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Deborah Lambin

Photography by David Lambin





Deborah (Debbie) Lambin of Carson City, Nevada, is not your typical book artist — or the kind that draws illustrations or pictures for books — but a book sculptor. She takes all kinds and sizes of books — hardbound, softbound, well-loved, tattered, new ones and more — and allows the book to tell its story, bringing a special scene to life, through the pages from within!

“Close your eyes and visualize,”

my dad would say to us as he shared many of his great stories of wonder and excitement to help us fall asleep. I never realized those words to be so true as they are now with my art, the beginnings of being a book artist, and starting *My Thousand Words*.

When I became a mom of three children, those words resonated. My husband, David, would sit on the top of the stairs in our home, reading and telling several favorite stories as the kids worked so hard to fall asleep. His words helped bring the stories to life, and they enjoyed the adventure of the words he spoke.

My artistic journey began when I became a full-time teacher to our three children, Jeffrey, Rachael and John-Henry, while working with my husband at our insurance business. We relocated from a very urban and progressive school system in a Chicago suburb to a very rural Nevada town where education was not at the level our children were used to.

We wanted to provide a comprehensive education that involved them in our business travels, and a curriculum that included many hands-on activities that expanded their worlds through art. Balancing everything was difficult, but we hoped to make a difference in their lives. This journey taught me the importance of reading and learning, as books take you places you can only dream of and imagine.

As our children grew older, I began to pack up the books from our overflowing bookshelves to share with others. Several books showed distress as their spines loosened and the pages started to fall out. In lessons learned, I remember sharing the importance of repurposing and recycling and choosing to honor these once-loved books uniquely.





Both Rachael and I are artists, and we had always loved making sculptures from clay. We wanted to try something new and different and decided to use book pages to make something fun.

Taking a book with loose pages, we removed them and started to manipulate them by twisting and rolling them into an oblong shape, adding glue to secure the rolled paper arms, head and legs. As we worked, the shape began to resemble a girl! The joy and excitement we felt at that moment were indescribable. Then, taking the book, I started to fold the pages into a tree-like shape, and we placed a bodice on top and had a beautiful lady!

We used this sculpture to hold our business cards during one of our watercolor art shows. To our surprise, a customer wanted to purchase the sculpture, saying he had never seen anything like this and offering to pay more than we had ever dreamt. Who would have thought our repurposed loved book would be even more special to others! Then Rachael said the famous line “a picture is worth a thousand words,” and that is how we came up with mythousandwords.com.

We continued making books into sculptures and worked on one of our most cherished stories, *Black Beauty*, the classic novel by Anna Sewell that shares the story of a horse's life as he describes his many owners, some good and some bad. We carefully removed pages from the book, about one or two per 15 pages so as not to draw attention to any missing pages, and we started to cut, twist, wrap and mold them into a sculpture that resembled a horse.

Finding the middle of the book, we opened it, then secured the horse sculpture with wooden rods and wire to adhere to the inside spine as if he were jumping free from the pages. I placed another book on the bottom for the base, then glued the book in place to remain open. The corners of the pages are curled to show movement as the horse was seemingly running so fast that the pages were blowing freely!

When telling a story or defining a thought-provoking scene in a book, I ask myself many questions about the best way to present it and capture the story itself, from the books to the tools (lighting, size, stance, extras, etc.). I need my art and that book to tell its story through its pages; in a roundabout way, I am sharing literature with everyone.

There are many challenges in creating and making art, and they often come from people commissioning a sculpture made from various materials with a quick deadline, as my creativity becomes overwhelming. But I embrace these challenges as opportunities for growth. As I enjoy listening, I am learning new ways to create art by going outside of the box. These challenges are really opportunities to make myself a better artist.

When creating a sculpture, find a

book you want to bring to life and decide how you want it to be presented. Do you like the book upright and positioned on another book as its base, or do you want it to be open, lying flat, with a sculpture placed on top? Begin by removing one or two pages per 15 pages from the book, giving an illusion of an entire book. Ask yourself: *What am I trying to portray? What sculptures do I need to make to capture the story?*

Cut the pages into strips, twist them, mold them and wrap the sculpture using the strips of pages, adhering them with glue. Supports like wooden-doll rods, wire, tin foil and skewers help keep the sculpture in place. I like to glue a base to the bottom of the book for stability, then glue the pages to keep them from being opened. The process is intricate and requires patience, but the result is always worth it.

Over the years, I've seen perfection in the techniques I learned, which now improve what I do and allow me to share this love with others. It's satisfying to know that my art shares my belief in the importance of recycling, reusing and repurposing something into something beautiful. Art evokes emotions, and it dares us to create something extraordinary!

After teaching a workshop at the college, my youngest son, John-Henry, shared that he wanted to make something very different. Taking one of his favorite books, *The Life of Pi*, he started designing and sculpting something new, a 3D sculpture that tells the story of Pi as he stands on his boat along the island looking for Richard Parker (the tiger). Then, he added a fourth dimension by placing a light in front of the sculpture to create a shadow effect with Richard Parker appearing out of the trees. It's exciting to see others learn, taking the tools and methods taught to create something incredible!





The red Jeep Wrangler came to a stop, they had been following continued beyond. The game trail was wide and animals. They could see large, dark From the clearing, they! very large geese. Dodgson, King didn't answer. Baselson said, "What Without taking his black box on the sea? Baselson grunted. "That's because of the cone magnet the box, which was made of black shoebox, except it ended in a flame pistol grip. Dodgson clipped a battery into the box. Then he picked the box up knob at the back, facing him, and a grade. Dodgson said, "Batteries charged?" "They're charged," King said. "Okay," Dodgson said. "I'll go first, box, and get rid of the animals. You two for animals are gone, you each take an egg fire them back to the cat. I'll come



How to Create a Book Sculpture

Select a book – it can be a paperback or hardbound book – with approximately 250 pages. Becoming familiar with your book and its pages is essential in starting a book sculpture. Older books have yellowing pages that are often brittle to manipulate, whereas newer books have crisp pages easily manipulated into folds and buildings. Look for a book with white pages as they are easier to work with. Tear the covers off the book before working.

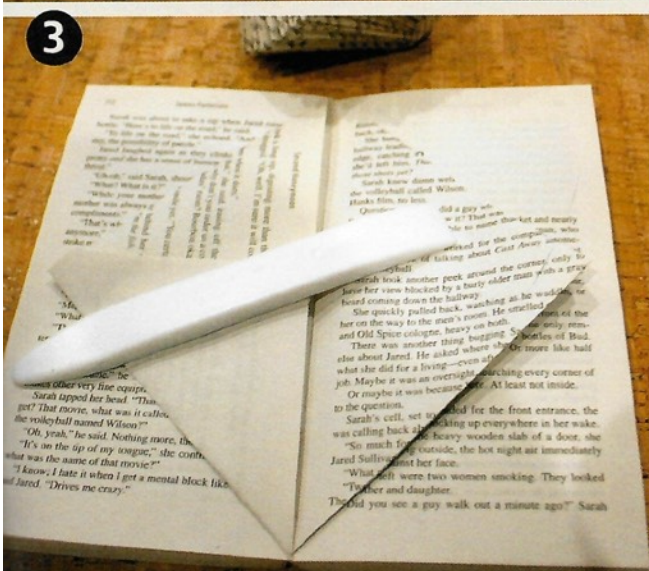
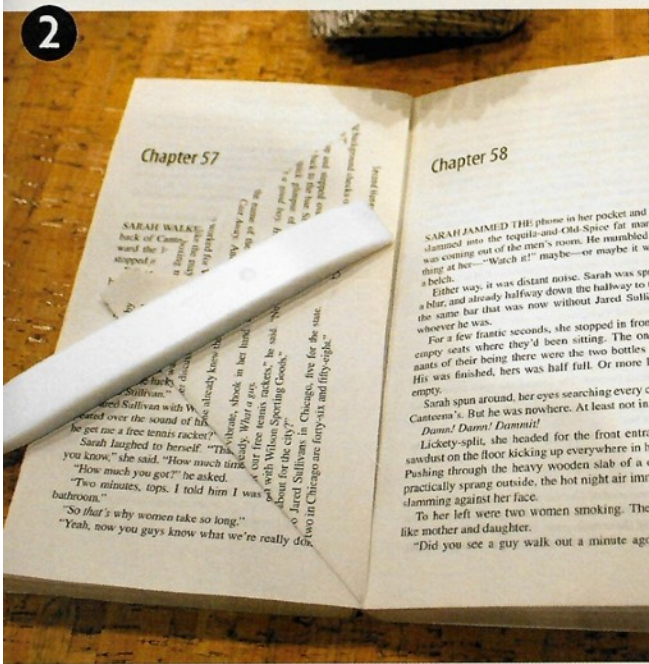
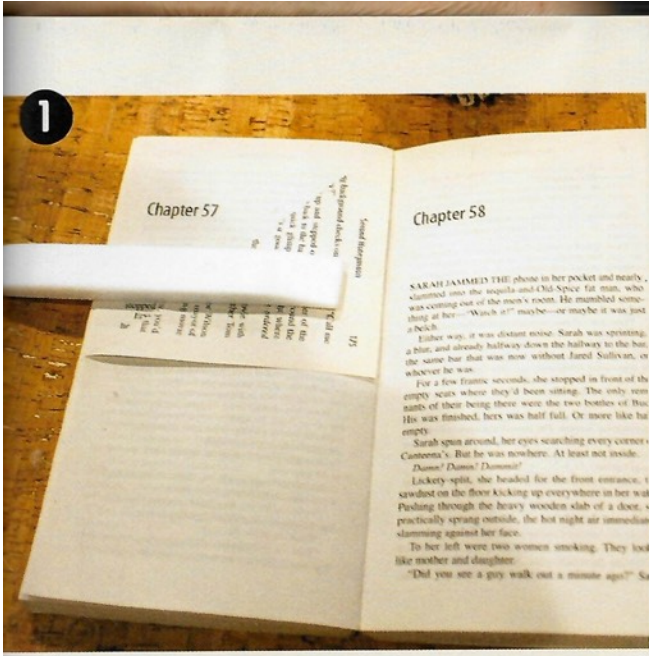
Open the book to the approximate middle and crack its spine by folding it backward. Fold the upper corner of one side to the spine. Now, fold the bottom corner to the spine, and continue with each page until you complete one side of the book; then work on the other. Once complete, you will have a diamond shape.

Find the middle again and look at the folds. There is a flat side and a folded side. Always work with the folded side by taking the point of the diamond and folding it to the center spine. Then, take the next page and fold it in the opposite direction. This design is what I call the football shape.

Feel free to experiment with the folds. Instead of folding in opposite directions, you can fold in one direction for a very different look, which can be a tree shape or the bottom of a skirt for making a lady. Best of all, play and have fun making and creating!

- 1 First fold
- 2 Second fold
- 3 Continuous folds
- 4 Diamond football folds







My most exciting but also frightening experience was being selected for the 2023 Burning Man Art Honoraria, an international art event on the Black Rock Desert that lasted about a month. My 20-foot-by-12-foot art design was one of 75 selected from over 1,000 applicants and contained more than 650 folded books in various shapes and sizes, painted in multiple colors, strung on jute ropes supported by 10-foot uprights. Colored solar lights adorned the sculpture. It was really a fantastic design and something that I will never forget!

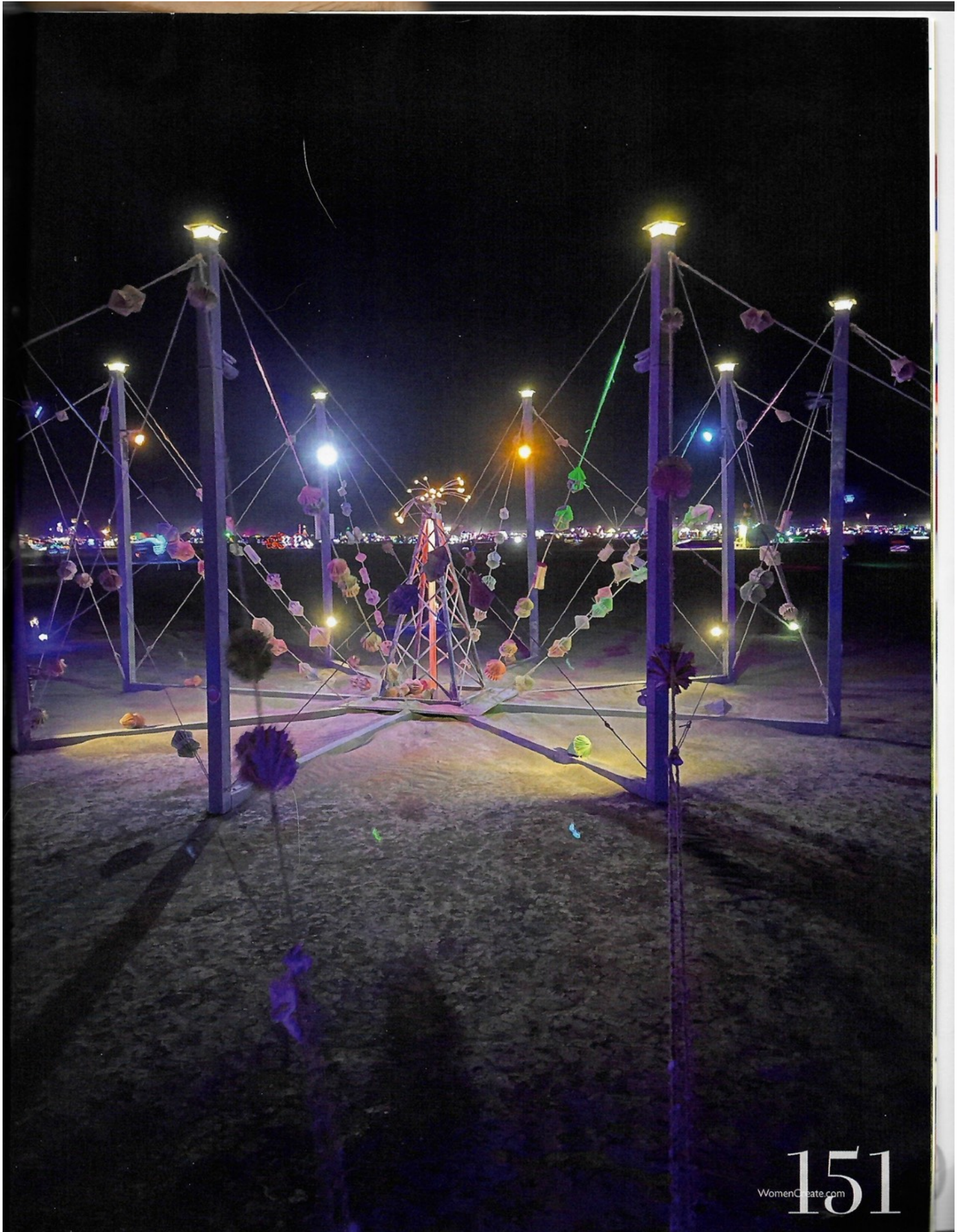
My hopes for the future are simple: to continue designing, creating and teaching my art to everyone I meet — paying it forward to share the love of taking something that is nothing and making it something!

■ Deborah

www.mythousandwords.com

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