

Pack Up Your Troubles

ARTISTS' BOOKS Time to escape? Sarah Bodman turns travel agent with a whistle-stop tour of recent artists' books on a topographic theme

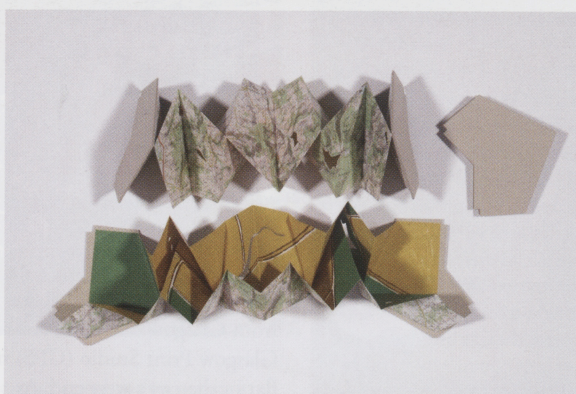
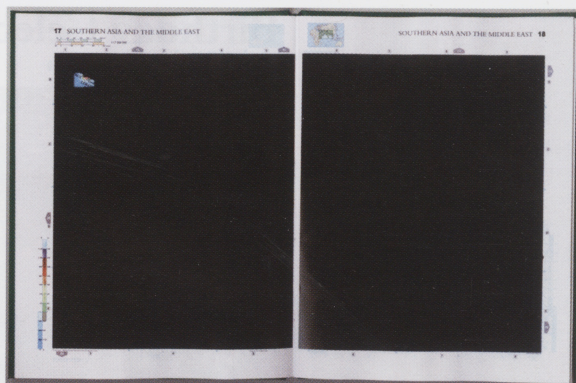
As autumn approaches, we may be fondly remembering summer holidays or looking ahead to winter breaks, or perhaps we haven't been anywhere at all. Artists around the world are creating books to suit everyone's tastes from those longing for an adventure or dreaming of an escape, to armchair travellers who just don't have the time, money or inclination to travel.

For those stuck at home, Francis Elliott's made-to-order *Dark Globe* (2007–) atlas has pages blacked out for every country in the world that the recipient hasn't visited, so the less you travel, the more pages the artist will paint over. Or what about dreaming of some faraway adventures whilst doing your grocery shopping? The aptly titled *I Haven't Been There, But It's On My List* by Simon Kentgens (2012) is a playful postcard-book of images of exotic looking beaches, mountains and sunsets which have in fact been gathered from the packaging of consumer items found on supermarket shelves. Or you could just pretend you have been away by creating an album of photographs; *Someone Else's Friends and Family*, Craig Atkinson (Café Royal Books, 2013) is one of a series of books of other people's adventures. These are made with the artist's selection of photographs developed from old 35mm cameras he finds in second-hand shops (the series also includes public holidays such as *Someone Else's Christmas*).

If you can't decide where to go, then these two books may be of help. *X Marks the Spot* (2012) by Hazel Grainger has obliterated any place names with stamped Xs in a series of recycled map books, leaving only topographical details so places can be selected by appearance rather than name, and Rodrigo Arteaga Abarca's *Nuevas Cartografías* series (2011–2012) includes reworked atlases with each place name erased with black ink so that any double-page spread inside the covers could be anywhere in the world. Or if you prefer to work out your travel route, his painstakingly produced, one-off piece *Ramifications* (2012) is hand cut from Chilean road maps leaving only the fine strands of the roads and no background.

Perhaps you could stay where you are and create a different look for the area you live in. Mark Pawson's *Everybody's Mapping Nowadays* (2012) has extra features added at the artist's whim: more trees, parks, benches, picnic sites, dolphins and treasure chests appear at the thump of a rubber stamp, although so do CCTV cameras, helicopters and occasional alien invasions. Or rearrange the landscape into more aesthetic patterns, a patchwork of concentric circles or squares to play with as in Heidi Neilson's *Atlas Dream Sequence* (2011) where each spread evolves into the next.

For adventurous types, Charlotte Hall's *Flying High* (2012) articulates the stunning viewpoint of the Pyrénées from a micro-lighting trip. The existing map of the mountains is cut and shaped into the range itself, with the underside screenprinted in the colours that stood out from the artist's overhead view of the ochre heat of harvested fields, still green crops, and the white roads snaking across the summer landscape. If that sounds too energetic, then *Les Chiens Des Pyrénées* might be more suitable. It's one from a set of Sharon Kivland's themed image books from her vintage postcard collection published by DOMOBAAL Editions (2012), the current series *Reproductions III Du Monde/Of the World* continues throughout 2013.



Anwyl Cooper-Willis's *Small Books for Experts* series (2012) looks at some of the duller aspects of travel. As the artist states: 'Hotels are places of transience, we all have memories of hotels; of fabulous holidays, traumatic events, lucky business deals, strange conferences, fluke meetings.' Each of these tiny books poses questions about how we use hotels and what we notice; whether presenting examples of what some hoteliers consider attractive decor (*A Warm Welcome Awaits*), or the conformity of luxury hotel chains (*Great Hotels of the World*) or the more mysterious reasons for wanting to keep free hotel postcards (*13 Postcards of Hotels Never Sent*).

For a simple day trip, Jeremy Dixon's Hazard Press books are just the ticket. These micro-books give photographic directions of all the signposts to look for whether *Finding Your Way To Dylan Thomas* (Laugharne, West Wales, 2011) or *Finding Your Way To Emily Dickinson* (Massachusetts, USA, 2010). Armed with one of these two books, all you will need at this time of year is a warm coat and a flask of tea to keep you company.

Images

Dark Globe Ongoing (first published in April 2007) by Francis Elliott. Altered atlas, 230 x 160 mm

Flying High 2012 by Charlotte Hall. Screenprint on map, 80 x 80 mm closed.
www.eccentrichorace.blogspot.com

Ramifications (detail) 2012 From the *Nuevas Cartografías* series by Rodrigo Arteaga Abarca
<http://rodrigoarteagaabarca.wix.com/rodrigoarteaga>