THE PEEP BOX

The peep box was a popular amusement from the 18th and 19th centuries. It was a very early example of a virtual reality technology (showing immersive, realistic 3D scenes.)

Content was varied, but included "exotic" scenes of faraway lands (and peoples), biblical scenes, and state sponsored events that celebrated new technologies. In this way peep boxes diseminated images of empire and encouraged the public to perceive technology positively, as tools that enabled social and economic "progress" set to imperial standards and ideals.

However, anyone can make a peep box and fill it with their *own* stories, images and experiences.
I made peep boxes that were meant to oppose the traditional images that old peep boxes contained. I included images of recent political protest and civil disobedience - images that represented mass discontent with the status quo instead of re-enforcing it.

Peep boxes of Occupy Wall Street and Standing Rock protests

Making a peep box provides an opportunity for anyone to share images and tell stories they believe *should* be valued and amplified.

At the same time, home-made peep boxes are also handmade alternatives to digital technologies, free from meta-data that can be surveilled, or restrictive pay-walls that limit access.

This PDF is a creative resource for free use. In it I offer a guide to how to create a home-made peep box out of easily findable, cheap materials.

Once you have made one, and know all the different parts, you can adapt, tweak, experiment and elaborate any part of it to suit your story's needs.

Peep boxes of the Flint, Michigan water crisis, and recent women's reproductive rights protests.

What you will need:

- ☐ Paper
- ☐ Cardboard (old cereal box will do fine)
- ☐ Scissors or cutting implements
- ☐ Glue
- ☐ Magazines/newspapers or drawing materials to take images from/make images
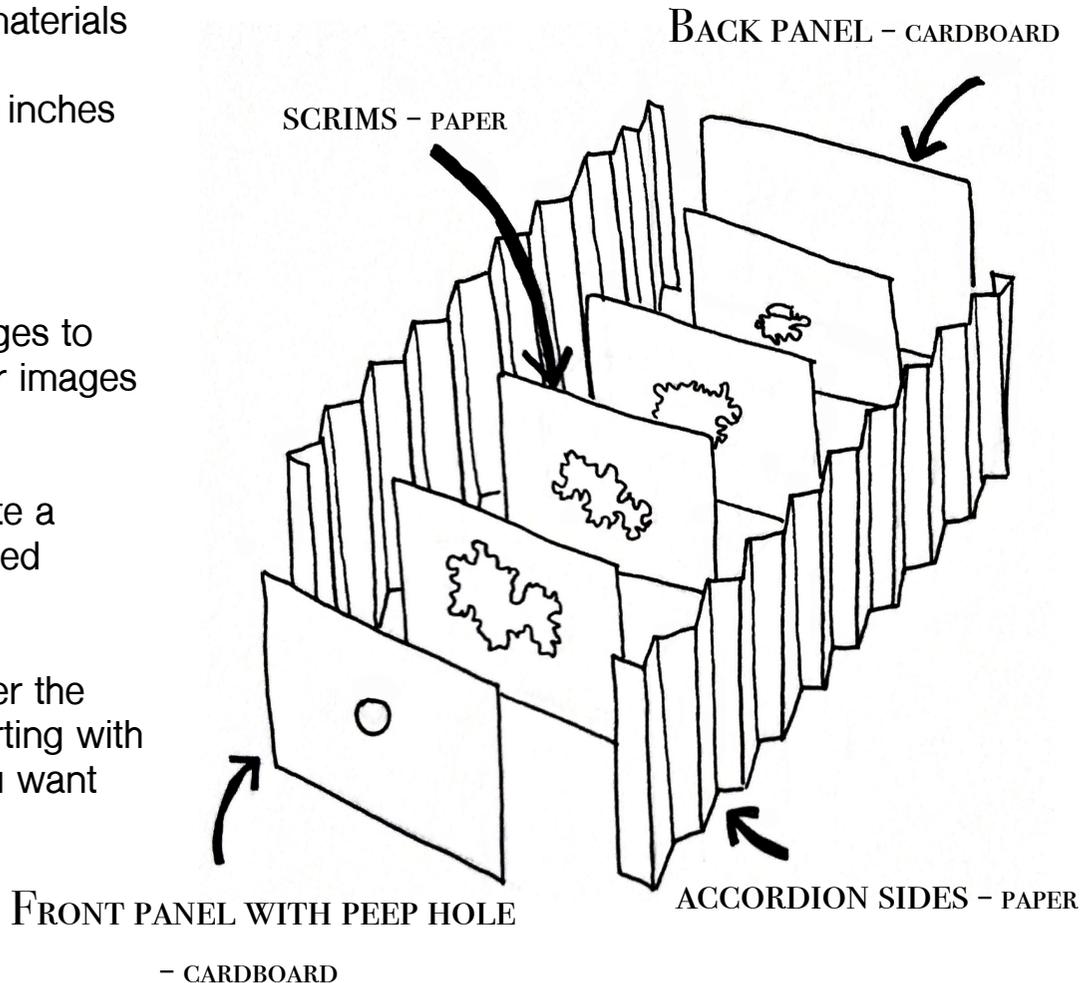- ☐ Measuring tape/ruler - to measure in inches

Tips:

Find a range of images - smaller images to put on the scrims at the back - bigger images to put on the scrims toward the front.

Images do not have to match or create a realistic scene - sometimes mismatched images can make a powerful point.

The more scrims you have, the greater the depth effect will be. I recommend starting with at least 4 scrims, adding more as you want and if you have time.

MAKING A PEEP BOX

BACK PANEL – CARDBOARD

SCRIMS – PAPER

FRONT PANEL WITH PEEP HOLE

– CARDBOARD

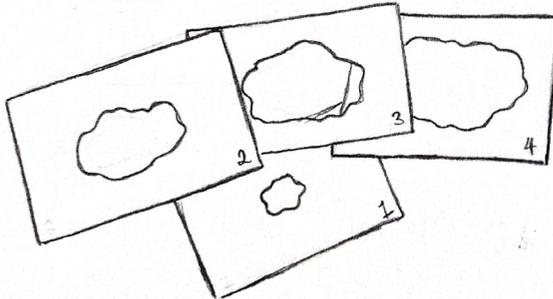ACCORDION SIDES – PAPER

CONSTRUCTION

1.

Cut out all pieces of box (see page 1) I recommend making the box roughly 5 x 7 inches big and the accordion sides roughly 20 inches long (before folding). Fold the sides into accordions. The folds can be as bog or small as you like.
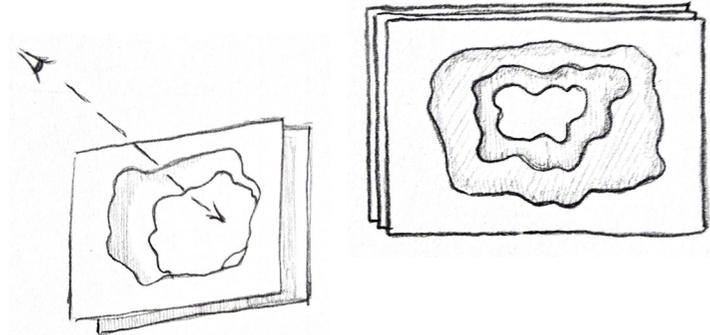
2.

Focus on the scrims - these will take the most time. On each scrim draw a shape in the middle, and cut it out. Start with a small shape, about an inch squared, then on each subsequent scrim make the shape bigger. These will be a guide for where to glue your images.
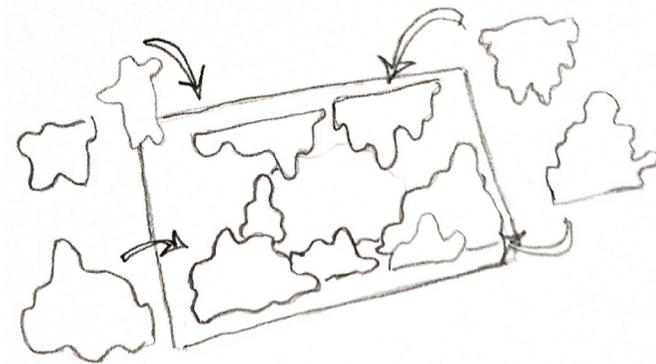
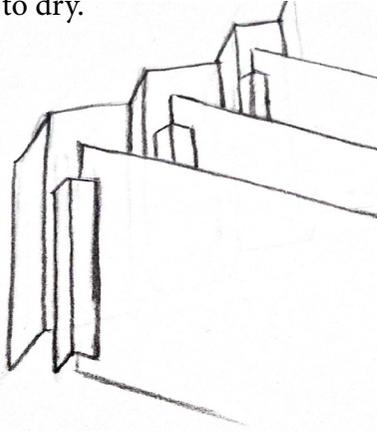Check the alignment of your scrims by placing one on top of the other.

3.

Add your images to your scrims. You can draw them yourself, or you can use photographs or images from newspapers of magazines. Think of scrims as mini collages. Smaller images on the back scrim, larger images on the front-most scrims. Dont forget to include something on the back panel. Leave the glue to dry.
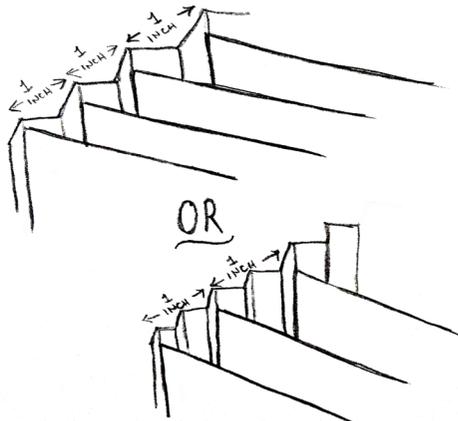
4.

Attach (glue) the scrims to the accordion sides with little strips of paper, folded in half. Glue one half of the strip to the back of the scrim, and the other half to the accordion side. Attach in the creases where the accordion sides fold. Leave the glue to dry.
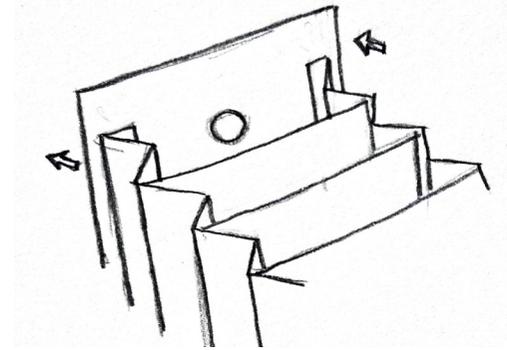
Depending on how big you made the folds, each scrim should be an inch or two far from the one before or after.

OR

5.

Glue the accordion sides to the insides of the front and back panels. Leave until glue is dry.

6.

Put a heavy book/weight on top of everything to flatten the peep box. Leave overnight. The next day, be careful when you extend/open the box as you may need to pull apart sections that have stuck together.