

## Mama Nef's Mixed Media Book Art

I love books. I love how they smell and feel, their different textures and sizes, the way they weigh in my hands and lap, and the foreplay of their pages against my fingertips. I love the personality of their *Titles* and colorful covers and their solid-colored covers with no text—that's so sexy. And how their inner parts get laid, overlaid, BLOCKED, flushed, and s t r e w n across the territory of pages for readers' consumption. The more delicious the content, the better.

I love bookmaking, too. It's the perfect medium for channeling my visual-literary creative selves simultaneously without having to choose to be a writer *or* a visual artist. It's also a contemplative practice that centers me in the present, in that holy state of "no mind" where thoughts yield to pure creative impulses. That's where all the magic happens. That's where the art gets made.

"The love is in the details," says Oprah. And I agree. It's in every piece of paper, every color, word, number, font, visual, and appliqué I use. It's in every stitch of the spine, every cut, every layer of glue, and each meticulous measurement. Every element contributes to the whole. It's a fine, intricate art form.

I may start out with an idea for one kind of book, but the finished piece is always a surprise. All I have to do is trust my creative process implicitly and not be attached to outcomes. Forget about making perfect art. It's all about showing up to the work and creating art from the heart. That's what I call creative freedom.

My book art pieces are, summarily, narratives inspired by Spirit, magic, nature, the marriage of images and words, the indigenous African American experience, the conjure / hoodoo / root medicine tradition, and reverence for life.

Special thanks to my bookmaking partner Jenny O'Grady for daily inspiration; to Rebecca Childers for teaching me how to breathe a book alive; and to Kendra Kopelke for teaching me that "a book can be anything."