

## WHY I MAKE BOOKS

Everything has a story. My task as an artist is to discover the essence, the core of the story and then to find the form that best conveys it clearly in the most well-crafted and compelling way I can. I began making editioned books over 20 years ago. All of my books are born from paintings. I research, make many prototypes and importantly, I ask people who know more than I do about a subject—all in the service of the making.

In the 1960's I made my first one of a kind books at Providence High School. Then on weekends in the art studio at our sister campus, Immaculate Heart High, I helped assist Sister Mary Corita. She wove poetry, social protest, even advertising slogans into her compositions of visually stunning serigraphs. At UCSB/ College of Creative Studies, as a literature and art major, I littered my essays with drawings, and wrote alongside my paintings. As a Graduate student my mentor William Dole loved using letterforms and words in his delicate collages. *You take this in, this is how you begin to find your voice.* It was clear early on that the combined use of image and words were the means through which I made sense of the world.

Since 1988 I have had the good fortune to travel the world, on

editorial assignments with my photographer husband, Macduff Everton. I'd assist, and many times write the story he would shoot. Travel increases your humanity. It makes me take risks, and undermines my fears and prejudices. Travel has also been a real source of inspiration. By inspiration I mean the gut feeling when something outside of you connects deeply within. For example, upon entering the real cave of Lascaux, riding a-horseback along the windy ridges of Chilean Patagonia, or seeing carved faces ablating into featureless stone at Angkor. In each of these instances, the task for the imagination then is to follow the initial threads of feeling, flesh them out with research, gather my thoughts and choose materials that eventually lead to a form. The aim is to make that initial spark of inspiration grow into something physical, an object that can be held, touched, shared with others. It seemed natural to pair the journal notes and sketches I make while on the road with the studio work and handmade paper I was making at home. Sometimes, out of this practice the shape of a book would suggest itself. This may come immediately, but more often it takes months, or years. Then the work begins.

I find painting to be a very solitary practice, but making books is more like a play, a collaborative effort. My imprint, *simplemente maria press* (*simply Mary*) in truth is a net cast wide filled with

many skilled and sharing people, living and deceased, who have guided me and to whom I am most grateful. Among them are Sandra Reese of Turkey Press, Inge Bruggeman, translator Alastair Reid, Patricia Cepeda, and fine press printer John Balkwill of Lumino Press with whom I've worked on projects since 1999.

- Mary Heebner 2016