

Public Abstract

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Intimate relationships pose a paradox: they are inherently dangerous on multiple levels and yet essential for our social well-being. A collection of artist's books was constructed with the purpose of illustrating this contradiction. The books were manufactured using a variety of non-traditional materials and contain an encrypted narrative. The project draws on imagery from western fairy tales, medieval illuminated manuscripts, antique playing cards, and other historical sources as a mode of visual storytelling. Text in the form of mirror-writing was added to further encode the story and force a degree of self-scrutiny on the viewer. The process of reading the books to uncover their content becomes an active metaphor for intimacy. The collection was publicly displayed in a small academic library for two weeks, during which time students and other visitors could be observed interacting with or ignoring the books. A few individuals offered unsolicited feedback that indicated the experience of reading the books was affectively positive for them. The library setting appears to have been very effective at reaching a diverse audience. Collaborating with libraries as exhibition spaces shows exciting potential for future projects.

Keywords: Intimacy, intimate relationships, interpersonal relationships, fairy tales, storytelling, book arts, playing cards, collage, illustration, mirror-writing, art, alternative exhibition spaces, libraries and art.