



'Carnet de Voyage'

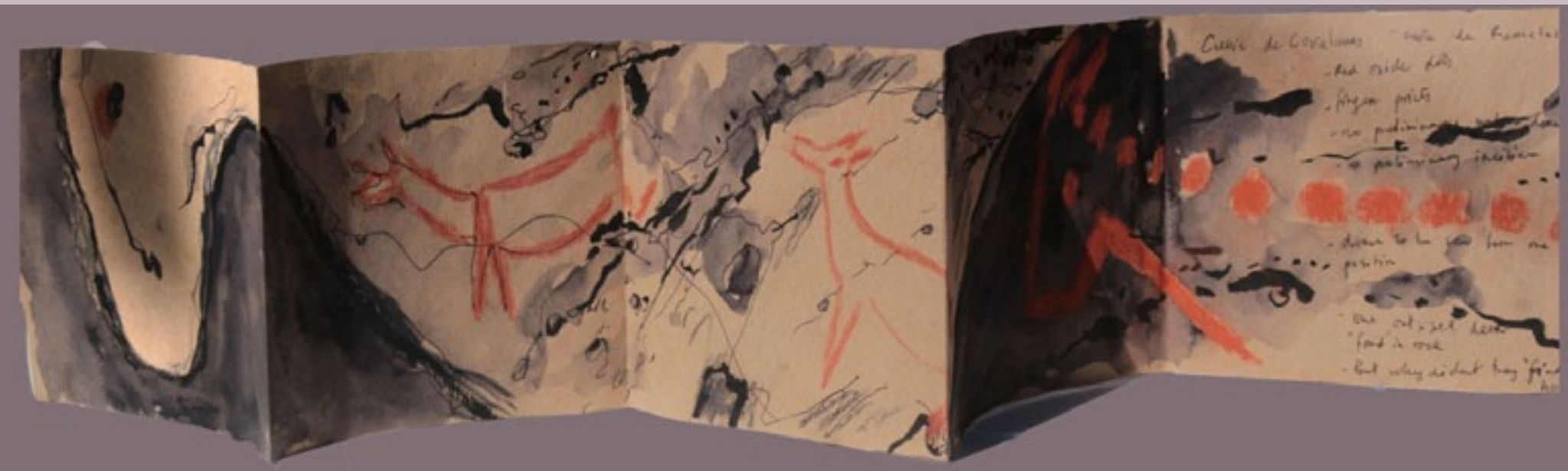
An Artist's Voyage of Discovery

by

Adam Cope



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‘Carnet de Voyage’

Carnet de Voyage = The Book of Travels

The name is a pun in the french language, ‘carnet’ has two meanings. A type of book but also, you buy a carnet of tickets, say for Paris Metro, which allows you the freedom to travel cheaply. *Quel bonheur!* Carnet de Voyage corresponds to the tradition of illustrated travel journals or ‘my travels with watercolour’ or the ‘holiday sketch book.’

ARTISTS’ CARNETS DES VOYAGES



Eugène Delacroix, Album d'Afrique du Nord et d'Espagne, folio 17 v et folio 18 r, 1832. Aquarelle, mine de plomb, 19,3 x 12,7 cm. Paris musée du Louvre

Famous historic French examples of Artist's carnets de voyages are **Delacroix's Moroccan sketchbooks** in The Louvre (1832. watercolour, pencil & much written annotations, often with arrows pointing out observations)

Victor Hugo's letters from his voyage along the Rhine (1848-50. pen & ink drawings inserted as indents into paragraphs of literary text written in elegant nineteenth century calligraphy).



SCIENTIFIC & ARCHEOLOGICAL CARNETS DE VOYAGE



It's not just artists who travel & explore with a sketchbook. Scientific voyages of exploration have greatly expanded our knowledge of the world, such the archaeological carnets from Dennon's 'Report d'Egypte' or the botanical illustrations of [Sydney Parkinson](#), the artist who accompanied Banks & Cook to Botany Bay in 1768.

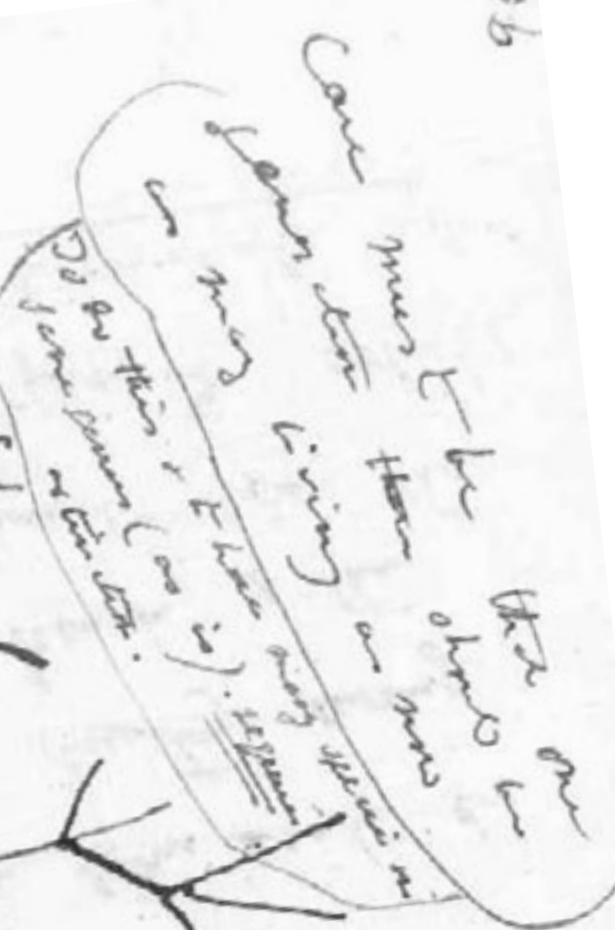
[Banksia Serrata](#)

Sometimes carnets are amongst the few rare remains of a lost world.

[John White](#) (c. 1540 – c. 1593) was an English artist and early pioneer of English efforts to settle North America. He was among those who sailed with Richard Grenville to the shore of present-day North Carolina in 1585, acting



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Some artists keep a ‘carnet d’atelier’ – a studio notebook – as part of their creative process. Sources, influences & tangential thoughts are the visual territory explored.

Ligne de Paysage 2009

→ STIBNITE IN A ROCKY
PACIFIC PROVINCE 1513
 OIL ON GRK. 362 x 24, 3

→ VOIR
LA CORRECTION
DE LA
"DÉCAPAGE"
DOMAINE

→ ST JUDITH IN A ROCKY LANDSCAPE,
JACOB JORDAN 1515.
Oil on oak, 36,2 x 24,3 cm.
NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON.

MODULATION / PARCOURS EN SOUFFLE VITAL.
EAU - TERRE - AIR en CIRCULATION en
FLUCTUATION, en ONDOIEMENT, en FLOTTÉMENT,
en TURBULENCE - VA-ET-VIENT...

- LIGNE
MODELÉE EN RELIEF
par le haut et l'
énergie qu'il pro-
duit.

FORMES MISES PAR
-FON ACTION DES FACT
CHARGES D'AGRESSIFS
POLYMERASE
MORPHO CLIMATIQUES

↳ CLIFFORD STILL.
1957-D, N^o. 1, 1957.
OT on canvas. (287 x 403, 9 cm)

vent et calibre des particules
par l'air changeant la STRUCTURE GÉOLOGIQUE.

REFLET FUGITIF D'UNE PIÈTE STRUCTURE...

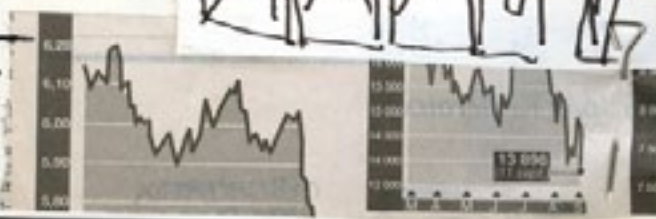
- Tectonique positive ANTÉCLISE / Bombement.
- Tectonique négative SYNCLISE / Affaissement.
- Oscillation de FAIBLE ou FORTE AMPLITUDE.

Proiectă creier un jant

TRAVERSE UN
ESPACE CLOS
pour installation
et interpréter au
niveau la
"LIGNE D'UNIVERS"

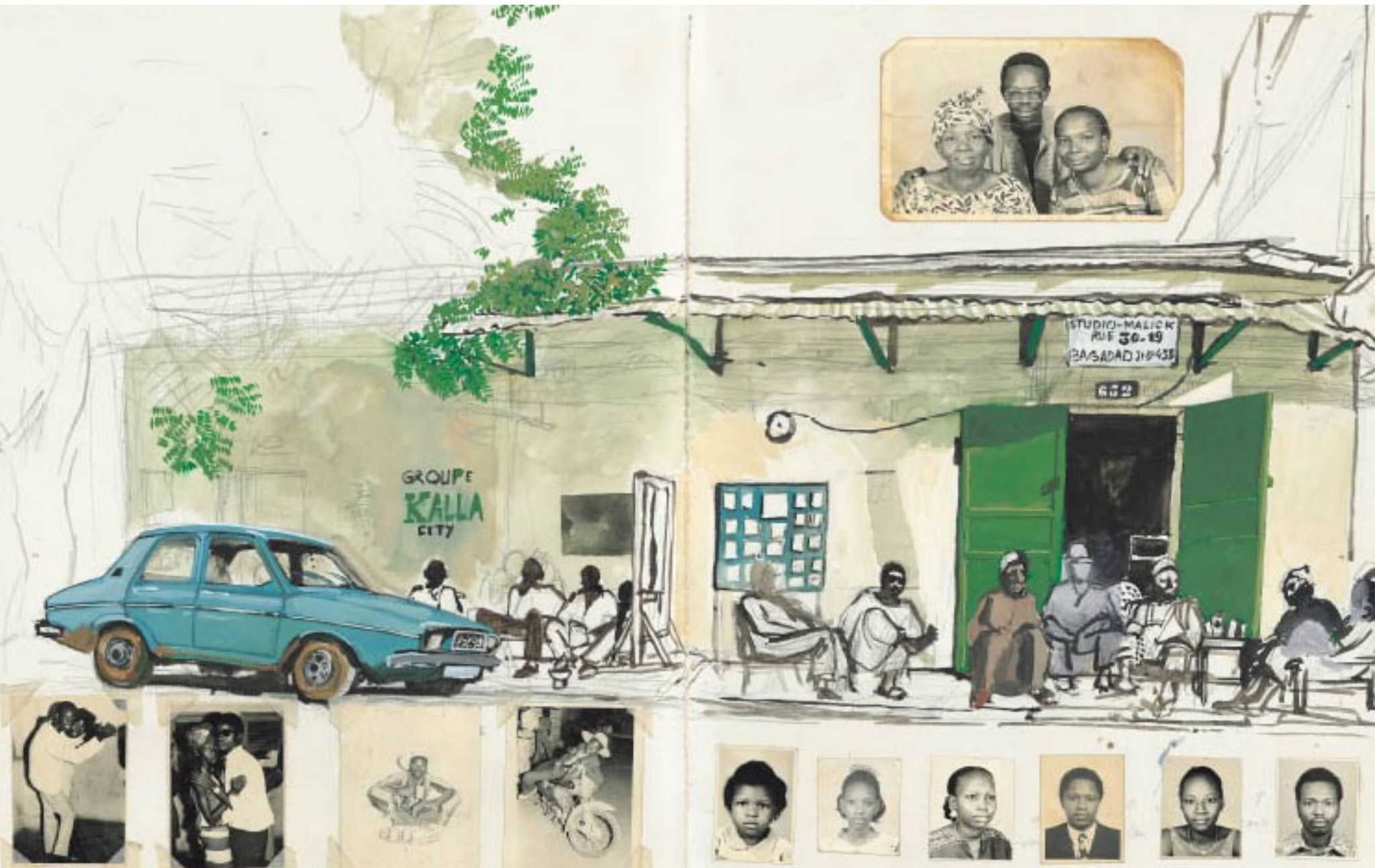
LA CROIX

FORTE
BRITISH
PLACES
REMARKS

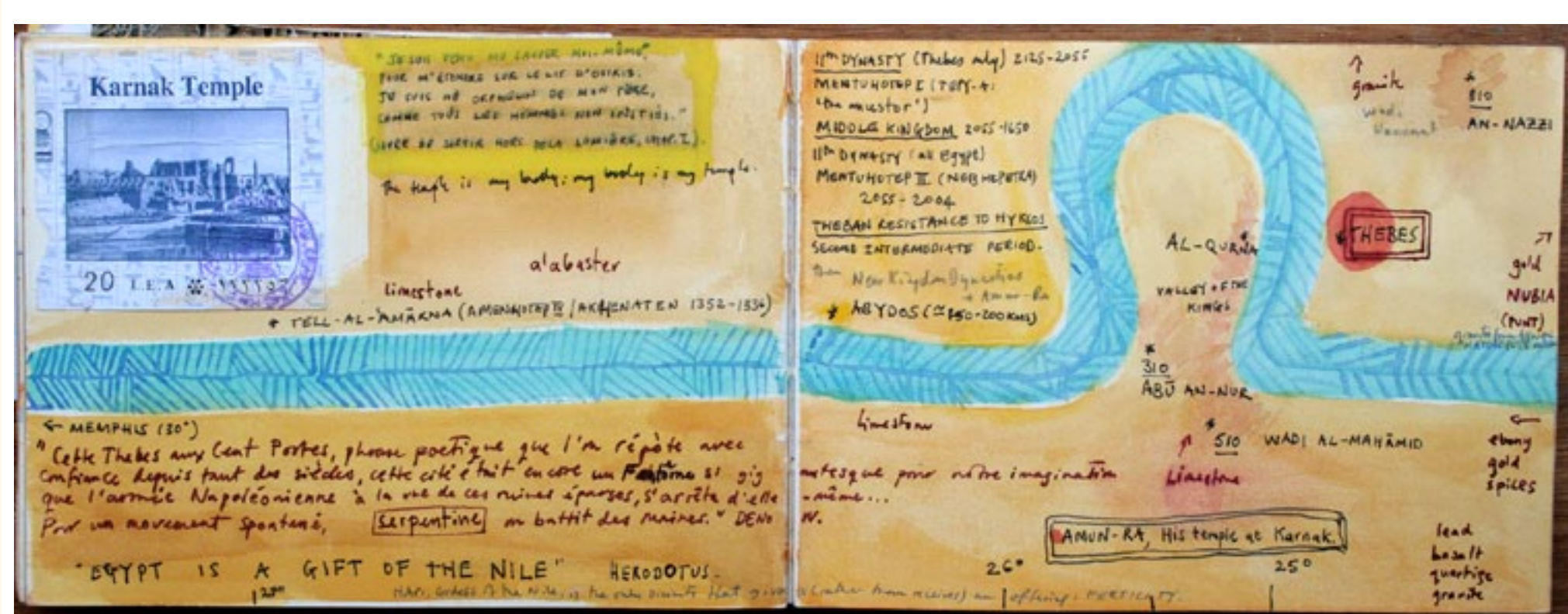


MODERN TRAVEL SKETCHBOOKS

A recent example is the the artist-traveller-adventurer is [Titouan Lamazou](#).(gouache, collage,text).



‘Carnet de Voyage en Egypt’ by Adam Cope
2001 (watercolour, ink & photos. Text. Web. Collage. Scrap)



‘Carnet de Voyage en Egypt’ by Adam Cope 2001 (watercolour, ink & photos. Text. Web. Collage. Scrap)



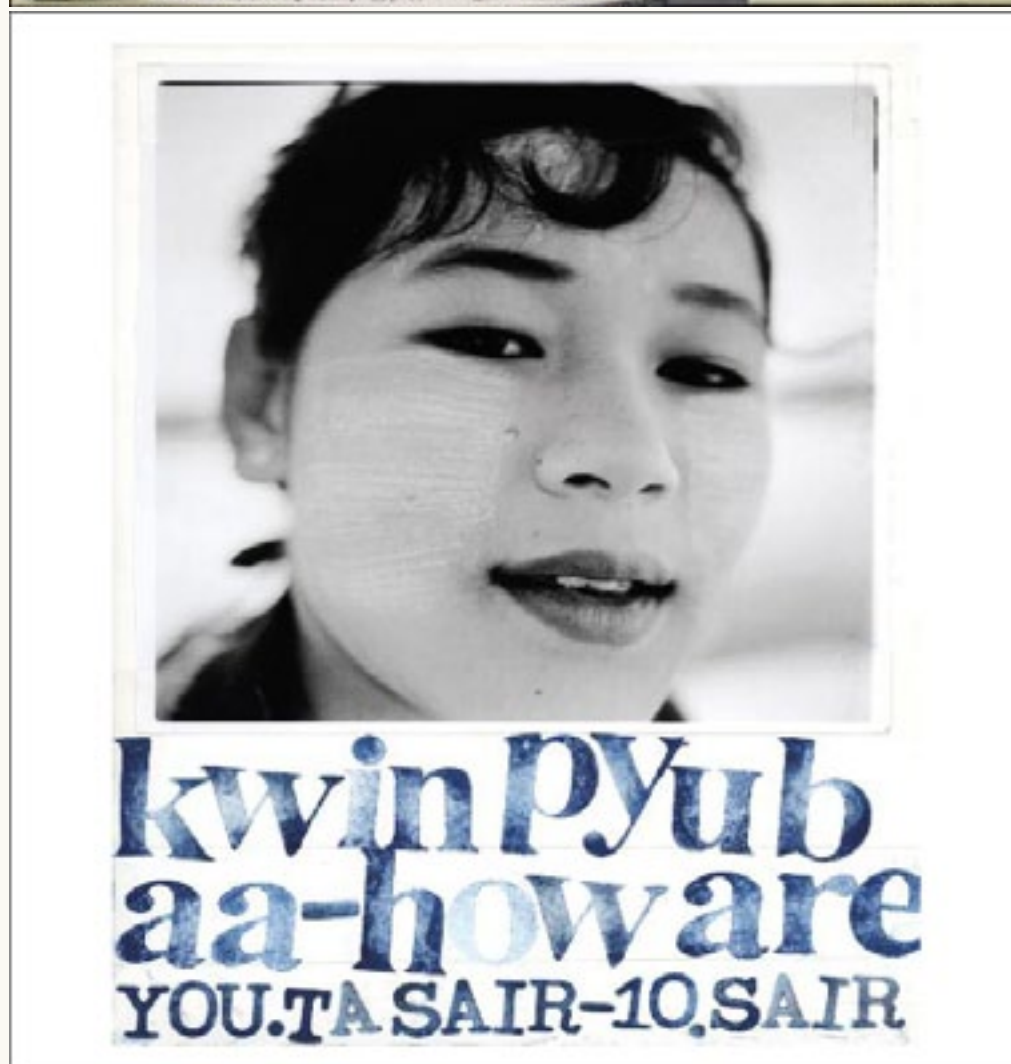
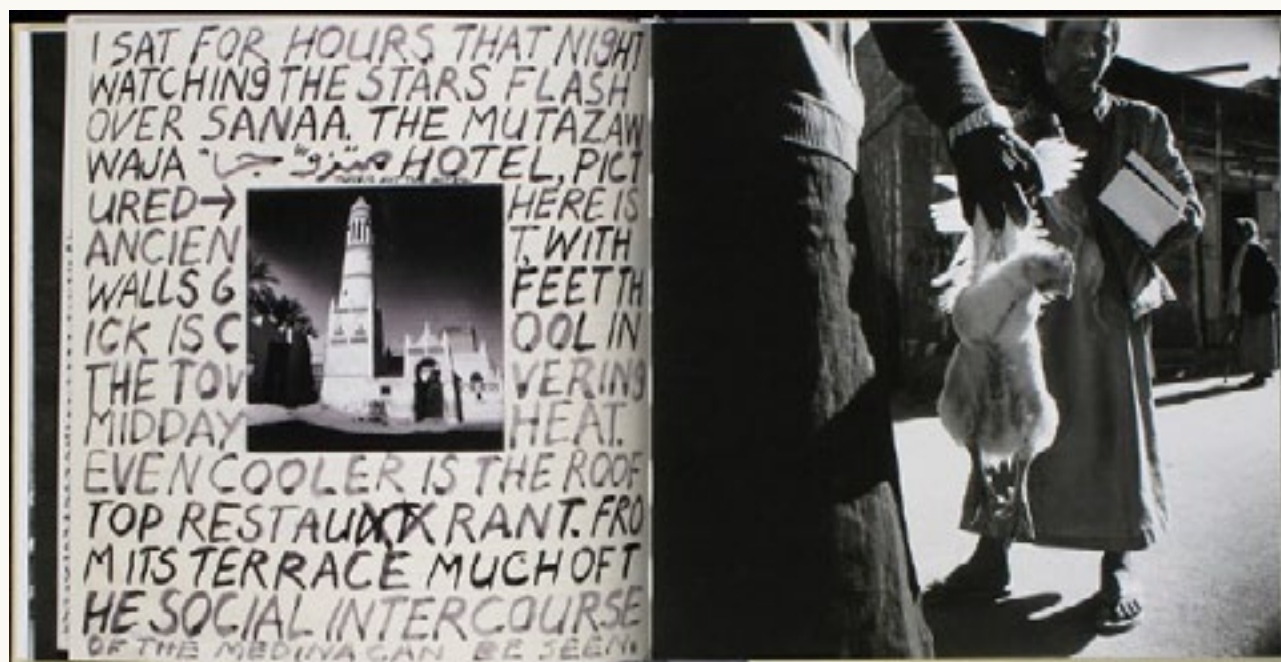
The dominant element to most artist's carnets is an exotic or oriental theme :
Go East! Go West! Go South! Go North!
Africa! The Middle East! The Orient!
Miraculous encounters, mirages & alladin's lamps. The stuff of heroic explorers.

IMAGE plus COMMENTARY

When students show me their sketchbooks, they frequently give a verbal commentary of the places & the people depicted within, often animated with a funny anecdote or quirky observation. I enjoy these commentaries as much as the visual artwork. But often the artwork doesn't even have a written note to indicate the place, let alone all the 'histoires.' What is so taboo about mixing text & image? OK not everybody is a great travel writer. You don't have to be a Paul Theroux, a Laurie Lee or a Robert Byron. Even a Marco Polo... It's easier to stitch a short note to an image than to write a whole page of flowing literary text. It's your voyage & these are your memories. It's your sketchbook & here you have the space & creative freedom to express yourself as fully as possible. When it comes to mixing text & image, the 'carnet de voyage' has a fine & illustrious tradition. However, it has to be said that beautiful handwritten calligraphy is much more appealing to the eye than illegible scrawl.

Travel log... Itineraries...record of places visited & first impressions ... *"Let me bore you with my slides"*... souvenir in french not only means a memento bought home from foreign places but also the verb 'to remember'. A good carnet de voyage will be brimming with memories of far away places. After all, who doesn't know about those ubiquitous shoe boxes full of holiday snaps, tickets, pamphlets & other memorabilia of past holidays mouldering away in the attic? Even textures, say of an exotic leaf. Why not bring the best of them together using the scrap book aesthetic of sticking, gluing, stapling & collaging together diverse elements? This way the book becomes an exotic object in itself.

MaxPam – creative use of photography & story telling :



SCRAP BOOK

High society fashion photographer & carnetist-extraordinaire, **Peter Beard** was devoured by the lyric african crocodile. The description on the front of his **'Beyond the End of the World'** is an eloquent inventory of wondrous techniques: "Photographs, dairies, notes, sketches, and collages; phantasmagoria, metamorphoses, natural horrors, & prehistoric memories: Last voices of a lost Africa". (Universe Publishers).

Note the snake skin!



It's this diversity that is the spice of Carnets. Maybe on a single page, you will see a portrait of a local tribesman, next to an entry ticket to a temple, with notes as to all time record fishing catches, with a little pen & ink of a boat. A patchwork. A collage. All of which can lead to exciting but improvised page lay-out. If Laurtemont's definition of surreal beauty was the chance encounter of an umbrella & a giraffe, then this element of surprise is fulfilled in the nomad asethic of the carnet de voyage.



Open up to the World

Artists go to new places in search of new subject matter. Sometimes it's not practical to try and make completed, finished paintings on the spot. You haven't the time, the next departure already calls, your equipment is heavy, there's too much road traffic, etc... It takes a lot of concentrated effort to zoom in on one subject & make a completed painting from it. This demands that you exclude the distractions of other possible, competing subjects. But sometimes the pleasures of travelling are exactly the opposite and consist of being open to all these other possible subjects. This requires a more global and open-ended type of concentration. This shift in the quality of awareness can lead to artists changing their habitual subject matter. In [Turner's Venetian sketch pads](#), we not only see wonderful thumbnails of architectural views meticulously drawn in pencil (for later use in the studio) :



But also colour notes and jotting down of possible new compositions :



Also paintings of his hotel bedroom, quick calculations of his spending, addresses of potential future patrons as well as... some intimate sexy sketches of erotic escapades. Turner never made important finished paintings for public exhibition of interiors or erotic scenes, yet whilst on holiday we can see hints of fresh & exciting new possible subject matter. He had them made up into popular prints, the pre-runners of post cards, which sold widely & fuelled the growing new business called 'tourism'.



So what is the difference between a carnet de voyage & a sketchbook?

There's a subtle difference between a carnet de voyage and a sketchbook. Mostly this difference centres around the fact that a carnet de voyage is made whilst travelling & not in the comfort of the studio. A really fine carnet de voyage is a lyrical passport that will lead you through it's pages on a journey of discovery that parallels that of the artist-voyager himself. It will have something of the freshness of plein-air painting, which is done in front of the subject, outside in the fresh air & is concerned with impressions, immediacy & responses rather than complex lofty mediations from a remote ivory tower. Drawing, sketching on the hoof, whilst passing through, a whistle stop in a place, maybe only for an hour or so, the act of sketching can become a way of fixing one's impressions, more a kind of an encounter than the creation of 'art'. . More like a hunter than a theoretician.

A sketchbook is often a collection of reference material with, maybe, the odd finished piece (which is often torn out). A sketch book is not the same as a collectors '*carnet de dessins*' which would have only exquisite examples of faultless drawing (so don't be afraid to make mistakes & take risks!) . Both the Carnet de Voyage & the sketchbook are frequently not concerned with being nether polished nor finished like a gallery painting in a picture frame.

Carnets are made whilst travelling, often tweaked or finished off in the hotel room at night. Or then laid-out afterwards, using computer-aided page layout programmes such as photoshop or quark express. But this type evolves away from the authentic handmade page into the computerised text/image. There is a risk of losing something of the spontaneity & freshness that reflects the immediacy of travel.

They are often finished off at a later date with artistry in perfecting the presentation. Maybe you just didn't have enough time to include some vital flavour...The risk of this adding at a later date, as with any work of art, is that you risk overwriting & thus weakening the essential of the work that was laid down in the creative act. A painter friend of mine, a wonderful abstract expressionist all splashy& spontaneous, says ' never but never paint afterwards...as the integrity of the moment has flown away. "***Leave your strokes alone***" said the artist & teacher Ted Smuskiewicz



Yvonn
le Corre

“... In your opinion, what is it that makes a carnet de voyage authentic?”

“As an author, I can recognise in a few seconds the difference between a work that is , even before the departure of its authors, prefabricated in the comfort of a publisher’s studio & a work of which the author has taken risks along the route and the time to reflect upon & concieve the work. Personally, I never leave for voyaging, saying to myself that I’m going to make such or such a work. It’s upon return that the project takes shape.”

Yvonn le Corre

So why do we love to travel?

Part of the allure of travel is to broaden one's horizons & be open to new impressions.

A good holiday will give us the pleasures of discovery. It’s not just about new places but maybe there’s also a hint of how different people live differently from us (of course discovering similarities is great fun too). For artists, the question why travel is doubly important. Going to new places & seeing new things for the first time refresh how we look at things. We see with a curiosity that is sometimes becomes tarnished with familiarity. It's this thrill of discovery whilst travelling that a carnet de voyage seeks to capture.

“ A voyage – it is not the kilometers traversed nor the hundreds of photos, nor even the drawings; it’s the part of a life, a return journey from self to oneself, the love-potion of new places, new people, new situations” – Yvonn le Corre

Here’s Some Tips on How to:

- Select your focal point of interest & cut out the rest.
- Pencil in quick & colour in later in hotel room.
- Simple equipment: speed of set up & simplicity of use.
- Use of sellotape & staple to paste in reference material – museum entry tickets, postcards or photos.
- Enjoy your page layout- not like a text book where you read lines from left to right & from top to bottom. But rather where you look & thus make the connections across the page.
- Text & image. The writing doesn’t have to be Shakespeare. There’s already a narrative structure as you go along your voyage, from one place to another, from one day to another. Journaling is the easiest narrative form for a carnet de voyage but it isn’t the only one!

WWW

Materials needed:

A hard bound sketch book is a good idea, so as to survive the bumps along the way. I use one made with heavy watercolour paper. I find a smooth surface allows me to flow freely with ink & calligraphy.

“The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes.” – Marcel Proust