

UTOPIA/DYSTOPIA

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Cheyenne, WY



“Experiments in Utopia reviews the American experience with communities dedicated to a utopian vision.”

Experiments in Utopia

Sculptural piece created with paper and letterpress, printed at Inky Mere Press. 6.5” x 16” x 3” each

Statement

I have been fascinated by Utopian communities, or intentional communities, since my early teen years. I discovered them through the library and have studied them off and on ever since. I find them all interesting — the ones from the 1800s all the way up to those being formed today. I continue to marvel at what seems to me the gullibility of people who give up...everything... in pursuit of someone’s idea of perfection. All of the communities have a strong philosophical component, with a majority being religious in nature. Most have some kind of strong, charismatic figure leading them — utopias are nothing without vision. I have never been inclined towards charismatic leaders. I tend to want to check for the shadow side, and there is always a shadow side. The most successful communities rise above or grow past their original visionary leaders, such as the Shakers, who continue today albeit in very small numbers. Most, however, succumb to flaws in the vision, the execution, or the leadership.

This book explores aspects of communities from the 1800s till now. One of the driving forces in communities is the desire for home, for belonging. Each house represents a community, and provides some information about what it is known for, and its shadow side. Streaming from each are commonalities which draw them together.

Biography

Camellia El-Antably is a visual artist, writer and arts administrator. In 2009, Camellia co-founded Clay Paper Scissors Gallery & Studio in Cheyenne, a space that shows contemporary art and rents artist studios. She served the arts community through the Wyoming Arts Council for nearly 15 years in a variety of capacities, including arts education, visual arts, and deputy manager.

Currently on sabbatical, Camellia is exploring new opportunities as they arise and evaluating how best to use her skills and talents in the world. She completed Leadership Wyoming in May of 2017. She holds a MA in Book Arts from Camberwell College of Arts in London and a BA from Mills College in Oakland, California.