

The Lost Journals of Sacajewea

by Debra Magpie Earling

photo-interventions by Peter Rutledge Koch

Editions Koch : Berkeley 2010

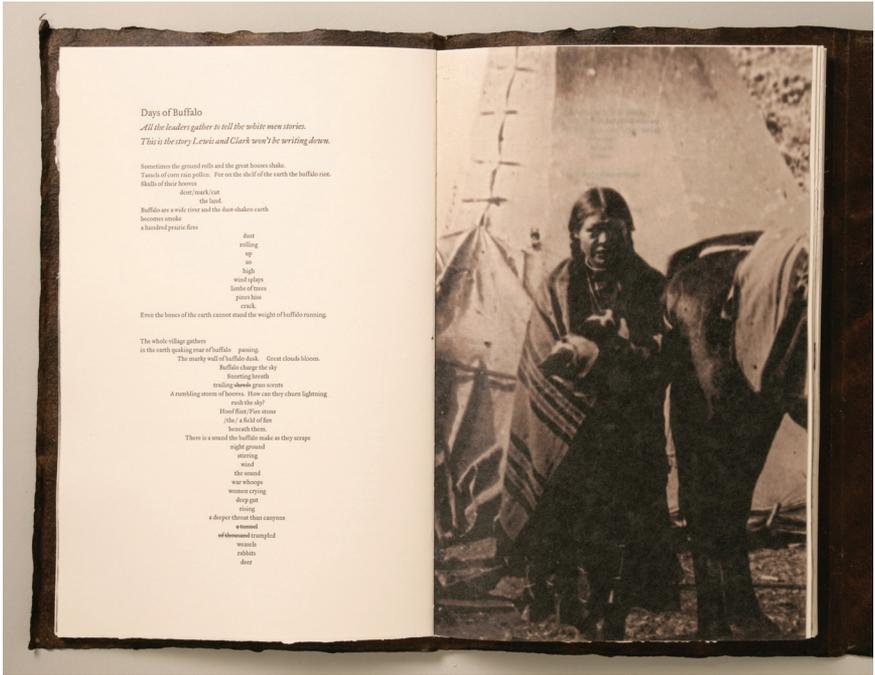
Sacajewea is one of the most famous American Indian women—famous because of the literature of exploration and the mythologies of Western adventure—and yet we are in a curious state of knowledge concerning her person. We know for certain that she traveled from the Mandan villages at the mouth of the Knife River to the headwaters of the Missouri, over the Bitterroot Mountains to the mouth of the Columbia, and then back to the Mandan villages with Toussaint Charbonneau, who was employed as an interpreter for the Lewis and Clark expedition from 1804 to 1806. We know neither how to spell nor pronounce her name, and we have conflicting accounts of her birth, parentage, early life, the circumstances of her marriage, her life after the expedition returned, her children, the circumstances of her death, and the whereabouts of her remains.

Approaching the Symbolic ...

Debra Earling's narrative takes us behind the eyes and ears of a pregnant 17-year-old slave girl traveling up the Missouri River with the "expedition of discovery" in 1804-5. She is haunted by visions. I have accompanied the texts with photographs taken along the expedition's trail years later.

A photograph is only a fragment, and with the passage of time its moorings come unstuck.

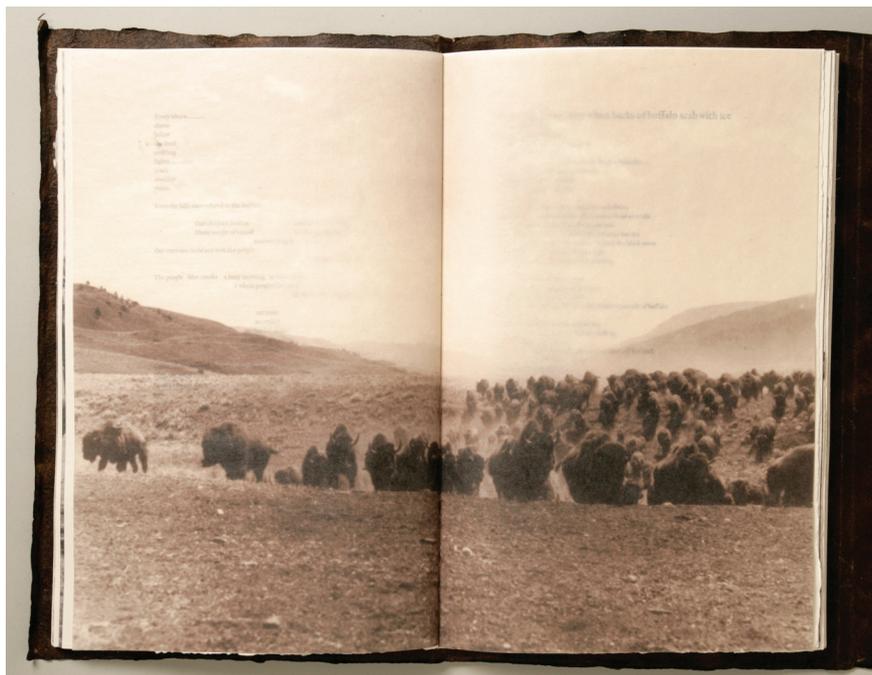
—Susan Sontag, *On Photography*



The appearance of the camera on the frontier changed the face of the Western mythos forever. The painted views and portraits by Bodmer, Catlin, Remington, and Russell quickly became symbols of past grandeur and romance—the “noble savage” as depicted in the dime Western and the “Indian Gallery.”

The earliest photographic records of the civilizations of the Missouri and Columbia River basins, often produced in a spirit of boosterish pride in scientific and industrial advancement, present us (perhaps unintentionally) with a haunting and fragmented record of environmental and cultural devastation. Commercial photographers arrived just in time to capture the reduced circumstances, starvation, and squalor on the newly formed reservations of the Upper Missouri and the Northern Rockies.





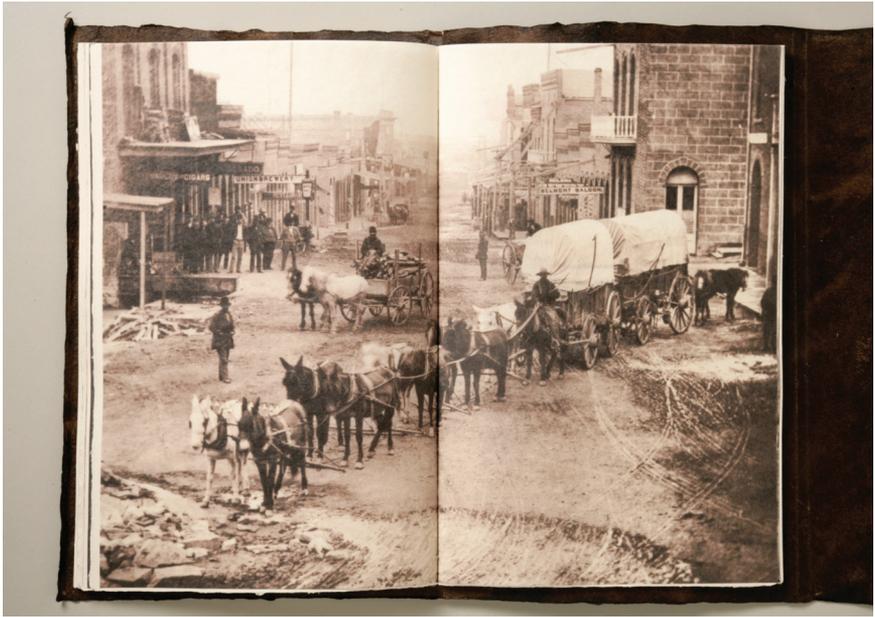
Only a few photographs document the extermination of the bison and the hunter's struggles against starvation. Instead, as if to marginalize the dying cultures, countless images survive that depict the arrival of the mining speculator, soldier, cowboy, homesteader, lumberjack, dry-goods merchant, and all that followed to give us a thorough and close-up look at the noble savage-free territory of post-bison civilization.

Recorded by the newly-introduced wet plate process, the images of recently "civilized" Indians (1870's and 80's) anticipate the future skid-row postcard views of alcohol-dependant urban American Indians with a vengeance.

Ironically, a great number of photos on deposit are preserved in the collections of the Library of Congress as evidence in legal disputes concerning mining disasters and industrial predation.

As the "Frontier" disappeared, the "Real West" burst upon the landscape like poisonous mushrooms after a forest fire.





The original photographs from which I extracted my “interventions” are:

“Spotted Eagle’s Village” [1878-1879, 1880]
L. A. Huffman, Photographer
Montana Historical Society, Helena, Montana

“Eventide on the Fort Belknap Reservation”
Postcard, W. T. Ridgley Calendar Co.,
Great Falls, Montana
From the collection of Peter Rutledge Koch

“Mouth of Heart River near Mandan”
L. A. Huffman, Photographer [MHS photo]

Woman in front of teepee [untitled]
Photographer unidentified
Northwest Museum of Arts & Culture
Spokane, Washington

“Buffalo Herd Stampede—Lamar Valley
Yellowstone National Park, 1916”
Jack E. Haynes, Photographer [MHS photo]

“Taking the Monster’s Robe, January 1882”
L.A. Huffman, Photographer [MHS photo]

Teepee, Drummer, Horse [untitled]
Photographer unidentified
Northwest Museum of Arts & Culture

“Presidential Escort (dismounted) Ft. Washakie,
Wyoming [Chester A. Arthur’s Expedition]
August 1883”
F. Jay Haynes, Photographer [MHS photo]

“Main Street looking North from Bridge Street
Helena, Montana” [ca 1879]
Photographer unidentified [MHS photo]

“First Monument Custer Hill” [April 1879]
S. J. Morrow, Photographer [MHS photo]

“Rainbow Falls American Smelting & Refining
Great Falls, MT” [ca 1892-1900]
Photographer unidentified [MHS photo]

“A Monster Buffalo Bull After the Chase”
[1879] L. A. Huffman [MHS photo]

“Portland” [December, 2008]
Bjørn Giesenbauer, Photographer



Sacajewea, the Shoshone- and Hidatsa-speaking woman who traveled with Lewis and Clark in 1805 from North Dakota to the mouth of the Columbia and back to the Great Plains the following year, would have things of great importance to tell us if only we remembered how to listen. Debra Earling has made that impossible feat possible after all, by giving her a voice that cuts through time and language like a razor. Peter Koch has also given that voice a body to stand up in, space to be heard in, and magnificent clothes to wear. This is what writing and publishing are supposed to be all about – and very rarely are. Not everyone can own this book, but those who are fortunate enough to bring one home will feel the difference as the potent object passes through the door.

Robert Bringhurst, *Poet, linguist and philosopher*

The Lost Journals of Sacajewea brings together a critically important text by author Debra Magpie Earling and unusually intense photo-interventions by one of the most creative master printers and book artists in the United States, Peter Rutledge Koch. A profoundly collaborative work, the book unites fine letterpress printing and hand paper-making with experimental digital imaging technology and continues Koch's tradition of exemplary book design. *The Lost Journals* belongs right next to Koch's *Diogenes Defictions*, (1994), *Zebra Noise* (1998) and *Watermark* (2006) as examples of his finest work. The "journal" by Earling, novelist and professor at the University of Montana, is a prime example of the concentrated poetic vision that garnered her first book, *Perma Red*, the Western Writers Association Spur Award for Best Novel of the West. This is an important work to own—for content as well as design and printing.

Roberto G. Trujillo
Frances & Charles Field Curator of Special Collections
Stanford University Libraries



Building Mandan Camp

There is no fever
like the fever of white men building
the sound of trees falling
hissing
the branches of bones snapping/cracking/dying.

Building
they are building their houses.

One day their buildings will devour the sky.

Wood dies slowly.
Floorboards moan.

Walls shift

split light

I wake to the sound of trees praying
their glittering sap mourning
trees gathered shoulder to shoulder
shuddering
loss.

Wind gusts over
the spirit-glazed river
shrieks
webs of cracks.
The ghost of the river is creaking.

In early morning darkness
the white men hunt
all day
come back
with only
a single squirrel
rabbits twitching in the palms of their hands
mean in their hunger.

Silver birds spear dawns lonesome as song.
Cracked ice glitters violet.
Sun rises. Sky sears white

JUST BEFORE SUN SLEEPS
SKY TURNS SHADES OF WILD ROSES.

The *Lost Journals of Sacajewea* began as a project during the bicentennial of the Lewis and Clark expedition. In the Spring of 2005, the Missoula Museum of Art had two exhibitions running simultaneously that were critical responses to the celebratory afflatus that customarily surrounds such events. I was at the museum to open my exhibition *Nature Morte* when I saw, hanging in the next gallery, a fragment of a poem that accompanied *Native Perspectives on the Trail: A Contemporary American Indian Portfolio*. I was introduced to the author, Debra Magpie Earling, and based on that fragment, I proposed a collaboration. Over the next few years we met occasionally and worked sporadically on the concept while we each pursued our own busy and demanding schedules. By 2006 Debra had completed the writing, and in 2009 I collected the last photographs that I wished to accompany the text. Printing began in late 2009 and was completed in January 2010.

Debra is a member of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation. She has been published in journals and anthologies and her novel *Perma Red* received the American Book Award, the Mountains and Plains Bookseller Association Award, and a Spur Award. She received a Guggenheim Fellowship in 2008.

The typeface is a version of the historic Fell types presumed to be the work of Dutch punchcutter Dirck Voskens and interpreted by Jonathan Hoefler in a conscious attempt to reproduce the imperfect image that the Fell types left on paper when printed in the 18th Century. The Fell types have been described as “retaining a retrogressive old-style irregularity” which somehow seems appropriate given our purpose here in this book.

The text is printed on Twinrocker Da Vinci hand-made paper at Peter Koch Printers and bound at the press by Jonathan Gerken. The smoked buffalo rawhide cover paper was designed and hand-made by Amanda Degener especially for this edition at Cave Papers in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The spine is beaded with trade beads and small caliber cartridge cases.

The images were prepared by Donald Farnsworth at Magnolia Editions and printed on Kozo hand-made paper with the assistance of Jonathan Gerken and Tallulah Terryll.

Edition: 65 numbered and 5 hors commerce copies designated A/P 1-5.

An additional suite of prints suitable for exhibition is available, information on request.

We encourage you to visit the press and gallery; please call or write to make an appointment.

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