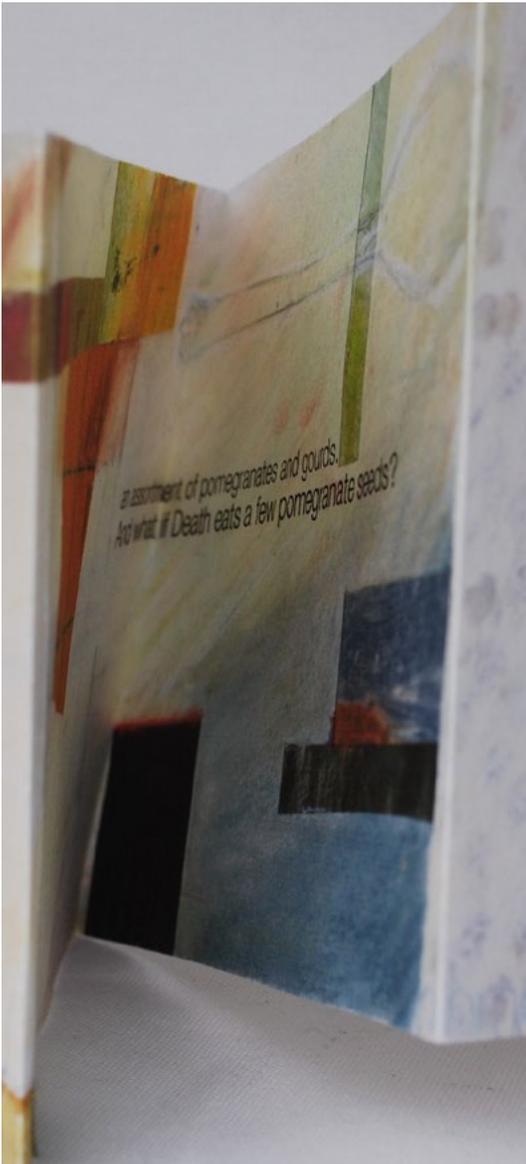


UTOPIA/DYSTOPIA

Ellen Sheffield
Gambier, OH



“Poet Arthur Sze’s lament on how one views the changing shadows in light of bad news seems particularly apt in this “upside down” climate of alternative facts.”

Each

Japanese stab-bound book created with inkjet printing and acetone transfers on Japanese Masa paper, indigo dyed paper, and linen thread. 14” h x 9.75” w x 5” d

Slanting Light

Accordion book created with inkjet printing and acetone transfers on Japanese Masa paper. 5.75” h x 5.75” w closed, 5.75” h x 92” w opened

Statement

My work explores the relations between language, materiality and time through small-scale hand held objects: sculptural books. I am interested in setting up experiences that unfold on several levels. One level is the conflation of reading and looking. Another level is the shifting of the viewer’s relationship to the object from the visual to the tactile. Various structural and narrative strategies are threaded through each piece to allow the works to reveal themselves over time.

My intention is to direct the viewer’s movement through the work by organizing content in the form of groupings, series, sequences or narratives. I like the possibility that a sculpture with moving parts requiring opening, closing, touching, turning and holding, may allow the viewer to engage in a more intimate sensory relationship with the work

Approaching the book as a cultural container has led me to inquiries into the dichotomy of exterior v. interior. The physical act of opening and looking inside may recall the memory of reading, but my unexpected use of materials and my conceptual twists on familiar objects often surprise the viewer. I am drawn to cross-genre hybrids that are ripe with possibilities for play — for pairing, rearranging, combining and redefining narrative through layered intersections of visual art, poetry and music.

The works in this exhibition reflect my obsession with light, and conversely with its opposite, darkness or shadow. Like utopia and dystopia contrary concepts that morph and contain multiple meanings. The poets Arthur Sze, and Anne Carson have generously given me permission to illuminate their poems, Sze’s “Slanting Light” and Carson’s “Each Day Unexpected Salvation (John Cage),” in visual book structures, my attempt to give physical bodies and tactile presence to lyrical language.

Biography

Ellen Sheffield is a visual artist who explores the relationship between language, materiality and time through small-scale hand held objects: artist’s books.

Her work has been in numerous exhibitions including those at The Center for Book Arts, NY, NY, Florida State University, Museum of Fine Arts, Tallahassee FL, CODEX V International Book Fair, Richmond, CA, and the Abecedarian Gallery, Denver, CO. Individuals and institutions including the Bienecke Library Collections at Yale University, Denison University, The College of Wooster and Kenyon College have collected her work.

A graduate of Case Western University, The Cleveland Institute of Art and The Ohio State University's Moritz College of Law and a two-time recipient of the Ohio Arts Council's Individual Artist Fellowship, Ellen teaches book arts at Kenyon College in Gambier, OH. She has co-taught with writer Gretchen Henderson "The Art of Text" for the literary journal The Kenyon Review's summer Writers Workshop. She collaborates with poets, musicians and artists in her Gambier studio, Unit IV Arts.

www.EllenSheffield.com