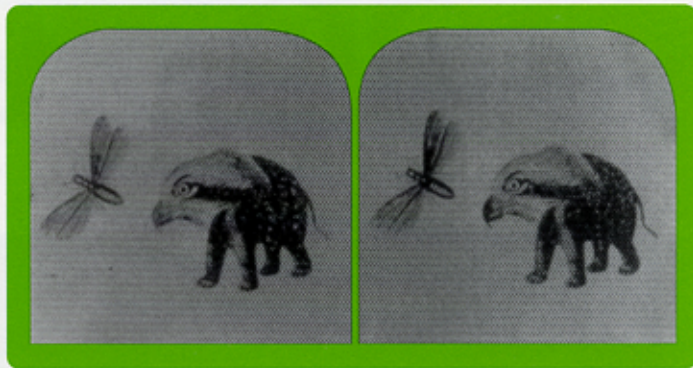


Sue Johnson *Antics of the skydiving Lacewings*
9 x 17" mixed media print, 1998



Sue Johnson *Elephant bird chasing a winged insect*
9 x 17" mixed media print, 1998

sue johnson

New Images for the Stereoscope continues Sue Johnson's work as a self-appointed pseudo-naturalist who presents startling and humorous combinations of flora and fauna in painting, print-making, and installation formats. Considered a sub-set of her on-going project *The Alternate Encyclopedia*, this series of mixed media prints takes its cue from stereoscopic cards from the late 19th century, which feature twin black and white photographs mounted on 3½" x 7" colorful backings with names, dates, and brief descriptions printed along the edge. The photos are taken from slightly different angles which are united in one 3-D view with the help of an optical instrument called a stereoscope.

Johnson has borrowed this outdated format to showcase her strange creatures as either new genetic proposals or lost originals from a bygone epoch. Other contemporary artists, including Mark Dion, Alexis Rockman, and Laura Stein are exploring categorization and mutation of the natural world, and like them, Johnson exploits conditions of archive, laboratory, and library. Her hybrids are rendered in the mode of scientific illustration, giving them linguistically lovely names like "Notorious chipmunkbug" and "Raincatcher turtle." Such wordplay is perhaps a clue for the viewers about the poetic nature of Johnson's interests, establishing what James P. Rice calls, "the knowing yes."¹

This series, with its combination of traditional relief techniques and the newer xerography method, recalls Andy Warhol's use of portrait diptychs and multiple graphic impressions on intensely colored grounds. Both artists exploit fortuitous accidents in printing to heighten emotion while referencing mechanical reproduction and popular culture. That Johnson makes two-part beings and presents them in a side-by-side format speaks twice of doubling, but also of potential: the possible unification of the print pair in an (as yet) unavailable apparatus (the large format stereoscope).

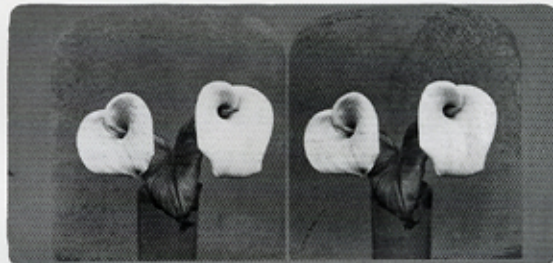
Months ago, while Johnson was visiting the Bucknell Art Gallery, she enthusiastically looked through a treasure trove of approximately 4700 stereoscopic cards. This collection, given to the university in 1986 by Drs. Leonard and Roberta Griff, includes, among others, images of occupations and industry, famous people, foreign countries, Pennsylvania scenes, architecture, and World War I. Finding great sympathy with this material, the artist has borrowed dozens of our cards for research and exhibition purposes. Her Project Room installation is preparation for an ancient future, what Johnson refers to as "images waiting for their viewer."

Stuart Horodner

¹James P. Rice, conversation with the author, Ottawa, Canada, 1998.



Selecting perfect cocoons according to size and colour from piles in a silk factory, Milan Bucknell Art Collection



Flower Series, 1618. Calla lilies Bucknell Art Collection

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Opening Reception February 27th 5-7pm

Gallery Hours:

Monday-Friday 11-5 pm

Saturday & Sunday 1-4 pm

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9 x 17" mixed media print, 1998

Cover: Sue Johnson *Hermit Bird* (partially exposed)

Virginia in 1999-2000.

Sue Johnson is an Associate Professor of Art at St. Mary's College of Maryland. She will have a one-person show of new work from *The Alternate Encyclopedia* at the Emerson Gallery/McLean Project for the Arts, in McLean, Virginia in 1999-2000.

new images for the stereoscope



sue johnson

new images for the
stereoscope