SHADOW
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An Artists’ Book by
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Poems by
Melinda Kennedy

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This limited edition of 125 handmade books was created for and supported by the Library Fellows of the National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C. It was produced by the artist in her studio, Moseybrook Press in High Falls, N.Y. and at WSW in Rosendale, N.Y. The poems are by Melinda Kennedy and the other text was collaboratively written. The type, New York (Macintosh) and Avant Garde, was letterpress printed by the artist on a Vandercook Press. Various archival, acid free and Asian papers were used including Abaca (banana leaf) paper which was handmade by the artist. Printing processes combine etching, relief and chine colle. Production assistance was provided by Val Wells, Amy Ciullo and Suzanne Toostach. The artist thanks Ms. Kennedy for her collaborative spirit, her family for their support, the MacDowell Colony for time, and the Library Fellows who made the project possible. Special thanks to the traditional and contemporary Shadow Players of the world who inspired this effort.

noon
zenith
mists river morning journeys
transformations youth waves illusions wisdom
dreams chorus bones time whirlwinds secrets dance volcanoes
SHADOW

PLAY
Red
Her chariot a monstrance
a golden shadow
at dawn she alights
among elephants
to triumph of thunder
and a tiger's
despairing
cry

Her feet are planted in mud
her lotus
thrusts sunward
from abyss over abyss
Among rooted stems
the red carp
glide

Impervious she suckles
the deities
in a sea of milk
Snow follows
her footsteps

yet the red dawn also
must break

Lakshmi
Creation
Blue

Immobile
on cobalt seas
her swan floats

Syllables of rain
cascade
lute strings woven
of lightning

Laughter blossoms
in torrents
and falling stars

The beating of her heart
is strophe and antistrophe
antiphonal
a rainbow arching

Forever
fecundity
the lotus
Immortal

White

And over there those mountains
snow snow
snow boiling in light bedazzled

everywhere snow snow falling snow rising

up out of those mountains towards the blinding light

and in the foreground she danced she was dancing
danced on ashes
danced on the ashes of memories
danced on the gray ashes of all those begettings

and deaths ashes of mountains
danced on gray ash in the white light
rubies in her diadem flashing dazzling

but always snow light

purity whiteness

bedazzled dazzling
She was light herself
her arms made love
sinuously to the light

her bare feet jangled among ashes
and incinerated bone
She was the mountains
the whiteness
the snow

the bedazzlement

Parvati

Enlightenment

Sarasvati
Wisdom
Gold
Blazing she rides
the shadow of a tiger
over a sea of gold
hurls lightning
at galaxies at the moon
From her eyes meteors flash
Whirlwinds bear her beyond time
to the place where the eagle cries
Hers the mind's jewels
a confusion of pearls dreams sapphires comets
gold rings stars
Her laughter rages in thunder brazen
serpents coiling from her lips fall syllables of flame to sear
the darkness beneath her sandaled feet
Mirrors come alive at her passing
Hers forever the gold burning
of delight

Durga
Victory

Black
Black lava over rock
an obsidian lake
dark mirrors shadows dark negatives
In the abyss she sleeps dreams
her hair is a black tangle
roots
weeds arteries
She dreams volcanic conquests
darkness pain
In her dream she dances on an ocean of blood
tramples demons ghosts
dreams millennial upheavals famine
invisible stars
As she dances eons dissolve into shadow
Earth cracks heaves
The goddess is ready to be born

Kall
Cosmos
Green
Bow's glades forests
cool dappled shadow
the petals of vocables
falling on grass

The third eye looks inward
sees seeds forming
roots coiling hears
the trembling of drums
the hoofbeats of young elephants

Peacocks parade
by the river

The young moon is rising
reeds part as she passes
and calm pools quiver
awake

Joyous the trees
glimmer as mists
like smoke
vanish

And it is time
for Time
to begin

Sati

Renewal
Shadow Play

is an invitation to participate in the creation of your own story.

Inspired by Shadow Puppet Theater which occurs in many cultures, it reflects the forms of Indonesian Shadow Play, introduces the goddesses of Indian mythology, and presents themes which are universal throughout the world's stories. We invite you to share in these inspirations, combine the elements, journey through the book, and create Shadow Plays of your own.

How to Begin

This booklet poetically describes the cast of characters. They are, at once, female archetypes, goddesses, places, music, times of day, earth and life cycles. They are shapes and symbols, each with a characteristic color, set of attributes and movements.

Shadow Play

asks you to assume the role of the Javanese “Dalang”, the puppeteer who brings the characters to life by telling tales through movement and verse. With lists, story starters and poems we suggest story types: creation myths, wisdom tales, stories of tricksters, tales of good vs. evil, myths of cosmic destruction and renewal.

Though our impressions spring from Asian sources, we encourage you to take these puppets where you want, on the pathways of your own imagining.

As in the Wayang Kulit, or Javanese Shadow Play, you may set the puppets in motion in front of or behind the enclosed book/stage. Shine a light behind the puppets to project their shadows through the book or move them in front of and through the pages as actors on a layered stage.

To release the puppets, unfold the wave shaped flaps of the folio and gently lift them from their places.......

Red
earth
birth
dawn
goddess
unfold
elephant
crown
omens
avenues
ascend
anthem
stirrings
thresholds

She rises from the milky sea on a lotus blossom.
The world is created.

The puppets await to do your bidding as you enact your own creation myth.
Blue
water
youth
morning
lotus
flow
swan
spiral
knowledge
rivers
transform
gong
wisdom
mists

White
mountain
woman
noon
oracle
soar
eagle
ladder
transcendence
snow
conquer
zither
desire
zenith

She falls from the heavens, her hair becoming rivers which impart knowledge.

The wisdom tale stretches forward to the place where adventure beckons. Discover where the puppets lead you.

She is transformed from ashes to light, scatters her enemies and shelters her family on the mountaintop.

Ascend to the pinnacles where wisdom reigns and the secrets are revealed.
Gold
sky
warrior
sunset
heroine
radiate
tiger
lightning
riddles
cave
struggle
flutesong
victory
flames

She vanquishes the demon who transforms himself to beguile her.

Black
cosmos
death
midnight
shadow
collide
peacock
star
mystery
chasm
sleep
nocturne
resurrection
dream

In dreams of destruction and renewals she dreams the universe into being.

Your puppet is a Trickster who triumphs over evil. She has earned the right to be called a heroine.

Your puppets discover the cosmos and observe galaxies in formation. The moon and stars swim into view.
How to operate the puppets

Green
forest
rebirth
day
Kayon
renew
fish
arch
promise
orchard
dance
bells
journey
time

She is the tree of life.
She is Time and
marks Time.

Your "Kayon" is introduction and conclusion.
Your puppets have completed the cycle
only to begin again.

Red
Hold the vertical rod and move it upward and sideways through
the landscape. Have it ascend from the sea. Squeeze the
diagonal rod to move the arching "arm". Depending on the story
you tell it may be a blooming flower, a crown, a figure emerging
from clay, showered by elephants, a mound, a planet..............

Blue
Hold the vertical rod with one hand while rotating the other from
the center. The character will transform in a circular motion, from
river, to swan, to moon, to warrior, to reflection. Move it up and
through the landscape, in front of or behind the book. Depending
on your tale, it may be water, creature, goddess, morning..........

While
This puppet may be used upright or sideways, face forward or
twirling. It is mountain, shelter, goddess in flight, winged creature,
the moon. It may be moving or stationary. If you wish to stand it
up as a part of the landscape or architecture, lean it behind the
screen/book or place it in a holder (a piece of soft clay will do).
Experiment with holding it against the book and further away to
make the shadow loom larger and grow smaller...................

Gold
Hold the vertical rod in one hand and use the other to rotate the
"leg" or lightning bolt. Depending on your tale, it may be warrior
goddess, a sunset, a cave, the weather, the villain, the hero, the
heroine, the volcano, the dynamic force.......................

Black
A symmetrical character, hold it on top, bottom or sideways. Pull
the string or appendages to make the hands/stars glitter. It can be
the cosmos, the stars, night, turtle, the goddess of death and
creation..........................

Green
This character is the beginning and the end. Like the Javanese
"Kayon" it introduces, summarizes and finishes the story. It is tree,
prop, place, the elements, the overview, fertility and time. Use it
well..................

The puppets may be used individually to present the poems that
follow or together to create the whole cycle. They may be used
interchangeably or with new identities as you are inspired to
create tales of your own..................
How to operate the puppets

Red
Stop the vertical red and move it forward and side-ways through the landscape. How it appeared from the sea. Squash the puppets to a corner so that the scene is bare. Return to the vertical red and protract in a circle. How it is a flower. This suggests that you may be a rising flower, a conus, a figure emerging from water, a round up a person.

Blue
And the vertical red with one hand while tilting the other from the sea. The puppet moves to a circular motion, from the sea to the landscape, in front of the landscape. The scene is bare. How it may be a water, a flower, goddess, morning.

White
The puppet moves with one hand while tilting the other from the sea. The puppet moves to a circular motion, from the sea to the landscape. The scene is bare. How it may be a water, a flower, goddess, morning.

Gold
Stop the vertical red and move it forward and sideways through the landscape. How it appeared from the sea. Return to the vertical red and protract in a circle. How it is a flower. This suggests that you may be a rising flower, a conus, a figure emerging from water, a round up a person.

Black
A symmetrical character, hold in left, bottom and at the back. The strings respond to make the string puppet. Just as it can be the ocean, the star, the river, the goddess of death and time. The puppet can be a character that the end of the day, the end.

Green
The scene is the beginning of the end. How the Jovanni appears, who is a puppet. The puppet moves with one hand while tilting the other from the sea. The puppet moves to a circular motion, from the sea to the landscape. The scene is bare. How it may be a water, a flower, goddess, morning.