production. It is the renegade book, in that it is a mass-produced object created for life in the realm of the public, its status lying in its existence on the margins of mainstream art contexts and institutions.

Artists have long understood the place, and role of the arts in societies of upheaval – some book artists too are inheritor's of this legacy and create work with 'activist' agendas (for example, see **Fig.4&5**) that focus on generating meaningful social reflection, and action. Although many book artists are working with 'digitization' processes (for example, see **Fig.6**), one the most exciting new modes of engagement in contemporary art contexts, the material book has not yet disappeared. In an age where technology has changed how we read, however, considering how processes of digitization will intervene in a book art practice will be the next stage of inquiry.



FIG.1: BANOO BATLIBOI (INDIA)
DIMINISHING WEDGES, BOOK SCULPTURE, LEATHER BOUND BOOK, WITH 22 K GOLD EMBOSSEING, ACID-NEUTRAL PAPER.



FIG.2: ZACH STENSEN (USA)
ELEMENTARY ASTRONOMY, DRYFIRE PRESS



FIG.3: SAMIT DAS (INDIA)
VIBRATIONS AND SILENCE 4 CARD BOARD EGG BOX AND PAPER, HAND STITCHED



FIG.4: KINGSLEY GUNTALLAKE (SRI LANKA)
BULLET BOOK, BOOK, CARTRIDGES



FIG.5: DENG YIFU (CHINA)
M29SM92FS-GUN, BOOK, PERSPEX, SCREWS



FIG.6: SATYANAND MOHAN (INDIA)
CHRONICLE, SET OF 25 PHOTOS DIGITAL PRINTS

These eleven frameworks only hint at the massive range of artistic experimentation possible, and explored within the book form in contemporary art. This range (as can be understood through the frameworks described) is indicative of the fact that the contemporary book art praxis, especially because of its multi sensory and experiential dynamic moves the culture of spectatorship beyond the limitation of considering visual aspects of work to taking into account the book in art as a visually based cultural site.

READING RESISTANCE

Resistance is an interesting perspective to adopt when delving into the artistic, political and conceptual aspects of book art created and curated in the global South. Ranjit Hoskote defines 'Resistance' as a condition of the global South in his delineation of the 'biennales of resistance.' In "*The Shapeshifting Trajectory of The Biennale*," he discusses the shifting geography of the biennale from the traditional centres of biennale activity situated in West Europe to the global South – in Asia, Africa and Latin America. He notes, with the Sao Paulo Biennale (founded in 1951), the significance of the act of 'participation' in the "*supposedly cosmopolitan, though essentially Euro-American ambit of international art.*" Already, there is a formulation of a dynamic of resistance – the shift away from traditional centres, and the aspect of meaningful participation (in effect a democratic principle) in the international art domain.

The first place of 'resistance' in Hoskote's articulation is the imagining and mapping of the global contemporary – from a different axis. Secondly, where the politic is of emergence itself, the art context becomes that of collective witness, remembrance and resistance. The 'Reading Room,' in its curation and its collection, 'imagines and maps' a global contemporary position of the book conceived from an axis of difference. While the work is sometimes fantastical and playful, and sometimes emotive and intimate, at its most activist, it stands as a collective statement on dominant politics and ideologies. It is work that reminds us that the resistive power of the book art form is both possible and significant, and in the consideration of such work, critical and evocative. And, as the artist, in many ways, works as an interpreter of the book, so will the viewer of the work.

- *Ruhanie Perera*

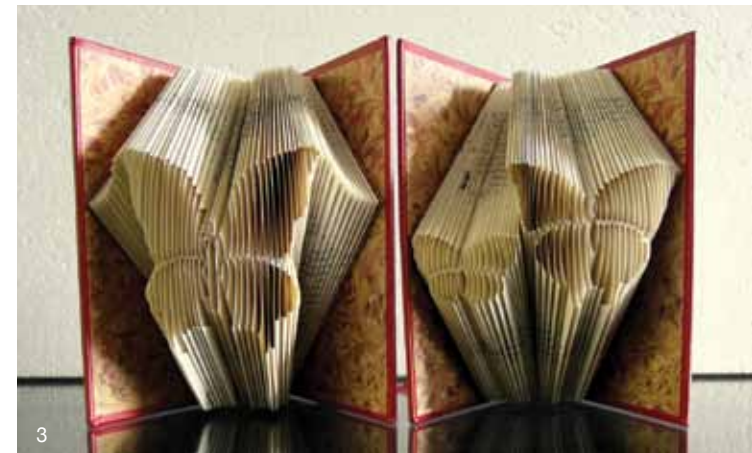
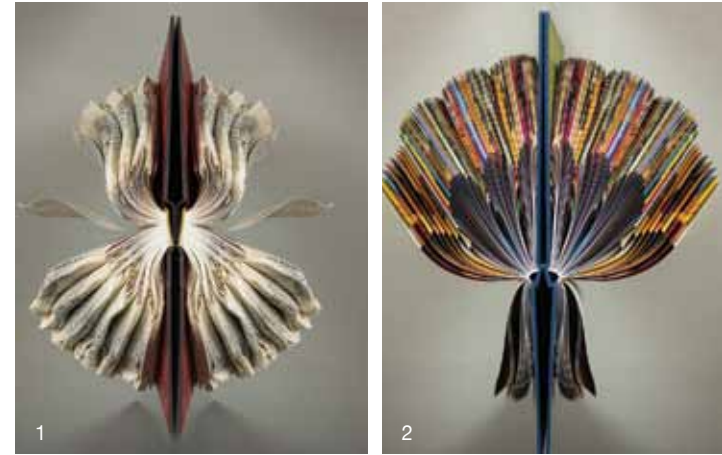


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BANOO BATLIBOI

For the past several years I have been working in the field of 'altered book art'. I work with old, abandoned books which have served for many years in their conventional form as a vehicle for narrative ideas. Now, by shifting focus to the tactile and visual qualities of the book, I imagine an alternative interpretation. Through a precise series of folds the books are reconfigured into an intriguing sculpture where the original text becomes a texture. For the 'Plush' series of sculptures I have used old volumes of the Franklin Library Series. These books were a serendipitous find. They had been lying forgotten, in a dark corner of a voluminous godown for 30 years. These handsome books are bound in real leather and have a distinctive cover design embossed in 22k gold. The pages are gold gilded to protect against dust and moisture and the paper used is acid neutral to last generations without discoloring. My practice now extends to a further exploration into the forms that my books take through photography.



1. *THE AGE OF SHIVA 1*, DIGITAL PRINT ON METALLIC PAPER | 2014
2. *PACIFIC PATTERNS 1*, DIGITAL PRINT ON METALLIC PAPER | 2014
3. *THREE BUTTERFLIES*, LEATHER BOUND BOOKS, WITH 22K GOLD EMBOSsing, ACID-NEUTRAL PAPER | 2014

SMRITI CHOUDHARY



SESSIONS IN PARADISE, ILLUSTRATED BOOK (DETAIL) | 2014

Born

and brought up in a small town in Rajasthan, I had plenty of nature to soak in. Fruit trees in the garden, birds of different kinds on the terrace in the mornings, sparrows' nests inside the attic, monkeys on the porch, view of green hills from the window, that was my world before I moved to a city to study design. This physical detachment with the natural environment led me to explore illustration as a medium to revisit and reconnect with the natural world. My inspiration comes from each and every creation of nature. Through my illustrations, I like to capture and idealize the harmony, that seamlessly exists, between wild beings and their environment. I often find myself getting lost in minuscule details of my subjects, which reflects in the overall treatment as well as the emotion of the artwork.

I have been using pigment pens as my primary medium and absolutely enjoy working with the contrast of black and white. My process involves a great amount of minute detailing work, which I find extremely therapeutic. Because of my background in graphic design, my artworks tend to have a stylistic tone with a balance of realistic interpretations.

I am not trying to accomplish anything through my art. I draw to escape from the hodgepodge of citylife to a fair and peaceful world; and I hope it does the same for my viewers.

ANNE COVELL

As an artist, I am drawn to the structure of the book as a mechanism for exploring the temporality of sensory experience. A book for me is as much about the tactile experience of handling, as it is about the sound it makes in action, the smell of its ink, and the shape and texture of its visual makeup. Much of my work in this way draws upon the evocative nature of the senses in relationship to memory, and in tandem, as each relate to the structure of the book as a medium for expressing the passing of time and the fragility of nature.

Indeed, my work often utilizes natural and historic production methods, such as natural dyeing and hand papermaking, as a means to produce cohesive work that is sensitive to the preservation of material resources and processes. Transience and decay are not only of the natural world, but are also of the material culture we construct. Through both research and practice, I attempt to capture and reflect the temporal essence of the ephemeral, as a means to preserve what might otherwise be lost.



NATURAL ORDER: A GAME OF PAIRS, ARTISTS BOOK/CARD GAME, 30 HAND-DRAWN CARD ILLUSTRATIONS, LEARNING GUIDE, AND CASE LETTERPRESS PRINTED FROM POLYMER | 2012

As a starting point for my Artists books, I must say that I cannot separate the intimate connection between my source of inspiration [also various books] from my own process of execution throughout my artistic journey. To engage with the book is a form of performance and a manner of taking this process further by the use of different materials and images, thus creating different architectural thoughts. This form of expression can allow a contemporary viewer to make a connection between history and the present in an ongoing act. The book thus seems to be an appropriate structure to share the essential thoughts acquired from other books. It takes the viewer through different experiences using a support that is a visual/ textual journey, rather like a film. It is also a manner of recalling a vast range of past experience and putting forward another aspect of architecture. Clearly the essential quality of an architectural hypothesis is strongly perceptible in the form of a book.

VIBRATIONS AND SILENCE

Cities have the impressionist aspects of visual vibration and sound. I have focused primarily on the visual imagery and given little attention to descriptions of sound. As an artist, writer and archivist I have influenced by literary impressionism at the same time the sense of abstract void. However, I have used aural imagery in these unique edition books; both thematically and descriptively. For me as an artist silence is an essential part of any city, sometime historical part is quiet, some time approach of modernism. Thus, sound functions as a disruptive force, indicating the revelation of destructive secrets. It also fulfills the

SAMIT DAS



1. *VIBRATIONS AND SILENCE – 1*, CUSTOM BOUND TWO BOOKS , HAND MADE PAPER , DRAWINGS WITH BURNT LINE AND ROUTER | 2014
2. *VIBRATIONS AND SILENCE – 3*, HAND STITCHED NOTE BOOK, PEN AND CHARCOAL | 2002



desire to make readers 'hear' through written words and lines to evoke the suggestive power of city and its silence .

MEERA DEVIDAYAL

Into the Rose Garden is the culmination of my mill project, 'A Terrible Beauty' - a suite of paintings, photographs, video and this Artists' Book. Using images and text, culled from the writings of poets, historians and philosophers, I have attempted to look out to the past, to investigate the present, and to imagine the future, recognising the need to move on while wrestling with lingering traces of the past.

Finally this book is my project come full circle.

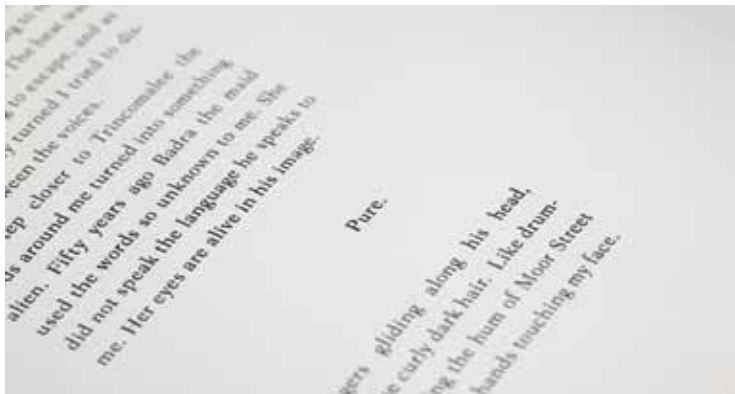
'I rise again changed but the same'

Starting with my wanderings in the wastelands of Mumbai's textile mills in present times, I have returned to a distant past. To a childhood also spent around a textile mill...in another time, another place.



INTO THE ROSE GARDEN (DETAIL), ARTIST BOOK, DIGITAL PRINT ON PHOTO PAPER | 2014

LIZ FERNANDO



TRINCOMALEE: MY FATHER'S STORY AND THE LOST PHOTOGRAPHS,
DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHS | 2012

My own biography and research into the role of the photograph in South Asia highlights the different role that photography, memory and the personal archive occupy within non-western cultures. A diverse understanding of cultural values is important for the tactile and broader understanding of the medium. In Sri Lanka, my father's place of birth, humidity destroys the photographic object in a painfully slow and unstoppable process until it vanishes completely, as though it had never existed. As a result of this my photographic family archive vanished over the years. The oral history became the precious but fragile and delicate string for my own identity. The specific circumstances of my father's upbringing raised my interest. They are the underlying narrative of the images and the story is built on the perspective of a daughter listening her father's earliest memories of his upbringing in the peaceful setting of the 1950's city of Trincomalee.

Trincomalee, during the colonial period one of Britain's most important harbours in South Asia, became soon synonymous with the invention of suicide bombing and the war-ravaged north. In contrast my father's stories, are stories not attached to nostalgia but naïve and beautiful little episodes between a Tamil girl and a Sinhalese boy. They are stories that describe a childhood lived in innocence whilst the post-colonial crisis between Tamils and Sinhalese was still to emerge.

Over centuries we have warped our own history. Our versions, new understandings and discoveries of the past have been mistranslated, changed, altered and skewed to fit our understanding of reality or pre-conceived notions.

Documenting and recording histories reflect prejudices, glorification, preconceived ideas, simply because the person responsible for it is human. It is impossible to document anything free of personal biases and choices. As Will Durant said, our knowledge of the past is always incomplete, inaccurate, beclouded by ambivalent evidence & biased historians, and perhaps distorted by our own patriotic or religious partisanship.

History is a fable not quite agreed upon, Napoleon declared.

Here I take Making History in its literal sense.

Every one of us is a maker or participant of it, and a chronicler of history as well, by oral or written tradition. Thus we are in control of how it is assembled and presented to the rest, and consciously or otherwise, we take liberty in trivializing, simplifying, omitting, glorifying, and simply rearranging information and experiences on a selective basis, in line with our perceptions and beliefs. We manipulate truths into prepared or fabricated histories. This is further influenced by political, social and religious perspectives and trends of our times. Histories occur with multiples of humans and chains of events. Is it possible for one person or a small fraction of a large collective, to cast a moment or event without error?

LAYLA GONADUWA



THE SILVER FISH, ACCORDION BOOK, ARCHIVAL INK PRINTED ON ARCHIVAL PAPER | 2014

KINGSLEY GUNATILAKE



DISPLACED, BOOK, WOOD AND GOLD | 2013

My books are like the cartridges where ammunition is kept. Instead of letters, words and ideas that can be read, they have rather become an arsenal containing empty ammunition that had been used at war or for killing. Communication in my books has been burnt by incandescent bullets that reflect rage of violence.

We, who failed to understand harmful effects of ethnic discrimination in the 1915 Muslim conflict or in the 1956 Tamil conflict, have suffered a 30 year civil war which sprang up in 1985 by The Black July. The wounds and scars caused by brutality and violence of that war are still visible and still hurt.

There are no live bullets now. However, the scars of where the live bullets had once been still remain the same. Do read the irreversible lunacy of ethnic conflict on spent cartridges as well as in weapon marks buried inside this book.

The word history itself highlights an inherent flaw in how we record it. It is most often 'his' story, and marginalises if not leaves out entirely, the 'her-story'. Particularly in Sri Lanka, because of the manner in which the war ended – a military solution to a conflict rooted deeply in social, political and psychological tensions – a masculine lens dominates the narrative of history. As this master narrative is reiterated and grows stronger, the ground realities of how a 26 year conflict impacted and continues to affect the lives of women and children (at times the most affected by conflict), will disappear from record. With the passing of this generation, future generations may not have access to oral histories and stories of how people lived, died and rebuilt their lives.

The Herstories Project attempts to fill this gap. By interviewing and building an archive of mothers' oral histories from across the ethnic and geographical divides, this project captures the voices of the voiceless. When history's master narratives aggregate an entire human experience of many, many people into facts and figures, it loses out on the individual stories of heroism, struggle, resilience and hope. Herstories, are intensely personal accounts of a time and a place - about the village, children, neighbours and even the dead - told through mothers' eyes because they are guardians of family history. Yet these personal narratives taken together, form a collection of peoples' histories that show the human cost of conflict. The project has collected 275 oral histories through hand-written letters, photo essays, short video, mapping of collective memories and other visual story telling methods.

RADHIKA HETTIARACHCHI & SHANIKA PERERA



HERSTORIES: MOTHERS' VOICES OF RESILIENCE AND HOPE, (DETAIL)
DIGITAL PRINT | 2013

They have been collected from women who have shared their stories voluntarily from Mullaitivu, Kilinochchi, Batticaloa, Vavuniya, Moneragala, Ampara and Kurunegala (North, South and East of Sri Lanka). They have been translated into English, Sinhala and Tamil. A sample collection of sixty stories in its original format was presented through a travelling exhibition in Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and England. The entire collection is archived online at www.herstoryarchive.org and the original hand-written material has been presented to the National Archives of Sri Lanka for preservation.

SAMANTA BATRA MEHTA



THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF TIME, ANTIQUARIAN BOOKS, INK, GRAPHITE, GESSO, 23K GOLD LEAF, PLASTIC PLANTS | 2012

My work investigates themes in personal history, gender constructs, socio-political order and colonization. Broadly speaking, I am interested in mapping connections between the human condition and the environment we inhabit. I often use the body and abstracted organic forms as metaphor for land/earth/people. My work draws from a broad range of influences including history, myth, the natural world, medieval illustration, religious iconography and mystical philosophies. I'm an avid collector of antiquarian and vintage books, maps and objects which often find their way into my art. My practice is drawing, photo and installation-based, and I often use these diverse media interchangeably.

In 'Games of Chance', intricate cut-outs made from my drawings are collaged onto the imagery on this vintage accordion book. This work is a play on childhood imagination and fancy. As a parent of two young children and an artist, I'm fascinated by how creativity unfolds early on in the human mind and how environment plays a role in shaping it.

For some time now, I have been interested in exploring the complex relationship between language, subjectivity and identity. I explored it in my photographs, and this is, in a sense a continuation of my previous work (although formally quite distinct from them). In my photographs (for example the series based on the alphabet), I was trying to explore how language structures the way we perceive and grasp the world, whereas these works were born out of some anxieties regarding the fate of languages under globalization.

It has been estimated that about 90% of the world's languages would have become extinct by the end of the 21st century because of the standardization and homogenization brought about by globalization (for example in the use of English as the internationally accepted medium of business communication). On the other hand (perhaps in response to this very real threat of cultural destruction) there are all kinds of fundamentalisms and regionalisms cropping up all over the world today. So the book tries to think through these complexities.

'Chronicle' - A set of photographs of a journal written between 1942 and 1944 by my grandfather, a doctor who was a member of the Indian National Congress and involved in the Indian independence movement, and according to family lore, friend of Gandhi, Nehru and Aung San (Suu Kyi's father). His house in Rangoon, where he practiced medicine, was a refuge for freedom fighters and other 'criminal' elements wanted by the British police in India. This journal, a family heirloom, dates from the end of his life in Kerala, and is an extended meditation

SATHYANAND MOHAN



CHRONICLE (SET OF 25 PHOTOGRAPHS OF A JOURNAL), DIGITAL PRINTS | 2013

on the continuing struggle for Indian independence, interspersed with personal reflections on his family, on his failing health and on his straitened financial circumstances. It also references events such as the growing use of penicillin to treat infections, and contains excerpts from poems by prominent Malayalee poets.

In my work, I try to play with ideas of learning, remembering and forgetting; the act of naming things, transforming objects and things into mnemonic devices that allow us to recall immediately their associative usage, and then cleverly subverting any easy meaning-making through the erasure of context and location.

I buy old keys that open no locks, locks that are no longer capable of securing anything, watches that keep no time, old books that have spent the knowledge contained in them, in flea markets and street shops in lost alleyways. I transform these objects into motifs, attempting to evict ritualised meaning from them.

My new body of work includes three-dimensional books, where I use old books gluing the pages together, layering it with rice paper, excavating shapes out of the paper, adding objects until the final object is a book only in that the covers are opened to reveal another universe held within them. 'Cartographer's Paradox-I and II' are testament to my love of reading travelogues and his fascination with maps. Hours spent poring over travel accounts, maps and globes, tracing countries and continents, I wondered what the smells and tastes of each place would be like. In Cartographer's Paradox-I, all the continents are brought together, an amalgam of Gondwana and Laurasia, a reimagining of Pangaea. The lines dividing continents and countries are rendered invisible. I play the role of a mapmaker, one who makes map without lines and borders. How does a cartographer make a map in flux, a map that is flexible, one in which

TANMOY SAMANTA



THE CARTOGRAPHER'S PARADOX, RECYCLED BOOK, PAPERBOARD, GOUACHE ON RICE PAPER | 2013

the shapes of continents morph and move, much like clouds and their shadows that fall upon an unstable earth? I strive to create the paradox of a map that does not behave, a map that does not perform its assumed function.

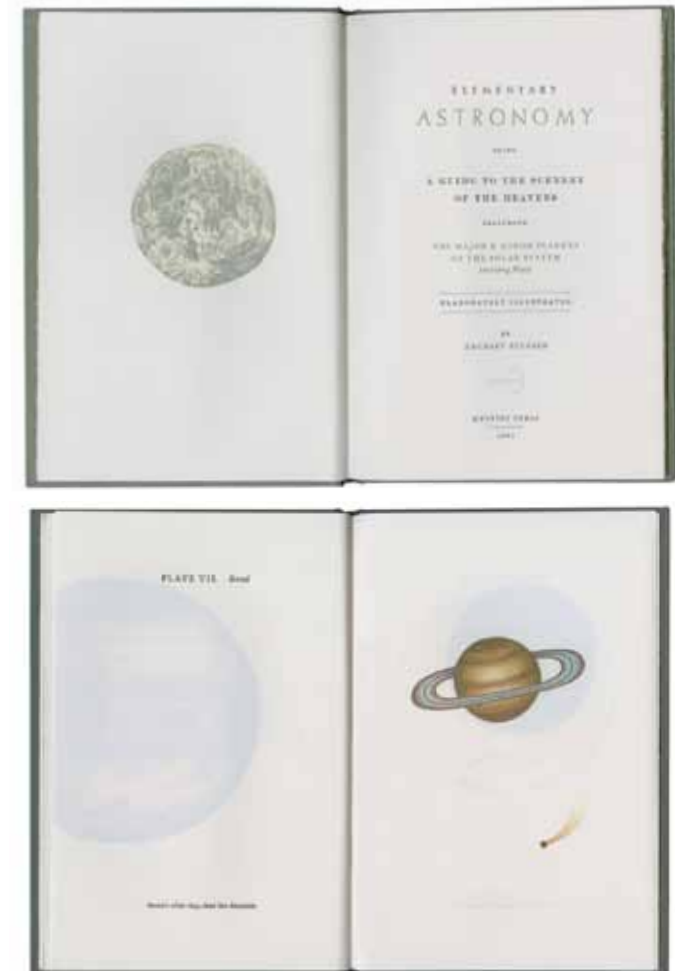
When

I was a child my grandfather gave me my first astronomy book, a novice manual containing star maps and basic planetary facts. In search of binary stars and distant constellations,

I would spend the summer evening navigating The rural Wisconsin skies with my \$35.00 telescope—usually only being able to identify the Moon. This continual interest in the heavens has led me to amass a large collection of antique astronomical prints and book illustrations, specifically from the late nineteenth century. During that time telescope photography was still in its infancy, so many images of the cosmos were drawn from observation, and later reproduced as oleographic prints. Any depiction of the heavens was subject to the observer's visual memory, perceptions, and interpretations. Subsequently, the illustrations look much different than the Hubble Telescope views we are accustomed to. Although technically refined, many astronomical prints from this time employ an amateur-like stylization more than a scientifically accurate depiction. Colors are radically enhanced; pattern and form are generalized while other times exaggerated.

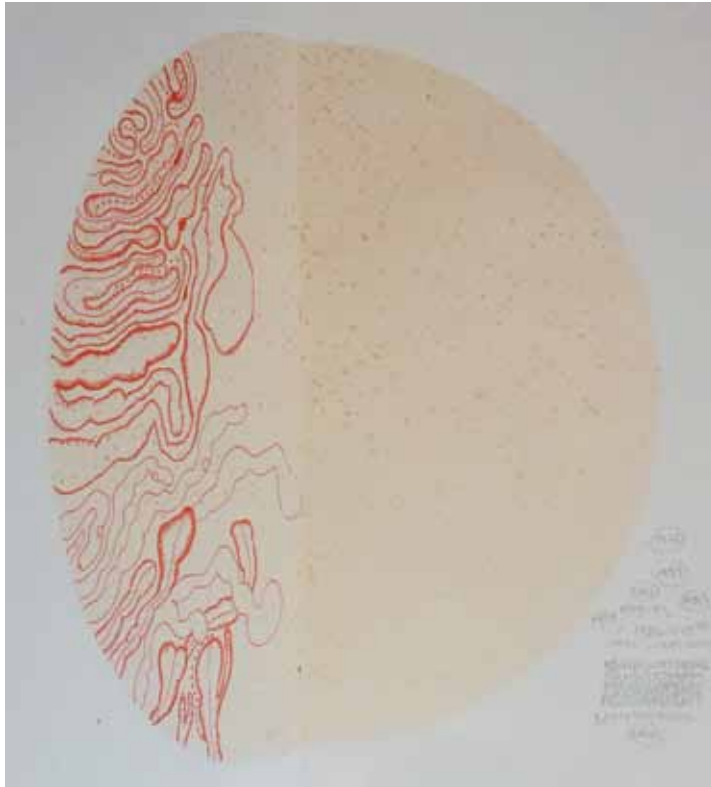
Elementary Astronomy is a catalog of our Solar System. It is based on an illustrated book of the planets I made at the age of 11, and influenced by my collection of antique astronomy chromolithographs. Comprised mostly of images, this book is intended to be more of an artistic compendium than a scientific manual, paying homage to that childhood explorer.

ZACH STENSEN



ELEMENTARY ASTRONOMY, DRYFIRE PRESS | 2011

JAGATH WEERASINGHE



CAUSE OF ILLNESS, MIXED MEDIA ON PAPER | 2011

Imagining

one's own ailments and illnesses and making a sign system for them is one way of living with them happily'. My work, mostly as a painter and draughtsman, is deeply informed by my society's actions. I strive to examine and critique Sri Lankan anxieties, responding to collective attitudes and take themes such as nationhood, religion, identity and confrontation for commentary.

DENG YIFU

I regard knowledge as my primary window to the observation of social change. On one hand, my acquisition of knowledge and understanding of culture comes from a western perspective. On the other, during the time I was in school, traditional Chinese culture was being notoriously criticised, deconstructed and emasculated by socialism. And even the Chinese people themselves thought of their cultural tradition as being useless and outmoded. But I consider this to be problematic, and the result may be very serious. Hence, Yifu Ordinance Bookshop tends to take the initiative in investigation and reflection on how power can be successfully overruled.



DIPLOMATIC HISTORY (Y1145-GUN), BOOK, PERSPEX, SCREWS | 2003-05

ARTISTS' BIOGRAPHIES



BANOO BATLIBOI

Banoo Batliboi is a self-taught paper artist who is impassioned about creating 'book art'. She works with old, abandoned books which have served for many years in their conventional form as a vehicle for narrative ideas. Now, by shifting focus to the tactile and visual qualities of the book, she imagines an alternative interpretation.

SMRITI CHOUDHARY

Smriti is a graphic designer and illustrator who graduated from National Institute of Design in 2005. Soon after, she started her independent graphic design studio – Pinksoda, which specializes in branding, print and web design projects. After working with digital art and design for years, she started to illustrate again and founded an illustration studio in 2013 – Airphish, where she draws while dreaming about nature and designs products around her art.

ANNE COVELL

Anne Covell is an MFA candidate at the University of Iowa Center for the Book, where she studies letterpress printing, book binding and hand papermaking. In 2004, Covell completed a BA from San Diego State University and in 2010 she completed a MA from the University of Iowa where she was Robert A. Olson Fellow in Special Collections. Her work has been exhibited in the United States and abroad.

SAMIT DAS

Samit Das was born in 1970 in Jamshedpur and specialises in Painting Photography, Interactive art works and artist's book creating multi-sensory environments through art and architectural installations.

He studied fine arts at Santiniketan Kala Bhavan and at the Camberwell College of arts London. He has a deep interest in archiving and documentation. Samit has held several solo shows in London, Singapore, New Delhi, Kolkata Mumbai and Santiniketan.

MEERA DEVIDAYAL

Meera Devidayal studied English Literature in Kolkata and Fine Arts in Mumbai. Having lived and worked in Mumbai for most of her life, Meera's recent solo shows include 'A Terrible Beauty' (2014) 'Where I Live' (2009) and 'Dream/Reality' (2006) at Chemould Prescott Road. She has participated in several group shows both in India and abroad.

LIZ FERNANDO

Liz Fernando is a graduate from the prestigious LCC BA Photography programme, University of Arts London. Fernando's work mostly finds its roots in conceptual research. Her own biography, research into the role of photography in South Asia and the resulting work highlights the different meaning that photography, identity, the notion of memory occupy within nonwestern cultures. Her work was exhibited at Tate Modern London and is showcased by Photoworks Brighton. Her award winning work 'Trincomalee - My father's stories and the lost photographs' has recently been acquired by the Worldbank, Washington D.C for its permanent collection and is currently on an international travelling exhibition. She lives and works in Europe and Sri Lanka.

LAYLA GONADUA

A self-taught, experimental Enamel Artist, and the founder of Read & Seed, a home based secondhand book exchange with a cult following for its novelty, she from an early age has been inspired by the concept 'Complete Freedom Of Expression for Children Through Art and Material' popularised by the late Cora Abraham and Nalini Weerasinghe. She went on to become an inspirationalist – a role more ap-

proprate than 'teacher' in the context of Art - and the Vice Principal of The Cora Abraham Art School Trust, resigning in 2006 to discover and pursue enameling as a medium of art, full time.

KINGSLEY GUNATILAKE

Kingsley is a painter, installation artist and book artist. He received his BFA from the Fine art University, Colombo and diploma in Environmental Education from the University of Strathclyde Glasgow. He has had several solo exhibition in Sri Lanka, The UK, The Philippines, Ireland, Glasgow and India. Has participated in many group exhibitions and international artist camps both in Sri Lanka and abroad, most recant of which were in France. Gunatillake's painting sculptures and Installations can be found in the collections of architects, several collectors and the President Collection of Contemporary Art, Sri Lanka.

RADHIKA HETTIARACHCHI & SHANIKA PERERA

Radhika and Shanika have collaborated on a joint project entitled "HERSTORIES" for the exhibition. Radhika Hettiarachchi obtained a BA in Communications and English at York University, Canada and her MS in Development at the London School of Economics and Political Science. She has been involved in the development sector, conflict transformation and alternative methods of peace-building in Sri Lanka since 2005. She is the curator of Colomboscope 2014, which shares the CAB theme of "Making History". She is the curator and creator of the "Herstory Archives" project.

Shanika Perera holds a degree in graphic design from the Academy of Design in Colombo. Beyond her enthusiastic fondness for cows, cats and chopsticks, she shares a deep passion for the environment. A self-styled environmentalist, her ambition and dream is to one day champion positive change in cultivating a more "green-conscious" society. Till then, she remains a professional graphic designer with a multitude of creative accomplishments ranging from fashion and art to advertising.

SAMANTA BATRA MEHTA

Samanta Batra Mehta's work is included in private collections in the Americas, Asia and Europe. Her work has been exhibited at various international venues including at the Queens Museum of the Arts, the Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts and Aicon Gallery in New York. In 2012 the Fondazione Fotografia showcased her work in at their museum in Modena, Italy titled 'Tenth Parallel North: Contemporary Photography from India and South America', curated by Filippo Maggia.

SATHYANAND MOHAN

Sathyanand was born in Kerala in 1975. He completed his Bachelor's degree in painting from the Government College of Fine Arts, Trivandrum, in 1998 and then his Master's degree in printmaking from the Faculty of Fine Arts at Maharaja Sayajirao University, Baroda, in 2000. Mohan's first solo show 'Reliquary', was held at the Guild Art Gallery, Mumbai, in 2009. His work has been featured in several group shows including, 'Multitudes' at the Goethe Institut, Bangalore, in 2009.

TANMOY SAMANTA

Born in 1973 in West Bengal, Tanmoy obtained his BFA and MFA in painting from Kala Bhavan, Santiniketan in 1996. He has been the recipient of the Pollock-Krasner Foundation Award, New York and has had several solo shows at Gallery Espace, New Delhi, since 2006. His works have been included in group shows across India.

ZACH STENSEN

Zach graduated in Master of Fine Arts with Honors from University of Iowa, majoring in Printmaking. He is the recipient of various grants, scholarships & fellowships such as: Faculty Research Grant. Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar, Doha, Qatar (2012) and the Len Everett Fellowship, University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA (2008). His works have been included in several important group and juried shows across the United States.

JAGATH WEERASINGHHE

Jagath studied Painting at the Institute of Aesthetic Studies, University of Kelaniya and at the American University in Washington DC. His most significant exhibitions include 'Anxiety' and 'Yanthra Gala Round Pilgrimage' which explored artistic expressions reflective of broad socio-political implications within a deep personal context. He currently teaches at the Postgraduate Institute of Archaeology, Colombo and is the Founding Member and Chairman of Theertha International Artists Collective, Sri Lanka.

DENG YIFU

Deng Yifu is a multidisciplinary artist involved in painting, photography, sculpture, and installation based in Beijing, China. After graduating from the Guangzhou School of Light Industry, Guangzhou, China, Deng engaged in additional studies at the Guangzhou Academy of Arts and the Luxun Academy of Arts. Deng's works have often engaged with the nature and process of history and have been included in shows with related themes.



