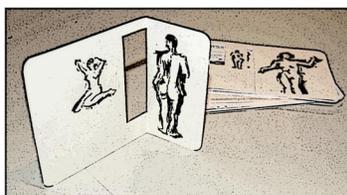
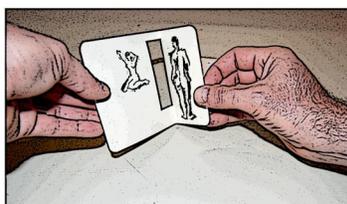
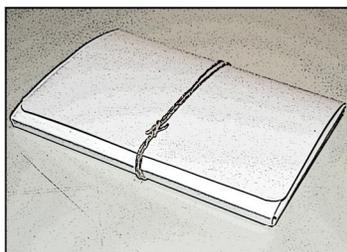


A Simply-Crafted Architectural Paper Toy

Everett E Henderson Jr

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We commonly associate playing with children; creative adults use play when they create as well; playing allows a freedom in the process of creation. Children are inherently creative during play because of a lack of inhibitions and imposed rules about how to go about creating. “The child understands well beyond what he knows how to say, responds well beyond what he could define, and this after all is as true of the adult.”¹ While one may not be able to articulate why something happens, they may be able to make the same occurrence repeatedly with skill. Playing often involves the hand and mind working in conjunction to learn and experience through action and reflection. Craftsmen of their disciplines play; this deviation from sheer production allows for evolution of ideas and techniques. Play is a valuable tool that allows for experimentation and deviation from what can be conceived of as the normal. Play allows for the participants to ask questions of themselves.

Charles Eames made a film about toy trains; he was interested in the difference between a model and a toy. He said “These are real toys, not scale models. That is not to say toys are good and scale models are bad, but they are different. Most of the trains we have used are old and some of them are quite old. The reason for this is that in the most recent years we seem to have lost the knack for making real toys. Most old ones have a direct and unembarrassed manner that give us a special kind of pleasure, a pleasure different than the admiration we may feel for a perfect little copy of a real thing. In a good old toy there is apt to be nothing self-conscious about the use of materials. What is wood is wood, what is tin is tin, what is cast is beautifully cast. It is possible that somewhere in all of this is a clue to what sets the creative climate of anytime,

¹ Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, and Claude Lefort. Translated by Alphonso Lingis. *The Visible and the Invisible; Followed by Working Notes*, Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology & Existential Philosophy. Evanston [Ill.]: Northwestern University Press, 1968.

including our own...”² Allowing for truth in materials for the toy trains, I decided to simplify the materials for the paper and ink toy construction. Playing often involves the projection of self into a space that is at a much smaller scale. Children have little trouble understanding how to play with model houses for their scale figures; they also have no trouble anthropomorphizing other animals into human scenarios. Children intuitively project themselves at the scale of the toys they are playing with. Gaston Bachelard referring to the miniature cardboard houses that children play and wrote “In other words, the tiny things we imagine simply take us back to childhood, to familiarity with toys and *the reality of toys*.”³ This *reality of toys* that he speaks of is a powerful concept in that playing allows one to make decisions about how they perceive; this playing allows for a second iteration of thought to come forward, not just the initial conception. Through play we learn.

While looking at the drawings of Valeriano Pastor, I am reminded of the importance of how the body dwells within space. Marco Frascari draws attention to the fact that in contemporary architecture practice architects tend to use generic figures that then create and inspire generic spaces.⁴ The more information the architect can provide for the basis of a design, the more the client can see what the architect is trying to accomplish. The posture, position and attitude to the body in space activate the architecture. The imagined occupation of space is what is left after the body leaves. The architecture without the body has yet to be activated; inhabiting the spaces the drawings of the bodies have dialogs with the spaces as well as each other. I began to draw figure studies on 4”x6” postcards in black ink, refer to Figure1. I used a bamboo pen that

² Charles and Ray Eames, *Toccata for Toy Trains*, A Film made by Ray and Charles Eames, 1957. Note: The text was transcribed from the film by Everett E Henderson Jr in 2003 for *The Reality of Toys: An Exploration of Interstitial Space*.

³ Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, (Beacon Press; Boston 1964), 149.

⁴ Marco Frascari, George Dodds and Robert Tavernor, eds. "A tradition of architectural figures: a search for Vita Beata" in *Body and Building: Essays on the Changing Relation of Body and Architecture*. (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.2002)

I made from wild bamboo that grows in my back yard. The bamboo pen allows for the scale of the hand to transcribe the scale of the body to the scale of the small postcard. The looseness of the figurative ink drawings allows for one to empathize with the figure while not being too prescriptive; there is still room for interpretation from the person playing with the cards. The media of ink on paper was chosen for its simplicity; simplicity in material does not equate directly to a simple meaning though. Once the drawings were created, I began to find ways to relate the figures to each other; I scanned the drawings and reprinted them on multiple 4"x6" cards in order to place apertures in each of the cards so that they would be able to frame new views to other figures. Openings or apertures in the cards were created to allow for the opportunity to view a distant space; the openings create a visual delay and a threshold that the eye must navigate. I then folded the cards to make the card stable as well as introduce a new dimension. This simple folding allows the figures to interrelate to each other on the same card as well as the figures on the other cards. To make the cards become objects and not architectural spaces, I rounded the corners of each of the cards; this breaking away from the want to make a model allows the person playing with the cards to imagine their own spaces and places. This gives a non-specific approach to the play. These rounded corners strengthen the fact that they are cards to be played with and not architectural models. While there is nothing wrong with models, in the words of Charles Eames, the strength of the toy lies in the fact that the person playing with the cards has to project their own ideas to make the spaces.

The intent of the toy is simple in that it allows for the user to use their hands to manipulate the pieces in space. In Figure 2 the construction instructions elude to a way to view the distant figures through the apertures while having a figure in the foreground. This open ended way of controlling the space allows for the user to control their spatial creation. This

manipulation with hands adds a tactile layer that the person placing these cards experiences with their hand and mind. The drawings of the figures at different scales in conjunction with the apertures allow for views to be framed according to the person playing with the cards. The intent is for the person to become involved and having opinions and views as how to arrange the cards; this allows for the person playing to bring their own ideas to the toy. As Merleau Ponty stated “A perceived world would not appear to man if these conditions were not in his body; but this is not that they explain the world.”⁵ This reinforces that the human while experiencing space must bring their own explanations to the simple facts. The interpretation and knowledge that man possesses is not part of our bodies only, the individual’s experiences make up their knowledge. He says that the questions that philosophy raises are the questions within our lives.

The Chiasm that Ponty speaks of in *The Visible and the Invisible* implies that the person touches an object, but the object in turn touches the person.⁶ The Chiasm is a *reversibility* that refers to the interaction between the object and the subject. A person often thinks that they are touching, but not being touched. The Paper Toy to be played with must touch the person playing with it; it is not simply being touched. The toy by being interactive requires the user to confront the figures on the paper and juxtapose them with the other figures to create a spatial sequence. The user will develop a vested interest in the figures when they require themselves to make spatial decisions with their eyes and hands to form a composition. These decisions become stories; these stories come from the information that the user has within their vocabulary. The structure of the story that can unfold from the cards is already embedded within the author of the story. A key to the toy is having the user/author bring the story forward; the toy cards are simply

⁵ Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, and Claude Lefort. Translated by Alphonso Lingis. *The Visible and the Invisible; Followed by Working Notes*, Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology & Existential Philosophy. Evanston [Ill.]: Northwestern University Press, 1968, 22.

⁶ *Ibid*, 155.

a muse in which the user is able to respond. The more knowledge or experiences a user has, the more information the cards can help bring forward.



Figure 1. Everett E Henderson Jr, *Ink drawings with bamboo pen on watercolor paper, 4"x6"*, April 2011.

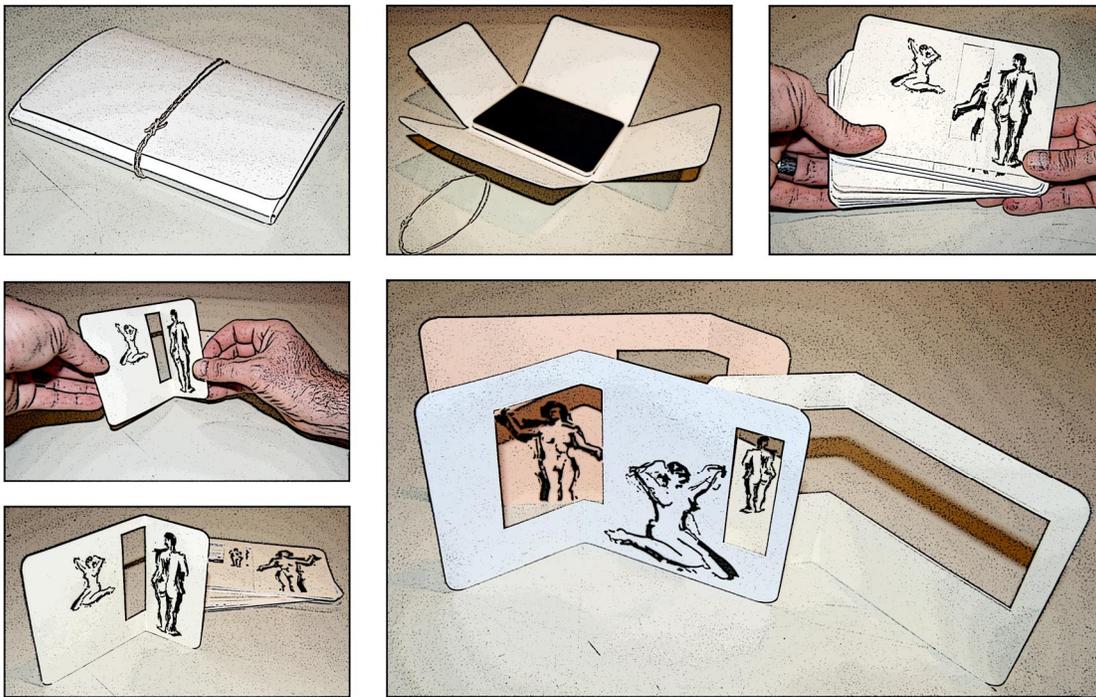


Figure 2. Everett E Henderson Jr, *A Simply-Crafted Paper Toy construction instructions*, April 2011.