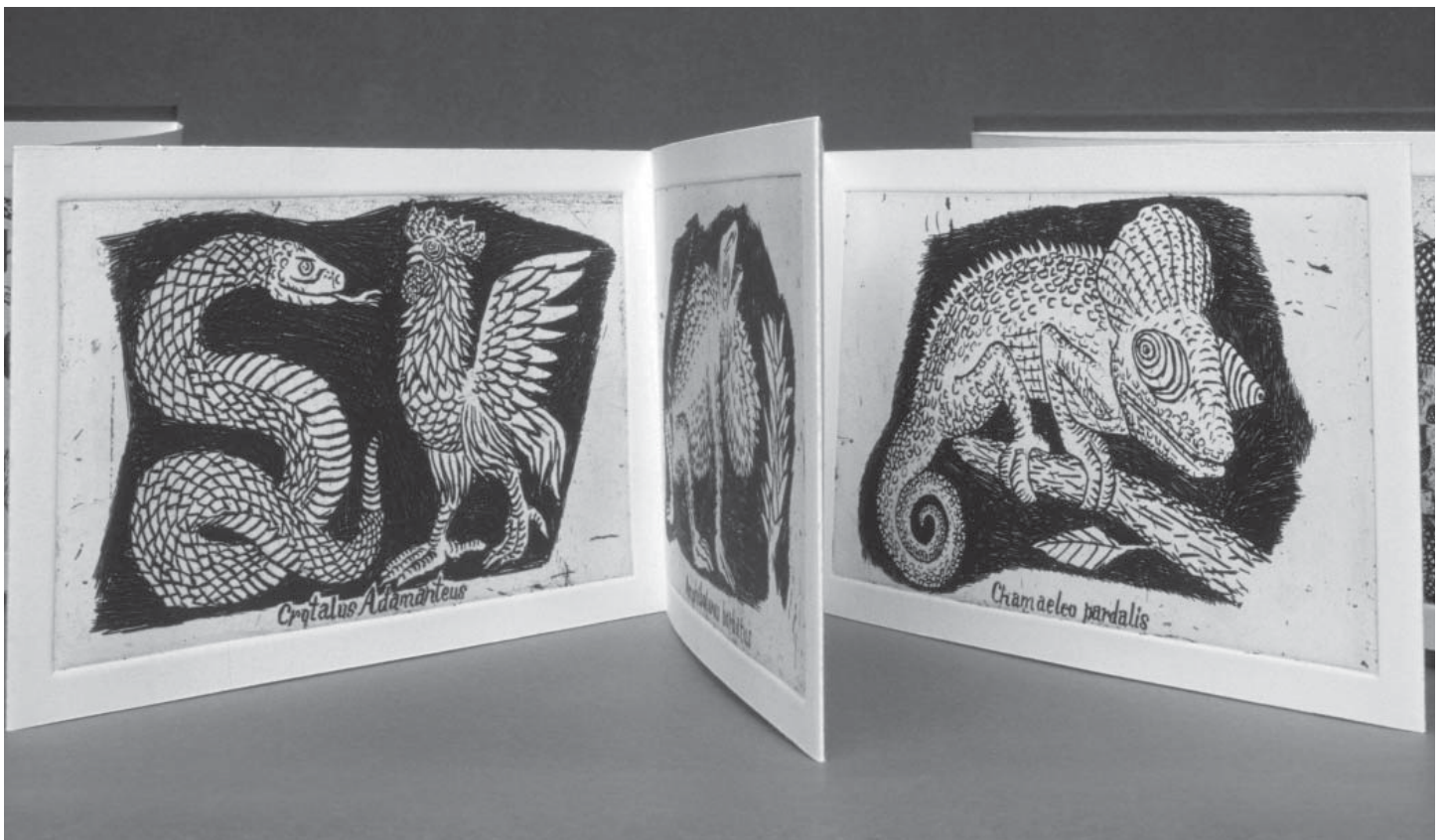


ACCORDIONS, TUNNELS, & ETCHINGS

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Reptiles (inked version). Eight panels, each panel 7" h x 9" w. Etchings on Arches paper, with embossed covers (on Canson Mi-Teintes). Edition of 75. Parrhasia Press, 1994.

For almost twenty years I have made limited edition accordion and tunnel books, and I have enjoyed the way in which the simplicity of both formats provides a framework for experimentation. Most of my books have used only figurative imagery – influences have included Greek mythology and ancient Middle Eastern carvings – so that viewers are free to supply their own narratives. I produced the imagery almost solely by etching, which is a printmaking technique and

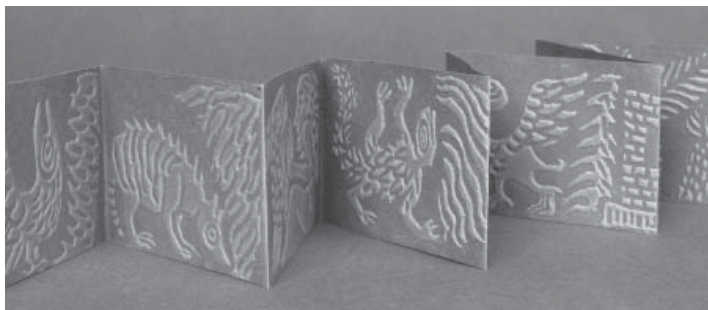
thus can yield multiple copies. Creating an etching plate is a very tactile process, so the resulting prints are especially suited for use in the books, which I think of as paper sculptures that can be manipulated.

Etching was invented in Germany 500 years ago; it has been a print medium for Rembrandt, Goya, and Picasso, among others. It is ideal for creating images with the look of pen-and-ink lines and hatchings. The artist covers a metal

plate, usually copper, with an acid-resistant, wax-like liquid. When that substance has dried, a metal stylus is used to remove some of it and to expose areas of metal. Those areas will be etched when the plate is put in acid; they will later create the image on paper. When the lines have been etched, the artist removes the resist material from the plate and applies a paste-like ink into the grooves. The plate is put on a printing press, covered with paper, and printed, thereby



Biblion. Seen above and below. Ten panels, each 3" h x 5" w. Uninked embossment on Canson Mi-Teintes papers. Edition of 75. Parrhasia Press, 2005.



transferring ink from the plate to the paper. For each additional print, the plate must be re-inked and reprinted.

The interior, or text block, images of the accordion book *Reptiles* are etchings. The book was intended to evoke Medieval and Renaissance bestiaries, which have been very influential on my imagery. Although I was taking an Expressionist approach to the depictions, the Latin taxonomic names accompanying them are real ones. The book illustrates basic animal activities and, using a different species for each panel, represents a life cycle; the eggshell shape in the first scene is echoed by the waning moon in the last one. The image on the inside-back panel is something of a spoof, as it depicts a colophon obliterated by geckos.

Embossing, an etching variation, was the means of creating the front and back cover images (applied to book board), and it is a technique that I use to make the elements in

most of my other books. Embossing plates are designed so that after left in acid for many more hours than usual, they can be printed, uninked, on paper to produce raised images similar to those of bas-relief sculptures. Canson Mi-Teintes pastel paper is especially suited for this process, as it slightly lightens in those areas of the paper that are the raised designs and it has the look of tooled leather. A number of my accordion books consist solely of un-inked embossments. My exploration of embossing arose from my long-term interest in Mayan and Egyptian stone carvings.

I find that the accordion book is most effective when displayed standing and extended, like a folding screen, so that the viewer can scan all of the images at once. Therefore, while I usually consider each panel to be a self-contained unit, I also design the book with the entire image sequence in mind. However, in *Biblion*, inspired by ancient Middle Eastern art, there

is a continuous narrative flow. For example, a grouping of figures is divided between two adjacent panels, as are a building and an ox. Whereas the title text for most of my embossed books is raised, in *Biblion* it is indented, an allusion to the recessed hieroglyphs in Egyptian stone carvings. The book's earth-colored paper also refers to the region in which the inspiring ancient images were created.

Embossments can be hand-colored by rubbing crayons, held

almost at a horizontal, over the raised surfaces of the design, so that the recessed areas of the paper do not change color. *Menagerie* is an example of that premise, with silver Caran d'Ache water-based crayons used for the hand-coloring. Years after my first version of *Reptiles*, I returned to that favorite subject matter for another book, also called *Reptiles*, and made embossing plates similar in design to the original printing plates. I then hand-colored the prints on the embossed



Menagerie. Eight panels, each panel 3" h x 4" w. Embossment on burgundy Canson Mi-Teintes, hand-colored (with water-based silver Caran d'Ache crayon). Edition of 50. Parrhasia Press, 2007.



in a hot dry place. Eight panels, each 5" h x 6" w. Etching on Rives paper. Covers are made from uninked embossments on Canson Mi-Teintes papers. Edition of 50. Parrhasia Press, 2006



Muybridge Sequence. Eight panels, each 4" h x 6" w. Etchings. Edition of 25. Parrhasia Press, 2007.

areas, as well as on the surrounding borders of each panel, for which I used a freehand approach.

Recently I have started to experiment with combining text and image, and *in a hot dry place* is one of my first attempts at that. The text came to me when I was half-awake and visualizing the animal imagery, which had already appeared in a prototype. It is a single sentence, sectioned to all eight pages: "in a hot dry place/ where the wind/only rarely rises/ only rarely spirals down/ soundless/

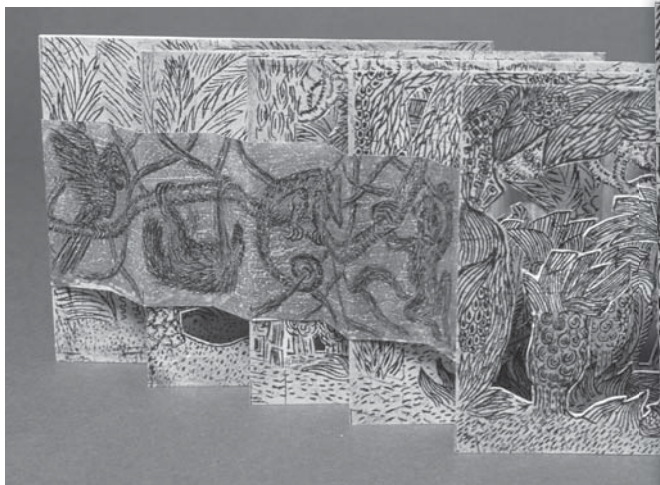
against dense earth/the dangers of the day/shimmer in every glance." The book's embossed covers echo some of the interior images, and, as with a number of my accordion books, when the two covers are positioned next to each other, they form a unified scene.

This is also the first book whose text-block images were made by an etching technique that I invented several years ago and have named *carbograph*. Tiny particles of carborundum grit are mixed into the acid-resistant liquid, which

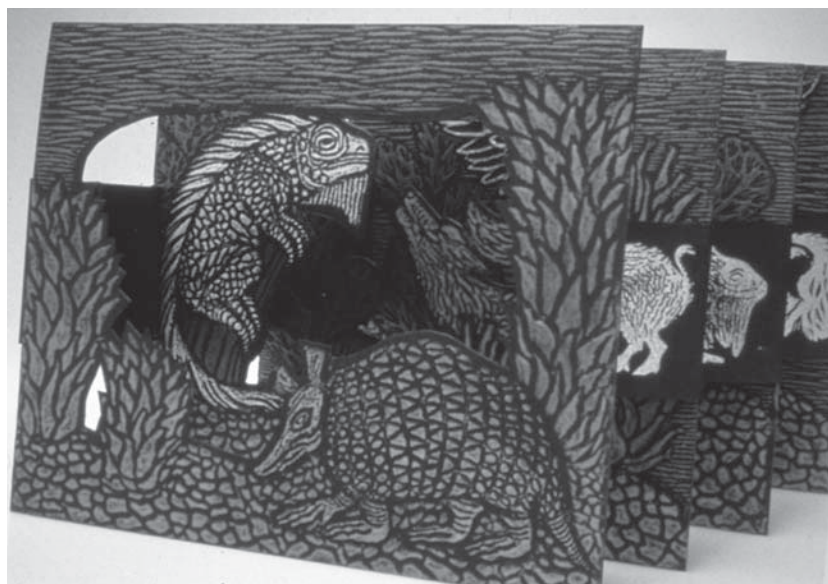
is brushed onto the bare metal as usual and allowed to dry. As described above, the metal stylus is used on the plate and thereby removes some of the grit particles, so that miniscule areas of copper are exposed to the acid and etched; they will eventually hold the ink for the printing process. Thus the image on paper has a texture similar to that of a charcoal drawing.

Muybridge Sequence was inspired by the work of the nineteenth century photographer Eadweard Muybridge, who devised a system

for photographing on glass-plate negatives the locomotion of humans and many other animals. This was a precursor to motion pictures. For this book, I was exploring the wide range of textures that could be achieved by means of etching, using a variety of acid-resistant materials to make the printing plates. Each letter of the title page is enclosed in a compartment, to echo the sequences in Muybridge's work. Printed on the back cover is text that I wrote as a commentary on the book's moving horse: "...shifting its



Not out of the Woods yet. 5" h x 6 1/2" w x 8" d. Five hand-cut panels, hand-colored line etchings, accordion strips printed with etchings and relief blocks. Edition of 50. Parrhasia Press, 2003.



Night Desert. Tunnel book, 5" h x 8" w x 9" d. Four hand-cut panels, hand-colored (with Caran d'Ache crayon) embossments on black museum board, side strips printed with hand-carved rubberstamps and water-based silver block ink. Edition of 50. Parrhasia Press, 1998.

weight through the succession of shadows and light...in acquiescence to the surrounding wind, to the sound of its body moving through time...marching, on a mere membrane of glass, into uncertainty..."

My other format, the tunnel structure, has existed since the Italian Renaissance, when artists used it to study perspective concepts for their paintings. It consists of a series of parallel image-bearing panels that, except for the solid back one, have cutout areas. (I use an X-acto knife for the job of cutting out the

interiors.) The panels are attached on two sides to accordion-folded strips. I enjoy the way in which the theater-like scene changes when the viewer changes position vis-à-vis the book. In addition, the format entails a nice tension between the visual autonomy of each panel and that of the entire piece. Historically, tunnel books often had ten fairly simple panels, but my books usually consist of four, each holding much information.

I started making tunnel books after seeing two examples from

the nineteenth century (when they were called "peepshows," in keeping with their hide-and-seek aspect). One of my first books, *Not out of the Woods yet*, has panels of two-ply museum board printed with creature etchings that were then hand-colored with washes of Caran d'Ache crayon. The accordion elements of the tunnel book are ideal surfaces for additional information, and the strips for *Woods* were printed on their exterior sides with etchings of more creatures and with hand-carved rubberstamps on their

interior sides.

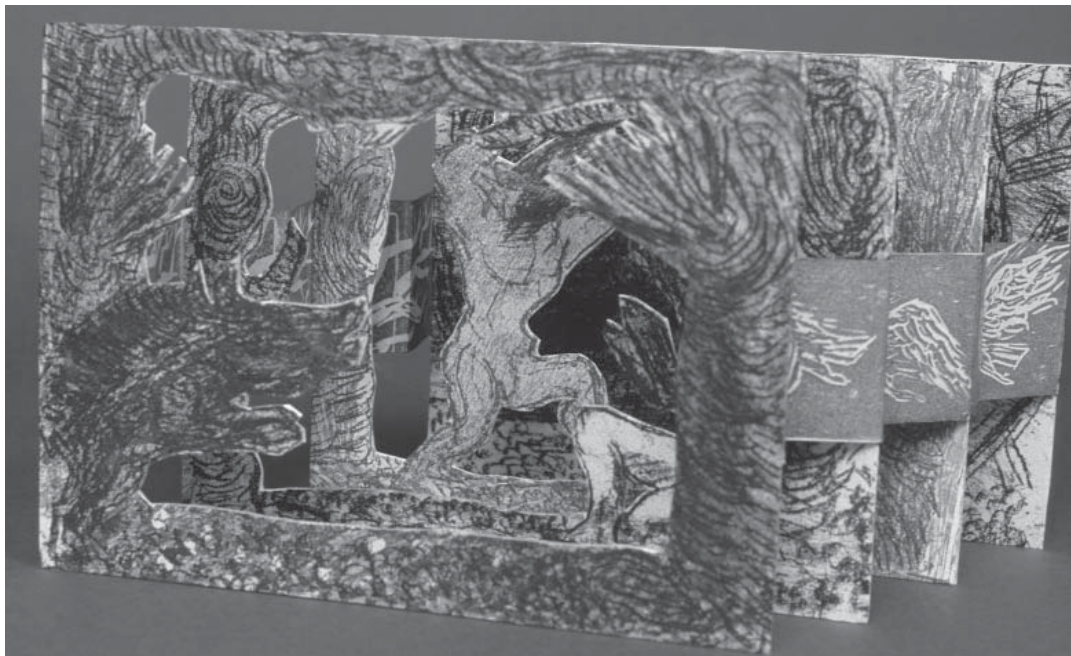
For *Night Desert*, I first made a prototype by drawing with colored chalk on black paper and seeing how the panels related to each other. Then I translated that imagery to embossing plates. I used an etching press to emboss on black museum board and cut away the non-image areas with an X-acto knife. I then hand-colored the embossment with Caran d'Ache crayons. On the solid back panel, there is a rabbit in the lower right-hand corner. It is hidden from the predatory owl, as well as

from any viewer who does not closely inspect that panel.

While the tunnel book usually presents a single scene, its series of parallel panels can also imply the passage of time or a metamorphosis. This was my premise for *Circe 2*, based on the *Odyssey* episode in which Ulysses's crew is changed to swine after drinking a magic potion from a sorceress. The back solid panel shows a man receiving a cup from Circe, and the successive panels show the metamorphosis. I also was interested in using the connective strips so that one side showed an owl's flight and the other strip had the equivalent text: "within the wingbeat of an owl, they howl from men to beasts." I chose to have the text on the exterior of one strip and the images on the exterior of the other strip, so that the viewer can see only one version at a time.

The School for Scandal, a unique hand-painted structure inspired by the Sheridan comedy, has an interactive, kinetic element. The book does not represent a specific scene, but, instead, the satirical tone of the play, which deals with intrigue in London's eighteenth century high society. Many of the characters manipulate and scheme, so some of the book's figures have movable parts to which strings are attached, so that the viewer can manipulate them. For example, in the panel just behind the stage proscenium, the fop's jaw and outstretched arm are hinged and can be raised and lowered as the figure pontificates. The connecting accordion strips feature period musicians who play incidental music to underscore the dialogue.

Among the variations that I hope to explore with the accordion format is the use of both sides of the book for text or imagery. With the tunnel book, I can imagine making large, lightweight versions that could be used as theatrical sets. I continue to find the accordion and tunnel structures rich with possibility. 🐾



Circe 2. 6" h x 8" w x 7-1/2" d.
Four panels, etchings. Accordion strips relief printed. Edition of 75.
Parrhasia Press, 2007.

More on the embossing process can be found at www.randhuebsch.com/makeimpression/newsletter.html

More on the etching process can be found at www.randhuebsch.com/explorations/newsletter.html.



Circe 2. detail.



The School for Scandal. 10" h x 15" w x 12" d. Foam core, Caran d'ache crayon, cardboard, string, pen and ink. 2005. Photo by Marcia Rudy.