

some
books,
words,
photographs,
and drawings
by

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2012

CACTUS Magazine

BACKSTORY

While working as designer and editor for arts and culture magazines *LucidMedia* and *Side St. Review*, I proposed to create a new publication that would take a conversational approach to artist interviews and utilize innovative printing techniques to add value to the publication. The interview subjects would range across the disciplines of art, curation, and writing.

PROBLEM

The task was to create a publication that balanced art and information. When the publication was produced in 2011 it was becoming increasingly evident that producing provisional printed matter was competing directly with the internet. Magazines that offered interviews and articles catered to an over-indulgent information diet. Therefore the goal was to subvert the disposable nature of other magazines and create a serial publication that operated as a unique book work.

SOLUTION

CACTUS featured five interviews, two visual essays, and two interludes. It was designed so that each section differentiated itself in radical ways that would refuse digitization. Gatefolds extend, transparencies reveal what's behind, paper stocks change, smaller supplementary booklets protrude, stickers can be removed, and one article is cut at an angle that opens up into diagonal patterns. The book is about discovery and exploration. Woven throughout are various subversions to conventional reading and viewing, yet at the core is a narrative sequence that displays a spectrum of artistic activity and thinking.

REFLECTION

CACTUS's initial short print-run was sold out. It was a labour of love. It showed all the things that could be done as a designer and printer without limits, which might also be its fault. It is essential to experiment and innovate, but also to keep sight of the goal and scope of the project.





2014

Free as a Bird Tonetta

BACKSTORY

As a new publisher I was exploring possibilities for publications and was presented with a proposal to produce a monograph of artist Tony Jeffries, better known as Tonetta. I knew little about this mysterious musician, but his videos, songs, and drawings were popular enough to attract a devoted cult following. The goal was to create a portrait of the man and artist that would satisfy his fans and introduce his work to new audiences.

PROBLEM

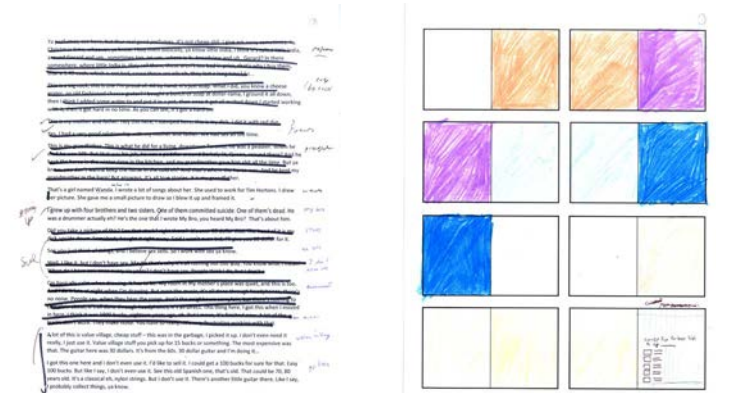
The greatest obstacle to producing a book about Tonetta was Tonetta himself. As a divorced single man in Toronto with a history of being burned by business decisions gone bad, and a lifetime's worth of unsorted art, writing, and music, revealing Tony Jeffries and Tonetta would be a challenge. The road to discover the truth of Tonetta was a two-year long process, but what surfaced from this relationship was a level of trust and access that had never before been granted to any other collaborator, meaning everything was on the table.

SOLUTION

After several visits to Tony at his home, I decided to create a simple but visionary book. The essence of the book is one meeting where photographs were taken and a conversation recorded. The conversation was transcribed, edited, and refined into a narrative about creativity, history, and lifestyle. The photographs provided a fly-on-the-wall view of his apartment, a place vital to understanding his creative drive. The photographs and conversation encompass one half of the book. The other half contains his drawings, writings, and selected video stills.

REFLECTION

Sadly, this project was never released. Sometimes projects falter, and ultimately get canned, but it still stands as a testament to the artist and his life. It was an opportunity to make organizational, editorial, and aesthetic decisions on a large scale.





FREE AS A BIRD



2014

Cusp: Word Sonnets

Seymour Mayne

BACKSTORY

Seymour Mayne is a poet, short story writer, and university professor. His work has levity, brevity, and wisdom. After working with him on his book of short stories, *The Old Blue Couch*, he proposed working together again on a book that would contain his word sonnets: one word lines arranged vertically to create momentary flashes of emotive situations, feelings, or memories. The book would contain two collections combined together, including some previously published work.

PROBLEM

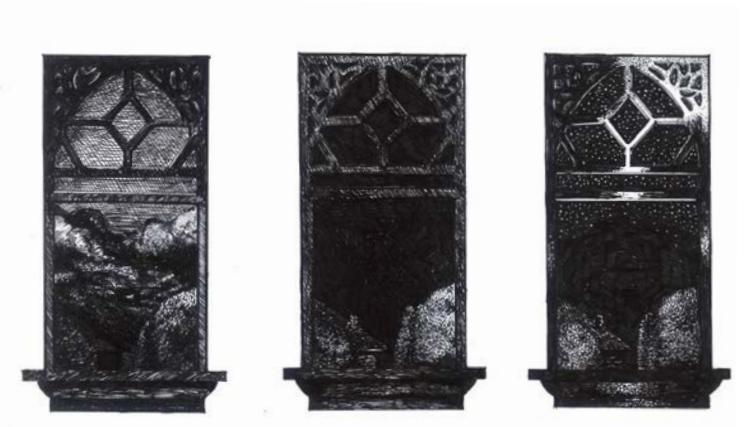
The author wanted a unique book and a work of art. The text was light, seemingly sparse, but contained multitudes when read and absorbed. The vignettes conjured instances of observed life and ruminations on subjects such as old age, friendship, belief, beauty, and finality. Each poem was written and arranged to face another specific choice on the opposite page. Finally, the book was intended to appeal to an audience of general readers.

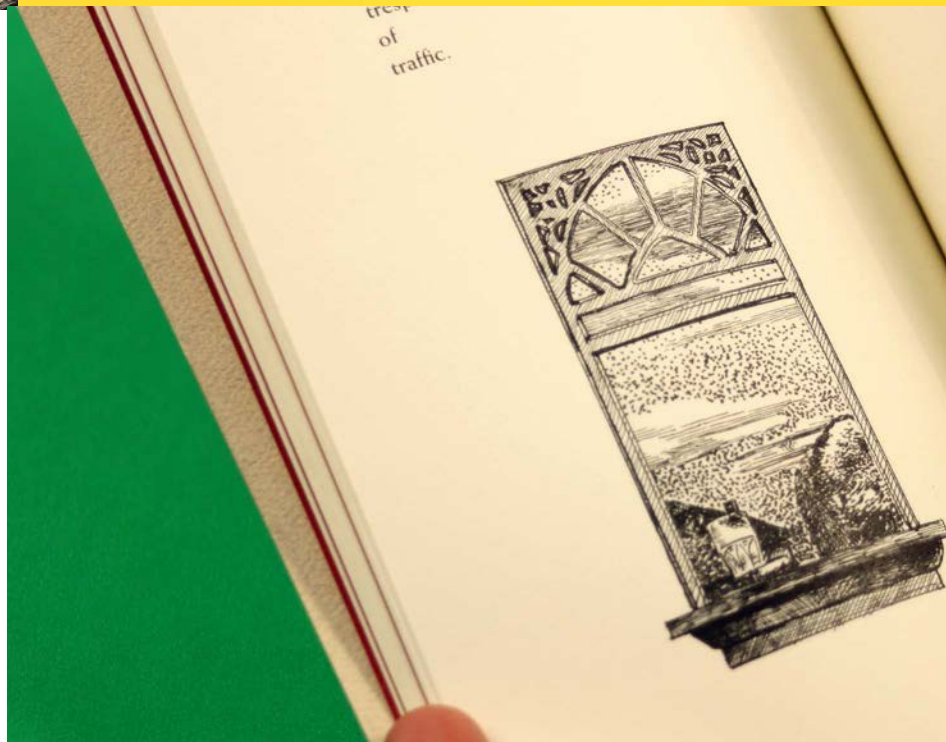
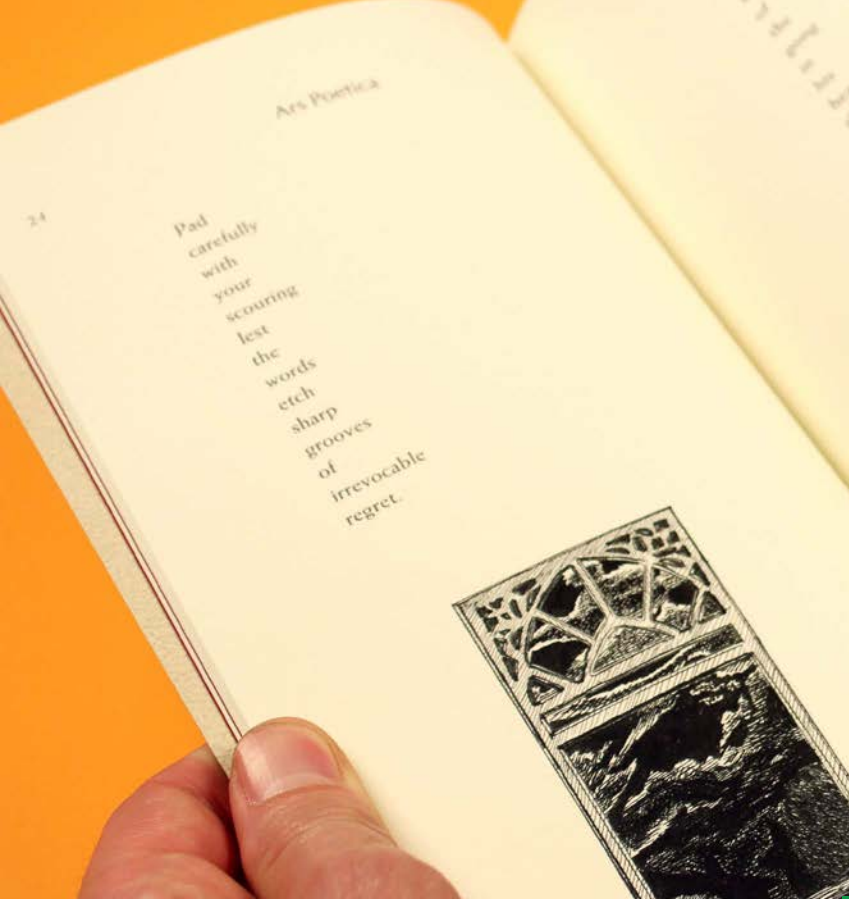
SOLUTION

The poems inspired illustrations of window frames looking out onto changing days. The window remains the same, but the content is dynamic. The drawings depict changing seasons, night and day, and evidence of quotidian life such as tea cups, books, reading glasses, and flower vases. The illustrations were placed below the text and materialized at the beginning of each section and disappeared at the end.

REFLECTION

The book was well received and noted for the integration of art and writing. The author was very pleased with the book and it remains unique in his bibliography. Some lessons learned during the creative process included how to utilize the computer to assist in illustration. At one point, after a handful of drawings had already been completed, the author suggested a different window frame design. This change was implemented digitally by imposing the new frame over the old and making minor adjustments.





2015

CG(eye)

BACKGROUND

Zines are often a provisional and disposable print medium. These thin flimsy often cheaply produced booklets are traded, given away, or sold by the individuals who make them. They do however offer a rich array of possibilities because their tradition is one of rupture, revolt, and redefinition.

PROBLEM

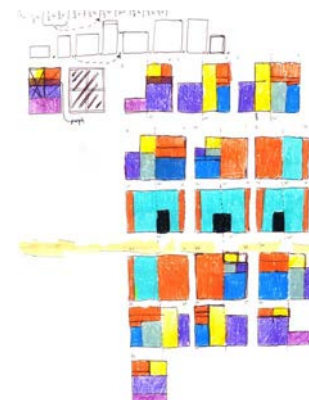
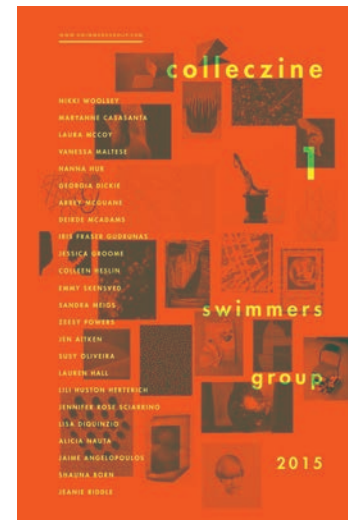
The question was, could a collection of zines be considered art and capture the creative spirit of emerging Canadian artists? These staple-bound booklets would aim to offer experiences similar to viewing a group show at a gallery. Each booklet would be a self-contained work intended to reinforce the whole. The accumulation needed to be coherent so that visual and thematic links could be made across the varied spectrum of the projects without homogenizing.

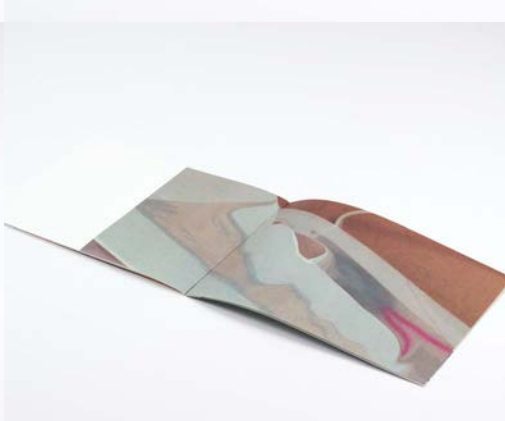
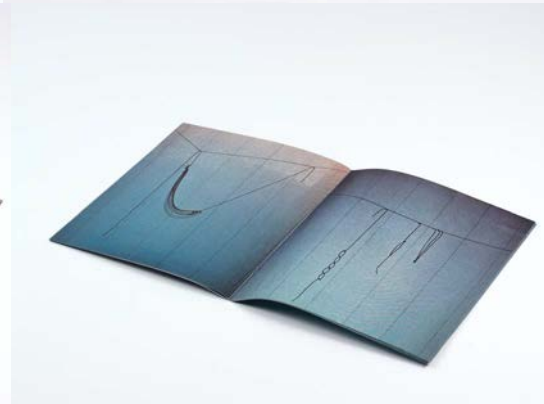
SOLUTION

A list of artists was made, and then from this list twenty-six were selected to produce publications. This selection showed the vitality of women voices in the art world. Visits to the artist's studios were scheduled and during these visits materials were accumulated from the artist's practice and then documented. Interpretations of these materials constituted the short zine. Each zine was intended to be bound with metal wire to house within a binder with a magnetic spine.

REFLECTION

While the idea to create a binder with a magnetic spine to re-arrange the zines was innovative, it was impractical and had to be scrapped. In the end zines were individually produced and complete collections had each zine sewn into a central axis. As for the booklets themselves, they are each different and incubate the reader in self contained worlds. Taken all together, it captures a moment in 21st century Canadian art.





2016

Spell David Peter Clark

BACKSTORY

David Peter Clark is a new poet and *Spell* was his ambitious all-encompassing poetic project that charted experimental explorations in language and form. Inspired by W.B. Yeats and the occult, *Spell* is a captivating and dense poetic statement that required a similarly immersive book design.

PROBLEM

The work is composed of forty-three pentacle poems which enter and exit the waxing and waning phases of the moon. These poems are displayed on two-page spreads and the phases of the moon appear half-way through as systems woven within. The book is complex, but it is also fun and gleeful. The author wanted a cover illustration of a specific image that contained motifs found within the text.

SOLUTION

The text was haunting and esoteric and hinted at underground publications of occult manuals. Therefore, the manuscript was treated by rubbing it against coarse surfaces to break up its 'clean' appearance. The pages were then scanned and refined in photoshop to be readable, but slightly worn. The cover image was intended to replicate the style of iconic comic artist Charles Burns.

REFLECTION

The book was intended for a niche audience of experimental poetry, however the total design allowed it to burst out of its hermetic shell and gain wider recognition. There is an undeniable aura that hovers over the book itself. It is infectious, and makes it appealing to more than just experimental readers. The cover immediately attention grabbing and compels curiosity. The book was well received and presented the author as a adventurous poetic presence.





