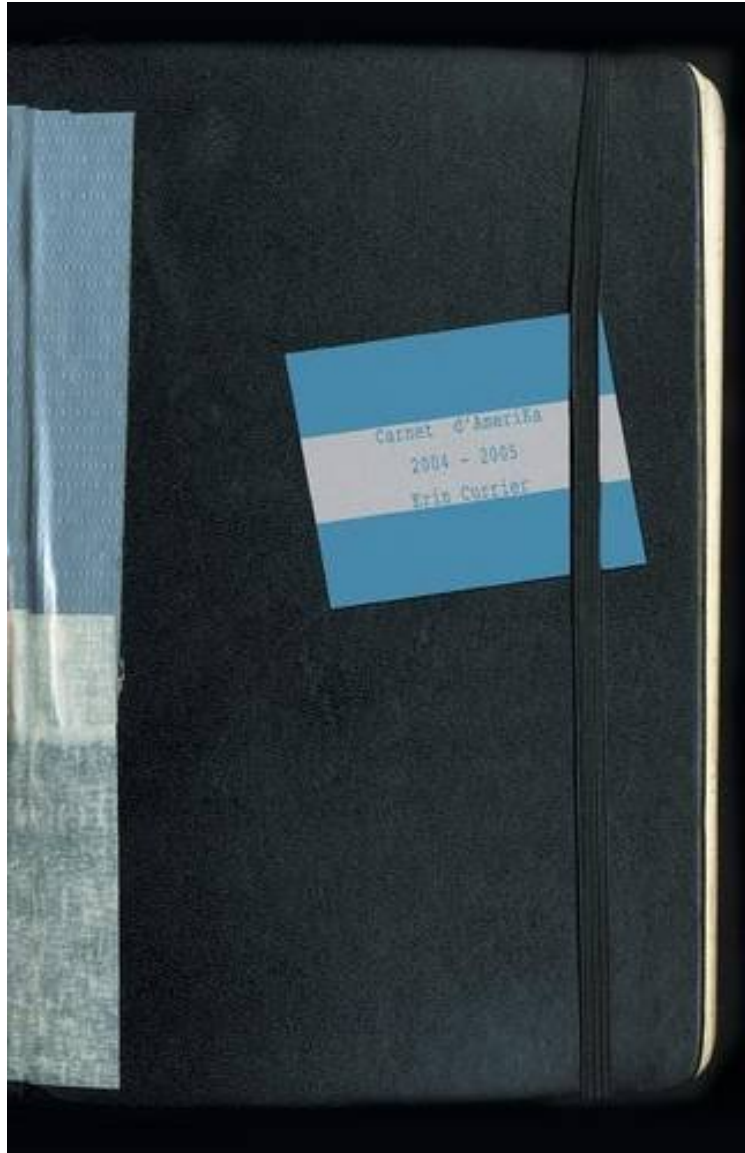


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Carnet D'Amerika 2004-2005

Erin Currier

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Erin Currier : Carnet D'Amerika 2004-2005 before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Carnet D'Amerika 2004-2005:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. I enjoyed this personal account from Currier for its heartfelt observations ...By Real DJThough our politics are diametrically opposite, I enjoyed this personal account from Currier for its heartfelt observations of time spent and connections made with folks in Argentina. Also, Currier's personal drawings and painting make for a unique, special and charming volume.0 of 0 people found the following review

helpful. beauty within the context of the human condition"By Britta L AndersonErin Curriers gaze is intimate and immediate, generous and filled with love for humanity. In the pages of *Carnet dAmeriKa*, human frailty is laid bare, alongside its strength: her own, her partner Anthonys, and that of every person she encounters on their journey. Her pages pulse with the intensity of navigating a new place. Her approach to the travel journal as a genre far exceeds the documentation of a voyage, to instead propose the travelers heightened awareness as a way of being in the world. She invites readers to approach their surroundings, words, and every human encounter with the newness and delight of a traveler. Currier prioritizes and honors the Spanish spoken throughout the lands she travels. The primacy of Spanish is clear from the first pages of the book, from a preface that precedes its English translation, to an untranslated Borges quote. Through language and the use of Latin American cultural references rendered refreshingly personal, she shows a deep respect for Latin America and a willingness to adapt and grow into its modes of communication. She conveys her own daily frustrations and ongoing commitment to learning Spanish, recognizing language as the social material that enables human connection. The untranslated poems peppered throughout the text recreate for the reader Curriers own language learning efforts. They require non-fluent Spanish speakers to do some work, or to play the role of what Julio Cortzar calls a lector cmplice, a reader who engages actively, who co-creates and participates in the construction of meaning beyond a text. Currier continually asks her audience to become more than readers: more alert, active, and self-reflective. Curriers experience is saturated with her reading of Paulo Freires *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, which proposes the idea of praxis as the combination of critical reflection and action that together can transform oppressive structures. She does include a number of unattributed Freire quotes without citations. Although she builds on and beautifully processes his ideas, the editor and professor in me urges her to more carefully distinguish her own thoughts from his published words. She does not simply record or write about his ideas, however, but animates and activates them; she enacts praxis through the life that infuses her text. The living engagement of her words and images function as activism, as action that produces further social engagement and understanding, bringing to life the idea that art cannot exist apart from societyfrom the social. Her sketches of Buenos Aires meld layers of human gesture with the lines of the citys architecture, making visible the movements of humanity in social contexts. Throughout the text, Currier visualizes and reflects on the fundamental interconnectedness of the human: in attempting to draw a city, I found that nothing is not attached and already a part of something else. All is inextricably connected. Her work does not end on the level of reflection and representation. She lives it, placing herself vitally within the splashes of color and motion of her cityscapes. True to Freires notion that those who authentically commit themselves to the people must reexamine themselves constantly, Currier takes self-examination seriously, turning the diary into a political genre, an essential component of social engagement. Recognizing that the internal and the external are inextricably one, she delves into self-inquiry as a means to understanding the larger sphere that she inhabits. She pastes a double photo of her faceperhaps printed from a public photo boothover a sketch of the city on the first pages of the book, physically placing herself in the social and political environment, in the public space that surrounds her. She erects the rectangle of her photos alongside and over the buildings of Buenos Aires, stacking copies of her torso like stories of the skyscrapers, visualizing the fact that the personal is public, and vice versa. Her level gaze expands from the page as if from the windows on her 7th floor apartment, and also looks inward. There is nothing selfish about Curriers processes of self-discovery. Even the seemingly self-indulgent momentsthe self-pity when unable to smoke in an airport, the claustrophobia of a bedridden sore throatactually contain a great generosity of spirit, in their authenticity and vulnerable openness to readers. Curriers self-portraits appear throughout the text, as she reexamines herself constantly. In one, labeled *Myself henna-ing in Spanish in my favorite shirt*, she wears a Hulk T-shirt, communicating her strength, and labels her body parts in Spanish, translating her body itself into the local scenario and language. Her eyes gaze out vividly over the word **PRACTICA**, suggesting that this document, and the lived experience it conveys, is her practice and her praxis. In another self-portrait, Currier raises a fist in solidarity with the Zapatista movement, and holds paint brushes in other hand. Her skirt flows directly into a photo of a graffitied wall. In this way, her Self and her actions emerge from and merge with this public space. By making her body part of the city, she embodies the extreme interconnectedness that she earlier only theorizes. Currier brings equal enthusiasm and unrelenting dedication to the extroversion and introspection that her engagement with the city requires. Curriers pages of self-inquiry also tell a love story. She quotes Che at beginning of the book, labeling her travel: not a story of heroic feats, but, rather, a story of two lives running parallel for a time. As she recognizes a fundamental human interconnectedness, she delights in all encounters, but shows particular bliss in the moments shared with her partner Anthony. She renders their intimacy vibrantly: in evenings inhabiting tango bars in dubious barrios, in the sheer joy in their Christmas Eve lit by fireworks, and in the traces of their shared life: receipts for Spanish classes, cappuccinos, and French fries. His partnership and presence across the table is a constant throughout her journey. She includes pieces of sensual Spanish poetry and an extensive list of the countries in which they have landed and made love. Her portraits of himsad-eyed Tony of the Lowlands, or as co-creator, with a focused brow and a pen in handcontain great tenderness. Her text, mostly in the plural voiceAnthony and Iconveys the love and spontaneity of their shared life. Together, they are absolutely present. Each page communicates Curriers great love of humanity, her capacity to look people in the eyes, truly see them, and to share her compassionate gaze with her audience. She recreates the immediacy and affection of

her encounters with the tide of infinite human variation on the metro, with teary-eyed futbol fans, with the female literature professors who teach her Spanish and Argentine history, or with a wild and ethereal blond boy of six or eight [who] swept through [her] life like a torrent from a far off desert. She recounts luminously: Barefoot and broken armed, he took the coins I gave him, gave me a radiant thumbs-up, and receded into my past as a sandstorm eddies off into the horizon. She proposes human connection as a spiritual practice, noting that the Buddha didnt retreat from humanity; his understanding and illumination came from his recognition of others suffering and his human interactions along the way. Currier shares with her readers the sanctity of the connection and comprehension possible between humans. She makes it visible and relatable: communion. While she recognizes her fundamental connection to all humanity, Currier insists on distinguishing herself from more overtly consumerist tourists, demonstrating her scorn for the bottomless gluttony of Yankees pouring in from Texas and their Eurotrash counterparts. If, indeed, all is inextricably connected, are we not also related to the men with hot-pink skin and bellies bridled by Hawaiian shirts? What could we learn from seeing our reflection, also, in this aspect of humanity? I wonder what connections could be forged, what lessons absorbed, if she extended her empathy, so immediate for intellectuals and the impoverished, to these brains lost in big cowboy hats, if she were not so quick to dismiss them as the embodiment of capitalist greed. Freire positions direct human connection as immediately relevant political engagement, as an essential means to structural change. Currier quotes him: Dialogue with the people is radically necessary to every authentic revolution. Her personal encounters directly foster political engagement, as she immerses herself in a Latin America on the brink of a revolution, pulsing with Hugo Chvezs energizing discourse: she attends a Zapatista lecture, learns the peoples history of Argentina, and frequents the Plaza de Mayo, where mothers continually protest the state kidnapping of their children under dictatorship. She also follows the specter of oppression in the U.S. following Bushs election, and resolves to dedicate herself completely to critical reflection combined with direct action, both through [her] art and everything she does. She proceeds in all things with ears alert, inviting her readers to also wake up to their surroundings, to bring equal intensity to the politics and people connected to them. While she travels Argentina, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and Panama, her journal continually seeks links beyond her immediate surroundings. Her reading list expands the territory of both her reflection and her action, from Cisneros and Freire to Cervantes and Rushdie. Her images, even more than her words, push the book towards the global, encouraging comprehension beyond local contexts. A blood-splattered page honors a beloved bandit shot in India, and miles of laundry lines connect the rooftops of the world. As she reflects on the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo, her sketches establish motherhood and loss as global experiences, seeds of her future exhibition Mothers and Martyrs of the Americas. The sad, kind eyes of Gandhis mother Putliba, for example, resemble those of Alberta Williams King. Currier makes these far-flung connections, and her own internal processes, emotionally accessible, by presenting them as visually beautiful and verbally alluring. Her heightened awareness and critical analysis becomes infectious, due to its aesthetic draw. Her artistry makes us pay attention; then her authenticity demands further action. *Carnet dAmeriKa* is a work that meets its authors definition of art: beauty within the context of the human condition. She draws her readers into a social relationship, brings them on her journey through the human landscape. These pages communicate Curriers deep love for the people- vivacious, bulbous, bony and bright, fleshy, vital, young and old, macho, sexy, withered, cautious, indifferent and effeminate. Travelling with her is a joy. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A Moveable Feast By John Biscello To be human is to transform; to be human is to name, then name anew. I must remember the inseparable nature of word and action. Erin Currier, November 6th, 2004 In a sense this passage became one of Erin Curriers self-fulfilling mantras, its ethos guiding the trajectory of her life and art. As an insatiable seeker, with the ambulatory zeal of a flneur, Currier has literally walked the walk in collecting trash from different countries around the world. Her epic scavenger hunt, keyed to alchemy and renewal, has given rise to a dynamic body of artwork, which continues to grow and attract followers and collectors worldwide. *Carnet dAmeriKa*, the second of her travel diaries to be published (the first, *Carnet dAsie*, came out in 2013), is a visceral blend of sketches, observations, musings and collages, spanning a period in Latin America (2004-2005). Immersion into the cultures she visits, particularly the fringes and non-touristic-realities, is a central theme in Curriers writings, and is reflected with nuance, compassion, and unflagging curiosity. In one entry she writes: I am back in Buenos Aires and love is born anew. This time, I have tried to arrive with empty eyes and a mind that forgets. Indeed, a fresh-visioned, beginner-minded way of seeing, coupled with astute political awareness, permeates the diary. Demonstrating a collagists schismatic flair, Currier moves between topics with fluency and ease. The serenity she experiences in hanging out laundry on a rooftop, tangentially extends to Frida Kahlos painting *My Dress Hangs There*, and by literary proxy to Remedios the Beauty, the woman from Marquezs *One Hundred Years of Solitude* whose common task of laundry turned into a sky-sailing departure. Christmas Eve in Granada, replete with a siege of fireworks and ceremony; tenderly observed moments of children sliding down slides into the stronger gravity of their mothers arms; the subterranean allure and teeming democracy of a metro station; arriving in Buenos Aires at 4 am melancholy, spirited, and appealing as ever in the junk-sick dawn. These and other textual snapshots make for a compelling and inclusive read. Berthe Morisot, the Impressionist painter, wanted to capture the fugitive effects of light on nature. *Carnet dAmeriKa* left me with a sense that Currier is attempting to capture the fugitive motion that powers and lives inside people, a sort of spiritual

kinesthesia. Her words, like her artwork, insist upon dignity, grace and nobility as the innate riches of our human inheritance.

Tuned to Latin America's rawest frequencies - that of marginalized people -, and echoing through Erin Currier's acute gaze, this travel diary is pregnant with the fascination of discovery. The period of Erin's journey could not have been more fortuitous: Argentina in 2004-2005 was at a historic turning point, when democracy was restored. Walking through the streets, Erin observes, questions, reads the newspapers, analyzes, and reflects in her diary, experiments that have allowed her to live the spirit that pulses in every corner, and which transmits the hope and joy of those who dare to keep dreaming. About the artist: Part portraiture, part collage from disinherited consumer "waste," part socio-political archives, but always humanists, Currier's work has been featured in numerous solo show. She lives and works in Santa Fe, New Mexico.