Extra-illustration and ephemera: altered books and the alternative forms of the fugitive page


Abstract

In 'A Friendly Gathering: The Social Politics of Presentation Books and their Extra-Illustration in Horace Walpole's Circle', Lucy Peltz plays with the technical and metaphorical senses of 'gathering' to reflect on the materiality and sociability of altered books in the Strawberry Hill set. The practice of extra-illustration consisted in disbinding the book, cutting loose the gatherings of leaves that make up its quires, in order to interleave them with additional pages, or to inlay each page into windows cut through larger sized paper. The process is captured in Walpole's Correspondence: 'Mr Bull is honouring me, at least my Anecdotes of Painting, exceedingly. He has let every page into a pompous sheet, and is adding every print of portrait, building, etc., that I mention and that he can get, and specimens of all our engravers. It will make eight magnificent folios, and be a most valuable body of our arts.' Specimens collected and collated with the text anchor, document, and illustrated the words on the page. As a result, an identical multiple within a print run was turned into a unique object. Through the art of extra-illustration the extra-illustrator Richard Bull 'erected for himself a monument of taste'. In its monumentalizing aims and dimensions, extra-illustration could be considered an antidote against ephemera; yet transience is inherent to its attempt to document the text with reproductions that might secure a virtual survival on the page against the referents' future dispersal. The concept of ephemera is refracted through a rich lexicon, which punctuates Walpole's paratexts – from his title Fugitive Pieces in Verse and Prose (1758), which he presents as 'trifles' and 'idlenesses', to his 'diminutive' house 'a paper Fabric and an assemblage of curious Trifles, made by an insignificant Man'.

In this essay I will read the practice of extra-illustration against its grain to recuperate the ephemeral side of 'the pompous sheet', the composite object disbound from its gatherings, and alternative forms of the page as a detached piece, a scrap, a caption appended to objects in the house. I will focus my discussion on two complementary book collections produced by Richard Bull: his extra-illustrated copy of Walpole's Description of Strawberry Hill, now at the Lewis Walpole Library, and his curious compilation of occasional publications bound with the title-page A Collection of all the loose pieces printed at Strawberry-Hill, and the alternative title Detached Pieces Printed at Strawberry Hill, now at the Huntington Library.

Metadata

Item Type: Article
Keyword(s) / Subject(s): extra-illustration, ephemera, Horace Walpole, Richard Bull, Strawberry Hill Press
School: Birkbeck Schools and Departments > School of Arts > English and Humanities
Research Centre: Nineteenth-Century Studies, Centre for
Depositing User: Luisa Cale
Date Deposited: 27 Jun 2017 12:11
Last Modified: 08 Sep 2017 06:14
URI: http://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/id/eprint/18646
I recently started an altered book project that will serve as a journal of my recollected childhood memories. I'm going to show you how I prep my pages and I invite you to play along with me by altering a book of your own. If you've never altered a book before, I promise you, it's very easy, and more importantly, incredibly fun. This is the book I'm using. When choosing a book to alter, there are a few things I consider. I make sure the condition and material of the cover is something I can work with. I check the size and weight of the book, and make sure I like how it feels in my hands. I also check the texture and thickness of the pages, and like the cover, I make sure they are pages I'd be happy to work on. I love how this book has a deckled edge, giving the book a handmade feel.

The Art of the ALTERED BOOK: A unique look at an emerging art form. NOTICE: July 25th postmark deadline There's still time to take part in this exhibit; we would need to have your submission **in hand no later than July 25th in order to be in publicity write ups, but can recieve works up until the end of July. First of all, while we are slightly changing the alternative book idea: If you would rather do the book as originally suggested please email us with your address and we will send you additional information and start the Alternate Book Project as originally suggested. If you are interested in being a part of the Pages Project please comment with your email address included and we will send you our address.