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## REVIEWS & PRESS

Gerrit Lansing and Ligorano/Reese. *Turning Leaves of Mind*. Granary Books, 2004.

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**Weiss, Jason. "Page Turners." *ARTNews* 30.**

A strong tension holds in a recent artist's book about books—between the glory that was Spanish bookbinding and the wear and tear of time. Yet time was also an agent in the construction of this book. *Turning Leaves of Mind* (Granary) began 20 years ago with Nora Ligorano's photographic documentation of the 13th- to 17th-century books in Spanish archives. Then, a year ago, she and Marshall Reese—collaborators on video books, installations, and limited-edition objects—cropped, manipulated, and arranged the photos to make them into more than discrete documents. Stitched throughout the pages of the resulting volume, brief lines and phrases by poet Gerrit Lansing speak to the enchantments of the book, to the persistence of reading even among ruins.

### **Staff. *Umbrella Reviews*.**

*Turning Leaves of Mind* by Ligorano/ Reese and Gerrit Lansing (Granary Books) is a masterpiece of design, intention, and production. This is a testament to the book as the most elegant storage and retrieval system ever devised. Nora Ligorano's documentation of Spanish bookbinding from the 13th to the 17th century is no longer a lecture, but in fact an epiphany of "gorgeous" with highlights, close-ups, and details that only a true aesthetic eye could realize into astounding abstract forms.

With the new technology of digital, the decorative bindings are transformed; by manipulation the surface ornamentation and detailed structural design of these early books become new configurations of design and more. With essence of text by Lansing, manipulated on the computer to appear as antique calligraphy, the details of "book" become more than themselves, symphonic rhapsodies and odes to hand-made, to culture, to libraries, and to codexes.

The index inside the front and back covers was written by Marshall Reese, but more than an

"index," it is also a kind of poem and journal that wets the curiosity and yet interacts with one's own memories of places visited, books revised, and friendships begun and interrupted. It comes from indices in some of the books in their library, as well as poetic meanderings of a life lived in books.

We are living in an age of collaboration. We no longer can live isolated and hermetic, for the world impinges on our every move. This book is an example of true collaboration, of the artists with the book, of the poet with the artists and the book, of the three with Steve Clay of Granary Books, and an intense confluence with the reader, the no longer missing collaborator. To us, the readers, we owe the creators of this marvelous book a tribute by buying the book and giving this book and treasuring this book. Use it, read it, but do not lock this book up! It has taken almost twenty years for this book to evolve. Give it time and love it. All binders of the world should buy this book, or lovers of books should buy this book, and all librarians should buy this book!

Twenty-six of the edition of 700 have been bound by Daniel Kelm at the Wide Awake Garage in Easthampton, MA, lettered and signed by the artists and poet.

**Princenthal, Nancy. "Review of *Turning Leaves of Mind*." *Art On Paper* (March, 2003): 79.**

Nora Ligorano and Marshall Reese have long collaborated on scathingly witty videos, installations, and sculptural and printed multiples that address the nexus of power, religion, and commerce. *Turning Leaves of Mind* is a very different project, a tender homage to books as a historical form. A small, square paperback, it contains borderless color photographs toned a honeyed brown, all featuring details of leather-bound volumes from Spain that date between the 13th and 17th centuries. Lavishly embossed, tooled in gold, and sewn with the intricacy of lace, these books were clearly meant, like sacred reliquaries, to be objects of reverence. Evoking, at times, bricks and mortar, and at others, sinews and flesh, the books are shown close up, as if they were faces intimately observed. Ligorano took the photographs twenty years ago while studying in Spain on a Fulbright Scholarship, and it seems they've waited ever since in an enchanted slumber. Lansing's poetic text, which celebrates the books' "impeccable decay," sits lightly on the images, no more than a few words at a time, and printed in pale brown ink. Inside both covers is an index invented by Reese that alludes to the variety of knowledge, bracingly majestic from some angles, gloriously absurd from others that books contain. With its recursive structure and its immersion in the cloistered but richly—even fanatically—detailed sensory life of medieval scriptoria, *Turning Leaves* recalls Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*; Abelardo Morell's recent photographic essay *A Book of Books* is also kin. But the alchemy of *Turning Leaves*—it seems to have been fermented rather than merely written and illustrated—is all its own.

*Nancy Princenthal is a Contributing Editor to Art on Paper.*