



SUE HUGGINS LEOPARD

PRINTMAKING COMES NATURALLY



Sue Huggins Leopard is often inspired by poetry—by Emily Dickinson, Rainer Maria Rilke, Walt Whitman, and Al-Mutanabbi—and by nature. A printmaker and book artist for four decades, for the past 20 years she has concentrated on artists' books, experimenting with monotypes, digital processes, and non-toxic methods. Working solo on limited edition miniature books and larger albums, she designs, prints, and binds her work in a two-level restored carriage house, Leopard Studio Editions, adjacent to her home and large garden in Rochester, New York.

Her work is in private and public collections across the US, and in Hungary and Azerbaijan, and has been exhibited widely here and abroad. In the Rochester Public Library juried show, Art of the Book, her artists' books have earned Best of Show (2013), 1st Place (2012), and 2nd Place (2014) honors.

Leopard's 2018 artists' book, *Work/Time*, draws from another writer, Shaker founder Mother Ann Lee (1736–1784), who wrote, "Do all your work as if you had a thousand years to live and as you would if you knew you must die tomorrow." Sage advice given the slowly progressing yet urgent times we're experiencing.

BY JANET MENDELSON



Like much of her art, *Work/Time* is small, but its 2.5 x 3 inches concertina structure unfolds to 11 feet long. Each page bears one of Mother Ann Lee's words, printed with antique wood type on white paper, enclosed in a box of marbled paper, daylily paper, and Japanese silk. The book also expresses Leopard's approach to life and art: observe small treasures close to home as well as the swirl of big ideas.

"I'm very visceral," said Leopard who studied painting and printmaking at Moore College of Art in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. "I spend a lot of time gardening. The sensual quality of the materials I use in my books, including actual plant material and handmade papers; the emotional impact of color; the structure of objects—all are important to me." She and her husband, George, also restore historic properties, an interest she feels parallels her art. Both pursuits unbuild and rebuild, tell stories, respect the past, and look to the future.

Their family lived in South Africa during apartheid for one year (1979), then in London for three. Both experiences deeply influenced Leopard's career. In London, weekly visits to the William Blake collection at Tate Millbank introduced her to the art of wood engraving which American art schools ignored



OPPOSITE PAGE TOP and THIS PAGE TOP RIGHT and ABOVE: **Three**, 2019; handmade papers, antique marbled paper, Mylar, drawings, flotsam and jetsam; handmade scrapbook form with Mylar windows; 4.5 in. each book
OPPOSITE PAGE BOTTOM: Susan Huggins Leopard in her studio.

THIS PAGE TOP LEFT: **Work/Time**, 2018/19; quilted maple covers (Beau Leopard), marbled paper, daylily paper, Japanese silk; concertina printed with antique wood type; 2.5 x 3 in., unfolded 132 in.



STEVE BALDWIN



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BOX TOP: **E.D. (89) Word**, 2017; hand painted boards, Cave paper, Moriki paper, leather; hand painted, collaged, letterpress, inkjet printed; 2 x 3 in.
 BOX ABOVE: **E.D. (980), Purple**, 2018; hand painted boards, Cave paper, Moriki paper, leather; letterpress, hand painted, collaged, inkjet printed; 2 x 3 in.

My ongoing series of Emily Dickinson-inspired books is currently composed of nine volumes; in each I have responded to her use of color in the poem. E.D. refers to Emily Dickinson. She did not title her poems. Over the years, editors and scholars have assigned numbers to identify the poems, hence, after E.D., I put the number of the poem in parentheses followed by my title, which is usually a color or sometimes a characteristic described in the poem. — Susan Huggins Leopard

back then. It was ideal for the young mother who could work at the kitchen table while her small child played. That was when she first knew printmaking would become her life's work. Over the years, she has traveled extensively to exhibit at international book fairs including New York; Oxford, UK; and every biennial CODEX symposium in Berkeley, California.

"Printmaking is multifaceted and messy. Bookbinding requires obsessive neatness," said Leopard. She has organized her studio so that upstairs she paints, draws, assembles, and binds, while downstairs she prints on a Vandercook #3 and an Ettan press. Until the COVID-19 closures, she often worked with the extensive collection of antique wood type at the Printing and Book Arts Center in Rochester. Some of her series have covers or custom boxes made from wood, leather, or handmade paper by friends or by her son, Beau Leopard.

Ten years ago, Leopard embarked on an ongoing project, her Emily Dickinson Miniatures series. The little books fold out accordion-style to reveal their colorful interiors employing etching and collage and the poet's words printed with letterpress on handmade papers.

"I've loved Emily Dickinson's poetry since I was a child," said Leopard. "She, too, was a gardener. About the time I made my third E.D. volume, I realized the concept of color is as important in her work as it is in mine." Exploring their mutual use of color, she began devoting each book to a single color in both poetry and design: purple, rose, yellow, green. A recent volume is titled *Blood*. Created right after the violence in Charlottesville, Virginia, in 2017, the piece references that event and battles during the Civil War.

TOP: **Girl Struggles**, 2011; photos, etchings, Japanese papers; collage, letterpress; 18 double sided pages, accordion stiff leaf binding, clamshell box; 6 x 6 x 3 in., accordion opens to 108 in.



Sue Leopard's current work-in-progress, tentatively titled, *The Marriage of Chance and Intention*, might be said to sum up the pursuit, through artists' books, of the mysterious, the wild, the deliberate. leopardstudioeditions.com

ABOVE: **Emily Dickinson Broadside from series, Past Surmise**, 2007–2010; Charbonnel ink on Magnani Pescia paper; etching, letterpress; 11 x 19 in.
 RIGHT: **Work/Time**, 2018/19; quilted maple covers (Beau Leopard), marbled paper, daylily paper, Japanese silk; concertina printed with antique wood type; 2.5 x 3 in., unfolded 132 in.

JANET MENDELSON, a freelance writer and author of *Maine's Museums: Art, Oddities & Artifacts* (Countryman Press), especially enjoys writing about travel and the arts. She welcomes readers' story ideas. janetmendelson.com



STEVE BALDWIN



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