

2005

She comes from text, exhibition

Moya Costello
Southern Cross University

Publication details

Costello, M 2005, 'She comes from text', exhibition, Libre livre: artist's books and sculpural book objects exhibition, The Barr Smith Library, The University of Adelaide, 22 July to 6 August, North Terrace, Adelaide, SA

ePublications@SCU is an electronic repository administered by Southern Cross University Library. Its goal is to capture and preserve the intellectual output of Southern Cross University authors and researchers, and to increase visibility and impact through open access to researchers around the world. For further information please contact epubs@scu.edu.au.

SHE COMES FROM TEXT

She comes from text. The work of mark making is her familial history. She keeps her father's wooden box of lettering tools nearby as she works; she looks into it as she would a book, for the story of her evolution, and finds nibs to paste into a book of letter writing (*Do Writin'*).

She dwells in textuality, as she does on earth, in the world, within what sustains life. Sea, land and sky write her, make her story. Books are central to her text. She forms in the margins where she writes back. Books contain words, support them in their expansion, like building joists. She cuts letters out of B.O.O.K.S to make the W.O.R.D.S. Words call things into existence, into being from the shadow behind them. Things become visible, are made real from words singly and in groups, from the incantations of a list, a repetition of marks.

Shape and colour are her language. Her textual marks are marginalia, central to the work of intervention. Her interventions are works performing, textual realisations on and with texts, closing on origins, opening on interpretations. She makes texts from others' texts. She covers books so books are recovered. Primary colours and plain covers recode the books to be received as luxurious and substantial, as common and practical. She makes her books into the blue of breath and water and the red of blood and earth. She reinscribes and rewrites what is clearly hidden when she pastes pages together, when she pastes her text onto another's page. She respects books and to unmake them seems disrespect. The etymology of book: beechwood sticks on which runes were carved. In *Book on a Stick* she inserts her message stick into the heart of the text, straight through and out of a book, a text in a text, an interplay of text and intertext, making a ruin of the book. But beauty and presence are in the marks she makes. Her interventions are a homage to other texts, and a movement on them. She makes her artist's books. She researches, acquires, records then recodes. In her acquisition: second-hand books, a second life for books.

Architecture and engineering influence her making. She applies her making instincts to the form of the book, the architecture of textual structures. She makes little books from leftover bits of books. Books never losing their life. She folds books in folds, folding the folds with the bone folder, opening the book up and hiding the text. The books become harbour bridge, paddle wheel, fan, foil and frill; kaleidoscope; accordion; grass skirt; house roof; house of stories; book in a book; the heart of a book. A passage is booked, for comfort, safety, sensuality and shelter, for travelling through a tale of uncertain meaning.

She makes books as windows onto the world, transparently opaque. She cuts out an opening in the books and puts in paper tracing feather, leaf and fern. Light from a window highlights their frosted vision, the meaning of their muted message becoming clearer in a light reading.

She stacks transparencies in time, to see through the text. *A is for Bull* is read as a legible recording of the evolution of writing.

The story of a tree's evolution is in its cover. Trees grow to another storey in the light. She covers *Eu Kaluptos Story* with bark, dyes its pages from leaves and uncovers her scribbly gum text. Stories in leaf litter are told with the wind in the invisible ink of a whispered conversation. She takes a leaf from another's book and writes her story on it (*Leaflets*).

The story of paper is in plant life. In her garden, vine writes its text with tendrils, the *Writ(h)ing* tendrils responding to light, creating a duality, a doubling, a shadow text of the writ(h)ing tendrils. The tendrils are like twine, like strands of stories travelling along threads, so with thread she binds the books of bark and leaves of books.

Termites write their text in her fence posts, marking and making borders. Termites eating fence posts eat out markers of territory and make their own postmarks. Textual interventions work in edited spaces, work at editing spaces. Spaces result from an excision, text ex(er)cised in an exegesis. Spaces remain after demarcation of territory, of textual authority. In the cracks, holes, fractures, the ellipses and caesuras the termites make, spaces open that make an architecture of narrative. Termite transcript forms the terms of a text. Termites, miniscule beings, form majuscules making their story. In eating, teeth etch flesh and bone. The raised paper she makes of the termite majuscules is an embossed skin, the scarring of a grafted story (*Termite Trails/Termite Tales*). Body waste after eating in the leftover text; another body, another text, another language is made in a remaking. She trails her script of miniscules alongside the termite text of majuscules (*The Book of Termites*), her citation recalling another site. In the collaboration of translation, she transcribes.

She told a story from what is left out in music notation, a text for a reading piano, cut out of the roll (*Pianola Chronicle*) She cut text into threads leaving a book (*Away with Words*).

She cuts through the cover then into the text, leaving the empty shell of a book. Beached and fossilised books, tidal books, are marginal, found on the edge of land and water, on the shoreline, at the bottom of an escarpment in the desert. The chamfer, the cut text, forms a surf or a cliff face and rock shelter, showing the margin, the meeting place. A sea is formed, an ink stain, the shadow of text, a reading of the landscape. She places shell, sea snail and fossil inside the cut-out books. Nothing and everything is there. A history of mark making. Her books are containers, vessels, houses, boats, houseboats, bejewelled *Treasure Books*, fossilised under the cover, an image within text, sealed containers of the precious and secretive, the space where stories se(c)a change.

Fossil Book is a star book, an ancient text. Stars speak in a sky-reading, in time of time. Fossils and books, ancientness and secrets, oscillate in time.

Consumer durables, conforming, held and moving, glue working under compression. Books are suppressed animation; automatons in automated re(s)po(n)se, enforced stiffness, requisitioned silence. For a book expressed in Expressionism, she cuts out a window in the book, askew and twisted, odd-angled, nonconforming, a shock of the non-natural, non-representational (*Elision*). She looks through the window of the book and what she expects to be there, isn't. What she takes to be true is fiction.

Books are marked in her memory, her own recording, a catalogue, her private library. Where she has been, she marks the margins, with the corner turned into the margin. To text she will return.

TO TEXT SHE WILL RETURN

Moya Costello
The University of Adelaide