



ARTISTS' BOOKS: Visual Studies Workshop Press 1971–2008



Karen Wirth. *Spatial Geometries*
 Visual Studies Workshop, 1991
 5 x 5 in. 24 pages, offset in 4 colors
 800 copies, diecut accordion with self-cover
 artist in residence project

Appropriately, the colors of the book are black and blue, with gold and silver used predominantly in the reverse fold photographic images of the moon and rockets. The pictorial space of the pages combines diagrams of the movement of planets with atmospheric gradations of color. Sources include NASA photos, and *Newsweek* and *Time* magazines.

The project stems from a Mayan myth about the creation of day and night—the Sun gouged out the eye of the Moon because she was too bright. The book interconnects metaphors of gender balance and imbalance: images and veiled sexual language of space exploration (“First probe to impact on moon, first successful soft landing”) with astronomical phenomena related to planetary balance such as the equinox and solar eclipse.

The project began with the bare bones of the story. As this was my first offset book, the learning curve was high. Everything was developed during the residency—from doing research at the Rochester Public Library, to working with Joan Lyons to learn the camera work and film corrections and with Stewart Cauley on the press. Joan worked with me to develop the layouts for the sheet and press sizes and to set up the plan for the die cutter. The work was done completely with paste-up mechanicals, not Photoshop or page layout programs.

Coincidentally, during the residency period the studio radio was tuned in daily to the Clarence Thomas Supreme Court nomination hearings, with Anita Hill’s testimony. As this was a topical version of the same story, quotes from newspaper reportage float through the background: “explosive exchange of charge and discharge, one was lying one was telling the truth.”

There was also a memorable driving trip with Joan and a flat tire, and an evening with Stewart and David Thorne to see the late great Sun Ra and the Arkestra perform.

—Karen Wirth

