

# Ross Coates

## About Ten Years

Sometimes people ask me where I live and when I say “Moscow” they always ask why I don’t speak Russian well. Then I have to explain that my Moscow is in Idaho. Marilyn and I moved here about ten years ago from Pullman, just across the border in Washington State. As the title indicates this book is about the work that I’ve done since the move.

But isolating any period in an artist’s life seems pretty arbitrary unless you’re one of those whose art zips along in a linear fashion. My work has always slid around in place and time and doesn’t fit comfortably into a nice neat linear analysis. Partly that may be the result of a lot of years college teaching... bouncing ideas off fifteen or twenty kids three days a week...makes it difficult to believe in logical progressions. But we’ve done the best we can.

And what is it all about, the drawings and the installations, the forays into book art and the constructions of various kinds? Well, I’ve always liked books and I like to read, and I’m even attracted to the mystery of books written in languages that I don’t understand. When I was ten or eleven, I kept overflowing scrapbooks filled with clippings about things that interested me (my mother saved them). Now when I travel, (which I also like to do), I’ve always kept a journal, and pasted things in the journal, and drawn in the

journal, and written on the drawings. It was only a short step then to write and collage on drawings that were outside the journal.

And the other pieces also have always started out as personal vignettes in my mind or as magical connections between objects on my work table, so it was just another short step then to think of all my work as stories... stories about a place, a relationship, a history, a direction... The writing becomes a design element, and the objects become words, and the two elements are constantly trading places. As Jeffrey Rian said in Echoes, “Ambiguity is one of art’s most intriguing attributes.”

One can find stories in lots of places, so I don’t believe that I need to keep my story between two hard covers.

My work has increasingly become a traveler’s record of my personal journey.

These last ten years are really **from Moscow with love.**

**Ross Coates**

Moscow, Idaho