

I came to the Gardner in the summer of 2002. for the artist in residence programme. I carried with me contact sheets of all the empty spaces I had been photographing in Calcutta, the weeks before. Intimidated by the grandeur of the fine art I was living amidst, I withdrew into my contact sheets. There in the solitude of the carriage house, I made my first little black book from these contacts, for a writer friend whose work I wanted to find a response to. I hesitantly showed this little book to Pieranna Cavalchini, as a private story. At the same time I was beginning to slowly photograph the museums collection, somehow drawn mainly to the chairs, in hindsight. As though they were the people that I would have, in my earlier work, made portraits of. I then made a little book of my museum images for Pieranna, when I returned for the residency in 2003. Since then I have made 12 such books, each one for a specific person, that lies in their homes somewhere in the world. Sometimes they remain closed and sometimes the friends open them onto a mantel piece. A private exhibition for one person, sometimes traveling with them.

In the spring of 2003 I went to Florence to meet with Fausto Calderai. He led me into various homes in Florence including his own. I spent an entire day alone in his house, conversing with his chairs, darting from room to room as the light changed. The room upstairs felt as though I was making once again a family portrait. From these contact sheets I made a little black book for him, that he carried in his pocket to Greece. Now this little black book will be shown in the Chairs exhibition in the Gardner.

When we decided to make an exhibition of chair portraits for the Gardner, it took awhile for me to decide to print the catalogue in a similar format. I had so cherished the privacy of them and so we decided that these books would not be sold but privately distributed by my friends. Each friend being given 10 such books, and the decision of who they would be passed onto, would remain unknown to me.

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In conversation with
Fausto Calderai
Andrea Anastasio
Pieranna Cavalchini
Alan Chong

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India Coffee House

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