

**BOOK ENDS**

# BOOK ENDS

Charles LeDray

Over the last two years, the American artist Charles LeDray has produced 177 unique miniature books for the Library Council of The Museum of Modern Art. The books were conceived as the parts of a singular collection, *Book Ends*, that was dispersed in late 2019 and early 2020.

LeDray's books are re-creations of a group of eighteen commercially published books, found by LeDray in secondhand shops and yard sales, on city streets, and on his own bookshelf. These books, all from the twentieth century, have been passed from person to person, sold and resold, and marked by the passage of time. LeDray's versions of them are devised to illuminate their journey over time, recalling the multiple histories of the readers who have read them, the libraries that have held them, and the fragile aspirations of their authors, designers, illustrators, publishers, and buyers and sellers. Re-creating the originals and at the same time significantly departing from them, LeDray's books focus our attention on the narrow gap between fiction and nonfiction, and on the distance traveled by the ideas and stories embedded in each book since it was published.

Working both freehand and by tracing, LeDray made over 2,000 drawings replicating parts of each of his used books: covers, dust jackets, endpapers, title pages, preliminary text pages, and illustrations. To create unique ephemera to add to each volume, he also drew and traced over 1,000 bookplates, bookmarks, letters, labels, price tags, news clippings, and library card-pockets and due-date cards that he found in hundreds of different used books and other sources.

To create the printed and bound volumes in the collection, LeDray worked in close collaboration with the printer Leslie Miller, of The Grenfell Press, New York, and the binder Mark Tomlinson, of Mark Tomlinson Bookbinding, Easthampton, Massachusetts. With her associate Brad Ewing, Miller printed eight to eleven examples of each of the drawings that LeDray had made from his selection of eighteen used books. These sheets—printed at a reduced scale, by letterpress, laser, and digital printing—then went to Tomlinson, who bound them into 177 miniature versions of LeDray's books. Each of these hand-sewn volumes measures less than four by five inches. Some are bound in cloth, some in paper; in all cases their covers have been foil stamped to replicate the covers of the original books. Working from LeDray's drawings and mostly using letterpress, Miller and Ewing at the Grenfell Press, with the help of Peter Kruty Editions in Brooklyn, New York, printed over 1,100 pieces of ephemera, each unique.

The bound volumes and ephemera were then returned to LeDray's New York studio, where he hollowed out the page block of each book to create a secret cavity. He also altered the volumes by distressing and staining their covers, adding hand-drawn marginalia and notes to their pages, or, in the case of library books, stamping them "Withdrawn" or "Discarded," using stamps based on those in a broad selection of former library and privately owned books. LeDray also glued selections of ephemera onto the covers, endpapers, and pages of each of the 177 books. His layering of stamped, stained surfaces, pencil or crayon markings, and accreted stickers and other papers from the past traces a fascinating succession of attachments and detachments.

## PUBLICATION AND DISTRIBUTION

LeDray is well-known for creating collections of a multiplicity of similar but different, carefully crafted, often miniature objects. Certain conceptual aspects of his project extend to the publication and distribution of *Book Ends*. From the start, the artist requested that the Museum not reveal that the volumes are unique until after they are published. He asked that they be distributed only to members of the Library Council, the collaborators, specific libraries, the Museum, and himself.

In late 2019 and early 2020, LeDray's books were distributed to the members of the Library Council, who supported the project without advance notice of its nature. Each book was sent to the Library Council members wrapped in a brown wrapper and tied with string. The Library Council members have thus become the first keepers of a dispersed collection.

## A SCULPTURE FOR THE MUSEUM

LeDray has offered a set of eighteen books as a gift for the Museum, to be presented in the spring of 2020. The books will be held between two miniature clay bricks. Generous donors—Kathy Fuld, Marie-Josée Kravis, Frances Reynolds, Alice and Tom Tisch, Cecily and Robert Bradshaw, and Anna Marie Shapiro—gave additional funds for the sculpture, in the process supporting the publication and the Museum's Archives, Library, and Research Collections.

## A UNIQUE EDITION

The collection of 177 books comprises 116 books reserved for MoMA's Library Council and collaborators; 25 books for the artist; and 36 books used to create two unique sculptures to be contained within two unique hand-made grocery boxes, one to enter the collection of The Museum of Modern Art and one to remain in the possession of the artist.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Deep thanks for their generosity on the project, made for the benefit of the Archives, Library, and Research Collections of The Museum of Modern Art, go to all the members of the Library Council and to the Council's co-chairs, Gregory Miller and Frances Reynolds.

May Castleberry, editor of Contemporary Editions, organized this publication for the Library Council.

An enormous debt of gratitude goes to Charles LeDray for his extraordinary labors and generosity, and to Leslie Miller, Brad Ewing, and Mark Tomlinson for their exceptional ideas, skills, and dedication to the project.

At The Museum of Modern Art, gratitude for their encouragement, guidance, and constant support goes to Michelle Elligott, Chief of Archives, Library, and Research Collections, and Megan Govin, Department Manager, Archives, Library, and Research Collections, as well as to Nancy Adelson, Deputy General Counsel; Christophe Cherix, The Robert Lehman Foundation Chief Curator of Drawings and Prints; Glenn D. Lowry, Director; and Peter Reed, Senior Deputy Director for Curatorial Affairs. For photographing aspects of LeDray's collection, many thanks go to Denis Doorly, Kurt Heumiller, and Robert Kastler in the Department of Imaging and Visual Resources. Outside the Museum, we thank David Frankel, for advice and thoughtful reading as the project was described and shaped, and Gina Broze, of Smart-Rights.com, for copyright research and consulting. We thank Jennifer Gorman for photographic documentation.

Because the histories of the books that inspired *Book Ends* are so important to the project, every effort has been made to trace the books' origins. Their titles are listed below; thanks go to their publishers and to their authors or the authors' estates, and we also thank all those we have been unable to locate. The Stanford Libraries Copyright Renewal Database helped us to establish which books are in the public domain. The number of examples of each title included in the *Book Ends* collection is also noted here.

- Ashley, Steven. *Caleb, Who Is Hotter Than a \$2 Pistol*. New York: David McKay Company, Inc. 1975. © Steven Ashley, courtesy Harold Ober Associates. Eleven examples, in paper covers with jackets.
- Anderson, Edwin P. *Audel's Television Service Manual: Practical Installing, Trouble-Shooting, Repairing*. New York: Theo. Audel & Co., Publishers, 1953. Eleven examples, in cloth covers.
- Baum, Frank. *Ozma of Oz*. Illustrated by John R. Neill. Chicago: The Reilly & Britton Co., 1916. Eleven examples, in cloth covers.
- Cole, Willie, and Tomi Ungerer. *Beastly Boys and Ghastly Girls*. Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1964. © Estate of Tomi Ungerer. Eleven examples, in paper covers.
- Darius, Michel, ed. *I, Sappho of Lesbos: The Autobiography of a Strange Woman*. New York: Castle Books, 1960. Michel Darius is the pseudonym for Alexander Trocchi, the author of this novel. Eleven examples, in cloth covers with jackets.
- Gardner, Gerald B. *Witchcraft Today*. Introduction by Dr. Margaret Murray. New York: The Citadel Press, an imprint of Kensington Books, 1955. © Gerald B. Gardner. Ten examples, in cloth covers, with jackets.
- Gurman, A. S., and D. P. Kniskern. *Handbook of Family Therapy*. New York: Brunner-Mazel, a member of the Taylor & Frances Group, U.S., 1981. © A. S. Gurman and D. P. Kniskern. Eight examples, in cloth covers with jackets.
- Irving, Clifford. *FAKE!: The Story of Elmyr de Hory, the Greatest Art Forger of Our Time*. New York, Toronto, and London: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1969. © Estate of Clifford Irving. Eleven examples, in cloth covers with jackets.
- Konigsberg, E. L. *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler*. New York: Atheneum Books, an imprint of Simon & Schuster, 1973. © 1973 E. L. Konigsberg. Eight examples, four in cloth covers, four in paper covers.
- Linton, Ralph, and Paul Stover Wingert, in collaboration with René d'Harnoncourt. *Arts of the South Seas*. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1946. © The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Eleven examples, in cloth covers and jackets.
- Marshall, Logan. *Our National Calamity of Fire, Flood and Tornado*. Chicago: L. T. Myers, 1913. Eleven examples, in cloth covers and jackets.
- Peyrefitte, Roger. *Exile of Capri*. Foreword by Jean Cocteau. Translated from the French by Edward Hyams. London: Secker & Warburg, an imprint of Random House, U.K. 1961. © Roger Peyrefitte. Eleven examples, in cloth covers and jackets.
- Piller, E. A. *Time Bomb: America's Sinister New Fascism—Will It Explode on Schedule?*. New York: Arco, 1945. Eleven examples, in cloth covers and jackets.
- Rodale, J. I. *Pay Dirt: Farming and Gardening with Composts*. New York: The Devin-Adair Company, 1946. Six examples in cloth covers.
- Sanderson, Ivan T. *The Monkey Kingdom: An Introduction to Primates*. Garden City: Doubleday, 1957. Seven examples in cloth covers and jackets.
- Smith, F. V. *Explanation of Human Behavior*. London: Constable and Company, Ltd., an imprint of Little, Brown, U.K., 1960. © F. V. Smith. Ten examples in cloth covers and jackets.
- Thane, Edith. *Marionettes Are People*. Illustrated by George Alan Swanson. New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1948. © Estate of George Alan Swanson/Shannon's Fine Art Auctioneers. Ten examples, in paper covers.
- Zindel, Paul. *My Darling, My Hamburger*. 1969. New York, Evanston, and London: Harper Collins/Harper & Row Publishers. © 1969 Paul Zindel/© 2005 Paul Zindel Trusts, HarperCollins Publishers. Seven examples, in paper covers with jackets.

For further information and additional images, please consult [moma.org/charlesledraybooks](http://moma.org/charlesledraybooks)

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