

# NATIONAL POST

The pop-up makes a comeback

National Post

Saturday, January 15, 2005

Page: SP5

Section: Saturday Post

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Source: Saturday Post

Pop-ups -- those clever paper sculptures we associate with children's books -- have been making forays into the art-magazine establishment of late.

Tod Lippy of Esopus and Sina Najafi of Cabinet have both published examples of paper sculpture -- beautiful hybrids of origami and engineering. A medium that previously limited itself to glossy paper, the occasional poster, gate-fold pull-out and a great many objectionable scent strips, the pop-up has suddenly reinvented itself on art's cutting edge.

The second issue of New York-based Esopus, a biannual magazine that started up last year, contains a pop-up sculpture by William Christenberry, an artist better known for haunting barren photographs of his native Alabama. True to form, the work that appears in Esopus consists of a ghostly white house that stands alone atop its two-page base. And, of course, when the magazine is closed, the house has to collapse in precisely the right way -- which required consultation with paper engineers skilled in the intricacies of such projects.

Mass-producing such a creation is prohibitively expensive for any small culture magazine, so Lippy, Esopus's editor (and sole employee), took the project to Winnipeg-based Westcan Printing, a firm with a reputation for taking on quirky projects, such as Drawn & Quarterly and Dave Eggers's The Believer.

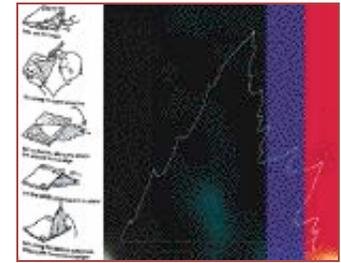
Westcan's Chris Young proposed an innovative alternative to the costly process of having the pieces machine made. "They ended up being made by the Hutterites," says Lippy. "But it was Lent, and we had to meet a deadline, so people at the plant made some ... I made some. It was truly a community effort."

Indeed, Lippy's mother-in-law made 600 of them, while the Manitoba Hutterite community (descendants of German Mennonites) made 4,000 inserts. Thus did the pop-up artwork take on aspects of traditional handicraft.

## IMAGES



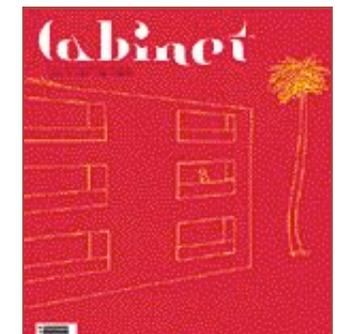
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Ester Partegas, Things You Don't Like, cabinet (FPinfomart: Restricted, Canada.com: Restricted)



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Lugo Vargas, Cabinet (FPinfomart: Restricted, Canada.com: Restricted)



Uncredited image  
William Christenberry, Esopus (FPinfomart: Restricted, Canada.com: Restricted)



For Lippy, one of the most gratifying aspects of the pop-up feature is that it means the magazine will be a keeper: "As a magazine project it's sort of by definition temporary art. People say it's the one magazine we don't throw out, which frankly I'm relieved to hear," says Lippy.

Cabinet, a quarterly publication, recently took the idea of paper sculpture even further. In its fourth issue, the Brooklyn-based arts and ideas magazine commissioned five artists to make paper sculptures. "One artist did a flame on the page, and by cutting it a certain way, cutting it almost out and folding it back, it looked like the flame was spilling out of the magazine," says editor Sina Najafi. Another project involved a cutout coffee cup that came with "six different shades of brown paper, based on how much milk you put in there," she says.

The idea was so well received the magazine decided to create a touring paper-sculpture show and accompanying book. Cabinet invited 29 artists to create three-dimensional sculptures for the book that the reader could fashion by doing the folding. The companion show is touring galleries in the United States for a year (Regina has been its only Canadian stop). Each of the DIY sculptures is accompanied by a colour-coded scale indicating degree of difficulty and time commitment. "People took very seriously the question of craft that comes into paper sculpture. Some are very difficult to make and some are very simple," says Najafi.

And so the paper sculpture pop-up evolves from mere magazine bonus to distinctive piece of build-it-yourself art.

"But I'm nervous about being gimmicky," says Lippy. "The idea is not to make it eye catching but to have some substantial relationship to the artist itself." His comment is prompted by another issue of Esopus, in which conceptual artist Jenny Holzer's artwork involves classified documents and disappearing inks. "The ink is almost completely invisible to the eye, but when you take it out into the sun, it darkens."

This is not the first time high-end arts publications have sought to introduce creative surprises within their pages. It began in the 1950s with Flair, a short-lived but influential publication that featured fold-outs, die-cuts and unevenly cut pages, often adorned with art by the likes of Saul Steinberg, Jean Cocteau and Salvador Dali.

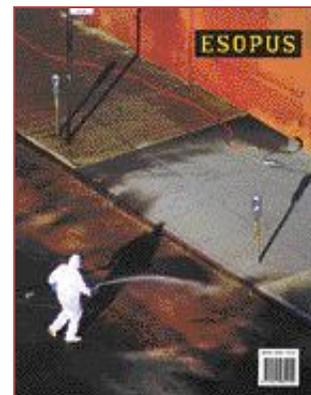
The magazine was the baby of Fleur Cowles, a free-thinking woman who was married to Gardner Cowles, the wealthy publisher of Look. The first two issues of Flair included pullout art and postcards.

Tod Lippy also cites Alexey Brodovitch, creator of the beautiful art magazine Portfolio, as an influence. Like Flair, Portfolio experimented with layout and tactility in a way that elevated it from disposable ephemera to keepable art.

Najafi says magazines -- particularly ones that emerge from the arts and culture establishment -- don't create conceptual-art projects to the extent they did in the 1970s, the movement's heyday. "When you have conceptual art there's no need for it to be in the gallery anymore. In the '70s, even magazines like Artforum had these crazy projects in them."



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So the pop-up, the paper sculpture and even the sound art CDs that Cabinet includes on alternate months are representative of a new exploration of magazines as mass-produced art space.

And the pop-up, the most accessible and least conventional of these projects, is a great way to get people thinking about art. "I think the original idea was to create this unmediated space for artists, and [offer] access to people who aren't just art fans or collectors," says Lippy. "I wanted to reach a wide range of people whose lives could be enriched by art."

But he and Najafi are newcomers to the pop-up world, at least compared to Joan Irvine, an Owen Sound teacher and unofficial "pop-up lady," who at countless workshops over the years has taught pop-up art to thousands of children and educators in Ontario. Next fall, Dover Press will reissue her book, *How to Make Pop-Ups*, which was first published in 1987. "You don't know what's going to happen with pop-ups," says Irvine. "There's a magic about them, the way they come out at you."

Her words remind us that there's really nothing new about the appeal of pop-ups. They have always been used to engage open minds in creative thinking and reading. It's just that now the audience is somewhat older.

And if we start seeing pop-ups of Nick and Jessica in the pages of *US Weekly* or entreaties to build-your-own abstract paper art in the folds of *Vanity Fair*, we'll know who to thank: a few innovative magazine editors. And of course the bonneted Hutterites of greater Winnipeg.

Illustration:

- Color Photo: Ester Partegas, *Things You Don't Like*, cabinet
- Color Photo: Lugo Vargas, *Cabinet*
- Color Photo: William Christenberry, *Esopus*
- Color Photo: (Cabinet)
- Color Photo: (Esopus)

Idnumber: 200501150030

Edition: National

Story Type: News

Length: 1076 words

Illustration Type: CP

**PRODUCTION FIELDS**

BASNUM: 4297149

NDATE: 20050115

NUPDATE: 20050115

DOB: 20050115

POSITION: 1

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