

CORONA, *marking the edges of many circles.*



Presenting CORONA V  
a meditation on writing—a history of the book—an experiment in text and image.

*Dear Reader,*

#### TABLE OF CONTENTS

CORONA begins with evidence that Blake had already been on Jupiter. So we start with an illusion that is also an allusion to the history of writing: few cultures invented writing, but all cultures know how to read. In order to read, ancient peoples gazed upon the flight patterns of birds or stars, the traces and prints of deer and bison, the current of the water, or the entrails of sacrificed beasts. Gazing upon the face of the planet Jupiter we find delicate tracteries of Blake. Your CORONA, then, begins by playing with the idea of reading: wherever we look we will make order.

CORONA gives you a miniature history of the book before the book.



Farmer, artist, and activist **Trudy Laas Skari** meditates on her land by forming a non-verbal geologic and geographic essay marked in Montana clay. As a girl she had spent a summer at the British Library looking at early writing on little clay tablets, which she evokes in her one thousand unique clay versions of her visual essay, “Terra Coda.” If you cannot decipher her swirls, knobs, and incisions, we cloaked the tablet in her lyrical guide. The twine that keeps the corrugated wrapper around the tablet bleeds onto the paper, making another statement about marking, accident and intention, time and language. And if that version proves elusive, CORONA translates her essay once again into six Sumerian words stamped along the margin: woman, water, mountain, bird, grain, earth.

A scholar of several works on religion and visual culture, **S. Brent Plate** reconsiders some habitual thinking about the notion of book, as well as conventional distinctions between text and image. He notes in his essay, “Words, Images, and the ‘Peoples of the Book’: Re-Reading, Re-Writing and Re-Hearing the Word of God in Western Religious Traditions,”

*The Book is a radically modern idea and product, and a cursory glance at the material dimensions of writing and bookmaking challenges us to rethink the word-image distinction.*

The eye-socket cut into the wrapper revealing the pupils on each page suggest radical, single-image analogues to his essay, in which Plate reminds us:

*Words, written or printed in books, have always been visual objects . . .*

The eye wanders. Shuffle the pages.

CORONA also marks the intersection between a dying oral language and the electronic preservation of it.

**Geoffrey Gamble**, linguist and president of Montana State University, is one of the last speakers of the language of the Wikchamni. He presses “K<sup>h</sup>ak’acaw” into alphabetical memory from a consciousness that was once recorded in storytelling, journeying, rock painting, and baskets. Included is a thread of his lexicon, the essential vocabulary: to dance, to basket. Here’s a transliteration of the story that gathers by basketing (basketing: a lacuna in the English language) the granddaughter back to Kadadimcha. Lift the flaps to create a hint of a paper basket, bordered by quail and community.

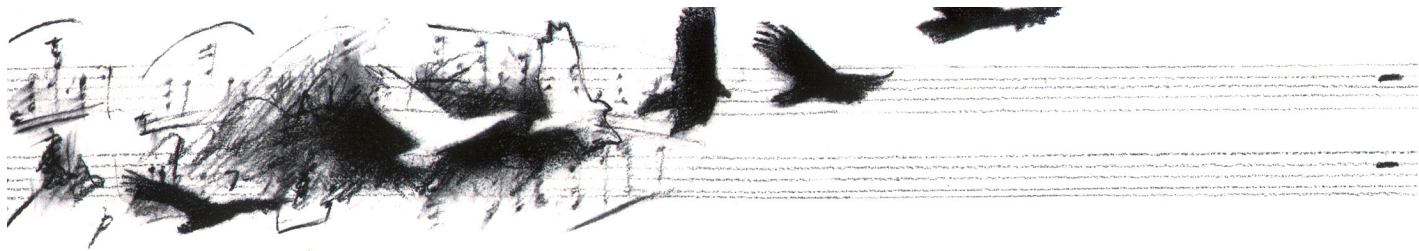
Western culture is made visible by invisibility, made possible by the continual shattering of its images.

Pick up artist **Dave Kirk’s** glazed cube stuffed with remnants of pages; it’s a charming object. Yet, he tells us the tatters used to be a book, which gave

*a view of the world woven of the twisted threads of hatred. . . . How do we destroy the fear in these books without excising our memory? What if we become book burners ourselves? We may have stripped the text of its identity as a hate book but the integrity of the text is, quite literally,*

in your hands. It is a “resting place for text recently released from its prison of context,” which shatters the horrific iconoclasm of the book and from its shreds of paper and shards of letters gives us a playful, healing iconoclasm, a text made of image.

**Julie Comnick** invents haunting, contemporary myths heightened by her astonishing draftsman-ship. Comnick, on the faculty at Prescott College in Arizona, gives us a miniature scroll, “Revision,” which begins with a few notes from Chopin disrupted by birds who erase the music we almost hear and almost see. She has signed and numbered your scroll for you.



Your CORONA is a limited, numbered edition.

The number on the bookplate corresponds to the number on Julie Comnick’s scroll.

**Leigh Melander’s** “Heart Wood” circles on pulp and page. Dr. Melander is the founder of the Imaginal Institute in California. CORONA attaches a *reading leaf* of handmade paper to slip under the vellum to get at the words ringing the tree.

CORONA is made for extended enjoyment. So, here’s a bookmark to keep your place—

“Goosebarkbookmark” is designed to move by resemblances from feathered neck to tree trunk to the edges of an old bound book. An image of the thing itself is also a deflection, a metaphor.

Now, to take up CORONA again, begin this time perhaps with the tiny manila envelope by artist **Mary Ann Sampson**, founder of OEOCO Press (The One-Eye Opera Co.), who constructs fine arts books in Ragland, Alabama. Sampson tucks up her whimsy about reading, "Book Balancers," in the envelope, creating a dollhouse version of CORONA.

First there was the alphabet. Then alphabet books appeared, where apples longed to get together with zebras. Then comes "Alphabet Haiku Book" by **Greg Keeler**, whose twenty-six haikus range from terminally ironic autobiography to twisted zen. Poet and painter Keeler's latest book is *Trash Fish*; his latest painting is "Richard Brautigan Trout Fishing."

A tiny cameo of the poet bands the work of **Anna Rabinowitz**. She is the Manhattan author of several books of poetry, including the acrostic *Darkling*, as well as editor of *American Letters & Commentary*. Rabinowitz writes a sestina for CORONA, "Hymnal," with words seeking to

*startle to bloom an alphabet,*

and a cosmogony, "Primer," to unfold, and

*Now, talk to stone and tell it words  
you want to remember.*

*Have stone repeat these words  
three times after you.*

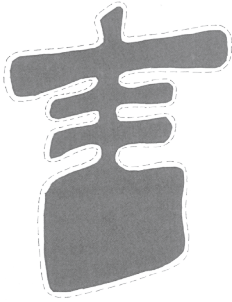
*Do this one hundred times a day  
for the rest of your life.*

*On the last day go to stone  
and ask it what it knows.*

All treasures have maps. CORONA has four of them:

Author of *The Reluctant Mr. Darwin* and other award-winning natural histories, **David Quammen** celebrates the pleasures of the map. Use the map's Key in the "Book of Earth" to navigate the text, and find yourself in Africa, Antarctica, Asia, Australia, Globe, Madagascar, Saturn, Soviet Union, Universe, or Yellowstone in the midst of Quammen's lapidary prose.

**David Metzger**, Dean of the Honors College at Old Dominion University in Virginia, takes up "The Aesthetic Vision of Medieval Mapmaking: Story, Metaphor, and Something Else." Understood aesthetically, these old maps show us not where we are, but where we should be. We get to where we need to be through story, metaphor and "something else." One "something else" is the way in which CORONA has realized Metzger's essay. Spread the leaves of the essay to open its compass points. Place the red intersections between them for the footnotes. Rotate the T-O map in the center to find the images in the window. This is your map of the universe constructed by Metzger's wit and erudition.



**Carla Nappi** is assistant professor of history at the University of British Columbia, and visiting fellow at the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science in Berlin. Her new book is *The Monkey and the Inkpot: Natural History and its Transformations in Early Modern China*. Her CORONA puzzle, “Body Language,” is inspired by Chinese natural histories, in which each puzzle piece contains both the story and a visual rendering of an imagined body part. When joined together, the pieces recreate the shape of a medical patient from a sixteenth-century Chinese text. The center of his body reads as his ribs, his blood, and his yan 言, the Chinese character for word.

**Frederick Turner**, poet and polymath, writes an essay under the traditional title, “The Book of Nature,” where he maps all of reality, saying,

*Nature, then, is literally a self-reading book, and an instantaneous “god-type” universe might well envy its richness and suspense, and want to be part of the story.*

Turner is Founders Professor at the University of Texas at Dallas and a black belt in Karate. He is the author of two epic poems, two books on Shakespeare, and numerous works of cultural criticism. When you experience the pleasure of the prose of Turner’s book of the night, your fingers will brush the embossed tree of CORONA on the back cover.

The last pieces in CORONA are original and radical—that is, they go back to the origins and down to the roots. Books talk about themselves. A book is always an inquiry into the idea of book. Each of these works play upon incongruities and correspondances.

Three poems by **James Bertolino**, “Exalted Questions,” “The Path of Water,” and “Copyrighting Jesus,” are presented on a triptych for three moods and modes of being in the world or in this box. Bertolino’s poetry and prose appear in nine volumes and fourteen chapbooks; his latest volume is *Pocket Animals: 60 Poems*.

“Distraction” and “Reverie,” are postcards sent to you from **Jacklyn St. Aubyn**, professor of art at New Mexico State University. Her birds are juxtaposed with botanicals in multi-dimensional spaces, like the inner and outer of the artist’s life. Eavesdrop on her artist’s statement written on the backs of the prints, as though two characters from within her images are corresponding—Pear and Plum.



If you wish to send a postcard, look for the CORONA announcement postcard in your box.

CORONA re-imagines the principles of mechanical reproduction in the electronic age.

As the editors made this extended meditation on text and image, we saw that handmade elements meshed with mechanical and electronic production. Amidst the focused hand construction, we thought about the tradition of "Acheiropoietos," that which is made without hands. CORONA ends with a book re-shuffled, rendered in handcarved prints by artist **Tandy Miles Riddle**, a game of images, a riddle of appearances: The Egg, Sudarium, Man in the Mountain, Tracks, The Unlicked Bear Whelp, The Reflecting Pool, Flames, The Universe, Water Beings, Rabbit in the Moon, and The Kiss. Books without pages, words, letters. The game has been tested on human subjects. It generates stories. It is a book.

CORONA is a metaphor of book,  
*a cabinet of curiosities and wonders,*  
a performance of book.

*for the editors,*

*Lynda Sexson*



Corona Productions  
Department of History, Philosophy & Religious Studies  
Montana State University  
Bozeman, MT 59717

sexson@english.montana.edu  
www.montana.edu/corona  
(406) 994-5200  
(406) 994-5189

EDITORS

Lynda Sexson  
Michael Sexson  
Carla Nappi

ASSOCIATE EDITORS

Sadie Tynes  
Meekyung MacMurdie

DESIGN EDITOR

Susan Torre

ART EDITORS

Tandy Miles Riddle  
Linda Knox

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Sarah Merrill; Karyn Lewis; Scott Hyslop; Karen Gaulke; Marie Lynn; Mark Sheehan;  
Paul Swift; Melissa vonBorstel; Donna Davis; Devita Sexson

DESIGN ASSOCIATES

Stephanie Newman; Andrew Orr

PRODUCTION ASSISTANTS

Sutter Stremmel; Samantha Clanton; Ben Miller; Rio Gonzales; Lee Strickler;  
Michael Becker; Elizabeth Beese

In gratitude to Montana State University:

Mary Murphy; Carol Schmidt; Diane Cattrell; Deidre Manry  
Brett Walker, Head, Dept. of History, Philosophy, Religious Studies  
Linda Carrell, Head, Dept. of English  
Paula Lutz, Dean, College of Letters & Science  
David Dooley, Provost, Montana State University  
Thomas McCoy, Vice President for Research, Creativity, and Technology Transfer  
Undergraduate Scholars Program  
MSU Bookstore, Art Department

Also thank you to:

Hailey Haffey Sherman; Allison Schulz  
Russell Chatham; Beth Gregory; Livingston Center for Art & Culture  
Stone Container Corporation, Missoula

*In memory of Connie Staudobar and Gennie DeWeese.*

©2009 CORONA, Montana State University, All Rights Reserved

