



Julie Chen

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CBAA Board of Directors 2008-2011
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Sequence & Technology:
Book Art in the 21st Century

Statement:

FLYING FISH PRESS was established in 1987 by internationally known book artist and book art educator Julie Chen. The press focuses on the design and production of limited edition artists' books with an emphasis on three-dimensional and movable book structures and fine letterpress printing. Editions range in size from 25 to 150 copies. Work from the press is known for combining meticulous attention to craft, intricate structural design, and inspired artistic vision.

Artist Statement:

My approach to the artist's book involves intensive explorations of both form and content. My work is heavily rooted in the ideas of the book as a physical object and a time-based medium. I view reading as an intimate act in which the reader must be in close physical proximity to the book, can control the pace of reading through the self-directed turning of pages, or equivalent action, and must interact with the book through the manipulation of the book's physical structure. I strive to present the reader/viewer with an object that challenges preconceived ideas of what a book is, while at the same time providing a deeply engaging and meaningful experience through the presentation of my own text and imagery in a purposefully structured format. Often the reader must engage in unexpected physical actions such as the unfolding or sliding of pages, the turning of a wheel, or the tilting of a box in order to fully read/view a piece.

The idea of giving order to personal experience through the use of mapping,

charting, and numbering is an important underlying theme that runs through much of my work. These systems of organization allow me to present content in ways that can be understood and translated through the reader's own life experience. An essential part of my creative process involves a deep investigation of my understanding of and response to a chosen topic or concept through a combination of research, personal observation and inquiry, and intensive exploration in the studio of various ways to express my ideas through writing and image-making in purposeful combination with the physical form of the book. Enclosures such as boxes, along with the corresponding concept of creating a fully self-contained world within the piece, also play a major role in the presentation of my book-works.

I use the crafts of letterpress printing and hand bookbinding, combined with more modern technologies such as photopolymer plates and laser cutting, to create work that is often designed digitally, but produced with an intense attention to the materiality of the resulting piece. For me, the physical manifestation of the book is often of equal importance to the visual and textual ideas expressed within the pages in conveying meaning and in affecting the experience of the reader/viewer. This experience begins with the initial perception of the container for a piece, and continues through the process of reading/viewing and through the manipulation of the piece's structure and materials. My personal definition of the book is quite broad, with boundaries that are in constant flux. At the core of my interpretation is the act of reading, and the element of time that is essential to this act.