

Sumi Perera

*Lines Exploring Space Outside of
the Building Blocks (I-VI)*

6 modules, each 20.5 x 20.5 x 3.5 cm
Relief embossing with dust and stitch
(Open numbered variable edition)

Sumi Perera
Building Blocks Book (XV)
21.5 x 23.5 x 3 cm
Cloth bound artist book-etching,
aquatint, embossing, laser cut, digital
print, stitch and fragments
(Open numbered variable edition)



— For the *permeable* and *porous* nature of paper, and how it imbibes and draws in ink like no other surface.

— For the *memory* that paper retains when impressing on wet paper (using an etching press) or dry paper (using a platen press or baren, etc.).

— For the *marks* created by manipulating paper: creasing, scoring, crumpling, and pinching, each of which leaves an indelible imprint. This feature is exploited in the inkless heavy blind embossing seen in TYPEFACE¹ – a work which explores the subliminal effects of fonts, logos and brands in everyday encounters. The box pictured overleaf, bears an etched zinc plate, houses four interchangeable books.

— For the *sound* that paper produces. This is explored in TURN THE PAGE...² an artist book made with different papers that examines the performative and collaborative role of the 'page turner' when reading musical scores, and their additive percussive contribution. This white book also addresses 'white noise', copyright/copyleft, and the editorial choices made by different publishers of musical print.

1 William Morris Gallery –Everyday Encounters 2013; and Outside the Margin, Pyramid Atlantic, [Shortlisted for acquisition of the Smithsonian Museum/National Portrait Library Collection USA 2014].

2 Exhibited at 'Book to Book' at the Leeds Art Gallery 2008



— For the *grain*, a quality that most papers possess, and a feature to be considered in 3D paper work constructions. This facet is exploited in the artist book *aGAINST THE gRAIN*,³ a personal exploration of non-conformity and ‘men in dress.’ The title also alludes to the construction of the book which contains pages that were folded against the grain, causing tension.

— For the *touch, texture, weight and feel* of embossed open-bite acid etched prints. This quality has been emphasized heavily in the book *PERCEPTIONS*⁴, created for the deaf-blind reader. Launched in 2006, and inviting universal collaboration, the book was featured in the invite for the Printmakers’ Council exhibition, *SURFACE AND OBJECT*.

³ Acquisition in 2003 for the Tate Britain Special Collection.

⁴ Exhibited at the Helen Keller International Award, Collins Gallery, Glasgow



In 2007 at the FRIEZE London Art Fair, I was struck by how few works on paper were on show. At that time, I was designing a book for an international exhibition titled SHELTER (in the USA), on the topic of architecture and homelessness. Using a photograph that I had taken of the Deutsche Bank building (the main sponsors of FRIEZE), I created a body of work that was consciously dedicated to paper, leading to BUILDING BLOCKS BOOK⁵ and its variants. I deconstructed the edifice manually then transferred the information to drive a computer-programmed laser beam. To defy the preset pattern, however, I interrupted the program, using the substrate as a drawing tool, so that I was effectively drawing with the paper to catch the laser beam. This generated unique pages that were totally random and un-replicable.

THE NEGATIVE SPACE OF ARCHITECTURE⁶ was designed using the space around the word 'architecture' in different fonts. These shapes were re-arranged as a crowded cityscape and printed using burnt dust generated by the laser beam. Laser-cut modules were also converted into printing plates and collagraphs, and some prints were re-used as *chine collé* fragments.

As a book artist the *recto* and *verso* aspects of a page are of utmost importance and often explored through both surfaces of my deeply embossed prints. Often stitch, incisions and inserts traverse from the front to the back of a 2D sheet of paper. Certain prints are designed to convert from 2D to 3D objects merely by folding, and *vice versa* by unfolding, as seen

5 Awarded the 1st Prize at Shelter (2008), 1st Prize Complete Book & the Best Overall NPB Award, Society of Bookbinders Conference, 2009. Won the Southern Cross Award, Australia (2009) and acquired for the Collection.

6 Exhibited at the RWA Bristol during Impact 2009.

in *THINK OUTSIDE THE BUILDING BLOCKS – THE REBUILD*⁷ and *UNBUILDING BLOCKS*⁸. The former was a tribute to the power of the poster and the latter a tribute to temporary ‘flat pack’ accommodation, in times of war and natural disasters respectively.

*REBUILDING THE UNBUILT*⁹ is a series of prints paying homage to Piranesi, probably the first ‘paper architect’. Paper architects were visionaries who designed utopian or dystopian fantasies on paper which were never built. Drawings by renowned architects were cut, copied and pasted by hand on to paper (as opposed to digital manipulation on a computer), then photographed, rescaled and configured into different interlocking permutations and stacked on top of each other.

*TO BARE OR NOT BARE*¹⁰ is an artist book made to commemorate 50 years of naturism. Drawing inspiration from medieval manuscripts, newspaper adverts and personal stories, topless women were screen-printed on to fabric. This visual narrative was re-transferred onto ‘woven’ paper and an artist book was created. The book ‘undressed’ itself by withdrawing a detachable spine to reveal a textual narrative about the boundaries of modesty between different cultures. This book led on to *CLOTHES ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND*¹¹ which addresses the manipulative mechanisms within the clothing

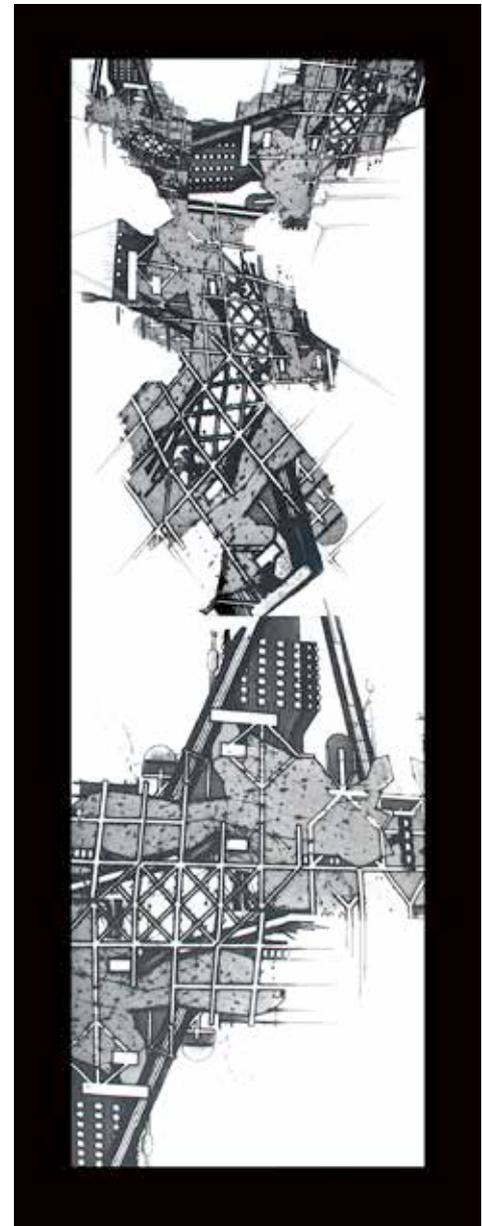
7 Selected for *Inspired By-V&A* 2014, based on a poster issued during the war.

8 Selected by Susan Tallman (Editor-in-Chief of *Art in Print*, author and curator) for *Stand Out Prints*, Highpoint Centre for Print, Minneapolis, USA 2014

9 Based on the elevator tower designed by Peter Cook for Expo 67.

10 Won the Birgit Skiold Award for Excellence in Book Arts, ICA London 2005. Copies acquired: Tate Britain and Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery 2005.

11 Awarded the Gold medal & 1st Prize-Seoul International Book Arts Competition 2005





industry, featuring dressmaking paper patterns, textile paraphernalia and mannequins.

I have explored the potential and survival of printmaking processes in several outdoor public art projects. I am currently working on **THINK OUTSIDE THE WHITE BOX**, a series inspired by a worm's eye view photograph I took outside the **WHITE CUBE** gallery in Bermondsey, London. Using the same plate, I have created different variations, including

one that uses paper that is smaller than the printing plate (to allow a full bleed), and another that utilizes paper larger than the size of the plate, combined with masked out squares of different sizes. These printed squares are lifted off the surface of the original print and displaced outside of the 'box' to reflect the ubiquitous nature of print inside and outside the built environment.

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12 (i) EdgeCentrics-Williamson Tunnels, Liverpool, during the Liverpool Biennale 2008 : <http://www.artgoingplaces.com/edgecentrics.php> ; (ii) Abolition 2007, Circular Green, London:<http://www.artgoingplaces.com/todojustlytolovemeracy.php> ; (iii) Sculpting the Suburban Landscape-Museum of Domestic Design & Architecture Gardens, London 2007: <http://www.artgoingplaces.com/sculptinginsuburbanlandscape.php>