

Layers Upon Layers: Mixed Media Art

Book artist: Tamar Stone

by Cyndi on March 4th, 2009



Artist: Tamar Stone

Website: [Art of Tamar Stone](#)

My artist books that tell the stories of women's lives that have been constricted by their various situations throughout history. As an artist bookmaker, the stories unfold in a non-traditional way via pages that are pieces of corsets, or layers of a bed. However, I consider these non-traditional forms of the book, still a book that tells a story in a narrative way with the viewer having the opportunity interact with the pages of the books, a hands-on tactile experience with the embroidered words and printed images on vintage materials.

The definition of a book has a wide interpretation and I believe this has to do with the layers of pages in which any narrative unfolds as well as being connected by a traditional spine - with the corset books, the spine in this case is something built into what is instrumental about corseting.

Although not popular in these days of "immediate gratification," my work requires the viewer to slow down and undo the book; untying the "book" via the corset laces or folding back the bedcovers, and reading the text. This is part of the contemplation and therapy of the process, echoing what women have been experiencing for a century of dressing and in the case of the beds - housekeeping.



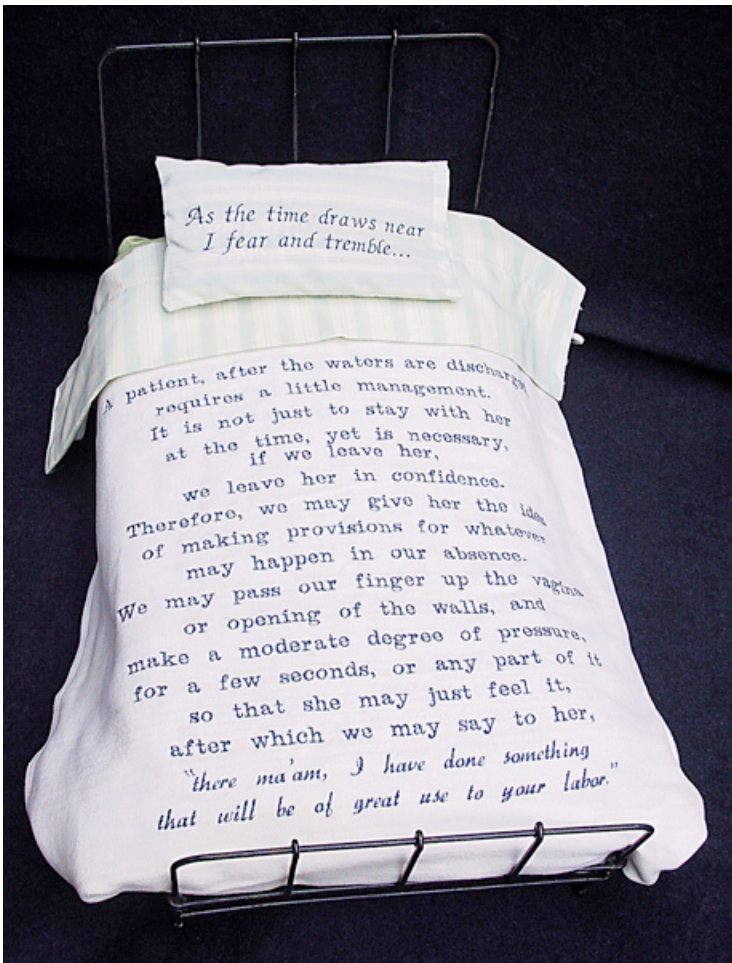
General Corset Books background:

Inspired by my own experiences, my books capture moments in women's lives when issues of appearance, self esteem and assimilation become paramount due to physical restrictions placed on the body, either by fashion or by medical necessity.

My interest in women's body/image has come about because during the 1970's, for 6 years, from the ages of 13-18, I wore a brace 23 hours a day to correct my spinal curvature (Scoliosis). In 1984 I again found myself in a corset/brace for a herniated disk made by the same man who made my earlier brace and who made the buckle straps for my 2nd paper book, "to exert...as oneself". Through all of this, I developed sensitivity to "correction" and the need to fit in. In my early paper books I talked about feelings of isolation and body issues. I used sheer materials (vellum and acetate), with repeating text and pictures, layering and stripping away at words and images. Visual and literal puns emerge, involving structure, apparent and concealed.

The corset books evolved because I wanted to continue to use overlapping text, but I wanted the text to be more tactile, using antique corsets to tell the stories of women being confined and defined by their supporting clothing. By using embroidery, I feel the text is literally coming out from the textile – so that the fabric is telling the story. The stories that are stitched into these vintage textiles incorporate text from the behavioral manuals of various historical periods, which describe prescriptions of public and private deportment, as well as personal narratives of modern women who have lived with these physical constraints. These same texts and relationships inform my corset books as I create a resonance with the rules and perceptions, which have been confining and defining women's postures.

These corset books are a continuation of my expressions and pay homage to understructures, which have voluntarily or involuntarily supported and corrected women throughout history.



General Bed Books background:

The more I read about women's lives being constricted by their clothes and social mores, combined with the fact that I have an interest in the history of housework, the more I became interested in what was happening to women in their homes and how at times they had become prisoners within their own "upholstered cages" (a description used for many homes).

Because women have always been associated with the home, hearth and all the domestic duties that belong to them, this bed project is about memories and moments that are attached to specific objects within our homes—specifically beds.

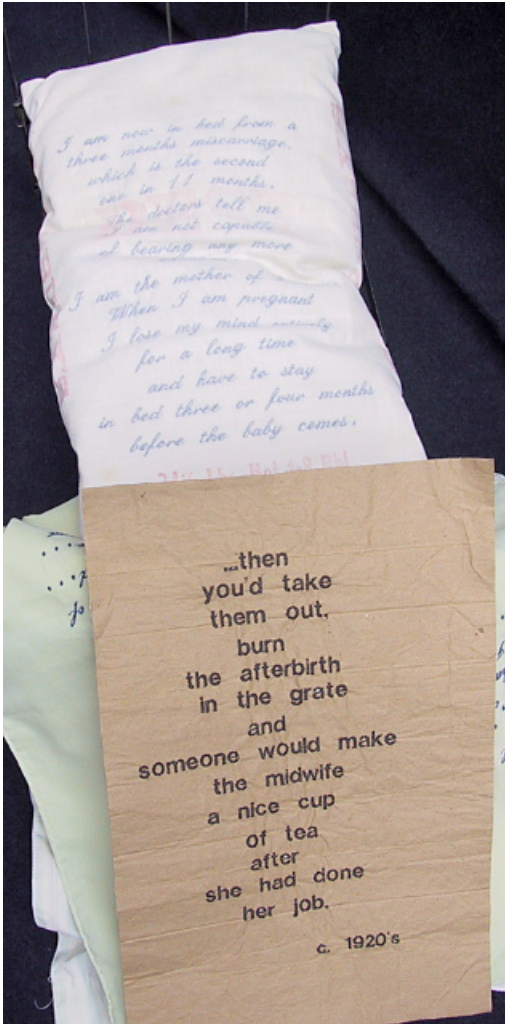
Historically our life cycle begins and ends in the bed from being born in a bed, and then dying in one. It used to be that many of our life cycle events (birth, sickness, death) occurred at home in our beds.. In the second half of the

20th century so much of our lives have been taken out of the home and moved to places where we become handled by specialists i.e. the hospital bed or any other specialized institution – away from the family, where we are now managed by professionals.

As children we used the bed as an impromptu trampoline or tent and as we got older, it became the place in which intimacies are shared with significant others.

I realize that these things have been shared by both men and women but since women tend to be the primary housekeeper of the home (long considered the center of family life), this project focuses on girls and women, and their thoughts told in stories centered around their beds.

It is because of these domestic associations that in order to read these intimate stories the reader must unmake each bed, pulling back the covers to turn the “pages.” In order to close the book, one must re-make the bed, mimicking the actions of women’s housework that have been done for centuries. In order to create a more intimate experience, these stories are told with the use of vintage doll beds and salesman sample beds.



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4 opinions for *Book artist: Tamar Stone*

- **Elizabeth**

Mar 4, 2009 at 11:31 am

So incredibly unique and thoughtful! Wow!

- **Shirley**

Mar 4, 2009 at 11:04 pm

Reading this overview and visiting Tamar Stone's website has been a powerful and interesting experience. I am just old enough to have worn a girdle rather than a corset but the same 'stories' applied. I am also interested in 'social' history so this has been a treat and a challenge for me. Thank you Tamar for putting the thought provoking and artistic presentation out there for readers/viewers and thank you Cyndi for the unforgettable opportunity to share Tamar's work.

Shirley

PS While I was out this morning all I heard on the radio was...the word Tamar. Living in the Tamar Valley ..Tamar Yoghurt (being shipped from Tasmania to India) ... Tamar wine...Tamar cheese etc

- **Kara aka Mother Henna**

Mar 5, 2009 at 3:51 am

Beautiful! Thanks, Tamar, for sharing your work with us! I love seeing the actual bra or girdle used in the social/art discussions/stories! Emily Duffy's Bra Ball is an interesting piece, too:

<http://www.braball.com>

miracles!

k-

- **SusanPI**

Mar 5, 2009 at 5:53 pm

Tamar Your work is beautiful. I love it. The many emotions that we all deal with at times are hard to express. Your work reaches deep into the soul.

TY for sharing

Susan

Have an opinion? Leave a comment: