

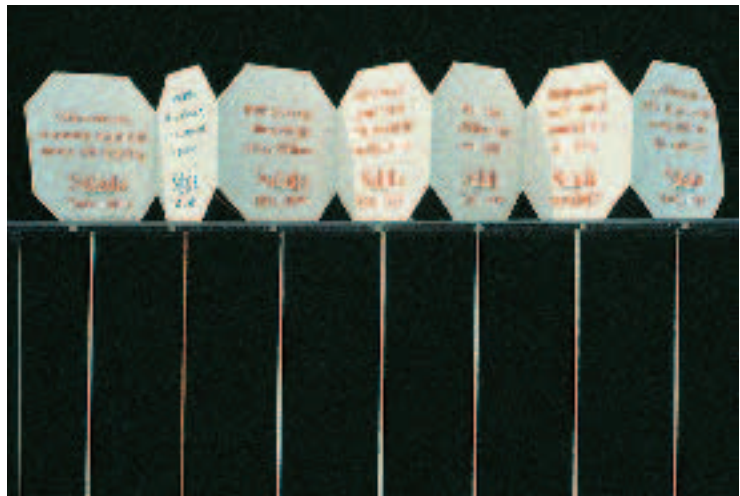
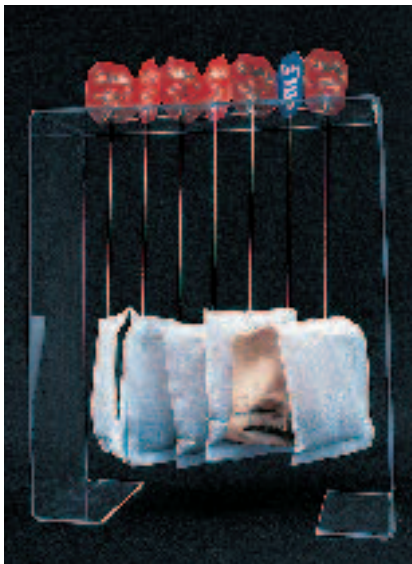
Interdisciplinary Arts

In this final chapter, we explore three forms of interdisciplinary art. In **interdisciplinary art**, two or more disciplines are fused to create a hybrid art form. The first section focuses on visual books, which combine words and images in a wide variety of structures. The next section is devoted to installation art, which presents an ensemble of images and objects within a three-dimensional environment. The final section is devoted to **performance art**, which can be broadly defined as live art performed by artists.

EXPLORING THE VISUAL BOOK

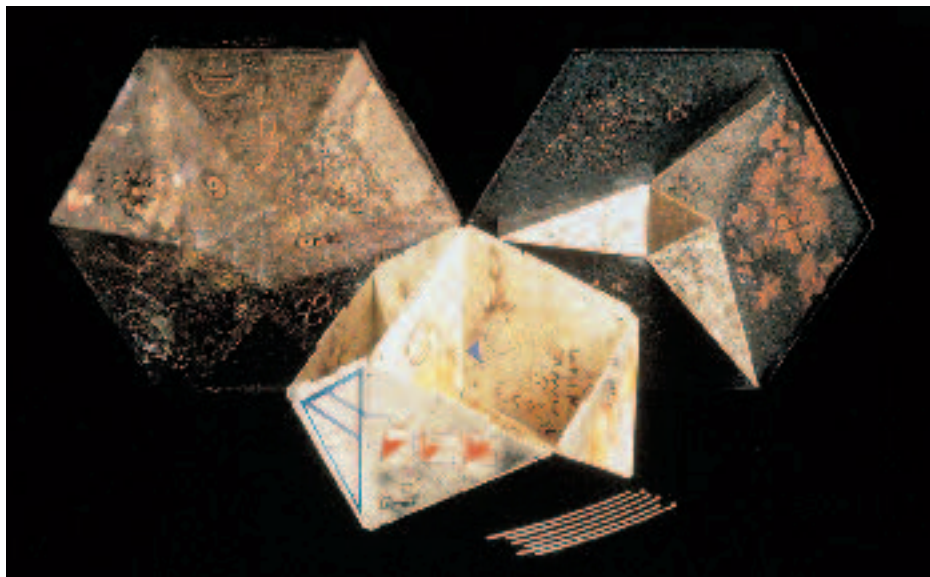
What is a visual book? A **visual book** is an experimental structure that conveys ideas, actions, and emotions using multiple images in an integrated and interdependent format. Every image is connected in some way to every other image. In a sense, there are no single pages in a visual book. It is the combination of the multiple pages that creates the complete artwork.

Any material may be used for pages, from the bags of tea Nancy Callahan used for her *Daybook* (15.1) to the sheets of lead Anselm Kiefer used for *Breaking of the Vessels* (15.2). Pages may be of any size or shape, from the 3-inch triangles Daniel Kelm and Tim Ely used in *Rubeus* (15.3) to 8-foot-tall screens. The subject matter can be profoundly philosophical, fiercely political, or painfully personal, as in Susan Kae Grant's *Giving Fear a Proper Name* (figure 14.33, page 341). Images can be generated using photography, printmaking, drawing, or other techniques.



15.1 Nancy Callahan, *Daybook*, 1988. Artist's book, screen printing and hand-fabricated tea bags, 16 × 12 × 6 in. (40.6 × 30.5 × 15.3 cm).

15.2 Anselm Kiefer, *Breaking of the Vessels*, 1990. Lead, iron, glass, copper wire, charcoal, and aquatec, 12 ft 5 in. × 11 ft 3 in. × 4 ft 9 in. (378.5 × 343 × 144.8 cm).

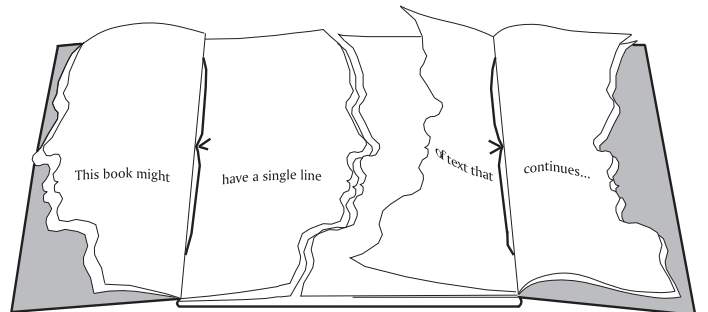
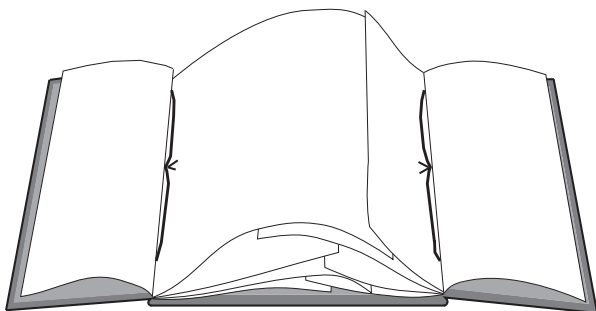
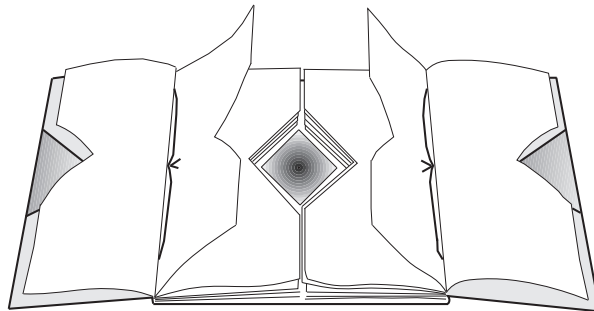


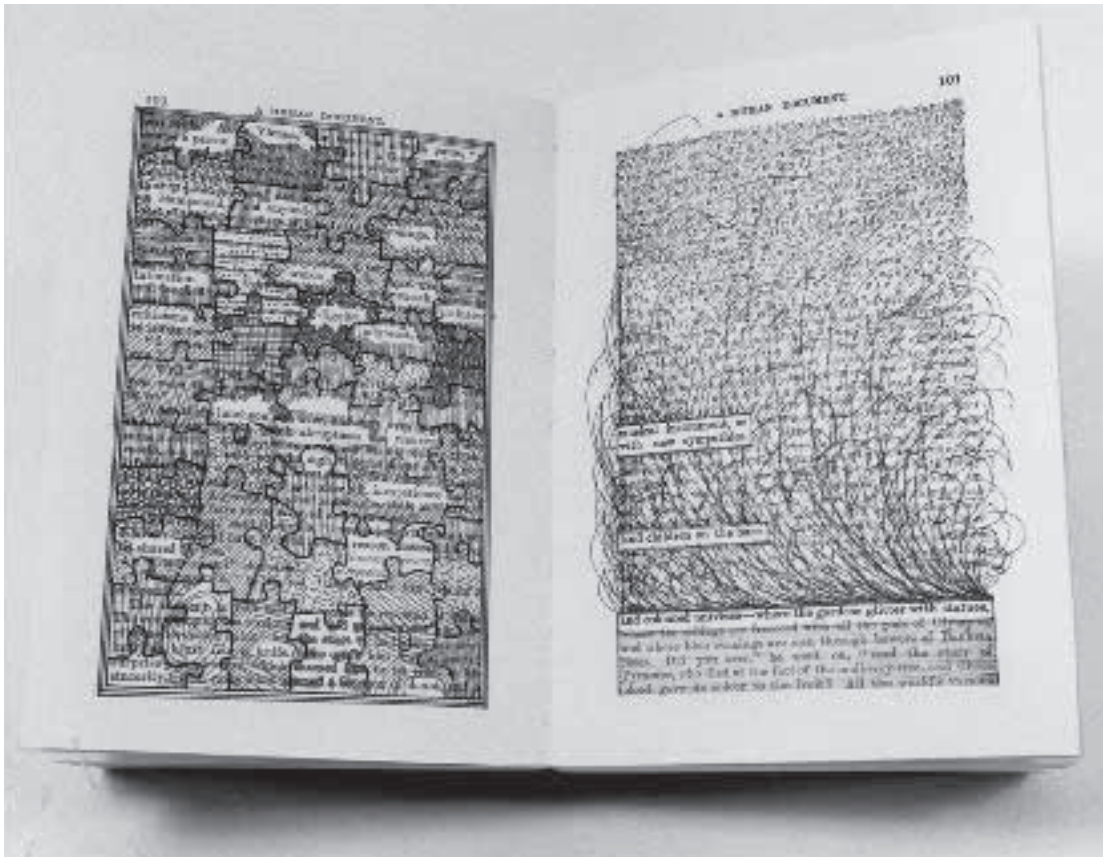
15.3 Daniel E. Kelm and Timothy C. Ely, *Rubeus*, 1990. Book: Flexahexahedron (six cyclically linked tetrahedra with a circular axis of rotation), Arches paper, museum board, stainless steel wire, aluminum tubing, brass beads, cotton-covered polyester thread, with drawings using airbrush acrylics and ink, 5 × 10½ × 10½ in. (12.7 × 26.7 × 26.7 cm). Box: High faceted structure with hexagonal base and felt pad; paper consolidated paperboard and medium-density fiberboard, finished with polymer medium, copper leaf, plastic, metal bits, and sand from sacred sites, 6.25 in. (15.9 cm) high, 13 × 13 in. (33 × 33 cm) base.



15.4 Mary Stewart, a page in *Labyrinth*, front and back view, 1999. Intaglio, 13 × 18 × 39 in. (33 × 45.7 × 99 cm).

15.5 Keith Smith. Bound-edged codex structure.





15.6 Tom Phillips, *A Humument*, 1980. From *The Cutting Edge of Reading: Artists' Books*, R. R. Hubert and J. D. Hubert. Granary Books, New York, 1999.


Visual books combine two-dimensional composition and three-dimensional structure. For example, each page in my own *Labyrinth* (15.4) was composed individually, then slotted together to create a complex three-dimensional object. Even when a more traditional bound-edged **codex** structure is used (as shown in figure 15.5), variations in the page length and shape can substantially affect meaning.

Visual books may be entirely visual, like Michael Snow's *Cover to Cover* (figure 13.18, page 300); primarily verbal, like Tom Phillips's *A Humument* (15.6); or entirely conceptual, like Keith Smith's *Book 50* (15.7). Generally seen by one person at a time, a visual book can create a very direct connection between the audience and the artist. This contact is especially important with pop-up books, which come to life when the pages are turned and the tabs are pulled.

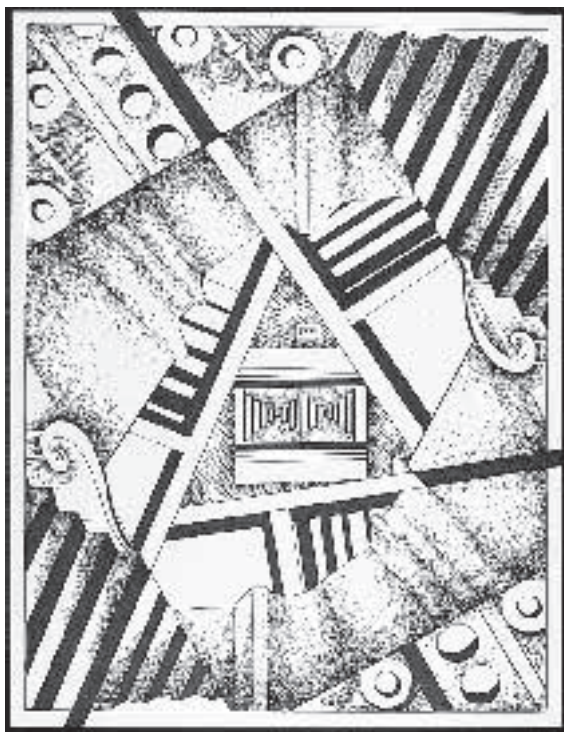
BOOK NUMBER 50
(Turning the page creates and destroys the image.)
 Autumnal Equinox 1974

Construct a Western Codex book consisting of images on thirty transparencies. Process the film-positives by developing, short stop but no fix. Wash, dry and under proper safelight, hand bind as a leather case bound book. Place completed book in light-tight box.

Present the boxed book to the viewer. Upon opening the box and viewing, the entire book will not fog at once. Opening to the first page, the viewer will glimpse the image as it quickly blackens. The black will protect the remainder of the book from light. Upon turning each page, the viewer will momentarily see the image as it sacrifices itself to protect the remaining pages.



15.7 Keith Smith, *Book 50*, 1974. A conceptual book.



15.8 Emily Frenkel, *Labyrinth Drawing*. Pen and ink, 18 × 24 in. (45.6 × 61 cm).

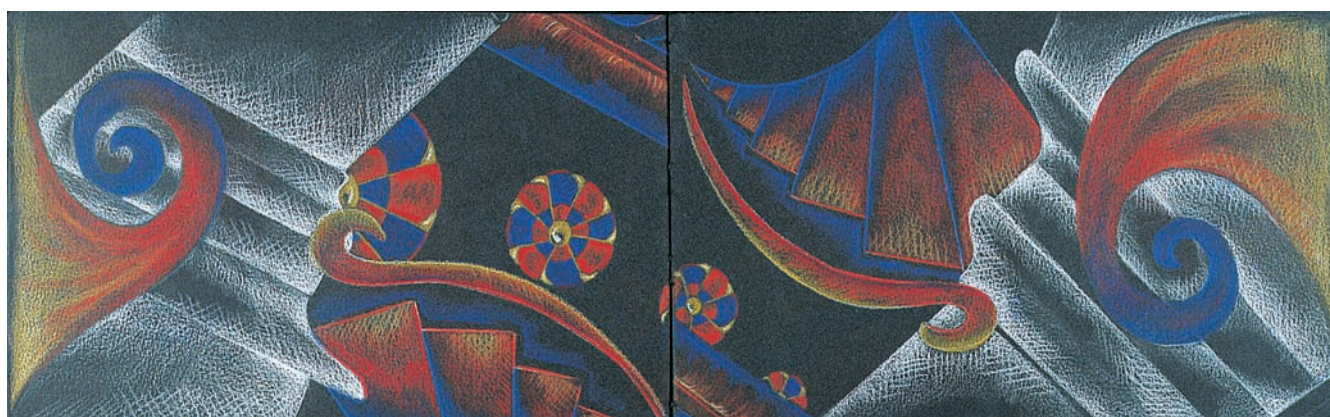
Selecting a Text

Generative Potential

A brief evocative text can act as a springboard for the book artist, while an overly descriptive text may become a trap. More than verbal polish, a text must provide an opening for further development.

The labyrinth book project I assign to my students provides such generative potential, both visually and conceptually. The students begin by developing a labyrinthine drawing of a complex building (15.8). Because this drawing will act as a stage set for the narrative, careful use of lighting, balance, and the illusion of space is encouraged.

After a critique of the initial work, students expand their ideas and refine their images, finally creating two rough drawings, one on the front and one on the back of a 22 × 30 in. sheet of sturdy paper. This sheet is then cut apart to create four 7½ × 22 in. strips, which finally are folded and sewn to create sixteen 7½ × 11 in. pages.



15.9 Emily Frenkel, *Labyrinth Book*, two double-page spreads. Colored pencil on black paper, 7½ × 22 in. (19 × 55.9 cm).

The final book is developed from this raw material. We consider dictionary definitions:

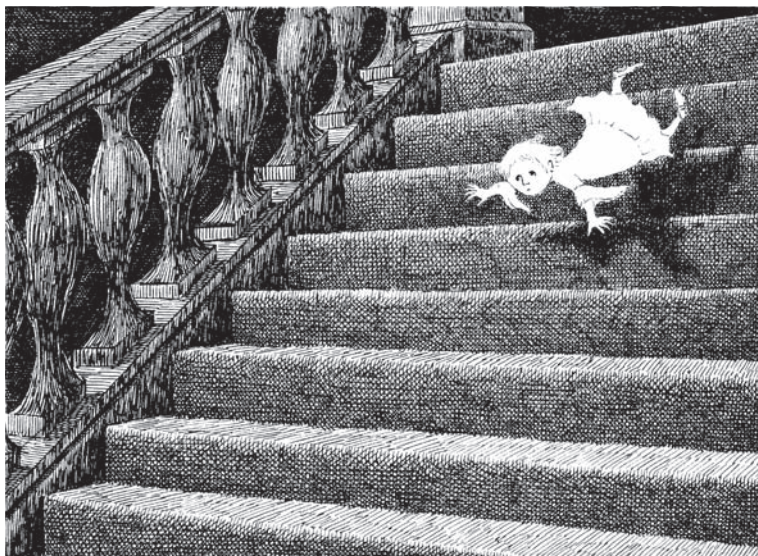
lab-y-rinth: 1: a structure full of intricate passageways that make it difficult to find the way from the interior to the entrance or from the entrance to the center (for example, the labyrinth constructed by Daedalus for Minos, king of Crete, in which the Minotaur was confined); 2: a maze in a park or garden formed by paths separated by high, thick hedges; 3: something bewilderingly involved or tortuous in structure: a complex that baffles exploration; 4: a situation from which it is difficult to extricate oneself; 5: the internal ear, or its bony or membranous part; 6: a body structure made up of a maze of cavities and channels; 7: intricate, sometimes symbolic pattern, spec. such a pattern inlaid in the pavement of a medieval church; 8: in metallurgy, series of troughs in a stamping mill through which water passes for washing pulverized ore.¹

We read the story of Theseus, the Greek hero who conquered the half-man, half-bull Minotaur, and meet the princess Ariadne, who provided him with a ball of golden thread that aided in his escape from the maze. We investigate labyrinths as described by archaeologists, physiologists, and psychologists.

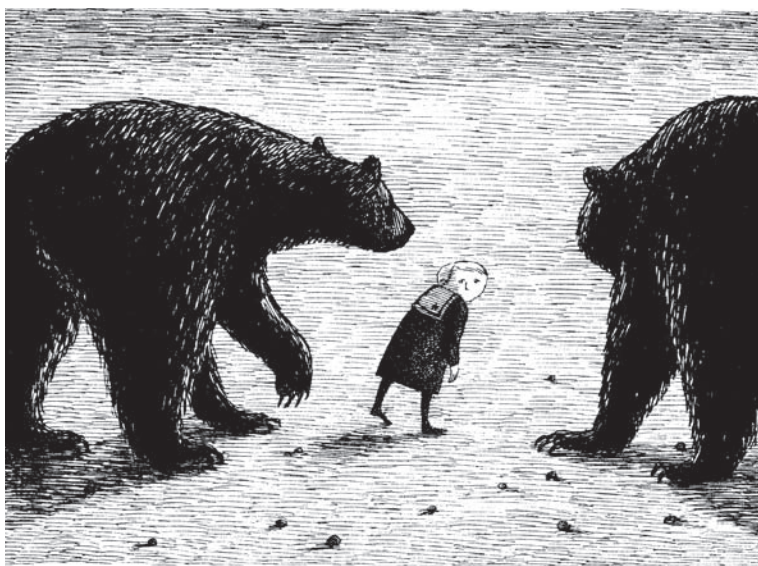
This assignment consistently results in an astonishing array of inventive books. Some students introduce characters into the setting, creating a simple narrative. Others use the illusion of space to move the viewer through mysterious corridors and down precipitous staircases. Light and pattern can be used to create a world of enchantment and beauty (15.9). All are valid solutions to the problem. Because the word *labyrinth* is so open to interpretation, the assignment has great generative potential.

Divisions and Connections

A text that easily breaks apart can suggest connections or divisions between book pages. An alphabet



15.10A Edward Gorey, *A Is for Amy Who Fell Down the Stairs*. Illustration from *The Gashlycrumb Tinies or, After the Outing*.



15.10B Edward Gorey, *B Is for Basil Assaulted by Bears*. Illustration from *The Gashlycrumb Tinies or, After the Outing*.

provides the page divisions in Edward Gorey's *The Gashlycrumb Tinies or, After the Outing* (15.10A and B). Each letter is accompanied by a rhythmic and rhyming text describing assorted accidents and childhood fatalities, beginning with "A is for Amy who fell down the stairs, B is for Basil assaulted by bears, C is for Clara who wasted away, D is for Desmond thrown out of a sleigh," and continuing in like manner. The alphabet provides a sense of anticipation as we wonder what wild expression of humor we will encounter on the next page, while the singsong rhythm and clever rhymes help unify the pages.



15.11 Robert Sabuda, “Nine Drummers Drumming.” Reprinted from *The 12 Days of Christmas, a Pop-Up Celebration*. Simon & Schuster.

Similarly, a traditional song provides the structure for *The 12 Days of Christmas*, by Robert Sabuda. This song has become a holiday cliché, and a conventional drawing of the familiar partridge in a pear tree would have been deadly. Sabuda overcame the cliché by combining a lively imagination with elegant and elaborate pop-ups. The “six geese-a-laying” sit atop a slice of gooseberry pie, while the “seven swans-a-swimming” fill a crystal ball. For “eleven ladies dancing,” nine ballerinas dance atop a music box and a mirror is used to multiply some of the figures. And the “nine drummers drumming” (15.11) are mice, with their tails tapping out a lively beat! Imagination conquers cliché every time.

Music

Each language has a distinctive aural quality, or music, as well as a distinctive grammatical structure. English, which is dominated by words derived from Latin and the Germanic languages, provides at least

two ways to say almost anything. For example, a Viking warrior is *strong* (a word derived from the Anglo-Saxon word for strength), while a Roman warrior is *vigorous* (a word derived from the Latin word for strength). Spanish provides great grammatical clarity and has similar word endings that encourage rhyme, while Chinese is literally musical—the meaning of words changes when the inflection and tone of voice change.

Each text also has music. When words are poorly chosen, the text is discordant and painful to read. When the words are used thoughtfully, however, both the meaning and the music improve. *Kubla Khan*, by Coleridge, uses wonderfully musical language:

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
 A stately pleasure dome decree:
 Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
 Through caverns measureless to man
 Down to a sunless sea.²

You simply must read this aloud. A combination of rhyme, repetition, and alliteration makes the words sing.

Rachel Carson's *Under the Sea Wind* provides many examples of musical prose:

By September the eels of the sound country had begun to drop downstream to the sea. The eels came down from the hills and the upland grasslands. They came from cypress swamps where black-watered rivers had their beginnings; they moved across the tidal plain that dropped in six giant steps to the sea. In the river estuaries and in the sound they joined their mates-to-be. Soon, in silvery wedding dress, they would follow the ebbing tides to the sea, to find—and lose—their selves in the black abysses of mid-ocean.³

As with an alphabetic or a traditional song, the music of the text may suggest page divisions while simultaneously providing conceptual unity to the book as a whole.

Writing a Text

At some point, most book artists and illustrators decide to generate their own texts. The ideas and emotions they want to express are not available in a traditional text, and copyright laws may limit the use of a contemporary text.

Taking a creative-writing course is a good place to start. As with art courses, a well-designed writing course can provide a solid base of information and encourage the beginner to try various approaches. Try writing a page or two in response to any of these assignments:

- *Memory amplifier.* Describe an object, a sensation, or a setting that summarizes or epitomizes an event, a feeling, or an idea from your life. Looking at family photographs, childhood toys, or everyday objects is a good place to start.
- *Moment of truth.* Describe an event that clarified or transformed your life.
- *Homeworld.* Describe the physical or psychological place that is your home. Is

it a particular house? A forest? The World Wide Web?

- *Build a memory bank.* Triggering questions can help you start. Just fill in the blanks: (a) "The first time I ever ____"; (b) "The best day of my life was ____"; (c) list memorable events, such as theater offerings, trips, or concerts; (d) list companions in triumph and adversity; (e) consider the greatest gift you ever received or ever gave.
- *Concept generator.* Research a single word, using a thesaurus, a dictionary, an encyclopedia, the Internet, and so on. Collect all the resulting meanings into a book.

Selecting or writing an appropriate text can increase the impact of the book. The best texts are of personal interest, offer room for experimentation in the book format, and are meaningful to your audience. Ask yourself the following questions as you assess the potential of several texts:

- *What is the conceptual, psychological, or political power of the text?* Does it embody ideas and emotions you find personally compelling? The stronger your connection to the text, the more effective the book will be.
- *Does the text include any verbal patterns that can help unify the book?* Rhythm, repetition, and rhyme can be used to create a stronger connection among the pages.
- *How resonant are the words?* Do they gain or lose strength through multiple readings?
- *How accessible is the text?* Is the language comprehensible to the intended audience? How wide an interest is there in the book's subject matter?
- *How long is the text?* Generally, texts of 30 or fewer words are easiest to use effectively. Extended texts can get long-winded and crowd out the images.

Any source, from graffiti to Shakespeare, can be used. Indeed, many visual books derive their power from an unexpected selection of words.

Text and Type Style

After a text is chosen, book construction can begin. Each page you design raises many questions. Let's concentrate on three major questions, using an 11 × 17 in. double-page spread. Ask yourself the following questions:

- *What type style and type size are most appropriate to the ideas expressed?*

Each type style has a significant effect on communication. Let's experiment with a simple phrase: "Footsteps echoed emptiness."

Impact type has an industrial look. Perhaps it is the echo of boots descending a factory staircase that we hear (15.12).

FOOTSTEPS ECHOED EMPTINESS

15.12

Garamond type, especially when italicized, is flowing and graceful. The footsteps we now hear may be those of a child descending a staircase in a Victorian house on Christmas Eve (15.13).

footsteps echoed emptiness

15.13

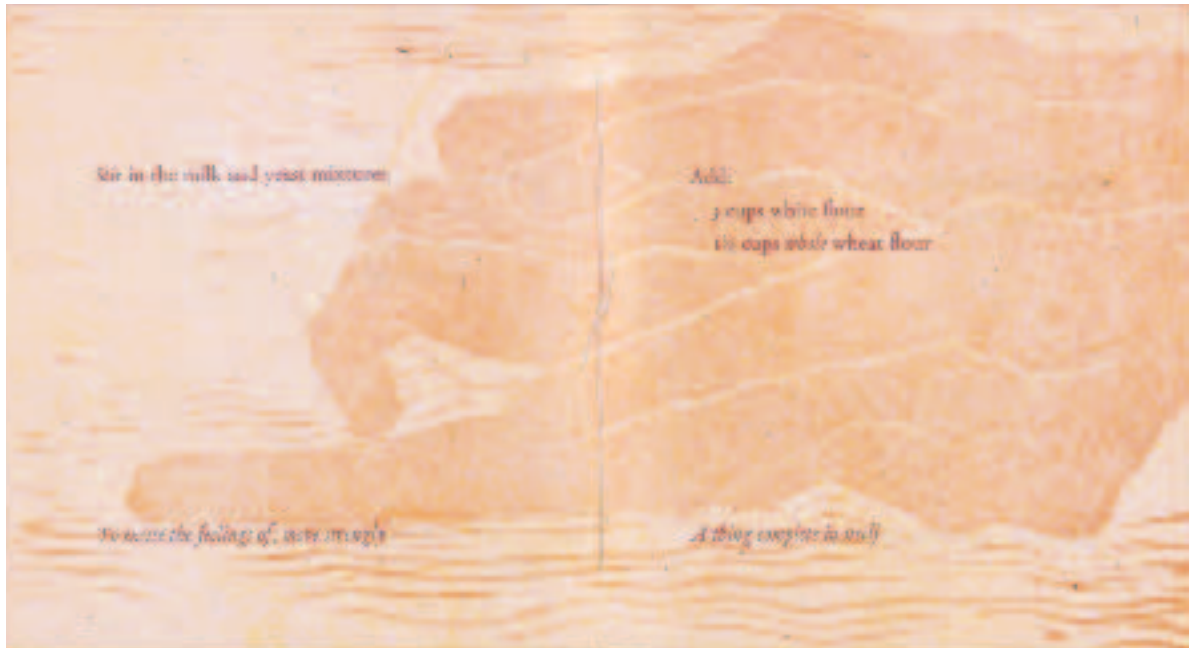
Madrone type paints a much grimmer picture. A gang war has concluded, and the survivors are slowly leaving the deserted parking lot where it occurred (15.14).

FOOTSTEPS ECHOED EMPTINESS

15.14

- *Can more than one type style be used effectively?*

Multiple type styles are used in many books to communicate the distinctive voices of multiple speakers or to convey multiple perspectives on the same event. *Sticky Buns: An Overnight Roll* uses this approach (15.15). This book was developed by a team of 12 artists during a workshop organized by the Paper and Book Intensive, a national

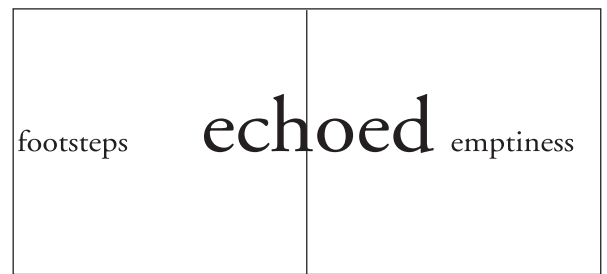


15.15 *Sticky Buns: An Overnight Roll*, 1996. A collaborative book developed by 12 artists participating in a letterpress workshop at the Paper and Book Intensive. Kathy Keuhn, instructor.

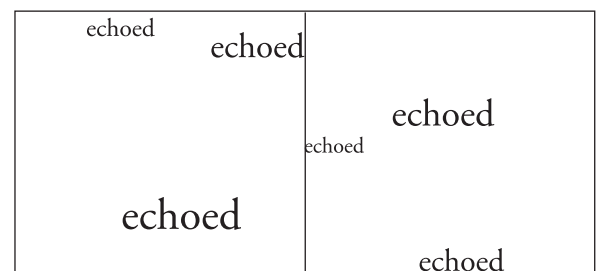
book-arts group. An actual recipe for cinnamon buns is provided near the top of each page, while a **gloss**, or commentary on the text, is written in italics along the bottom. Words carefully selected from the recipe are thereby reinterpreted, suggesting a romantic afternoon in the kitchen as the emotions (as well as the dough) begin to rise.

- *How should the words be positioned on the page?*

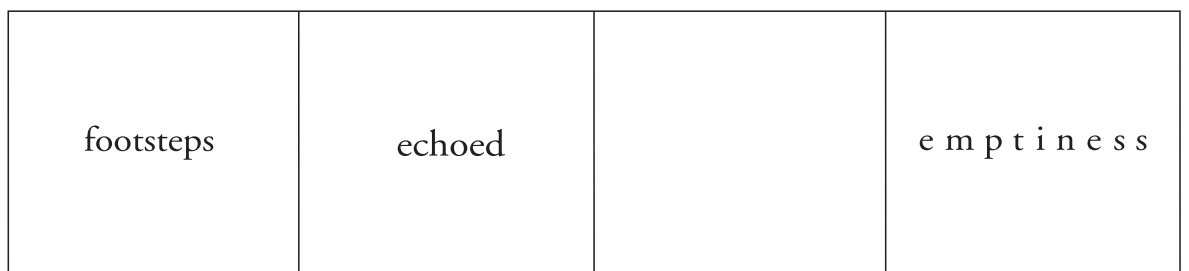
In figure 15.16, position combined with size emphasizes the acute hearing we develop in threatening situations. The mysterious implications of the phrase are emphasized in figure 15.17. With the addition of two more pages, figure 15.18 communicates the loneliness of the journey.



15.16



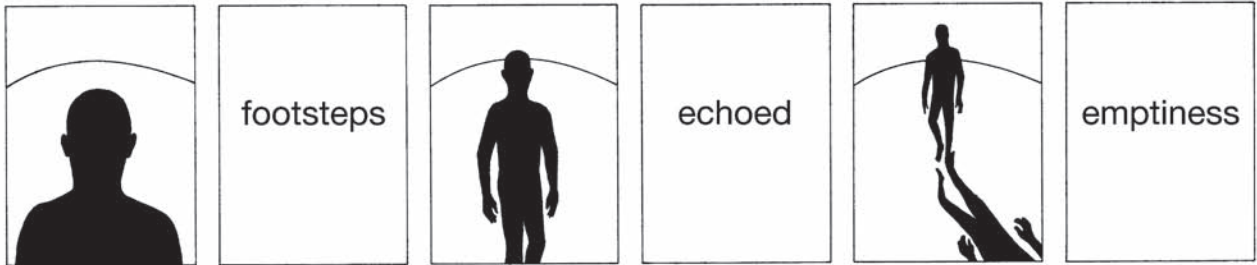
15.17



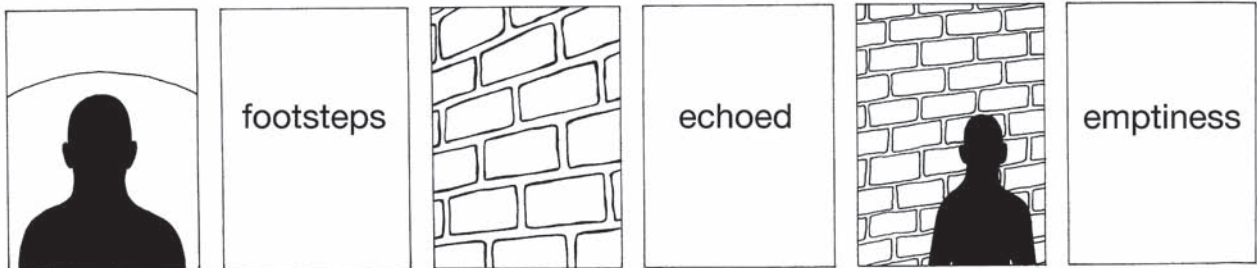
15.18



15.19



15.20



15.21

Word and Image Relationships

Things get even more interesting when words and images are used together. The organization in figure 15.19 suggests the woman's memory of a past event. The same phrase describes a walk into the future in figure 15.20. Finally, the combination of words and images in figure 15.21 puts us back into a labyrinth.

Advantages of Visual Books

Through a combination of words and images, visual books can convey complex ideas and emotions to a broad audience. In some books, the words provide direct, explicit communication, while the images are more implicit and evocative. In other books, the words are evocative, while the images are explicit and direct. In either case, layers of meaning can be created through a contrast between the visual and the verbal. Instead of overexplaining an image, words can be used to suggest alternative ideas and implications. For artists

with big ideas, this interplay between words and images greatly expands communication.

Key Questions

THE VISUAL BOOK

- What thoughts and emotions do you most want to express in your visual book?
- What thoughts and emotions are best expressed in words? Through images?
- What balance between words and images is most effective?
- Will a change in tempo increase impact? Try adding some blank pages to slow down the tempo or putting multiple frames on a single page to speed up the tempo.



15.22 Robert Irwin, *Part II: Excursus: Homage to the Square*³. Installation at Dia Center for the Arts, New York. September 1998–June 1999.

INSTALLATION ART

An **installation** is an ensemble of images and objects that are presented within a three-dimensional environment. Because we occupy the actual time and space of the artwork, we become physically engaged in an installation. This can heighten the aesthetic experience.

Uses of Space and Time

Some installations are primarily spatial. For example, many installations by Robert Irwin emphasize direct experience within a constructed space. By devising a series of entrances, exits, and environments, Irwin creates a framework that is activated by each visitor. His *Part II: Excursus: Homage to the Square*³ (15.22) was installed at the Dia Center in New York in 1998. This structure consisted of nine cubic rooms defined by delicate walls of cloth. The opacity and transparency of the fabric varied depending on the amount and location of the light. Two vertical fluorescent lights illuminated each cube, creating subtle changes in color from room to room.

Entering the installation was both inviting and disorienting. From any point, all the rooms were visible yet veiled. Multiple layers of cloth and the variations in light made the most distant rooms dissolve. The vertical fluorescent lights, which always remained visible, read first as individual, then as mirror images, creating a hallucinatory experience similar to that in a carnival fun house. All activity

within the space was created by the visitors themselves, who entered and explored the installation like ghostly silhouettes.

By contrast, *Floodsong*, by Mary Lucier, was primarily temporal. Six video monitors were installed in a narrow room at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Each showed an interview with a survivor of the 1995 Grand Forks flood. A young girl, an old woman, an old man, a minister, and a farmer told the story of the terrifying event. In the enclosed space, the individual voices were indistinct. They echoed and merged, creating a litany of fortitude and grief, resilience and fear. In sharp contrast to the straightforward interviews, an enormous projection on the back wall of the gallery took the audience through wrecked houses and piles of debris.

Bill Viola's *Hall of Whispers* (15.23) was equally temporal and spatial. In his catalogue for a retrospective exhibition of Viola's work, David Ross wrote:

Viewers enter a long, narrow, dark room, and must pass between ten video projections arranged in two rows along the side walls, five on either side of the room. The projections are life-sized black and white images of people's heads facing the viewer, with their eyes closed and their mouths tightly bound and gagged. They are straining to speak, but their muffled voices are incomprehensible, and mingle in the space in a low, indecipherable jumble of sound.⁴



15.23 Bill Viola, *Hall of Whispers*, 1995. Video/sound installation.

This installation, while similar to *Floodsong* in layout, created an entry into a nightmare. Lucier's installation evoked a range of emotions: fear, pity, and respect. Viola's *Hall of Whispers* was claustrophobic and terrifying.

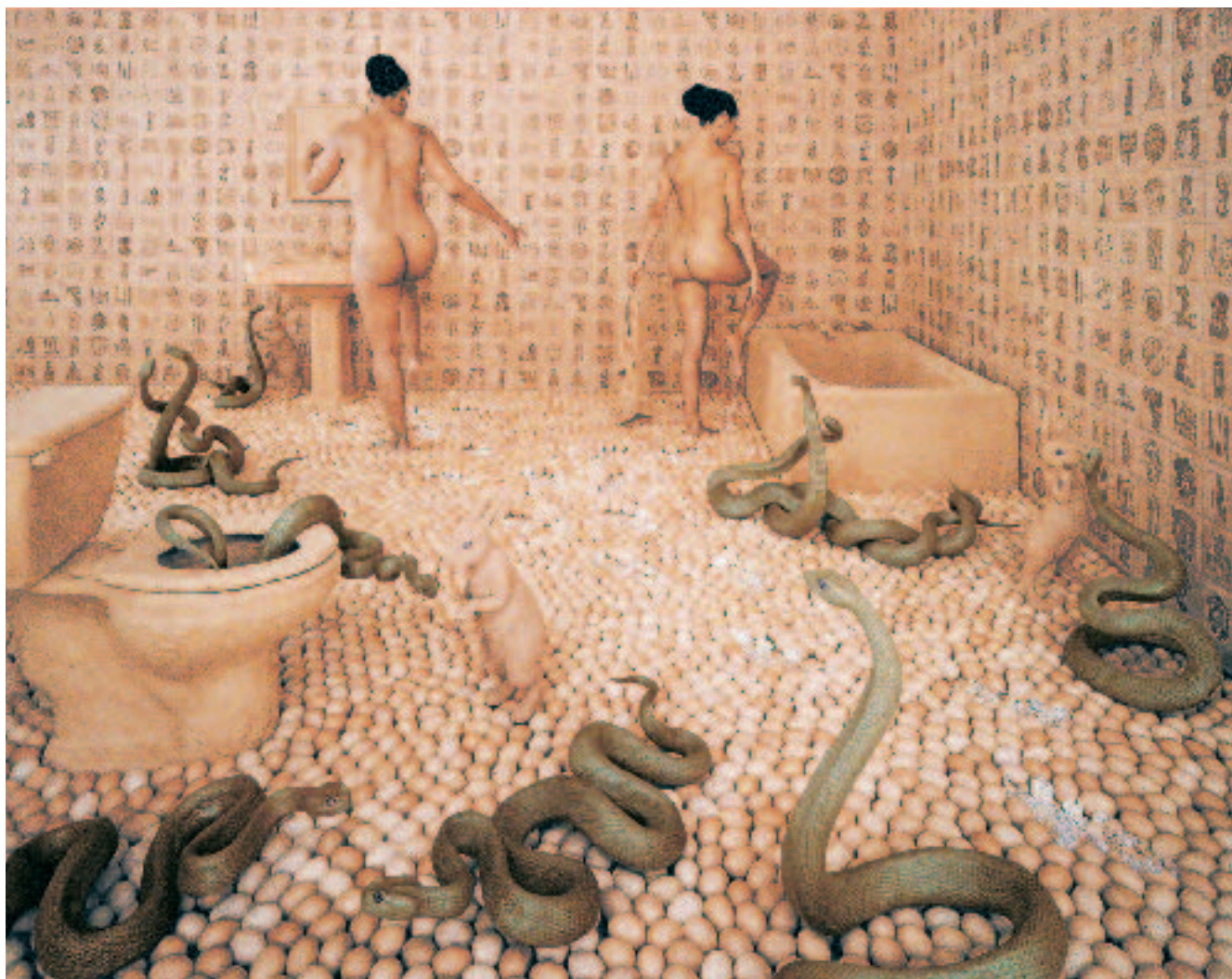
The Importance of Context

Installations must be seen in context. Spatial variations from site to site require changes in an installation whenever it is moved. More important, each site adds its own meaning to the artwork. No site is neutral. Each imparts its own emotional and spatial charge.

When the context is used fully, a powerful connection can be made between art and life. For example, our associations with the interior and the objects used in Sandy Skoglund's *Walking on Eggshells* (15.24) are essential to the meaning of the piece. For most of us, there is no place more

private than a bathroom and there are few animals more insidiously frightening than snakes. This combination alone is sure to create tension. The addition of a floor covered with delicate eggshells, nude female figures, and playful rabbits expands the expressive range further. Even the wall tiles are deliberate. Dominated by hieroglyphics from the Egyptian Book of the Dead and other ancient images, they add to the sense of mystery. The women in this space seem like goddesses from antiquity, and the bathroom becomes loaded with conflicting emotions.

A site also may be used to expand the audience for art. In *Storefront Stories* (15.25), Nancy Callahan and Diane Gallo transformed empty shop windows in several small towns into a series of vignettes based on childhood memories. When shown in Cherry Valley, New York, a single window was changed every day over a six-week period. In this project, personal



15.24 Sandy Skoglund, *Walking on Eggshells*, 1997. Cibachrome print, 47 × 60 in. (119 × 152 cm). © 1997 Sandy Skoglund.

experience became public communication through the use of a nontraditional exhibition space.

Through *Truisms* (15.26), Jenny Holzer brought public art to an urban audience for a more political purpose. Printing various proverbs on posters, flyers, T-shirts, hats, and finally electronic signs, Holzer used mass-marketing techniques to convey messages such as “Abuse of power comes as no surprise” and “Raise boys and girls the same way.” Shown next to the flashing neon signs in New York City’s busy Times Square, these seemingly banal messages took on new importance and reached many viewers unfamiliar with contemporary art.

Advantages of Installation Art

For the artist seeking new and expanded means of expression, installation art offers several advantages:

- *A fresh perspective on a familiar setting or situation.* The site itself is an essential component of the piece. We must see familiar settings afresh. Any aspect of reality can become a staging area for art. Our expectations may be shifted, inverted, or upended.
- *A large scale.* Most installations are made in a scale that invites physical entry. Thus, the distance between viewer and image is eliminated: viewers become one with the artwork. The principles of time, space, and gravity that rule our everyday life can be used deliberately in an installation to heighten impact or to create a sense of disorientation.
- *Increased viewer involvement.* No longer a bystander, the viewer must physically enter and consciously interact with the artwork.



15.25 Diane Gallo and Nancy Callahan, *Storefront Stories*, 1999. Mixed-medium installation, 6 × 6 × 6 ft (1.83 × 1.83 × 1.83 m).

Key Questions

INSTALLATIONS

- What ideas do you most want to express? What emotions do you most want to evoke?
- What is the advantage of a confined space as opposed to an expansive space?
- How much lighting is needed, and what is the most appropriate light source?
- What sounds will you provide? What sounds can be generated by the audience?
- How can you invite viewers into your artwork? What will they discover? What might they know on leaving that they didn't know on entering?
- Will interaction among viewers or between the viewers and the artwork expand meaning or heighten emotion?



15.26 Jenny Holzer, *Truisms, 1977–79: Abuse of Power Comes as No Surprise*, 1982. Times Square, New York. Spectacolor Board No. 1.

PERFORMANCE ART

Mixing dance, theater, music, and art with politics, philosophy, and other disciplines, performance art pushes the possibilities of interdisciplinary work even further. Like any other art form, performance art is designed to communicate ideas and express emotions. Unlike traditional art forms, performance art is immediate and direct. Rather than paint an image on a canvas, the performers generally present images directly—on a stage, in a gallery, or outdoors. The wood, bronze, or marble of traditional figurative sculpture is replaced with the flesh and blood of the artist's own body. For example, in *Indigo Blue* (15.27), Ann Hamilton placed 18,000 pieces of used “blue-collar” work clothes, a seated “attendant,” and a desk covered with history books in a large room. The laundered clothes had been meticulously folded by an army of volunteers and carefully stacked. Quietly seated at the desk, the attendant erased the historical texts from back to front, using a pink pearl eraser and moisture from her own saliva. In this performance piece, the worn items of clothing became mute witnesses to the loss of industry and employment in America.

Historical Background

The roots of contemporary performance art may actually extend back in time to the Futurists, a group of Italian poets, musicians, and artists most active from 1911 to 1915. Determined to develop a new approach to art, they created revolutionary paintings and sculptures based on dynamism, wrote inflammatory manifestos, and staged theatrical performances that were both frenetic and shocking. In word and deed, the Futurists rebelled against good taste, traditional subject matter, compositional rules, and established institutions such as museums.

Performance art has become especially prominent in the past 30 years. The current surge in



15.27 Ann Hamilton performing *Indigo Blue*, 1991/2007. Cotton clothing, wood and steel platform, wood table and stool, book, eraser. Dimensions variable.

interest is often traced to the Happenings developed by Allan Kaprow and others in the 1950s and 1960s. In a **Happening**, the time, place, materials, and general theme for the event were determined by the artist. Upon arrival, the audience created the artwork through their actions. Unrehearsed, these events often were chaotic as well as exhilarating.

Characteristics of Performance Art

To some extent, contemporary performance art shares many of the basic characteristics of Futurism. Four qualities are especially notable.

Ephemeral

Just as a symphony ceases to exist as soon as the last note fades, so performance art is inherently ephemeral. The performance may persist in the memory of each member of the audience, but the full force of

the event disappears as soon as the audience leaves the site. While any well-trained classical violinist can perform a given Beethoven sonata, roles in performance pieces are rarely played by new actors. Generally, a piece written by Laurie Anderson must be performed by her. Even when a new production is planned, difficulty in transferring information about the role may make it impossible to restage the piece.

As a result, time is always of particular importance in performance art. In 1952, musician John Cage deleted pitch, timbre, and loudness from one composition, leaving duration as the only remaining aspect of the music. The resulting work, titled *4 minutes 33 seconds (4'33")* therefore was silent for 4 minutes and 33 seconds.

Time was also a major component of Dan Graham's *Past Continuous Pasts*, installed in a New York City gallery in 1974. The walls were covered with mirrors, and time-delayed video monitors were positioned at each end of the room. Upon entering, viewers first viewed themselves in the present; then, watching the video monitors, they viewed themselves in the past.

Collaborative

Working collaboratively, artists can expand their ideas and explore new modes of expression. Despite their interest in live art, few visual artists have extensive training in dance and theater. It may be physically impossible for them to perform a movement themselves. And, just as an amateur's drawing is very different from a drawing done by a professional, so amateur dance differs greatly from professional dance. By working collaboratively, artists, actors, musicians, and dancers can combine forces to create powerful new pieces.

Furthermore, a collaboration tends to extend the ideas generated by each participant. Despite their similarities, art, theater, music, and dance are also distinctively different. Each has a long and complex history, an extensive theoretical background, and particular aesthetic values. By sharing information and discussing alternative approaches, each participant has an opportunity to rethink his or her own creative process.

Many disciplines have been combined successfully. In *Predator's Ball* (15.28), Karole Armitage



15.28 Karole Armitage, *Predator's Ball*, 1996. Brooklyn Academy of Music. Sets by David Salle, animation videos by Erica Beckman, costumes by Hugo Boss, Pila Limosner, and Debra Moises Co.

combined her choreography with sets by painter David Salle and videos by Erica Beckman. This tale about Wall Street junk bond dealer Michael Milken is both stark in its staging and frenzied in its energy. In *Available Light* (15.29), choreographer Lucinda Childs sought a pulse in the spaces designed by architect Frank Gehry and the music composed by John Adams. And, in *L.O.W. in Gaia* (15.30), Rachel Rosenthal presented a meditation on art, feminism, and ecology.

Blurred Boundaries

During a performance, separations between art and life are often dissolved. For some artists, performance art is a way to work outside the rarefied world of the art museum or the competitive world of the commercial gallery. Viewing art as a creative process and a life-affirming philosophy rather than as a product, such artists seek new venues and new audiences. Separations between high art and mass culture may become blurred. Graffiti, popular music, or television advertisements may provide



15.29 Lucinda Childs, image from *Available Light*, 1983. Performed at the Brooklyn Academy of Music.



15.30 Rachel Rosenthal, *L.O.W. in Gaia*. First performance, Marquette University, WI, 1986.

more inspiration than a masterpiece in a museum. Indeed, in describing his approach to a Happening, Allan Kaprow said that “the line between art and life should be kept as fluid and perhaps as indistinct as possible.”

Many contemporary artists pursue this goal with a vengeance. In John Cage’s *First Construction in Metal*, automobile brake drums, cowbells, and sheets of metal are used along with conventional percussion instruments in a highly rhythmic piece. In *Imaginary Landscape #4*, Cage broke the concert-hall barrier even more vigorously. Twelve ordinary radios, tuned to various stations, were the major instruments played. Any advertisement, news, or music each radio played became part of the concert.

The Artist and the Audience

When barriers between art and life are removed, separations between artist and audience also become blurred. Indeed, many artists deliberately involve the audience in the work. In *Performance/Audience/Mirror*, Dan Graham confronted his audience directly, describing their appearance and commenting on their participation in the performance. And, with *Pull*, Mona Hatoum created a humorous interaction between audience and artist. Viewers were invited to pull on an actual braid of hair, then watch the artist’s reaction on the video monitor. No longer an observer, each member of the audience helped create the artwork.

ADVANTAGES OF INTERDISCIPLINARY ART

Visual books, installations, and performance art all require interdisciplinary integration. The connections created offer new opportunities for creative thinking and complex communication. Ideas and emotions outside the mainstream can become accessible to both artists and audiences. Furthermore, because each of these new mediums requires a substantial amount of audience

Key Questions

PERFORMANCE ART

- When working collaboratively, what can you offer your partner and what can your partner offer you?
- What similarities and differences are there in your creative processes? What is the best way to handle differences of opinion?
- How many performers are needed?
- What is the relationship between the performer(s) and the set? Should all the performers appear live, or can some appear via slides, audio, or video projections?
- In what context will your performance appear? A subway station is a very different venue than a gallery and may add meaning to the artwork.
- How can sound and light heighten emotion or expand meaning?
- How much change must occur during the performance? Is repetition a virtue?
- How can you heighten or reduce intensity?
- What is the most powerful beginning you can devise?
- What is the most memorable ending you can devise?
- Who is the intended audience, and what role can the audience play?

participation, relationships between artist and audience are redefined. An active audience can contribute more to the experience than a passive audience. When artist and audience share the same time and space, as in a performance piece, this connection is especially strong. With performance art, boundaries dissolve not only between art and theater, but also between art and life.

SUMMARY

- A visual book is an experimental structure that conveys ideas, actions, and emotions in an integrated and interdependent format. Each page is connected in some way to the preceding page and to the following page.
- Visual books combine two-dimensional composition with three-dimensional structure and may use time and narrative very deliberately. They may be entirely visual, may be entirely verbal, or may mix words and images.
- In selecting a text, consider its potential to generate ideas, how the text will be divided and distributed over multiple pages, the rhythm and music of the words, and the significance of the ideas.
- Every type style has its own distinctive quality, which can add to or detract from the meaning of the book.
- The combination of words and images in a visual book can encourage the development of complex ideas using layers of meaning.
- An installation is an ensemble of images and objects that is presented within a three-dimensional environment. When the viewer enters an installation, he or she is physically surrounded and aesthetically engaged.
- An installation may be primarily spatial, may be primarily temporal, or may use both space and time equally. The context in which an installation occurs can add to, subtract from, or expand its meaning.
- Installation art offers a fresh perspective on a familiar setting or situation, is usually done in large scale, and requires some viewer involvement.
- Performance art is live art designed by artists. Combining aspects of theater, music, art, and dance, it offers both the artist and the audience a laboratory for aesthetic experimentation.
- Many performance artists use time very deliberately, expand their ideas through collaboration, and seek to blur the boundaries between art and life.
- Each of the interdisciplinary arts described in this chapter requires substantial audience participation. As a result, relationships between the artist and the audience are constantly being redefined by contemporary artists.

KEY TERMS

codex
gloss

Happening
installation

interdisciplinary art
performance art

visual book

STUDIO PROJECTS

To apply the concepts from this chapter in the studio, check out the Projects page in the Online Learning Center at www.mhhe.com/stewart4e. The following is a sample of the chapter-related assignments that are described in step-by-step detail.

Labyrinth Collage and Book. Integrating multiple materials, methods, and structures to communicate a complex idea.

Profile:

Nancy Callahan, Artist, and Diane Gallo, Writer

Storefront Stories: Creating a Collaborative Community



Nancy Callahan (left in photo) is a leader in the field of artists' books and is known for her creative work in screen printing. She has exhibited her work widely, and in 1994 she was one of four artists chosen to represent the United States at the International Book and Paper Exhibition in Belgium. In 1999, she participated in the International Artists' Book Workshop and Symposium in Mor, Hungary. In addition to her full-time teaching at the State University of New York at Oneonta, Callahan has taught workshops at major book centers around the country, including the Center for Book Arts in New York City and The Women's Studio Workshop.

Diane Gallo (right in photo) is an award-winning writer and performance poet, as well as a master teacher. Her film work has received awards from American Women in Radio & Television and nominations from the American Film Institute. Gallo teaches creative writing and life-story workshops at universities and cultural institutes throughout the country and is a visiting poet with the Dodge Foundation Poetry Program, a humanist scholar with the National Endowment for the Humanities Poets in Person program, and cofounder of the newly formed Association of Teaching Artists.

Callahan and Gallo began working together in 1984 as a photographer/writer team for the Binghamton Press. As a result of many years of collaborative teaching, they became the first teaching artist team working with the Empire State Partnership project, jointly sponsored by the New York State Education Department and the New York State Council of the Arts. In 1996, they received fellowships to the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, where they began working on a major project, which led to their selection by the Mid-Atlantic Foundation for their millennium project. Funded by the National Endowment for the Arts, the project—*Artists & Communities: America Creates for the Millennium*—named Callahan and Gallo as two of America's 250 most creative community artists.

MS: You've gained a lot of recognition for your recent text-based installations. Please describe *Storefront Stories*.

NC: Over the past two years we've had an extraordinary collaborative experience. As an extension of our writing, we developed a new type of text-based installation. One day as we worked on a story about ironing, we playfully hung a single wrinkled white shirt in the front window of our studio in Gilbertsville, New York. Below the shirt, we placed a small sign that said "No one irons anymore." As

the lone shirt turned, it attracted attention, causing people on the sidewalk to stop, read the window, and react. *Storefront Stories* was born.

DG: Objects became words; words transformed objects. Week by week, using storefront windows as a public stage, we wrote and presented installments of autobiographical stories. In one town, a single window was changed every ten days, creating an ongoing narrative. In another, we used five windows in a row, like pages in a book. Bits of text and symbolic objects were

used to tell stories about personal change. Stories and objects—combined with the unexpected street location—sparked curiosity and started a community dialogue.

MS: How did members of the community become participants?

NC: They just began telling us their stories. An elderly woman on her way to the post office stopped to tell us the story of how she had learned to type on an old Smith typewriter, just like the one in the window. Eleven-year-old boys on bicycles stopped by. A mother brought her children to the windows each week to read the story aloud. Couples strolling by in the evening asked, “What’s coming next?”

DG: People talked to us easily, asking questions and encouraging us. Many times, we’d return to find handwritten stories, comments, and suggestions. We watched passersby examine the windows and heard them laughing and talking to each other as they pieced together the story. When a viewer made a good suggestion, we incorporated the idea into the next window. When community members saw their ideas so quickly incorporated, they realized they were more than passive viewers. They were now active participants, with a vital involvement in the artistic process. The collaboration which began between two artists quickly expanded, engaging the entire town.

MS: In your household installations you create complete environments to frame your stories. To create these environments, you spend many hours scouting thrift shops and garage sales, searching for just the right objects to evoke an exact time and place. Why are these objects so important?

NC: Household objects are the vocabulary of the everyday world. Everyone feels comfortable with them. The objects are a bridge—they allow the viewer to cross easily from everyday life into the world of our installations.

DG: After the object is safely in the viewer’s mind, it becomes a psychic spark which triggers associations and amplifies memories. For example, while we were doing the ironing installation, a delivery man who stopped for a moment to watch us work said, “I don’t know anything about art,” and began talking deeply and at length about how, when he was a boy, his mother took in ironing to make extra money so that he could have a bicycle.

NC: His narrative then created another layer of collaboration.

MS: When you began creating the installations, did you expect this kind of public reaction?

NC: No. It was a shock. From the moment we hung that first wrinkled shirt in the studio window,



Diane Gallo and Nancy Callahan, *Storefront Stories*, 1999. Mixed-medium installation, 6 × 6 × 6 ft (1.83 × 1.83 × 1.83 m).

people on the street were responsive. The immediate feedback was exhilarating.

MS: What are the characteristics of a good collaboration?

DG: Quiet attention is crucial. We both have to really listen, not only to words but also to the implications.

NC: Always tell the truth. There can be no censoring. If something’s bothering you, it’s important to talk about it right away. Honesty and careful listening build trust. When you trust your partner, you can reveal more.

MS: When people first see your installations, many are almost overwhelmed. Why?

DG: We’re balancing on a fine line between life and art, between the personal and the universal, the public and the private, the conscious and the unconscious. We’re working on the edge of consciousness, looking for things you might only be half aware of under ordinary circumstances. It’s like watching a horizon line in your mind, waiting for a thought or an answer to rise.



Daniel Sutherland, *I Wish I Could Help You*, 1994. Oil on canvas on wood with hardware, 75 × 84 in. (190.5 × 213.4 cm).