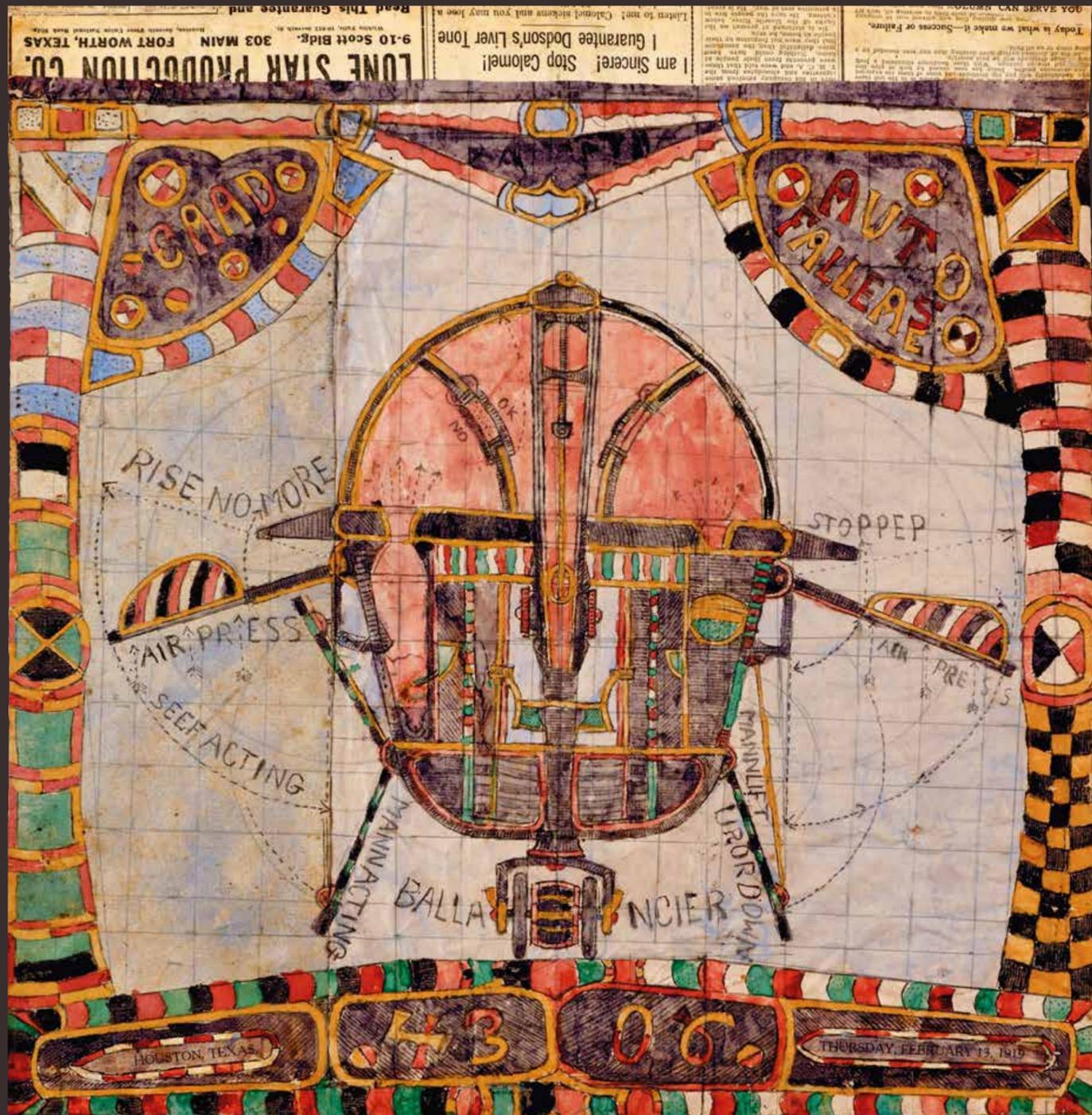


Charles A.A. Dellschau



Marquand Books, Seattle

D.A.P./Distributed Art Publishers, New York

Charles A.A. Dellischau

1830–1923

James Brett

Thomas McEvilley

Tracy Baker-White

Roger Cardinal

Tom D. Crouch

Barbara Safarova

Randall Morris

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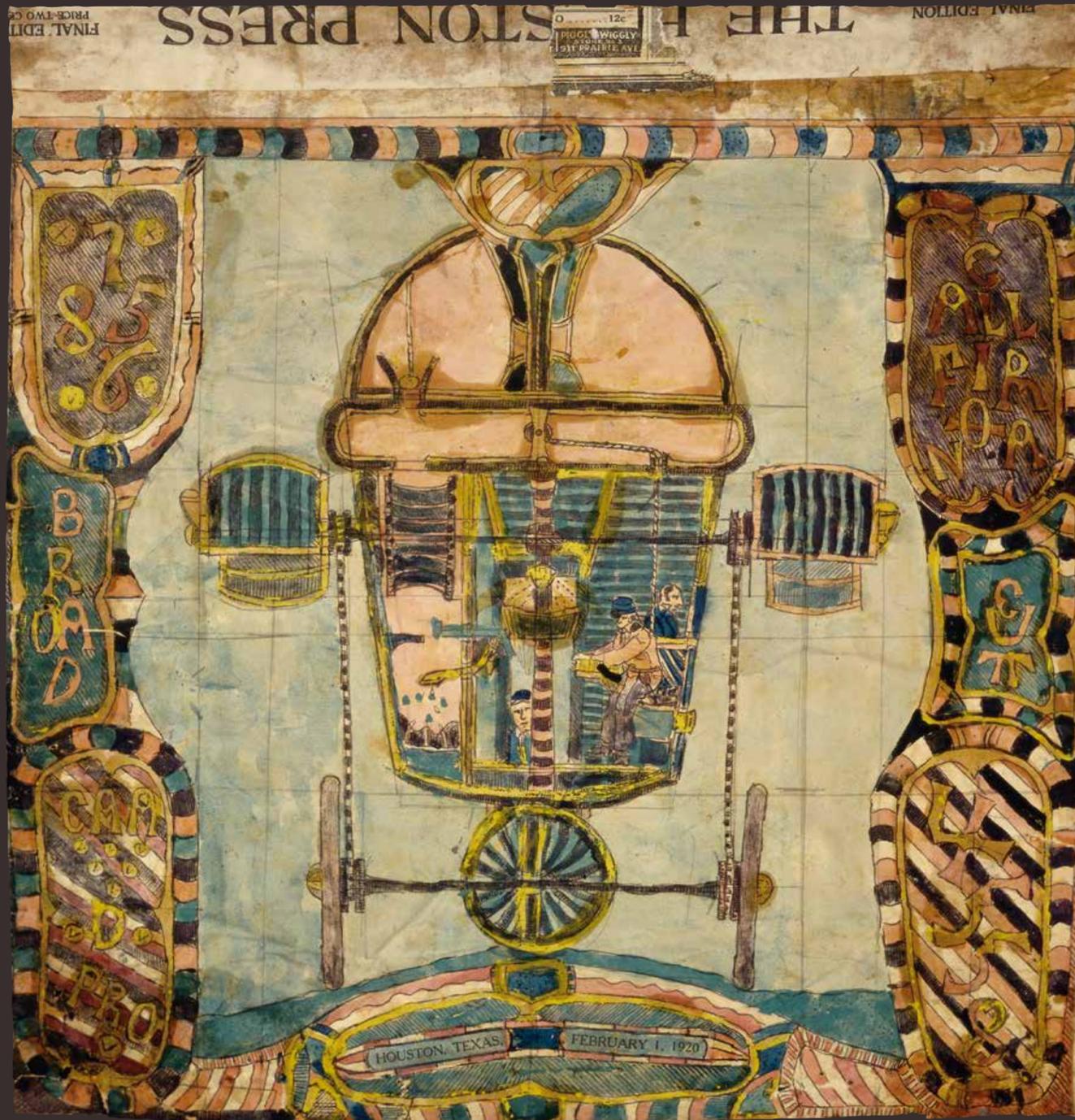


Plate 4558 California Broad Cutt, February 1, 1920, 17 x 16 in.,
The Museum of Everything, London

Hello dear friend of the air, why do you gaze at the skies? Is it perhaps that you want to fly, to sail, to flap on an aspirational Archimedean abstraction, a profound nonsense of watercolour stripes and industrial press cuttings?

If so, then you have come to the right place. You are not alone, far from it, for on these very pages shall you experience the complex contraptions of Mr. Charles August Albert Dellschau, C.A.A.D. as he signed himself, a lowly Prussian by birth, an everyday butcher by profession, an immigrant into the Americas whose lifetime imaginary hobby found form in a dozen books of impossible flying machines.

What are these strange aesthetic drawings? Dreams, most certainly, transcontinental shifts from one country to another. Think of a fellow who arrived in the new world to escape from the old and you will surely understand this hobby of flight. Yet the escape is not simply geographical, it is metaphysical. In flight comes the dream of what is to come, a visionary future filled with possibility, where a carver of meats knows no limitation, where mankind can aspire to immortality.

Like the brave collaged pilots he admires, so Dellschau's inventions are celebrated by the Sonora Aero Club, dozens of tiny figures who man the mighty vessels, shoveling in coal as they sail, book after book, into the hereafter. So look beyond the red, white, and blue, lift up the grease-proof paper, discover Charles Dellschau as a hero of the heavens, whose butchery is emblazoned all over his vessels, be they FLANCKS or FINE CUTTS.

There are self-absorbed notations, imagined passenger announcements, there are numbers, over-heads, sections and diagrams for movement, there are names, dates, cuttings, endless cuttings, plus puns-a-plenty. Best of all there is beauty, great beauty, a private expression of joy, so childlike in its creation, so limited in its colour palette, that it forms a body of work at once compelling, intimate, and grand.

These creations are truths, be they fiction or reality, made by C.A.A.D. for C.A.A.D. You, dear friend of the air, are privileged just to be here, taking a peek, gazing at the skies, and dreaming of up.

James Brett

The Museum of Everything, London, 2013

Introduction

Dedication and Acknowledgments

The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and all science. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer pause to wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead: his eyes are closed.

—ALBERT EINSTEIN

This book is dedicated to the life and art of Charles August Albert Dellschau (1830–1923). The pages that follow are a testimony to the artist's extraordinary legacy.

Many people's generosity of spirit went into the production of this book, and it is my pleasure to acknowledge them here.

Foremost, this project has the distinction of having seven genuinely passionate advocates for the artist behind it. They would be the distinguished James Brett, Thomas McEvilley, Tracy Baker-White, Roger Cardinal, Tom D. Crouch, Barbara Safarova, and Randall Morris. Thank you all for giving Charles Dellschau his due respect, at long last.

Thank you to Ed Marquand and his staff at Marquand Books: Leah Finger, Brielyn Flonex, Jeremy Linden, Adrian Lucia, Ryan Polich, Brynn Warriner, and Jeff Wincapaw. At D.A.P., thank you Todd Bradway.

Thank you, Tanya Heinrich, for your editorial commitment and vision. I am extremely grateful for the life, resonance, grace, and dignity with which you have imbued this project by going so far above and beyond the call of duty. Your contribution is immeasurable.

My deepest appreciation goes to J. Kevin O'Rourke of Maryland, who has made available all of the works from his extensive collection for this book. Furthermore, his continued support over the years has allowed me the opportunity to devote myself to the dissemination of Dellschau's art.

My sincere gratitude also goes to James Brett of The Museum of Everything, in London, for his early support of this project and full commitment to the appreciation of the artist, and for giving continued worldwide visibility to Charles Dellschau through exhibitions and publications of his collection.

Similarly, to Bruno Decharme of the abcd collection, Paris, it is with great admiration that I also applaud your efforts to give this artist's work and legacy respect throughout the world.

A recipient of my utmost gratitude is the owner of the earliest known Dellschau works—three volumes of illustrated memoirs written between 1898 and 1900—who wishes to remain anonymous. Without your insight and custodianship these magnificent works by Dellschau would not have survived, and indeed, it is one of the distinct great honors of my lifetime to be able to present them for the first time within the context of this book.

I must also acknowledge several Texas museum professionals who generously shared their time and resources. At the San Antonio Museum of Art: Katie Luber, The Kelso Director; Marion Oettinger Jr., curator of Latin American art; and Karen Baker, registrar. At the Witte Museum, San Antonio: Marise McDermott, president and chief executive officer; Amy Fulkerson, curator of collections; and Shellie Eagan, registrar. At the Menil Collection, Houston: Mary Kadish, collections registrar; and Amy Chien, rights and reproductions. A special thank-you to curator Michelle White for her ongoing enthusiasm and support for the artist.

Thank you as well to historian and genealogist W.M. Von-Maszewski, who helped with the biographical research on Dellschau's life in Texas, and Clint Drake of the George Memorial Library, Richmond, Texas.

Heartfelt thanks go to all the photographic artists who generously lent their time and talent toward representing Dellschau's works with integrity. My deep gratitude to René Pierre Allain of Brooklyn, who gave his full commitment to this project. Additional thanks go to John Berens of Brooklyn for his beautiful cover photograph. Thank you also to William Bengston, Charles Bechtold, Dimitris Skliris, Patrick Goetelen, Peggy Tenison, Todd White, Sylvain Deleu, Rick Gardner, Hickey-Robertson, Paul Hester, David Plakke, Madelaine Johnson, and especially Frank Maresca and Roger Ricco for generously donating the Ricco / Maresca Gallery photographic archives for this effort.

And to the honorary members of the Sonora Aero Club, I salute all of the above, as well as Tom Isenberg for his inexhaustible enthusiasm for Dellschau, Lynne Adele, Edward Blanchard, Shari Cavin, Scott and Susan Glazer, Audrey Heckler, Stacy C. Hollander, Lee Kogan, Rebecca Hoffberger, Phillip March Jones, George Morton and Karol Howard, Siri Von Reis, Charles Russell, Jan Petry, Ann Percy, Susan Crawley, Adam and Flora Hanft, John Foster, Larry Dumont, Harriet Finkelstein, Terry Nowell, Francois Meyer, Chris Navarro, John Jerit, Dennis Crenshaw, Robert Kruckemeyer, Rita Reif, Cynthia Greenwood, Ruben Calderon, Lauren Redniss, John Turner, Deborah Klotchko, Phil Allocco, Stephanie Smither, Michael Burke, Jennifer Pinto Safian, Leslie Umberger, Steven Simons and Cheryl Rivers, Bruce and Julie Webb, and the late and forever great Elli Buk, Kenneth Simpson, William Steen, and Kim Maenak. And to the late Dennis Oppenheim, one of the greatest artists of the second half of the twentieth century, whose early encouragement and admiration for Dellschau was a seminal inspiration for this book.

Of course, thank you to my family, Amie, Jordan, Phemie, Amber, and Anika.

As for myself, my contribution to this effort is well known to those close to the project, a psychotomimetic journey, as is the unravelling of the many layers of mystery in Dellschau's work.

Finally, thanks to those who preserved Dellschau's legacy: Fred Washington, Dominique de Menil, Mary Jane Victor, Cecilia Steinfeldt, Frank Maresca and Roger Ricco, and again, James Brett, Bruno Decharme, and the late William Steen.

And to the greatest of all Aeronauts: P.G. Navarro. No words can possibly express how indebted I feel to you for sharing so unselfishly and enthusiastically all of your original resources and research into Dellschau. Your lifelong commitment to the artist can only be described as beautiful, and truly articulates the above quote by Albert Einstein. Bless you, Wonder Weaver.

Stephen Romano
New York, 2013

Ink drawing of Charles A.A. Dellschau by P.G. Navarro, 1999
Private collection





1

Charles A.A. Dellschau's
 Aporetic Archive

Thomas McEvilley

An Orphic Journey

In 1921 the psychiatrist Dr. Walter Morgenthaler, working in Waldau, Switzerland, published a book called *Ein Geisteskranker als Künstler* (A Psychiatric Patient as Artist); the psychiatric patient was Adolf Wölfli. In the next year another psychiatrist, Hans Prinzhorn, began to collect and publish the artworks made by his patients at the university clinic in Heidelberg. This led to the 1922 book *Bildnerlei der Geisteskranken* (Artistry of the Mentally Ill).¹

These events were in the background of the artist Jean Dubuffet's decision in 1945 to visit mental hospitals in Switzerland and amass a collection of patients' art, which he called *art brut*—rough art or raw art: it hadn't been cooked yet. In 1948 Dubuffet published the Art Brut Manifesto, in which he defined *art brut* as “work produced by one who is unscathed by artistic culture”; all the inspiration, in other words, comes from the inside, nothing from the culture roundabout. “These artists derive everything . . . from their own depths,” he wrote, “and not from the conventions of classical or fashionable art.” In this and other writings he developed the idea that “madness . . . is merely a mechanism for revealing true creativity, a sign of ‘liberation’ from the stultifying effects of social convention.”² In 1949 the first *art brut* show, at the Galerie René Drouin, in Paris, was called “L'Art Brut préféré aux arts culturels” (Art Brut in Preference to the Cultural Arts). *Art brut*, then, seems to be uncultured art or art by an uncultured or uneducated person. Is that what uncooked means? Dubuffet in the essay for this show said that art has “nothing to do with ideas.” The “art of intellectuals,” he insisted, “is false art, counterfeit art, an abundantly ornate currency which nevertheless rings hollow.” Later Roger Cardinal would revisit the question of whether autistic people are more creative than others.³

Thus things got underway, and they soon sped up. In 1959 the Tate Gallery in London received some outsider works into its collection. In 1962 the Collection de l'Art Brut was located in Paris, with its first catalog appearing two years later. In 1967 the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris, showed the collection. In 1972 Harald Szeemann introduced conceptual art and minimal art at documenta V, in Kassel, Germany, and also the works of Adolf Wölfli and American outsider artist Howard Finster. In the same year Roger Cardinal published *Outsider Art*, though in his own writing he continued to use the term “art brut.” In this book, outsider art was proposed as a larger category that contained the smaller category of *art brut*. The outsider category also contained, for example, prisoners' art and children's art. In 1976 the Collection de l'Art Brut gained a permanent home in Lausanne, Switzerland. In 1979 the Hayward Gallery, in London, had a show of British outsider art cocurated by Roger Cardinal and Victor Musgrave, “Outsiders: An Art Without Precedent or Tradition.” Written on a placard at the show was a quote from Dubuffet that read:

Outsiders: Art does not lie down on the bed that is made for it; it runs away as soon as one says its name; it loves to be incognito. Its best moments are when it forgets what it is called.

In the catalog Musgrave posited a deep connection that would endure: “It offers an Orphic journey to the depths of the human psyche.” The unconscious part of the human mind has often been thought of as an underworld, and an “Orphic journey” seemingly refers to Orpheus's descent to hell and reascent from it. Musgrave, in conjunction with Monika Kinley, curated “Arte Incomum” (Unusual Art), an exhibition of outsider art for the 1981 São Paulo Bienal. Szeemann included outsiders again in “Der Hang zum Gesamtkunstwerk” (The Tendency toward the Total Work of Art), at the Kunsthaus Zürich, in 1983.

Adolf Wölfli

Adolf Wölfli (1864–1930) has been called the first outsider artist, a statement that doesn't add up chronologically, since Charles A. A. Dellschau (1830–1923) was born thirty-four years earlier than Wölfli. Still, Wölfli was the first outsider artist to be designated as such, so it was his work that catalyzed the concept of the outsider and affected its definition. When Dellschau's work first entered the discourse, some said he was an American Wölfli. This was not a light or meaningless observation. In fact, there are pronounced similarities between Dellschau's and Wölfli's work. Their obsessive detail and structural order is much the same. Perhaps that is a result of both artists being northern or Germanic Europeans, or perhaps there is more to be said about it. Wölfli, like Dellschau, took up writing and drawing at what would usually be retirement age, and spent the last two decades of his life making a series of large hand-bound books containing hand lettering and thousands of illustrations.

The Mandala

Perhaps the most thorough correspondence between the oeuvres of Wölfli and Dellschau is that both are very involved in the tradition of the mandala. All of Dellschau's drawings of airships (which he called *Aeros*) involve an underlying mandala form. *Mandala* is a Sanskrit word for a type of illustration that goes back to at least the Late Bronze Age and probably the Neolithic. It was perhaps originally regarded as the floorplan of a temple (or a monastery, as C. G. Jung has it), with four entrances at the four cardinal points and everything balanced around the center and the quaternity that rises from it as in a compass or a clock face.⁴ In the Jungian tradition it is believed that when someone “constellates” the mandala archetype it means his or her personality is seeking to center, harmonize, and balance itself. The occurrence of this motif in the work of mental patients is not unusual or surprising. Its basic meaning is “the premonition of a centre of personality.”⁵ This is experienced as a self-revelation: “The energy of the central point is manifested in the almost irresistible compulsion and urge to *become what one is*.”⁶ This “what one is” is experienced not as the ego but as a *self*.

Charles A. A. Dellschau

Charles August Albert Dellschau was born in 1830 in Brandenburg, Prussia, grew up there, and at age nineteen immigrated to the United States. He is believed to have arrived at the port of Galveston, Texas, in 1849 and settled in Richmond, just southwest of Houston, where he worked as a butcher—the trade that had been his father's. An Amnesty Oath he signed in 1865 (indicating that he had served in some capacity on the Confederate side in the Civil War) describes him as five feet three inches tall with brown hair and eyes. The one known photograph of him suggests he was balding and paunchy. In the 1850s he somehow became associated with a group of men in Sonora, California, that he would later call the Sonora Aero Club. The members of the club were occupied with the attempt to invent, design, and build a flying vehicle—or a number of them.

At that time an airship meant primarily a balloon. The Sonora Aero Club meetings took place when ballooning was a craze. In 1803 the Royal Navy lofted observation balloons from ships with people in the baskets. In the same year a Frenchman flew four hundred miles in a balloon. In 1809 a hydrogen-filled balloon used wings for changing direction. Various steam-engine dirigibles and aeroplanes were

tried in the 1840s and '50s. In 1852 Henri Giffard built the world's first passenger airship, driven by a steam engine.

In the midst of this activity, which was followed assiduously in the newspapers, Dellschau seems to have moved to California gold country and to have spent around four years there, from 1856 to 1859. Upon his return to Texas, he found work as a butcher and got married to a widow named Antonia Helt, who had a five-year-old daughter. The family grew to include two more daughters and a son.

In 1877, when Dellschau was forty-seven, his wife and young son both died. A decade later, he relocated to Houston with his stepdaughter, who had married a saddle maker named Anton Stelzig, and Dellschau occupied a room of their house. Dellschau seems to have lived, in the middle of an active and expanding household, a quiet and inconspicuous life, indeed almost reclusive. After working as a butcher for approximately thirty years, he clerked at the Stelzig saddlery for another decade or so. Thereupon, in his late sixties, he retired from the family business and continued to live in the Stelzig home.

Now, in his retirement years, Dellschau's creative energies came to the forefront of his consciousness. From the meager available knowledge of his life up to this moment nothing is known about his education and training except that his father had been a butcher and he followed his father's trade. Whether he had ever worked with drafting or with writing is unknown, but he dove headlong into both those activities and continued working obsessively at them for the following twenty-three years. It is worth mentioning that outsider artists often grow into the role of artist in their old age; outsider art is almost a retirement profession.

First Dellschau spent two years or so—from around 1898 to 1900—writing and illustrating his memoirs, two volumes in English and one in German. The earliest is called *In Evening Hours of Lisure Recollections of real and speculative Work of Friends in Time long gone by from a Friend yet here The are gone but their Work is not forgotten*. The *Recollections* contains, among other things, an account of some of the events he was involved in (or witnessed—or maybe just heard about) in Sonora in 1854–1859. At the same time or immediately after this writing, he went on to write another text, again in English, called *Recollections real and speculative Works on Ideas of Friends in for higher Aims long gone by second part*. This “second part” consists of his responses to a letter he read in the *Houston Post* in December 1898 that describes the basic concept of jet propulsion. At some point Dellschau translated the English texts into a German manuscript, with the two parts titled *Erinnerung vergangener Jahre Zeit und Sittenspiegel niedergeschrieben und illustriert in freien Stunden Zweiter Theil* (Recollection of Years Past of time and a Way of Life Written and Illustrated in Idle Hours) and *Erinnerungen über Wahre und Versuchs Arbeiten Gedanken Ideen von Freunden längst todt, aber nicht vergessen von einem jetzt hier Der bringt sie aufs Papier von den Kerl habt ihr es nicht erwartet* (Recollections of real and experimental work and thoughts and ideas by friends long dead but not forgotten, put presently to paper by one who knew them, you would not have expected this from that guy). The memoirs were handwritten in a cursive script with letters that tend to lean forward at about forty-five degrees. Each line is remarkably straight and parallel and the blocks of script occupy almost the entire page, with only small margins on the left and bottom. Occasionally letters have been written over to clarify them—in one case changing a small *e* to a capital *E*. The overall impression of the writer's personality is that he is careful, neat, given to small and fine work, and wants to get things right.

After writing his memoirs, Dellschau began to make drawings and collages, painting in very thick watercolor on hand-cut sheets of butcher paper roughly eighteen inches square. Often the watercolor is applied so thickly that it looks as opaque as gouache. It stands up visibly on the page. These paintings are usually pictures of Aeros, presumably those that had been designed (and flown?) by the Sonora Aero Club in the 1850s. In addition newspaper clippings are glued onto the pages and there are elaborately lettered bits of text, sometimes in the Latin alphabet and occasionally in a simple alphabetic code. Dellschau called the pages “Plates” and the news clippings “Press Blooms,” seemingly a reference to flowers pressed in books. The whole complicated work is not so much a text as a collage—the text being one of the elements of the collage, along with representational paintings and drawings (mostly of various Aeros), hand-lettered messages, press clippings, and elaborate borders or framing devices that conspicuously assert the art nature of the pages they appear on.

For thirteen years (1908–1921) Dellschau worked on these Plates, binding them with shoestring into large book-like objects. Twelve of these “books” survived, but it seems, judging from the careful dating and numeration of each page, and large gaps in the numeration, that there were perhaps ten others of the same size and type whose whereabouts are unknown.⁷ The twelve books contained in all about two thousand pages produced at the rate of about one every two days.⁸ Each page is an ambitious, complicated work unto itself, bearing intricate and delicate and sometimes secret messages in both visual and verbal symbols. In contriving these powerful and somewhat inscrutable messages Dellschau seems to have felt he was archiving certain historical facts connected with his years in Sonora—but their historicity has not been evidentially confirmed, and “archive” may be too simple a description of what he was up to.

Yet, archivist or not, Dellschau, as far as is known, had no audience or readership for these works. He labored on his creative output over a span of more than twenty years, dying, in 1923 at age ninety-three, without having made any provision for the publication—or even the preservation—of his accumulated works, which the Stelzig family simply stored in the attic after his death, along with some other things the family was keeping there.

The Fate of Dellschau's Work After His Death

For forty years Dellschau's thousands of Plates moldered in the darkness of a closed attic, gathering dust. The only intrusion known to have taken place was when a male child of the Stelzig family became curious about the Dellschau books and rummaged through them. Sometime in the 1960s there was a fire elsewhere in the house, and a fire inspector said to clear the debris out of the attic. So, after four decades in the secret dark, gently wafting the aura of twenty years of solitary late-night concentration into the depths of shadowy and slightly sinister corners, over the pieces of sad furniture with sheets flung over them and gathering dust, Dellschau's life-work was carried unceremoniously out into the light of day and literally left in a heap in the gutter. (It was born into the gutter, you might say.) So the first venue for Dellschau's oeuvre was his bedroom; the second, an attic; the third, a heap in the gutter. From this point there is uncertainty, and two versions have emerged. First, that a furniture refinisher named Fred Washington, making his rounds to see what people had thrown out, found Dellschau's stuff and took it to his shop in Houston, called the OK Trading Post. Another version adds another pair of hands

and another transaction. The heap in the gutter, on this account, was taken to the dump by a garbage truck. In the junkyard a nameless picker found it and sold it to Fred Washington for \$100.

In any case, the story is that once Washington had Dellschau's things in his shop they spent some time under a stack of old carpets or, in another rendition, tarpaulins. Before long they were discovered by a browser who recognized them as artworks of some kind, and then the books began their wanderings through the artworld and its levels of society.

The find made under a pile of carpets in the OK Trading Post was talked about a bit and began to be split up and moved in various directions—mostly upward (through the classes). Four of the twelve books were acquired by the Menil Collection, in Houston, which had previously shown some interest in outsider art.⁹ Fred Washington sold the other eight books to a man named P.G. Navarro, who is an interesting figure in the story. Navarro was a practicing commercial artist in Houston who in his spare time had developed as a hobby an investigation of certain reported airship sightings.

These mysterious airship sightings occurred in the late 1890s first in Northern California (not far from Sonora), then throughout the United States but especially in the Southwest and Texas. The phenomenon was known in the press (not only in Texas) as the Great Texas Airship Mystery. Navarro was studying the airship mystery at the time Dellschau's books were discovered in the OK Trading Post, and it occurred to him that the Dellschau material might somehow be a part of it. Perhaps at first Navarro didn't know about the Sonora Aero Club and assumed that the Aero drawings referred to aeronautical events around the turn of the century.

You've got to admire this sensible guess, and as he started to carry it out it became even more admirable. Navarro filled several notebooks with his findings, and these pages are exquisite in conception and execution; his obsessive concentration on order and neatness was not so unlike Dellschau's own. Dellschau's aesthetic is more expressive—meaning somewhat looser and more gestural—whereas Navarro's notebooks are “expressive” of rigid order—more or less a contradiction in terms.

Perhaps Navarro appreciated Dellschau's books as artworks. In any case it is clear that for one reason or another—maybe aesthetic, maybe spiritual, maybe as a search for something he couldn't exactly name—Navarro felt a strong attraction toward the Dellschau material. It almost seems he got into a folie à deux with the long-dead Dellschau; in his notebooks, Navarro redrew many of Dellschau's pages, carefully and in detail. He worked many long evenings to decipher coded messages he found there in what looked vaguely like alphabetical symbols, as seen in Plate 1631 (at left), but from some other tradition. Navarro says Dellschau used a simple one-to-one substitution code and claims to have worked it out.¹⁰ He worked on this hobby for thirty years and became something of a philological scholar in the process. He is still alive now at age ninety-three, the age at which his ego-ideal Dellschau died. At some point Navarro sold four of the eight Dellschau books of drawings in his possession to the San Antonio Museum Association; two went to the San Antonio Museum of Art and the other two went to the Witte Museum, also in San Antonio, a museum devoted to South Texas culture. His remaining four books ultimately entered the art market and ended up in various hands.¹¹

P. G. Navarro's “Books of Dellschau”

Navarro worked long and hard on his documentation of Dellschau's work. The main report, entitled “Books of Dellschau,” is compiled in a five-hundred-page record book. It is an index of each Plate, each

Aero, each club member, Dellschau's terminology, and a chronicle of Navarro's history with the material and the process by which he conducted his research. The initial index of the Plates, which includes brief summary information, key words, and a few sketches of motifs, is joined by another index of each book, with more detailed sketches and observations of the Plates. Additional record books contain even more details and replicas of the drawings. Navarro attempted to make his record chronological, but in this respect there seem to be divisions in the artist's oeuvre. Dellschau was more out-of-time—more ahistorical—in the early work. But for the most part Dellschau was not as ahistorical as might be expected of someone who would fall into Cardinal's category of autistic artists. He definitely had a view of history that dominated his thought. But this view of history seems partly made up and partly devised to conceal this fact; the question of how far Dellschau himself believed it is open. So Dellschau may have been an obscure archivist, or a Trickster with a Lie to work on, or deluded, as some other outsiders seem to have been, such as Adolf Wölfli, Henry Darger, and Martín Ramírez. But, deluded or not, the enormous list in “Books of Dellschau” involves some recognizable themes, among them smatterings of his view of history.

Plate 1727 is described by Navarro as a “Newsclipping re: Airship War.” This is in connection with the Aero Hector, which is represented in seven of the surrounding Plates. Hector was the great Trojan warrior in the *Iliad*, and the name suggests that the Aeros were intended for use in war. This theme continues with a number of pictures of the Aero called War Goose on Plates 1776–1780, along with the somewhat cryptic reports “poem” and “The war lord reads poetry,” which may suggest or hint that the collage element contained a poem, perhaps about Hector. The War Goose was a version of the original airship made by a man named Peter Mennis and called Goose (sometimes Goosey, sometimes Gander). On the same page Dellschau adds the query, “What would Peter do now?” Is one supposed to glimpse a hidden history behind such references? The Goose, it seems, refers to the 1850s era—the Sonora Club version of history—and the War Goose recaps it in the era of the turn of the century, the age of the Wright Brothers, whose first manned flight was in 1903, and the age of the approaching war.

Plate 1856 (see page 171), Navarro notes, includes the following inscriptions: “Jeht nich” and “How would our members laugh, over the deeds of today's Aeronauts.” Dellschau is implying that he and his comrades in the Sonora Aero Club were more advanced in 1856–1859 than early twentieth-century aeronauts (such as the Wright Brothers).

Two Plates later we find, “Aero des Jeht Nich.” The phrase *jeht nich* looks like the more common German phrase *geht nicht*—(it) does not go. In fact, *jeht nich* seems to be the Berlinerisch form of *geht nicht*, that is, the form in the dialect peculiar to Berliners, which may include Dellschau. So the phrase “airship that does not go” might be a self-ridiculing joke by Dellschau.

Plate 1877 is described by Navarro as having the words “Das geht jaddock! auf papier! ‘Cruel feat cutting Goosey . . . and exposing Peter napping.’” It seems that Dellschau has made a drawing in which he “cuts” open the Goose and shows Peter Mennis inside sleeping—lying down on the job. Dellschau calls his own act of drawing “a cruel feat” and seems to have sympathy for Mennis in regard to a trick he himself has played on his friend. That little moment—“a cruel feat”—could indeed come from someone deeply involved in a delusion or daydream, feeling sympathy for one of his own characters. The following Plate, of the Aero Goosey, includes the information “Peter Mennis 1857 Builder, Touhume Co., Calif. ‘Nothing new on Earth says Brother Caro.’”

Details from P. G. Navarro's “Books of Dellschau”

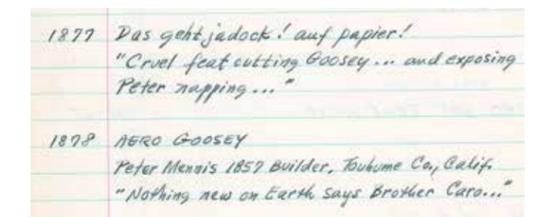
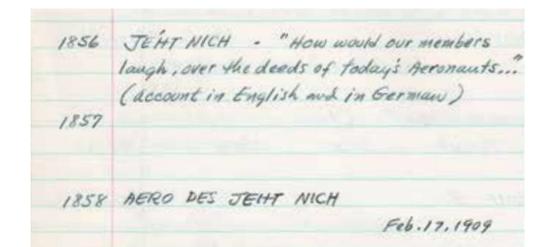
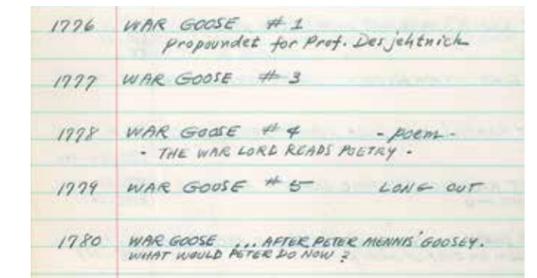
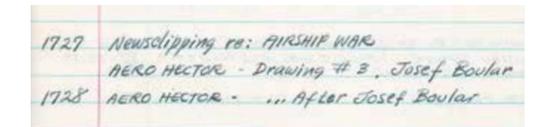
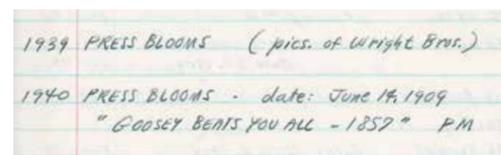
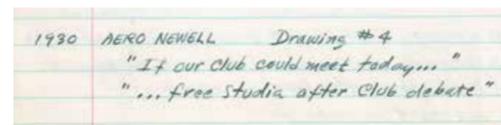
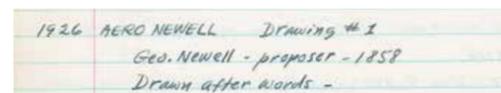
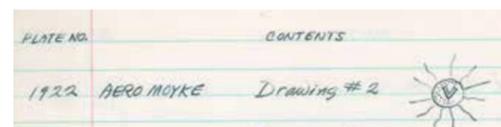
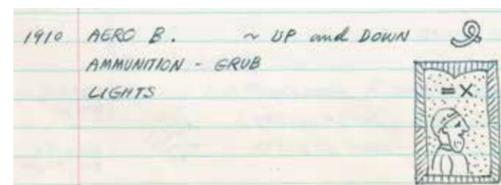


Plate 1631 Peter Mennis Ende, March 9, 1908 (see page 167)



Details from P.G. Navarro's "Books of Dellschau"



Of the many named characters who appear in these pages as members of the Sonora Aero Club, Peter Mennis seems to be the main one. He not only designed and flew the first airship, the Aero Goose, but also provided the mysterious anti-gravity fuel that supposedly permitted some of the airship designs of the club members to fly and which, when it ran out and could not be obtained, marked the end of the Sonora Aero Club. Drops of this Lifting Fluid fell onto an Electrande (a set of three rotating black-coated metal plates), causing a rising gaseous stream that would fill the pockets in which balloons of that time were filled with hydrogen gas, and have the same lifting effect.

Plate 1910 is titled "Aero B" and is inscribed with the words "up and down," "ammunition," "grub," and "lights." Navarro copied a looping symbol and added a little framed drawing to his notes of a bearded man in profile against a dotted ground headed by the scrap of formula "= X." This symbol could be part of the code DM = XØ, which appears on Plate 1688 with the apposition "A Hoax. Long Distance Aero Berlin." The next Plate is labeled Groser Aero Berlin, "Prof. Max des Jeh'tnich teasing Heinrich Schroeder." And Plate 1690 is inscribed "Aero Berlin From Below #3/pro des Jeh'tnich—proposer." The phrase *jeh't nich*, then, in addition to being a Berlinerisch form of *geht nicht*, is also found, in the Sonora Aero Club history, to be the name of the proposer of the Aero Berlin.

In his notes for Plate 1922, entitled "Aero Moyke," Navarro has sketched one of Dellschau's symbolic drawings that look rather like Egyptian cartouches. This one seems to represent the sun, with eleven rays radiating out from it, and within the circle of the sun a mottling that suggests sand, and the drawing of a V. In New Kingdom Egyptian tomb paintings the mottling means desert sand surrounding the burning sun. But in Dellschau's version the mottling that seems to suggest sand is inside the sun-disc rather than surrounding it. Does the V suggest the double mountain from within which the sun rises in the ancient iconography?

Plate 1926 is the first in a series of drawings pertaining to another major figure in the Sonora Aero Club, George Newell. "Geo. Newell—proposer—1858 / Drawn after words." Does "Drawn after words" mean that Dellschau never saw the Aero Newell but had heard a verbal description of it and based his drawing on that? Or does it mean "afterwards," later. Among several more appearances of Newell in Navarro's notebook is the quote "Don't believe every word I say." Plate 1930, another drawing of the Aero Newell, includes the musing "If our Club could meet today." Then: "free studia after Club debate." *Studia* is the word Dellschau used for his drawings of airships, seemingly the word "study" put into an Italianate form. He claims to remember accurately and in detail the discussions the Sonora Aero Club had fifty years before.

Navarro notes that Plate 1939 contains Press Blooms and "pics. of Wright Bros." At that time Dellschau clearly was not using only his fictional imagination to picture reality but also real contemporary aeronautic adventures reported in the newspapers. The point that drove his interest seems to have been the idea that those events around 1900 paralleled those that the members of the Sonora Aero Club supposedly experienced fifty years earlier. Perhaps in their day the unscheduled flights of Aeros made by club members might have led to "mystery airship" rumors. Perhaps there is another such club behind the new reports.

Plate 1940, dated June 14, 1909, contains Press Blooms and the haughty declaration "Goosey Beats You All—1857." This is evidently another claim that the Sonora Aero Club members were further advanced in the 1850s than the Wright Brothers and other twentieth-century would-be aeronauts.

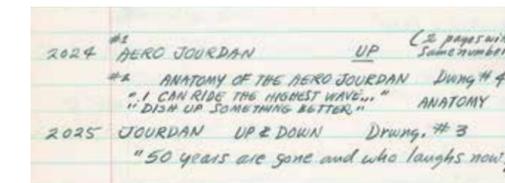
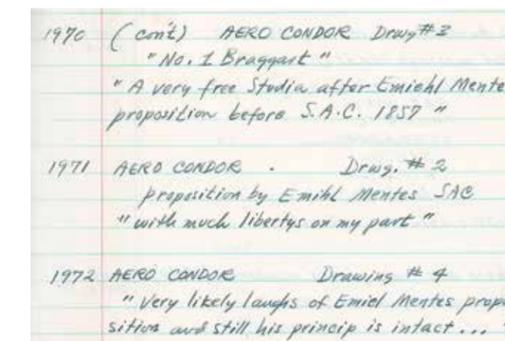
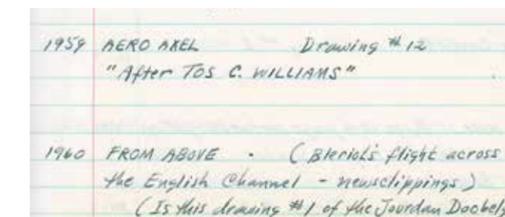
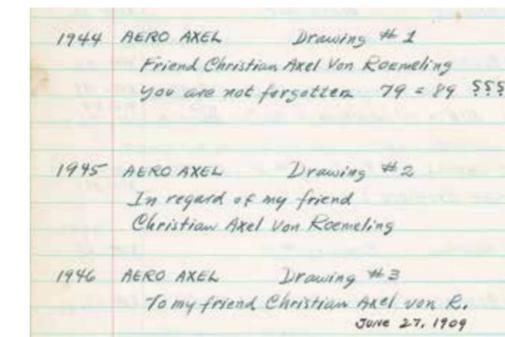
Plate 1944, of the Aero Axel, introduces "Friend Christian Axel von Roemeling" with the sentiment "you are not forgotten." The following two Plates are of the same Aero and bear sentiments to Dellschau's old friend. A few Plates later we find this narration, as transcribed by Navarro: "Looking at the plates of Aero Axel, my friend Williams say it weatherproof all-right in rain, yes—but . . . how in a big snow storm." Two points should be made. First, in this case the little glimpse inside the Sonora Aero Club—the question about the waterproofing—seems to suggest that it was historical (or at least that the idea of its historicity was plausible), unlike other signs to the contrary. Even more important is the fact that here for once Dellschau refers to a readership; he seems to say that he has a friend named Williams who would look at his work and comment on it. Was this a friendship from the 1850s? Or did this friend enter the private sanctum of Dellschau's room in the Stelzig house, and, if so, how many times and how often, and were there others? Or, did Dellschau take some of the work out of the Stelzig house to somewhere else to meet and show it to this friend? The Aero Axel in Plate 1957 is captioned "After Williams' idea." Perhaps this means that Williams expressed his "idea" in the 1850s period. The attribution to Williams may conflict with the fact that the Aero Axel has already been established as the proposal of Christian Axel von Roemeling (who, like Williams, is referred to as a "friend"). Perhaps he remembered them both from the 1850s or made them both up. But there does seem something legitimate underlying the anecdote about Williams revising von Roemeling's design. In addition there is confusion about credits, which seems believable. On page 418 of Navarro's "Books of Dellschau," for example, one reads that August Schoettler accused Juan Maria and Jose, two Spanish members of the club, of claiming as their own some discoveries that were actually made by other club members. Page 413 recounts that Dellschau made revisions to the Aero Jourdan that Jourdan himself, the original designer, objected to. Page 408 states that the Aero Goeit, with the Balancier, or landing device, hanging below it, snagged on a tree and crashed. Such failures sound realistic (cunningly realistic if indeed written by a Trickster). Even more so the story on page 400 of the "tragic flight that caused the death (by a broken neck) of a probable member of the Sonora Aero Club." (Why a "probable" member?)

Plate 1960 is described by Navarro as containing "Bleriot's flight across the English Channel—newsclippings," which illustrates the atmosphere of Dellschau's early twentieth-century work, where almost daily news clippings about aeronautical developments mix with the listing of important Aeros and their proposers from the possibly fictitious history of the Sonora Aero Club in the 1850s.

Navarro's notes for Plate 1970, of the Aero Condor, indicate that it contains the phrases "No. 1 Braggart" and "A very free Studia after Emiehl Mentés' proposition before S.A.C. 1857." Emiehl Mentés was another of the club members whom Dellschau says he remembers from the 1850s. Plate 1972, another drawing of the Aero Condor, contains the remarks: "Very likely laughs of Emiel Mentés proposition and still his princip is intact." Someone evidently laughed at Mentés's proposition yet in Dellschau's mind "his principle is intact."

Plate 2024 contains, among other things, the strange boast "I can ride the highest wave." Plate 2025 includes the comment "50 years are gone and who laughs now?" The implication is that the claims of the Sonora Aero Club in the 1850s have subsequently been proved true and those who laughed the first time the claim was made, in the 1850s, can no longer laugh. Yet that doesn't actually seem to be the case. Is this an example of Dellschau speaking from a delusion?

Details from P.G. Navarro's "Books of Dellschau"



The Contents of Dellschau's Books of Drawings

Dellschau leaves a picture of a reality that has to be pieced together from isolated words, images, scraps, and reversals. Currently the meager discourse on the artist includes one exhibition catalog from a 1997 show at a New York gallery and a book published a dozen years later by Dennis Crenshaw, *The Secrets of Dellschau*.¹² P.G. Navarro is credited as a collaborator on this book, which includes a list of about fifty Aeros and what detailed information they had on each.

A key element of Crenshaw's book is the fact that Dellschau's career was bookended by two aerial phenomena—in the 1850s the balloon craze and increasing experimentation with flight, and in the late 1890s the series of unexplained airship sightings called the Great Texas Airship Mystery. Dellschau read the Texas papers and followed aviation stories in general—but especially the mystery airships, which are referred to in some of the Press Blooms.

The story of what was going on in Sonora in the 1850s can be filled in somewhat sketchily from the artist's memoirs combined with the hand-lettered texts in the twelve books. In all, about sixty people are mentioned by name as being involved in the flight-experiments of the 1850s, and about a hundred airships, presented in the texts and depicted in the paintings, with some mention of technical developments from one model to the next. There is dim talk of an entity referred to, after Navarro's decoding, as NYMZA, possibly a group of people in Germany that in some unexplained way is supposed to lie behind the activities of the Sonora Aero Club. Those activities are presented by Dellschau as a record of events that took place at the meetings of the club, where one member might present to the others a design or an idea for a design, which would be discussed and criticized.

The drawings in Dellschau's books, when Navarro got to them, were in disarray; many pages had been removed from their bindings and stacked or heaped in no particular order. It is not entirely clear who reconstructed the pages as books, nor if it was done correctly. Navarro may have been involved at that stage, as part of his attempt to identify everything and organize it all, along with comments, in his voluminous notebooks, and his work does not seem to be that of a maniac or crank. If he wasn't a scholar when he started, he made himself one.

Various authors have proposed different appraisals of the truth value of Dellschau's account. At one extreme is the opinion of Fred Washington, who, like Navarro, spent a lot of time studying the drawings when he had them at the OK Trading Post. Washington believes Dellschau was a seer whose transcendent visions were, perhaps, above categorization. Dellschau's "brain," he surmised, "was far too advanced to function in the world as we know it . . . His whole mind had been taken over; it wasn't of this reality."¹³ But he doesn't say what exactly he thinks "took over" Dellschau's mind. Was it a delusion? A message from outer space? A mystical flash that just didn't stop?

Navarro expresses different positions at different moments. His skepticism is apparent when he says: "The lack of records would seem to indicate that the entire story of the Sonora Aero Club is a figment of his imagination." But at the same time Navarro found the books compellingly convincing. Crenshaw notes that "Pete felt almost without a doubt that Dellschau was diagramming a working machine. The detail was too precise, the same pieces of machinery placed time after time on his Aeros."¹⁴ The later Aeros maintained the same mechanical and aerodynamic principles as the Goose. "If Dellschau was making these drawings up in his mind as he went along it's hard to believe that he would continue to use the same components used in his early Aeros to make up the working machinery in his later

machines."¹⁵ Dellschau's imagination, according to this view, was too limited; he kept repeating the same Aero design a hundred times over twenty years. Why didn't his imagination produce further developments in the design of the Aeros? Studies of doodles indicate that they do change and develop over time. Dellschau's paintings do change a bit over the years, but not in the mechanics envisioned for the Aeros. The difference is more a matter of style.

Dellschau's early work may strike one as pragmatic and technical, while in the later work it seems he is either losing his mind or becoming an artist. The touch of the brush becomes increasingly gestural, and added emphasis seems placed on the ornamental borders.

What artworks might Dellschau have been familiar with? Another question that stands alone.

The Aesthetic of Dellschau's Art

It is not hard to see Dellschau's work as art—especially the later work. The books themselves have a sculptural presence with a rustic frontier aura. They could be props in a movie. But most artlike are the airship paintings, of which there are many hundreds. Dellschau's approach to painting features drawing, which is to say it emphasizes line over color. Much of it could be called drawing with paint. The airship paintings have the fascination of something light (a bubble) hanging in the air. They really do speak right out to the beholder in a way that seems like art—a parading of their sensory nuances along with the overlay of a verbal message that may permanently remain not totally understood. One of the flagrant qualities of the Plates is the fact that much of the color is heavily tinted—meaning that there is a lot of white mixed into it; broad areas of the compositions are left translucent, allowing the light of the page to shine through. Along with the elegant simplicity of Dellschau's drawings comes the sense of an object with a lightness not exactly ghostly and not quite supernatural. It floats like a snowflake or a Christmas ornament or a ghost—yet with remarkable detail. There is a quality of thinking there that either a child or an adult could follow.

Each of Dellschau's Plates is carefully composed and attractively, even expertly, merges its verbal and visual elements. For a similar feeling about space and the beings who might inhabit it in the imagination one may think of the gods' departure in Jean-Antoine Watteau's *Embarkation for Cythera* (1717), or the ceilings of Tiepolo—both Rococo depictions of the edge between historical space and pure or ideal space. Dellschau's Aeros occupy that edge, too.

Some Aeros have one balloon or lifting chamber, some two. These mechanical alternatives lead to two different types of compositions. Many of the Plates are based on unity and structured around the central point, which gives birth to a mandala-like eight-petaled lotus form. Others are based on portraying the moment when duality emerges from unity. Those are based around a central axis rather than a central point, and a heraldic flanking device is structured around that axis. Some of Dellschau's renderings embody what you might call an aristocratic use of space, somewhat as in Renaissance painting; others give the impression of a working-class view of space, with hints of comics and advertisements.

Numerous Plates are devoted primarily to Press Blooms but place them in pictorial settings; the different orders of the sensual and the cognitive are cunningly brought closer and closer to one another as they contribute to the same pictorial effect. In Plate 4441 (right, top) a huge Press Bloom hangs suspended in a pale blue sky, like an Aero; the picture of an airplane dropping a bomb in the *Scientific American* clipping in turn parodies or ironizes the fact that the Press Bloom itself is in the position of

Top: Plate 4441 Press Blooms (Attacking Forest Fires with Gas Bombs), August 6, 1919 (see page 255)

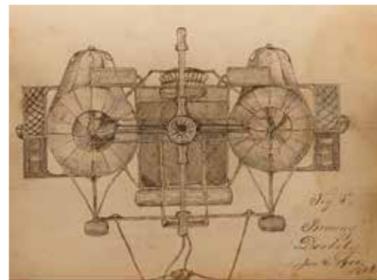
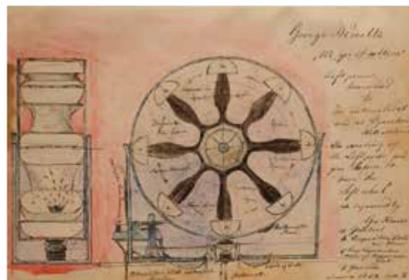
Bottom: Plate 4520 Maybe, December 3, 1919 (see page 275)



Top: *Recolections second part*, Otto Krauses Batery Revolving Generator and Releaver, 1900 (see page 10)

Middle: *Recolections second part*, George Newells “We goe it allone,” 1899–1900 (see page 124)

Bottom: *Recolections second part*, Brownny Doobely, 1900 (see page 113, bottom)



an Aero. The massive Bloom hangs on ornamental—even somewhat palatial—brackets on both sides, which in turn are fastened securely to an emphatic border in primary colors, white, and black whose tiny framed rectilinear abstractions might be found on a Neolithic bowl. In the similar Plate 4520 (page 21, bottom), the Press Blooms in or around the center are embedded in massive ornamental borders, which become picture panels or series themselves.

Plate 4520 is a special masterpiece. The large central panel shows a Press Bloom in which a dirigible is crashing into the ocean. In the water below is a wooden boat with a crew of six, and a vague aura of another era. Above it the elaborately framed newspaper headline “Border Drug Smugglers Use Planes” seems unconnected to the scene of which it is the heading. In the border at the bottom right, in large yellow print cunningly superimposed on circus-like primary stripes, is the word *Maybe*, also seemingly in a world by itself, only vaguely integrated into the whole pictorial / linguistic puzzle or reality. These and other elements are lovingly and intricately unified on a page, along with many elements that work and interpenetrate with some difficulty. The decorative framing of disaster (which Roger Cardinal identifies as *schadenfreude*) is like Horace’s famous poem beginning *Suave mari magno*, in which he says that it is pleasant to stand safe on the shore and watch a ship caught in a storm out at sea.

Prominent among the center-based compositions are several that present massive eight-cogged gears (turning at the center of the Platonic clockwork universe) like monstrous mandalas. A great example—another of Dellschau’s iconic masterpieces on which he seems to have expended especially loving or reverential care—is a page from *Recolections second part* that bears the heading “Otto Krauses Batery Revolving Generator and Releaver” (left, top). It seems that the whole energy of the revolving universe is held within a transparent glass vial in an ambience of blue air or water—like a perfume. It is a mighty icon that one can almost hear groaning in the turns. The central mandala figure (representing the inner harmonic motion of the universe) has eight rays, or petals. The mandalas scattered throughout Dellschau’s work are almost always eight-petaled, like the primary and secondary compass points or the quarterly positions of a clock face. The four- and eight-petaled mandala was the ancient Sumerian form, where the iconograph, which is still everywhere in human culture, came from. In this instance the mandala is dated on one side 1858 and on the other 1900, the dates invoking both of the spheres of aeronautical activity that lay behind Dellschau’s work—the Sonora Aero Club in the late 1850s and the Great Texas Airship Mystery of the late 1890s. The droplets of Mennis’s antigravity fluid are dripping into the revolving mandala from above; power derived from them presumably keeps the mandala turning (clockwise, it seems).

Another, also from the same volume of the memoirs, is headed, “George Newells ‘We goe it allone’” and dated 1858 (left, middle). On the left one sees the drops of Lifting Fluid creating an upward current. The eight-limbed mandala is centered around a smaller center-plus-quadrature motif. As in many Neolithic and Early Bronze Age icons the cosmic quadrature rises out of a system of concentric circles and revolves clockwise. The Liftpower, which is generated on the left, is used to turn the Liftwheel. This tiny engine, it seems, turns the universe.

The mandala center-plus-quadrature icon occurs throughout Dellschau’s Aero designs, often portrayed not as the center of everything but as one ancillary part among others. It’s a form that appears often in *Recolections second part*. In one drawing, of the Brownny Doobely (left, bottom), the little mandalas appear on both sides in the heraldic flanking arrangement, with eight blades for the eight petals of the

lotus. In other drawings the form occurs with variations but always with the eight primary and secondary compass points. In Plate 3352 (right, top) the eight-petaled rosette at the center is made up of Press Bloom photos of “Eight Members of the New British War Cabinet.” As the mandala sheds its meaning all around it, war is presented here as an ongoing universal life form permeating everywhere. The cabinet members are like devils.

Dellschau’s depiction of the Aeros involves some artistic license; he found in the concept of a device for ascent some decorative room to explore alongside symbolic meanings. Dellschau has chosen to make use of this freedom to give meaning to the work by the incorporation of symbolic forms into it. To begin with he has imagined his spaceships along Platonic lines—meaning with circular mandala-like forms, usually divided into eight interior segments, placed in dominating positions in the compositions. The message is an exhortation to live in peace and harmony—the ethical message inherent in unity, centrality, and circularity. Aristotelian cosmology has a similar ethical tinge. The motion of eternal entities is always circular, as their shape is apt to be spherical. Aristotle seems to have adopted this from the Pythagorean-Platonic tradition, and indeed Dellschau’s imagined conceptions of the Aeros are made up of circles within circles, like the gearbox of the universe.

Several of the Aeros are featured in numerous drawings—George Newell’s Airostant Stickfast, Eduard Hermsdorf’s Airostant Doobely, W.H. Brown’s Airo with the Suckerkicker, the Brownny Doobely, and finally and above all Otto Krause’s Idea, two drawings of which are made up almost completely of an array of circles within and around one another creating a constant flurry of rotation and energy (right, middle and bottom).

The Theme of Flight

The theme of flight has often been said to dominate the twentieth century. It is a theme with several branches and levels. There’s the Wright Brothers making an airplane, and then there’s St. Teresa flying above the treetops. On one level it is the old center-based mandala spirituality, with flight as an ascent from the center; on another it has an ecological aspect that has to do with the ambition to leave the earth (perhaps having used it up) and fly to unforeseen rematerializations. Renaissance paintings show saints and angels floating or flying around amid clouds in the same skies where Dellschau’s angelic Aeros are suspended light as a feather.

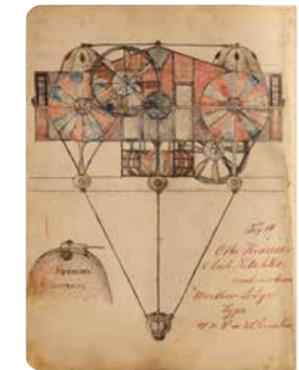
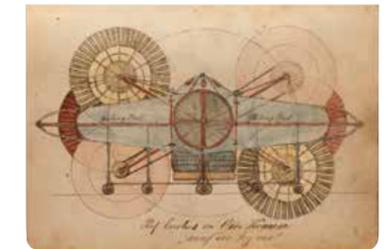
But there is an inner tension to the Aero drawings. The mandala form that much of Dellschau’s work involves is a vision of cosmic space as an enclosure, but the theme of flight or upward ascension implies escape from or flying up out of the cosmic enclosure. On the one hand, it may seem that the mandala theme with its positing of the wholeness of space is the primary theme rather than the theme of ascent or escape from it. On the other hand, the function of the mandala, though it is static in space the way a center is, is as a launching pad either out of the mandala or to a higher level of it conceived three-dimensionally. It provides stability but not a dead stability so much as a space crawling with life—perhaps it could be called a space for transformation, though it is not glimpsed at the moment of the blazing miracle—but the gentle ascent of a balloon floating silently up, up, and away.

The ascent or escape from the mandala, in fact, needs some magical or religious help, because it’s not just a matter of ascent but of descent also. “Of all the metaphors,” Gaston Bachelard says, “only those pertaining to height, ascent, depth, descent and fall are axiomatic. Nothing can explain them

Top: Plate 3352 War Press Blooms (Eight Members of the New British War Cabinet), May 27, 1915 (see page 224, top)

Middle: *Recolections second part*, Prof Carolus on Otto Krause, 1899–1900 (see page 116)

Bottom: *Recolections second part*, Otto Krause & Carl Nitschke combination Weather Lodge Type, 1899–1900 (see page 117)



but they can explain everything.”¹⁶ Eliphas Levi, in *The Mysteries of Magic*, presented his own form of the axiom: “The spirit clothes itself to come down, and strips itself to go up.”¹⁷ In Levi’s parable of the comet and the fixed star, the comet brags: “I am permitted to wander at will and vex the harmony of the spheres! . . . I am the proscribed, the eternal wanderer, who has infinity as domain.”¹⁸

Shamanic traditions around the world involve the claim of bodily flight. “Ancient India,” Mircea Eliade notes, “knows the ecstasy that makes ascension and magical flight possible.”¹⁹ Patanjali, in the *Yoga Sutras* (III.45), declares that yogis can obtain the power “to fly like a bird.” In the *Mahabharata* the sage Narada “soars into the sky and reaches the summit of Mount Meru.”²⁰ There is also “the myth of ascent to the sky by a ladder,” which goes back to Old Kingdom Egypt and “is also known in Africa, Oceania, and North America.”²¹ And, Eliade notes, “the sky can [also] be reached by fire or smoke, by climbing a tree or a mountain, or ascending by way of a rope or a vine, the rainbow or even a sunbeam.”²² Shamans are called to their profession by what Eliade calls a psychotic episode, and among them as among mental patients the dream or imagining of flight is common. Artists too have sometimes exhibited the special personality that needs the dream of flight. One modern artist who was especially literal about it was the French artist Yves Klein, who wrote:

Today anyone who paints space must actually go into space to paint, but he must go there without any faking, and neither in an airplane, a parachute, nor a rocket; he must go there by his own means, by an autonomous individual force: in a word, he must be capable of levitating.²³

Of course, some or all of these flights or ascents must have been made in the imagination, and that is clearly how Dellschau’s relationship to flight developed. It seems that he imagined it visually and thought it, somehow, nearly in his grasp.

Scrap Book

A tantalizing remnant of Dellschau’s oeuvre is *Recolections second part*, composed in a commercially bound blank journal with “Scrap Book” imprinted on its leather cover. Dellschau filled both sides of each of its twenty-four pages with elaborate drawings, among his most intricate and finely finished. In addition, he affixed two sets of double-sided sheets of handwritten text with brads to some of the drawings—these he called Yarns and are the two stories for which the pictorial drawings illustrate. Made with lead pencil and watercolor and/or colored pencil, the gray of the pencil lead is joined by red and blue with minor touches of lavender-pink and pink. The airship designs vary somewhat in their aesthetic effect, but the concept remains basically four-part: the balloon on top of the rig, which will be filled with anti-gravity gas; a cablike arrangement in the middle that provides room for an aeronaut or two; the device that powers the airship by dripping a few drops of Peter Mennis’s antigravity fluid onto a plate that converts it into a gas that is funneled into the balloon part or lifting chamber; and beneath it all, the landing device, involving what Dellschau called the Falleasy. The overall effect of most of his drawings and watercolors of Aeros is that they are composed principally of circles in some arrangement and look like flying mandalas.

On the one hand, Dellschau’s drawings look like technical drawings (as Cardinal and others have stressed), though as far as is known he never had training in draftsmanship; on the other hand they look like decorative artwork, though again Dellschau never, as far as is known, had training as an artist.

In any case it seems that he took leeway with the technical aspect of the drawings, though he never cut loose from it completely. This aspect led to Pete Navarro’s argument that if the Aeros were all imagined they wouldn’t display such regularity.

Another dichotomy that has arisen in the discourse is that some interpret the changes in his late work as a sign of deterioration, maybe with a bit of old-age dementia, while in reality it may be that his increasing awareness of himself as an artist is taking over and remaking his personality.

In addition to the apparition-like silence of the colorful Aeros floating and rising iconically, Dellschau introduced narration here and there in his writings, presenting a childlike story or a dream with possible symbolic suggestions. He wanted to draw connections between his more important characters, seemingly in hopes of making the whole thing a single great mandala-yarn (more like Wölfl’s magnum opus). George Newell, Peter Mennis, Christian Axel von Roemeling, and others are connected in a nexus of story that is only visible in partial glimpses. One of the supplemental texts in *Recolections second part* is entitled “George Newells Yarn of Peter Mennis Dream ‘The Rescue’ of Christian Axel von Roemeling, The Moonskooter, rendered Sumer 1857 after closing Club Transactions of the Sonora Aerial Club” (right, top). Dellschau claims the yarn to have been “rendered” (just meaning “drawn”?) in 1857, though his artistic efforts are usually regarded as beginning in 1898 (perhaps in the retirement-artist mode of the outsider—here again the same three names haunt him: Wölfl, Darger, Ramírez).

One of the Moonskooter rescue drawings shows the Goose tilting at a strange angle above some landscape (right, bottom). The Aero is made up of four spherical elements disposed around another larger one. An empty basket swings down below it. A man (Dellschau, perhaps) stands on the ground with a telescope looking, it seems, at the moon, where von Roemeling, with a sword, is seated astraddle. He says: “If i get hold of that Mashine I never go to California i strike out for Copenhagen I get that Rope-ladder tyed to the moons horn and go down to him if ever on I fid him.” Down below: “Ha Shuckelmyer Air is mighty thin up here you never go to Copenhagen i save you, but my own Way I need Ballast . . . and you are just built for that.” On the right is a long text that seems spoken by Mennis. “Im gone by myself August. You have plenty of Grub on hand by dinner. We fetch a good Apetite whit us. You hear Dont you forget my Order August as he went a going. Yes Fatty will act splendid as Ballance Wheight if i ever get him of that roost. You bet his weight pull us home quick i recon the action of the air trow the Hair on our Heads out whit the Boots and i be baldheaded the ballans of my Life im gone August good bye old Soul.” There is the Man in the Moon, the man on the earth with the telescope, and in between there is a third man barely visible in the passenger basket of the Aero. That middle figure would seem to be speaking the long speech just quoted: Mennis. At some point he wakes up and realizes it was a dream.

DM = XØ

Present in many of the Plates are character-like symbols that look as if they are based to a degree on letters of the Greek alphabet. It is not clear to what end these only semi-recognizable characters are used. A formula that is on many of the Plates looks almost like $DM = XØ$ but not quite. The two letters on the right of the equation look more like *chi* and *phi* from the Greek alphabet than like *X* and *O* from the Latin alphabet. The formula $DM = XØ$ has a horizontal dash entering the *D* around its middle, from the left, and a diagonal line from upper right to lower left through the *O*. And of course *D* and *M* are both in the Greek alphabet, too. *Delta mu = chi phi*? It may be Dellschau didn’t leave enough clues to figure

Top: *Recolections second part*, Geo Newells Satyre “The Rescue of the Moonskooter as given before The Sonora Airostat Club vait a leette i come and get you Fatty,” 1899–1900 (see page 120)

Bottom: *Recolections second part*, The Moonskooter Rescue, 1899–1900 (see page 120)



it out. Maybe it has something to do with Peter Mennis, as on Plate 2003 (as described by P.G. Navarro in his “Books of Dellschau”) are the words: “Have you never heard of P. M.’s goose and heir offspring DM = XØ—Peter I haven forgot you!”

Navarro thought he had worked it out in Dellschau’s code so that DM = XØ translates into NYMZA. In his interpretation the five elements refer by code to a mysterious organization, perhaps operating from Germany, that was the sponsor or secret director behind the activities of the Sonora Aero Club. There is in addition one drawing (Plate 2550) that is signed, “a DM = XØ Club Debate Studia . . . Drawn by CAA Dellschau.” *Studia* is the term Dellschau used for a model or study or artist’s proof. So: this is the Study-Model that came out of a Sonora Aero Club debate. But of course Dellschau treated the right side of the equation as if it was the Latin letters *X* and *O*, and didn’t consider the problems about those letters mentioned above.

The Question About Question

One of several major questions surrounding the secrets of Dellschau has to do with the historical value of the account given in his various formats—the three volumes of memoirs and the twelve known books of Plates. Attempts have been made to find other records or evidences of the Sonora Aero Club, or Peter Mennis or George Newell or any other character of the many named, but the results have not been satisfying.

P.G. Navarro sums it up: “Many of the newsworthy events that Dellschau claimed to have happened while he was there have been verified. But those events dealing with the activities of the Aero Club have not.” And again: “A personal search of records and cemeteries . . . have turned up nothing that would prove the members of the Aero Club ever existed.” And “The lack of records would seem to indicate that the entire story of the Sonora Aero Club is a figment of his imagination.”²⁴ The idea that Dellschau’s yarn is fiction somehow does not resolve the issue, since fiction has many modes. Is it fiction in the way a work of art is fiction? Or the way an outright lie is fiction? Or the way confusion may produce a kind of fiction? Different opinions have been registered on all this.

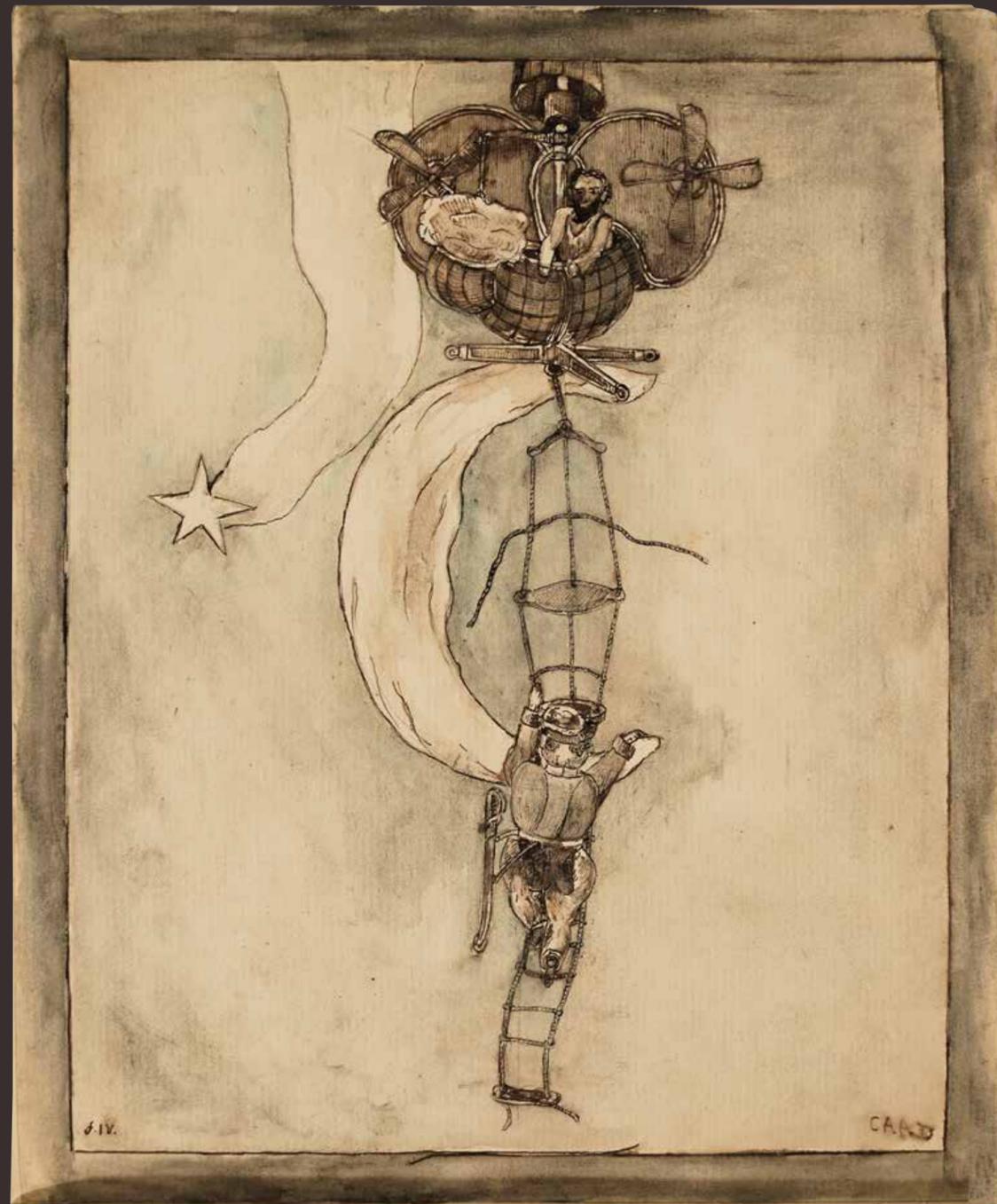
And after considering them all, one must acknowledge that the evidence simply doesn’t provide a clear answer to this question. It is one of many questions that just have to be lived with as questions—or ignored. Dellschau refers to events in the news of the 1850s that check out, but he could have just looked them up in a library. The problem is that little if any confirmation of Dellschau’s personal history, the Club and so on, has been found.

If a question is rivetingly important to a questioner, then the failure to find an answer can cast a question mark over everything in his or her life. Some will try to escape the dilemma by asserting that a question that does not have an answer is not a real question. Question and answer are a mutually dependent pair, like yes and no or true and false or up and down. In such a pair neither proposition can be meaningful in a universe where the other is not also meaningful. The idea that, lacking an answer, one should live with the question as a question, like an acquaintance whose name one does not know, may seem frustrating, but at least one major artist, James Lee Byars, has apotheosized the idea of Question; his oeuvre is posited on a universe in which Question rules, which he feels will be more open and creative than one in which Answer rules. Question, after all, is wide open; it could be pointing to anything in the universe. But Answer is closed, it appears as one thing and continues to do so.

Can it be that accepting a question as a question is inwardly, hiddenly, a kind of answer? Or is it just a kind of shrug? Dellschau’s twelve massive books of words and pictures may be no more than an old man’s lonely daydreams. They are pretty daydreams, which imply a pretty question mark, pretty and somehow deep, as one question behind the Aeros is the choice between ascent and descent. The breathlike striped spheres floating by may remind one of a line from a poem of e. e. cummings: “In Just-/spring when the world is mud-/luscious the little/lame balloonman/whistles far and wee.” The little striped spheres float silently onward. What is their destination?

Notes

1. Walter Morgenthaler, *Ein Geisteskranker als Künstler* (Bern: E. Bircher, 1921); and Hans Prinzhorn, *Bildnerie der Geisteskranken* (Berlin: J. Springer, 1922).
2. Colin Rhodes, *Outsider Art: Spontaneous Alternatives* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2000), 45.
3. Roger Cardinal, “Outsider Art and the Autistic Creator,” *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of Biological Sciences* (May 2009): 1,459–66.
4. C.G. Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 356.
5. *Ibid.*, 357.
6. *Ibid.*
7. This calculation was done by P.G. Navarro.
8. This count was made by Stephen Romano.
9. The first public exhibition of Dellschau’s work was “Flight,” at the University of St. Thomas, in Houston, in 1969. I personally saw them on display in that exhibition.
10. He translates the ciphers as (left side, top to bottom) *P, O, N, M, L, K, I, H, A, B, C, D, E, F, G* and (right side, top to bottom) *Q, R, S, T, U, W, X, Y, Z, CH, SCH*, with the *O* used for double letters and no representation for *J* or *V*. By using this code, he claims the passages on the left and right edges of the drawing read “Now talk about your dirigibels” and “O yes we didden know nothing say.” P.G. Navarro, e-mail to Stephen Romano, July 30, 2012.
11. Two were acquired by a New York gallery that specializes in outsider art, one entered the abcd collection, Paris, and one is in a private collection.
12. Lauren Redniss, *The Aeronautical Notebooks of Charles Dellschau*, exh. cat. (New York: Ricco/Maresca Gallery, 1997); and Dennis Crenshaw and P.G. Navarro, *The Secrets of Dellschau: The Sonora Aero Club and the Airships of the 1800s, a True Story* (San Antonio, TX: Anomalist Books, 2009).
13. Redniss, *Aeronautical Notebooks*, 7.
14. Crenshaw and Navarro, *Secrets*, 114.
15. *Ibid.*, 138.
16. Quoted by J.E. Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1962), 104.
17. Arthur Edward Waite, *The Mysteries of Magic: A Digest of the Writings of Eliphas Levi* (London: George Redway, 1886), 192.
18. Eliphas Levi, *Transcendental Magic, Its Doctrine and Ritual* (Chicago: Occult Publishing House, 1910), 184.
19. Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972), 407.
20. *Ibid.*, 409.
21. *Ibid.*, 490.
22. *Ibid.*
23. See Thomas McEvilley, *Yves the Provocateur* (Kings-ton, NY: Documentext, 2010), 86.
24. Crenshaw and Navarro, *Secrets*, 114 and 181.



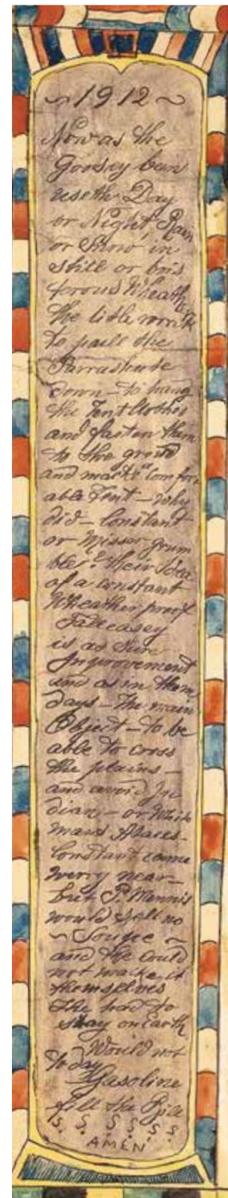
2

To Cross the Plains

The Life and Art
of Charles A.A. Dellschau

Tracy Baker-White

Detail of Plate 2554 (see page 41)



Charles A. A. Dellschau was an outwardly ordinary man with an amazingly inventive mind. At sixty-eight years of age, the retired butcher and saddlery clerk in Houston started a creative project that would occupy him for more than two decades. It began as a set of illustrated memoirs and grew in time to include at least a dozen additional handmade books, with thousands of watercolor drawings related to airships.

Although Dellschau wrote his memoirs at the turn of the twentieth century, they concern the years 1854 to 1859, when the artist was living in a boardinghouse in Sonora, California, a Gold Rush boomtown. Many who traveled to the Golden State to seek their fortunes made the treacherous trip overland from the Midwest or by sea—around Cape Horn or to and from each coast of the Isthmus of Panama—and they dreamed of an easier, faster route. The residents of the Sonora boardinghouse were no different. They formed a club that gathered regularly in the saloon to drink and talk about ideas for an airship capable of transcontinental flight. “The main Object,” as Dellschau inscribed on a drawing from 1912 (left), was “to be able to cross the plains—and avoid Indian—or White mans stares.”

The airships, or Aeros, as Dellschau called them, are somewhat fantastical constructions that combine elements of nineteenth-century air balloons and early twentieth-century dirigibles, zeppelins, and biplanes. He introduces the Aeros in the memoirs, which were written between 1898 and 1900, but explores them more fully in the later books of drawings, which date between 1908 and 1921.

The purpose of the Sonora Aero Club was to debate various proposals, secure financial backing, and build an airship that could fly; the riches would surely follow. But many of the club’s proceedings were held with great frivolity and jest. A 1912 drawing depicting the Aero Guarda (Plate 2627, opposite, top), includes a humorous description of the method by which members would present an idea:

Gustav Freyer, a high educated Mechanic, in proposing this Inormus Idea was forced by the Rules and Bylaws of the Sosity to produce something to be talked off. His turn had come and jockinly he stepped to the black board took the Chalk, and says Brethers, you all know I am not quite a professor. Looking straight to some of the Member I give you a nut to crack. My Idea is to put a guard Fence all around the mashine to fall—land—easey and always Safe, to keep some of you Smartys from falling out—to drown you falling on Wather, let her Somersoult and you will stay perpendicular, I mean head up on the floor of the Hold—He draw a Sketch on the Board and give a short Explanation—Well now some of you has to pay the treat for me. Tell ye the Thruth, I am busted and dry as a fish! And they all went to the Barrrr. . . . 1858.

Drinking clubs and boisterous behavior were a well-established part of mining-camp culture. The infamous drinking club E Clampus Vitus was established in California in 1851 and still survives today. The “Clampers,” some of whom were the most highly regarded residents in town, met regularly in Sonora in the Hall of Comparative Ovations.¹ It is not unlikely that a group of boardinghouse residents might have gathered to drink, tell stories, and dream of flying machines just as Dellschau describes.

Dellschau’s artwork was discovered in Houston in the late 1960s.² After the artist’s death, in 1923, the drawings remained in the attic of the family home for approximately forty years until it was cleared of debris by order of the fire department. The drawings were discarded on the street curb and taken to the dump, where they were found by a trash picker who sold them to a furniture refinisher named Fred Washington. In 1969 Mary Jane Victor, at the time a student at St. Thomas University and an employee

of the Menil Collection, discovered the books of drawings in Washington’s OK Trading Post. She showed four of the books to art patron Dominique de Menil, who bought them. The remaining eight books were purchased from Washington in 1970 by P. G. Navarro, a graphic artist in Houston. Navarro ultimately sold four to the San Antonio Museum Association and four to a private collector. Dellschau’s drawings have since been exhibited nationally and internationally.

German Roots

Charles August Albert Dellschau was born in Berlin on June 5, 1830.³ He appears in public records under the names Charles and Albert, but in the memoirs he refers to himself as Charly. Dellschau was the third of thirteen children born to Friederike Wilhelmina Franck and Heinrich Adolph Dellschau, a master butcher.⁴ As the child of a middle-class family in early nineteenth-century Berlin, he probably received an elementary school education before entering into an apprenticeship in his father’s trade.⁵

Presumably Dellschau would have been aware of the revolutionary advancements in flight taking place during his youth. After the first experiments by the Montgolfier brothers in 1783, ballooning became a popular craze in Europe. Nineteenth-century inventors drafted all manner of fanciful designs for balloons and airships and engaged in adventurous attempts to fly them in Germany, France, and England. Aeronauts like Eugene Godard and Charles Green test-piloted balloons all over Germany in the 1830s and ’40s, when Dellschau was at an impressionable age.⁶ One of Dellschau’s late drawings, Plate 4714 (right, bottom), shows a young man (perhaps the artist himself) flying a kite and may be a reference to this period in his life.

Times were hard in Germany throughout Dellschau’s childhood. Food was scarce because of poor harvests, and riots were common as the prices for potatoes, pork, and rye skyrocketed one year then plummeted the next—a situation that would have created economic hardship for the large family of a butcher. Social unrest began to develop in the 1820s and culminated in a failed attempt at revolution in 1848. Dellschau was eighteen years old when violent demonstrations in Berlin resulted in the shooting deaths of more than three hundred citizens at the hands of government soldiers.⁷ Ultimately, thousands of Germans left their homeland for the promise of a better life in America, often aided by settlement societies that would arrange for the voyage and the means to establish themselves upon arrival—a small house, oxen, and a wagon.⁸

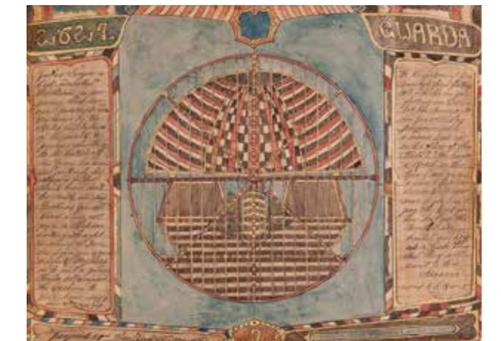
Immigration to America

Whether Charles Dellschau left Germany because of economic hardship or because of his politics is not known, but he probably arrived at the Port of Galveston, Texas, in late 1849.⁹ The first definitive records of his presence in the United States, however, date to 1860, when he applied for and received his citizenship in Fort Bend County, Texas.¹⁰

In 1861 Dellschau married an Austrian widow named Antonia Helt in Richmond, a small town near Houston.¹¹ Helt had a five-year-old daughter named Elizabeth from her previous marriage, and the couple had three more children—Mary, Bertha, and Edward. Dellschau worked as a butcher for approximately twenty-seven years, paying taxes annually on a one-acre lot in Richmond, one horse, and two to four cows, depending on the year.¹² No record of his military service during the Civil War has been found, but Dellschau evidently served on the Confederate side: the Dellschau family was included on

Top: Plate 2627 Guarda, August 21, 1912 (see page 217)

Bottom: Detail of Plate 4714 Wind 1845 Muehl Berg, October 18, 1920 (see page 319)



a list of those eligible for benefits to indigent families while the head of household was fighting for the Confederate cause, and after the war Dellschau signed an Amnesty Oath.¹³

Dellschau's stepdaughter, Elizabeth, married a saddle maker from Bastrop, Texas, named Anton Stelzig, in 1873. The couple may have been introduced by Dellschau, who, as a butcher, could have supplied Stelzig with hides. Tax records indicate that Elizabeth and her new husband lived with her parents for at least a few years after their marriage; Anton Stelzig was listed as a member of the Dellschau household through 1876.¹⁴

A Time of Loss

In 1877 Dellschau's seemingly normal domestic life began to unravel with the deaths of his wife and his son. Because their death dates are approximately two weeks apart, they both may have died of a communicable disease such as yellow fever, which swept through the swampy region in the 1860s and '70s.¹⁵ More tragedy was to follow. Two years after Antonia's death Dellschau married a T. Petridz, but she seems to have died within the year.¹⁶ Dellschau's daughter Mary, who had married a young man from Brenham, Texas, also disappears from historic records around this time and probably died.

Dellschau moved with the Stelzigs in 1887 to Houston, where Anton Stelzig opened a saddlery. The 1889–1890 Houston city directory shows that Dellschau was not working as a butcher but rather was employed as a clerk in his son-in-law's store. The 1891–1892 Austin city directory, however, lists an Albert Dellschau, butcher, living at the Central Hotel.¹⁷ Dellschau had relocated to that city to be near his last remaining natural child, Bertha, who was confined to the Austin State Hospital with tuberculosis. She died there, in 1893.¹⁸ That same year Anton Stelzig died back in Houston, at age forty-three.¹⁹

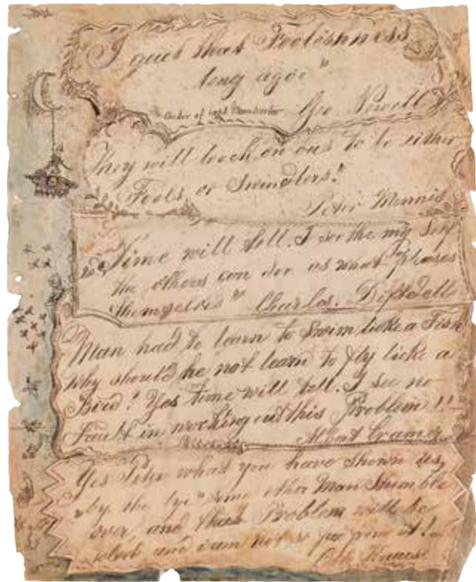
After these untimely deaths, Dellschau returned to Houston and resumed working at the Stelzig saddlery.²⁰ He was sixty-three years old and had lost two wives, three children, and a son-in-law. He moved in with his widowed stepdaughter, Elizabeth, and her eight children, including an infant and a toddler. Dellschau would live within the Stelzig household for the remainder of his life.

The First Memoir

Charles Dellschau's illustrated memoirs provide a critical anchor for understanding the narrative content of his later work. They consist of three separate manuscripts—two volumes written in English and a third written in German. They are collections of idiosyncratic text, illustrations, and explanatory inscriptions that do not take the form of traditional sequential autobiographical narrative. One gleans the overall story through a collective interpretation of the varied visual and textual elements.

The first volume, *In Evening Hours of Lisure Recolections of real and speculative Work of Friends in Time long gone by from a Friend yet here The are gone but their Work is not forgotten* consists of 108 double-sided pages bound with four brads.²¹ It begins with a flourish: the cover page (left) features a stack of elaborate cartouches containing quotations by Sonora Aero Club members, such as “I quit that Foolishness long agoe,” “They will loock on ous to be either Fools or Swindlers,” and “Man had to learn to Swim licke a Fish Why should he not learn to fly licke a Bird? Yes time will tell. I see no Fault in working out this Problem!!” A narrow margin on the left features a tiny sketch of a man in an airship dangling by rope from a sliver of moon, a visual motif that appears again in the later memoirs.

Recolections, cover page, 1898–1900 (see page 93)



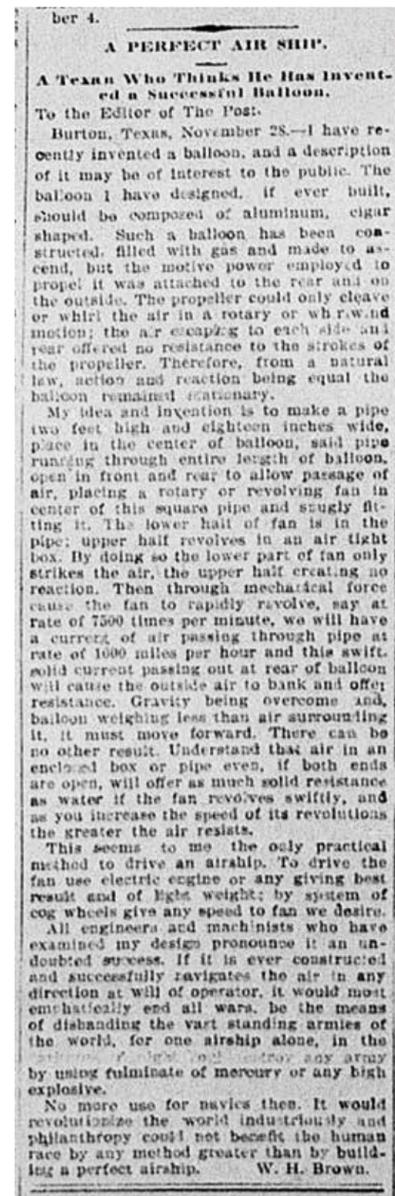
The first half of *Recolections* consists of many pages of unembellished writings interspersed with pages with drawings of airships. The earliest pages that contain these drawings have lengthy passages of narrative text wrapping around the image. In later pages, as the project became more formalized, the texts are shorter and take on the form of annotations or explanatory lists of various parts. Dellschau usually named the club member who proposed the design. He also gave the vessels witty names like the Multyplus and the Maybugg (by Michael Gorée), the Illusion (by George Newell), the Ride Me (by Professor Carolus), the Dove (by Heinrich Baumann), the Doobeline Balance Sphere (by Edward Hermsdorff), the Idea (by Otto Krause), the Saturnus (by Joe Cheney), the Hawk (by Christian Axel von Roemeling and Karl Distell), the Trebla and the Augar Bohrer (by August Schoetler), and the Moveable (by Jonas Rockstroh).²² The Aeros are carefully rendered in sepia ink, with some details accented with delicate pale color washes.

The main hero of the Sonora Aero Club is Peter Mennis (right), a rough-and-ready miner who created a balloon airship called the Goose. Mennis is often depicted in Dellschau's illustrations wearing a hat and typical red wool flannel miner's shirt and holding a pipe; sometimes there is a little dog at his side. Mennis is central to all of the activities of the club, and it was a Sunday afternoon ascent of the Goose that seems to have been the impetus for its formation:

Who was Peter Mennis? A California Miner, a German up in the fourties, a plain yes a rough Man, whit as kind a hearth as to be found in verry few living beengs. a genius in getting Up useful contrivances, but adicted to strong drink, and for ever out of Means, “Flat brocke” as the word goes. Now to astonnish his Friends and Neighbourns he was tinkering for some time on some contraption, borrowing nails, Screws, Wire and other articles to fix his Airostant Goose, and one Sunday afternoon, calling to witness the whole Neighbourhood on Woods Creek that he was going to Sonora and Columbia and inviting annybody to join in and go whit him. They all had a hearty Laugh on Peter, and his ragged Mashine expressly as Peter had a Load, but no boddy ventured, and up he went, allone & how manny bigmouthed man oppened their Eyes, telling he would never come back allive, he break his Neck coming down if he ever could turn back. Yes and he did come back whitin ten feet of his Cabin, and as easy as a Bird alighting. Now he was a Wichman and some of the Biggmouths went out of his way, talking behind his Back. but others began to smell a Fortune to be able to get out of the Fool Duchman and in no greath while their was the Omibus Plaine Co. born to go it on a large Scale, and fleece Peter. Yes the build three fine Airomnibusses under Guidans of Mr Dr Michael Gorée a friend of Peter Mennis, and a man that know it all, and a heap more, as Peter himself, but when all was ready they would not rise and as their Companies Pocket books was closed to pay Peters Claim he stnd by and had a horslaugh at the man that where to get rich of Peters Invention. A thing or two that he kept to him Self and neither Dr M Gorée nor his hungry Money loaners could solve. Yes they bulldosed Peter, they called Dr Gorée a humbug and as buldosing would not go whit Peter, they landed him after while in the Insane Assylum, “as i Understand” but their Omnibusses went to old Iron and Tattess, and their Fortunes never realised. but as some things cant never come to rest Severall other genial man toock up Peters Invention again and worked the Problem on and off, the visibile Points of Peters “Goose” and Still others Claim all their Own Self made Ideas. but as Yet no

Erinnerungen (Recollections), Peter Mennis, 1900 (see page 130)





Baddy has achieved what Peter Mennis has shown whit the “Goose” an Airship constructed as two Balloons harnessed to the Seatbasket, and a steady Central Parrashute. Making his Lifting power or Gass as he goes allong, rising, falling, drifting, “at will of Opperator” and minding the Stearing Apparatus licke a Charm.²³

Some of the drawings within the first thirty-six pages of *Recolections* include the headers “Lather Propositions” and “Aftermath” and seem to be somewhat later insertions. The Aeros are rendered in a style even more akin to patent drawings, with labels, legends, and commentary that often takes the form of banter among the men, as if Dellschau was reliving snippets of remembered dialogue. These illustrations also are framed by thin sepia rules, and sometimes a border filled in with a pale red ink wash. Dellschau made the Lather Propostions and Aftermath drawings in response to a letter to the editor of the *Houston Daily Post*—dated November 28, 1898, but published December 6—that was headlined “A Perfect Air Ship: A Texan Who Thinks He Has Invented a Successful Balloon” (left).²⁴ The letter writer, a W. H. Brown of Burton, Texas, describes in detail how the propeller design of his aluminum airship would differ from that of an existing airship—presumably the first aluminum airship to be constructed, which had a widely publicized but marginally successful test launch in Berlin the previous year. Impressed, Dellschau copied much of the published letter verbatim into *Recolections*, calling it “Sucker Kicker Principles” (see pages 94 and 95), but he remained skeptical, writing “Now i have read the letter over and over again and there is a greath principle involved in his Teory, but the man Mr. Brown, has he ever seen a Ballon or Airostat Stationary? . . . no no the man don’t know what he is writing about.” He continued to consider Brown’s idea carefully, however, speculating “is it mechanical possible? . . . I have my greath doubt about not the possibillity of ataining such Speed, but the danger of Frition, the Creation of greath Heath in a sphere filled with light explosive Gass and the Danger there from.”

The second half of *Recolections* presents illustrated stories of life in the boardinghouse and the antics of Sonora Aero Club members. The first tale is the “Rise and Fall” of Christian Axel von Roemeling, a 385-pound man who has failed to remain aloft in Peter Mennis’s Goose and crash-lands on top of skinny Captain O’Hairy (opposite, top).²⁵ The episode results in von Roemeling’s marriage proposal to Madam Glantz, the proprietor of the boardinghouse. Alas, O’Hairy is also in love with her, and he takes revenge on his rival by orchestrating an elaborate prank on their wedding night. He rigs the marital bed with ropes through the ceiling and, at an intimate moment, gives the ropes a yank, upending the bed and causing the amorous couple to tumble to the floor (see page 128). All the while he and a friend peep in through holes at the scene in the bedroom.

After the wedding, it is revealed that O’Hairy is actually a man of questionable reputation who makes his living robbing stagecoaches.²⁶ He is run out of town by Sheriff Stuart, who pretends to shoot at him but actually lets him escape unharmed. In one of the illustrations, which contains a rare self-portrait, Dellschau is seen riding in a stagecoach to Stockton with a friend of Mrs. von Roemeling named Mrs. Seelich. When the stagecoach is stopped by O’Hairy and his band of outlaws, Mrs. Seelich refuses to give over her possessions. Instead she draws a gun from under her skirt and shoots O’Hairy dead (opposite, middle).

The drawings that illustrate these stories are full-page compositions set within simple ruled borders. The figures are carefully drawn, almost in exaggerated fashion, and show a sophisticated grasp of the

human figure in action. Interiors are portrayed with specific features that carry over from drawing to drawing, and Dellschau lavished special attention to the details of costume. Those scenes set outdoors show what is unmistakably the Sierra Nevada foothills landscape.

Some pages are dated 1898, but it is difficult to determine if that is the year he began to record his remembrances. The Aftermath and Lather Propositions drawings date to after the December 1898 W. H. Brown letter that so provoked Dellschau, and these pages show slight stylistic differences in penmanship—the nib of his pen was fatter and the ink bled a bit into the paper fibers, as though he was recording these notes in greater haste. The last page of *Recolections* is inscribed with the date March 1859, but this may simply be a notation of the time frame of the contents within; the years 1856 and 1859, as well as the years in between, appear frequently in his work, and these are the years he is believed to have been in California. A section of text in the middle of *Recolections* reads “Many years after I left California, I was standing one day on the Realroad Depot in Richmond, Texas,” which would date the manuscript to well after his departure from California.²⁷ However, there is an Aftermath drawing with text in which Dellschau mentions that “In studying over W. H. Brown’s Annoncement of his so called Invention of bombarding Air whit Air . . . i come to some long forgat Papers . . . If I had found them old papers before, Geo Newells Idea would have been treated in the forepart, and not the Aftermath of my Recolections in English.”²⁸ One wonders if the long-forgotten papers were notes or sketches made while Dellschau was in California, and if indeed they are interleaved among the other pages of *Recolections*.

Although Dellschau’s narrative is difficult to follow because of misspellings and unusual syntax, he is a masterful storyteller. He uses wonderfully humorous and idiomatic descriptions. He calls O’Hairy a “bundle of bones” and Madam Glantz’s stash of gold a “thunderin big sack of money.”²⁹ Meister Freund, the local cabinetmaker, offers the newlyweds a wedding gift of a bed crafted with a built-in chamber pot, a metal fan overhead, and a music box that played “Ach, du lieber Augustin” when activated by movement on the mattress (right, bottom). He tells the couple, “Now my friendship to you dictates me to keep you two Balls of Lard, cool, or you melt some hot Night. I have to make you a wedding gift of the Bedstead, but you got to let me put in a Ventilator overhead, trough the ceiling, out trough the Roof, and you thank me all your life for it.”³⁰

The Second Memoir

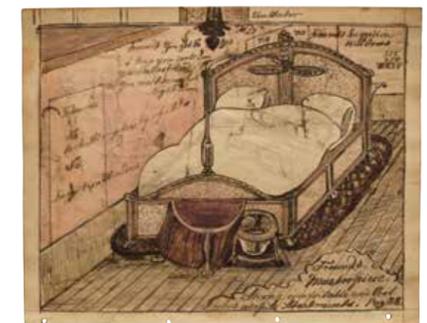
Recolections real and speculative Works on Ideas of Friends in for higher Aims “long gone by” second part dates from December 1898 to April 1900 and is recorded in a twenty-four page dark-green commercially bound leather sketchbook with the words “Scrap Book” embossed on the cover. It is largely a visual exploration of the airship ideas of W. H. Brown merged with those of the Sonora Aero Club members—and thus labeled Combinations or “fixed up in W. H. Brown Style”—as well as additional illustrations of boardinghouse life.

The Aeros are rendered similarly to those in the first *Recolections*, in sepia ink, but they are not set within borders or frames. Some are drawn on one page with the gutter at the top edge, and others span the spread. Some look like technical illustrations, with labels and legends, while others appear to be modeled after book illustrations, labeled with a figure number. Pencil underdrawing is more evident, as is Dellschau’s use of drafting tools for perfect circles and other shapes. Details are embellished with colored ink washes. One drawing, of Eduard Hermsdorf’s Airostant Doobely (page 113, top), bears loosely

Top: *Recolections*, Ch. A. von Roemelings Rise and Fall, 1898–1900 (see page 106)

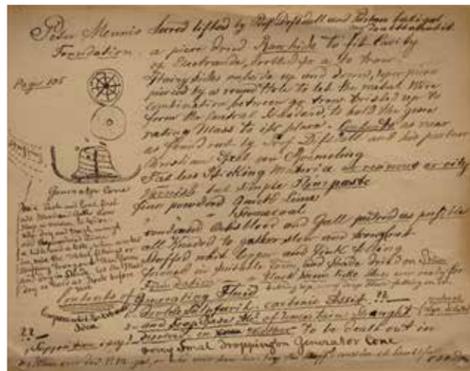
Middle: *Recolections*, O. Harras End by Mrs Seelich, 1898–1900 (see page 109)

Bottom: *Recolections*, Friends Masterpiece Strong comfortable and Cool whit usefull Atachments, 1898–1900 (see page 108)



Top: *Recolections second part*, Eduard Hermdorfs Doobely, 1899–1900 (see page 114)

Bottom: *Recolections second part*, Peter Mennis Foundation, 1899–1900 (see page 125)



penciled calculations and corrections—some of the Aero’s wheels are overlaid with an X and the word *No*—as though Dellschau revisited his drawings and updated the mechanical details. Most of the Aeros maintain the technical style seen in *Recolections*, but another version of Eduard Hermsdorf’s airship (left, top) in this volume was drawn in a much more illustrious fashion—it’s flying across the spread at close range—creating a visual link between the Aero drawings and the story illustrations.

Recolections second part also includes the recipe for Peter Mennis’s secret fuel for the Goose, whose ingredients (left, bottom) he was reluctant to divulge because of the danger of combustion. It was apparently stolen by Professor Diftzell and and Christian Axel von Roemeling, but Dellschau notes “i got my doubts about it.” The instructions call first for the construction of a Generator Cone made of “dried Rawhide . . . Hairy Sides outside up and down . . . Fatless Sticking Materia, no resinous or oily Varnish but simple Flourpaste fine powdered Quick Lime . . . condensed Ochs blood and Gall putrid as possible all Kneded together slow and troughout stuffed whit Copper and Zink filling formed in suitable Form and Shade dried on Skin Foundation.” The Generating Fluid, made of soap, lye, sulfuric acid, and water, was then “dealt out in verry smal droppings on Generator Cone” to transform the liquid into a gas. At the very bottom, however, Dellschau wrote, “Where ever did P.M. get, or who ever saw him buy the stuff? i consider it doubtfull.”

The German Memoir

The 240-page German volume, which Dellschau created after the two English volumes, in 1900, was intended to be “a free translation from the English with supplements.”³¹ The title of the first part is *Erinnerung vergangener Jahre Zeit und Sittenspiegel niedergeschrieben und illustriert in freien Stunden Zweiter Theil* (Recollection of Years Past of time and a Way of Life Written and Illustrated in Idle Hours). The second part is titled *Erinnerungen über Wahre und Versuchs Arbeiten Gedanken Ideen von Freunden längst todt, aber nicht vergessen von einem jetzt hier Der bringt sie aufs Papier von den Kerl habt ihr es nicht erwartet* (Recollections of real and experimental work and thoughts and ideas by friends long dead but not forgotten, put presently to paper by one who knew them, you would not have expected this from that guy). Both parts are encased in a deep-red leather cover, and many additional pages are loosely inserted in the middle. The two sections track closely but not exactly to the English volumes—Aero drawings, lengthy discussions about the merits of designs proposed by Sonora Aero Club members, vignettes about life in the boardinghouse—but, curiously, the second part precedes the first.

The drawings are framed with more elaborate borders than those in *Recolections*—some frames bend to accommodate the contours of the image within, and others, with narrowly spaced hatch strokes and a red ink wash, take on the appearance of a wooden frame. A few borders even emulate building blocks. Because *Erinnerungen* (Recollections) is the artist’s translation of his own work, various scenes were replicated and they are often quite close compositionally to their predecessors but more fully realized. For example a portrayal of club member George Newell addressing the group of miners on the cliff behind the boardinghouse (pages 121 and 161) is much more sketchlike in *Recolections second part*, but they are clearly the same scene. Two drawings illustrating the courtship of Madam Glantz and Christian Axel von Roemeling share the same composition, with interesting similarities and differences (opposite, top and middle). The later version has obviously been modeled very carefully after the earlier one, but it is more refined and done in colored inks or watercolor. The couple sits in a parlor while

Dellschau himself peers in through a moonlit window. The interior is lavishly detailed—the floorboards, the cupboards, the wallpaper, the paintings—as are the costumes. In the later work, the figures are more proportional in the room setting, while the figures in the earlier work have oversized features and are squeezed awkwardly to fit within the composition.

Erinnerungen also includes thirteen full-figure sepia portraits of various club members, set in pairs or as solitary figures accompanied by a written profile (right, bottom). Like the figures that appear in the two English volumes, the men are portrayed with specific likenesses and details of costume or pose that indicate whether they are a miner (flannel shirt, boots, tools), a gunsmith (apron, at work in a smithy), or a businessman (three-piece suit, hat, rolled documents, bag of coins).

Dellschau describes his companions as follows:

Some individuals gambled, others liked fast women or dance halls or saloons. . . . There was no lack of pistols and knives. They were strong, rough men on the outside, but also many, many good and sometimes well educated men. . . . This was also true for the members of the Sonora Airship Club. Men of good upbringing, young and old, but most as poor as church mice. This did not matter, people of the same caliber are generally drawn together. Only they can help each other to make life more pleasant and they worked hard on this problem; they drank, sang, and gambled, held speeches and lied to the extent where black had to be taken for white.³²

A multidimensional drawing of an Aero called the Multyplus that was created on larger paper and folded to fit into the back of *Erinnerungen* serves as an important transitional work between the memoirs and the drawings created after 1908. The airship was first introduced in *Recolections* as a simple sepia line drawing (next page, top) and reappears several times throughout the memoirs, evolving technically and stylistically. In the larger transitional drawing (next page, middle), its three ballons are boldly striped in blue, red, and violet, and the bottom half of the composition is bordered in alternating squares of red and blue ink, showing the beginnings of the framing device that becomes one of the integral elements in Dellschau’s later works. The surface of the drawing has three innovative folding flaps; two on either side of the Aero’s center and one above. When the side flaps are closed we see an exterior view of the vessel. When they are open, the interior is revealed, complete with men in sleeping compartments. When the central flap is folded down, the pilot can be seen seated in the basket. In addition to the checkered border, other elements of this work presage details he would explore in the later books of drawings, such as the depiction of activities within the airships—sleeping, eating, playing cards—and experimentation with color and line. Dellschau occasionally added folding flaps to later works, including Plates 2333, 4524, and 4677 (pages 199, 277, and 310). Another version of the airship, this one labeled “Multiplus Brownified” and again oversized, folded, and tucked into the back of *Erinnerungen* (but without the innovative flaps), features the same airship and a variation on the checkered border, which in this case frames the entire composition (next page, bottom).

Dellschau was evidently drawing while in California—*Erinnerungen* contains a passage about a drawing he made for the Von Roemelings as a wedding gift. After confessing that he too was slightly in love with the bride (evidenced by his presence in the courtship drawings, at right), he drew a picture of what might have happened had Madam Glantz been present to catch von Roemeling when he fell from the Goose. “I handed the drawing to the lucky groom as a wedding present. Chris looked at

Top: *Recolections*, Madame Glantz and Christian Axel von Roemeling courtship scene, 1898–1900 (see page 107)

Middle: *Erinnerungen* (Recollections), Madame Glantz and Christian Axel von Roemeling courtship scene, 1900 (see page 127)

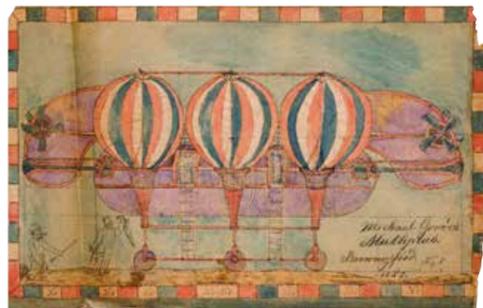
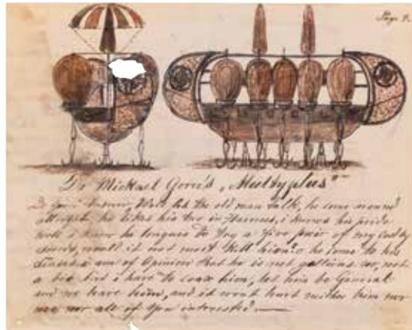
Bottom: *Erinnerungen* (Recollections), George Newell, 1900 (see page 140)



Top: *Recolections*, Dr. Mickael Gorees “Multiplus,” 1898–1900 (see page 99)

Middle: *Erinnerungen* (Recollections), George Gorres Multiplus, 1900 (see pages 131–133)

Bottom: *Erinnerungen* (Recollections), Michael Gorres Multiplus Brownified, 1900 (see page 150)



it, laughed . . . and said ‘Charles you dog, thanks for this caricature. I’ll keep it for ever to remember you by.’”³³ *Recolections* and *Erinnerungen* also include details of the artist’s occupation during these years. After the von Roemelings’ wedding, he reports, he traveled around Northern California for five months working in various slaughterhouses, among them one owned by a rancher named Sylvester Moore in Marysville.³⁴ When Moore sold his ranch to the Hoppin brothers of Eureka and Goodyear’s Bar, Dellschau began working for John Hoppin. He soon grew disenchanting with Hoppin, however, and returned to Sonora, taking a job with a man named Carl Becht selling meat to miners. Four months later, when Dellschau received a letter with a job offer from an old friend in Texas, he decided to return home, traveling the first leg of his journey on the *Golden Gate* steamer.³⁵

The Yarns

Both *Recolections second part* and *Erinnerungen* include two supplemental additions Dellschau called Yarns. They appear as separate stories appended to the manuscript with brads, each with its own title page and pagination. The yarns in *Erinnerungen* replicate those in *Recolections second part*. The first is called “George Newells Yarn of Peter Mennis Dream ‘The Rescue’ of Christian Axel von Roemeling, The Moonskooter, rendered Sumer 1857 after closing Club Transactions of the Sonora Aerial Club” (illustrations opposite). The use of the term “yarn” betrays a self-awareness about the project of storytelling. Dellschau had a great sense of humor, and, as in the nineteenth-century American tradition of the tall tale, the purpose of these stories is obviously to entertain.

The action begins with George Newell addressing a group of miners sitting on a cliff behind the boardinghouse:

To hot in here to enjoy the Evening, let us go back the yard up on the Ledge and tacke it easy, I sett em up before we go there. . . . So they all went to the Barr first—to trye George’s Veracity about the Sett em up, they called for their drinks and George planked down the Cash . . . and we all went outside to the Ledge above the Yard lighened up by the Light of the Moon. A flat rocky Place whit plenty of Bowlders convingent to use as Chairs, or Sophas, good enough for miners in conclave, we made us easy in all sorts of atitudes. Sitting, standing or laying on the Rocks and Bowlders. They all lit their Pipes, and George Newell whissling through his fingers, our Sighn asking to be heard—Silence—he comanred—

Newell then proceeds to recount Peter Mennis’s dream. He tells the group that he went to Mennis’s claim and noticed he was out of sorts. Newell gives him a “bottle of good Redeye,” which soon “worked his Tongue.” Mennis tells him he has had a miserable dream about saving a 385-pound man whose Airostant has crashed, stranding him on the moon. The moon is personified as a beautiful woman, and the remaining text is a colorfully written story with vague sexual innuendo about the rescue of von Roemeling, the “Moonskooter.” When the moon realizes that Mennis is there to take the Moonskooter back to earth, she says “Will all my hopes be lost? Oh, how happily I endured the first man trampling all over me, even when he sat astride my lower horn. What expectations then arose in me when I saw, heard and felt the contraption hanging on his side, and then comes the other stranger. Well, I see my mistake. You are taking the fat one away from me. . . . No, no I keep both of you here.”³⁶ But Mennis assures her that he is

“not that type of man.” The moon releases her gravitational pull and Mennis takes von Roemeling back to earth. He lands back at camp, right on top of August Schoetler, who has slept through the whole affair.

The second yarn, headed “Peter Mennis get even, whit Geo Newell By The Rescue of Mrs Roemeling Reality no Dream,” is also set outside behind the boardinghouse. This time, Mrs. von Roemeling has climbed the stone steps that lead up the cliff to surreptitiously listen in on the club members’ stories while looking for eggs from her stray chickens. Annoyed by her presence, and to prevent her from eavesdropping in the future, the last man down the steps at the end of the evening’s proceedings rolls away the top stone so that she is stranded on the cliff alone. Mennis then valiantly rescues her in the Goose, while her husband searches for a ladder in the chicken house below. As with the first yarn, Mennis takes the starring role as the hero in his Goose.

The 1908–1921 Books of Drawings

Aside from the memoirs, the only other works by Dellschau known to exist are the twelve hand-bound books of double-sided drawings that date between 1908 and 1921. For the most part they are vivid, colorful renderings of the airships and bear comparatively scant inscriptional detail; some works incorporate press clippings and some don’t include Aeros at all. Each drawing, which he sometimes labeled “Plate,” is meticulously dated and sequentially numbered, beginning with 1601 and ending with 5235. Sometimes he included the date on which a particular airship design was proposed to the Sonora Aero Club in the 1850s, as well as the name of the proposer. Characters introduced in the memoirs recur in these later works. Because of the gap of eight years after the last pages of *Erinnerungen*, and because of the high number of the first known Plate, it is possible that Dellschau created approximately 1,600 drawings prior to 1908, but their whereabouts are unknown. Other gaps in the sequence appear in 1910, 1913, and 1917.

There are significant stylistic differences between the drawings of Aeros in the memoirs and these later drawings. Dellschau maintained a consistent compositional format that includes elaborately striped and colored borders, often embedded with inscribed cartouches. The more celebratory borders correspond to increasingly dense renderings as well. Composition becomes just as important as content. He lavished attention to decorative details, playing up symmetry, pattern, and ornamentation to the point that the Aeros and the framing that encases them seemingly pulsate with energy. Whereas the striping seen in the drawings in the memoirs followed the contours of the airships, in the later works they are flattened, and tend to follow the contours of the pattern itself. Dellschau also introduces in these books communication by means of collaged text cut from the pages of newspapers—articles and photos pertaining to flight as well as the date and dateline (“Houston, Texas”) from the front page. By contrast, the memoirs have only one single instance of a collaged element (see next page), an image of a bicycle that has been cleverly incorporated into the lower apparatus of the Aero.

The Press Blooms, or Airo Cutts

Collage became a critical part of Dellschau’s creative process. He incorporated thousands of newspaper clippings into the later drawings, which he called Press Blooms and Airo Cutts. The articles come from the *Houston Daily Post*, the *Houston Chronicle*, the *Houston Press*, *Scientific American*, and at least one German-language newspaper. The presence of so many Press Blooms in these books invites speculation

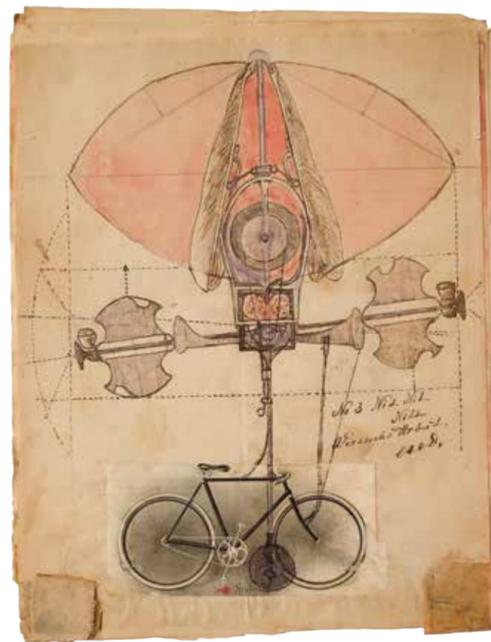
Top: *Erinnerungen* (Recollections), George Newell’s Yarn, 1900 (see page 161)

Middle: *Erinnerungen* (Recollections), Rescue of the Moonskooter scene, 1900 (see page 159)

Bottom: *Erinnerungen* (Recollections), Rescue of the Moonskooter scene, 1900 (see page 160)



Erinnerungen (Recollections), No 3 Nit Nit Nitt, 1900 (see page 157)



about the pattern of Dellschau's reading. The politics of prewar Europe created an atmosphere in which people craved more information through the relatively new medium of mass-produced publications. In newspapers, Dellschau was able to find articles about the politics of his homeland as well as ready access to new information about the technological advancements that fascinated him. Newspapers and periodicals provided photographic images and illustrations that were highly stimulating and had not been widely available before.

A systematic comparison of illustrations in the newspaper clippings to Dellschau's freehand drawings has yet to be done, but there are instances where one can clearly see that the collage sources did inform some of the technical elements in Dellschau's work, whether consciously or unconsciously. This is evident with the *Scientific American* illustrations he used in the spring and summer of 1912. A May 4 Press Bloom includes a very long article titled "A Flying Machine That Folds Its Wings" (opposite, top); in subsequent months, Dellschau created numerous airships with retractable lateral wings, such as the Aero Nix in Plate 2616 (opposite, bottom). Further close examination of the Press Blooms might yield other similar parallels.

Collaged figures sometimes appear alongside figures that were drawn freehand. They assume various occupations within the airship—manning the flight controls, sleeping, lounging in the cabin, even sitting at a table playing cards—and were usually drawn to scale. The figures that were cut from newspapers generally appear on the ground and are often out of proportion to the airship, bringing an aspect of caricature to these works. A humorous and recurring theme Dellschau maintains throughout is the attempt to get overweight men aloft in a balloon. In addition to the episode in the memoirs involving the obese Christian Axel von Roemeling's failure to ascend in Peter Mennis's Goose, Plate 2559, a drawing of the Aero Soso inscribed "Doc Tacken a Ride" (page 211) shows the hefty Doc Weisbach up in a balloon, while an inscription on a different drawing reads: "It is difficult to fit the Doctor. . . . A problem hard to solve. A hard nut to crack. But I want to try it—even if not practical—perhaps in humorous stature. Doctor Weisbach—now you shall fly too."³⁷ The theme reemerges in a late Press Bloom that includes a newspaper article titled "How a Fat Man Feels when Flying Up where angel's wings flutter."

The War Press Blooms

Like most Americans, Charles Dellschau was profoundly affected by World War I. Two of the Stelzig boys served in the military, and one saw combat.³⁸ The Press Blooms Dellschau created between 1908 and 1914 include many references to the prewar political climate of Europe. Newspaper headlines in a July 1909 collage reveal a range of concerns: "French Inspect German Airship," "Wrights Think They Can Do It," and "Britain Trembles Watched by Torpedo Boats." Dellschau's identity as a German American and his obsession with flying come together on this page as America anticipated the war in Europe.

There was a great fear of air wars in the first decade of the century, exemplified by the 1908 H. G. Wells book *The War in the Air*, a fictional account of a German zeppelin raid on New York.³⁹ Balloons had been used for military purposes in both the U.S. Civil War and the Franco-Prussian War, but these earlier military efforts do not seem to have entered Dellschau's pictorial consciousness in the memoirs. It was only after tensions began to increase in Europe that he brought these references to war into his work. By 1914 some of his War Press Blooms take on a darker quality, such as Plate 3339 (page 223), with its uniformed pilot bearing a somber expression.

Beginning around the time leading up to the war, Dellschau's drawings started to include texts scripted in a coded language. The symbols may reflect Dellschau's anxiety about the political climate of Europe or perhaps feelings of split allegiance. He prominently labeled most works from this period with the symbols $\text{DM} = \text{X}\emptyset$, often in a special cartouche at the top or side of the works. The sequence may represent the name of the Sonora Aero Club—Plate 2550 is inscribed "A $\text{DM} = \text{X}\emptyset$ Club Debate Studia." Significantly, as soon as the war was over, Dellschau dispensed with the $\text{DM} = \text{X}\emptyset$ label and all coded inscriptions.

Fact or Fiction: Dellschau's Characters

There are no census or tax records or other known historical documents that place Charles Dellschau in California at any time. However, many of the obscure towns he names in his work—Columbia, Shaws Flat, Knights Ferry—do exist, and several characters can be documented. For example, the Sheriff Stuart who appears in the memoirs correlates to James Stuart, who was the sheriff of Sonora from 1855 to 1857.⁴⁰ Dellschau writes of working for John Wolfling and Charley Mannors, and the two men were, in fact, partners in a ranching and meat business called the Centre Market.⁴¹ Meister Freund, who appears in the story about the marital bed, was well known in Sonora as a cabinetmaker, hotel owner, and undertaker.⁴² And four Hoppin brothers (including John) owned a large ranching concern in the areas of Eureka and Goodyear's Bar.⁴³

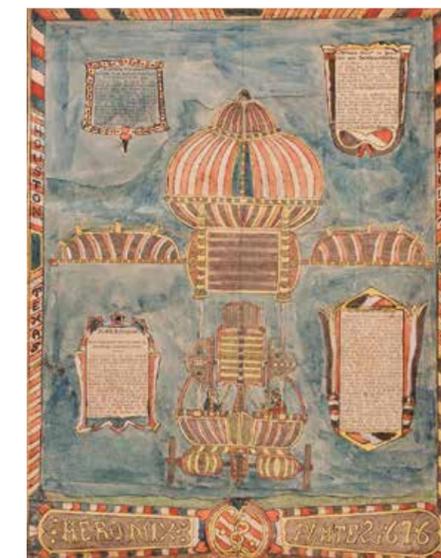
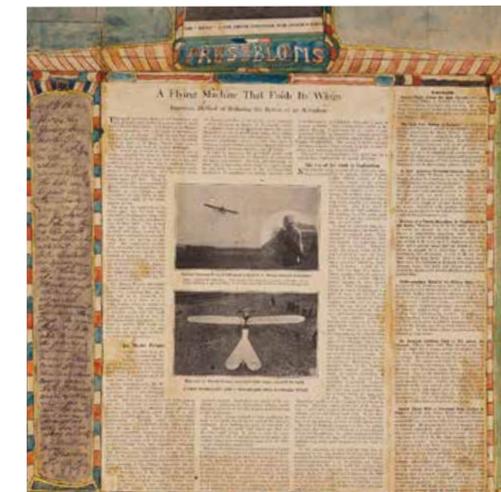
In addition, there are characters with names that hew closely to names in historical records—as though Dellschau couldn't quite remember them accurately half a century later. For example, the Moore's and McCarty's corral that appears in the memoirs may actually be the well-known livery stable run by Daniel O. McCarthy, despite the fact that his partner was a man named Cooper, not Moore.⁴⁴ Dellschau also refers to a trio of murderers as the Lyon, McHeely, Davis gang, which corresponds closely to the names of three men—Lyons, McCauley, and Poer—who were executed in a widely attended 1857 triple hanging in Sonora.⁴⁵ Dellschau may have mixed up Poer with a felon named William V. Davis, who was hanged earlier that year.⁴⁶ And finally, the Madam Seelich who shoots O'Hairy the stagecoach robber and appears in a subplot related to a stolen music box may have been the wife of a Mr. Seeligsohn who owned a shop in Sonora in the mid-1850s that offered books, cigars, stationery, music, and a wide variety of musical instruments.⁴⁷

Unfortunately, the primary members of the Sonora Aero Club—such as Peter Mennis, George Newell, August Schoetler, Michael Gorée, and Christian Axel von Roemeling—have not been positively identified in historical documents in Sonora or other area mining camps during the time the episodes take place. There are, however, some tantalizing possible matches in records for the years that follow. For example, a Peter Mennis who served in the Texas Mounted Volunteers during the Mexican War and died on November 1, 1901, is buried in the Veteran's Home Cemetery in Napa, California; an August Schottler was living in San Francisco in 1872 as per the Great Register of Voters; and a George W. Newell was married in Stockton on April 28, 1872.⁴⁸ There are other possible matches, but none of the men can officially be placed in Sonora in the late 1850s.

Interestingly, Dellschau uses character names in the later books of drawings that are not present in the memoirs. Some of these names, such as Eduard Hartung and Theodore Giesecke, can be located in historical sources in the Houston area around 1900.⁴⁹ This possible inclusion of people Dellschau may

Top: Plate 2554 Press Blooms (A Flying Machine That Folds Its Wings), May 4, 1912, 15½ × 14 in., San Antonio Museum of Art

Bottom: Plate 2616 Aero Nix, August 9, 1912 (see page 216)



have known at the time he was creating his drawings suggests that he may have been culling from his life experiences, even if he may have interwoven memories from different periods in his life.

Reveries in Idle Hours

When Charles Dellschau sat down to write his memoirs near the end of the nineteenth century, he didn't recount the details of his childhood in Germany, his immigration to America, or his life as a butcher in Texas. Instead he focused on a period of only a few years when he was in his mid-twenties. The memoirs were a kind of reverie for the time in his life when he experienced the freedom of youth. But as Dellschau continued working on his artistic project, the story of the Sonora Aero Club became a construct through which he interacted with the activities of the world, allowing him to learn about and comment on new technologies and news of the day. He used the drawings as a private place to express commentary on the ideas of others. In written asides he evaluated the merits of certain technological advancements, judging them "has beens," "may beees," and "will beees" and, on Plate 4538, a Press Bloom collaged with a photo of a dirigible, "Crasey Undertaken" (page 46).

We'll never know what actually prompted Dellschau to make thousands of paintings and collages of airships. What started as recollections compiled in a somewhat diaristic fashion became an obsession that he worked out visually for more than two decades. Roger Cardinal has observed that the "precondition" of old age and personal trauma can be the catalyst for this type of creative outpouring.⁵⁰ Perhaps the trauma Dellschau sustained in the losses of two wives and three children was the impetus for his creative work. Like many other self-taught visionaries, Dellschau didn't embark on this project until he had fully retired and had adequate time on his hands—what the artist himself called "idle hours."

Or perhaps he was simply stimulated by what he read of scientific and technological advancements in newspaper and journal articles. As scientists and engineers of his era created labor-saving devices from the cotton gin to the automobile, Dellschau carefully documented his friends' innovations, both serious and humorous—the Sucker Kicker Air Ram, the Rotating Electranden, the Automatic Balancier, the Falleasy, the Airsplitter Bed. He was constantly exploring ways to advance the technology in his airship designs. His interest in innovations reflects an era of intellectual optimism, when everyday people invented machines that would change the course of human history.

Dellschau hints at a sense of economic marginalization in frequent references to the members of the group not having enough money to actually execute their ideas. In *Recolections*, he wrote: "Peter Mennis made his little Airship Goose poor as he was whit matherial he could reach as his Means perimted rough made as the Goose was done things hard to beleave except by seeing whit our Eyes wide open. Let financial Robers lend their Dollars to rigg the Invention of a poor Man's Genius, and it is out of his Gripp." This theme is repeated throughout his work. Two late inscriptions read "Money cost plenty and dont pay" (Plate 4605) and, poignantly, "If I had the means" (left).

What is, of course, most likely is that a combination of all these factors led to Dellschau's outpouring of creativity. The trauma of loss, the opportunity of retirement, an inventive mind, a keen sense of humor, and a desire to accomplish something before moving on to the next world may have all come together to influence this remarkable artist in creating a body of work over more than twenty years—a process of creation that through its evidently pleasurable effect seems to have overtaken him to the point that he became very nearly, if not completely, immersed in the world of his own imagination.

Top: Self-portrait, detail of *Erinnerungen* (Recollections), Madame Glantz and Christian Axel von Roemeling courtship scene, 1900 (see page 127)

Bottom: Plate 4345b Aero Nix Down Front or Rear, April 3, 1919 (see page 246)



It is notable that Dellschau insists that his memoirs were real "true happenings," as he does on numerous drawings from his earliest to the latest. There is a convincing case that Dellschau went to California and lived in Sonora among gold miners, and he obviously knew of historically documented people of the area, but it is still not clear whether the stories are based on reality or fiction. His mixing of time periods in the later works gives a poignancy to the project. One late work from 1920 (right) is labeled "Dream and Real," as though he needed to emphasize the importance of each. Ultimately, the stories of the Sonora Aero Club seem most likely to represent some combination of truth, memory, and fantasy.

Charles A. A. Dellschau's watercolors have a distinct place in early twentieth-century art—works created by a German immigrant with a sense of adventure who had an honest enthusiasm for the creative intellectual advancements of his time, and was eager "to cross the plains" of the American West.

Plate 4602 No Fier Homer Lower Part Dream and Real, April 27, 1920 (see page 298)



Notes

1. For more information on the history of E Clampus Vitus, see Phoenixmasonry, Inc., http://www.phoenixmasonry.org/masonicmuseum/fraternalism/e_clampus_vitus.htm (accessed November 26, 2011).
2. For a detailed account of the discovery, see Cynthia Greenwood, "Secrets of the Sonora Aero Club," *Houston Press* (December 10, 1998); and Dennis Crenshaw and P. G. Navarro, *The Secrets of Dellschau: The Sonora Aero Club and the Airships of the 1800s, a True Story* (San Antonio, TX: Anomalist Books, 2009), 18–22.
3. The artist's birth certificate, with the date of June 5, 1830, is in the collection of the family, and a copy is in

the files of the Menil Collection, Houston. The record of his christening at St. Nicholas Church in Berlin, which was obtained through Mormon Genealogical records, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, also reflect this date of birth. However, his death record by the State of Texas and his tombstone both list Dellschau's birthday as June 4.

4. Information about Dellschau's father's occupation was obtained through correspondence with the Mormon Church by staff of the Menil Collection; William Steen, interview by the author, September 10, 1999.

5. Jamie Van Hook, professor of German history, Trinity University, San Antonio, TX, interview by the author, September 3, 1999.

6. For a complete discussion of early balloon flight, see Tom D. Crouch, *The Eagle Aloft: Two Centuries of the Balloon in America* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1983).

7. See Wolfram Siemann, *The German Revolution of 1848–49*, trans. Christiane Baherji (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998).

8. *The Emigrant to Texas: A Handbook and Guide*, trans. Otto W. Tetzlaff (1846; reprint, Burnet, TX: Eakins Publications, 1979), 79.

9. At least two immigration records may belong Dellschau. One, dated May 13, 1849, lists a Cha. Delschau, age 19, no occupation, who traveled from Hamburg to New York on the *Dudley Sheldon* (U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC, M237, Roll 79). The other, dated December 15, 1849, lists a Carl Delechaw, age 23, occupation butcher, who arrived in Galveston on the *Hamburg-Knollen* (Mormon Genealogical Records, 4th Quarter 1849, Galveston, Microfilm 0830233).

10. His naturalization papers, which are handwritten in sepia ink on ruled notepaper affixed with a blue seal, are dated June 28, 1860; private collection. The date of his Declaration of Intention given on this record is March 28, 1856, in Harris County, Texas. The application for citizenship, however, records that date as March 28, 1850; Harris County Probate Order Book, vol. B-2, 571–72.

11. They were married on February 21, 1861; Fort Bend County Marriage Records.

12. Fort Bend County Tax Rolls, 1838–1910, Microfilm Roll #1.

13. List of Confederate Indigent Families, Texas State Library and Archives Commission, Austin. The Amnesty Oath is among the artist's personal papers; private collection.

14. Fort Bend County Tax Rolls, 1838–1910, Microfilm Roll #1.

15. A note that reads "Ma Ma died August the 29 and was 48 years olde and 5 months and 19 days and my little brother was 6 years and 5 months and 29 days and died September 1877 the 10," presumably written by one of Dellschau's daughters, was among the artist's personal papers; private collection.

16. Thanks to Clint Drake of the George Memorial Library, Richmond, TX, for finding the marriage record. Below Dellschau's entry in the Federal Census of 1880, the ini-

tials T. L., followed by "keeping house," are scratched out. A word that appears to be "decd." is handwritten alongside this line in the left margin.

17. This information was provided to me by the staff of the Texas State Library and Archives Commission, Austin, on June 15, 2009.

18. Carmen King, assistant director of medical records, Austin State Hospital, interview by the author, August 11, 1999.

19. According to the December 31, 1892, edition of the *Galveston Daily News*, an A. Stelzig had traveled to Topo Chico Springs, Mexico, "for his health," but he died eight months later, on August 25, 1893, in Houston. His obituary ran in the *Galveston Daily News* on August 26, 1893. Thanks to Clint Drake of the George Memorial Library for finding these references.

20. Houston City Directory, 1894. The company is still in existence today as the Stelzig Ranch Store.

21. The artist's spelling and punctuation have been retained throughout.

22. Dellschau used variable spellings for the names of club members, Aeros, and airship parts throughout his work.

23. *Recollections*, 2–3.

24. *Houston Daily Post*, December 6, 1898, 13; see the Portal to Texas History, <http://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph114579/m1/13> (accessed May 31, 2012).

25. *Recollections*, 48–55.

26. *Ibid.*, 81–82.

27. *Ibid.*, 29.

28. *Recollections*, Aftermath, 15.

29. *Recollections*, 48, 67.

30. *Ibid.*, 87.

31. *Erinnerungen* (Recollections), translation of first part, 2. Translation courtesy the owner.

32. *Ibid.*, 73.

33. *Ibid.*, translation of second part, 11.

34. *Ibid.*, 67–80.

35. The *Golden Gate* sailed the San Francisco–Panama route between 1851 and 1862, when it was destroyed in a fire at sea. See the Maritime Heritage Project, <http://www.maritimeheritage.org/ships/index.html> (accessed May 26, 2012).

36. *Erinnerungen* (Recollections), translation of Rescue of the Moonskooter yarn, 96.

37. Translation courtesy Christopher Wickham, professor of German, University of Texas at San Antonio.

38. Leo and Charles Stelzig, conversation with the author, December 4, 2011.

39. Tom D. Crouch, *Lighter Than Air: An Illustrated History of Balloons and Airships* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 90.

40. Carlo M. De Ferrari, "The Twenty Sheriffs of Old Tuolumne" *The Quarterly* 8, no. 3 (January–March 1969): 275. *The Quarterly* is a publication of the Tuolumne County Historical Society, Sonora, California.

41. *Ibid.*, 1,434. Thanks to Pat Perry of the Tuolumne County Historical Society for this reference.

42. Pat Perry, "Undertaker Fred Freund Made Sonora Politics Lively," *Union Democrat* (April 10, 2001). Ms. Perry, Sonora's city historian, also provided me with a lengthy biographical sketch of Fred Freund with numerous citations from the *Union Democrat*. In addition, an F.A. Freund is listed on page 372 of the 1881 City and County Directory of San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, and Tuolumne counties as a proprietor of the Yosemite Hotel in Sonora. His advertisement on page 384 says that the hotel was furnished with "F.A. Freund's best make of Spring Mattresses, thereby having the most comfortable beds that can be found in any hotel in the state."

43. Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of Nevada, Colorado and Wyoming* (San Francisco: History Company Publishers, 1890), 263.

44. McCarthy and Cooper regularly advertised their livery services in the *Union Democrat* (vol. 1, no. 52, p. 4, for example) during the period. Thanks to Pat Perry for this and several other references.

45. The Lyons, McCauley, and Poer hangings are documented in De Ferrari, "The Twenty Sheriffs of Old Tuolumne," 279.

46. B.F. Alley, *A History of Tuolumne County, California* (San Francisco, 1882). Transcribed by Kathy Sedler. This file is part of the California Genealogy and History Archives. According to this account Lyons, McCauley, and Poer were executed on December 11, 1857, and the hangings were attended by a crowd of 5,000 people. William Davis was hung in June of that year.

47. An M. Seeligsohn advertised the opening of his store in the *Union Democrat* on June 23, 1855, and is mentioned as a founder of the Jewish Benevolent Society of Sonora in Ava F. Kahn, ed., *Jewish Voices of the California Gold Rush: A Documentary History, 1849–1880* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2002), 337. Two years later Seeligsohn

placed an ad stating that he was "Selling Off at Cost, to Close Business" in the *Union Democrat* 4, no. 5 (July 25, 1857), 3. He may also be the Max Seeligsohn who appears in the *San Francisco, Great Register of Voters* in 1867.

48. Mennis: "Headstones Provided for Deceased Union Civil War Veterans, 1879–1903," Ancestry.com, <http://www.ancestry.com> (accessed May 26, 2012); Schottler: Great Register of Voters, San Francisco, 1872 (California State Library, Sacramento, Microfilm Collection, c99, reel 56); Newell: California GenWeb, <http://www.usgwarchives.org> (accessed May 26, 2012).

49. Hartung is listed in the *Houston City Directory* beginning in 1889. A baptismal record shows that Anton Stelzig sponsored Giesecke's children; *Records of Salem Lutheran Church—Brenham, Texas, 1850–1940*, 58.

50. Roger Cardinal, "Toward An Outsider Aesthetic," in Michael D. Hall and Eugene W. Metcalf Jr., eds., *The Artist Outsider: Creativity and the Boundaries of Culture* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994), 29.



3

The Art of Interpolation

Charles A.A. Dellschau's
Inscriptions and Airo Cutts

Roger Cardinal

The morning paper is all I ever need to catch up with my news.

—ANDRÉ BRETON, *Nadja* (1928)

Not least among Charles A. A. Dellschau's idiosyncrasies as a draftsman is his habit of embellishing his designs with both handwritten inscriptions and segments of newsprint cut out from the local paper. This essay will consider the impact of these verbal intrusions upon the pictorial domain in the light of the artist's apparent desire to align his work to certain recognized models of representation—principally the technical drawing and the news sheet—in order to claim for it a degree of seriousness and authenticity.

■ ■ ■

Within Western culture, the deliberate twinning of pictorial and verbal material is an expressive practice dating back to the very origins of writing. Its history is far too long and complex to review here. Suffice to say that in the first two decades of the twentieth century—at the time when Dellschau was at his most active—it had become a symptomatic tendency in the productions of such European avant-gardists as Georges Braque, Pablo Picasso, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, and Kurt Schwitters. Their experiments in dual-idiom art bear a striking resemblance to the procedures of the German-American aeronautical fantast, for, as we shall see, these involve a marked investment in what is known as collage.¹

A further context of comparison is also worth considering, namely the annals of twentieth-century outsider art, which offer several striking examples of word-and-image interplay. The Californian outsider draftsman Achilles G. Rizzoli (1896–1981) lacked specialist training yet mimicked the technical conventions he had observed as an architect's clerk to produce a fascinating series of architectural drawings. In these Rizzoli delineates an imaginary environment of vast cathedrals, monuments, towers, and exhibition halls. His meticulous ground plans and elevations are replete with supplements in the form of scrolls and cartouches crammed with titles, legends, and mottoes, along with pseudo-technical commentaries and explanations. Furthermore, much like Dellschau, Rizzoli extended his work into discursive writing, producing substantial portfolios of doggerel verse and illuminated texts that are typically marked by neologisms and opaque acronyms.²

In like fashion, the prolific Swiss outsider Adolf Wölfli (1864–1930) festooned his partly figurative, partly decorative drawings with lively textual supplements, interpolating isolated capital letters or numerals, squeezing explanations in old Germanic handwriting into any gaps in the design, and adding a florid signature alongside details of the place and date of fabrication.³ In his later work, Wölfli made considerable use of press cuttings, pasting material from advertisements and travel magazines onto his sheets and thereby manifesting himself as an assured collage maker.⁴

■ ■ ■

Let us now consider the achievements of Charles A. A. Dellschau as a specific case of collagemaking and word-and-image interplay. I feel that the beguiling pictures of this long-dead and secretive creator bear scrutiny insofar as they reflect a highly inventive visual and spatial imagination—one that, nevertheless, felt the need to draw on various sorts of conceptual and linguistic complement, as though strictly pictorial expression were never quite adequate to fulfill the artist's intentions.

Plate 2573 Long Anna Long Cross Cutt, June 10, 1912 (see page 213)



Dellschau is credited with the design of more than a hundred aerial conveyances, which he equipped with a plethora of lift-off mechanisms, motors, fuel canisters, axles, pistons, pulleys, wheels, retractable landing gear, wings, propellers, vanes, rudders, ballast compartments, observation balconies, canopies, dining cars, saloons, sleeping cabins, searchlights, parachutes, and other safety devices, not to mention Lift Chambers, Ballance Stearing Floats, and Electrandes. His skybound dirigibles, or Aeros, incorporate more or less explicit reminiscences of old-fashioned hot-air balloons and often comprise slightly comical features reminiscent of stagecoaches, bicycles, and even umbrellas.

As is characteristic of many self-taught artists, Dellschau did not operate in intermittent spurts but sustained a disciplined and regular output, numbering what he calls his Plates consecutively and signing and dating them with a keen sense of purpose. For long periods he was producing at the rate of a drawing every day or two. There is about his work an air of serial coordination, whereby a finite repertoire of motifs generates a rich supply of permutations within a fixed representational schema.

While we can only guess as to what training (if any) Dellschau had as a draftsman, I take it as axiomatic that his renderings of fanciful aeronautical vehicles are consciously modeled upon the technical drawing or engineering blueprint and embrace most conventions of that established genre. Each of his successive designs bears the name of an individual invention and is intended to make visible the structure and dimensions of the contraption, along with any special components and novel gadgetry. The artist was frequently concerned to point out whether an Aero was being depicted from above or below, or again from the front, the back, or the side (the favorite “Flanck” view, as he calls it). Several machines appear in cross section, thereby revealing their interior, an engineering convention invoked in the very inscription “Long Anna Long Cross Cutt” (Plate 2573, opposite).

The consistency of Dellschau's approach strongly suggests an accurate and objective methodology whose validity rests upon its dependence on a factual, three-dimensional reality. His whole style of presentation seems to ask us to treat these images not as fictions but as portrayals of real machines or, at the very least, *possible* machines. They are, after all, guaranteed designs emanating from what he calls the Sonora Aero Club, and the artist's demeanor is calculated to confirm his reliability as a painstaking technical draftsman. We can say that each diagram testifies to the plausibility of an invention and is equivalent to the formal registration of an industrial patent.

A typical example of Dellschau's strategy of documentary persuasion is his double image of the airship Goose, “comming down” and “at Rest” (Plate 2200, right). In a passage from his memoirs, Dellschau attributes this contraption to Peter Mennis, a venerable member of the Sonora Aero Club. Mennis had demonstrated his invention many times and had even piloted it solo from Sonora to nearby Columbia and back. The Goose was able to leave the ground thanks to the chemical reaction of drops of Lifting Fluid, or Soupe, which fell onto an Electrande (a set of three rotating black-coated metal plates) and generated a chain of explosions within a sealed chamber. Dellschau's colored drawing portrays the vehicle at two separate stages in its progress. On the left we see it airborne, above a vaguely drawn landscape. The various working parts are folded outward, so that the vessel's profile becomes a complex symmetrical array of canopies, containers, and wheels. The pilot can be seen within the bowl-shaped cabin at the center. On the right, the Goose is shown after landing on rocky terrain. Now it is folded in upon itself to become a neat, compact unit somewhat in the shape of a tent or hut. However, part of its outer shell has been removed so as to lay bare the various moveable components,

Plate 2200 Goosey comming down Goosey at Rest, March 27, 1910 (see page 195)



Top: Plate 2647 Dora Compair Front Rear, September 19, 1912 (see page 219)

Bottom: Plate 3238 Outside of Aero Mina War, December 30, 1914 (see page 220)



tucked inside beneath the watchful eye of a bearded pilot. We might suppose that the latter is included in the twofold image as an indicator of scale, except that he appears taller in his second incarnation than in the first. On the other hand, we can say that the two versions of the Goose are broadly consistent, and that Dellschau is going through all the motions of handling objective technical facts with accuracy.

Now and again Dellschau relaxes his customary earnestness by inserting a few flying birds into his aerial scenes. These casual extras encourage a secondary way of looking that may be said to shift the focus from the scientific to the poetic. In semiotic terms, the birds inform us that we are to view the drawings not simply as flat diagrams but also as mimetic or perspectival images that show vehicles actually journeying through the upper air. Frequently the birds seem startled to find such large objects invading their ethereal province: this may be a running joke on Dellschau's part, although we may surmise that he was perfectly serious about convincing us of the buoyancy of his heavier-than-air conveyances. One such bird occurs on the left of the drawing of Long Anna (Plate 2573). That same image includes passengers aboard the airship, notably a black cat and a man in a blue blazer relaxing on a couch. In Plate 2647 (left, top), another unruffled traveler is introduced in the form of an elegant, dark-haired lady. I have already mentioned Dellschau's bearded pilot, who is usually to be seen at the controls. The inclusion of figures such as these within the technical diagram certainly provides a confirmation of scale. At the same time, they reassure us that Dellschau's machines have no trouble coping with their passengers' body weight.

Elsewhere in Plate 2573 we find a notice written upon the central shaft of the machine: "No smoking." Such an inscription may be said to be mimetic in so far as we assume that it shows an actual visible detail of the object, thereby sharing the same semiotic status as Dellschau's birds.⁵ However, we can also find words inserted within the figurative space that have no mimetic function: instead, they have been put there to explain the workings of the machinery. Thus in Plate 4579, Dellschau designates the separate arcs of his swiveling vanes as "fallin" and "at rest." These words must surely be understood as captions: verbal interpolations that remedy the insufficiency of the picture proper. Further, they are accompanied by curved, dotted lines ending in arrows. These are not something we are meant literally to see but are diagrammatic indicators of the orbits of the vanes, once set in motion. As such, they correspond to another well-known convention of the informative blueprint.

On occasion, short phrases are positioned next to the mouths of Dellschau's airborne travelers. These, of course, imply yet another expressive convention, this time borrowed from the popular cartoon strip: namely the representation of spoken utterances. Thus a passenger skulking with a lighted cigarette in the hold of one airship provokes the pilot's exclamation, "No smocking there," in Plate 2450 (page 207). Further humor creeps in when the two cuttings pasted on this same page are embellished with banners and strings. This allows the pasted elements to be read as kites being flown by two droll male figures, one of whom skids comically as he doffs his hat while the other sports a beard and smokes a pipe. Taken as a whole, this drawing emerges as a quite complex instance of a dispassionate diagram modulating into a comic tableau and suggests that Dellschau's quasi-scientific stance was not unwavering. There is, as it were, always a storyteller, if not a comedian, lurking behind the earnest engineer.

The art lover will, of course, be aware that Dellschau's diagrams also cater to a quite different order of appreciation, namely the aesthetic. The simple reason for our immediate attraction to the drawings

is that they offer the non-intellectual pleasure of gazing at agreeable shapes and visual textures. An example of a successful decorative design is an outside view of the Aero Mina (Plate 3238, opposite, bottom), in which a black-hatted pilot can be glimpsed at the very center of a pattern that is otherwise almost entirely ornamental and symmetrical. This striking composition is built up of tricolor stripes using black / blue / red, or blue / red / white, with such bicolor variants as red / white, yellow / black, and blue / black. These pleasing permutations bring to mind certain pictures of Adolf Wölfli, who similarly loved to position a face at the midpoint of a highly colorful and symmetrical composition.

By now it seems clear that Dellschau not only aspired to technological credibility but also wanted to convey the awesomeness and beauty of air travel: his interpolations are informative but are also an index of emotionality. Once we focus upon them, we find they are not restricted to the figurative areas of the drawings but extend to such typical marginalia as the draftsman's name, the four-figure plate number he allocates to each sheet, the name of the airship portrayed, occasionally the name of an inventor (such as Peter Mennis or Max Miser), incidental numerals and devices, and, finally, the enigmatic motto $\text{DM} = \text{X}\emptyset$.

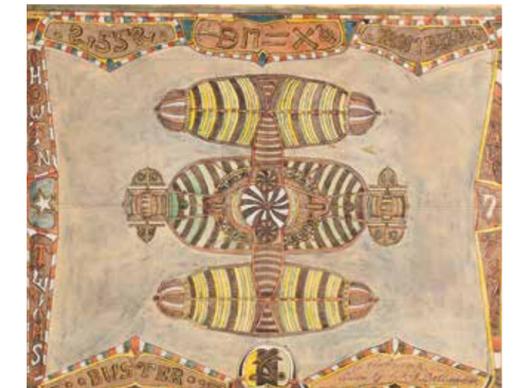
These inscriptions are typically set within carefully outlined containers, capsules, or banners and positioned in the corners, down the sides, or along the top and bottom of the drawing. As often rather fussy addenda, they behave exactly like the more elaborated scrolls, cartouches, tags, and inserts that enliven the architectural drawings of Achilles Rizzoli. The surrounds of Dellschau's legends nearly always take the form of stripes of alternating dark and light tones, whose slight curves are suggestive not of flat ribbons but of raised and rounded frames, fashioned to emphasize the value of their contents. Occasional checker patterns or rows of squares also occur. Here we may see an analogy with Adolf Wölfli's ubiquitous decorative device of the "ring of bells."⁶

Early on in his production, Dellschau's annotations took the form of simple handwriting in an old-fashioned Germanic script that may also remind us of Wölfli's practice. Later on, the interpolations are rendered in ornate capital letters, with a hint of three-dimensionality. Generally, Dellschau's lettering is slightly uneven, and his numerals are often subjected to capricious distortions. Here and there letters are laid one over another, as in Plate 2552, (right, top), in which the elaborate two-color "Houston" includes a red *S* stuck over a white *T*. In Plate 2599 (right, bottom), Dellschau's legible signature, "C.A.A. Dellschau," is positioned beneath a cryptic sigil that carries over into a few drawings. This seems designed to transmit a sense of magical potency. The bizarre cipher bears some slight resemblance to the cursive hieratic script of late Egyptian writing; it may also remind us of the semi-abstract pictograms improvised by Paul Klee. (The last component of the formula resembles the astrological sign for Saturn, set on its side.) Amusingly, Dellschau's cipher and signature are rimmed by a margin that creates a trapezoid, which then attains the third dimension once we notice that a bearded man, smoking a pipe and wearing a hat and a red jacket, has squatted down on it. By now we may be wondering whether this bearded figure is Charles Dellschau himself—or his hero, Peter Mennis—although what intrigues me most about this configuration is its nonchalant shifting between different textual and pictorial codes.

There seems always to be something idiosyncratic, a little perverse, and above all catchy about Dellschau's inscriptions. They tend to exhibit the same swagger as those handmade signs that market stallholders daub to advertise their produce. They amuse us, yet they also transmit an urgency that

Top: Plate 2552 Buster from Below, May 1, 1912 (see page 210)

Bottom: Plate 2599 Sicher, July 15, 1912 (see page 215)



re-injects seriousness into the occasion of our looking. In short, Dellschau's interventions both embellish and admonish. They show him to be not only a modest artisan but also an ebullient showman.

Let us consider that most insistent of ciphers, $\text{DM} = \text{X}\emptyset$, which appears prominently in works between 1908 and 1916. Set horizontally (and sometimes vertically), it manifests itself in large capitals or, occasionally, as a more modest rider to the draftsman's signature. The UFOlogist Pete Navarro, who studied all twelve of Dellschau's books of drawings quite intently and had eight of the books in his possession, has claimed to have cracked the code and that the five symbols are a reference to a secret society that he believes controlled the Sonora Aero Club in the late 1850s.⁷ If we accept this reading, then it would follow that Dellschau labeled his drawings as documentary records originating in a particular institutional context. Whereupon we might suppose that $\text{DM} = \text{X}\emptyset$ is a formal logo embodying his pride in having belonged to an illustrious (if highly secret) organization. On the other hand, we could infer a certain reticence, for the use of a logo could also mean that Dellschau is deflecting full responsibility from himself, the mere delineator. However, looking afresh at the cipher, we may feel dissatisfied with Navarro's mystifying half-revelations and choose to read it as Dellschau's highly personal monogram, as it were, his private seal of authentication—in which case, the message of $\text{DM} = \text{X}\emptyset$ could be construed along the lines of: "Here I am showing you yet another of those grandiose works whose authenticity I declare while hoping to protect them from wider exposure."

Taken in their totality, the artist's handwritten interpolations are essentially evidence of the draftsman's ultra-attentive monitoring, a concern that implies a curious awareness of an audience. Clearly Dellschau is not prepared to risk releasing his drawings for others to misread; rather, he insists on tying his imagery to explicit themes and concepts. Moreover, nearly all his verbal tabulations are calculated to emphasize novelty and grandeur. He seems obsessed with the idea of convincing us of his fertile aeronautical genius—so much so indeed that we are inclined to disregard the attribution of his Aeros to named individuals (Peter Mennis, Otto Krause, Michael Gorée, Karl Diftzell, Joe Cheney, and the rest). On the contrary, as we probably realize, these alleged colleagues could be in turn inventions, so that the entire spectacle adumbrated in the notebooks redounds to the credit of a single man, the authoritative scribe and draftsman himself.

• • •

Let us now turn to those textual and pictorial borrowings that Dellschau has taken so much trouble to snip out and paste onto his sheets. They consist, almost without exception, of press items, taken from such contemporary sources as the magazine *Scientific American* and three local newspapers, the *Houston Daily Post*, the *Houston Chronicle*, and the *Houston Press*. We may note that the last-named describes itself as "an honest, independent newspaper for the people," as seen in Plate 4529 (plate 279). Here and there are to be found texts in German, printed in the old Gothic typeface known as Fraktur. These probably came from issues of the *New Orleans German Gazette*, to which Dellschau is thought to have subscribed.⁸ The artist variously refers to these cuttings as Press Blooms, Cuts, and Airo Cutts—apparently Dellschau's private shorthand for "aeronautical press cuttings."

Now, Dellschau's 1908–1921 books of drawings were all homemade, and newsprint was implemented as a backing along the spine of each sheet of paper to facilitate its threading within a sheaf. Sometimes the sheets (which are now mostly separated for exhibition purposes) bear flanges of news-

print whose original messages remain legible. These comprise fragments of advertisements and miscellaneous news stories and are, in the main, of incidental interest: that is to say these marginalia do not appear to correspond to any deliberate communication on Dellschau's part.

On the other hand, there are a good many privileged cuttings that clearly play a part within an intentional scheme. First, we may consider the pictorial items that Dellschau appropriates. In a Flanck view of the Aero Soso inscribed "Doc Tacken a Ride" (Plate 2559, right, top), we see on the right a man with mustache and derby hat holding a stick and waving what looks to be a sheet of blank paper. Dellschau has manifestly drawn this figure. But to the left there is a collaged element, scissored from the fashion page of the local paper and showing a woman in a stylish dress and hat. Evidently the details of this image attracted Dellschau but were too difficult for him to transfer with pencil and ink, thus the pasted fragment constitutes an isolated trophy. In a drawing of the Aero Buster (Plate 2549, right, bottom), we find a variant procedure: on the left is a newsprint photo of a man in suit and hat, standing erect and proud, while on the right there is an illustrated drawing of a fat man with a stick. This time both items are collaged.

These pictorial appropriations are in fact relatively uncommon, given that the vast bulk of the pasted fragments consists of textual material (though it is true that this often involves photogravure illustrations). Typically, Dellschau sticks these cuttings onto his sheets and then, just as he does with his handwritten inscriptions, outlines them with two or three marginal bands, usually in alternating hues. These surrounds elevate the cuttings to the status of significant documents, as it were, distinguished visitors from the world outside the artwork.

In considering these interpolations, we may begin to discern a ritual of celebration.⁹ We may imagine with what glee the artist, scanning his daily paper, would suddenly pounce upon a choice item, identifying its relevance to his project. He would then scissor it out from the page, discard the rest of the newspaper, take out some glue, and transfer the cutting to its new context. It is conceivable that he kept a number of clippings in a box as a reserve, to be exploited once the time was right. On the other hand, the indications are that he didn't hoard them for all that long, for there are few anachronisms: in principle, Dellschau preferred his cuttings fresh. This is demonstrated in the composition inscribed "Wind 1845 Muehl Berg" (Plate 4714, page 319), which is dated October 18, 1920, and groups no less than seven press items, three of which converge upon the same historical event, namely the International Air Race held at Étampes, in France, in late September 1920. Three other clippings on this same sheet refer to unrelated aerial deaths occurring in the same September–October period. (The undated seventh one is devoted to the less relevant topic of industrial air conditioning, as if the word *air* alone had caught Dellschau's eye.) The implication is that the collage maker has consciously identified his elective theme—the thrills and risks of modern aviation—and sees it as his vocation to document its development, tying his data to an explicit time frame.

Similarly, a sheet bearing the significant heading "Airo Cutts" (Plate 4554) devotes its entire compositional space to items from seven printed sources. Arrayed across the page beneath the date of January 24, 1920, the items are set quite neatly in vertical columns, as if to recreate the layout of a newspaper's front page. This sheet, I would contend, is intended to invoke the newspaper as a paradigm of veracity and objectivity, along lines consistent with the attributes of the technical diagram. Reading is believing. As ever, the artist has improved on dull newsprint by inserting around the edges of the pasted material

Top: Plate 2559 Aero Soso Flanck Doc Tacken a Ride, May 11, 1912 (see page 211)

Bottom: Detail of Plate 2549 Max Misers Aero Buster Front or Rear, April 25, 1912 (see page 209)



a striped ribbon that at times breaks into ornamental zigzags. As the viewer draws closer and starts to decipher the actual words, the diversity of their content and tone begins to emerge, even though each item earns its place by virtue of an explicit aeronautical reference. Here is a list of the topics dealt with in this Airo Cutt:

1. A mail plane in a life-and-death race to transport serum from Chicago to New York
2. The invention of a color-signaling system for aircraft
3. The U.S. air force's newly formulated rules of flying
4. A jocular speech made by the president emeritus of the University of California, who opines that women should marry aviators since they can be relied upon to have plenty of nerve
5. The death of Sir John William Alcock, the first nonstop transatlantic aviator, in a crash in Normandy¹⁰
6. A rich father's vow that he will undertake a monthly twelve-hour flight in his own Curtiss plane in order to visit his daughter at her school in Tennessee
7. A wind-tunnel for testing aerodynamics on scale models

What this miscellany reveals is Dellschau's somewhat compulsive tendency to conserve any odds and ends relating to his pet subject, for whereas the report of Alcock's tragic death cries out to be preserved, chitchat about aviator-husbands or doting fathers seems hardly worth the trouble. (Given that, by the winter of 1919–1920, Dellschau was almost ninety years old and living with his stepdaughter, Elizabeth Stelzig, it is at least a possibility that she or one of her children saved certain news items to humor the old man's passion—in which case he might have adopted them more out of courtesy than discernment.)

In Plate 4605, a sheet dedicated to the Italian aircraft designer and pioneering manufacturer Gianni Caproni, we can identify a more concerted effort to enshrine a cherished hero, integrating separate components within a dignified commemorative ensemble. The central clipping shows a color drawing of Caproni's head, captioned with his name and the phrase "A Little Man of Big Ideas." Beside him hovers an airplane from which dangles a world globe, an allusion that a secondary cutting spells out in terms of the man's genius for designing planes capable of lifting very heavy weights. To either side of this primary material are pasted the two halves of an independent cutting: it deals with Germany's pioneering production of airplanes made of metal rather than canvas and wood. Here a reporter signing himself George Gaulois mentions that a giant aluminum flying boat is currently being manufactured at Wilhelmshaven, and warns America that, despite the progress it made during the war, it may now be falling behind in the race to produce a powerful air fleet. The sheet carries Dellschau's own homespun comment, "Money cost plenty and dont pay," so that the composition as a whole appears to voice the artist's concern with the economic downside of the race for mastery of the skies.

Another drawing, of the Aero Jake (Plate 2317, page 197, top), is described by its author as "A free Studia after forward Worck." It shows the airship in full flight with vanes swinging to either side. Dellschau has sketched three passengers aboard the vessel and two startled birds flapping beneath it. Of the several Airo Cutts positioned symmetrically about the sheet, the one placed directly above the Aero Jake is the most telling. Extracted from a German-language source, it shows a biplane piloted by the French aviator Louis Charles Bréguet.¹¹ A printed caption informs us that this single-engine craft had managed to lift ten passengers—a total weight of 637 kilos—on a demonstration flight at Douai

aerodrome. It would seem that Dellschau is trying to tell us that his own contraption is every bit as airworthy as Bréguet's. On the other hand, two of the other cuttings refer to aviation mishaps, so that it would be more accurate to say that Dellschau's outlook on flight is tinged with ambivalence, temerity being offset by timidity.

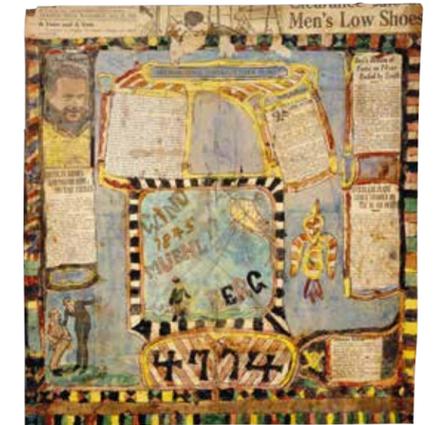
Plate 4714 (right, top) which brings us up to date on the International Air Race that I mention earlier, shows how Dellschau monitored the unfolding of various press stories across time. We learn that the race is indeed now over and that the winner, the French ace Sadi Lecointe, was the only pilot to complete the course. We further learn that the American participants harbor grievances about their treatment by the French, while a plane known as the Texas Wildcat came to grief on the very eve of the race and had to be retired. Unrelated cuttings on the same sheet refer to three separate fatal accidents involving stunt flyers. As if responding to this evidence of hubris, Dellschau appends his own little drawing of a male figure flying a modest kite. The artist's initials are set alongside the figure, so it is tempting to see this as a self-portrait and perhaps a reminiscence of adolescence. Given the clippings' general emphasis upon the perils of the skies, the drawing may be telling us that Dellschau is rather pleased to have kept his own feet on terra firma.

A certain *schadenfreude* may be detected in the way Dellschau repeatedly seizes upon reports of aerial disasters. Plate 2549 (right, bottom) shows a crashed airplane sinking beneath the waves. Elsewhere, we read of the lone pilot of a mail plane lost somewhere in the Utah desert (Plate 4695, page 316). In a Long Center Cut drawing of the Baby Myn, we read of the "slight accident" that befell ace pilot Hugh Robinson at Antibes, France, on February 10, 1912, when he recklessly took off in a Curtiss hydroaeroplane in a 35-mile-an-hour gale. Having stayed aloft for twenty minutes, the plane came down on the sea with the wind behind it and toppled over; luckily Robinson was unhurt, but the plane was smashed, as we see from a photo of the hapless machine capsizing. Hovering above his clippings, Dellschau's own hand-drawn Baby Myn is displayed in cross section in all its ungainly glory, complete with vanes, wheels, pulleys, and two brave crew members. Again it is hard to resist the inference that Dellschau envisaged aviation as a dangerous activity, for it is not clear that the exploits of the Sonora Aero Club were any less foolhardy than those of Hugh Robinson.

Above all, Dellschau's carefully preserved Airo Cutts are proof not only that he kept a close eye upon contemporary aviation but that he was keen to juxtapose his private imaginings with real-life events. We may suppose that each authentic news flash had the effect of adding a little ballast of realism to his airy inventions. Most noticeable is Dellschau's concern to tie his borrowings to a temporal scheme. For, of all the elements in his collage repertoire, the most insistent is the strip he regularly cut out from the top margin of the local Houston paper, citing the place and date. Early on, he used to enter these details by hand, but sometime in the spring of 1912 he opted for printed typography and stuck to it thereafter. We may want to muse upon the compulsion that made Dellschau fiddle with scissors and paste in this way, and ask why he often tinted the sliver of newsprint with blue watercolor. Would it not have been easier to sign and date his work by hand, as did Wölfli?¹² I suggest that the simple answer is that the information in a neat typeface struck him as more authoritative, more "official." This would be consistent with the notion that Dellschau was obsessed with defending the credibility of his project: the newspaper date is of a piece with the technical diagram as a marker of authenticity.

Top: Plate 4714 Wind 1845 Muehl Berg, October 18, 1920 (see page 319)

Bottom: Plate 2549 Max Misers Aero Buster Front or Rear, April 25, 1912 (see page 209)



As a German-born immigrant, Dellschau was always sensitive to aviation news from his homeland, and most especially to the development of the zeppelin. Pioneered in at the turn of the century by Ferdinand von Zeppelin, the zeppelin was almost exclusively a German specialty in the lead-up to the Great War. The quintessence of aeronautical progress, it greatly excited the popular imagination and was a recurrent preoccupation in the American press, which spontaneously equated it with the Kaiser's imperialist ambitions. In his fantasy novel of 1908, *The War in the Air*, the English author H. G. Wells imagines a German air fleet zooming across the Atlantic to capture New York. In 1915, during the war, zeppelins actually did drop bombs on Paris and London, albeit their efficacy was soon countered by incendiary countermeasures.¹³

It is intriguing to speculate on Dellschau's political sympathies at this time. Plate 2616 (page 216), a quartet of German-language cuttings dated 1912, refers to experiments with airships and makes specific and laudatory mention of the German zeppelin *Viktoria Luise*, which had landed in Frankfurt during Jubilee festivities. Plate 2450 (page 207) bears the date November 11, 1911 (this time entered by hand) and includes two small cuttings in Fraktur lettering. One of these speaks of an uneventful zeppelin flight over Berlin undertaken by the two sons of the German emperor and an entourage of courtiers. The other announces the successful completion of a piloting test at a German airstrip by a German-American pilot called Edelmann. We may surmise that Dellschau, himself a German-American, identified with this reference. The two cuttings are set to either side of Dellschau's florid drawing of a wheeled craft with two large turbines and carrying four passengers.

Once war broke out in Europe, Dellschau followed events in Britain. In one of his War Press Blooms (Plate 3339, page 223), the three clippings are taken from a German newspaper and are manifestly anti-British. Translated, their headlines read "Against British Secretiveness," "Blaze in Portsmouth Docks," and "English Perfidy." A month later, Dellschau would solemnly dedicate an entire drawing to a spread of cuttings entitled—and here we are directly reading the collaged newspaper headline—"Eight Members of the New British War Cabinet" (Plate 3352, page 224, top). The eight faces, captioned with well-known names such as those of Secretary of State for War Lord Kitchener, Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey, Prime Minister David Lloyd George, and Attorney-General Sir Edward Carson, are set in a dramatic fanlike circle, somewhat like a layout of cards in fortune telling. There are additional cuttings nearby, four of them in German and one in English with the heading "Sanitation Battle On in Britain." It is hard to gauge Dellschau's exact sympathies here, although elsewhere one may detect a definite touch of Teutonic triumphalism, as in the cutting in Plate 3240 (left), with its headline "Down Goes Another Ship!" heralding a list of eight vessels recently destroyed by the German navy.¹⁴

If the bulk of Dellschau's press cuttings reflects a fairly benign sensibility, at least one seems exceptional and even provocative. Into a design dated for the first day of 1920 (Plate 4538, page 46), he chose to integrate an uncaptioned press photo of the Russian revolutionary leader Leon Trotsky. Following the Bolshevik coup of 1917, Trotsky had become commissar for military and naval affairs, and was the successful commander of the Red Army during the Russian Civil War. An outstanding orator and political strategist, he became a founding member of the Politburo in 1919 and by early 1920 was being tipped abroad as the most likely successor to Lenin. Should we see a sign of hero-worship in this iconic clipping? I somewhat doubt it, for, notwithstanding its celebratory look, it is altogether dwarfed by another image about ten times as large—a spectacular newspaper drawing boldly titled "Sky Lubrication." It

depicts several biplanes above an American city watched over (or menaced?) by an immense, cigar-shaped zeppelin. Ought we to take Dellschau's obscure comment "Crasey Undertaken" (presumably "crazy undertaking") to refer to the Russian Revolution, or to the risky business of conquering the skies? In the end, I think it safe to say that it was the heroic drama of aviation that enthralled Dellschau rather than the complex struggles of international politics.

■ ■ ■

I shall close this investigation with a supplement of my own, drawing a parallel with a rather different artist, Pablo Picasso. It happens that the great avant-garde innovator produced his Cubist *papiers collés* in the years 1912–1914, at a time when both he and Dellschau were peculiarly receptive to news stories.¹⁵ In her monograph *Re-Ordering the Universe*, the critic Patricia Leighton examines Picasso's specific choice of contemporary press extracts and maintains that he deliberately introduced them into his pictures so as to give voice to his leftist and anti-militarist sympathies.¹⁶ Of course, in times of crisis, popular dailies such as the Paris-based *Le Journal*, which Picasso often used, are bound to prioritize striking international events, so that an arbitrary recourse to newsprint could not help but include a preponderance of dramatic items. What Leighton argues, however, is that Picasso singled out his cuttings with conscious intent, in effect compiling a journalistic diary.¹⁷ She calculates that, during 1912–1913 alone, he completed more than fifty *papiers collés* involving newsprint, more than half of which deal with the two Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913 and the deteriorating economic and political state of Europe. Many of the rest are devoted to accounts of murders, suicides, and unrest, and confirm the vision of a collapsing social order.¹⁸ Leighton's interpretation of the collagemaking is that, by dint of appropriating fragments of objective circumstance, Picasso was seeking to add historical ballast to his pictorial inventions. That is to say, belying the purism normally attributed to the Cubist project, his art in fact remained porous to reality. "No more concrete way could be imagined of pulling Cubism back from the brink of total abstraction," observes Leighton.¹⁹

It will be obvious that this reading of Picasso's *papiers collés* supports the case for seeing Dellschau's efforts in similar terms, as an attempt to pull back pictorial invention from the brink of total fantasmagoria. Certainly we should accept that the intrusion of real-life news stories invigorates the fictive drawings, and that their designer's investment in codes of technical veracity is backed up by up-to-the-minute knowledge of contemporary developments in aviation. The function of those pasted tokens of modernity is to lend Dellschau's splendid images a potent aura of immediacy and plausibility.

Plate 3240 Mina from Below War, January 4, 1915 (see page 221, bottom)



Notes

1. It is notable that the terminology pertaining to the practice of cutting and pasting is as diverse as its history—for we speak of the papier collé (pasted paper) of the Cubists, the *Merzzeichnungen* (Merz drawings) of Kurt Schwitters, the photomontages of the Berlin Dadaists, the collages of the Surrealists, the découpages of Henri Matisse, the *assemblages d'empreintes* (assembled imprints) of Jean Dubuffet, and so forth. I would want to differentiate two fundamental instances of collage practice, identified according to the outcome of the maneuver. In either case, paper components are delivered to the surface of an existing visual scheme and glued down. However, in the first instance, the alien element is so scrupulously integrated as to create the illusion of having always belonged there: the typical surrealist compilations of Max Ernst foster this impression of seamless unity. Conversely, in the second instance, the alien element tends to be snipped out in a relatively careless way, so that the fact of its late arrival remains obvious: we immediately recognize it as a supplement whose prior existence in a different context teases our curiosity. The papiers collés of Picasso are a good example of this latter tendency, and I turn to them at the end of this essay as an instructive parallel to Dellschau's collages. For discussions of collage practice in the twentieth century, see Katherine Hoffman, ed., *Collage: Critical Views* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1989); Christine Poggi, *In Defiance of Painting: Cubism, Futurism, and the Invention of Collage* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992); and Diane Waldman, *Collage, Assemblage, and the Found Object* (London: Phaidon, 1992).
2. For more on the artist, see Jo Farb Hernandez, John Beardsley, and Roger Cardinal, *A. G. Rizzoli: Architect of Magnificent Visions* (New York: Harry N. Abrams in association with San Diego Museum of Art, 1997).
3. For more on Adolf Wölfli, see Roger Cardinal, "Image and Word in Schizophrenic Creation," in *Literature and the Plastic Arts, 1880–1930: Seven Essays*, ed. I. Higgins (Edinburgh and London: Scottish Academic Press, 1973), 103–20; and Elka Spoerri and Daniel Baumann, *The Art of Adolf Wölfli: St. Adolf-Giant-Creation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press in association with American Folk Art Museum, 2003).
4. Among several other instances of outsider collage-making may be cited the startling large-scale displays of William L. Hawkins (1895–1990); see Mason Klein, "William L. Hawkins," in *Self-Taught Artists of the 20th Century: An American Anthology*, by Elsa Longhauser and Harald Szeemann (San Francisco: Chronicle Books in asso-

- ciation with Museum of American Folk Art, 1998), 170–73. Another impressive collagist is C. T. McClusky (act. c. 1940–1950), whose circus scenes combine cut-out imagery and color drawing; see John Turner, "The Collages of C. T. McClusky," *Folk Art* 25, no. 2 (Summer 2000): 30–37.
5. In another drawing, Plate 2316, there is a significant oddity tipped into an otherwise realistic ensemble—a funny disembodied face, floating in the sky and resembling a crescent moon smoking a curved black pipe. Set above the swaggering pilot, who dangles one-handed from his flying machine, this manifestly unreal face conjures up an atmosphere of mischief and nonchalant bravado. Needless to say, these are not attributes of an orthodox technical drawing.
 6. See Cardinal, "Image and Word in Schizophrenic Creation."
 7. See Cynthia Greenwood, "Secrets of the Sonora Aero Club," *Houston Press* (December 10, 1998).
 8. *Ibid.*
 9. In an article on the procedures of Kurt Schwitters, I speculate on the fetishistic pleasure the Hanover collage-maker might have derived from converting humble pieces of litter into precious works of art; see Roger Cardinal, "Collecting and Collage-Making: The Case of Kurt Schwitters," in *The Cultures of Collecting*, eds. John Elsner and Roger Cardinal (London: Reaktion Books, 1994), 68–96.
 10. Sir John William Alcock (1892–1919) became an air force ace in World War I, and completed the first nonstop transatlantic flight with Arthur Whitten Brown in June 1919. His death in an amphibian occurred on December 18, 1919, so this cutting must have been a few weeks old when Dellschau made use of it.
 11. We can safely assume that Louis Charles Bréguet (1880–1955) was one of Dellschau's real-life heroes. Bréguet constructed his first airplane in 1909 and his first hydroplane in 1912, and in 1917 he built an experimental gyroplane, an early type of helicopter. By 1919 he had founded an air company that would later become Air France.
 12. Among several date-conscious outsiders we may also cite Chicago self-taught artist Joseph Yoakum, who specialized in exotic landscapes and delighted in imprinting each of his named scenes with a rubber date-stamp. The gesture exactly echoes Dellschau's, a ceremonious assertion that rebuffs any hint of arbitrariness. For more information on Yoakum, see Derrel B. DePasse, *Traveling the*

Rainbow: The Life and Art of Joseph E. Yoakum (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2000).

13. See Robert Wohl, *A Passion for Wings: Aviation and the Western Imagination, 1908–1918* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994). Dellschau would die too early to hear of that most dire of aeronautical catastrophes, the conflagration that destroyed the great *Hindenburg* on May 6, 1937, just as the 804-foot-long dirigible reached America after crossing the Atlantic. Nonetheless, one is tempted to see that catastrophe as having been foreshadowed in Dellschau's meditations on the grandeur and folly of aviation.

14. Given that Dellschau's Press Blooms are usually confined to themes of aviation or war, it would be interesting to know which other items he might have enjoyed yet elected to discard. One might, for instance, have supposed him interested in the feats of the escapologist Harry Houdini, several of whose stunts involved daredevil aerial acrobatics. We do know that, from time to time, he preserved quite extraneous items, such as a report on three black convicts escaping from a Texas jail (Plate 4558). However, this item follows two aviation items in the same column, so it may have been snipped in error. There are also a few stories of little relevance to aviation proper, such as the item on the same sheet concerning "aerial anglers"—members of the Igorot tribe who fish for bats at dusk with baited hooks dangling from kites.

15. A further parallel might be drawn with the *Merzzeichnungen* that Kurt Schwitters produced in the immediate postwar years, collage works in which newsprint occasionally draws attention to contemporary political and social crises; see Cardinal, "Collecting and Collage-Making."

16. See Patricia D. Leighton, "The Insurrectionary Painter: Anarchism and the Collages, 1912–1914," in *Re-Ordering the Universe: Picasso and Anarchism, 1897–1914* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 121–42.

17. Whereas it is true that Picasso sometimes stuck his clippings upside down on the page, he nearly always preserved their legibility by respecting their textual integrity. By contrast, Patricia Leighton observes of Picasso's Cubist partner Georges Braque (whose collage experiments began slightly later) that he made use of press cuttings less frequently and more arbitrarily. Braque tended to slice columns down the middle, or to pencil over them once they were pasted down. This robbed the printed elements of their legibility and accentuated their purely visual and aesthetic import.

18. As it happens, Picasso made a single oblique gesture toward Dellschau's favorite thematics insofar as three of his canvases, produced in spring 1912, bear the (painted) inscription *Notre Avenir est dans l'Air* ("Our Future lies in the Air"). The slogan was taken from the title of an anonymous contemporary pamphlet that advocated the prompt development of a French air force; see Leighton, "The Insurrectionary Painter," 129.

19. *Ibid.*, 125.



4

Charles A.A. Dellschau and the Dream of Flight

Tom D. Crouch

In the last week of July 1899, Wilbur Wright, a thirty-two-year-old resident of Dayton, Ohio, flew an odd-looking biplane kite from the grounds of the Union Theological Seminary, ten or twelve blocks from the bicycle shop that he operated with his younger brother Orville at 22 South Williams Street. While a small group of boys looked on, he manipulated the kite lines, causing the little craft to climb, dive, and bank on command. The Wright brothers had taken their first step down a path that would lead to the invention of the airplane.¹

At some point the previous year, Charles August Albert Dellschau, a German immigrant, began to work on his memoirs, which offer an account of time spent among gold miners in Sonora, California, between 1854 and 1859. He initially wrote two volumes in English, which are known as *Recolections* and *Recolections second part*, and subsequently transcribed them both into a third volume in German, known as *Erinnerungen* (Recollections). The ink drawings of fanciful airships that accompany the texts look for all the world as if they had flown off the pages of a Jules Verne novel. The airships were, Dellschau insisted, machines that had been discussed, if not actually constructed (with the exception of two), by the members of an aeronautical society to which he had belonged in the California goldfields.

The Sonora Aero Club

According to the memoirs, the Sonora Aero Club was established in 1856–1857, inspired by the work of Peter Mennis, whom Dellschau refers to as a “California Miner, a German up in the fourties, a plain yes a rough Man, whit as kind a hearth as to be found in very few living beengs.” Although “adicted to strong drink,” and “for ever out of Means, ‘Flat brocke,’” his friends regarded him as a man blessed as “a genius in getting Up useful contrivances.”²

Working in secret, and borrowing “nails, Screws, Wire and other articles” from his friends, Mennis constructed the Goose (or Goosey), an airship consisting of two balloons with a basket fitted out with a pilot’s seat and steering wheel. Dellschau explained that the inventor generated lift by mixing a secret Lifting Fluid with water in a special apparatus inside the two balloons. One Sunday he invited his friends along Woods Creek to watch his takeoff on a test flight to Sonora and back. “[U]p he went, allone & how many bigmouthed man oppened their Eyes, telling he would never come back allive, he break his Neck coming down if he ever could turn back. Yes and he did come back whitin ten feet of his Cabin, and as easy as a Bird alighting,” Dellschau noted.³

Members of the Sonora Aero Club, who met every Friday evening at the saloon of the boarding-house where a number of them resided, were required to take the podium at least once a quarter, “and thoroughly exercise their jaws” describing their own plans for an airship. Half a century later, Dellschau illustrated his reminiscences with watercolor paintings of the fantastic aerial craft that he claimed were discussed on these occasions.

But that was not the end of the matter. Beginning, presumably, around the time he completed his memoirs and continuing until 1921, Dellschau filled one large book after another with thousands of drawings illustrating scores of additional airships. The airships are complicated craft, sporting lovely striped envelopes that were illustrated both empty and inflated. Dellschau drew many versions of the same craft, offering side, top, and cut-away views. As a result, the paintings often have the feel of lively technical illustrations as drawn by a cartoonist. The artist’s draftsmanship, and the marvelous sense of whimsy so apparent in the names of his aircraft, is exercised in his renderings of the

members of the club, shown gazing at the aircraft, climbing aboard, or comfortably ensconced in the operator’s position.

The airship drawings in later books are accompanied by pages of news clippings chronicling the progress of flight technology, which Dellschau referred to as Press Blooms. These pages are bordered, dated, and presented in the same fashion as the drawings. Some pages contain both drawings and clippings, but those prepared during World War I are often simply pages of clippings.

How are we to fathom the enigma of Charles Dellschau within the context of the history of flight? In a nutshell—Why airships? Why would a retired butcher and saddlery clerk in Houston devote the final two decades of his life to filling page after page with drawings of imaginative airships and news clippings relating to flight? One answer is to be found in the fact that the newspapers and magazines of the period were filled with stories of flying machines.

California Ballooning in the 1850s

First, it is important to determine whether Dellschau’s airships were based on real machines or figments of what was clearly a very active imagination. The artist goes a long way toward answering this question in his memoirs by explaining that “only the Goose and the Dove really functioned, the others were of no more value than the idle dreams that they were built on.”⁴

If the Goose really did leave the ground, we can only assume that it was a primitive balloon. Balloonists of the period used sulfuric acid, which Dellschau identifies as one of the ingredients of Mennis’s fuel, to generate the hydrogen gas that filled their envelopes. Even if the Goose did fly, it would not have earned Mennis laurels for having made the first flight in California. That honor goes to a sixteen-year-old fruit vender named Joseph “Ready” Gates, who ascended from Oakland on August 28, 1853, aboard a balloon owned by a Mr. S. Kelly.

Kelly had ordered his “splendid silk balloon” from John Wise, of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, the nation’s most experienced aeronaut, and announced in a local newspaper that he would ascend with a friend on the Fourth of July, assuring readers that “no expense would be spared to have the whole affair of California magnificence.”⁵ The appointed day came and went without a flight, however, as did a second announced date of July 30. He was finally ready to go on Sunday, August 28. The yellow balloon, measuring eighteen feet in diameter, was to launch from a spot near the Oakland wharf at 1 P.M. When that hour arrived, however, the balloon was only one-third full. Two hours later, it was still not completely inflated, and the crowd was growing restless. The craft refused to rise with Kelly, who was described as a heavy man, on board. One after another, a series of lighter-weight men took his place in the basket, but the balloon did nothing more than bump across the ground.

Desperate, Kelly was finally reduced to asking for volunteers from the crowd of young boys gathered at the launch site. Eager to ensure success, Kelly removed the basket and all that it contained, fastened a single board to the load ring, and helped young Joseph Gates climb into place. After some shouted instructions to pull the valve line to return to earth and drop a bit of sand to slow his descent, the balloon rose a thousand feet into the sky and sailed out of sight into the clouds eight or ten miles from the launch site, with the crowd threatening Kelly for sending the boy to what seemed certain doom.⁶

Fortunately for Kelly, Gates stepped off a steamer at the Oakland docks the next morning.⁷ He had traveled fifty miles to a landing in the Suisun Valley, fifteen miles from Benicia. Having lost his grip on

the valve line soon after takeoff, the youngster had left his perch on the board and clambered up the netting a short distance to cut a small hole in the envelope with his knife, allowing just enough gas to escape to bring the balloon slowly back to earth. For a young fruit vender, Ready Gates, the first person to fly in California, had demonstrated the cool composure of a veteran aeronaut.

Between 1855 and 1857, roughly the period to which Dellschau dates the foundation of the Sonora Aero Club, “Professor” Samuel Wilson attempted, “by lecture and experiment,” to convince California investors to finance the creation of a “balloon line” connecting the San Francisco Bay area to the Atlantic Coast. On one occasion in the spring of 1856, Wilson’s giant balloon, measuring a hundred feet tall and ninety feet in diameter, exploded during an inflation in Placerville, California. When the “professor” was reported to have made a successful ascent from Mexico City in June 1857, Californians seemed both surprised and delighted.⁸

In the fall of 1859, a Sacramento paper reported that Wilson was none other than Thaddeus S. C. Lowe, who was then exhibiting a giant balloon in New York and Philadelphia with plans to fly the Atlantic.⁹ That is certainly not the case, however. Lowe, who acquired his first balloon in 1856, operated east of the Mississippi until after the Civil War and makes no mention of antebellum trips to California or Mexico during the 1850s in any of his extensive autobiographical accounts. If “Professor” Wilson was an experienced aeronaut, Samuel Wilson, an itinerant balloonist operating in the Middle West and South during 1850s, seems a far more likely candidate.¹⁰

California newspapers of the 1850s were also filled with stories of balloon flights in Europe. John Wise, the most experienced American airman at the time, announced that he was considering flying from San Francisco to New York before continuing on to Europe. Whatever the truth of Dellschau’s claims for the Goose, it is by no means difficult to imagine a loosely knit group of friends who gathered for a lively discussion of the possibility of building a flying machine that would enable them, as the artist inscribed on Plate 2554, “to cross the plains—and avoid Indian—or White mans stares.” Certainly aerial navigation was very much a topic of conversation elsewhere during the era of the California Gold Rush.

Rufus Porter, a New England-born artist and mechanic and the founder of the *Scientific American*, had opened the discussion with a pamphlet published in 1849, the year the Gold Rush began—*Aerial Navigation: The Practicability of Travelling Pleasantly and Safely from New York to California in Three Days*. . . . A second pamphlet followed the next year.¹¹ Porter explains that he was “making active progress in the construction of an Aerial Transport, for the express purpose of carrying passengers between New York and California.” The cigar-shaped, hydrogen-filled airship would, he assures readers, carry fifty to one hundred passengers on a nonstop journey across the continent at a speed of sixty to a hundred miles per hour.

Powered by two steam engines, the envelope of the airship, or Aeroport, would be eight hundred feet long and fifty feet in diameter. A salon, or combination passenger cabin and crew compartment, would be suspended beneath the gasbag. Porter announced that transcontinental flights would begin on or about April 1, 1850. The cost of a one-way ticket to California on the first six flights would be fifty dollars. After that, the fare would increase to two hundred dollars. Two hundred tickets, Porter noted, had already been sold.¹²

The inventor had a long-standing interest in flight. He constructed his first model airship in 1833, and he published plans for two different airships in 1834 and 1835 issues of *Mechanic’s Magazine*. By

the 1840s, Porter was selling stock in the Aerial Navigation Company and had built and flown two model Aeroports filled with hydrogen and powered by clockwork.

The California Gold Rush offered the perfect opportunity for Porter to realize his dream. The discovery of gold near Sutter’s Mill in 1848 guaranteed that California would become an integral part of the nation and underscored the enormous difficulties faced by the thousands who sought to reach the goldfields. Inland gold seekers swarmed to St. Louis or St. Joseph, Missouri, where they swelled the ranks of what had been a mere trickle of overland emigrants only a few months before. Residents of the eastern cities often preferred to book passage around Cape Horn. Those of a more adventurous, or less patient, temperament faced the threat of tropical disease and other hardships involved in a trek across the Isthmus of Panama, shortcutting the four- to six-month, 18,000-mile ocean voyage around the Horn.

Small wonder that Porter’s promise of a three-day, 3,000-mile scenic aerial cruise over prairies, mountains, American Indians, and grizzly bears caught the attention of the press and public. Across the nation people read of his plan in their newspapers and magazines; subscribed to his newsletter, the *Aerial Reporter*; and flocked to the theaters and lecture halls where Porter demonstrated his models of the Aeroport.

Intriguing as they might sound, however, schemes involving the dream of aerial navigation were still fair game for skeptics and humorists, as indicated by a satirical Nathaniel Currier print of 1849. Would-be miners crowd a dock, attempting to recall a departing fleet of California-bound ships, while one of Porter’s Aeroports cruises serenely overhead, accompanied by a man riding an “Aerial Steam Horse,” a one-man rocket of the sort patented by the Englishman Charles Golithly in 1841.¹³

For Rufus Porter, as for Charles Dellschau and the other members of the Sonora Aero Club, flight remained only a dream. Unable to convince the Congress to provide him with a \$5,000 grant that would enable him “to extend his experiments, and apply his invention on a practical scale,” Porter launched a new stock issue. He continued to attract large audiences to demonstration flights of his model airships, including the steam-powered *Pioneer*, which measured twenty-two feet long and featured the painted faces of happy passengers peering out of the windows of the salon, but the enormous sums required to continue his work failed to materialize. By the mid-1850s the project was fading away.

Porter’s dream was shared by others. In 1859 California newspapers reported that John Steiner, a German immigrant and experienced long-distance aeronaut, had plans for an airship capable of flying the Atlantic in sixty hours. Cigar-shaped and measuring three hundred feet long and eighty feet in diameter, the craft was to carry twenty-one tons of payload and could be built for a cost of \$40,000.¹⁴ Steiner, a veteran of Thaddeus S. C. Lowe’s Union Army balloon corps, was operating as a traveling aerial showman in St. Paul, Minnesota, when he encountered a young German officer—Ferdinand von Zeppelin—on a grand tour of the United States following service with the Union cavalry. Zeppelin left the ground for the first time as a passenger in Steiner’s balloon in 1863 and was fascinated by the aeronaut’s description of his plan for a long, thin powered airship with a strong rudder. “While I was above St. Paul I had my first idea of aerial navigation strongly impressed on me,” Zeppelin recalled many years later, “and it was here that the first idea of my Zeppelins came to me.”¹⁵ And in 1864, Solomon Andrews, the Civil War-era mayor of Perth Amboy, New Jersey, demonstrated large models of his *Aereon*, featuring three cigar-shaped envelopes tied side by side, in the Smithsonian Institution’s famous castle in Washington, DC.

The honor of building and flying the first (barely) navigable airship went to the Frenchman Henri Giffard in 1852. Powered by a five-horsepower steam engine that drove it at a top speed of fewer than seven miles per hour, Giffard's airship would have taken far longer than three days to reach California, but, unlike the dream ships of the Sonora Aero Club, Rufus Porter, John Steiner, and others, it flew!

So did the *Avitor*, a large model airship measuring eight feet in diameter by perhaps thirty feet in length flown by the immigrant English experimenter Frederick Marriott at Shellmound Park, near San Jose, California, on July 2, 1869. A light wooden frame surrounding the spindle-shaped gasbag supported a pair of wings, a tail, and a lightweight steam engine and boiler-driving propellers. Operated by tether lines connecting it to ground handlers, the craft made a number of flights, was granted a U.S. patent, and attracted international attention. The *London Dispatch* took note of "the wonderful California flying machine" that would "soon wing its way across the Rocky Mountains from San Francisco to New York."¹⁶

Perhaps the combination of actual balloon flights in the Bay area and the excitement engendered by dreams of aerial navigation did inspire the residents of a California mining town to form an aeronautical discussion group that conducted some experiments. It is important to note, however, that Charles Dellschau would spend his life surrounded by aeronautical activity.

Aeronautics in the Lone Star State

Whatever the impact of balloon flights and discussions of navigating the air had on a group of friends in the gold camps of California, Dellschau would hear plenty of talk of flying machines following his return to Texas. While there is no evidence to suggest that Dellschau ever met Jacob Friedrich Brodbeck (1821–1910), or was in any way aware of his work, the two men had a great deal in common. A native of Plattenhardt, Württemberg, Brodbeck immigrated to Texas in August 1846 with his younger brother Johann Georg. A graduate of a prestigious teacher's college in the old country, he settled in Fredericksburg, a predominantly German community north of San Antonio, where he worked as a teacher and school administrator.

Always fascinated by mechanical problems, Brodbeck experimented with an ice-making machine and assured his students that human beings would one day fly like the birds. "For more than twenty years I have labored to construct a machine that should enable a man to use like a bird the atmosphere region as a medium of travel," he explained many years later. Like so many other aeronautical enthusiasts over the years, Brodbeck began by studying birds in flight and proceeded to an investigation of the "mechanical laws governing these wonderful structures."¹⁷ Having concluded his observations, the inventor claimed to have built his first model flying machine in 1863. Powered by a clock spring, the craft featured "a system of wings, both movable and fixed . . . entirely different from the sails of vessels." His call for investors, published in local newspapers in 1865, raised sufficient cash to enable him to build a machine large enough to carry a pilot, whose duties included keeping the massive spring wound.

The first test flight was conducted on September 20, 1865. "The plane [rose] . . . as high as the trees, [and] sailed around for several minutes," one supposed witness explained to a San Antonio reporter in 1937. Legend has it that the flight ended in a crash from which Brodbeck escaped with minor injuries. He tried again in 1874. "My ship took off and I sailed around until the power of the coil spring gave out,"

Brodbeck explained. "Then down into the corn field I crashed, but I was not badly injured, only bruised from head to toe."¹⁸

By some accounts, Brodbeck was still experimenting as late as 1894. Interviewed by a Fredericksburg reporter in 1973, octogenarian Richard Brehmer claimed to have seen Brodbeck in the air as late as that year. "The airplane was about twelve feet wide, maybe fourteen feet—about as wide as a good-sized wood gate," Brehmer reported. "Jacob positioned himself between two fabric-covered wings in the middle of the craft and wound up a spring that was about four inches wide. Jacob would stop from time to time to catch his breath while winding up the spring. Below the lower wing there were two wheels, and a sort of skid plate was attached underneath the tail section. The coiled spring was held in place by a sturdy locking mechanism. When Jacob released the lock, the airplane took off. The crude craft rose gently and quickly. It went about 50 yards, rising over a tree about twelve feet high and then gradually coming down about another 50 yards away on the other side of the tree for a total flight of around 100 yards."¹⁹

Eyewitness claims like this one from an individual more than eighty years of age regarding an event that he had witnessed when he was only seven years old have also been made on behalf of other pre-Wright flight claimants. In the absence of any solid supporting evidence, the claims made for Brodbeck and many other experimenters like him must be regarded as something more akin to folklore than to history.

While Brodbeck may not have actually left the ground, his work was fairly well publicized. Announcements of his stock issues were carried in San Antonio newspapers and picked up by other newspapers around the state. His airship was apparently exhibited at the Gillespie County Fair during the decade following the Civil War, and in Illinois in 1874 during a fund-raising campaign. If Dellschau, then living in Richmond, just southwest of Houston, was paying as much attention to aeronautical matters during these decades as he did at the turn of the century, he probably knew something of Brodbeck's work.

Jacob Brodbeck was not the only flying-machine experimenter active in Texas. W. D. Custead earned his living as a ticket agent and telegrapher for the Missouri–Kansas–Texas Railroad, manning the little station at Tokio, Texas. At the time of the McLennan County Centennial in 1949, old-timers described a five-mile aerial voyage that Custead is said to have made in or about 1897 with a passenger-carrying ornithopter. Former neighbors and Custead's son, interviewed in the 1940s and '50s, described additional flights with what may have been a second machine in 1901. The craft may have been powered by an engine produced by Gustave Whitehead, of Bridgeport, Connecticut, perhaps the best known of all pre-Wright flight claimants.²⁰

Many of the good people living in and around Pittsburg, Texas, in 1902 were convinced that Reverend Burrell Cannon, pastor of the local Baptist church, had flown sixty feet over a local pasture at an altitude of ten feet. He named his craft the *Ezekiel Flying Machine*, naturally enough—the design was based on the biblical description of the heavenly aerial craft seen by the Prophet Ezekiel. Cannon sold stock in his Ezekiel Airship Manufacturing Company, and, in 1904, shipped his machine to St. Louis for display at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition. When the original craft was destroyed in a train wreck, Cannon built a second machine in Chicago, where he is said to have made a brief hop. At the time of his death, at the age of seventy-four, he was hard at work on a mechanical cotton picker and boll weevil destroyer.²¹

Some of the airships making headlines in late nineteenth-century Texas, and elsewhere, were more mysterious than others. One of the most puzzling stories of the decade began on the evening of November 17, 1896, when some one hundred citizens of Sacramento, California, saw three bright lights moving slowly across the night sky at an altitude of 1,000 feet. The craft returned to Sacramento five days later and visited San Francisco that evening, as well. Over the next few days, strange lights were seen in the skies over Washington State and western Canada. Early the next year, the airship seemed to be moving east. In February, March, and April 1897, strange lights were seen in the skies over Nebraska, Kansas, Texas, Missouri, Iowa, Illinois, and Michigan.²²

On April 15, 1897, newspapers across the nation carried a report that the “airship,” as it was now identified, had exploded and crashed near Kalamazoo, Michigan. The noise, it was said, had been like that of “heavy ordnance,” followed by “the distant sound of projectiles flying through the air.” Four days later, the *Dallas Morning News* published an even more intriguing report of the demise of the strange craft, or one like it. Early on the morning of April 17 witnesses noticed an airship slowly “settling to earth” as it moved toward the little North Texas town of Aurora. Passing over the town square at a speed estimated at only ten to twelve miles per hour, it struck a windmill on the north edge of Aurora and “went to pieces with a terrific explosion.” Citizens combing through the wreckage were stunned to discover the badly disfigured body of an individual who was obviously “not an inhabitant of this world.” S.E. Haydon, the local businessman who filed the story, closed his account with a note that the body would be buried in the town cemetery the next day.²³

There can be no doubt that the single article describing the episode was a deliberate hoax of a sort that was relatively common in the nineteenth century and almost unknown today. According to the Texas State Historical Association, Haydon was attempting to increase the visibility of his dying community. Rediscovered by a *Dallas Morning News* reporter seventy years later, the case was, for a time, a favorite of flying-saucer enthusiasts.²⁴

Dellschau and the Development of the International Air Age

By the time Dellschau was working on his reminiscences, the great airship hoax had given way to stories of genuine achievement in the air. The first zeppelin airship flew in 1900. At 420 feet long, it would have impressed even Rufus Porter. Alberto Santos-Dumont, a Brazilian living in Paris, became the toast of the continent when he flew from the Paris suburb of St. Cloud to the Eiffel Tower and back in his one-man airship the following year. Since the mid-1890s newspapers and magazines in Europe and America had been headlining the efforts of heavier-than-air flying machine experimenters like the German Otto Lilienthal, the Englishman Percy Pilcher, and the Americans Samuel Pierpont Langley and Octave Chanute, who were laying the foundation for the invention of the airplane.

Dellschau was fully aware of the latest developments in aeronautical technology, and he was perfectly willing to pass judgment on the increasing number of aeronautical schemes described in the newspapers. In December 1898 the *Houston Daily Post* published a letter to the editor by a W. H. Brown of Burton, Texas, describing his invention of “A Perfect Air Ship.” “The man,” Dellschau wrote in his memoirs, “don’t know what he is writing about” (see pages 34 and 95). Brown’s perfect airship was most probably modeled after an aircraft designed by the Austrian engineer David Schwarz, the only all-aluminum airship that had been built and flown up to that time. Completed by the widow Schwarz

following her husband’s death, the 156-foot-long *Metallballon* consisted of a tubular aluminum framework covered with thin plates of the same material. The craft rose into the air from Berlin on November 3, 1897, but at an altitude of perhaps a hundred feet the belt driving the propellers began to slip. The soldier who had been drafted to serve as pilot panicked and began energetically valving hydrogen. He survived the ensuing crash landing, but ground winds and an excited crowd damaged the world’s first rigid airship beyond repair.

Dellschau, like Brown, was especially interested in aircraft propulsion, and he devotes a significant portion of his memoirs debating the validity of Brown’s theories. “The Balloon if ever built,” he noted, “should be composed of Aluminum Cigar shaped, such Balloons have been constructed, filled whit Gas, and made to ascend” (see page 94). He discusses ways to improve upon propeller placement and blade turbines. These prescient notions, which would serve as the basis for turbojets and high bypass fan-jets, had a direct impact on his art, as well. Turbines abound in Dellschau’s works.

Whatever the obsession that drove Dellschau to create imaginary airships, day after day, for approximately twenty-three years, the project clearly derived from his deep interest in aviation technology. The artist’s intention is complex, juxtaposing fanciful watercolor portraits of the airships with Press Blooms reporting the latest events in aviation. Dellschau clipped articles from Houston newspapers, including the *Houston Daily Post*; *Scientific American*, the historic journal founded by Rufus Porter; various illustrated magazines and journals; and German-language newspapers. He was not only very widely read but extraordinarily articulate, as evidenced by the often wry and humorous commentary on the paintings and Press Blooms.²⁵

The books of drawings created after 1908 give the impression of a dialogue between the “creative” products of Dellschau’s imagination and the Press Blooms describing the reality of a world that was taking to the air at long last. The links between the past and the present, the dream and the reality, were often underscored. In response to a series of articles on the latest wonders of the air age, Dellschau commented “Goosey beats you all in 1857”; elsewhere, he wonders what he and his friends might have accomplished if they were still working together.

Clearly, however, Dellschau applauded the achievements of the first generation of airmen. The Press Blooms contain dozens of articles on the Wright brothers, Octave Chanute, Glenn Curtiss, and the others who were pioneering aviation in the United States. The technical papers and the German-language newspapers yielded a wealth of clippings covering events in Europe, from Wilbur Wright’s first public flights near Le Mans, France, in 1908, to Louis Blériot’s historic first flight across the English Channel in July 1909 and the great flying meet at Reims a few weeks later.

Dellschau’s drawings are a particularly rich source of information on local aeronautical history. The Press Blooms chronicle the events surrounding the touring French aviator Louis Paulhan’s visit to Houston, where he made the first airplane flight in the state on February 18, 1910. We have no way of knowing whether the artist saw Paulhan fly. Given the level of enthusiasm indicated by the extensive clippings, however, it is difficult to believe that he would have missed the opportunity.

Dellschau also followed the aeronautical controversies of the era with great interest. The artist clipped a series of articles describing the progress of the lawsuits that the Wright brothers had brought for patent infringement in Europe and America. It was a particularly big story in Houston. On February 17, 1910, the day before Paulhan made his flight, U.S. Circuit Court Judge Learned Hand issued a temporary

injunction restraining Paulhan from flying his Henry Farman biplane, which was said to infringe upon the Wright patent. The defendant was required to post a \$25,000 bond in order to meet his commitments and continue his tour for another month. The details of the story are recorded in Dellschau's Press Blooms.

Since the discovery of his art in Houston in the late 1960s, Dellschau has emerged as a figure of genuine interest to art historians. Just as interesting, from a cultural point of view, is the extent to which the artist has attracted the attention of individuals interested in esoteric mysteries. Could the airships that graced the pages of the books of drawings actually have soared through the night sky over the Gold Rush country? Was there a relationship between the Sonora Aero Club and the wave of mysterious airship sightings in the West and Midwest almost half a century later? And how do you explain that extraterrestrial body buried in Dellschau's home state of Texas? Those questions, and others, have been explored in books, in magazines, and on various websites. There is not a scintilla of evidence to indicate that any of that might be the case. It is, however, proof that the rich imagination of Charles Dellschau still has the power to inspire the wildest of dreams.²⁶

Dellschau's reputation as an extraordinary creative talent is well established. The obscure butcher who kept to his room and painted obsessively has been accorded an honored place among American outsider artists. On quite another level, his work is evidence of the American love affair with the notion of flight. While the wondrous machines illustrated in Dellschau's books of drawings would never have left the ground, it is not difficult to imagine the artist and his friends gathering on occasion to raise a glass and describe the flying machines that they dreamed of building. The work to which he devoted the last two decades of his life is proof that Dellschau pursued that dream to the end of his days.

Notes

1. For more details on this event, see Tom D. Crouch, "Wilbur and Orville Wright Fly a Kite: The Crucial Early Experiments of 1899," *The Drachen Journal* 3 (Fall 1999): 12–19.
2. *Recollections*, 5.
3. *Ibid.*, 6. Woods Creek is in Columbia, CA, another mining town near Sonora.
4. *Erinnerungen* (Recollections), 74.
5. "Local Matters," *Daily Alta California* (May 17, 1853). For more information on early ballooning and the events described in this essay, see Tom D. Crouch, *Eagle Aloft: Two Centuries of the Balloon in America* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1983).
6. "Balloon Ascension at Contra Costa, Probable Loss of the Boy Aeronaut," *Daily Alta California*, (August 29, 1853).

7. "Safe Return of the Boy Aeronaut," *Daily Alta California* (August 30, 1853).
8. Gary F. Kurutz, "An Informal History of California Ballooning," *The Californians* (July–August 1988): 18–19; "The Balloon Explosion," *Sacramento Daily Union* (May 27, 1856); "News of the Morning," *Sacramento Daily Union* (October 29, 1856); and "Ballooning in Mexico," *Daily Alta California* (June 25, 1857).
9. "Aerial Navigation," *Daily Alta California* (November 2, 1859).
10. *Ibid.*
11. Rufus Porter, *Aerial Navigation: The Practicability of Travelling Pleasantly and Safely from New York to California in Three Days. . . .* (New York: H. Smith, 1849). The pamphlet is reprinted in Rhoda R. Gilman, ed., *A Yankee Inventor's Flying Ship: Two Pamphlets by Rufus Porter*

(St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1969). The second pamphlet included is Porter's *An Aerial Steamer, or Flying Ship. Invented by Rufus Porter* (Washington, DC: W. Greer, 1850).

12. For a full account of the aeronautical work of Rufus Porter, see Tom D. Crouch, *The Eagle Aloft: Two Centuries of the Balloon in America* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1983).

13. The print appears as an illustration in Ralph K. Andrist, *The California Gold Rush* (New York: American Heritage, 1961), 59.

14. "Across Atlantic in Sixty Hours," *Sacramento Daily Union* (February 18, 1859).

15. Rhoda R. Gilman, "Zeppelin in Minnesota: A Study in Fact and Fable," *Minnesota History* (Fall 1965): 285.

16. *Daily Alta California* (September 29, 1869).

17. Jacob Brodbeck quoted in Edwin W. Gibson, "First Airplane Flight," *Enchanted Rock Magazine* (April 1996): 15. For additional information on Brodbeck, see Michael Brockway, "People and Planes," *Aviation History* (January 1995): 8; and Anita Tatsch, ed., *Jacob Brodbeck "Reached for the Sky" in Texas* (Fredericksburg, TX: Dietel and Son Printing, 1986), a copy of which is in Pioneer Memorial Library, Fredericksburg, TX.

18. Brockway, "People and Planes," 22.

19. *Ibid.*

20. See Stella Randolph, *Before the Wrights Flew: The Story of Gustave Whitehead* (Washington, DC: Places, Inc., 1937), 94, 123.

21. Mike Elswick, "Pittsburg's Ezekiel Airship to come to life," *Longview [Texas] Morning Journal* (September 22, 1985); and "Airship Built by a Minister," *Sunday Companion* (November 16, 1901), 307.

22. For a full account of the subject, see Daniel Cohen, *The Great Airship Mystery: A UFO of the 1890s* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1981).

23. S. E. Haydon, "A Windmill Demolished It!" *Dallas Morning News* (April 19, 1897), reprinted in Melba Goodwin, *Chasing Graveyard Ghosts: Investigations of Haunted and Hallowed Ground* (Woodbury, MN: Lewellyn Publications, 2011), 88–89; see also Lee Krystek, "The Mystery Airship of 1896," The Museum of UnNatural History, <http://www.unmuseum.org/airship.htm> (accessed November 28, 2011).

24. "Author Attempts to Jump-start Town with Fictional UFO Story (April 18, 1897)," Texas Day by Day, <http://www>

.tshaonline.org/day-by-day/30332 (accessed November 28, 2011).

25. The term "Press Bloom" was an expression of Dellschau's wry humor. "Bloom" is apparently drawn from the German *Blumen*, or flowers. The specially decorated pages of news clippings are thus "pressed flowers."

26. The fringe literature identifying Dellschau as the answer to the great airship mystery of the 1890s continues to grow. See, for example, Jerome Clark and Loren Coleman, "Mystery Airships of the 1800s, Part 1," *Fate* (May 1973); Dennis Crenshaw and P. G. Navarro, *The Secrets of Dellschau: The Sonora Aero Club and the Airships of the 1800s, a True Story* (San Antonio, TX: Anomalist Books, 2009); and Michael Busby, *Solving the 1897 Airship Mystery* (Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing, 2004). A search of Dellschau's name on the Internet will produce any number of sites linking him to the airship mystery. See, for example, the reprint of "Mystery Airships of the 1800s" on KeelyNet, <http://keelynet.com/gravity/aero1.htm> (accessed November 26, 2011). Dellschau has been woven into the broader fabric of what can only be regarded as the fringe area of American historical paranoia.

End of the nineteenth century: the sky is filled successively with balloons—the first attempts of the Montgolfier brothers date from 1782—airships (the steam-powered airship of Henri Giffard from 1852) and aeroplanes (the exploits of the Wright Brothers from 1903). It is the golden age blending magic and technique: technological desire powered by the supreme fantasy to master heaven and earth, in imitation of the original act of Creation. Everything happens as if a dream has come out of books to invent reality. This is also true of other inventions in the course of the nineteenth century: the telegraph, the telephone, radio, photography, film, the X-ray, the first automobiles, locomotives, and so on. In turn, collective imagination appropriates the new models of emerging physics, with energies that remain yet to be better defined. It is both “high” literature as well as popular culture—novel, comics, film (*A Trip to the Moon*, 1902, by Georges Méliès, in which we see scientists wear pointed hats and stellar dresses, disguised as Nostradamus or Merlin). The symbolic framework of the ancient folklore is thus transformed in a huge mass of science fiction fantasies: the “Flying Dutchman” becomes the wonderful scientist, the divine light turns into electricity, chariots drawn by wild geese become the first air vessels in a baroque fusion of sailing boats and Wild West locomotives.

In Houston, Charles A. A. Dellschau, retired butcher and saddlery clerk, follows closely the early aeronautical adventures thanks to his subscriptions to several magazines and newspapers of the time: *Scientific American*, the *Houston Daily Post*, the *Houston Chronicle*, and the *Houston Press*. From 1898 to 1921 he would describe and draw the story of a club of aeronauts that would have existed in California in the 1850s. Are his drawings and writings based on real memories, is it an “autofiction”—a literary work in which a writer invents a new personality and existence, while keeping his real identity—or simply a story inspired by the discoveries of the time? We do not know because the existence of the Sonora Aero Club has not been proved thus far.

Dellschau is not the only creator inspired by the stories of ghost airships driven by mad scientists. Already in 1886, Jules Verne published *Robur the Conqueror*, in which he anticipated the American UFO wave of 1896–1897, when thousands of Americans observed large flying machines of baroque design in the sky. Fiction and reality become indistinguishable and sometimes echo each other in the most incongruous details: Jules Verne’s heroes throw down messages to signal their position—this is also confirmed by a farmer in Wisconsin, a witness of a passing airship.¹ The newspapers circulate rumors as to the possible tests of a paranoid scientist. Today, more than one hundred years after that first American wave of sightings, others have been trying to prove that the appearance of the mysterious aircraft flying over Texas and other states in the West and Midwest testifies to the existence and continuous activity of a secret society, of which Dellschau would have been a member during his youth.² Strange short circuits, in which imagination, symbolic configurations inscribed in our culture, and unexplained phenomena mix, elusive, ready to be reinterpreted by each new generation.

The belief in technological progress thanks to the flying machines, with a privilege of certain naivety, is permanently lost after the break represented by the First World War. From the start of the war, airplanes and zeppelins are used to drop explosives on the enemy. It is the beginning of strategic bombing with specialized aircraft whose goal is to hit the vital sources of the opponent. April 22, 1915, has entered history as the date of the first use of chlorine gas on a large scale by the German army as a means of fighting the French-Canadian positions near Ypres. An aerial photograph shows the deployment of the first cloud of military poison causing severe damage to the airways and lungs. The

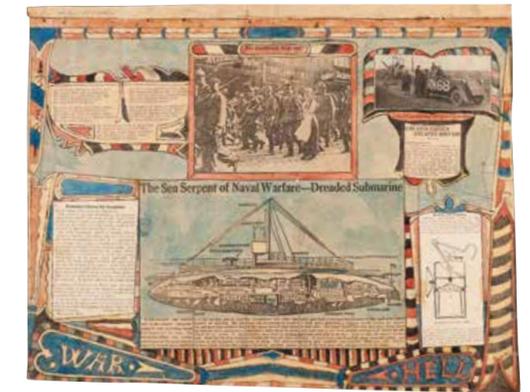
death toll varies according to the sources; the German reports state 15,000 people poisoned and 5,000 dead.³ The First World War equals from then on the invention of the “gas war” and “aerial war,” the discovery of the “environment,” the beginning of “atmo-terrorism” employed by the states: “As it is no longer possible to liquidate the enemy’s body by hitting him directly, the attacker now has the opportunity to make the extension of his existence impossible by plunging him long enough in an unlivable environment.”⁴

The disasters of the Great War can be characterized by words such as “collapse” and “destruction”—as if the explosion of knowledge in the course of the nineteenth century, its proliferation, had to result in auto-destruction, with scientific dreams transformed into war machines. This is what Dellschau seems to show us, through his selection of press clippings introduced in his collage books from 1914. The blazing color drawings with the striped Aeros recalling the Barnum & Bailey canvas circus tent, inspired by the almanacs or even the *Kalender Bilder* of the time, darken and become more dramatic, even disruptive. Press clippings describing the war alternate with collaged images of a civilian army, inscribed with the words “War” and “Hell” (Plate 3214, right, bottom), soldiers in trenches equipped with gas masks (Plate 3256, right, top), and destroyed zeppelins (Plate 4520, page 275). One of the War Press Blooms collages (Plate 3257, page 72) shows a soldier in a deep-sea diving suit; one cannot help but think about the failed performance of Salvador Dalí at the New Burlington Galleries in London in 1936, during which, to convey to his audience that he was speaking as a representative of a radically different world, he chose to wear a diving suit. As he was not connected to an air distribution system, he almost suffocated at the same time as he was shouting the principles of his “paranoiac-critical method.” A prophetic accident, an awareness of the danger of annihilation because of military “atmo-terrorism.”

Dellschau possesses a certain kind of lucidity, perhaps due to his exile. It is not only a geographical exile—he left his native Prussia at the age of nineteen—but a more radical break. His first and second wives have both died, as have his three biological children. During the war, with part of his family still in Berlin, his situation as a German seems rather difficult compared to that of his fellow Americans fully committed to the cause of the Allies from 1917. But perhaps it is because of this gap with the rest of his contemporaries that he manages to give us such a fascinating image of his time; through his drawings and collages Dellschau captures the historical background—rather than creates a historical narrative. According to Bertolt Brecht, who spent a great part of his life in exile (1933–1949), “the finest dialecticians are the exiled. They have been forced into exile by changes that have therefore become their only interest. They can deduce from the most imperceptible signs, provided they are able to think, the most fantastic events. If their opponents were to win, they would calculate the price they had to pay for their victory, and they have a great eye for contradictions. Long live the dialectic!”⁵ Along with Dellschau, in his small room in Houston, we can also think about another great artist, Adolf Wölfli, who succeeded in transforming the tomb that was the psychiatric hospital of the Waldau into the heart of the universe.⁶ This seems to confirm the thesis of the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben, for whom the real contemporary, one who can discern the notable darknesses of one’s own time, must be, paradoxically, always distanced from it: “Those who are truly contemporary, who truly belong to their time, are those who neither perfectly coincide with it nor adjust themselves to its demands. They are thus in this sense irrelevant [*inattuale*]. But precisely because of this condition, precisely through this rejection and this anachronism, they are more capable than others of perceiving and grasping their own time.”⁷

Top: Plate 3256 War Press Blooms, January 26, 1915 (see page 222)

Bottom: Plate 3214 War Hell, November 19, 1914 (see page 221)



The newspaper photos and articles Dellschau glued onto his works thus gain real epic power; their narrative power is increased by the interweaving between the world's history—clippings concerning memorable events, mostly aeronautic exploits or disasters—and his “autofiction.” The artist blurs the status of various documents, he shatters the boundaries between science and art, between document and fiction. Like an editor working at his table, Dellschau pastes one image to another, on one or more pages, revealing analogies, tensions, sometimes contrasts or contradictions. The assembly of these heterogeneous images, their juxtaposition in a completely different context, puts them in motion, exposing aspects previously imperceptible. This type of composition—or rather decomposition—has an evident cinematic quality, creating associative chains rather than signification. By this method, Dellschau joins other modern artists who have used the technique of montage to question contradictions—one can think again of Bertolt Brecht and his *War Primer*, a series of sixty-nine photographs accompanied with four-line epigrams—to reflect on the gaps opened by the confrontation of heterogeneous images. According to the French philosopher and art historian Georges Didi-Huberman, the montage as “dislocation and reorganization of all things” is primarily a method of knowledge related to the modern experience: “Montage is a method of knowledge and a formal process born out of war, transcribing the ‘disorder of the world.’ It characterizes our perception of time since the first conflicts of the twentieth century: it has become the quintessential *modern method*.”⁸

However, Dellschau appears to be less concerned with the interrogation of the political and social realities than in a personal search for *truth*, based on his own history. The drawings and collages bound in his books function not so much as a *Tageblatt*—a daily newspaper—than as a *Tagebuch*, a kind of a diary. It is a diary in its dimension of a montage, “as imaginative montages—documentary elements mixed with lyrical movements,” which “correspond precisely to this dual dimension, this perpetual rhythm back and forth: systole or contraction of *seeing* . . . diastole or dilation of the *vision*.”⁹ Montage as a tool that breaks up the smooth barrier of surfaces and focuses on the background, the depths? Montage as an opening of a “visual unconscious” of the world and its history?

Dellschau is not looking for visual coherence—indeed, his books do not resemble each other; it's more about composing from debris, scraps, flashes of truth. An organization of elements for private use, destined to play rather than to teach, almost naïve. Nevertheless, his point of view is not simplistic but opens to complexity. It is the montage in the sense of “grafting”: transplanting, destroying the cohesion of the surface, creating a new body, a new object. Each page is mounted on a thumbnail cut-out from the newspaper, bound together to form the books. It is thus through the newspaper, literally, that the artist connects and articulates the diverse events that are the subject of his drawings and collages—as if the thread of his life depended only on the news reports.

The tactile quality of his books becomes very prominent, especially in the case of the last one, preserved at the abcd collection, Paris. Dellschau uses very different kinds of paper, including Kraft paper bags, playing on its fragile texture. His drawings and collages become less smooth, more “expressionist.” The accuracy of the represented Aeros disappears in favor of a freer and sensual gesture, introducing a set of contrasts between colors. Most often it is black or dark blue, which sets the rhythm of the drawing and punctuates the harmonies of softer colors. Here the Aeros emerge from the background affected by the support variations, recalling a ghostly face on a starry sky or in a dark window. Their plasticity is strengthened by the insistence of the gesture spreading the color—we have an impression

that the artist uses his fingers or the palm of his hand—and makes us experience the heat, vibrations, and whirring emanating from them. One could wonder if the artist sought—by reinventing these wonderful Aeros attributed to a visionary group—to create order in the disorder of the world, to take on the position of the artist “shaman,” the “master of disorder.” Or, on the contrary, if he completely lost interest in the outside world, preoccupied only with the creation of his autofiction, whose hero-inventor would be the young Dellschau, a.k.a. all names of the—imaginary or real—collaborators. In the first case, Dellschau would join the ranks of artists as varied as Joseph Beuys or Kris Kuksi; we think of the latter's heterogeneous 2008 assemblages *Caravan Assault Apparatus* or *Sub-Sonic Dissidence Propulsion Device*.

In the second case, one could compare Dellschau's collages and their particular link to his personal history to that of the world of Adolf Wölfli's *Funeral March*. By this particular way of integrating various fragments of world history in his work and of treating the advertising photography of the time as if it were a direct trace of his psychic reality, Dellschau succeeds in transforming those pictures into almost personal photographs, having nothing to do with the original intention of the advertiser or publisher. It is as if photography became a sort of hologram, an illusionary tie between a photogram—an image obtained without the camera, just by placing objects on photosensitive surfaces—and an engraving—according to the dictionary “an organic trace left in the brain by a past event, which functions as the material support of memory”—exerting a direct influence on the viewer. He thus manages, at least in part and without his knowledge, to reconstitute photography's “aura” in the sense that Walter Benjamin gives to this term in his essay in *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*.¹⁰

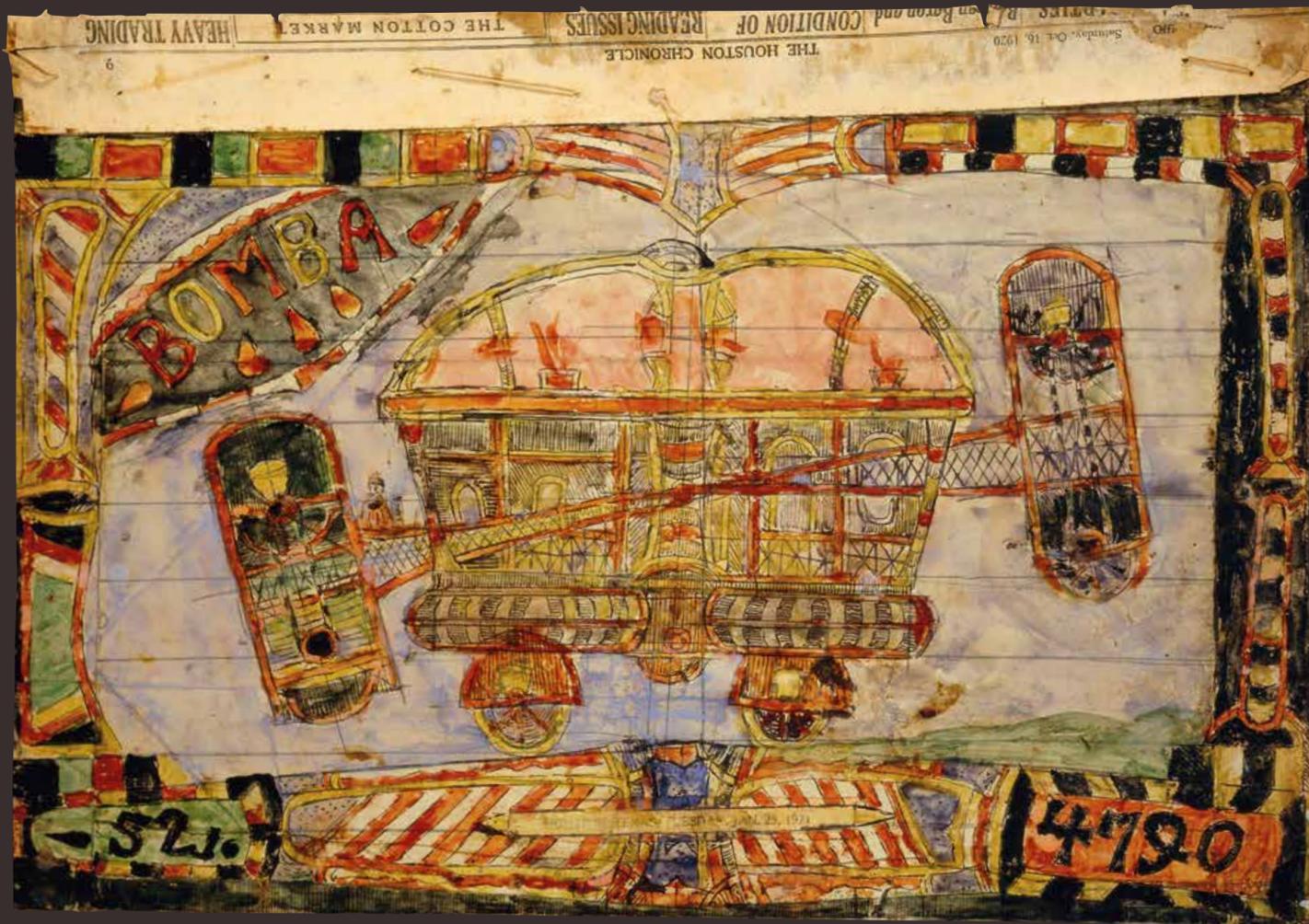
If we interpret this process of arrangement of images as a practice that allows the author to “rearrange” his own life—to relive it, recreate it by means of this almost “animist” ritual—we could also find in it a certain resemblance to the *Mnemosyne Atlas* by the German art historian Aby Warburg. In his own way, Warburg also seems to have been driven by the desire to experience the traces of the past, by juxtaposing heterogeneous images through which he expressed his view of the history of forms in motion.

It is no coincidence that at the end of the *Atlas* project Warburg placed the winged figure of Hope. It is positioned next to the image of Mussolini and an anti-Semitic engraving of the Renaissance, expressing the tragic contrast between art striving toward the ideal and its inability to rise above the ground of history. An implicit comment on Walter Benjamin's phrase “Thanks only to the desperate, we will be granted hope.” Outside Dellschau, another German artist seems to express the impossibility of rising above history, reflecting on memory and mourning through his artistic production: we think of Anselm Kiefer and, for example, his *Book with Wings*, made of lead (1992).

A private ritual, resulting in the creation of a charged object—when we observe the binding of Dellschau's last book, the notion of secrecy inevitably comes to our mind. Dellschau stitches together not only the back of his “book” but also its sides, thus preventing its opening. We are faced with a radically foreign object, a kind of will or a reliquary, enigmatic, similar to the unidentified flying objects that some of us might spot in the night sky.

Notes

1. Bertrand Méheust, *Science-fiction et soucoupes volantes: Une réalité mythico-physique* (Rennes: Terre de Brume, 2007), 224–33.
2. Michael Busby, *Solving the 1897 Airship Mystery* (Gretna: Pelican Publishing, 2004).
3. Peter Sloterdijk, *Écumes: Sphérologie plurielle* (Paris: Maren Sell Editeurs, 2005), 82; for the English translation, see *Bubbles: Spheres Volume I: Microspherology*, trans. Wieland Hoban (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press in association with Semiotext(e)/Foreign Agents, 2011).
4. Ibid., 85.
5. Bertolt Brecht, *Dialogues d'exilés: Suivi de fragments* (Paris: L'Arche, 1972).
6. Adolf Wölfli was confined to the asylum in Waldau, Switzerland, from 1895 until his death, in 1930. The only access to the outside world Wölfli had was through magazines and newspapers that the hospital made available to the inmates, sometimes with several years' delay.
7. Giorgio Agamben, "Qu'est-ce que le contemporain?" in *Nudités* (Paris: Bibliothèque Rivages, 2009), 24; for the English translation, see *Nudités*, trans. David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010).
8. Georges Didi-Huberman, *Quand les images prennent position: L'œil de l'histoire, 1* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 2009), 86; for the English translation, see *Confronting Images: Questioning the Ends of a Certain History of Art*, trans. John Goodman (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009).
9. Ibid., 246.
10. Walter Benjamin, "A Small History of Photography" (1931): "What is aura, actually? A strange weave of space and time; the unique appearance or semblance of distance, no matter how close the object may be." According to Benjamin, with the development of photography through modern technology (a lens opening resulting in a brighter image), the work of art has lost its uniqueness and has become part of an illustrated journal. This change—desecration of the work of art—corresponds to the appearance of the masses, who desire to possess the object, remove all distance, and reproduce its image. See Jean-Michel Palmier, *Walter Benjamin: Le chiffonnier, l'ange et le petit bossu* (Paris: Klincksieck, 2006).



6

Charles A.A. Dellschau Enigma in Plain Sight

Randall Morris

There was a time in this country when the unknown was sensually attracted to the known, when the occult was daily found in bed with science (in fact, the relationship seemed taken for granted and headed for marriage), when the possibilities of discovering and rediscovering the secrets of the Universe were potentially in the notebooks of Everyman, and the idea that the individual could rearrange the way life was perceived by the masses and gain riches and fame in the process was seen as the truest manifestation of the American Dream.

Charles A. A. Dellschau was one among many in this gold rush to the intangible frontiers of improving the world. The everyday vagaries of his career and details of his drawings have been and will be examined elsewhere, but it has been seen that the more information gleaned, the more mysterious his oeuvre becomes. Though he is an icon of *art brut* he has few of the attributes that we find in other artists of his ilk. There is evidence, perhaps, of an extreme obsession but none empirically provable of delusion, depression, or visions of alternate universes, though perhaps in the latter there is at least some evidence of a desire to use his inventions to discover them. His dreams are overt rather than hidden; his restlessness is of his time.

And what a time that was. It cannot be overemphasized what it is to think that with the mere tools of brain and pencil one can change the course of mankind. Society allowed theory to be speculative. No one but no one would deny that it was the machine that would change us, that it was metal and chemicals and gases and electricity and the complete domination of the forces of nature that would provide a panacea to man's limitations. Indeed, dragons were replaced by airships and magic shackled to science, and because this world was pretty much mapped and discovered there were obviously other worlds out there that could be owned, could be taken, could be had merely by the invention of the right machine. To do this the Inventor was the Soldier of the Light, and his duty was almost Old Testament, the domination of natural forces by man. Dominion, indeed. There was a machine for everything, from flight to orgasm . . . humankind could extend itself physically into every domain there was. This then was the context for Dellschau's airships. They were the archangels, fitted out for war and healing, ready to lend credence to man's ultimate God-given superiority.

I believe there was a transitional point in Dellschau's life as an artist. To me it no longer matters whether the Sonora Aero Club really existed. It did in his hands. And whether or not it existed on this plane of existence, he developed his ideas as if it did. Dellschau's earlier works were functional diagrams that he saw as charts for the actual recording and creation of his airships. If we follow them as near to chronological order as we can, we can sense him testing out the limitations of his own need for exactitude and detail. We should take into our thinking the possibility that if these airships had never been built then Dellschau was seeing them and discovering them for himself for the first time on paper. As he went along the shapes and forms and details became familiar to him, allowing him to take some liberties in the artistic shorthand devised for his later collages and drawings.

We must grant the artist a healthy amount of suspension of disbelief. If we regard the line of thought that puts the actual Aero Club in the past, then the earliest drawings may have been done as keys to memory or in hopes that the Aero Club would once again suck air into its conceptual lungs and live again in a new incarnation. The drawings then would be the spine of it . . . the permission granted to make those machines once again live. Following this thought then it is not unreasonable to believe that at

some point Dellschau himself understood that the club and thus his ideas were no longer in his present but had somehow become a huge and important part of his past.

This can change the way we perceive the later drawings. It makes them not artifacts of the past but rather works of a different valence for the future. During the course of a career every creative artist achieves a personal vocabulary of his own making, a lexicon for his own use. Some invent languages. A good case in point would be the artist Martín Ramírez, whose idiosyncratic vision caused him to invent trope after trope, a visual language of his own that he could then employ and with which he could juxtapose various elements as words to put together in glorious sentences unmistakably his own. Adolf Wölfli did the same. There are many artists in the *art brut* world and in the contemporary art world who do this to varying degrees of solipsism.

Some artists do not reinvent art. Their language is cultural or else not entirely relevant to their message. This is true in, say, Bill Traylor's drawings when he used an existing cultural vocabulary culled from his immediate surroundings to tell stories in his immediate vernacular, understood by others in the same culture. We can say the same thing about Dellschau, whose earliest works served the function of illuminated blueprints to document, like advertisements document, the airships and their capabilities. His drawings were slaves to the ideas they portrayed. But as he got older the means and the end shifted on him. The function and uses of the drawings changed along with his own meaning and relevance to the world around him.

There were two major factors at play with the later drawings; one was the immediacy of their application and the other was the advancing age of Dellschau himself. It is common for an aging artist to take life in review in his last works, and in Dellschau's case there was no letup in the urgency of his note-taking and documentation of the aeronautic and scientific events in the world that had seemingly left him socially behind. This is evidenced in the newspaper collages, and because of this urgency, combined with his no longer needing to invent things for the first time, he was able to change and shift his mode of expression. It evolved.

Encroaching age affects an artist in that the window of time once open so wide through which one could convey one's messages begins to close. The body begins to send subtle and less subtle warnings, and the need to elaborate every detail once seeming so necessary begins to lessen. The formal needs or excesses of the work begin to accede to the driven demands of the soul. It is a doorway to natural abstraction, an alternative to reiterating the entire message over and over again. The artist—and I am very much positing Dellschau here—invokes the core essence of his message, his vocabulary is still inevitably his own, his cadence, his rhythm, his style, his colors, his intentions remain constant, but he is no longer focused on the minutiae of shading and cross-hatching and miniscule marks in his burning drive to make the major points. It is his own voice, yes, cracked and crackled with the patina of age perhaps, but he is less apt to explain every aspect of his trajectory. He speaks in a shorthand of urgency. In many ways we could say he has become more of an artist as his command is such that less now conveys so much more.

We know what it is that Dellschau did. His mysteries are less in his actual art than in the gaps in his biography. I do not think appreciation of his work would do anything but grow if the blanks were actually filled in. He is the opposite of many other self-taught artists both then and now. We know everything

about Emery Blagdon's life, for example, in all its simplicity, its pain, and its joys, but it explains so very little of the magnitude and profound enigma of his art. We know a lot about Jon Serl's life as well in its complexity and almost cinematic plot, but the work he made is evermore soulfully encompassing than mundane daily events. Look at Martín Ramírez, about whom little or nothing was known; in fact, even what tiny bit was known—for example, his Mexican identity—was denied or ignored by art historians. But now his life has been pieced together in the last few years by recent research. The irony is that despite what we know about the bathos of his picaresque tale through the Americas, it has not really opened the cryptic meanings of most of his drawings and vocabulary, Madonnas and Cristeros aside.

Knowing the missing details of Dellschau's life, if indeed those details truly exist, would open up the context of his work, but the truth is the drawings are very much exactly what they are. The codes, the secret keys, the dates, the immediate intentions of the artist would build the contexts by which we might better label the work, but essentially we can see exactly what they are already, despite the eccentricity of their formalisms. They are not depictions of spiritual or personal malaise, not Henry Darger's Catholic battle between good and evil, not a dreamworld or an alternate universe, not Melvin Edward Nelson's capturing of planetary events or Eugene von Bruenchenhein's depictions of evil incarnate. They are not the mediumistic communications of Augustin Lesage or Madge Gill or Raphaël Lonné. They are embellished blueprints for miraculous airships, and their creator, their recordist, their obsessive archivist has clothed them in a veil of actuality that increases their power by making us wonder if we should believe him or not that they—and the people who did or did not build them, and who may be merely memorialized in their conception—actually lived. Often in ancient art exposure to the elements adds patina and filigree to an object that renders it not only the conception of the original artist but a collaboration among time, weather, and circumstance. We still view the result as great art. In a sense we can see the unanswered questions in our knowledge of Dellschau as the same sort of patina. We can chemically analyze it, but the result will still be great art in our eyes.

He launched these drawings into this world and as artworks we do not need to know anything about from whence they came. As drawings the late ones grow on different points of vitality than the earliest ones. We could say that the earliest ones depend on the Dellschau biography more than the late ones. The late ones are summations, recollections hazed by the vagaries of time. Seen without the earlier ones they are vast treasures, made even more so by their weathered demeanors, faded colors, rough collages. This work became more expressionist over time as he rushed not to complete it but to emphasize his legacy with an almost serial desire. A word repeated over and over becomes a mantra, to quote Dr. Robert Farris Thompson, a fetish in its singular obsession. I would daresay the function was to make an old man believe in himself as much as to make the world believe. At some point the dividing line of veracity and mythomania breaks down, and it no longer matters to the artist whether he is believed. In this case perhaps only the artist could answer that now.

In the world of great music performance two types interest us. Let me call up Jimi Hendrix playing "Machine Gun," or John Coltrane playing *A Love Supreme*, both genre-breaking, almost uncategorizable pieces of music. Neither depended on technique, though technique was there in great strength. We could include Miles Davis here as well, as there was a point in all three of the artists' careers when

technique transmuted into something else. No longer were they just playing music; they had stepped through the membrane into a new kind of art/life differentiation that had never been seen here before in music. Was it new? Not necessarily. Perhaps it was really ancient. When Hendrix played "Machine Gun" at the Fillmore East we were shocked because he was living it rather than merely performing it. We were held in thrall because the music was suddenly dangerous, and we did not know what would happen to either the musician or to us in the audience by the end of the concert. The musicians were serial in the moment. Pieces made by all three of those artists could last more than an hour. Coltrane would play till his breathing changed, till his heartbeat synched with a spiritual sense of completion. But Dellschau, in a funny way, comes closer to Miles Davis in his late work. Davis no longer cared about intricate chord changes and running down long cool bop lines. He threw out everything extraneous as he got older, and he let fewer notes *imply* many others. He expressed rather than calculatedly delineated.

Much of the work of self-taught artists is like that music described above. It pertains to the ancient because there is little or no differentiation made between art and life. It serves a function. It is ephemerally utilitarian, not made for the white cube of the art world but made to fulfill the intricate intentionalities of its makers in much the same way an *nkisi* is made in the Kongo tradition or a divination pouch is filled with objects in Angola or a complicated painting is made on the ground with colored sands by a Navajo healer. Are there aesthetics involved? Of course there are. But its identity as art spills way outside the lines of our narrow Western conceptions of what art is. We freely admit that *art brut* is not about art made for the sake of the art world or as part of high art culture, but we then drop the ball and, after declaring some of the so-called outsiders good enough to be on museum walls, we shamefully lose all interest in the real reasons they made the work in the first place. Dellschau had a reason for making his work. That it became art in the process of his inventing it is something that is really only of interest to us. This is almost a universality in the field of *art brut* and self-taught artists.

Charles A. A. Dellschau built his last drawings as pure experience. They were made in obscurity and found by accident. As he went on he gave in to his own impulses and abstracted his own visions. There is nothing we know about the work of Charles Dellschau that leads us to believe he was fabricating the machines and thus making the drawings as conscious works of fiction. We may come to that conclusion on our own, or time may prove it eventually, but it is not there in the drawings. We have three choices, really; to believe he knew what he was doing in creating this history, or to believe he was merely a vessel receiving commands from his muses, or to believe that he was faithfully documenting a very secret event in the underground history of world aeronautics. It is a credit to the artist, then, and to his presentation of the work, that they come to us—like James Castle's bundles and books, like Darger's books—as power objects, as books bound and drawn in the very mysterious skin of time itself. What these drawings actually are will never really be changed by finding out why and how they were made, because what they very much succeed in doing already is capturing our need and desire to believe in magic.



Charles A.A. Dellschau
Selected Works



Illustrated memoirs: *Erinnerungen* (Recollections), 1900 (left); and *Recolections second part*, 1899–1900 (right)
Private collection

Books of drawings, clockwise from top: Book 7 (Plates 3601–3685), 1916; Book 11 (Plates 4741–4785), 1920–1921; Book 1 (Plates 1601–1899), 1908–1909; and Book 5 (Plates 2405–2511), 1911–1912
The Menil Collection, Houston

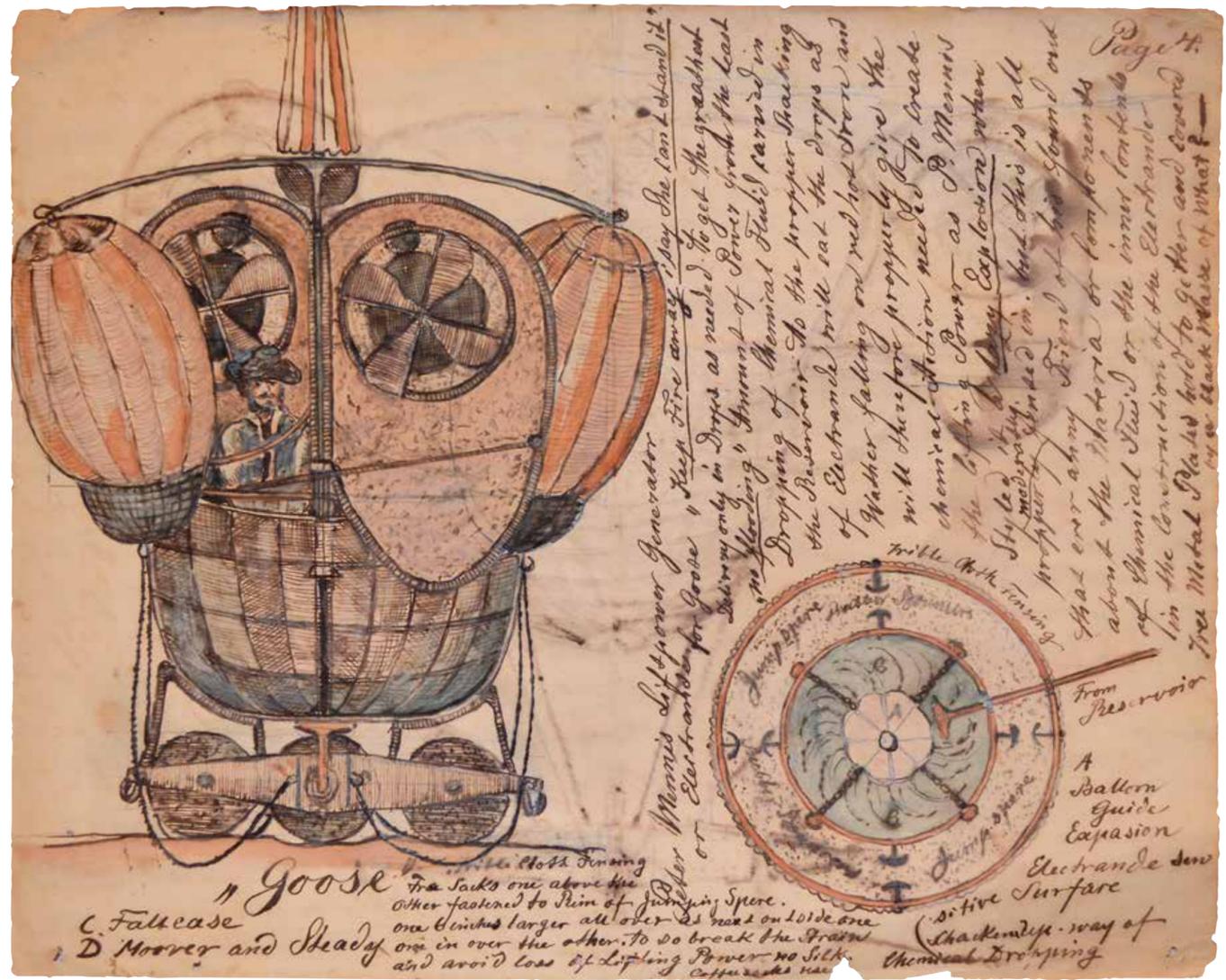


Book 8 (Plates 4301–4490), 1919
Courtesy Stephen Romano, New York

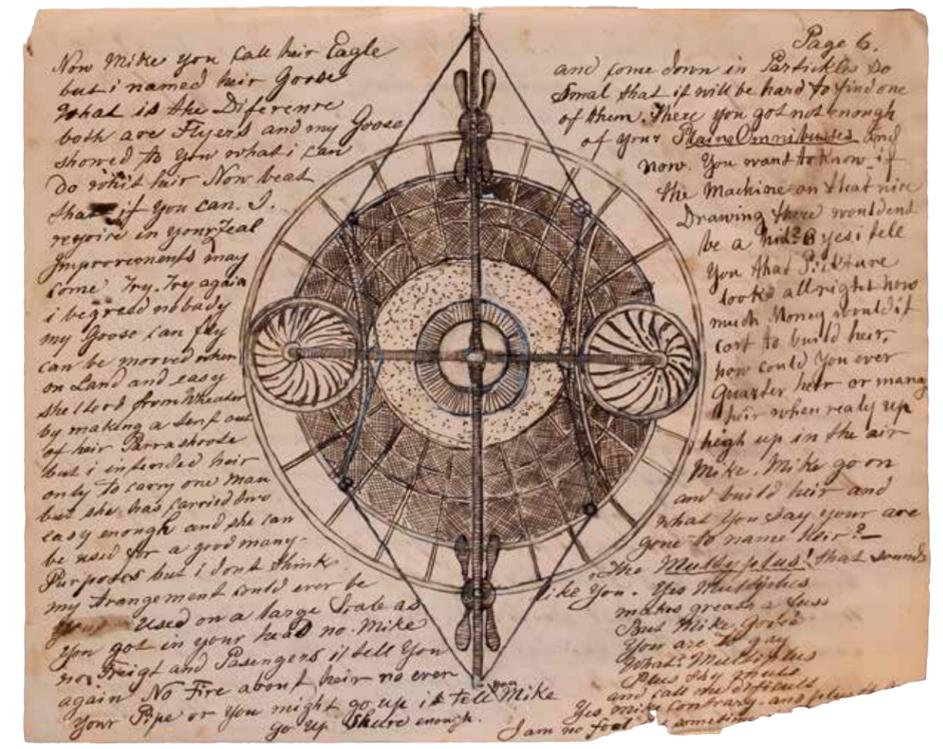
Book 9 (Plates 4491–4737), 1919–1920



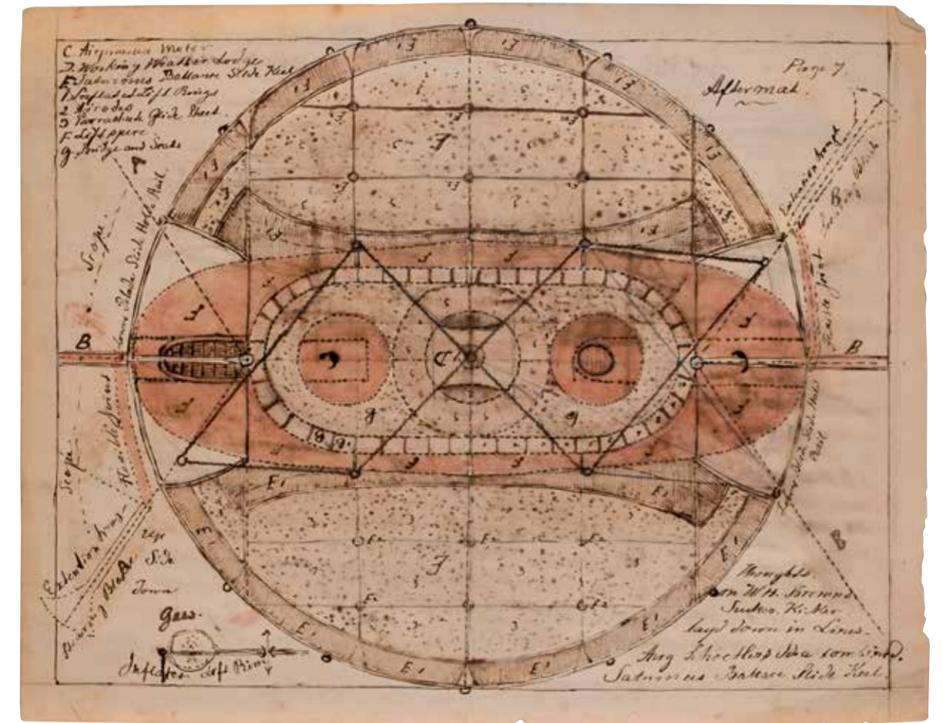
I quit that Foolishness
long ago"
The Oubor of Capt. Moon Drinker Geo. Nowell
They will look on us to be either
Fools or Swindlers?
Peter Mannis
Time will tell. I see the my self
the others can see us what I please
themselves" Charles. Duffell
Man had to learn to swim like a Fish
why should he not learn to fly like a
Bird? Yes time will tell. I see no
Fault in working out this Problem!!
Albert Gramer
Yes Peter what you have shown us,
"by the bye" some other man stumble
over, and that Problem will be
solved and I am not so far from it!
Oth. House



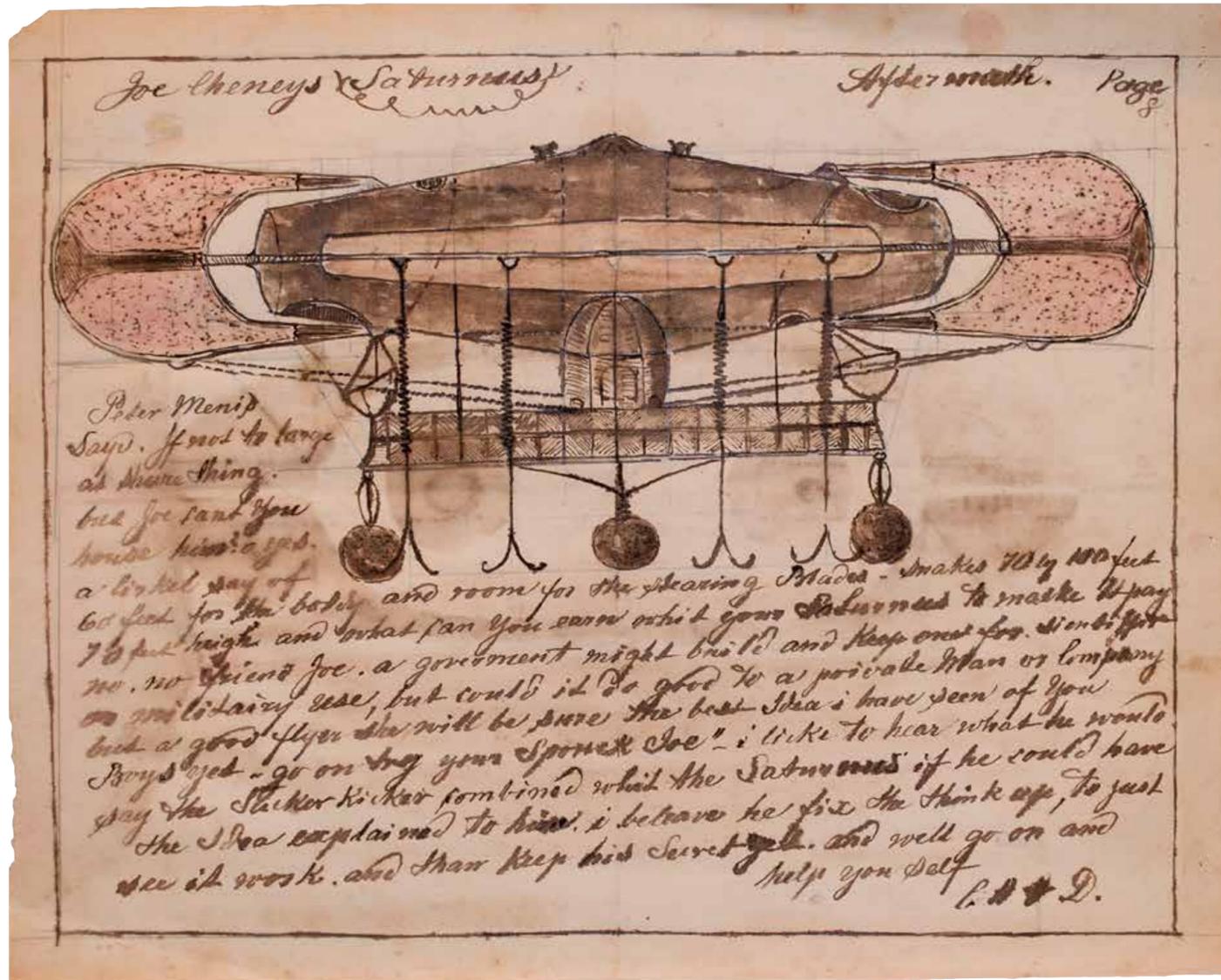
Recolections, "Goose," 1898-1900, 7 1/2 x 9 1/4 in. Private collection



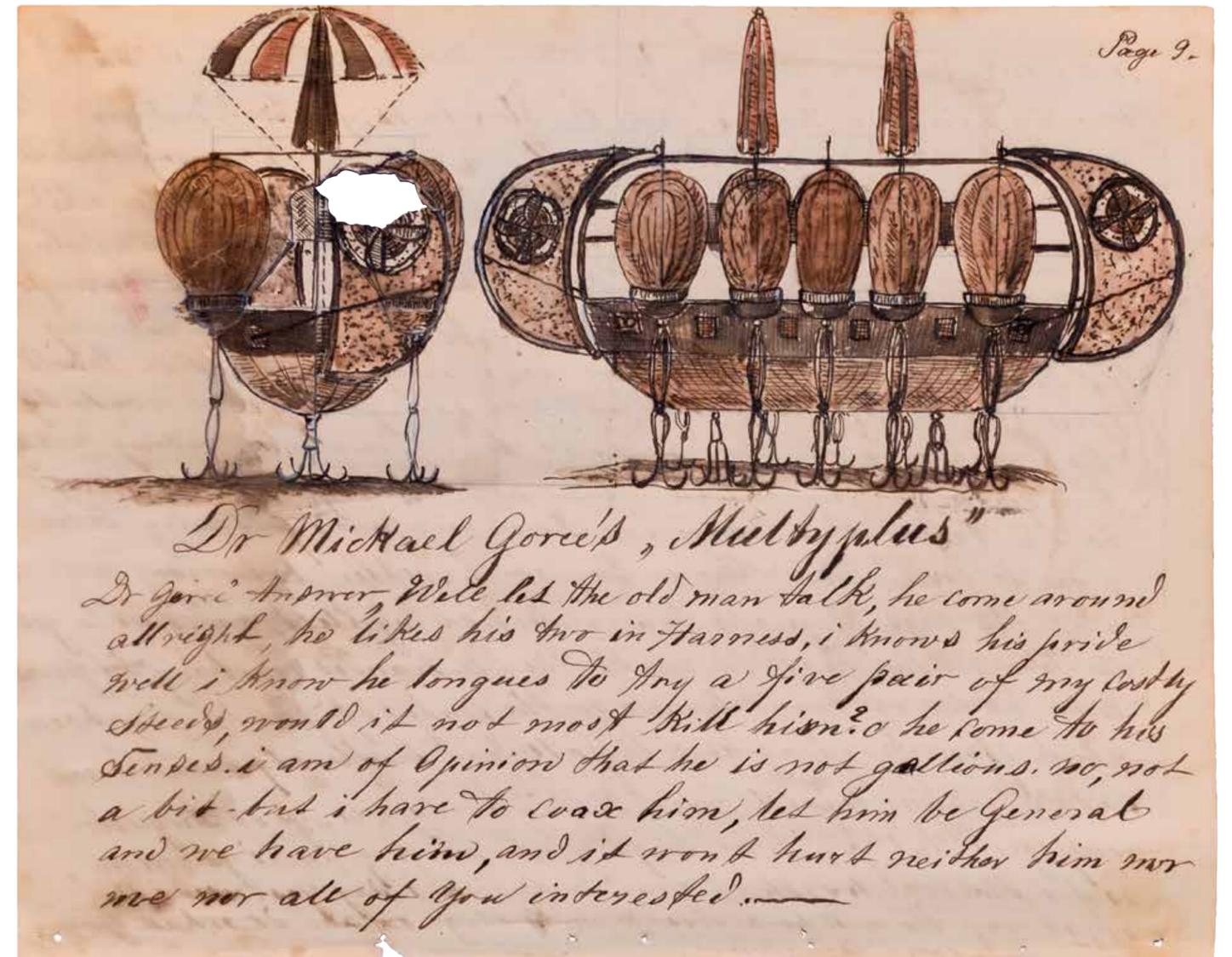
Recolections, Now Mike you call heir Eagle, 1898-1900, 7 1/2 x 9 1/4 in. Private collection



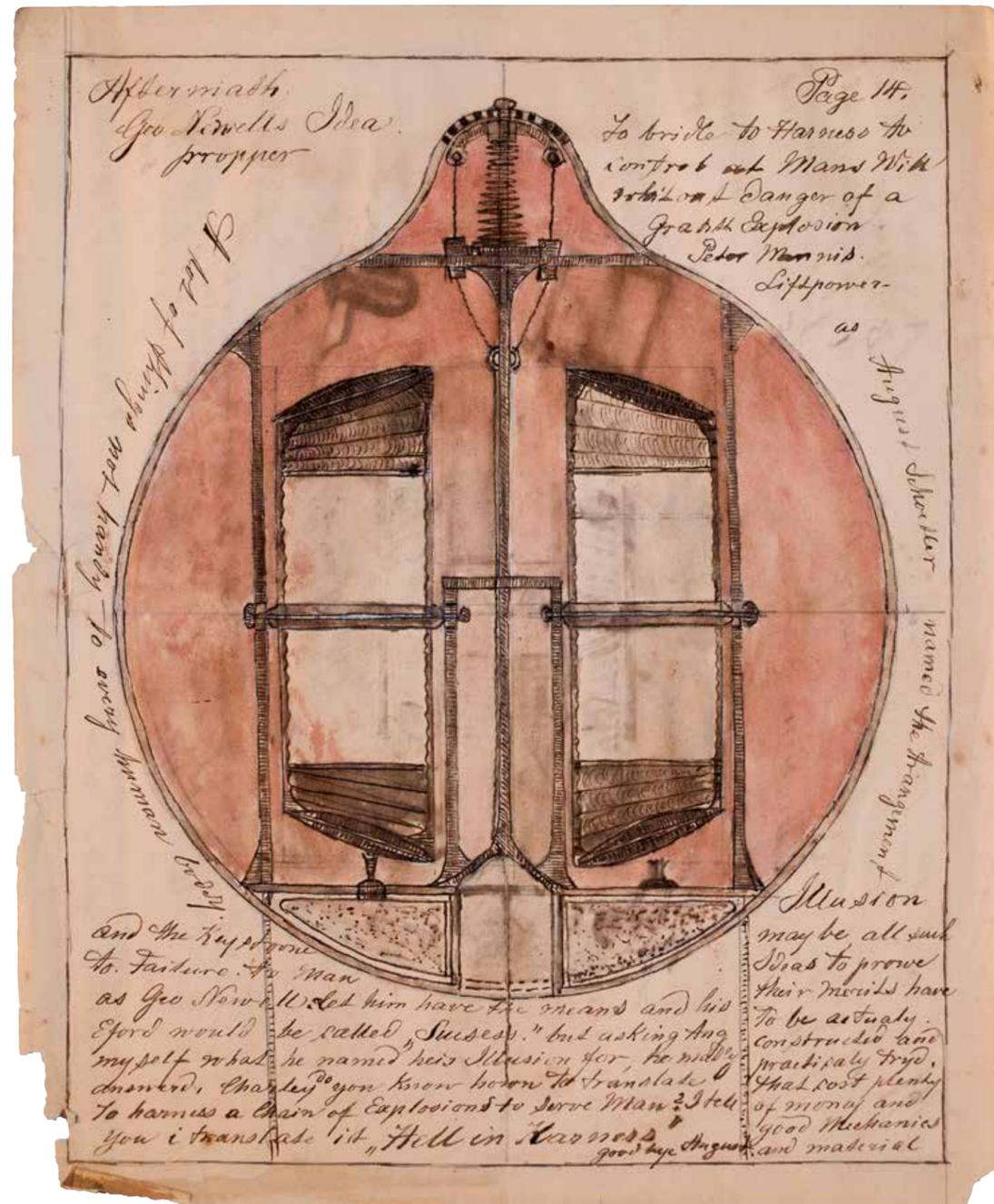
Recolections, Aftermath, Thoughts on WH Browns Sucker Kicker layd down in Lines, 1898-1900, 7 1/2 x 9 1/4 in. Private collection



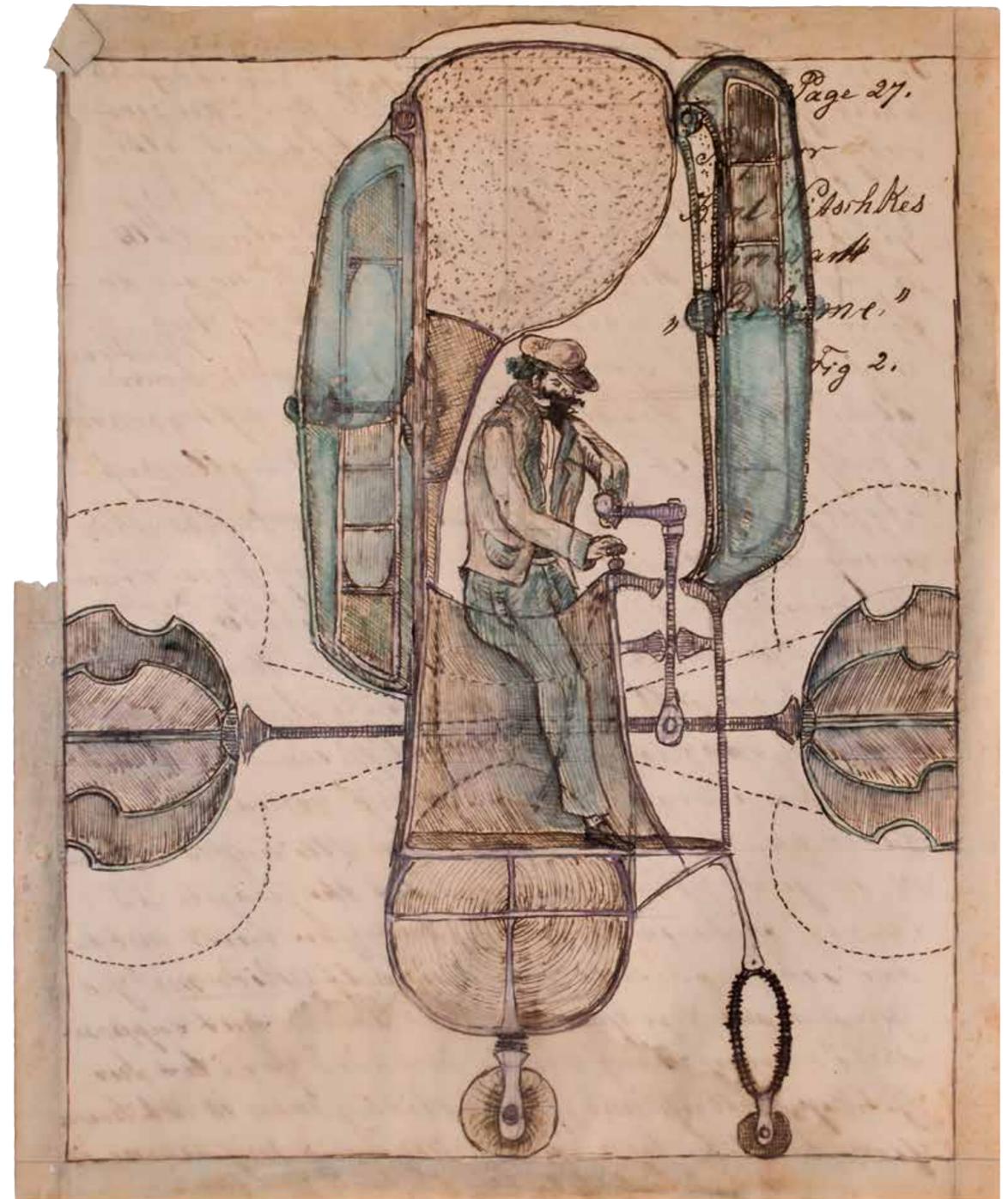
Recolections, Aftermath, Joe Cheneys Saturnus, 1898-1900,
 7 1/2 x 9 1/4 in.
 Private collection



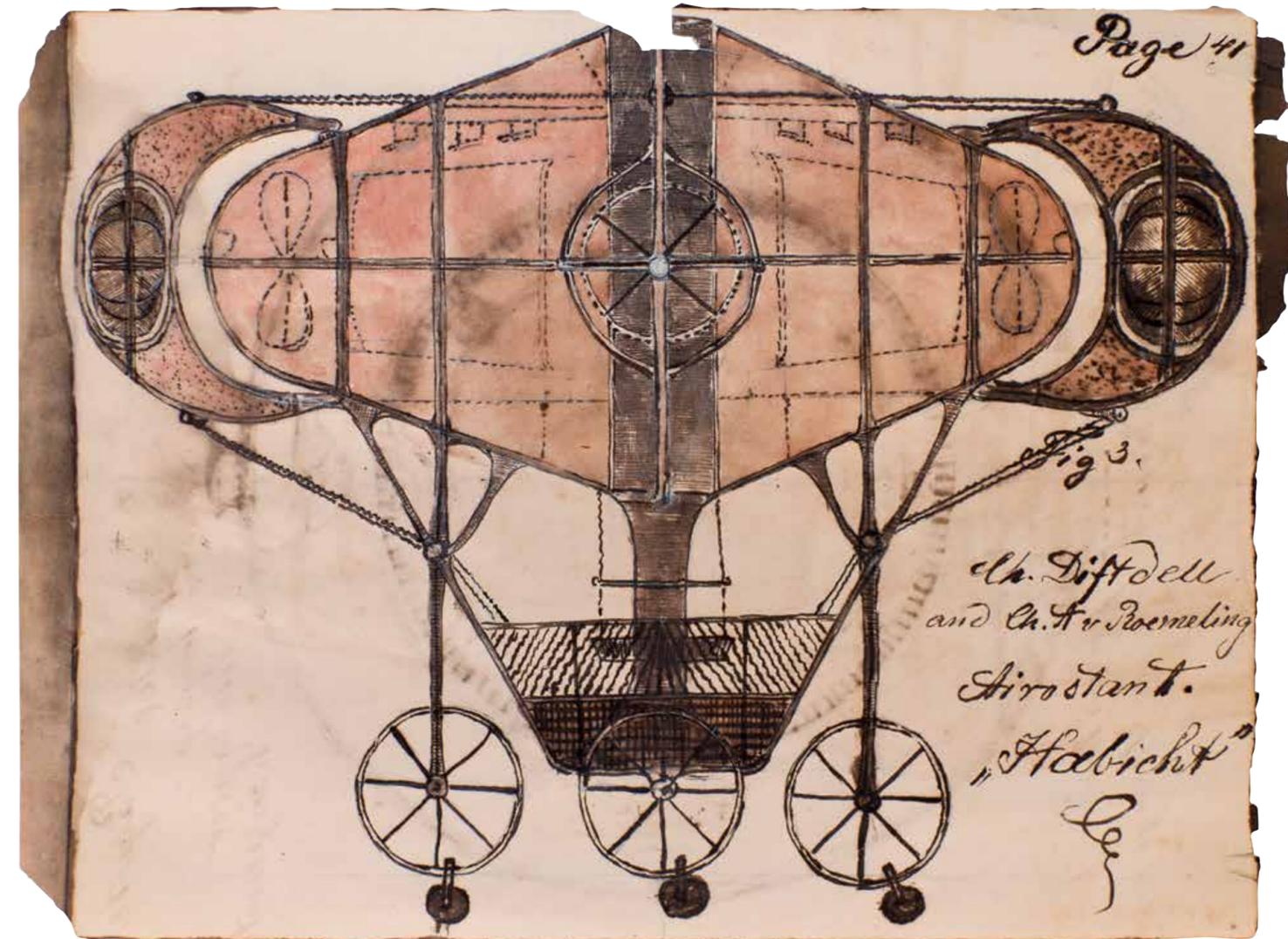
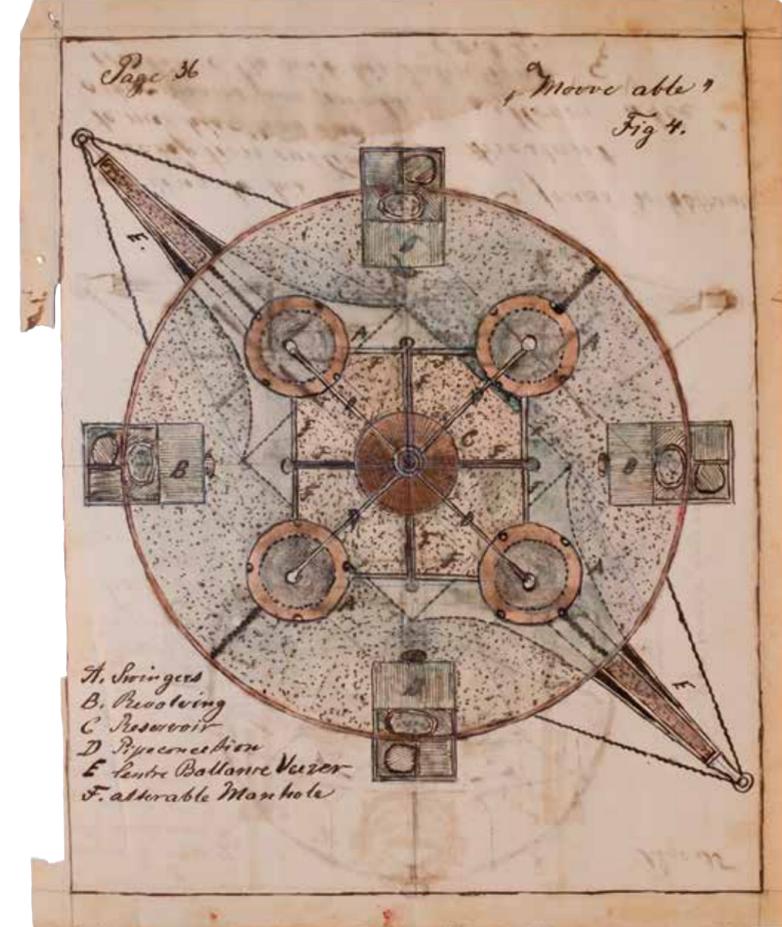
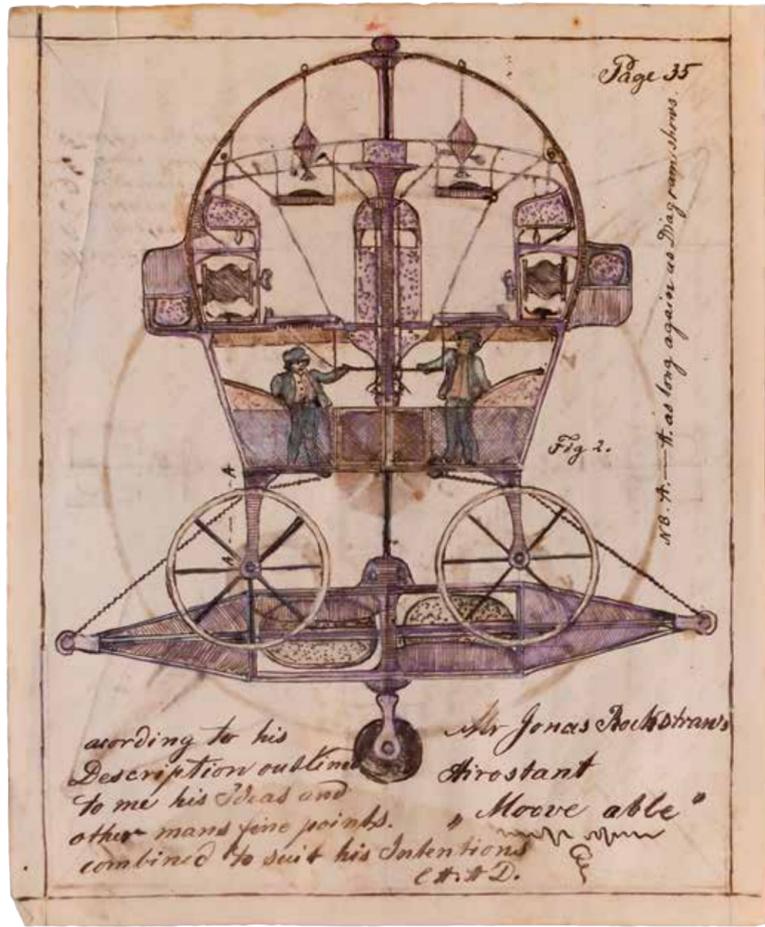
Recolections, Dr Mickael Gorees "Multyplus," 1898-1900,
 7 1/2 x 9 1/4 in.
 Private collection



Recolections, Aftermath, Geo Newells Idea propper, 1898-1900,
9 1/4 x 7 1/2 in.
Private collection



Recolections, Professor Karl Nitschkes Airostant "Rideme,"
1898-1900, 9 1/4 x 7 1/2 in.
Private collection

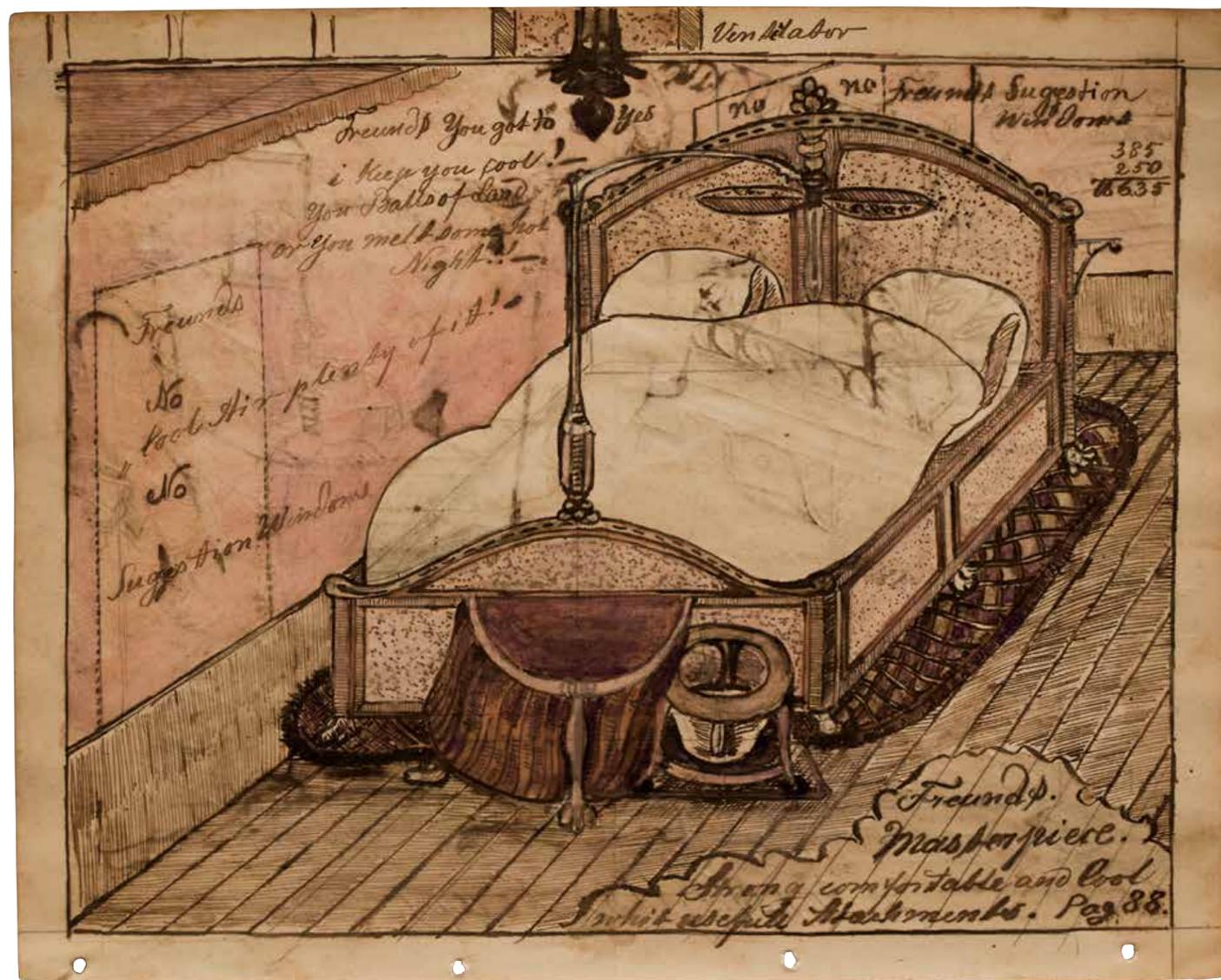


Recolections, Mr Jonas Rockstraws Airostant "Move able," 1898-1900, 9 1/4 x 7 1/2 in. Private collection

Recolections, "Move able," 1898-1900, 9 1/4 x 7 1/2 in. Private collection

Recolections, Ch. Dift dell and Ch. A v Roemeling Airostant "Habicht," 1898-1900, 7 1/2 x 9 1/4 in. Private collection





Houston Texas 1899.

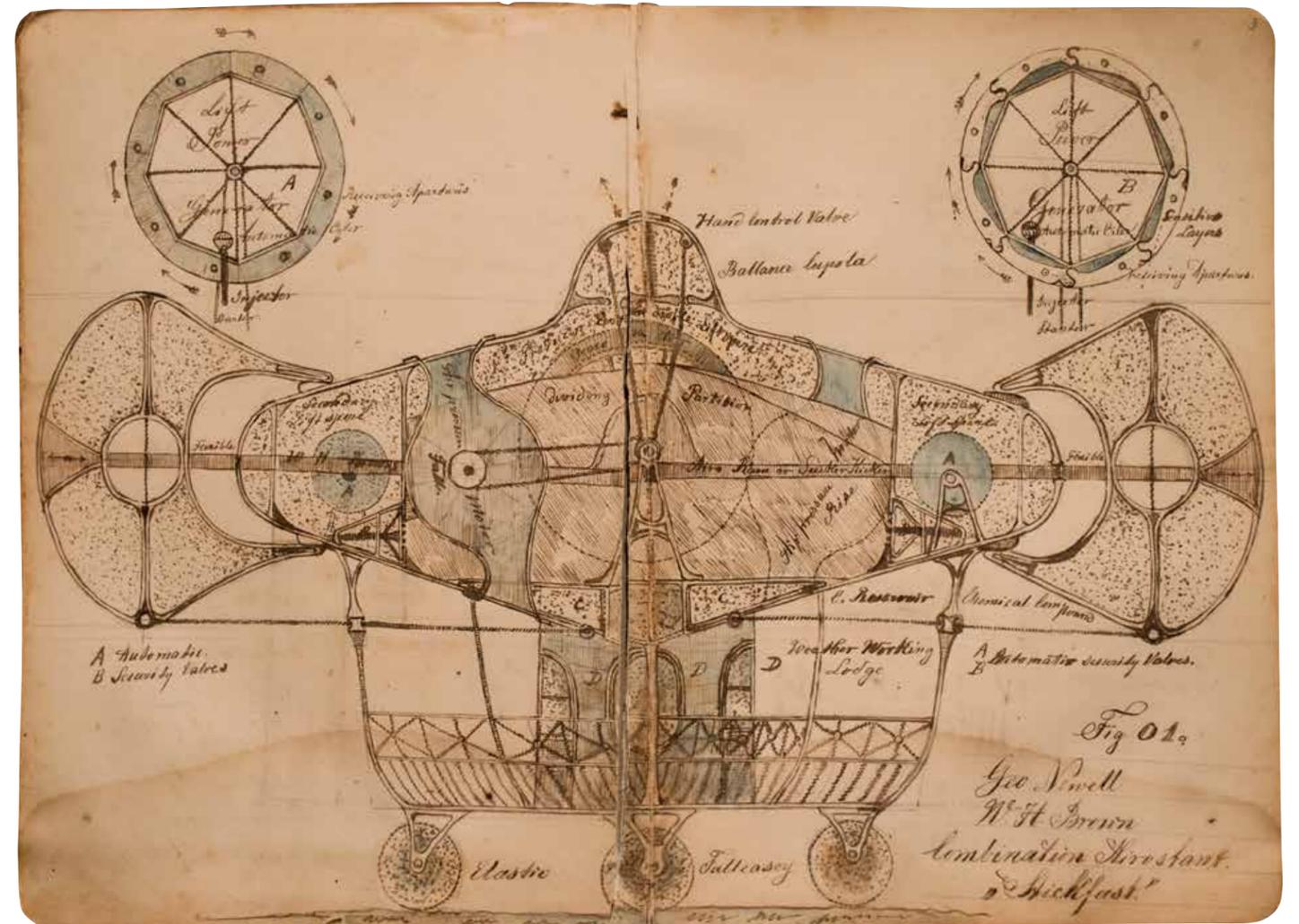
Recollections real
and Speculative Work

on

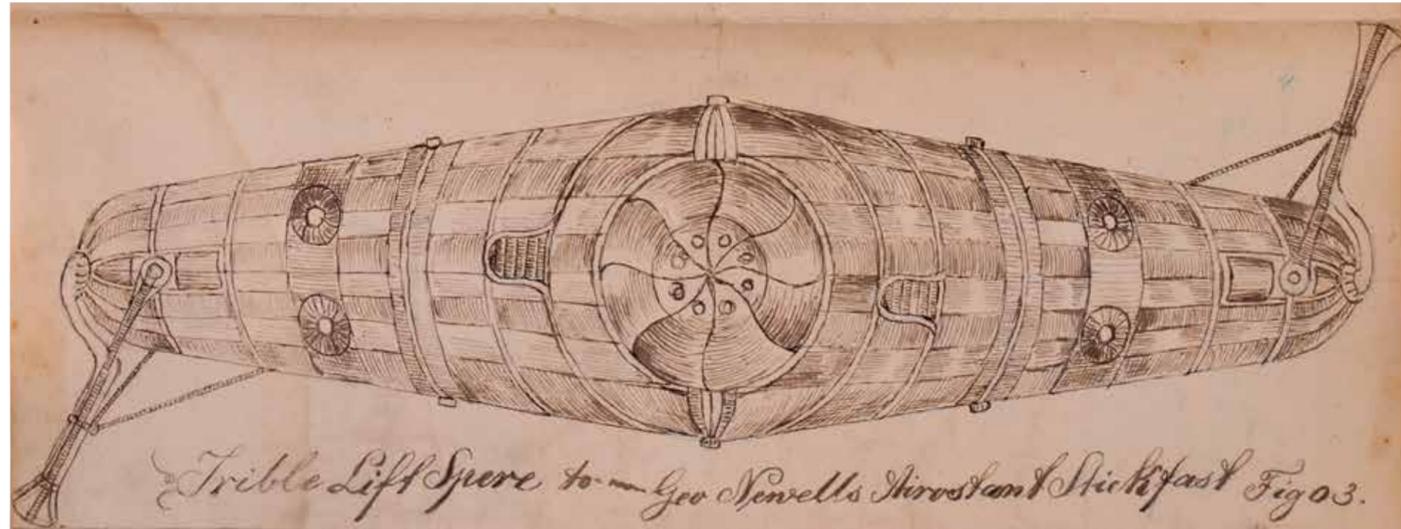
Ideas of Friends in

for higher aims long gone by.

Second part. by C. H. B. D.



Recollections second part, Geo Newell WH Brown Combination
Airostant "Stickfast," 1899-1900, 11 x 16 in.
Private collection



*Tribble Lift Spere to Geo Newells Airostant Stickfast Fig 03.
Partere Britch and Weather and Worklodge "Stickfast"*

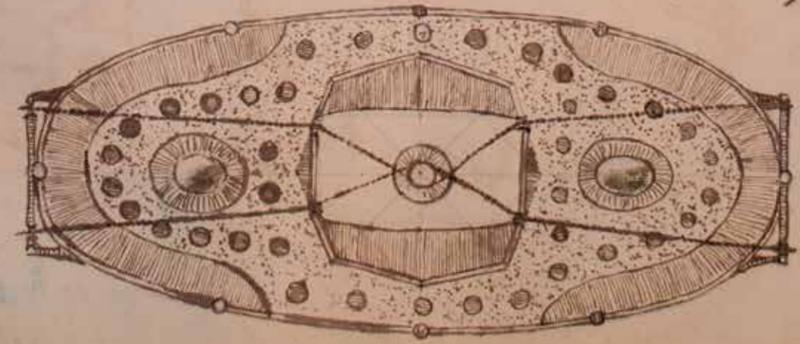
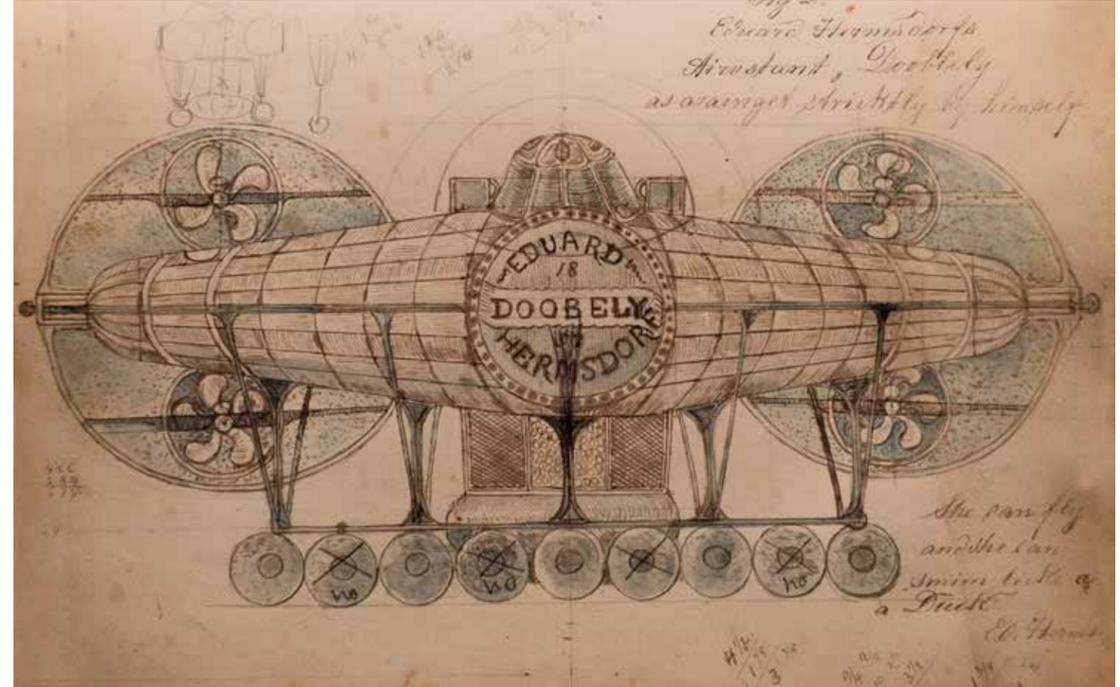


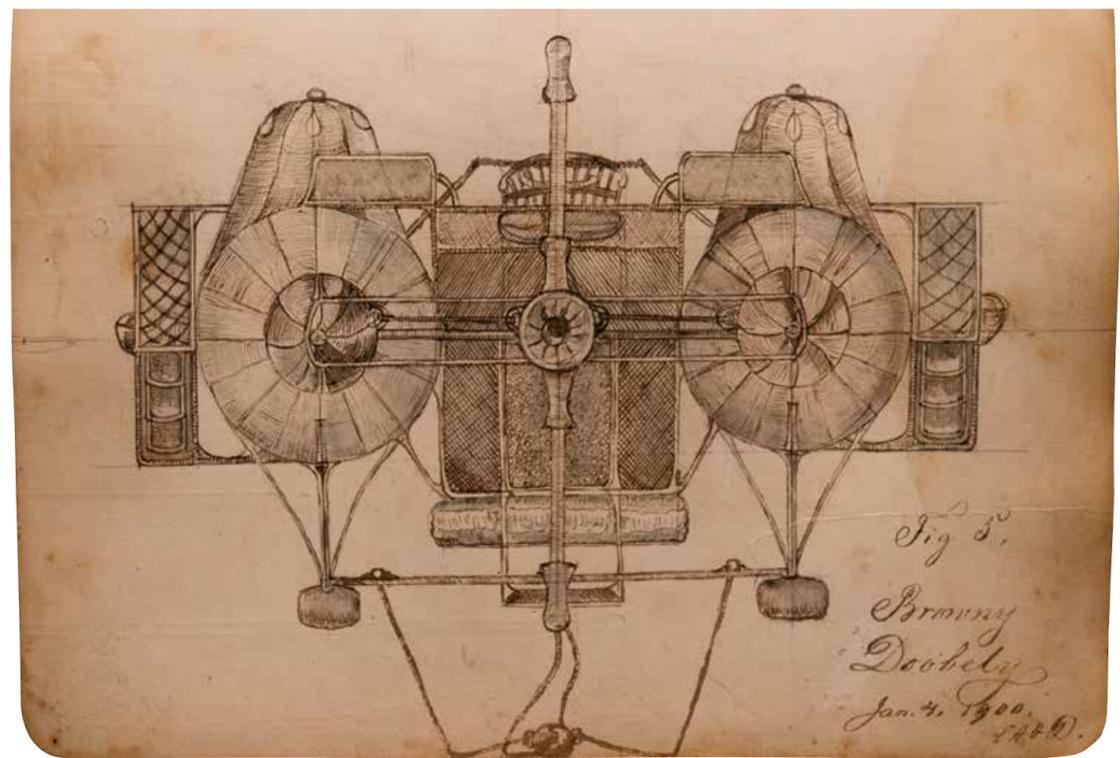
Fig 04.

Recolections second part, Tribble Lift Spere to Geo Newells Airostant Stickfast/Partere Britch and Weather and Worklodge "Stickfast," 1899-1900, 8 x 11 in. Private collection



Eduard Hermsdorfs Airostant, Doobely as aranger strictly by himself

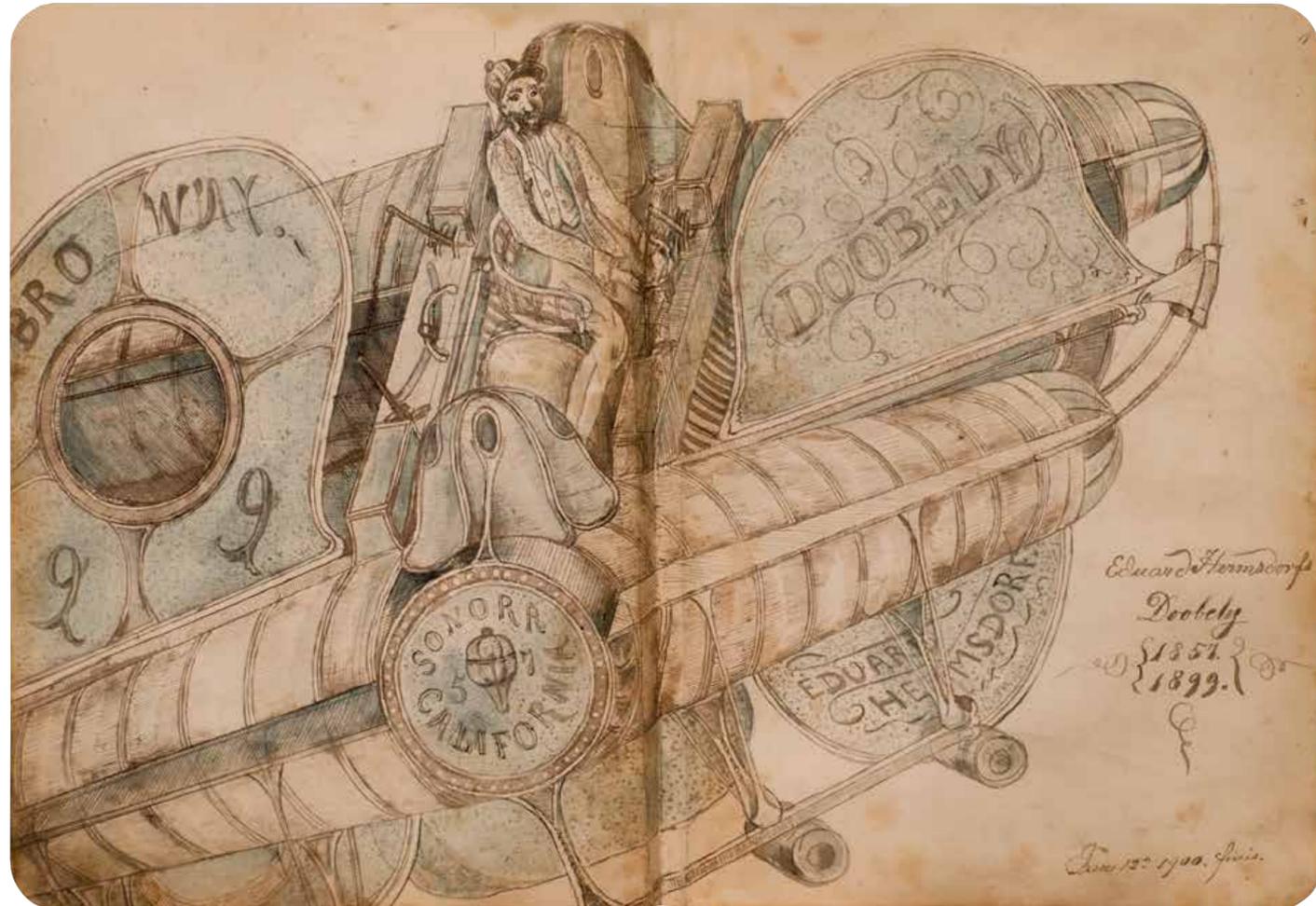
*She can fly and she can swim like a Duck
E. Herms*



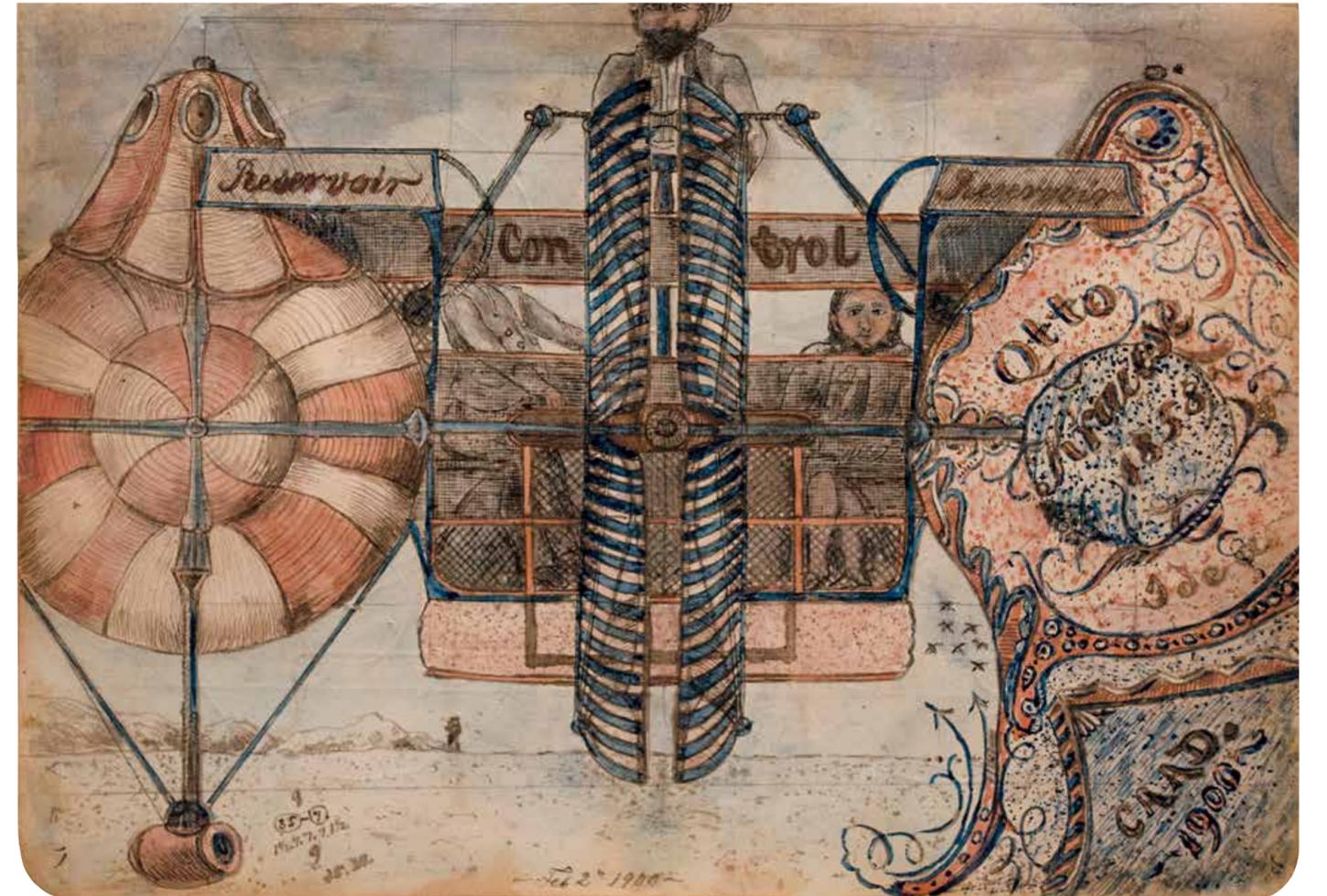
*Fig 5.
Browny Doobely
Jan. 4. 1900.
1899.*

Recolections second part, Eduard Hermsdorfs Airostant Doobely as aranged strictly by himself, 1899-1900, 8 x 11 in. Private collection

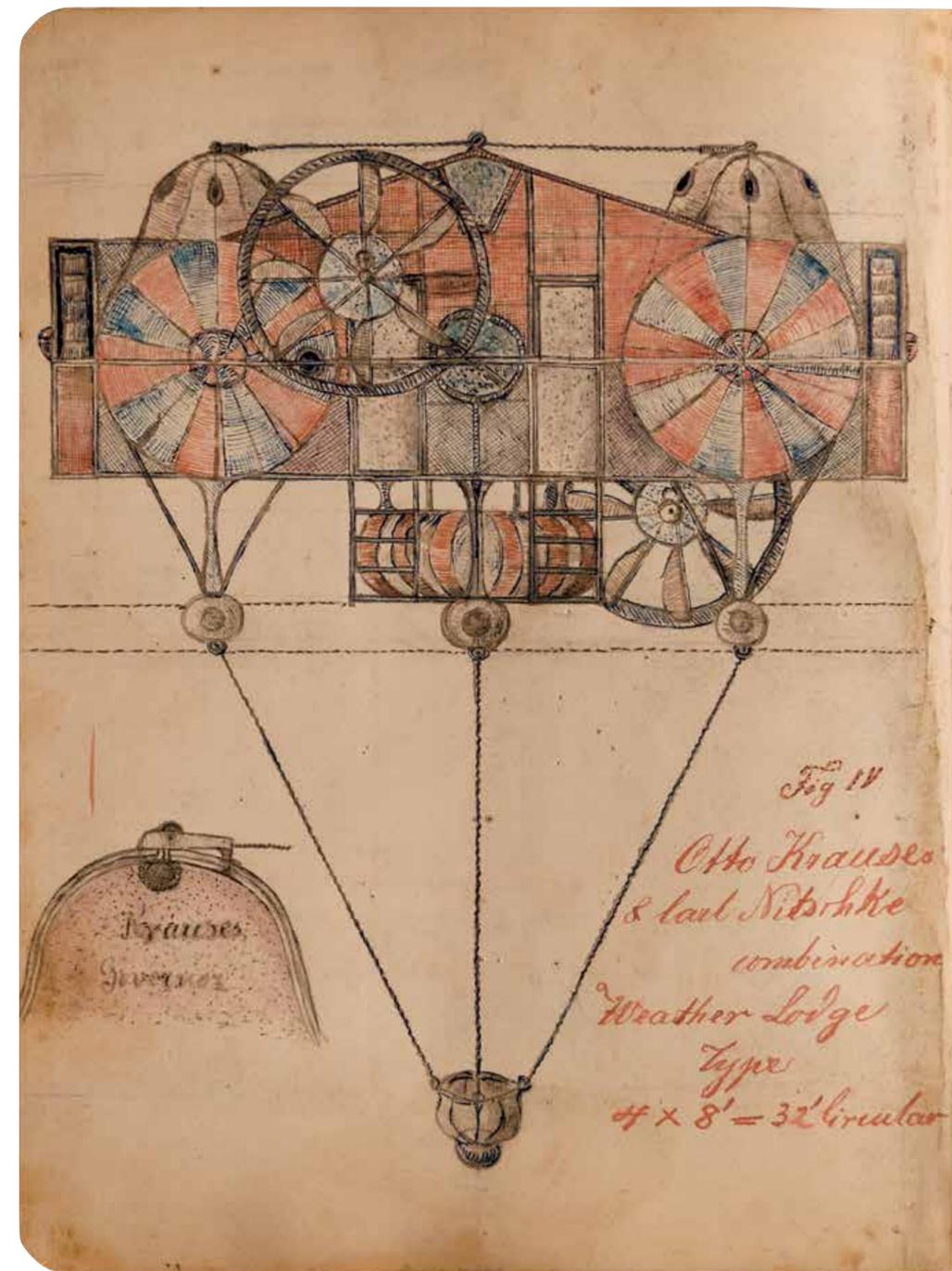
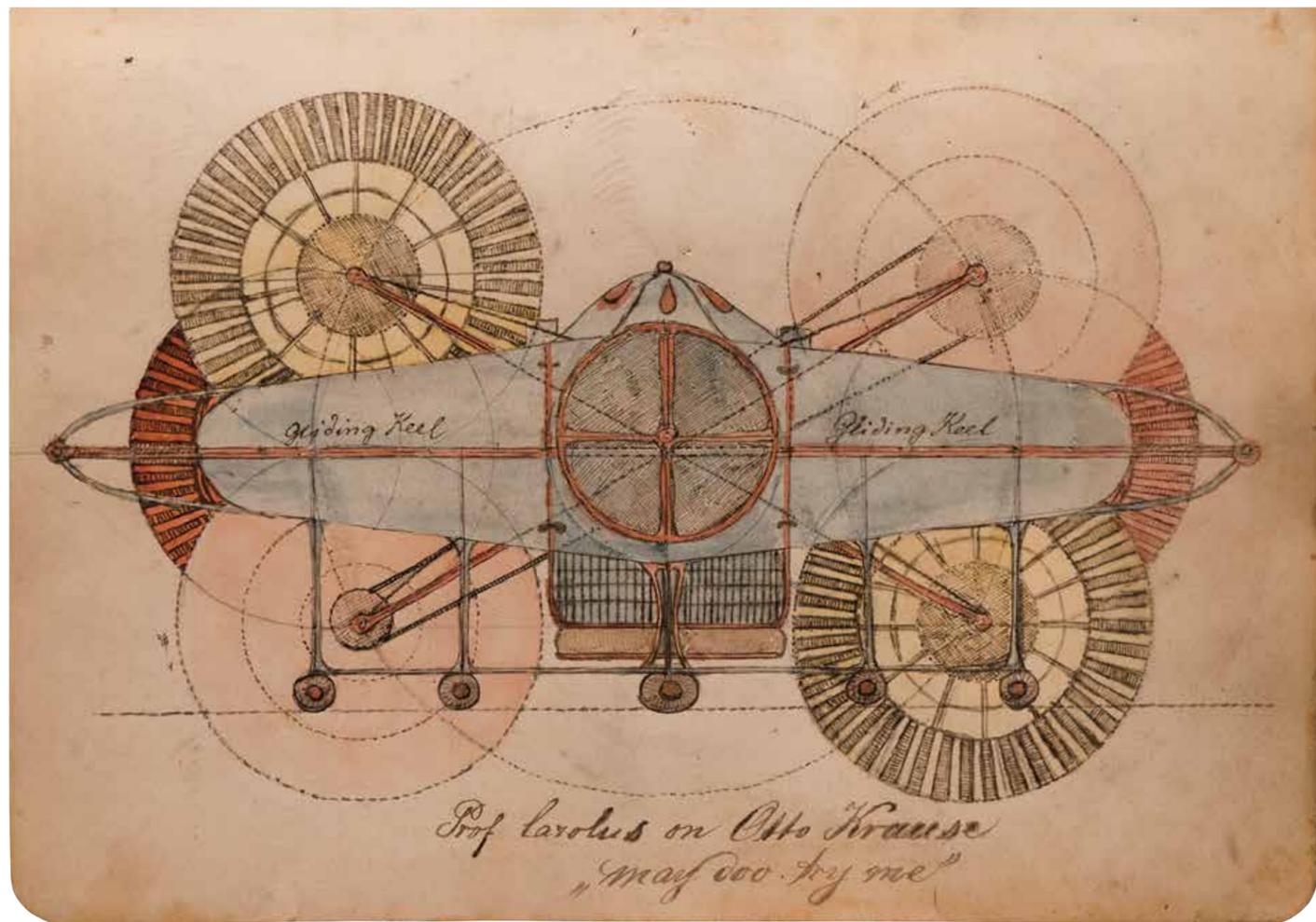
Recolections second part, Browny Doobely, 1900, 8 x 11 in. Private collection

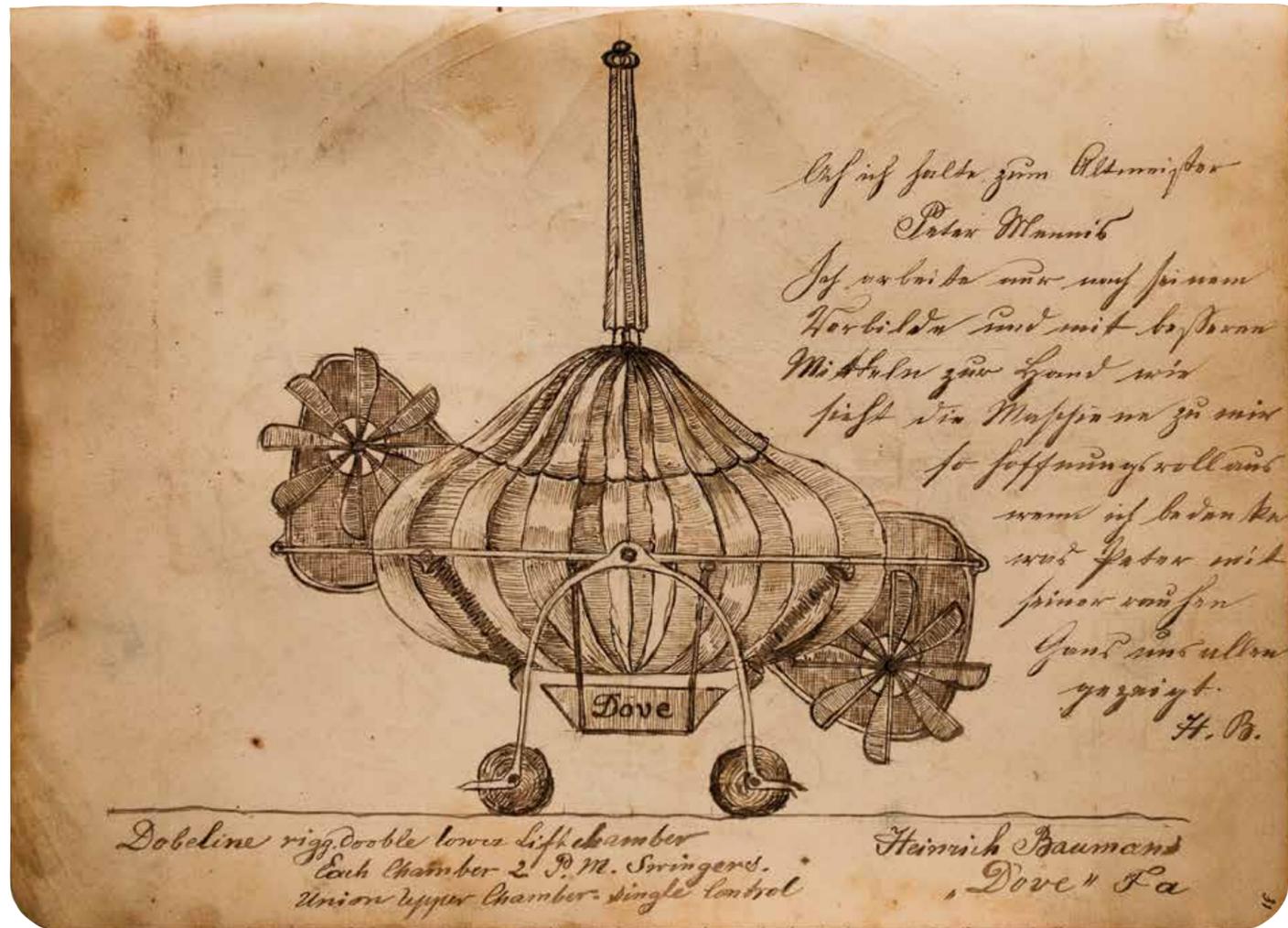


Recollections second part, Eduard Hermsdorfs Doobely,
 1899–1900, 11 × 16 in.
 Private collection

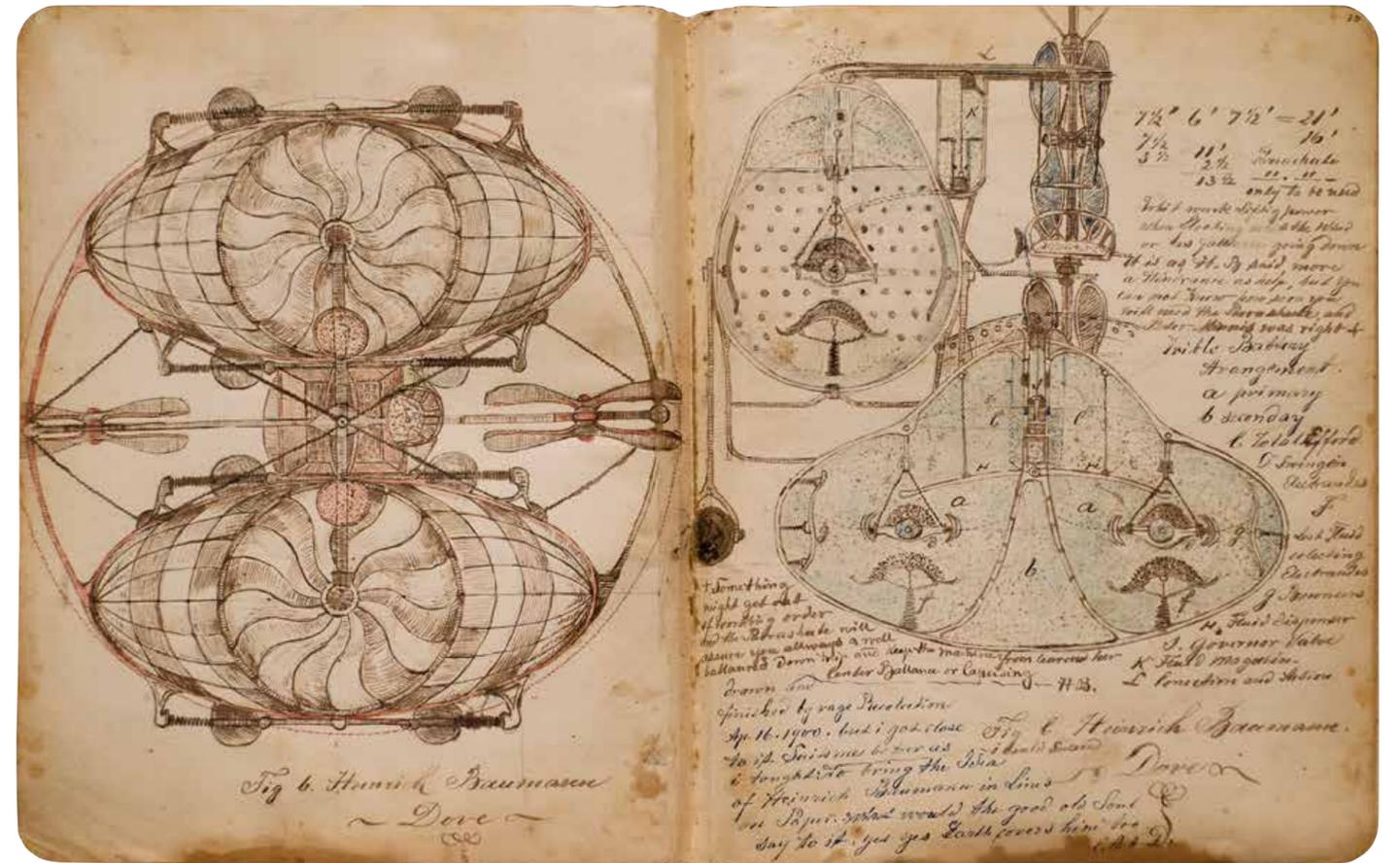


Recollections second part, Otto Krause Idea, 1900, 8 × 11 in.
 Private collection





Reollections second part, Heinrich Baumanns "Dove," 1899-1900,
 8 x 11 in.
 Private collection



Reollections second part, Heinrich Baumann Dove, 1899-1900,
 11 x 16 in.
 Private collection



The Rescue of the
 Moonskooter
 as given before
 the Sonora Airostat Club
 and a leettle i come and
 get you fatty

If i get hold of this Machine
 i never go to California
 i strike out for Copenhagen
 i get that Admiral's ship to the moon then
 and go down to him if ever i get him.

Fig 2 The Moonskooter
 I'm gone by myself I request
 you have plenty of grub on
 hand by August. The ship is
 good for a rabbit too. You hear
 don't you forget my letter
 August as the moon is gone
 the birds will not fly
 as Gallenore thought if a
 ever get him of that coast
 you bet his brights will
 come quick i give the
 action of the air from the
 hair on our heads and
 what the roots and i be
 half headed the balance
 of my life i'm gone
 the good good bye etc.

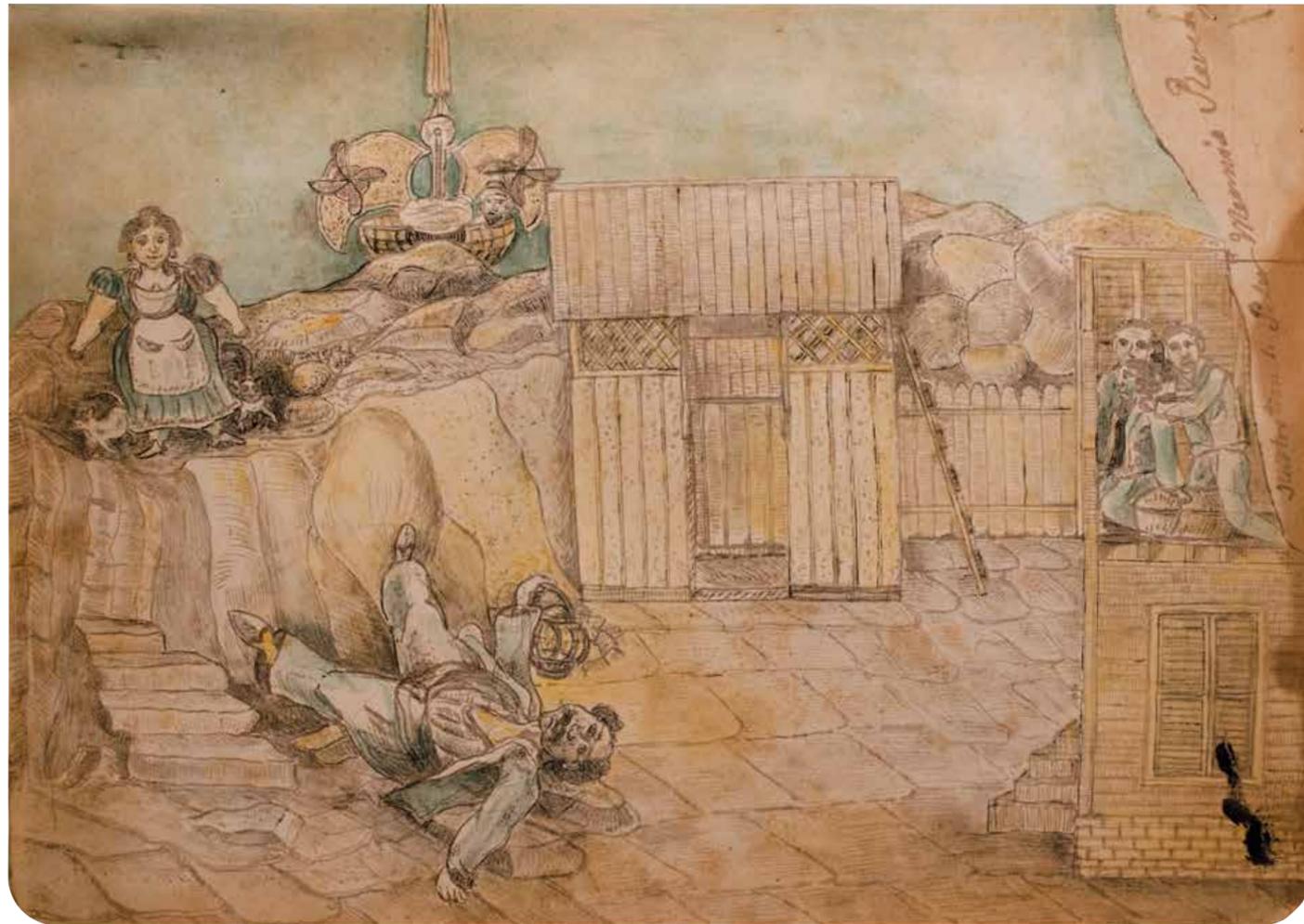
Ha Shackled Myer his is mighty thin as here you never go to
 Copenhagen i give you but down with i need ballast of
 under Gallenore and you are just built for that.



To life in Reality
 of the Moonskooter
 as given before
 the Sonora Airostat Club

Recollections second part, Peters Awackin to Life in Reality
 and Geo Newells Yarn, 1899-1900, 16 x 11 in.
 Private collection

Recollections second part, Geo Newells Satyre "The Rescue of
 the Moonskooter as given before The Sonora Airostat Club Vait
 a leettle i come and get you Fatty" and The Moonskooter Rescue,
 1899-1900, 16 x 11 in.
 Private collection

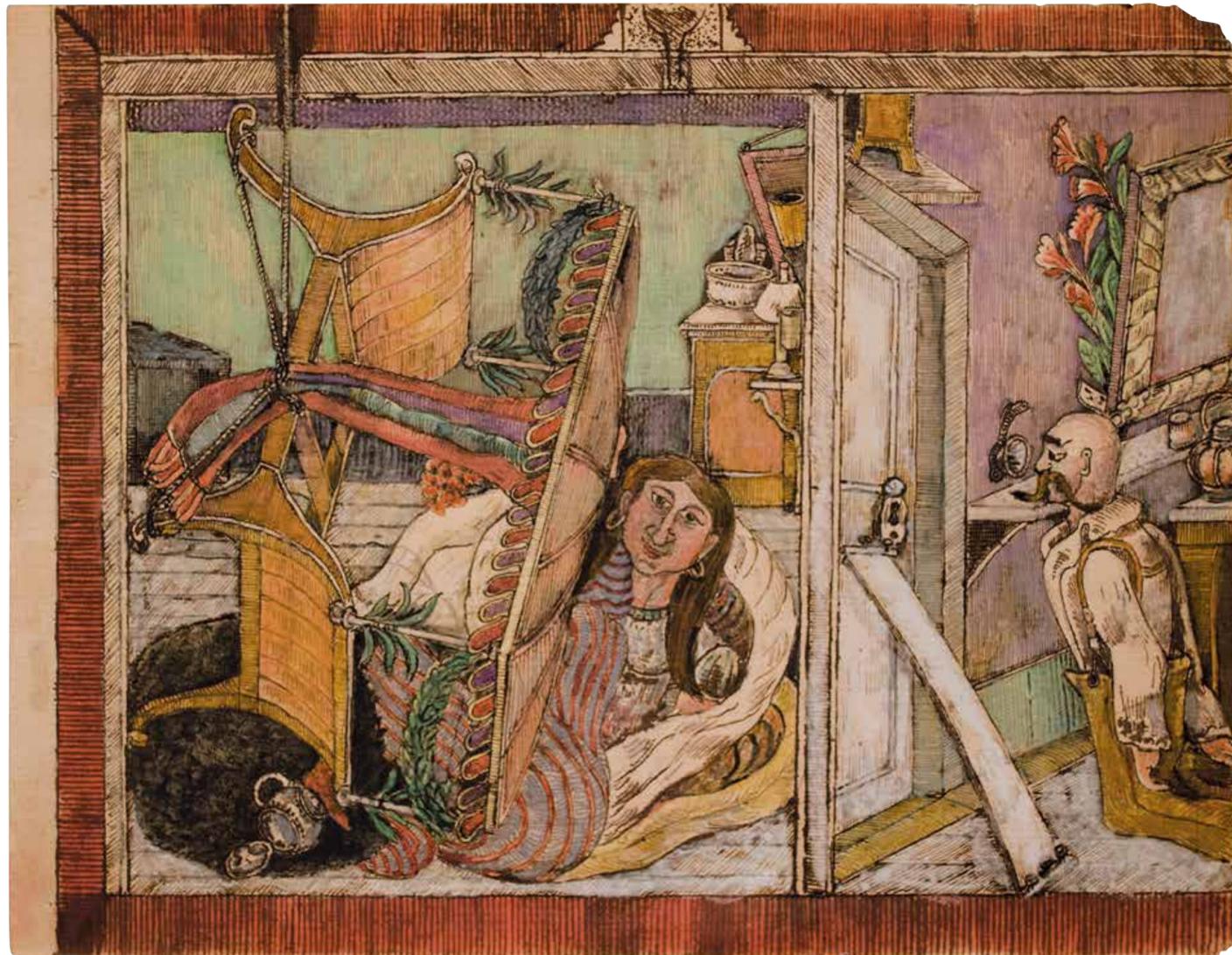


Recolections second part, Illustration to Peter Mennis Revenge, 1899–1900, 8 × 11 in. Private collection

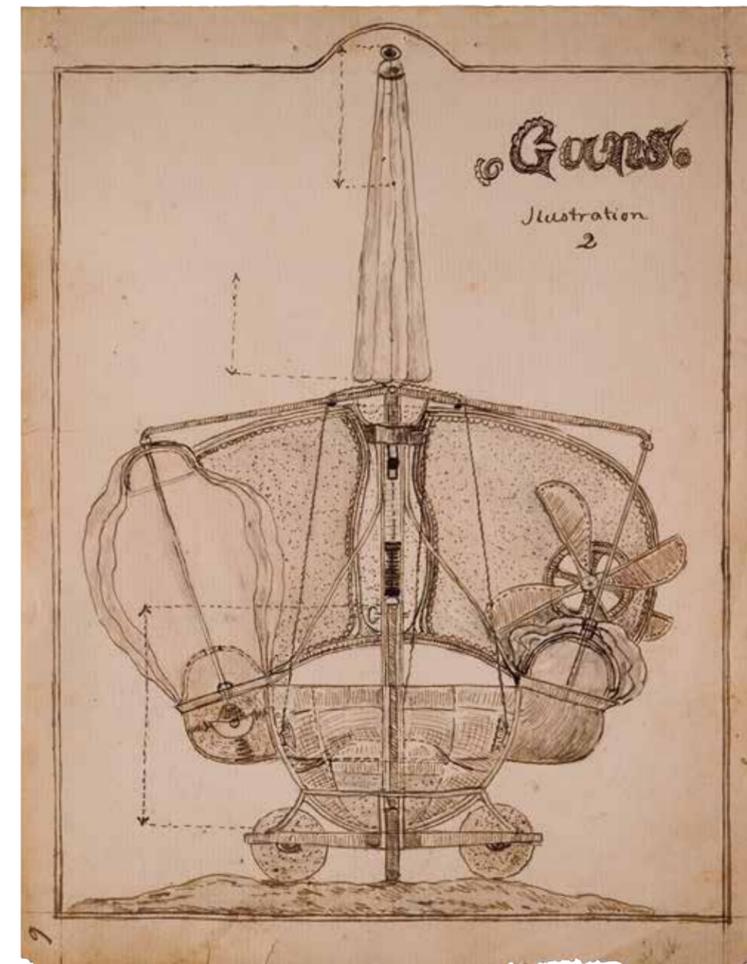


Recolections second part, P Mennis Revenge, 1899–1900, 11 × 8 in. Private collection

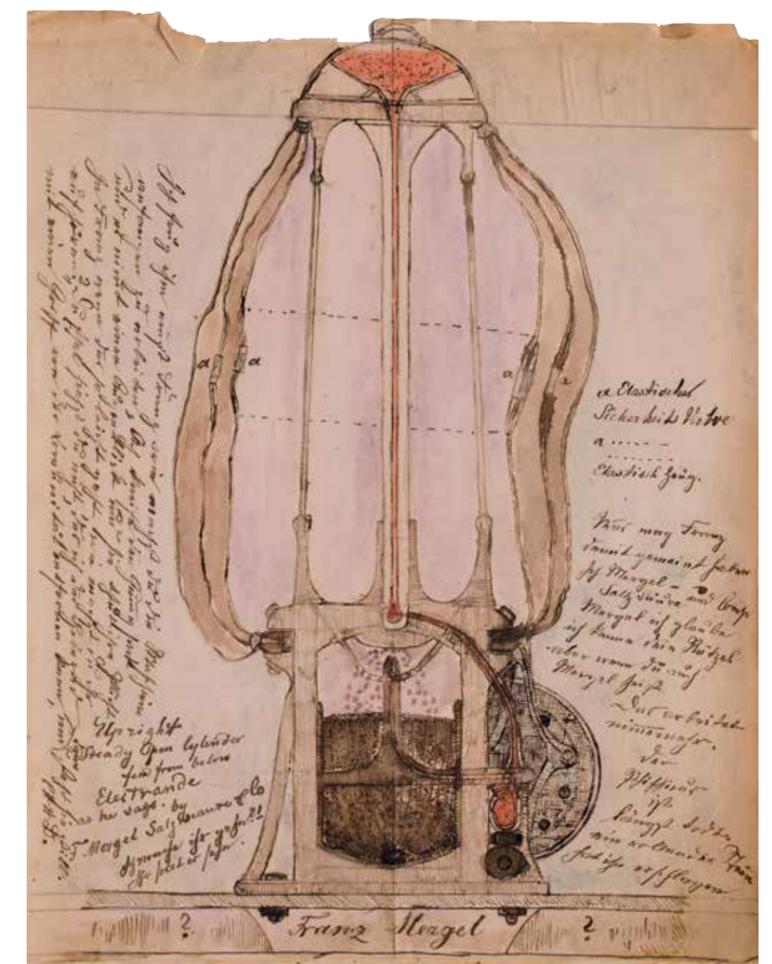




Erinnerungen (Recollections), von Roemeling marital bed prank scenes, 1900, 7 1/2 x 9 1/2 in. Private collection



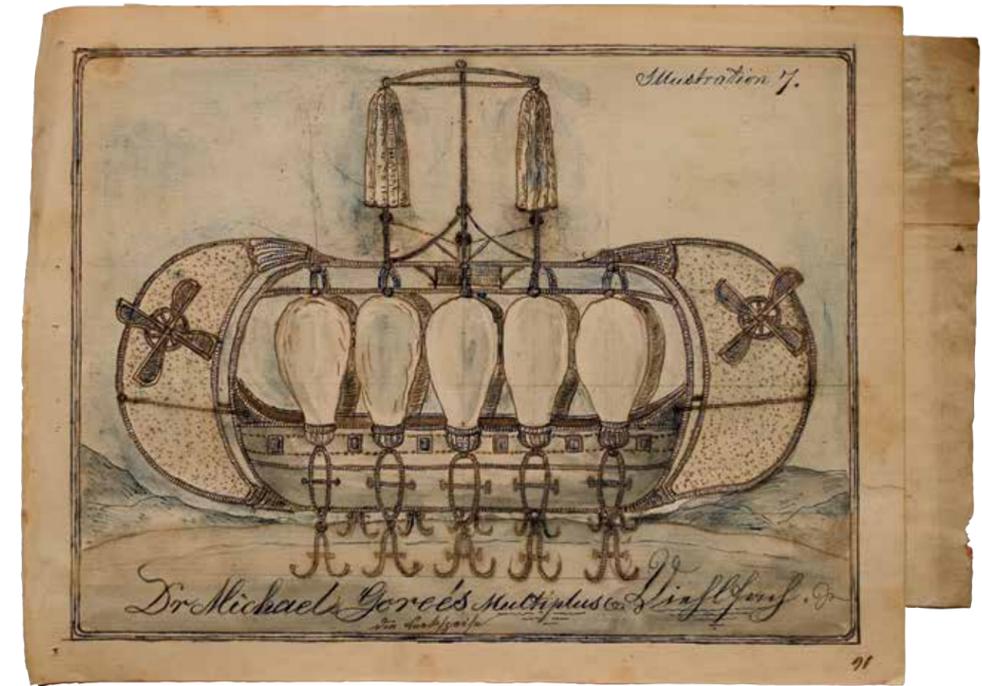
Erinnerungen (Recollections), Gans, 1900, 9 1/2 x 7 1/2 in. Private collection



Erinnerungen (Recollections), Franz Mergel, 1900, 9 1/2 x 7 1/2 in. Private collection



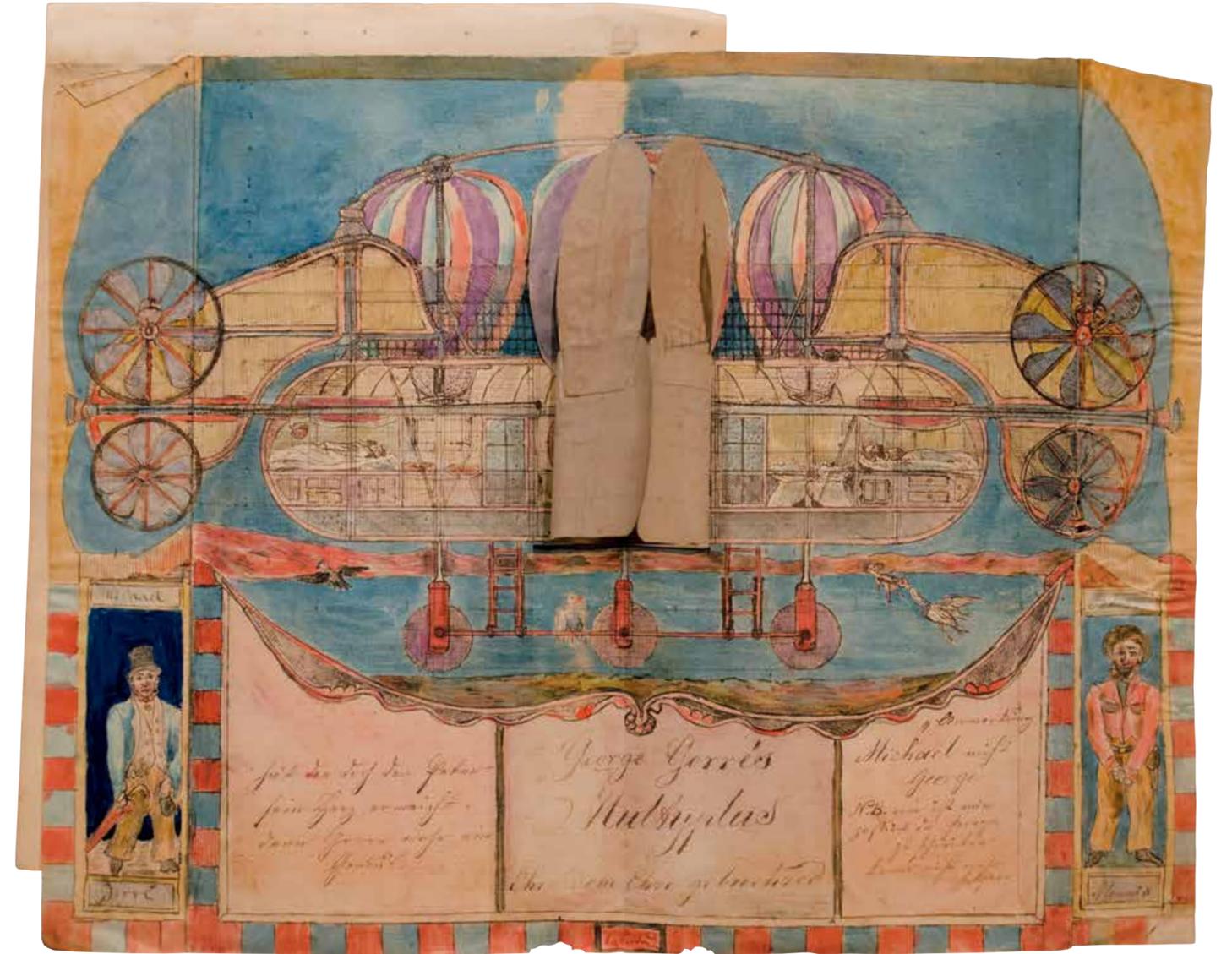
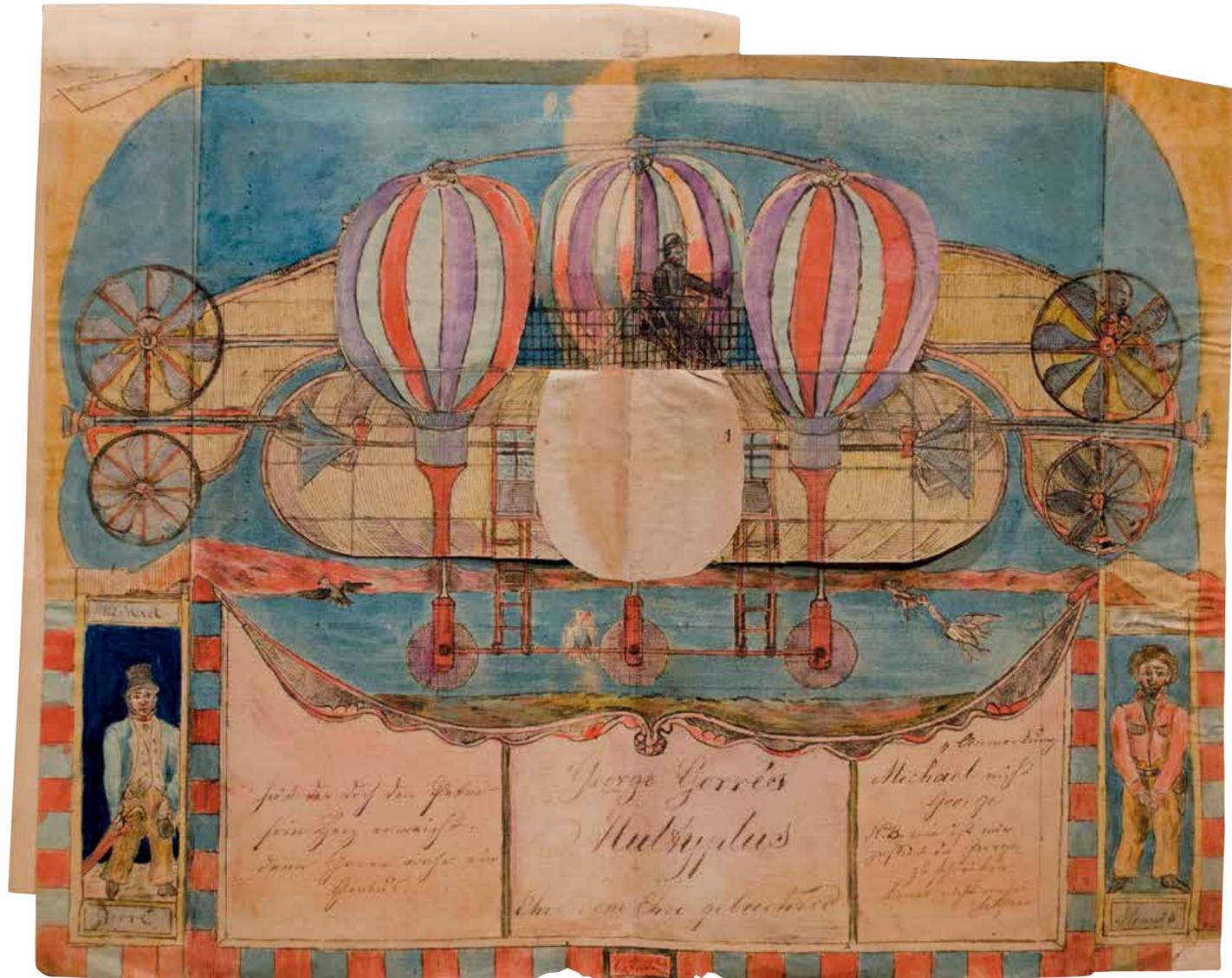
Erinnerungen (Recollections), Peter Mennis/Dr Michael Gorree, 1900, 7 1/2 x 9 1/2 in. Private collection

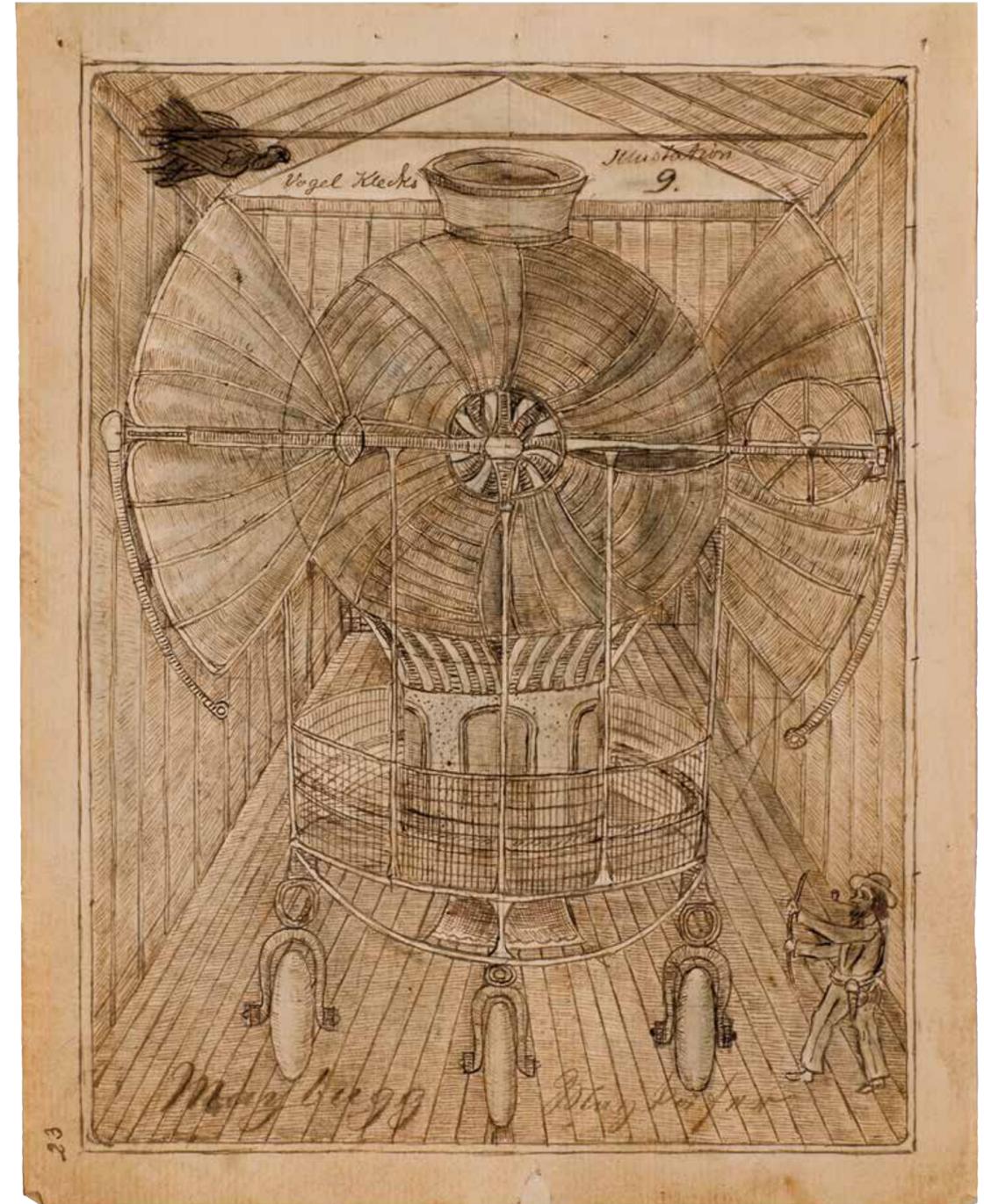
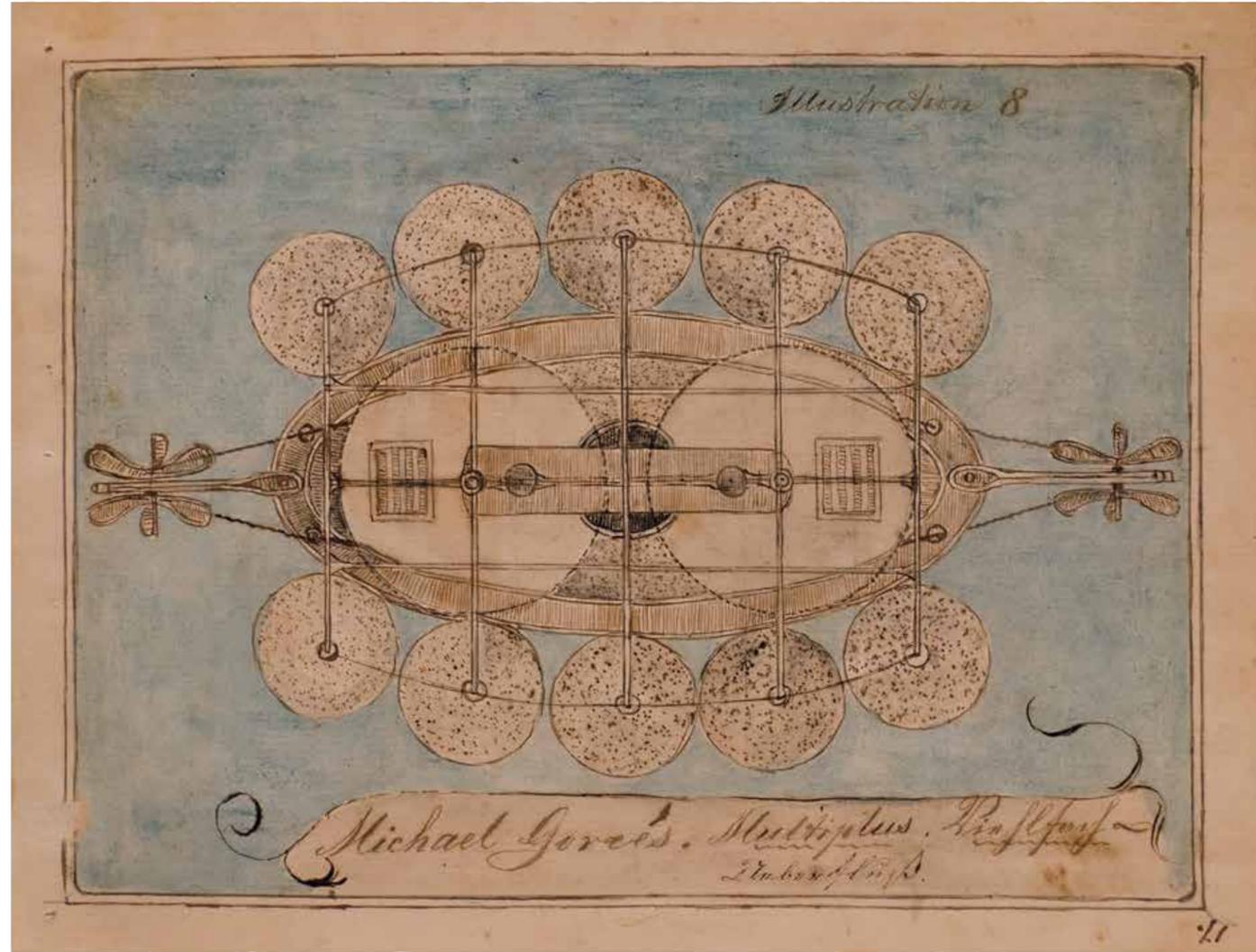


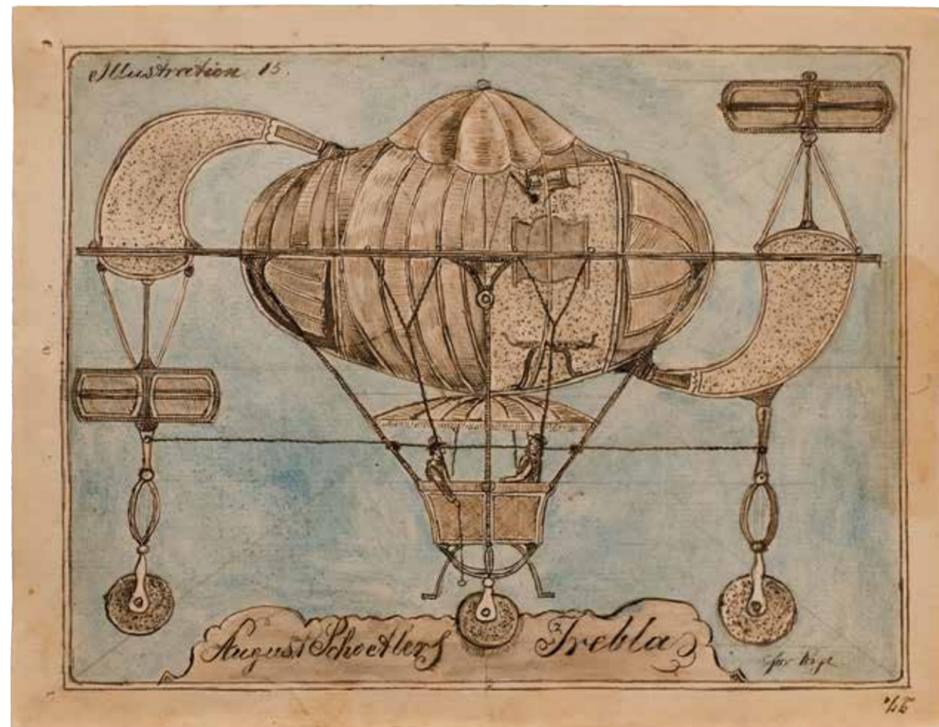
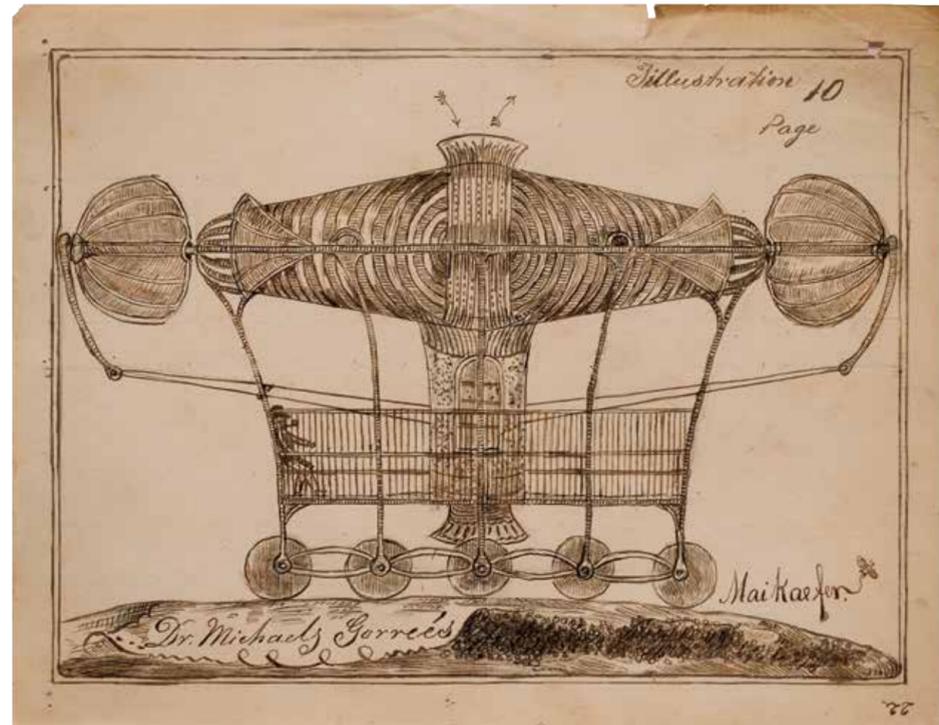
Erinnerungen (Recollections), Dr Michael Gorees Multiplus, 1900, 7 1/2 x 9 1/2 in. Private collection



Erinnerungen (Recollections), folded insert, George Gorres Multiplus, 1900, 10 1/2 x 12 1/2 in., flaps closed showing exterior. Private collection

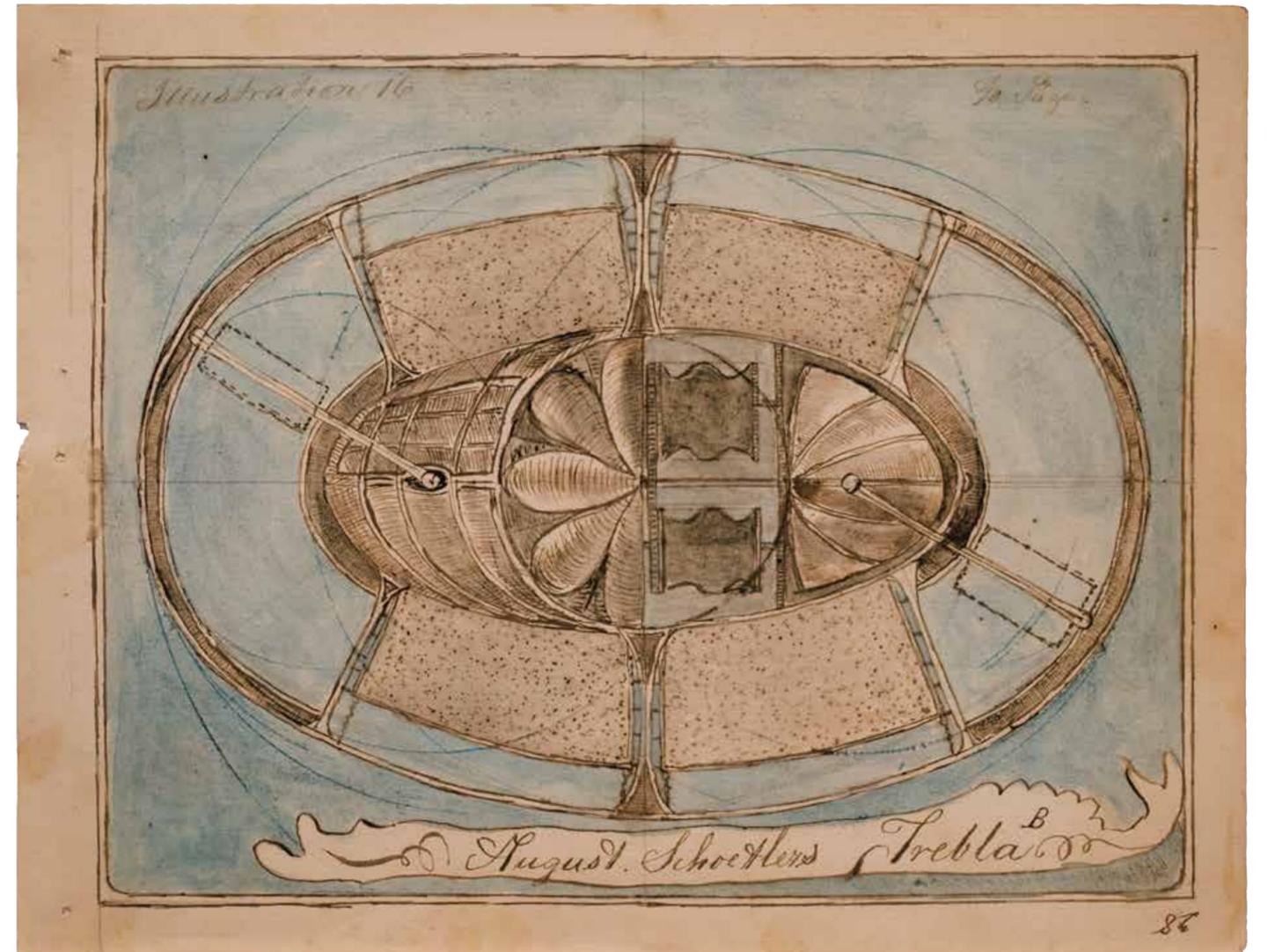




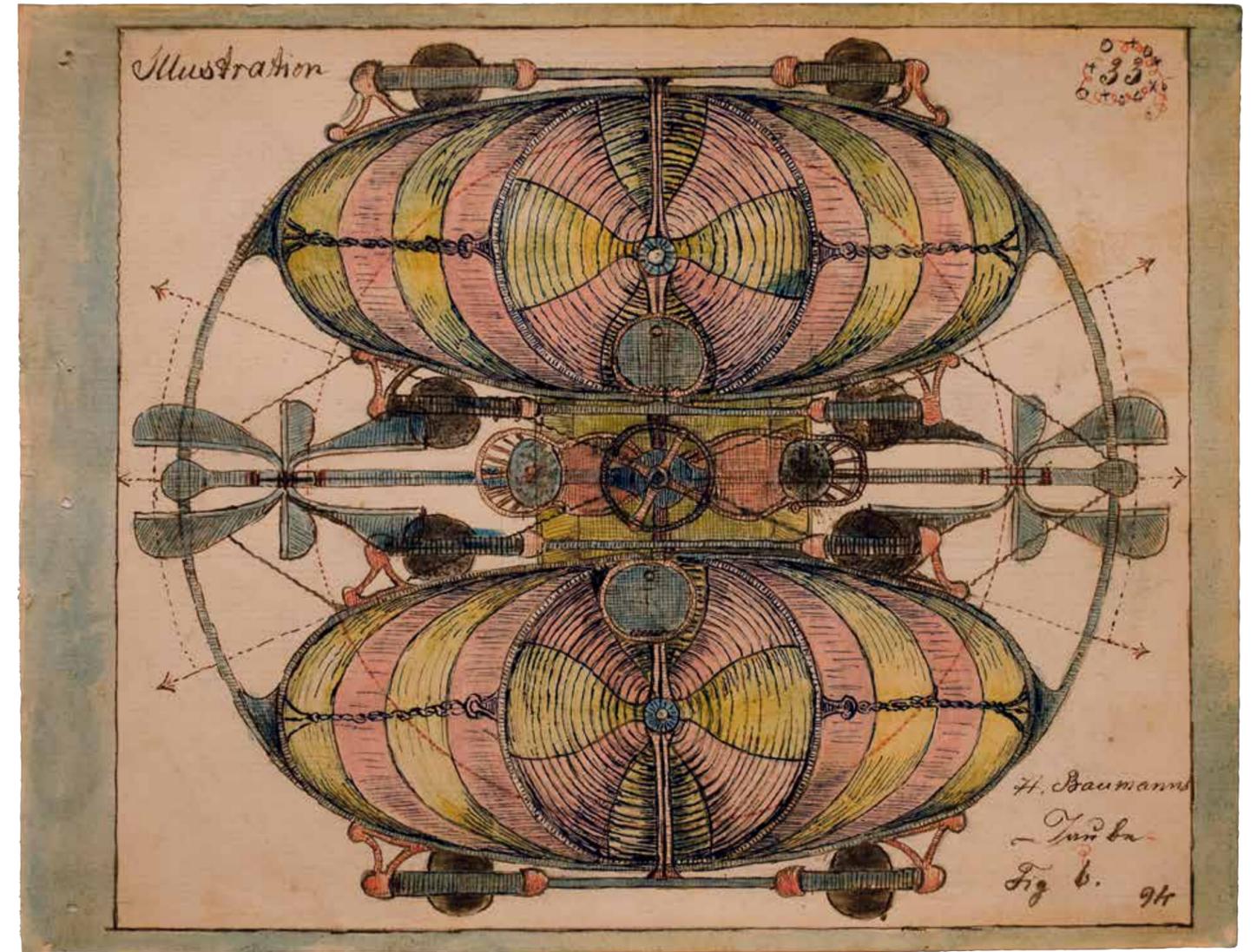


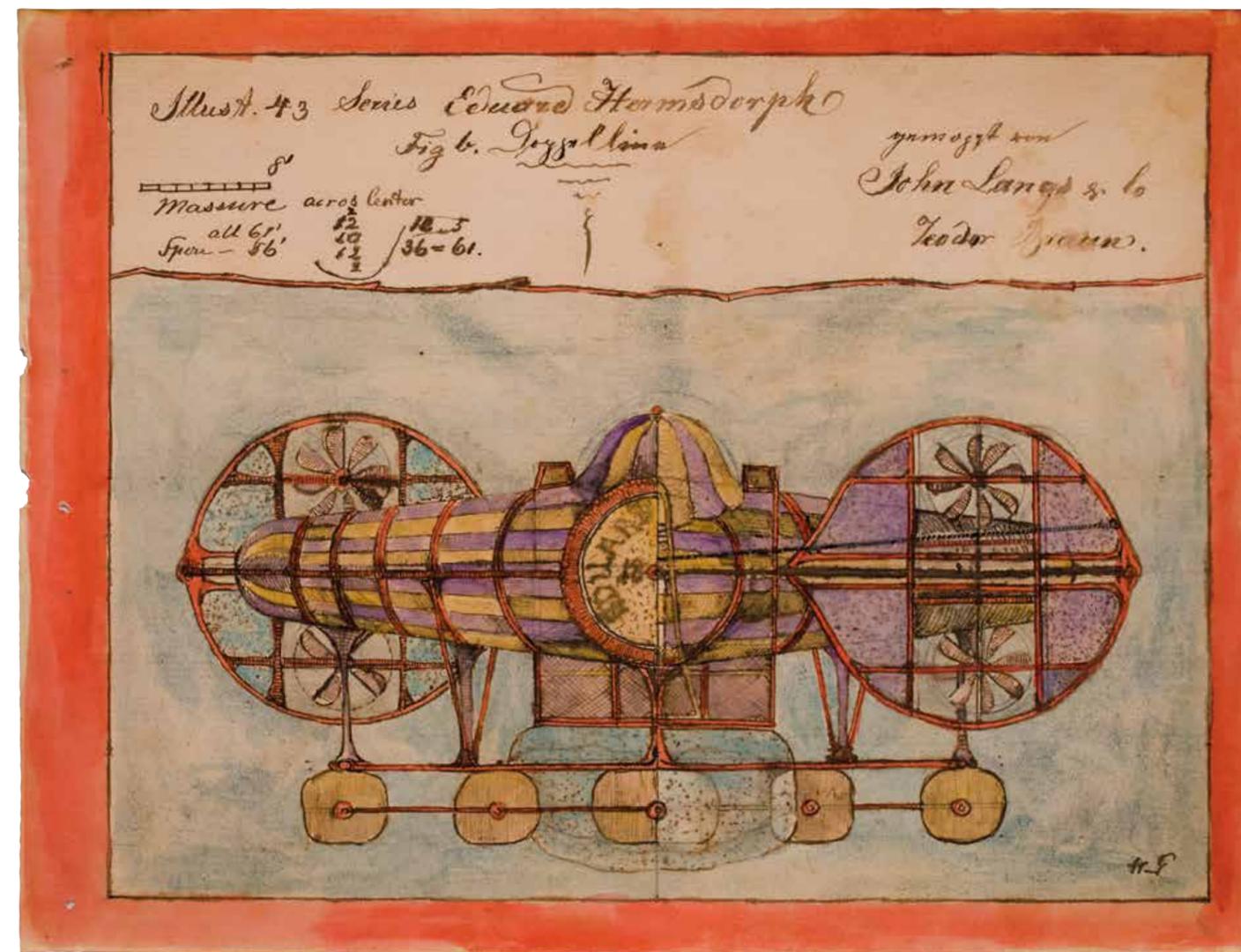
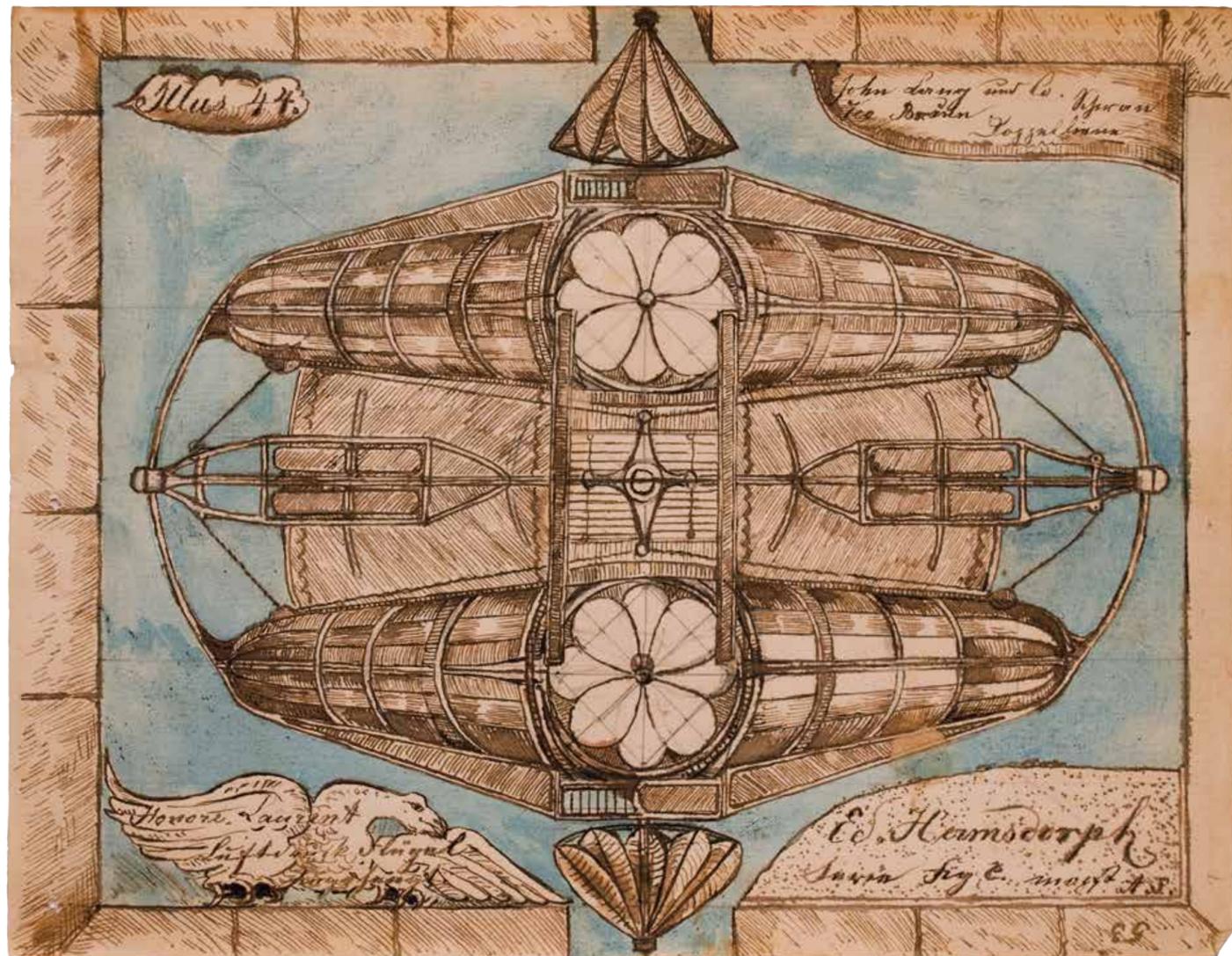
Erinnerungen (Recollections), Dr Michael Gorrees
Maikaefer, 1900, 7 1/2 x 9 1/2 in.
Private collection

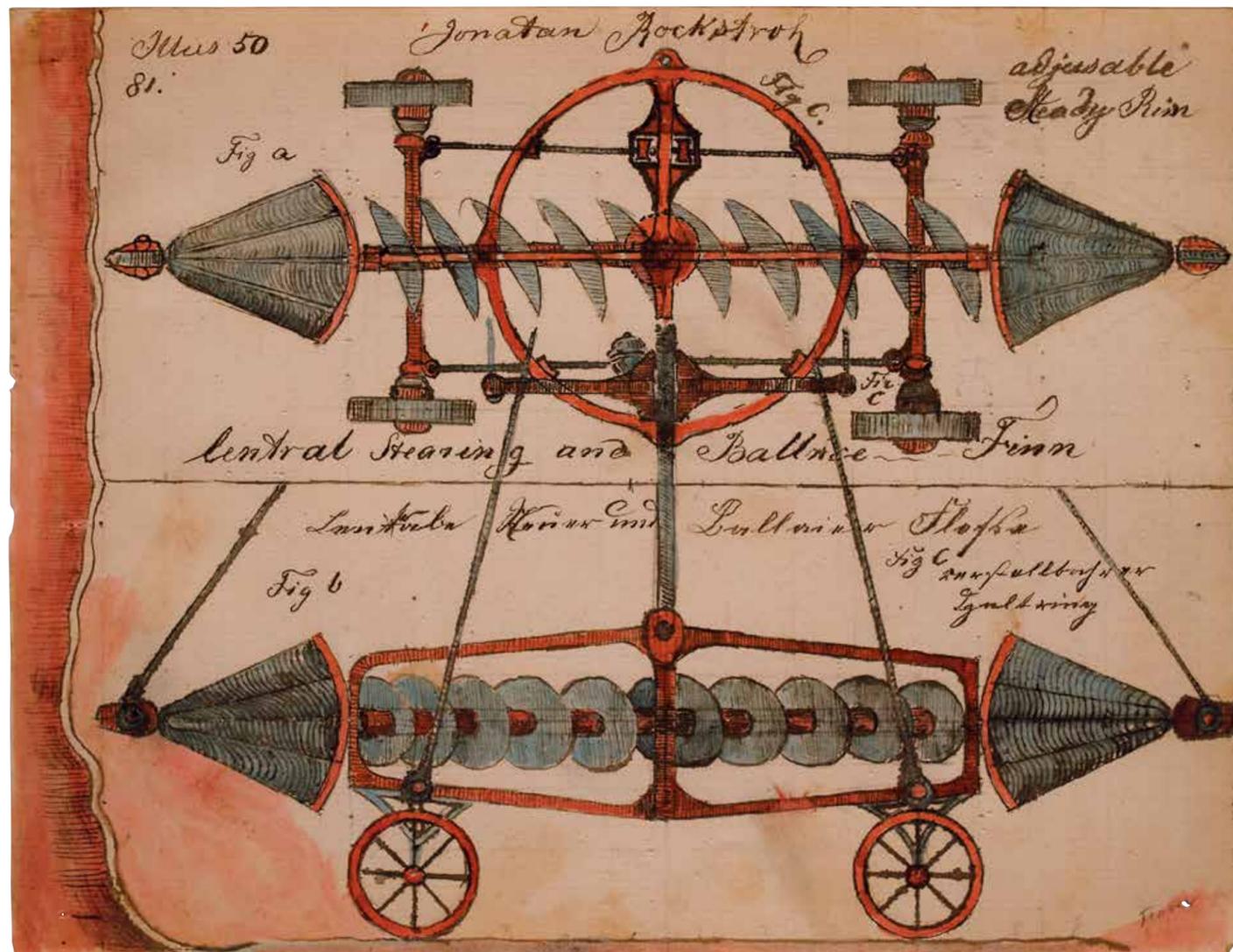
Erinnerungen (Recollections), August Schoetters
Trebla, 1900, 7 1/2 x 9 1/2 in.
Private collection



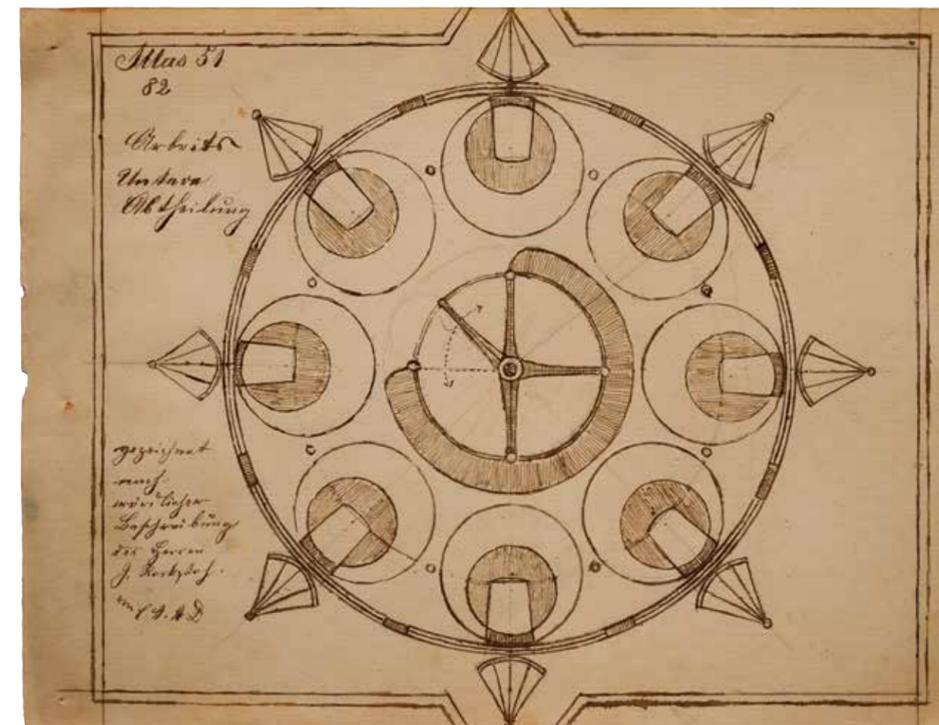
Erinnerungen (Recollections), August Schoetters Trebla B,
1900, 7 1/2 x 9 1/2 in.
Private collection



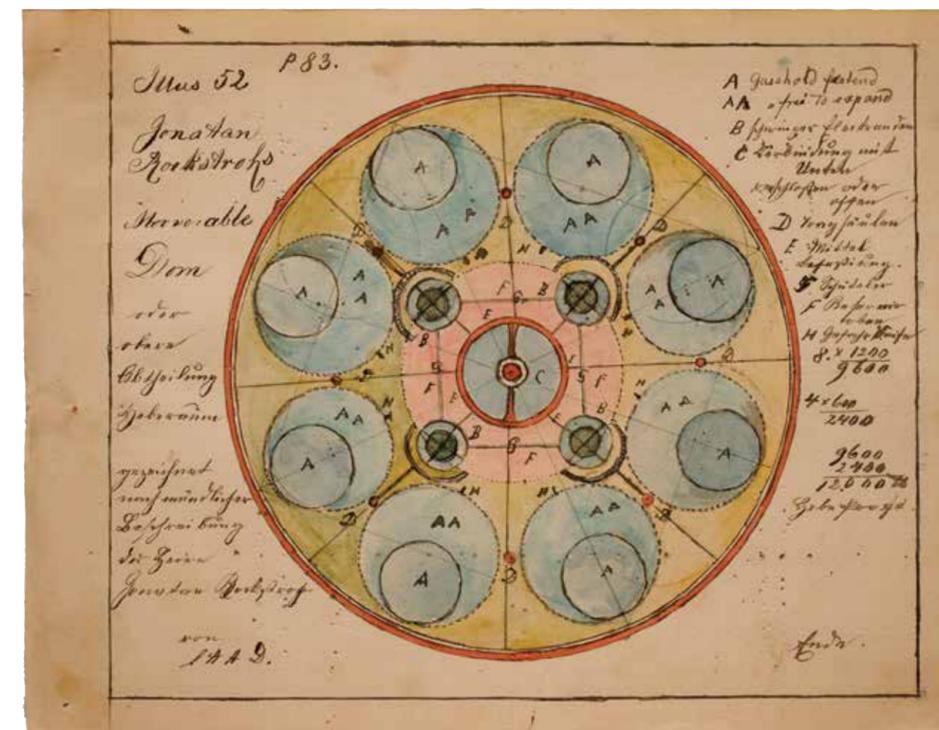




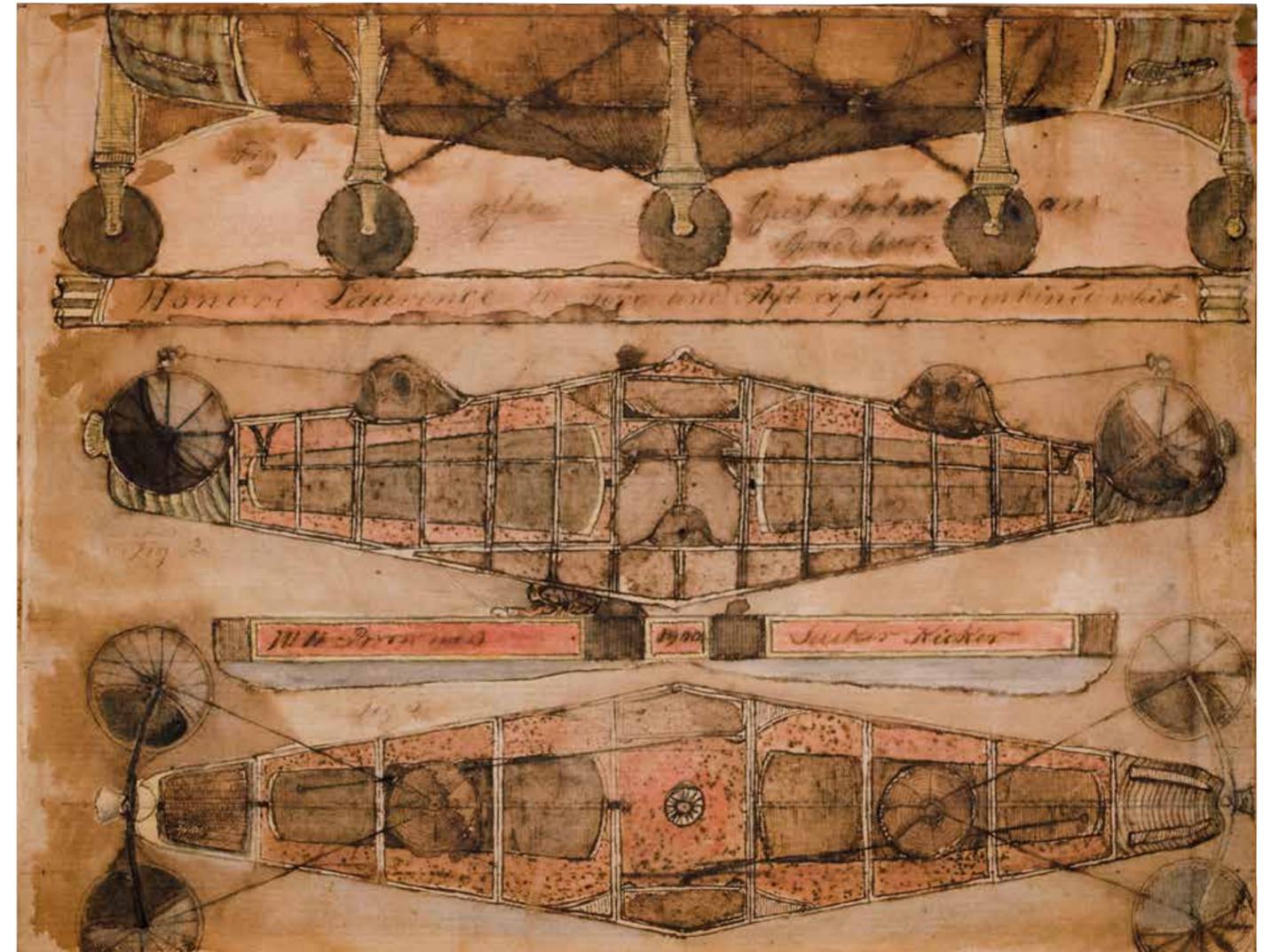
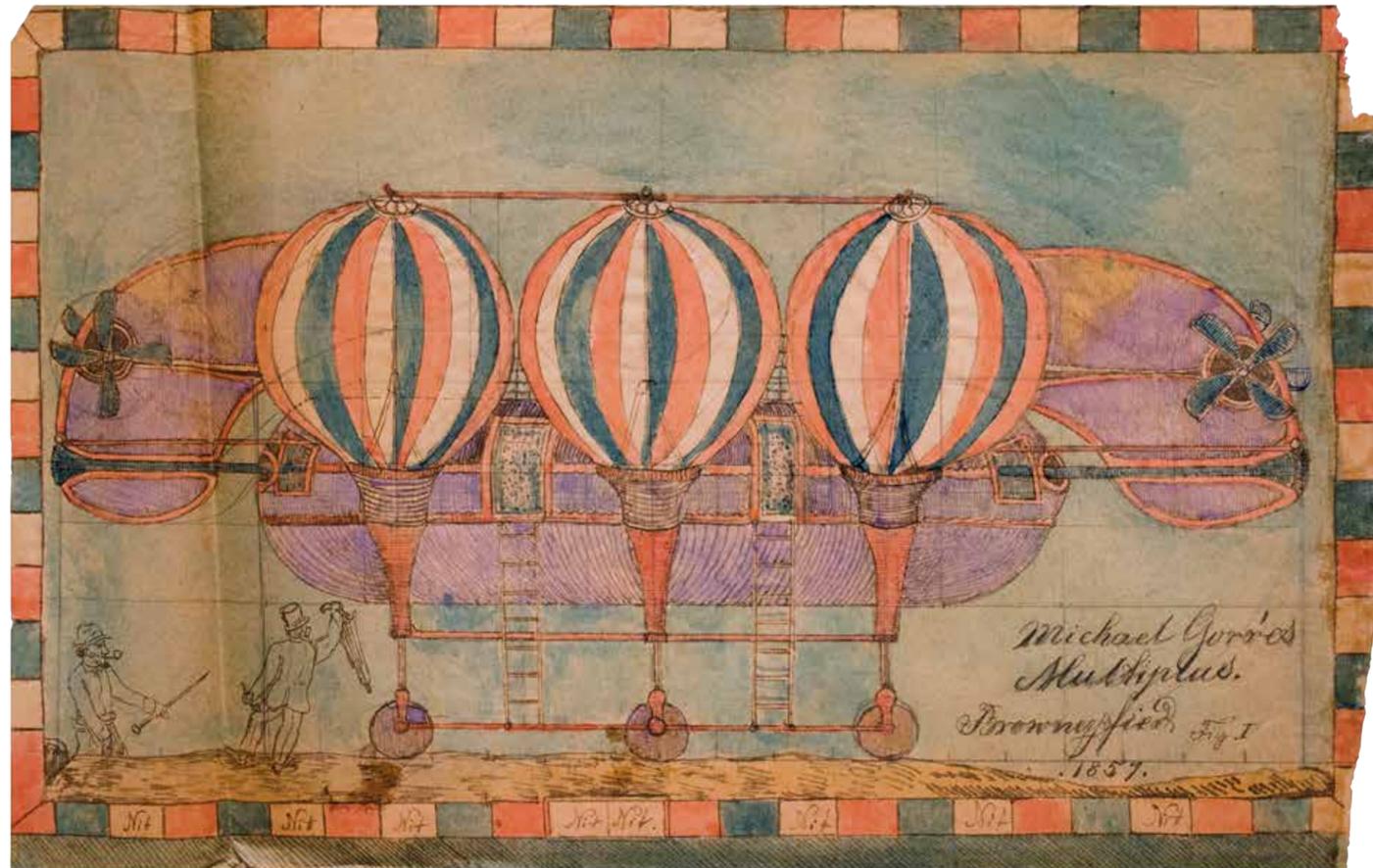
Erinnerungen (Recollections), Jonathan Rockstroh, 1900,
 7 1/2 x 9 1/2 in.
 Private collection

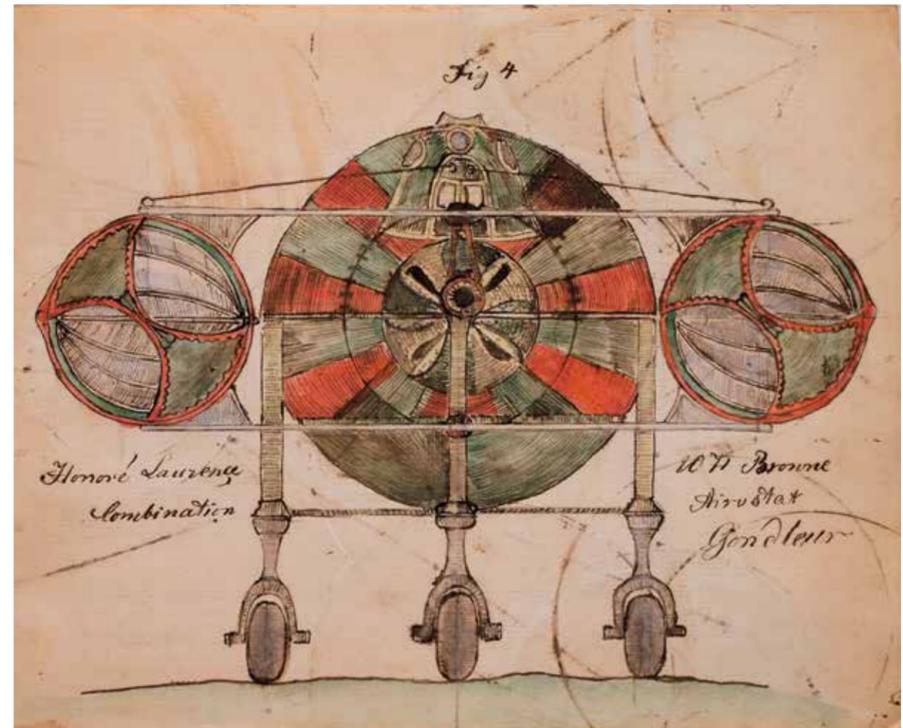
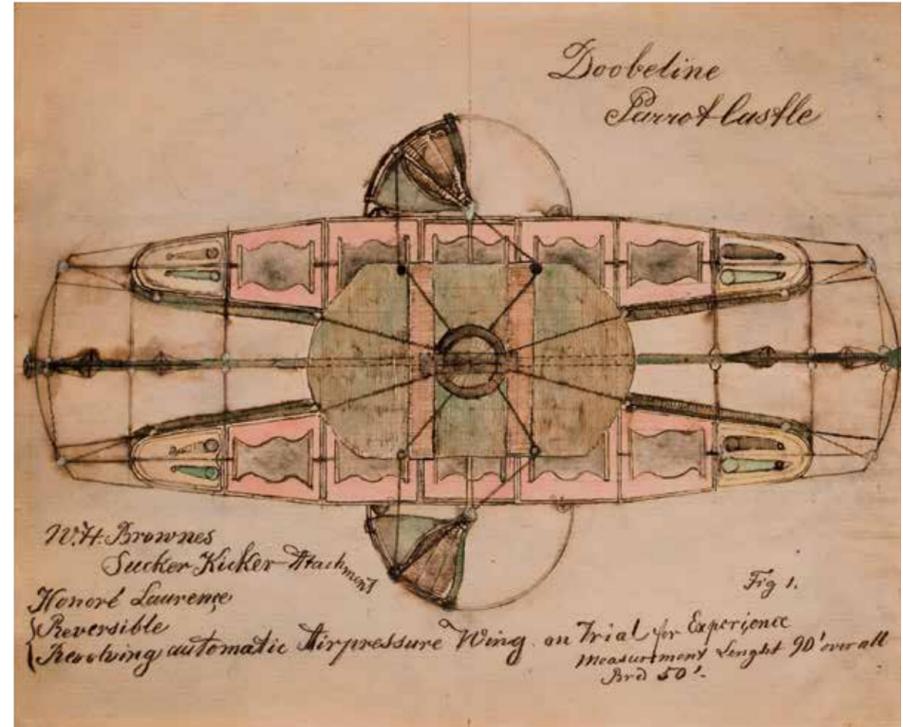
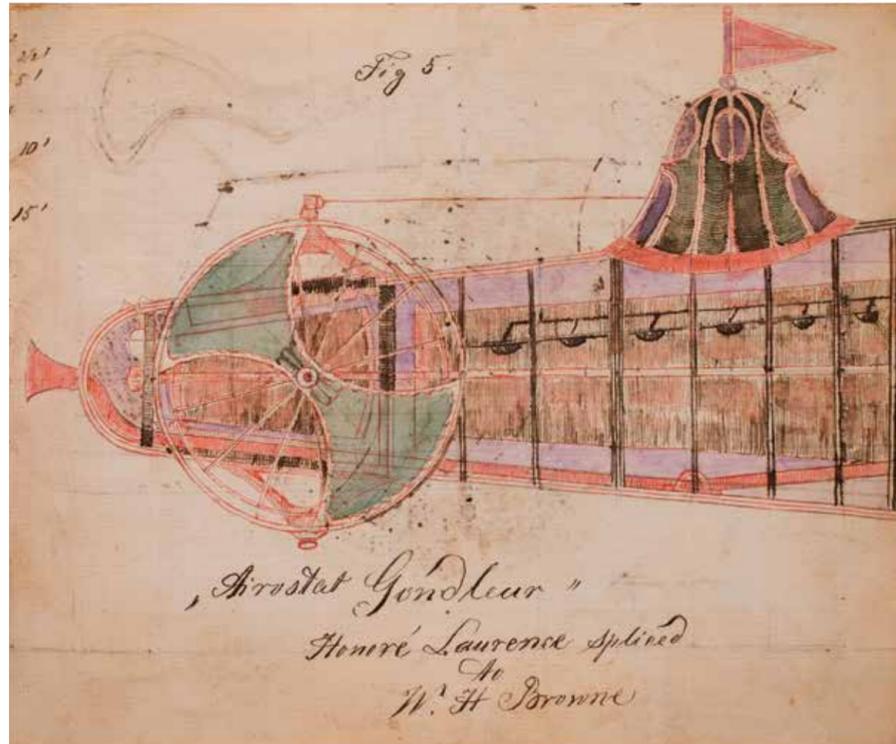
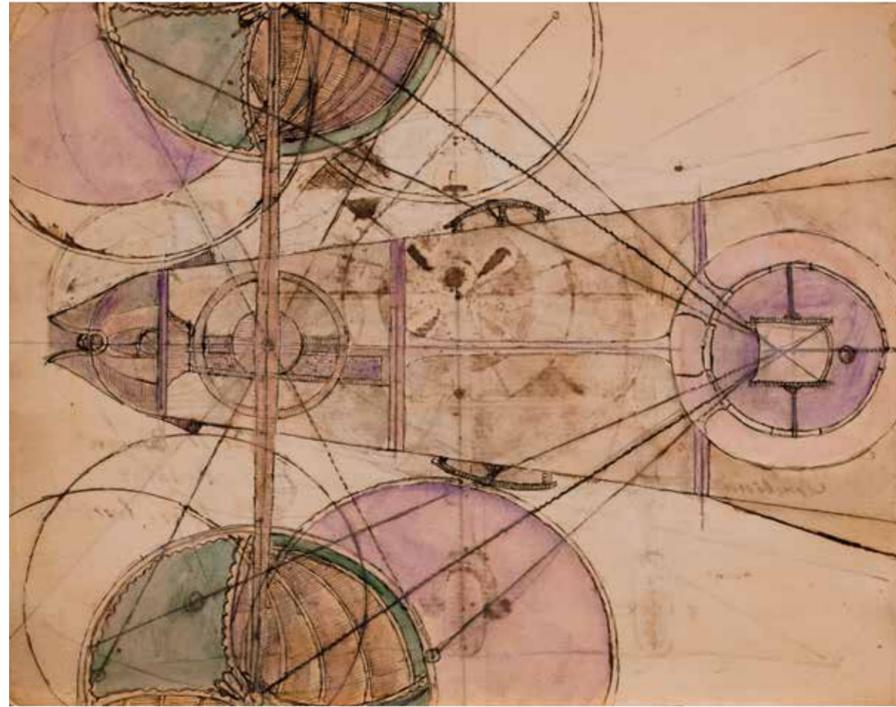


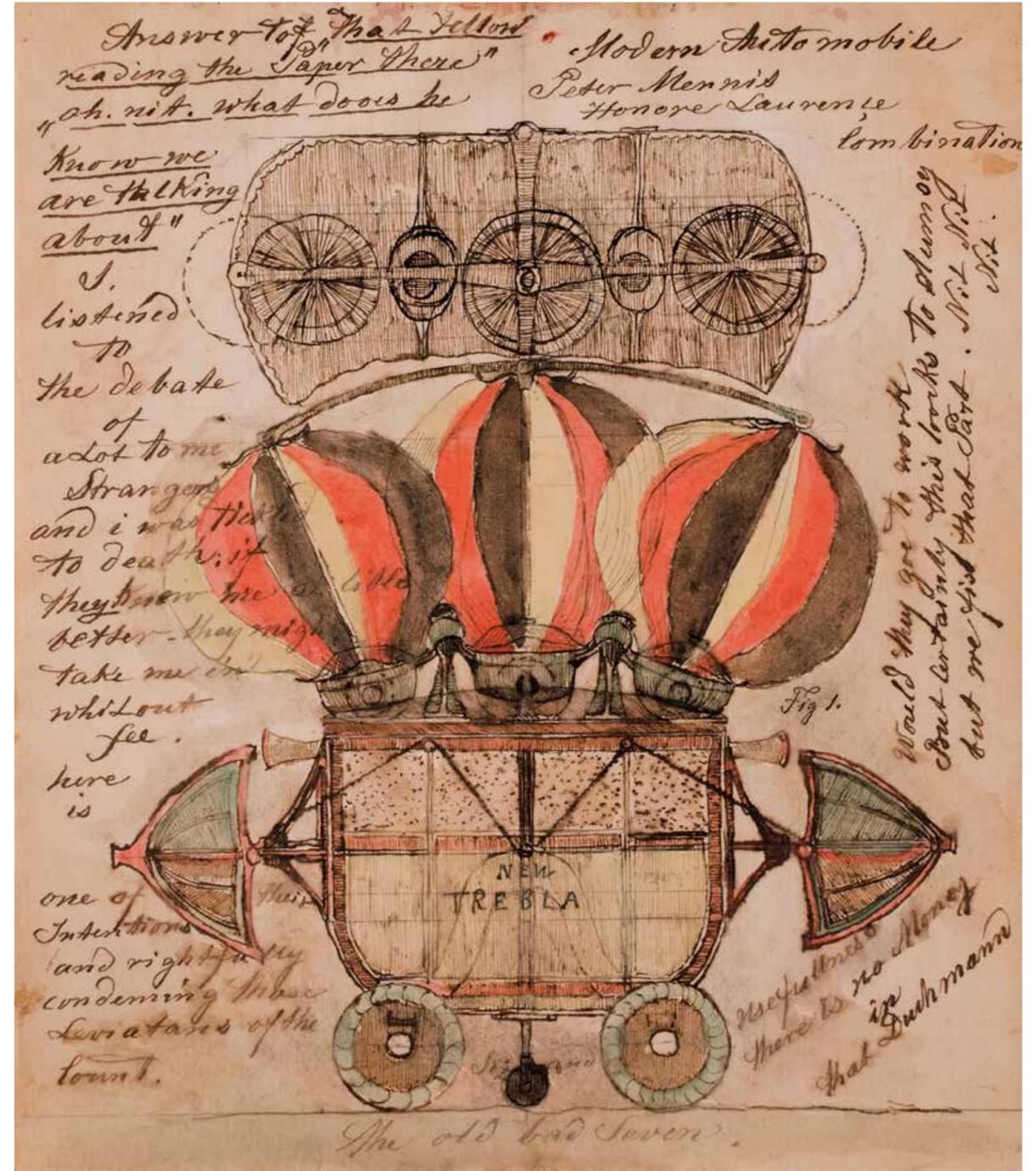
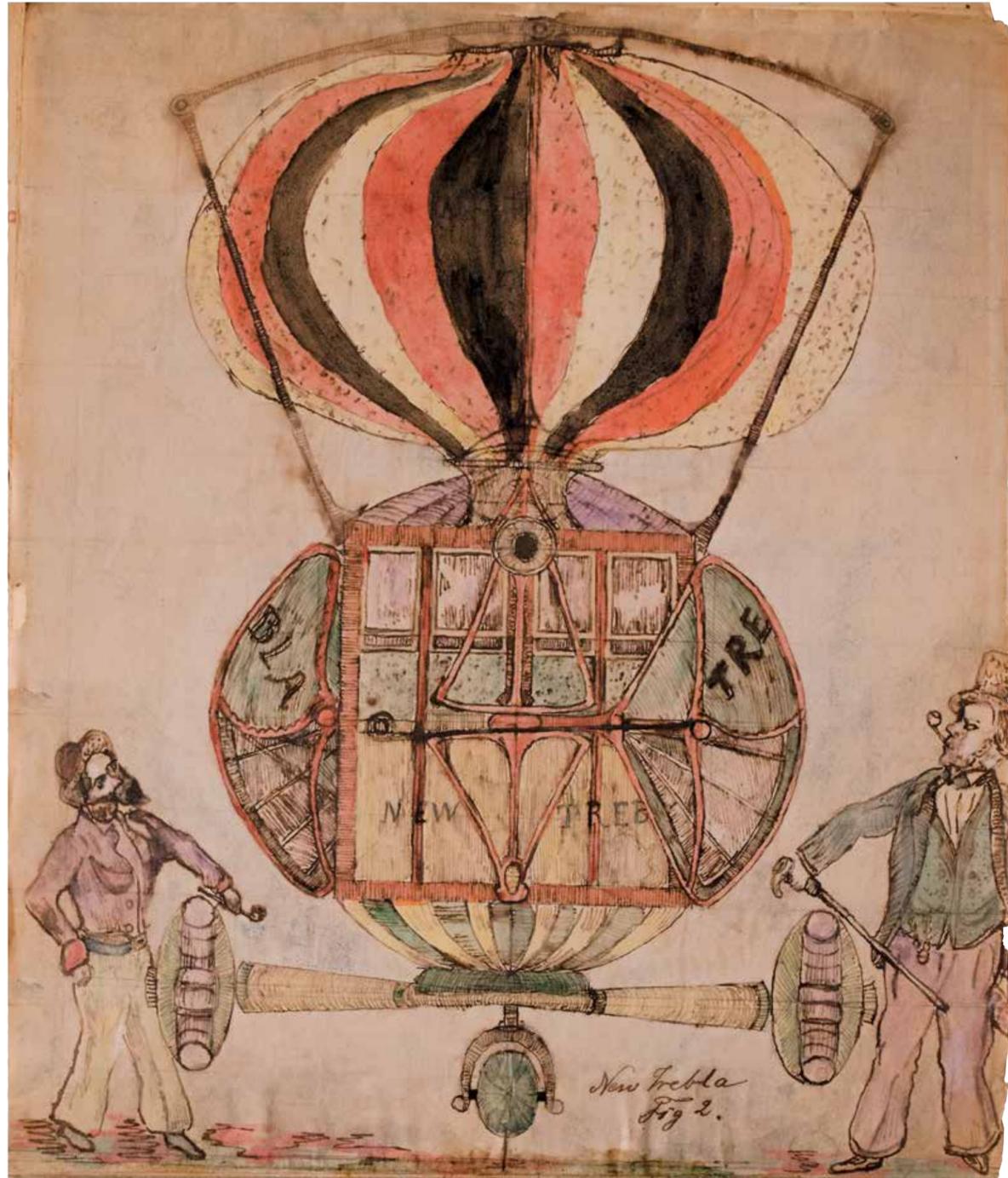
Erinnerungen (Recollections), Illus 51, 1900,
 7 1/2 x 9 1/2 in.
 Private collection

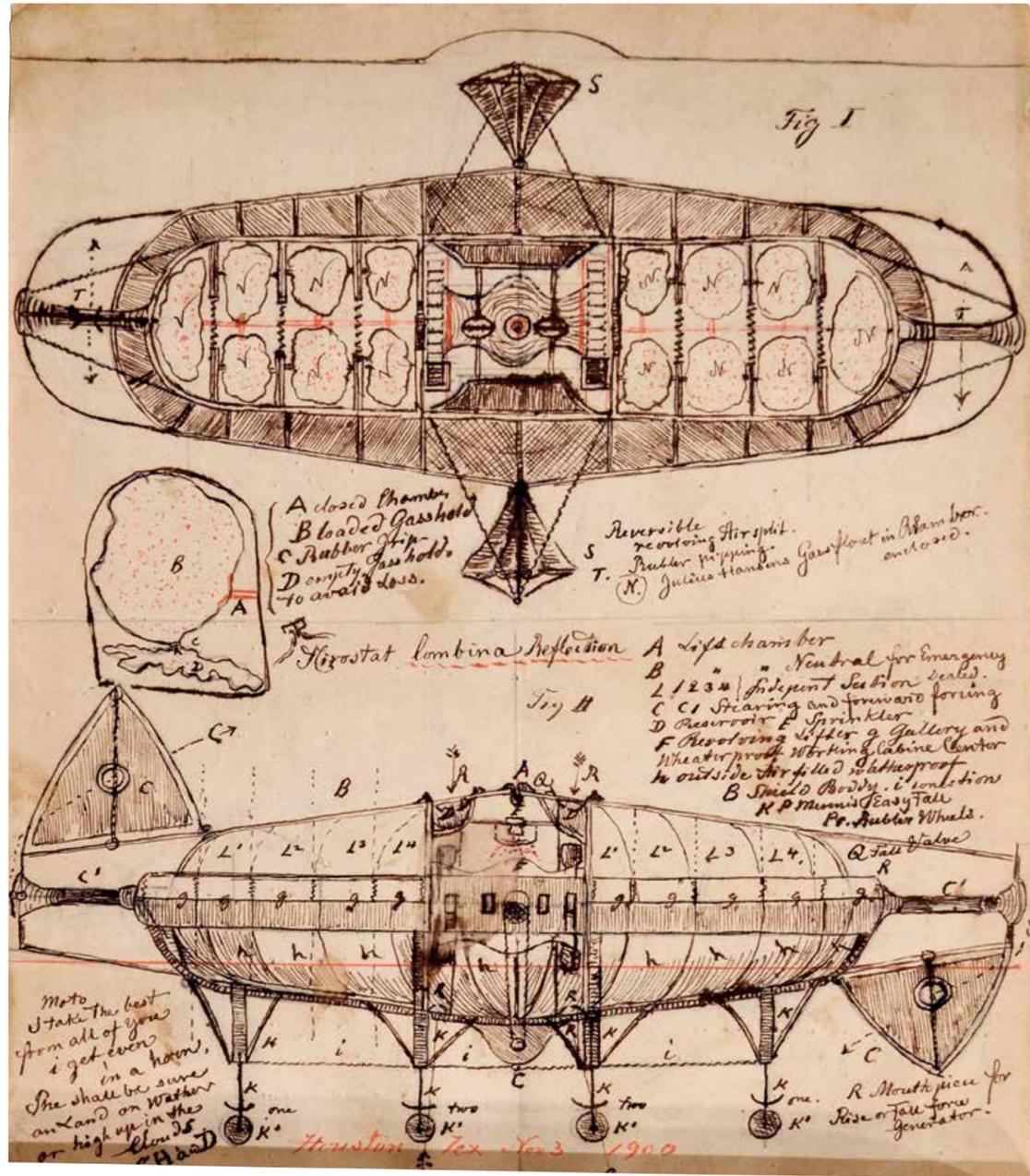


Erinnerungen (Recollections), Jonatan Rockstrohs
 Moveable, 1900, 7 1/2 x 9 1/2 in.
 Private collection

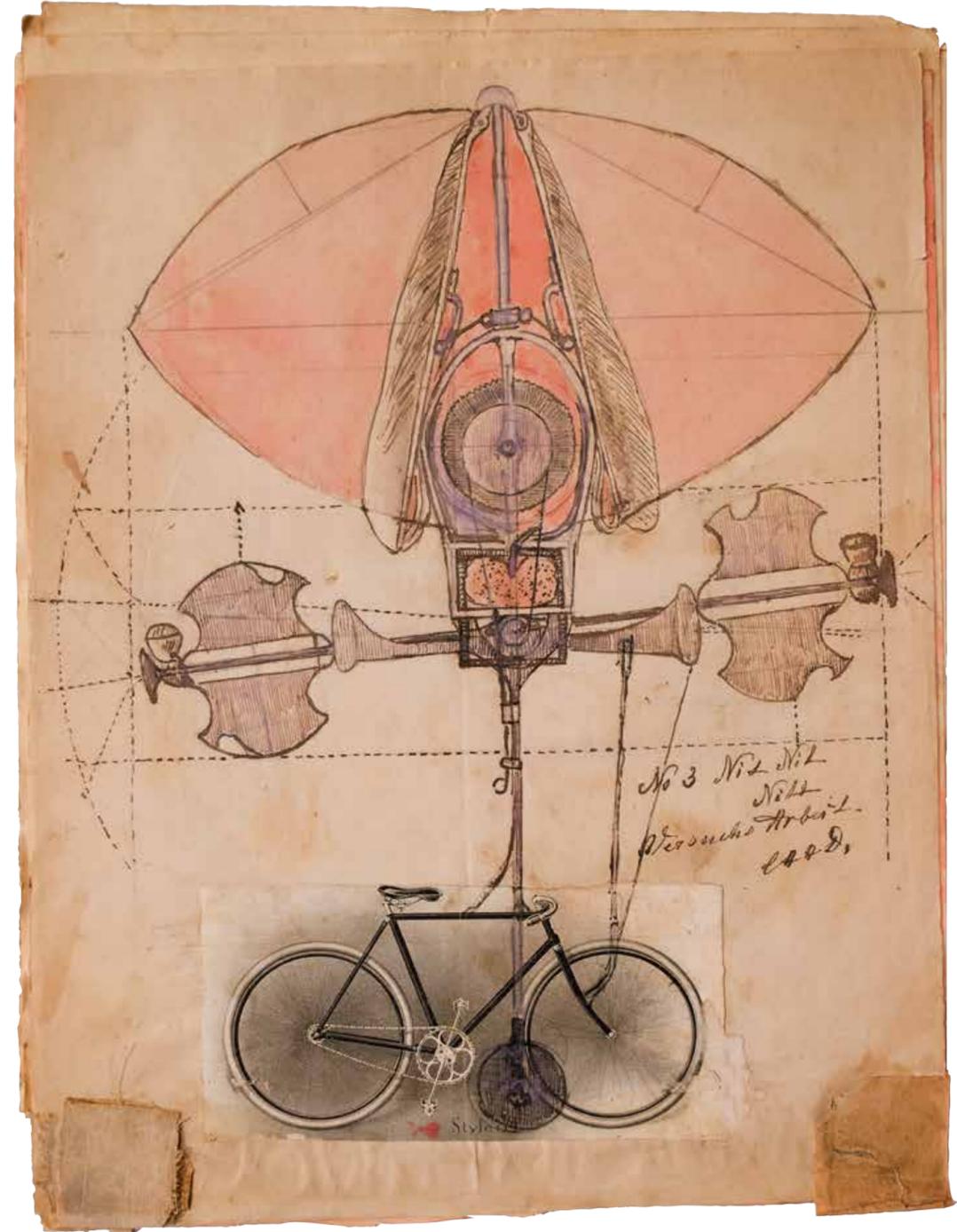








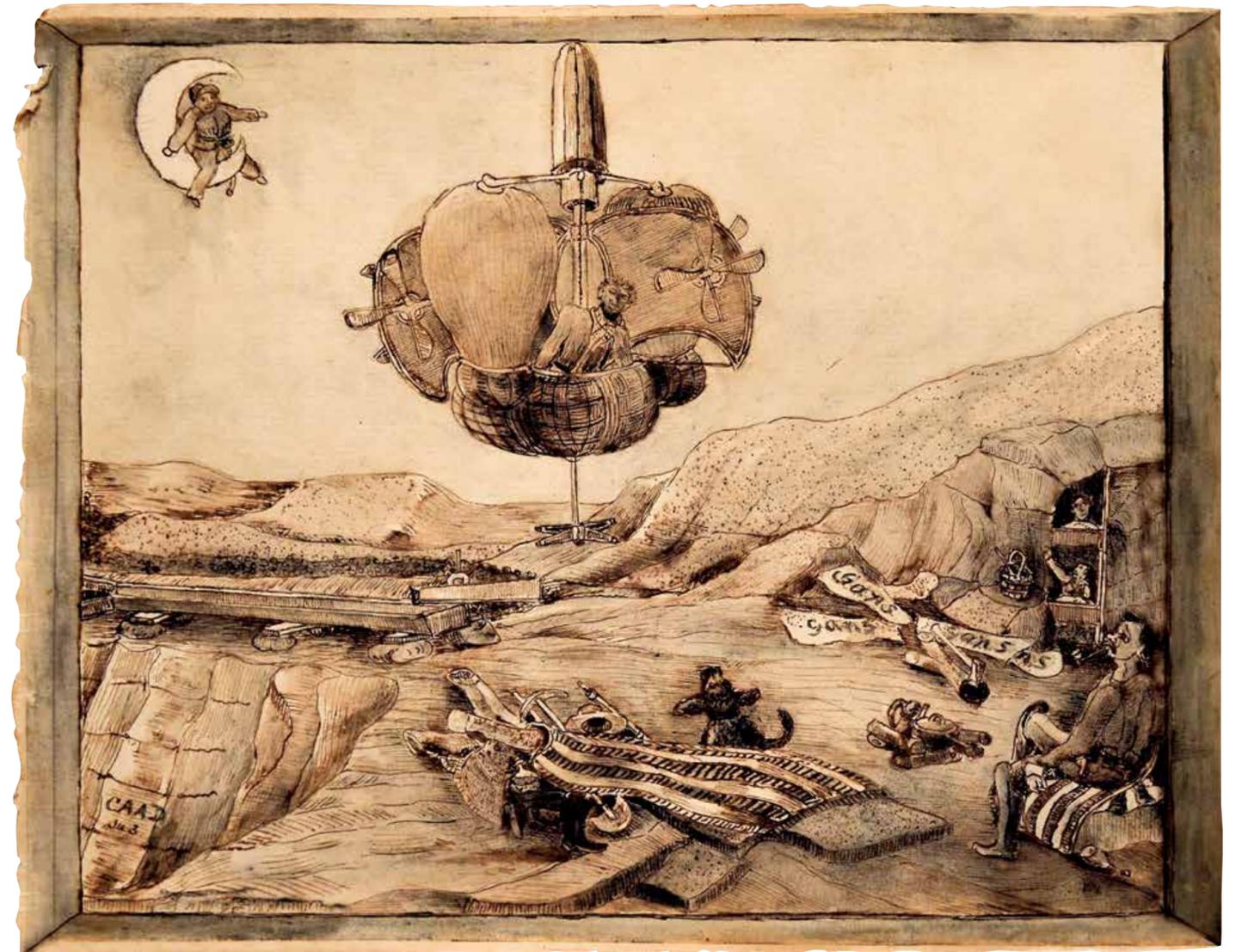
Erinnerungen (Recollections), Airostat Combinda Reflection, 1900,
 10 1/4 x 7 1/4 in.
 Private collection



Erinnerungen (Recollections), No 3 Nit Nit, 1900,
 10 1/4 x 7 1/4 in.
 Private collection



Erinnerungen (Recollections), Rescue of the Moonskooter scene,
1900, 7 $\frac{3}{4}$ × 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ in.
Private collection



Erinnerungen (Recollections), Rescue of the Moonskooter scene,
1900, 7 $\frac{3}{4}$ × 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ in.
Private collection



Erinnerungen (Recollections), Rescue of the Moonskooter scene,
1900, 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ × 7 $\frac{3}{4}$ in.
Private collection



Erinnerungen (Recollections), George Newell's Yarn scene, 1900,
7 $\frac{3}{4}$ × 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ in.
Private collection



Erinnerungen (Recollections), Peter Mennis's Revenge scene,
1900, 7 $\frac{3}{4}$ × 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ in.
Private collection



Erinnerungen (Recollections), Peter Mennis's Revenge scene,
1900, 7 $\frac{3}{4}$ × 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ in.
Private collection

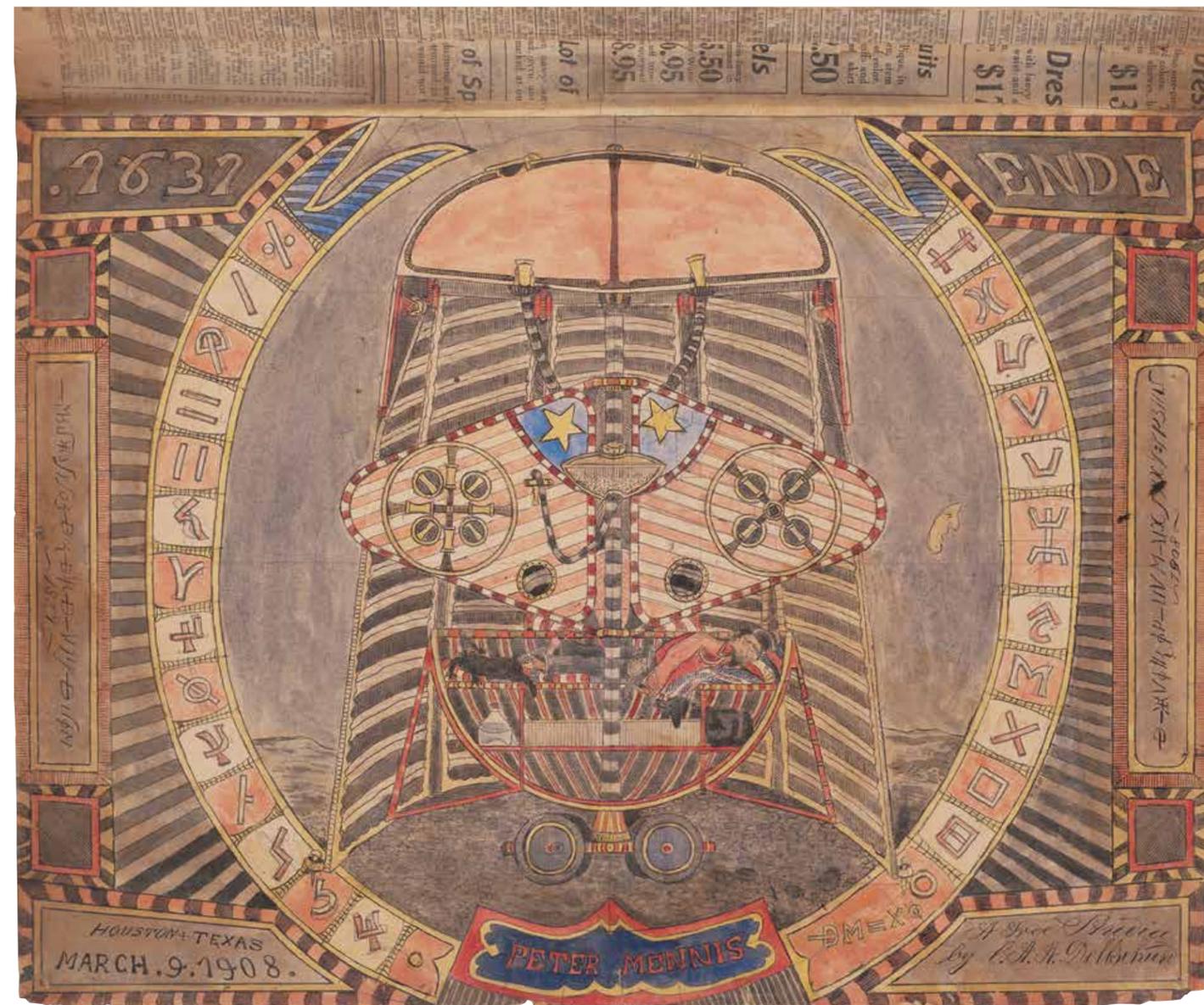
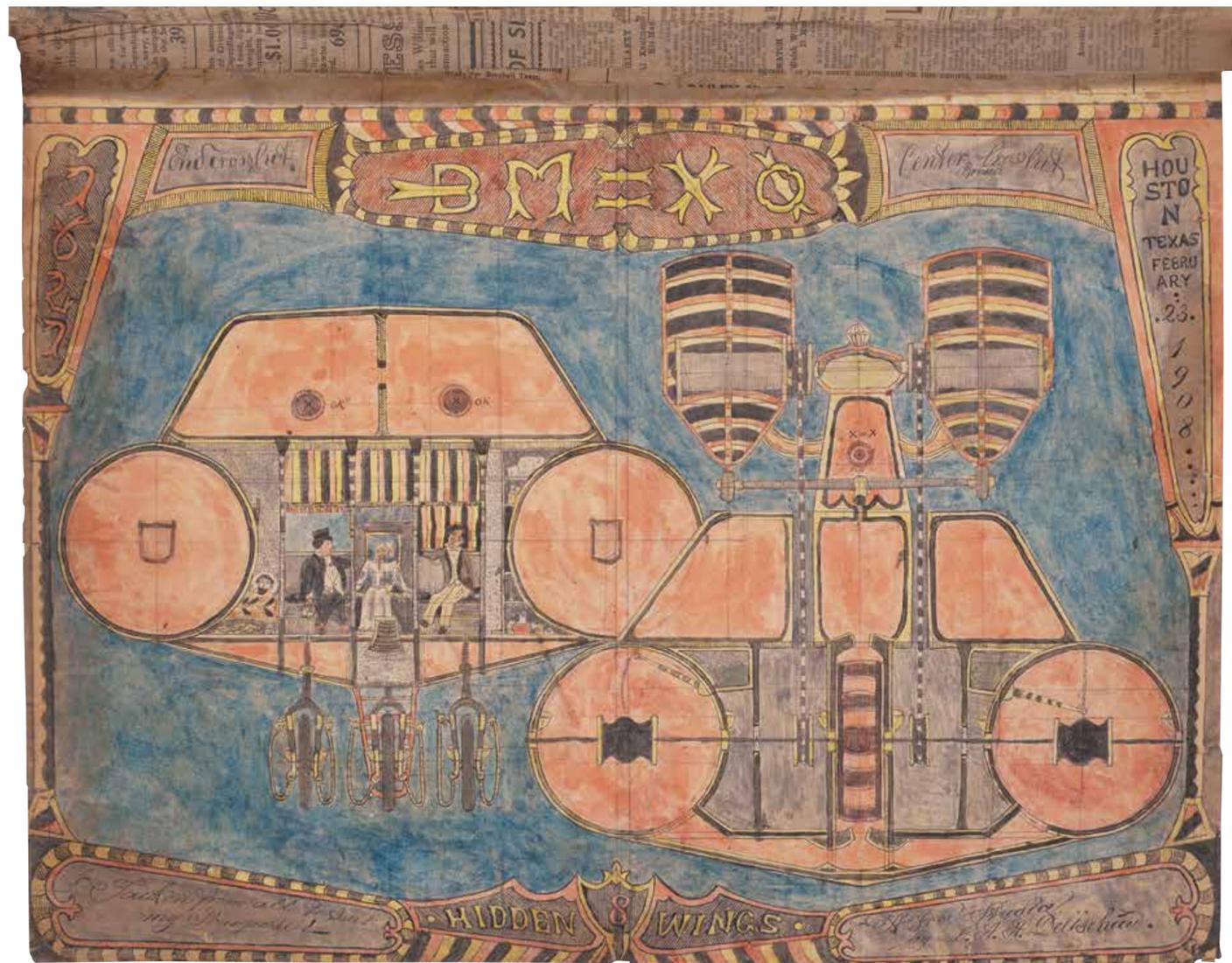




Plate 1632 Goosey, March 11, 1908, 15½ x 19 in.
The Menil Collection, Houston



Plate 1635 Axel, March 16, 1908, 15 x 18½ in.
The Menil Collection, Houston

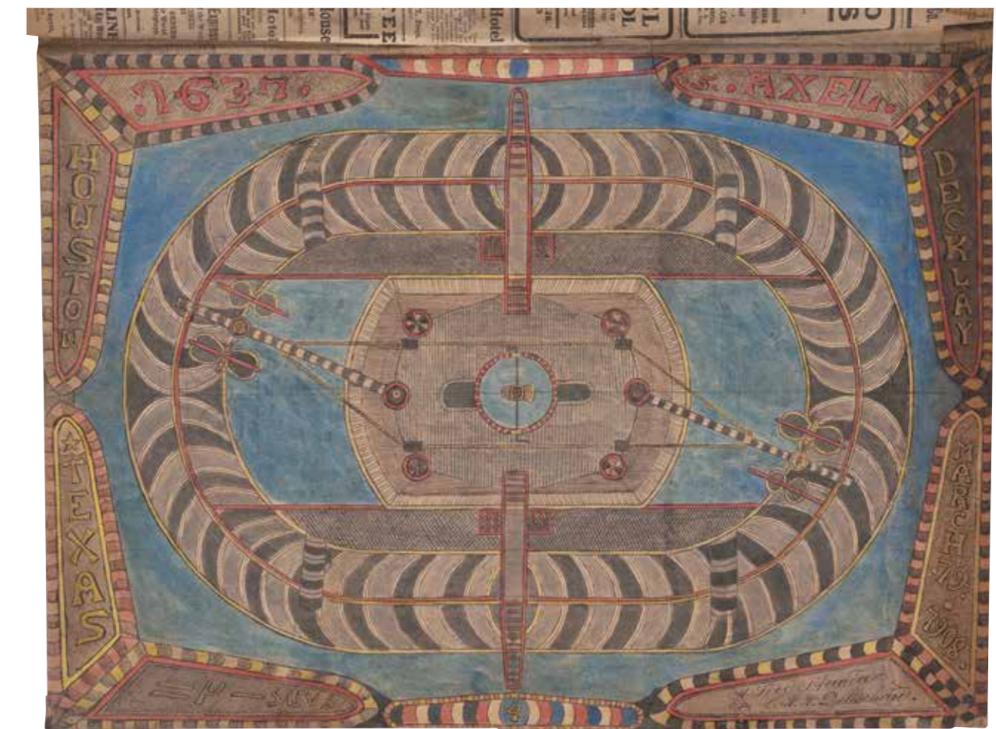


Plate 1637 Axel Decklay, March 19, 1908, 15 x 18½ in.
The Menil Collection, Houston



Plate 1767 Aero Dora Cloudstepp, September 22, 1908,
15 x 19 in.
The Menil Collection, Houston

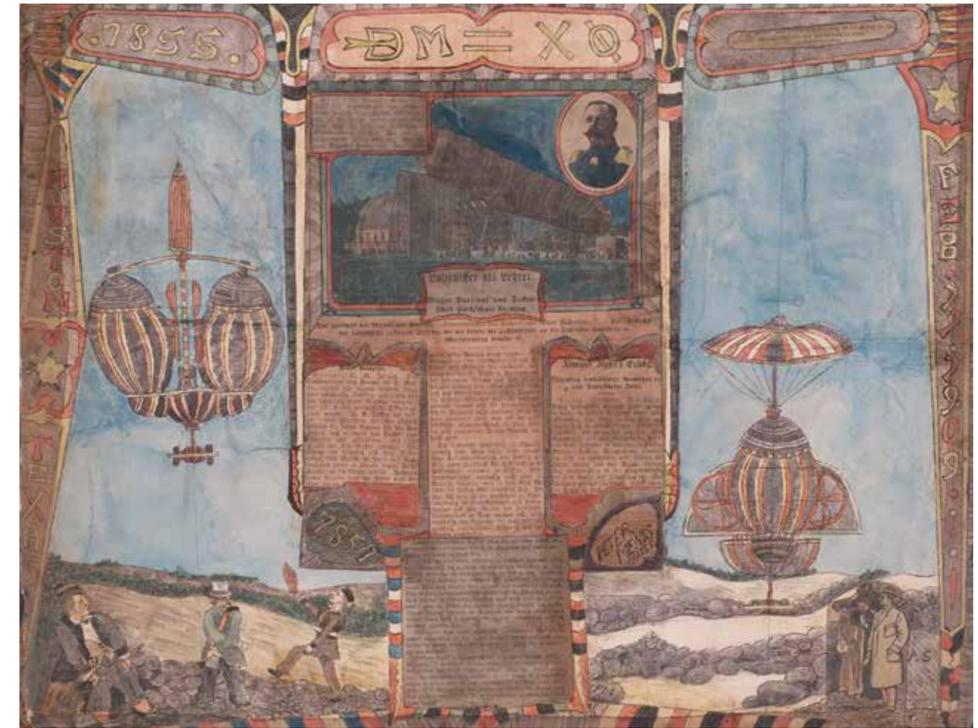


Plate 1855 Peter Menis Gouse, February 11, 1909, 15 x 19 in.
The Menil Collection, Houston



Plate 1856 Louis Caro Jeht Nich, February 13, 1909, 16 x 19 in.
The Menil Collection, Houston

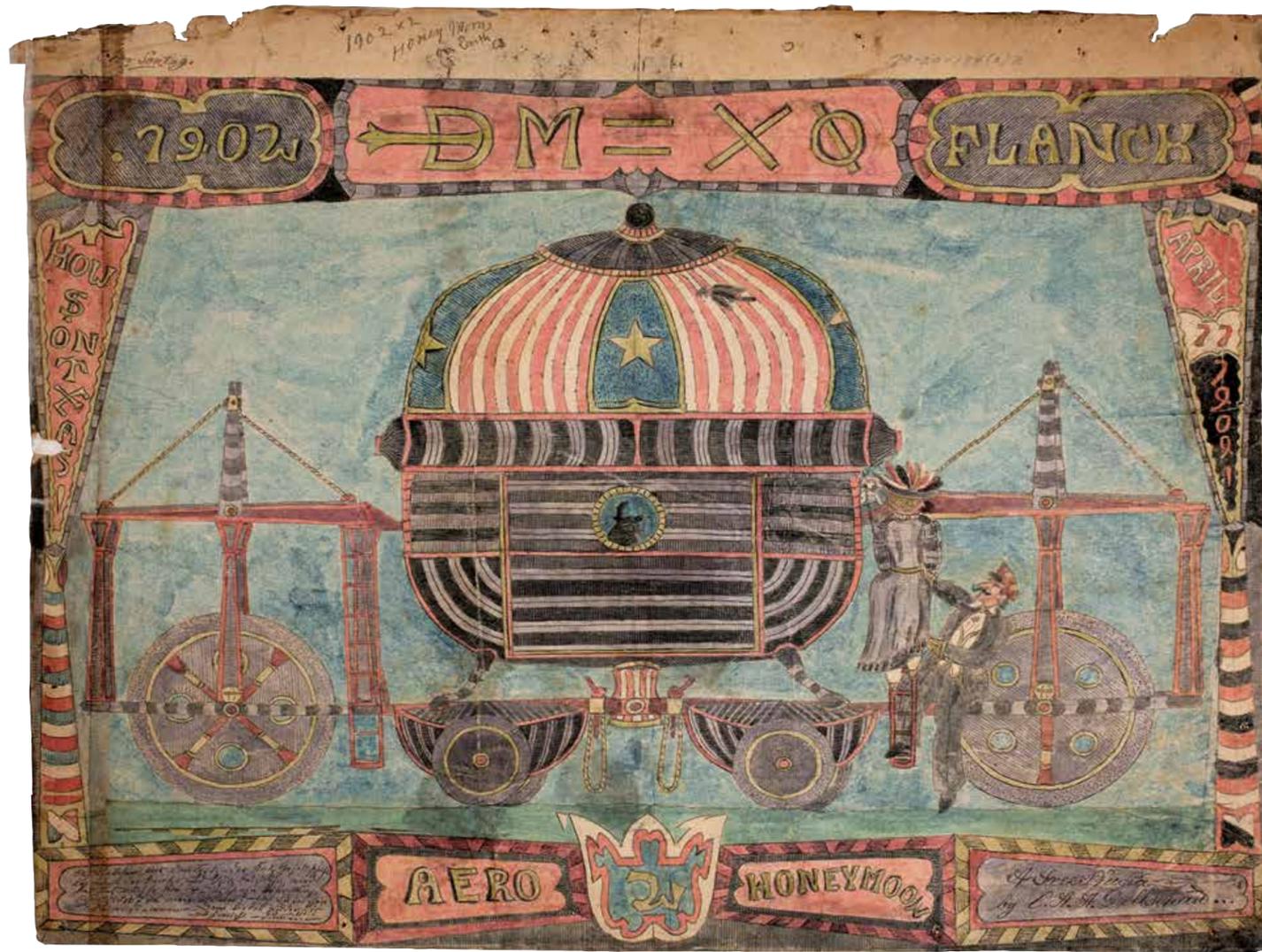


Plate 1902 Aero Honeymoon Flanck, April 11, 1909,
14½ × 18¼ in.
The Witte Museum, San Antonio



Plate 1903 Aero Honeymoon Front or Rear, April 12, 1909,
14½ × 18¼ in.
The Witte Museum, San Antonio



Plate 1907 Aero Honeymoon Compar, April 20, 1909,
19 x 16 3/8 in.
The Witte Museum, San Antonio

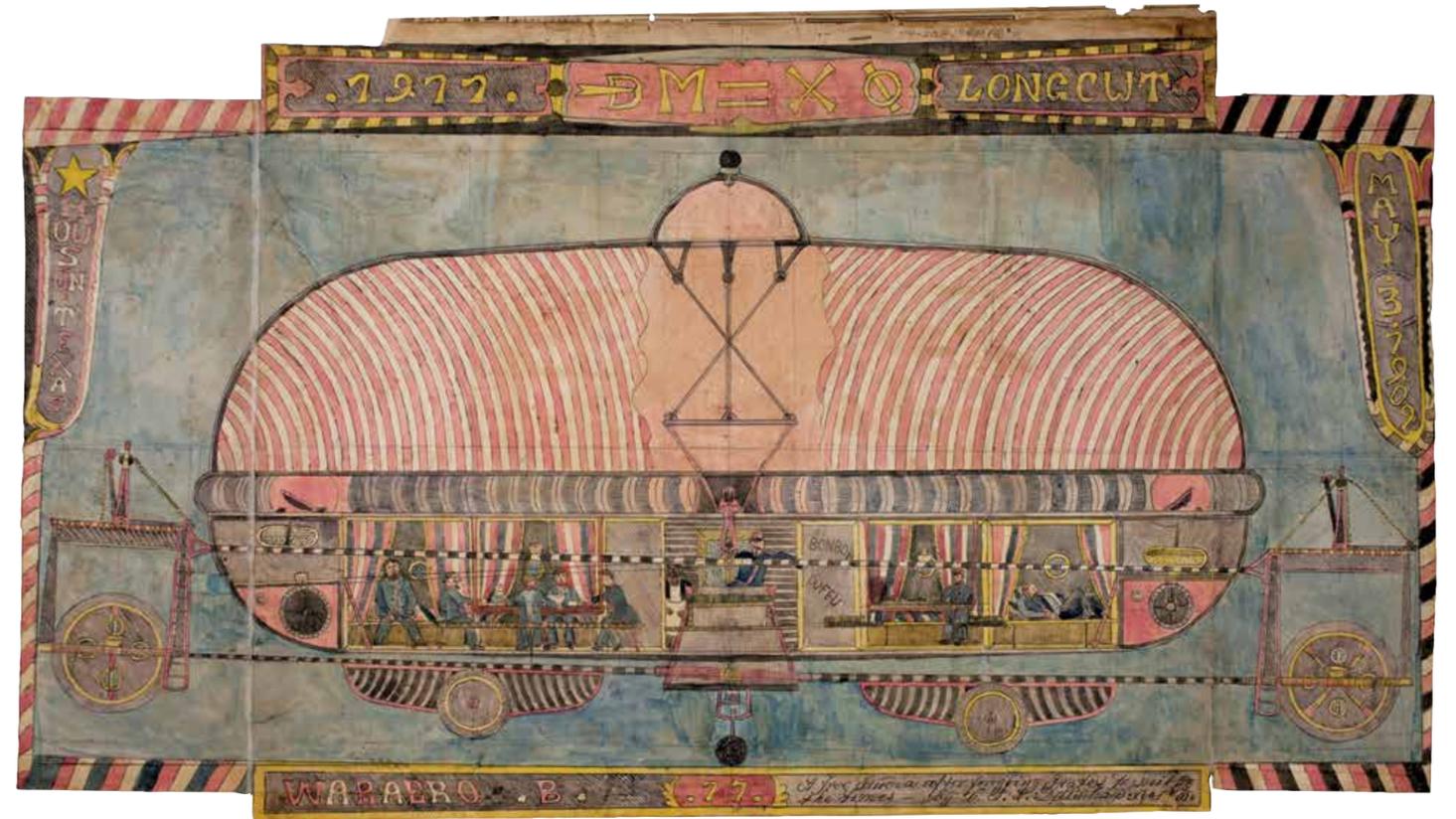


Plate 1911 War Aero B Long Cut, May 3, 1909, 16 x 27 1/8 in.
The Witte Museum, San Antonio

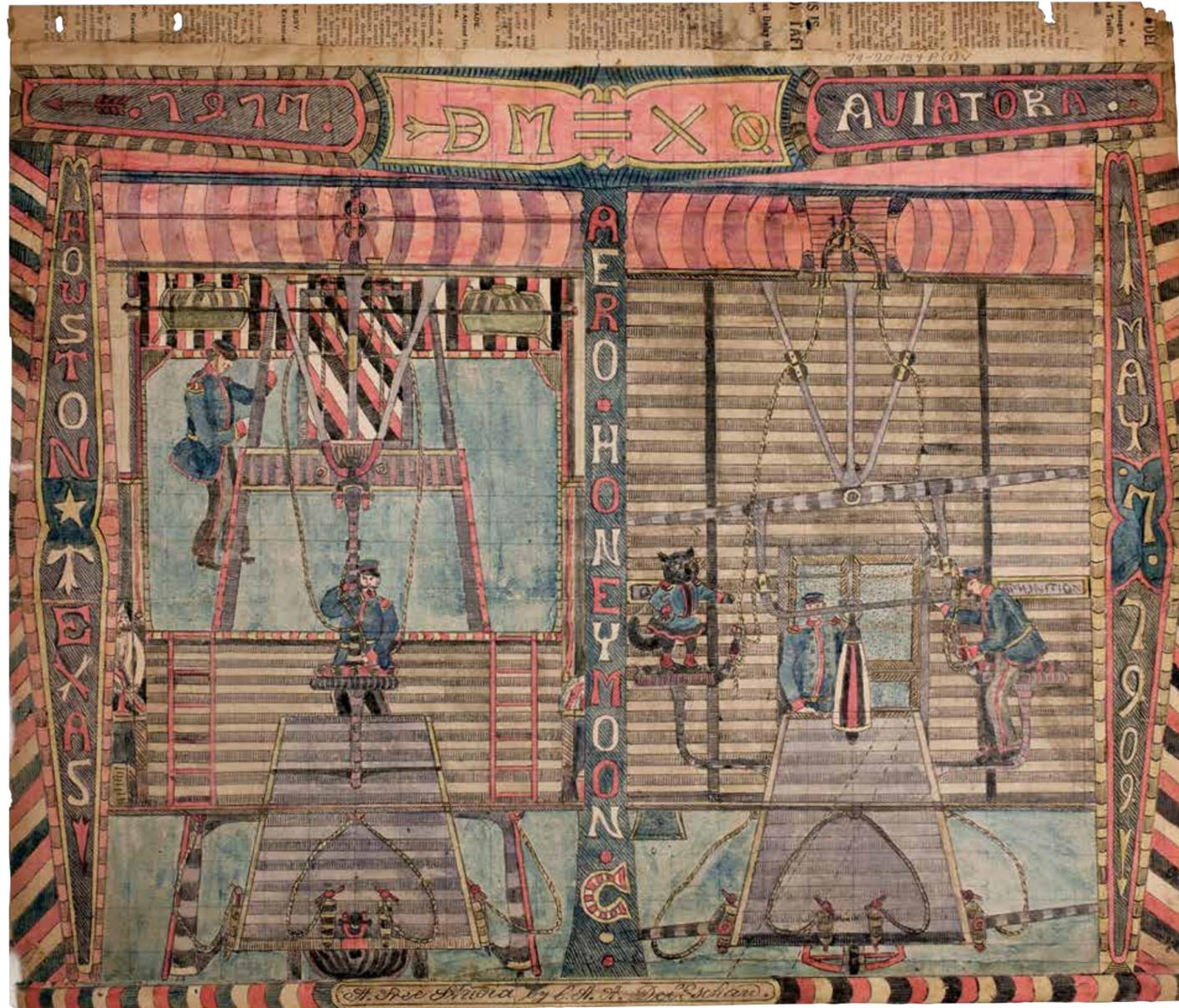
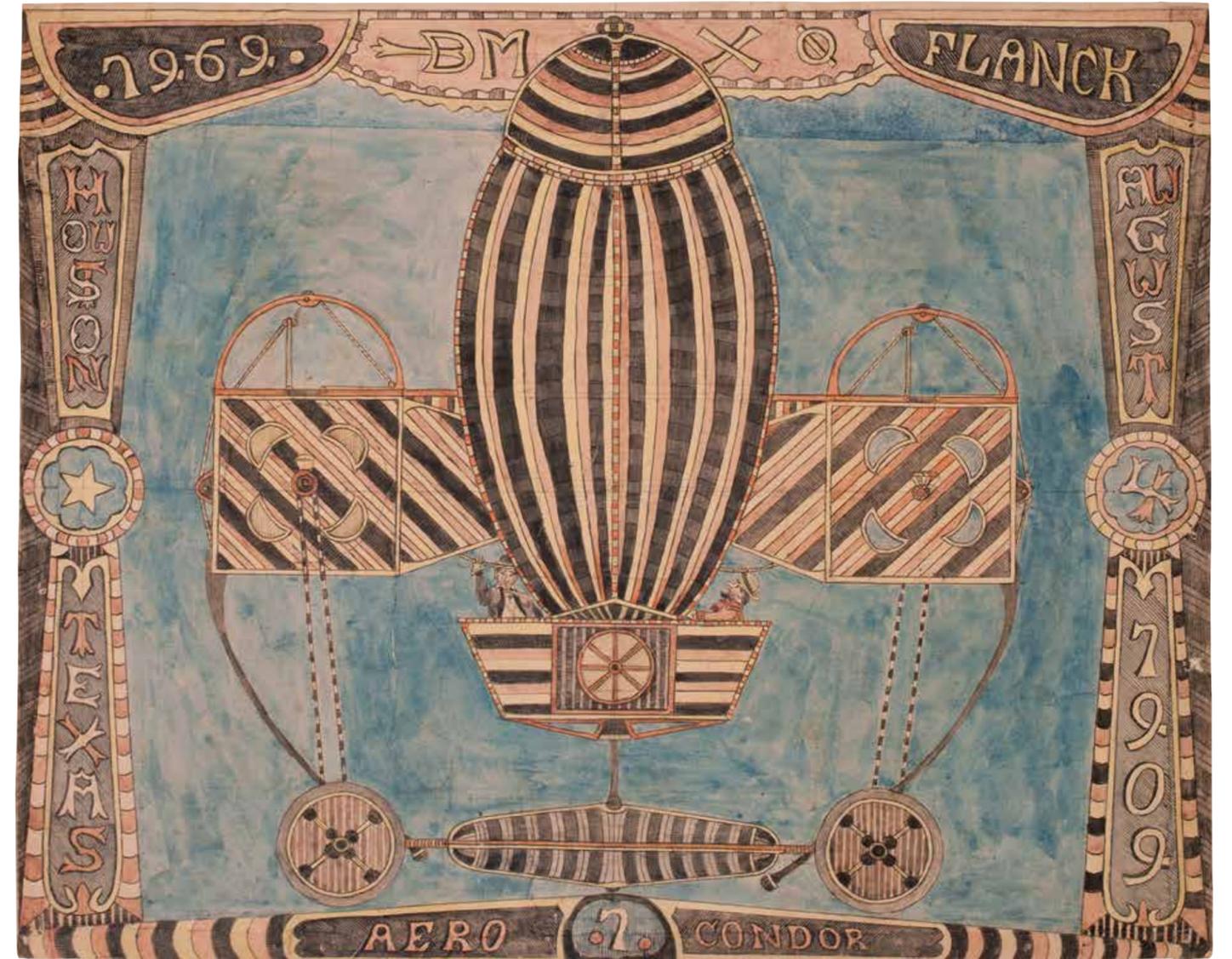
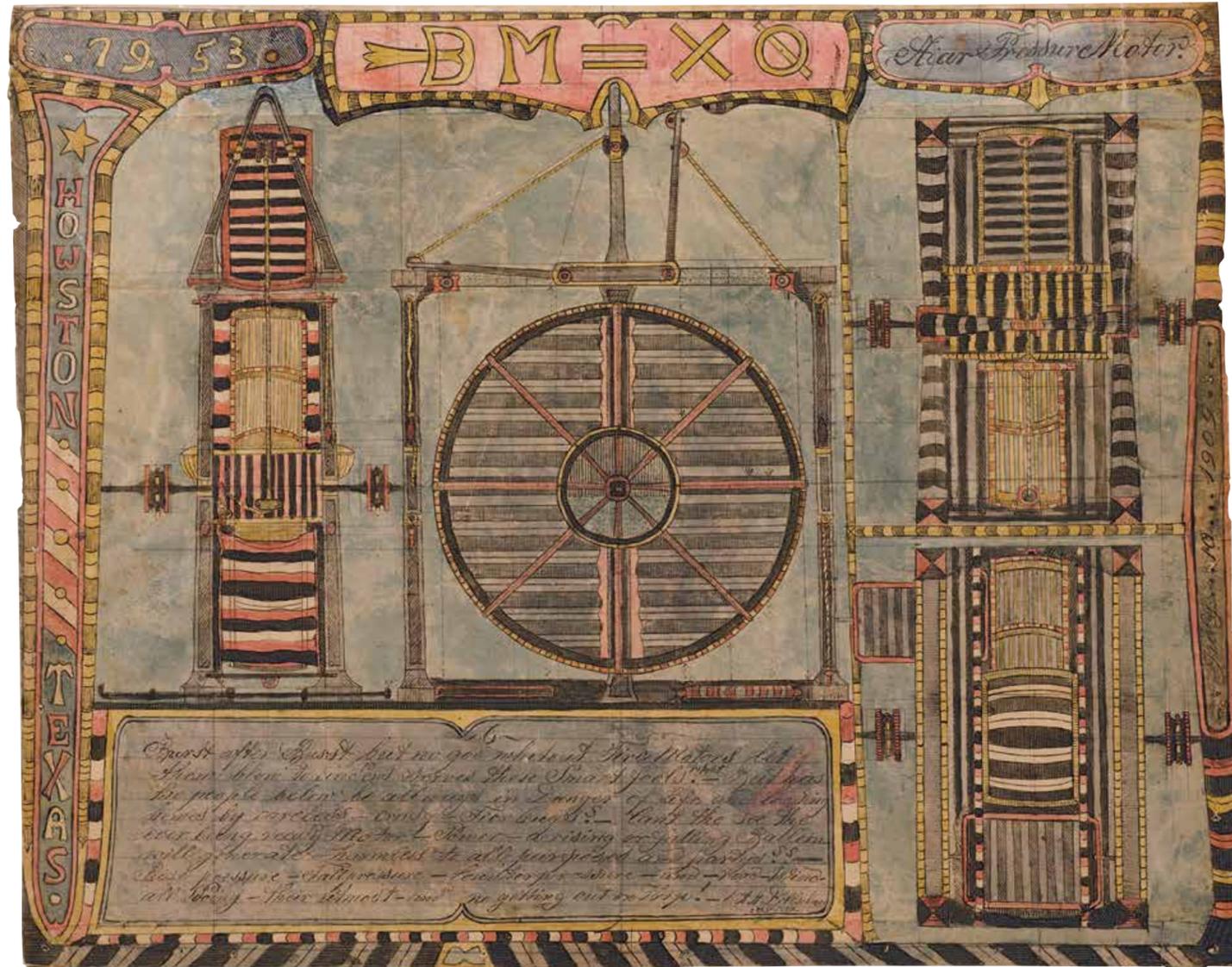


Plate 1917 Aero Honeymoon Aviatora, May 7, 1909, 16½ × 19½ in.
The Witte Museum, San Antonio



Plate 1952 Aero Axel Compair, July 6, 1909, 13¼ × 19 in.
Collection of Michael Burke, New York



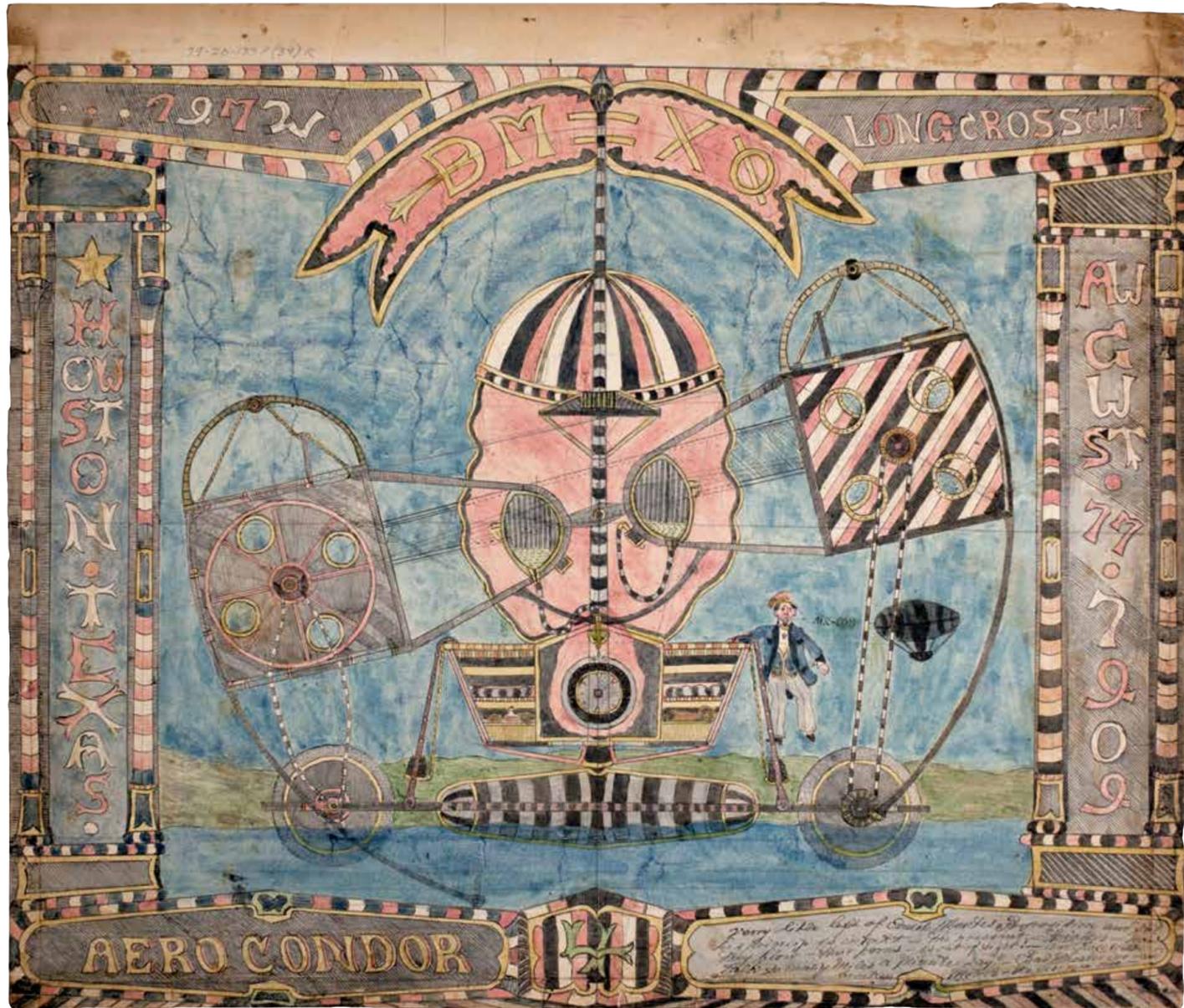


Plate 1972 Aero Condor Long Cross Cut, August 17, 1909,
16 3/4 x 19 1/8 in.
The Witte Museum, San Antonio



Plate 1977 Aero Condor from Below from Above, August 22, 1909,
16 3/4 x 19 1/8 in.
The Witte Museum, San Antonio



Plate 1984 Jourdan Condor from Below from Above, September 6, 1909, 16 7/8 x 19 in. The Witte Museum, San Antonio

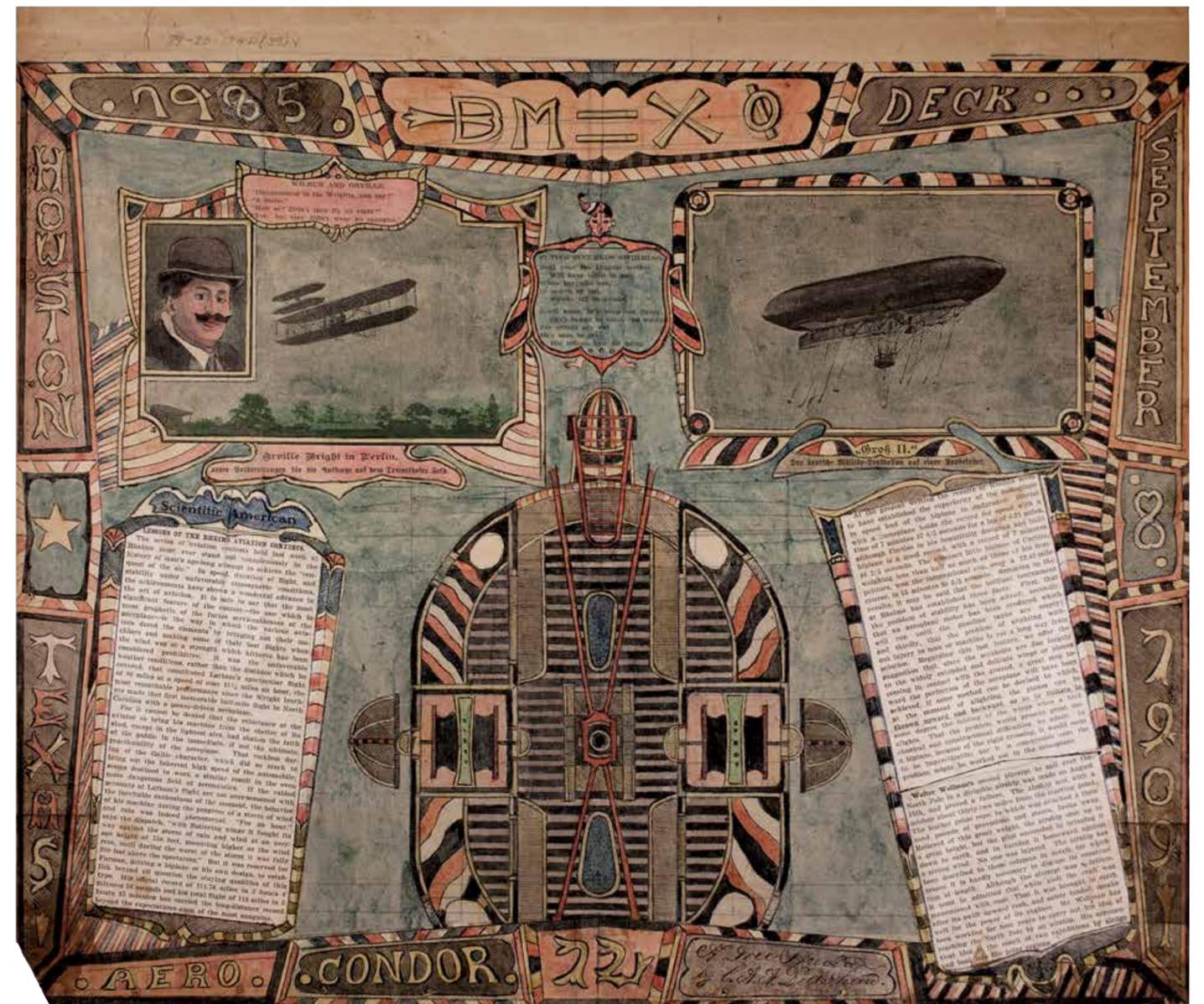


Plate 1985 Aero Condor Deck, September 8, 1909, 16 7/8 x 19 in. The Witte Museum, San Antonio

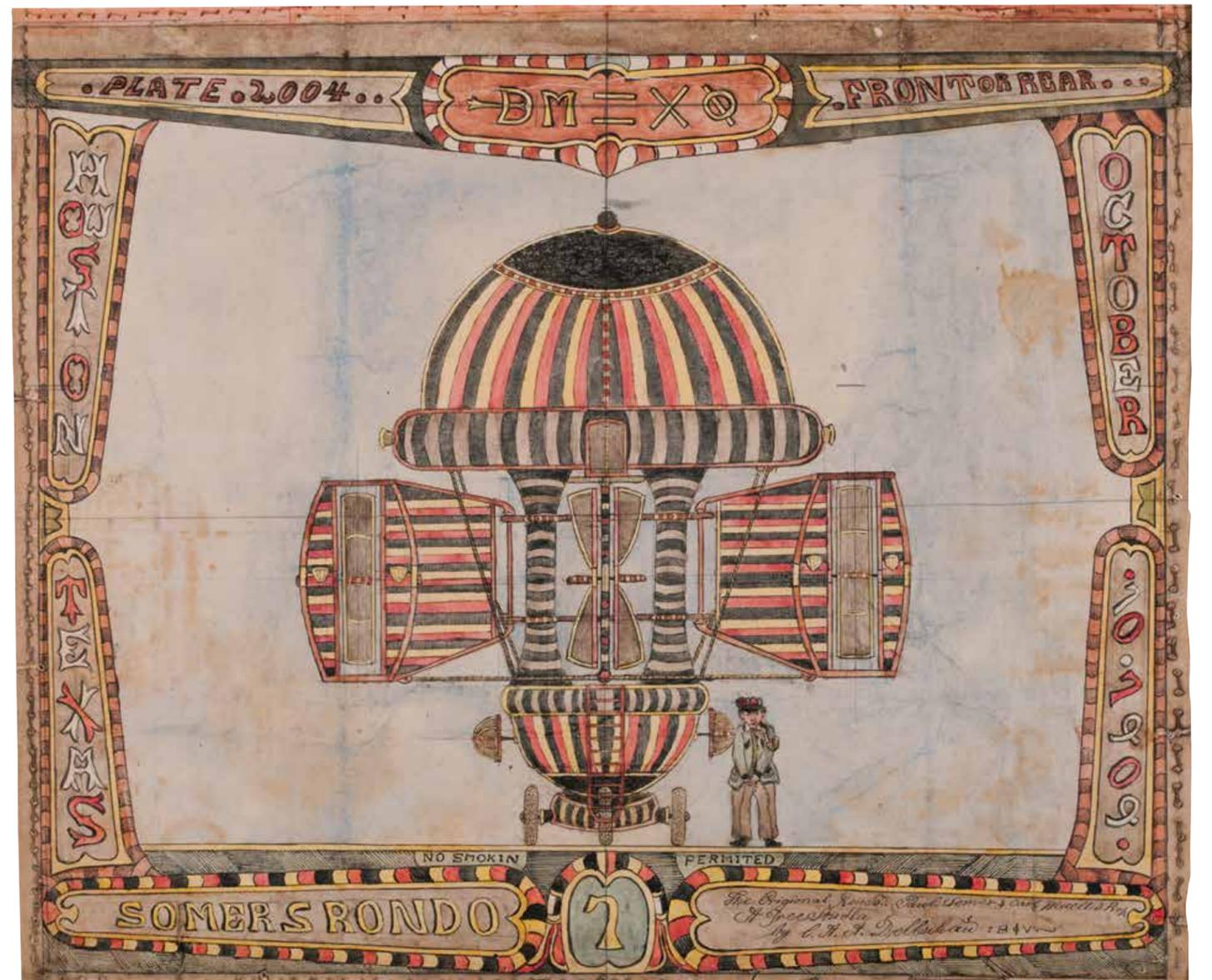
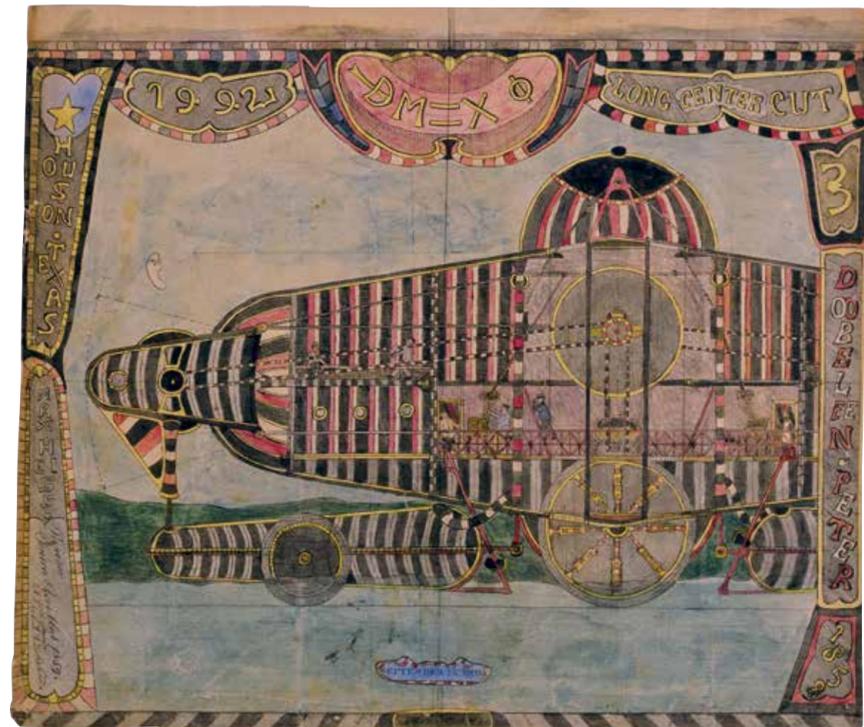


Plate 1992 Doobeelen Peter Long Center Cut,
September 16, 1909, 17½ × 19 in.
Collection of John and Susan Jerit

Plate 1993 Doobeelen Peter Front or Rear,
September 19, 1909, 17½ × 19 in.
Collection of John and Susan Jerit

Plate 2004 Somers Rondo Front or Rear, October 10, 1909, 17 × 20 in.
Collection of George Morton and Karol Howard, Texas

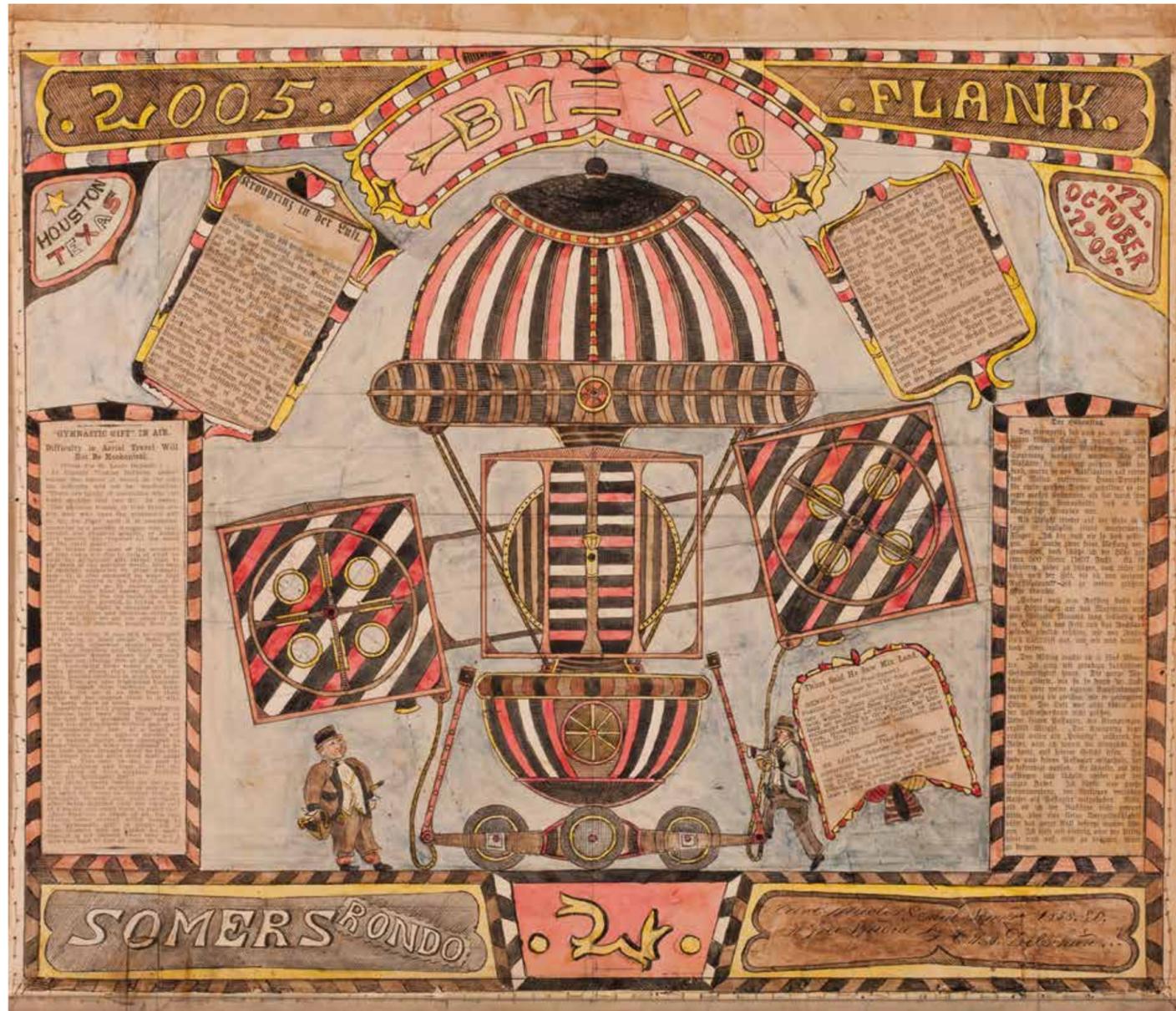


Plate 2005 Somers Rondo Flank, October 12, 1909, 17 x 20 in.
Collection of George Morton and Karol Howard, Texas

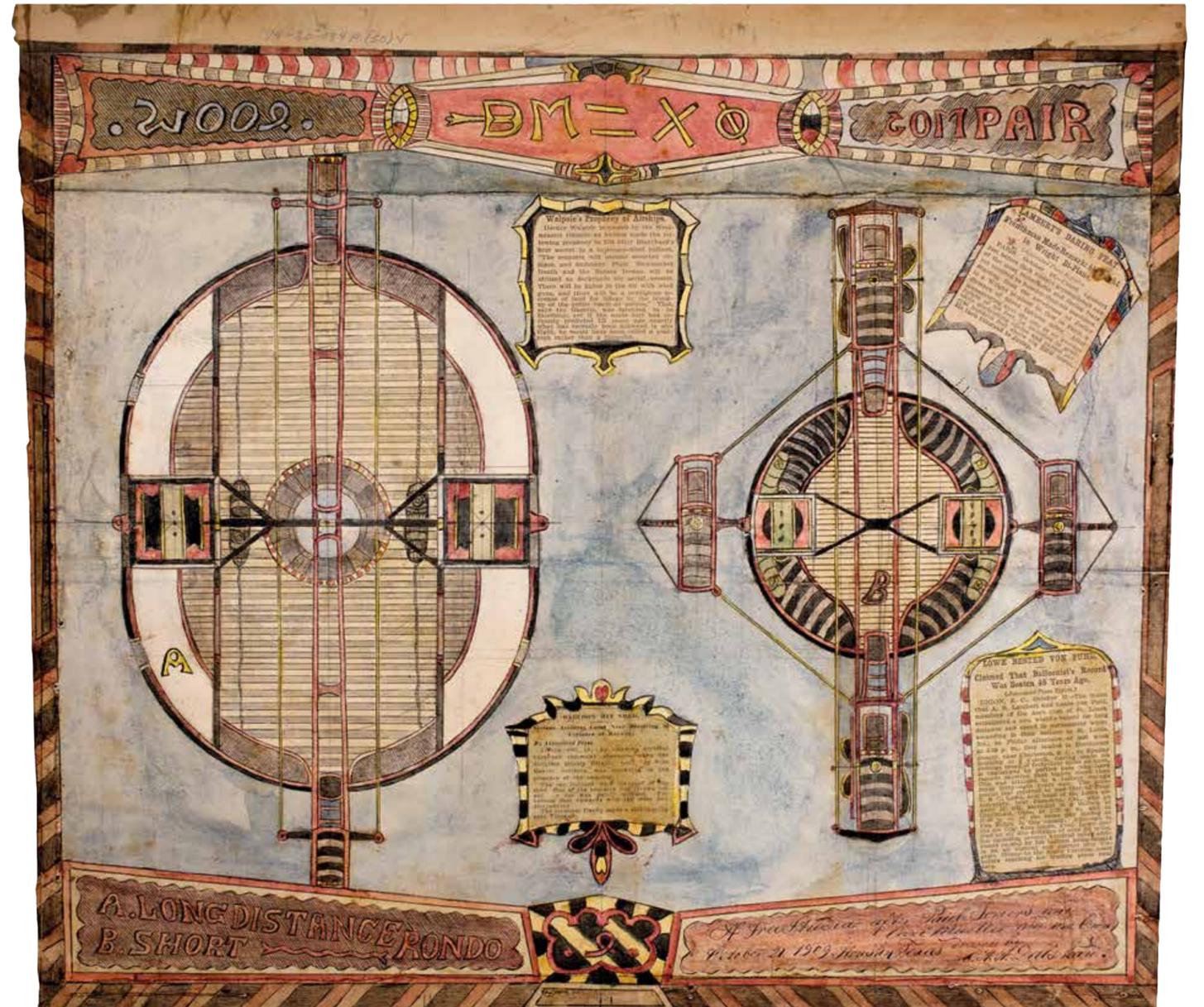


Plate 2009 Rondo Compar, October 21, 1909, 16½ x 18¾ in.
The Witte Museum, San Antonio

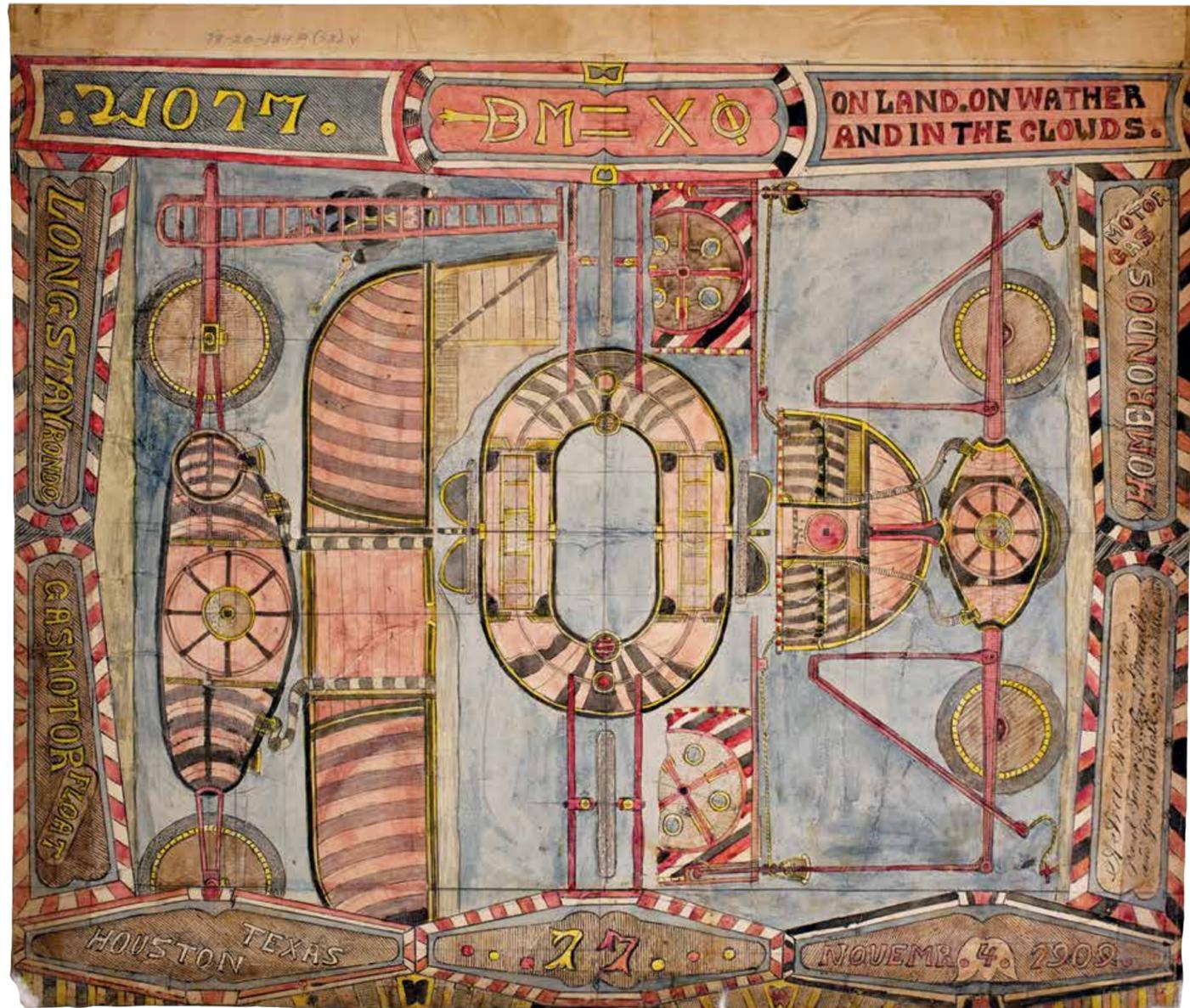


Plate 2017 Long Stay Rondo Home Rondos on Land on Wather and in the Clouds, November 4, 1909, 16½ x 19 in. The Witte Museum, San Antonio

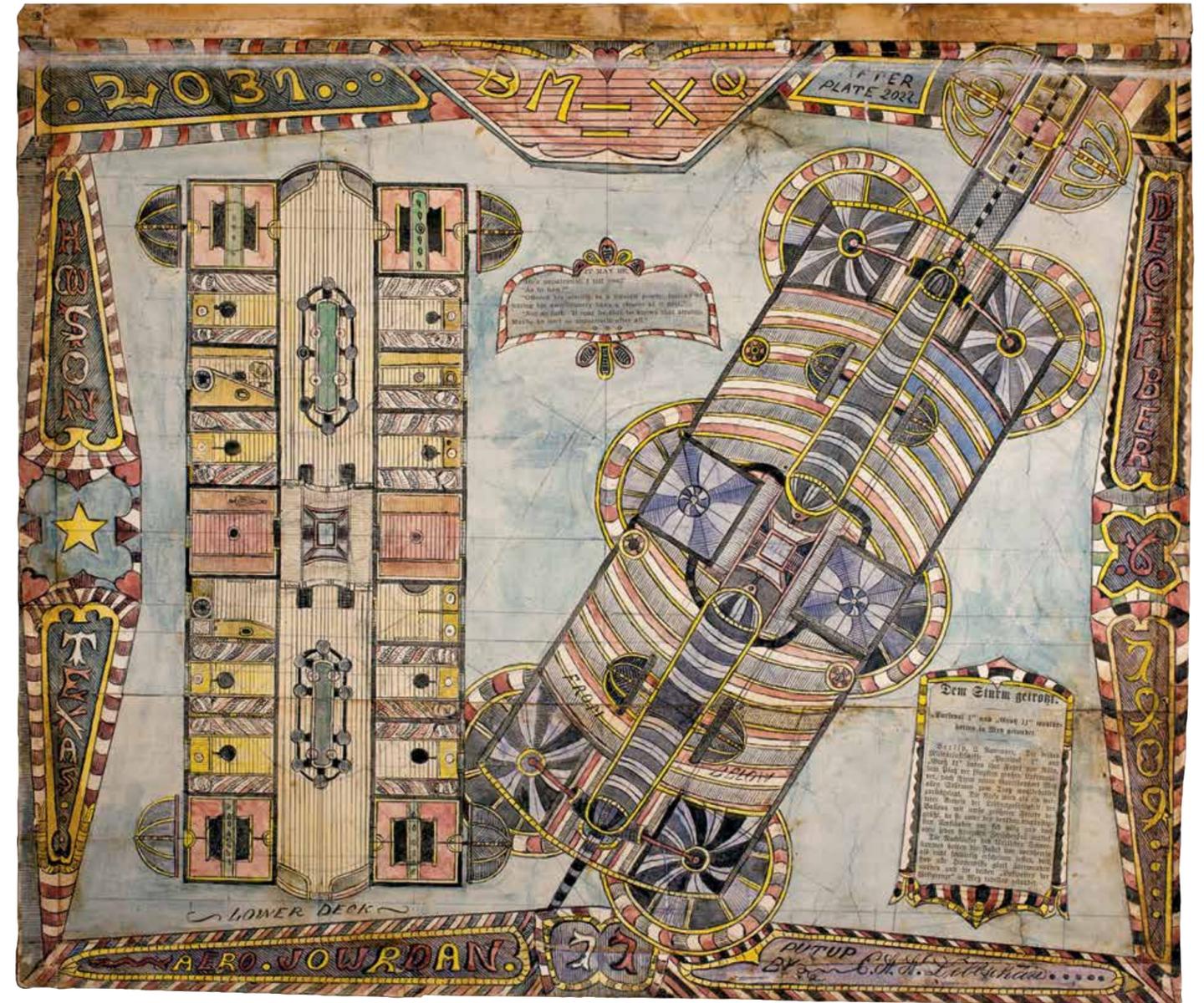


Plate 2031 Aero Jourdan, December 6, 1909, 16½ x 19 in. The Witte Museum, San Antonio

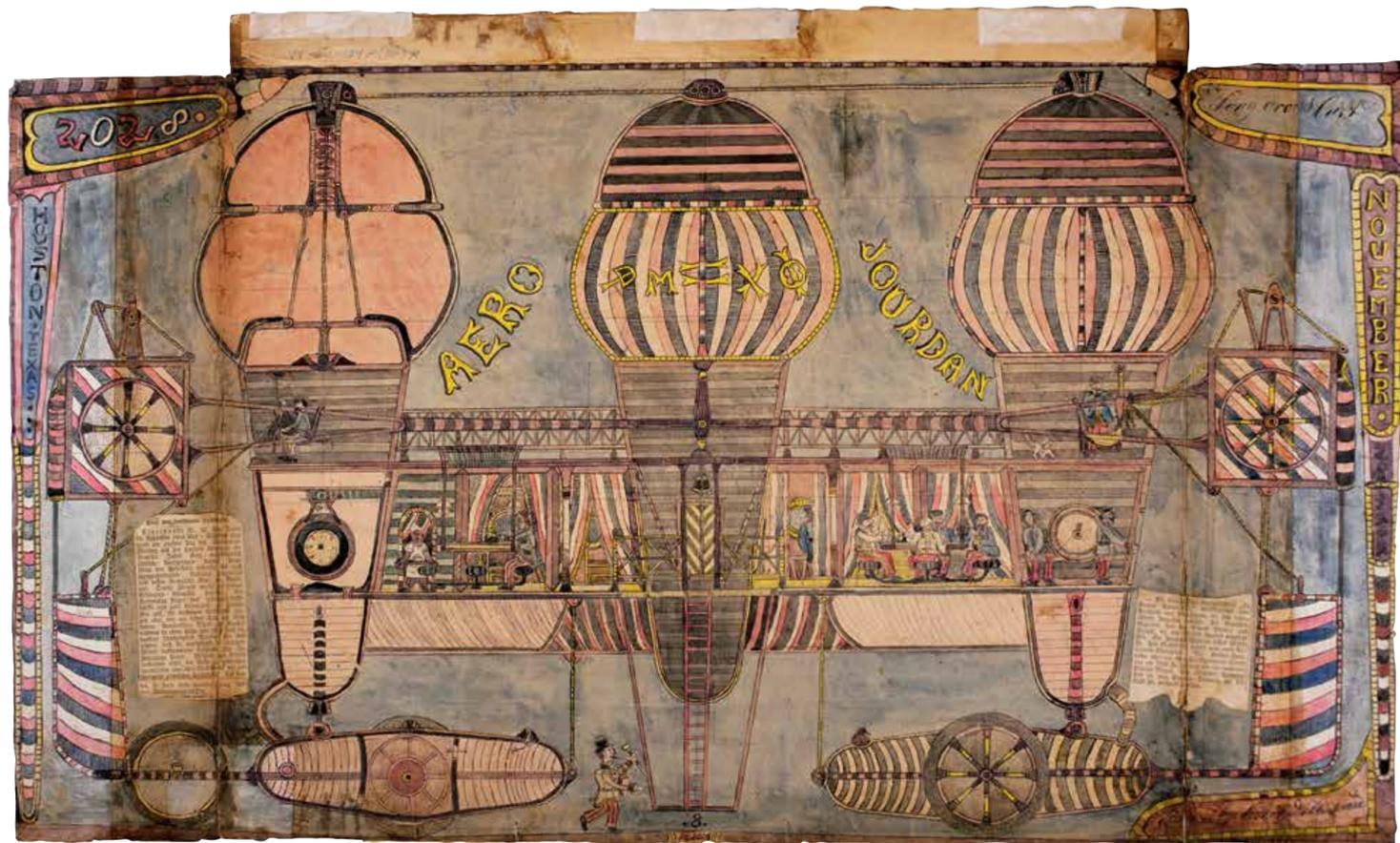


Plate 2028 Aero Jourdan, November 28, 1909, 16½ x 27 in.
The Witte Museum, San Antonio

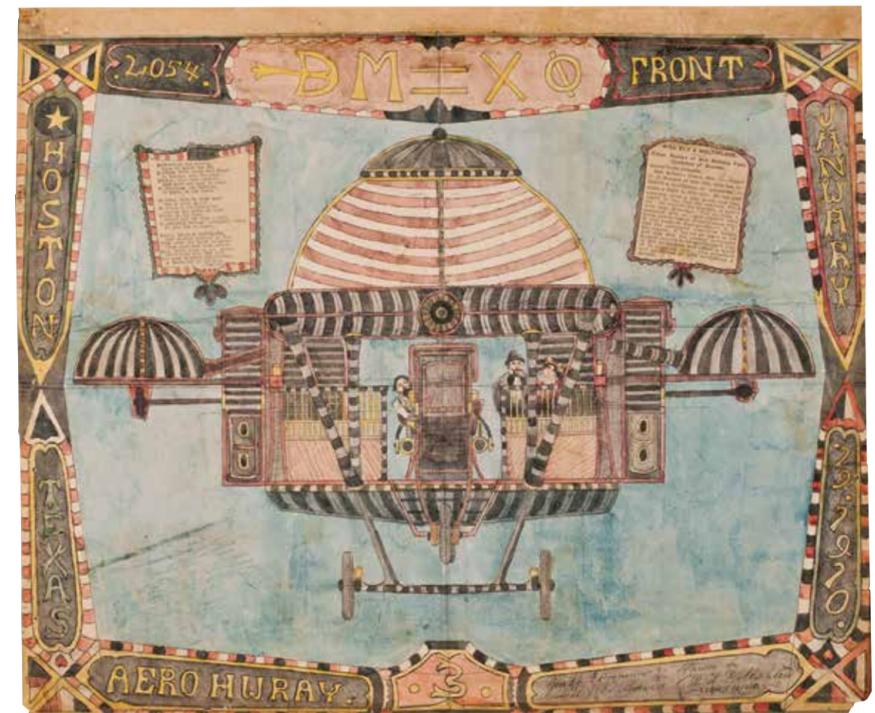


Plate 2054 Aero Huray Front, January 19, 1910,
17 x 20 in.
Collection of George Morton and Karol Howard, Texas

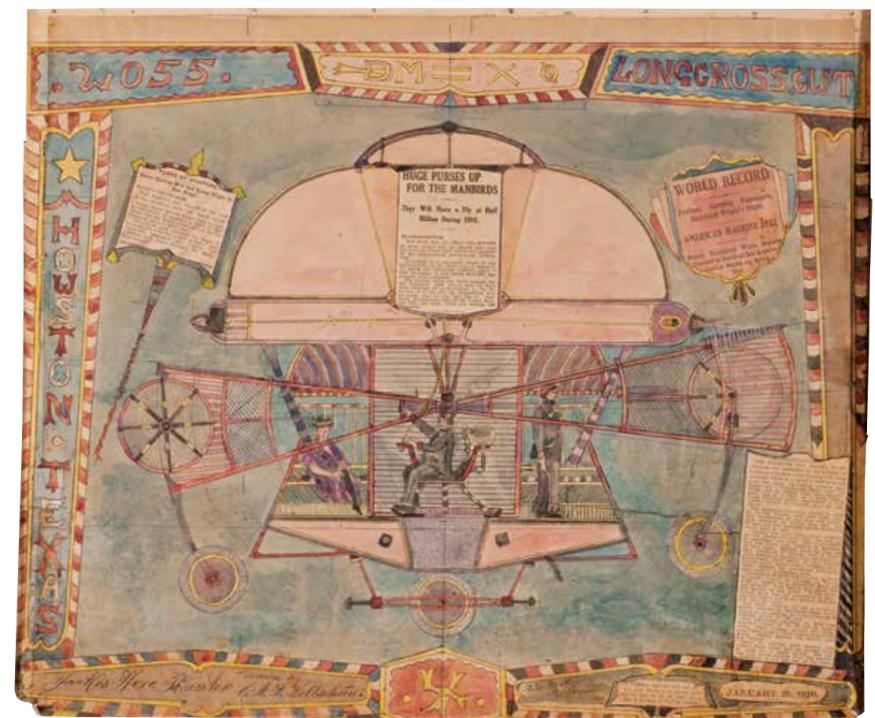


Plate 2055 Jacks Aero Hunter Long Cross Cut,
January 20, 1910, 17 x 20 in.
Collection of George Morton and Karol Howard, Texas



Plate 2075 Long Distance Aero Mio Flank Down,
February 17, 1910, 16¼ × 19 in.
The Witte Museum, San Antonio



Plate 2200 Goosey coming down Goosey at Rest,
March 27, 1910, 16¾ × 19 in.
San Antonio Museum of Art

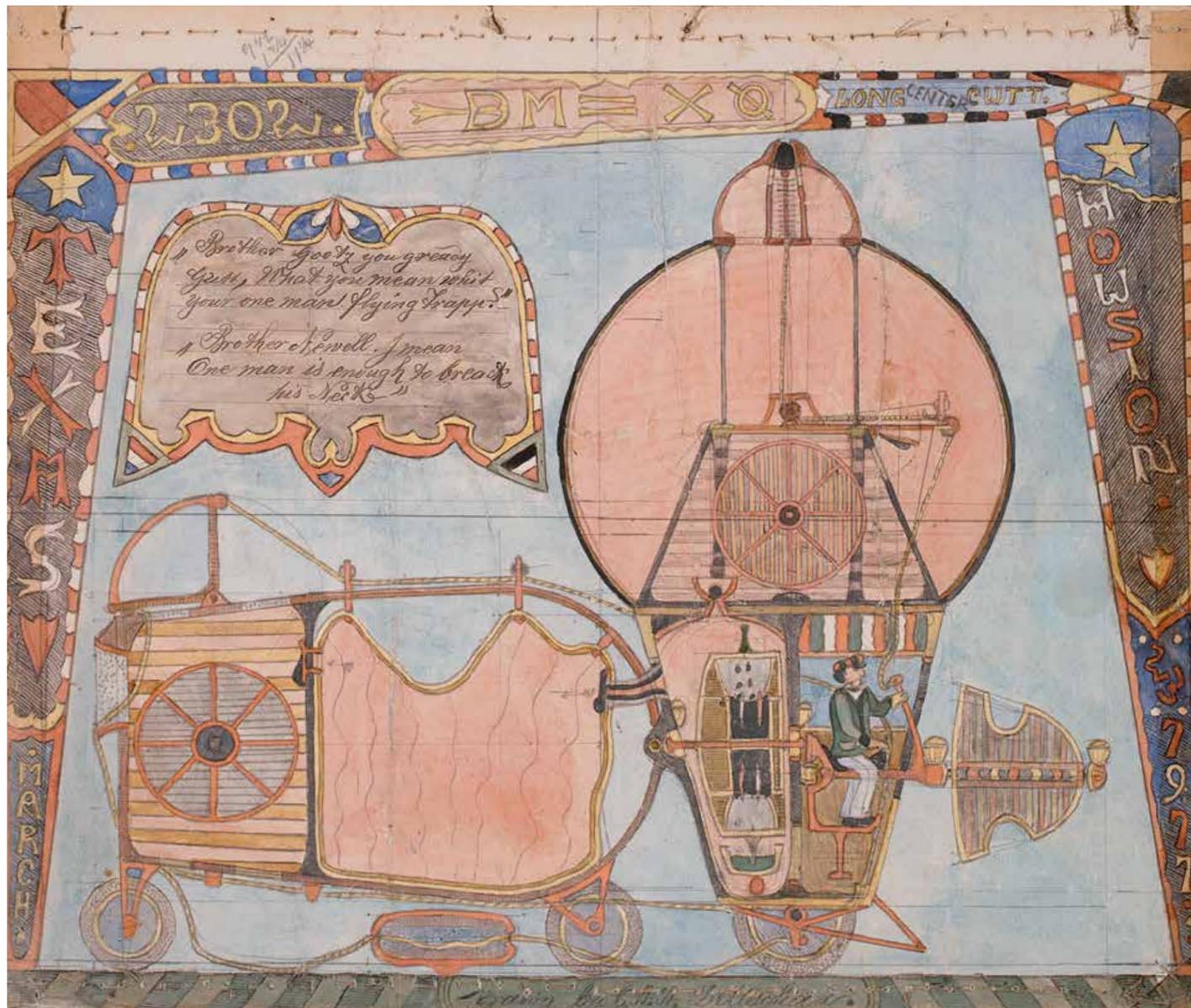


Plate 2302 Long Center Cutt, March 23, 1911, 17 x 19 1/4 in.
Collection of Stephanie Smither, Texas

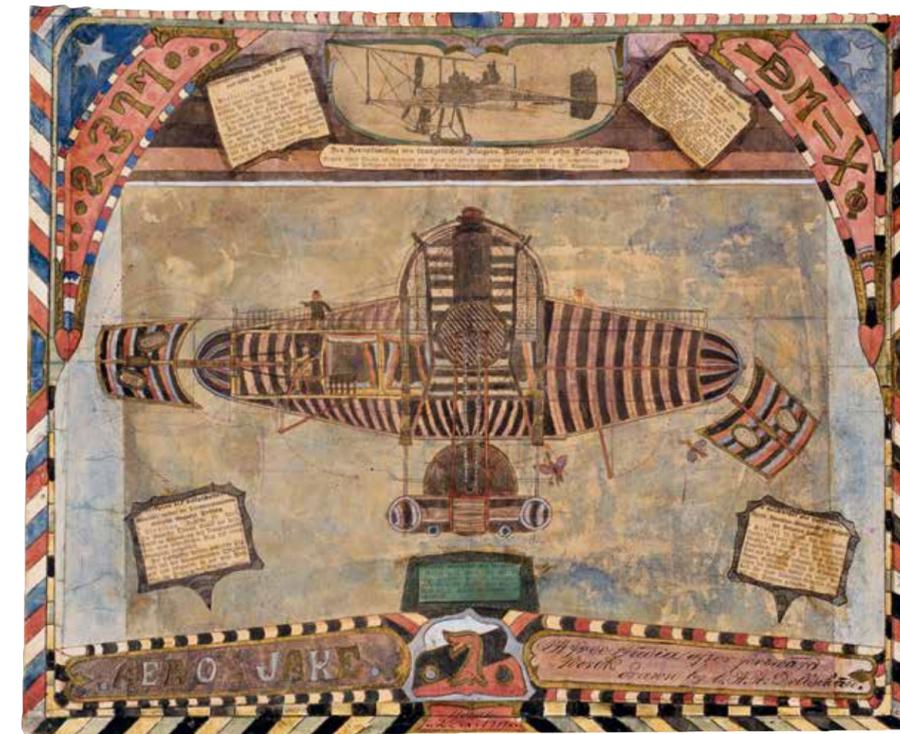


Plate 2317 Aero Jake, March 22, 1911, 17 1/2 x 19 in.
Collection of Joan and Michael Salke



Plate 2316 Aero Goeit and Goosey Compair, April 20, 1911,
17 1/2 x 19 in.
Collection of Joan and Michael Salke

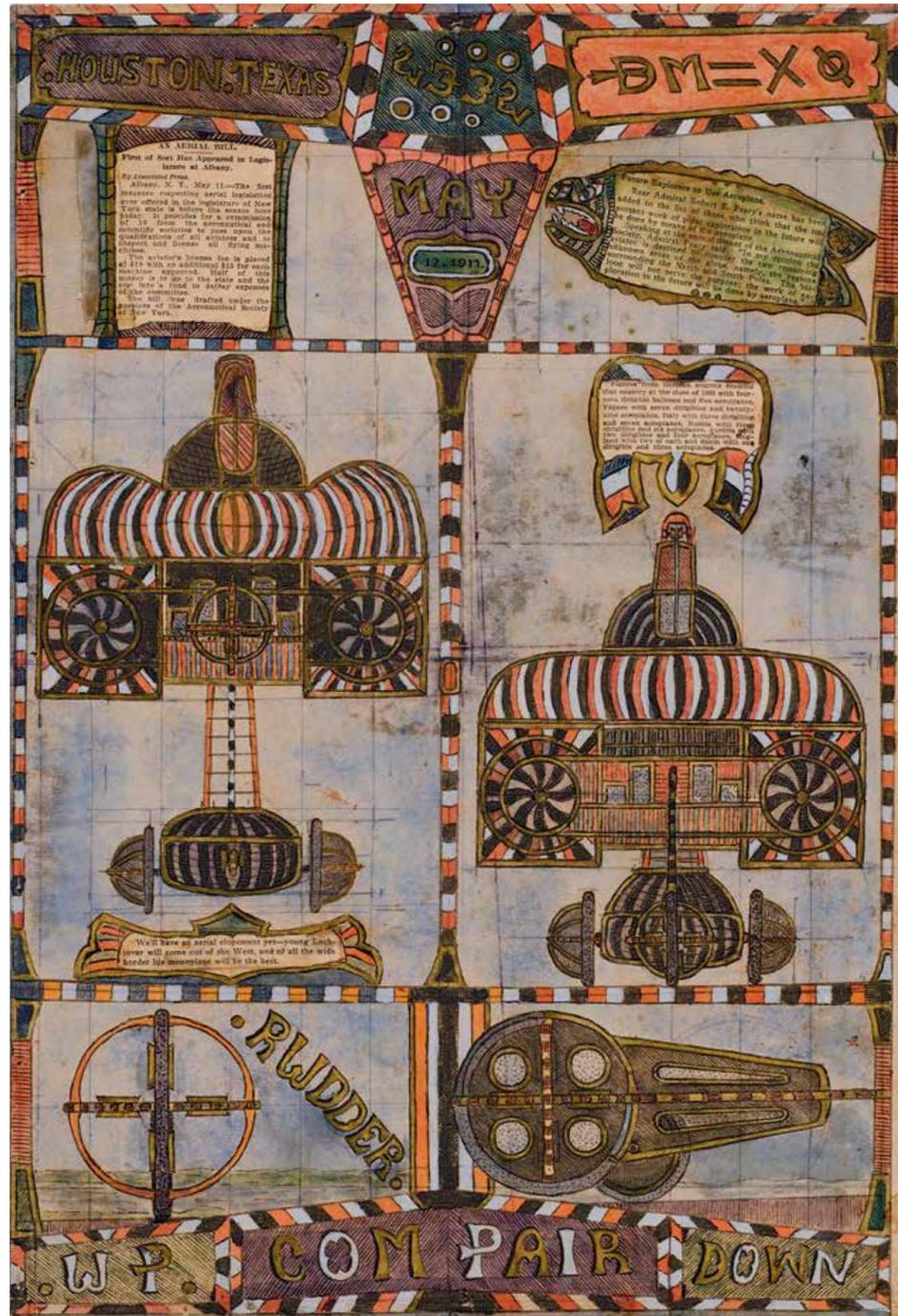


Plate 2332 Rudder Compair Up Down, May 12, 1911, 19 x 13 1/4 in.
Collection of J. Kevin O'Rourke, Maryland

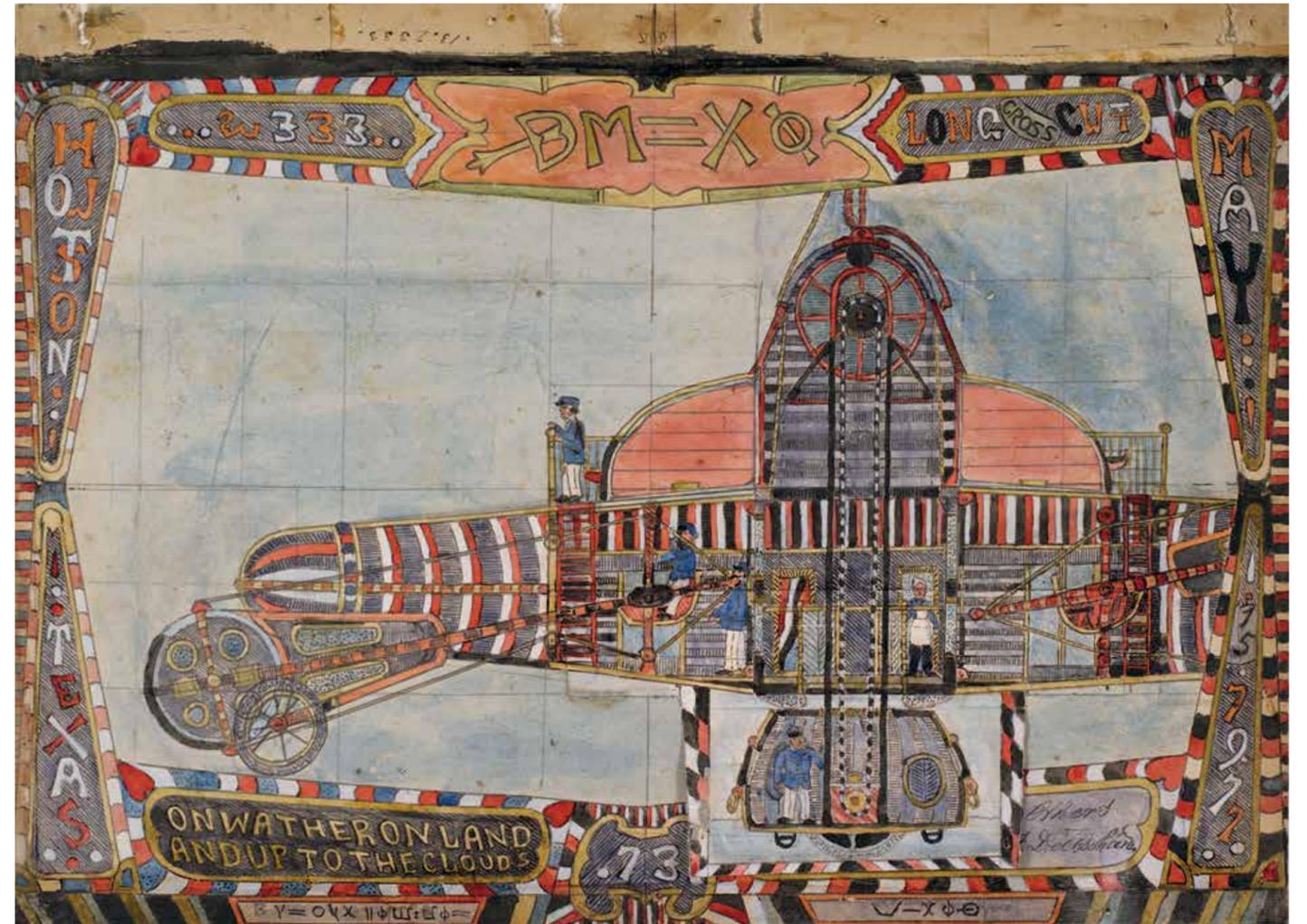


Plate 2333 Long Cross Cut on Wather on Land and up to the
Clouds, May 15, 1911, 13 1/4 x 19 in.
Collection of J. Kevin O'Rourke, Maryland

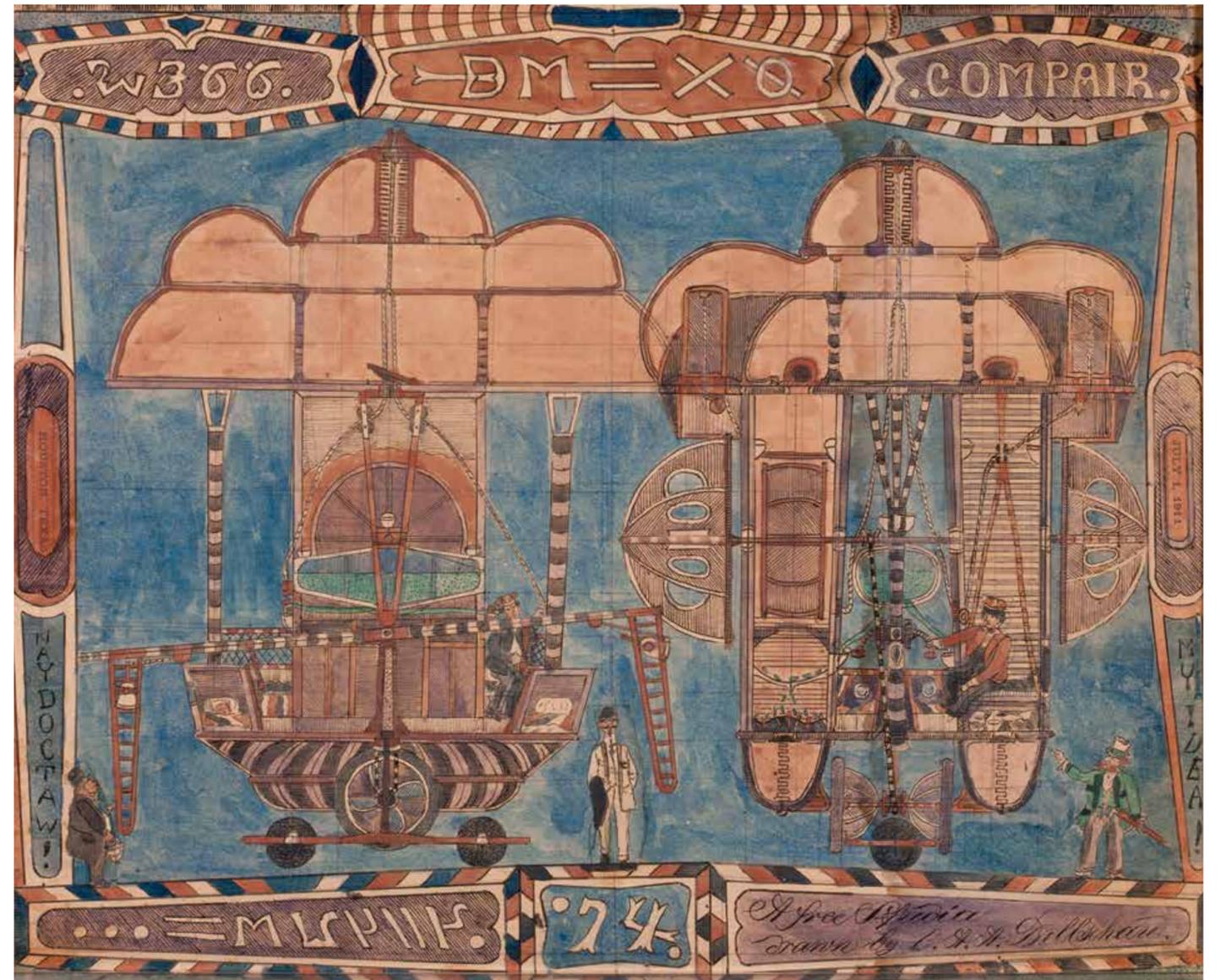
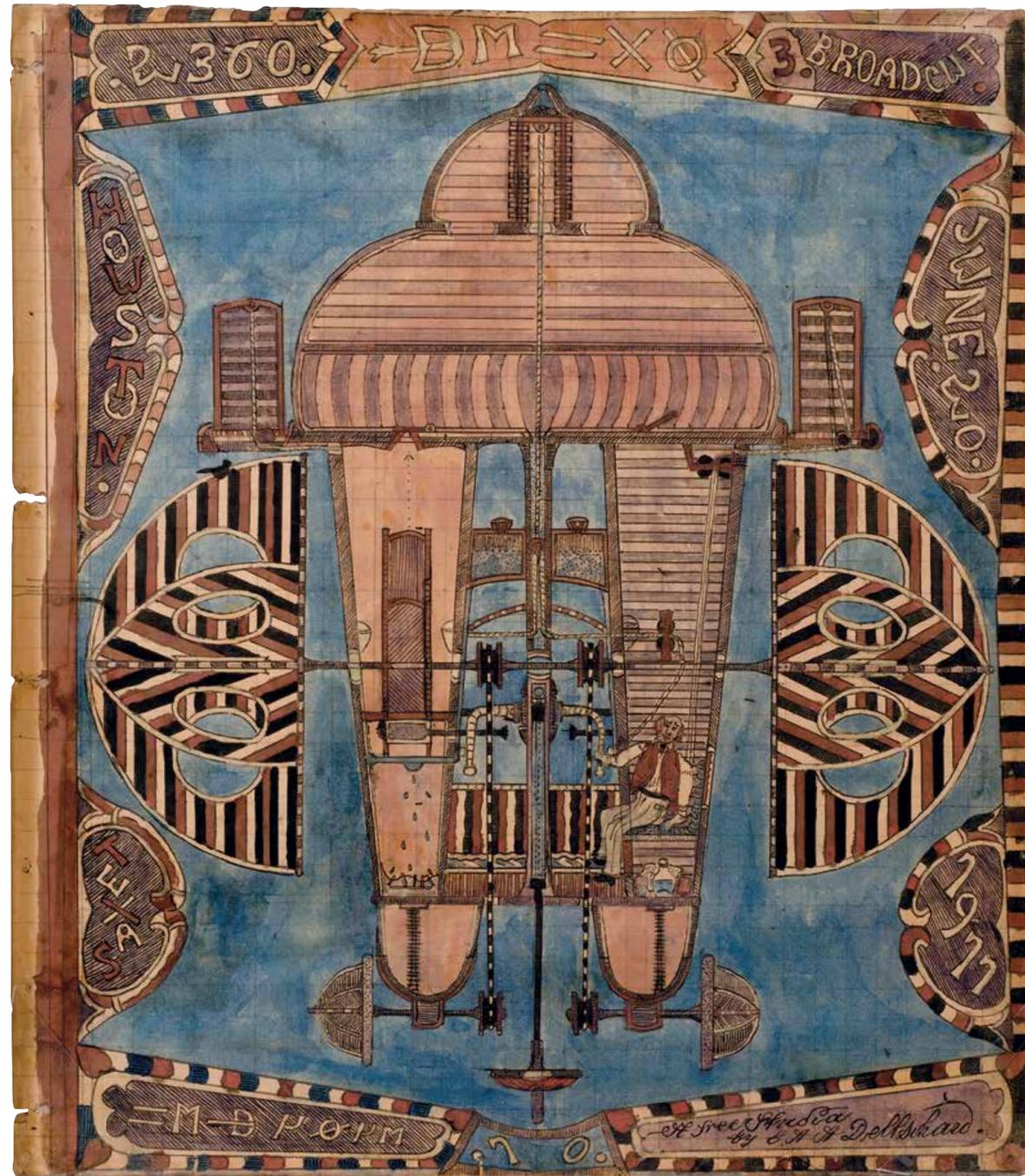




Plate 2364 Deck, June 26, 1911, 16½ x 18¾ in.
Collection of Dr. Siri Von Reis, New York



Plate 2365 From Below, June 28, 1911, 16½ x 18¾ in.
Collection of George Morton and Karol Howard, Texas

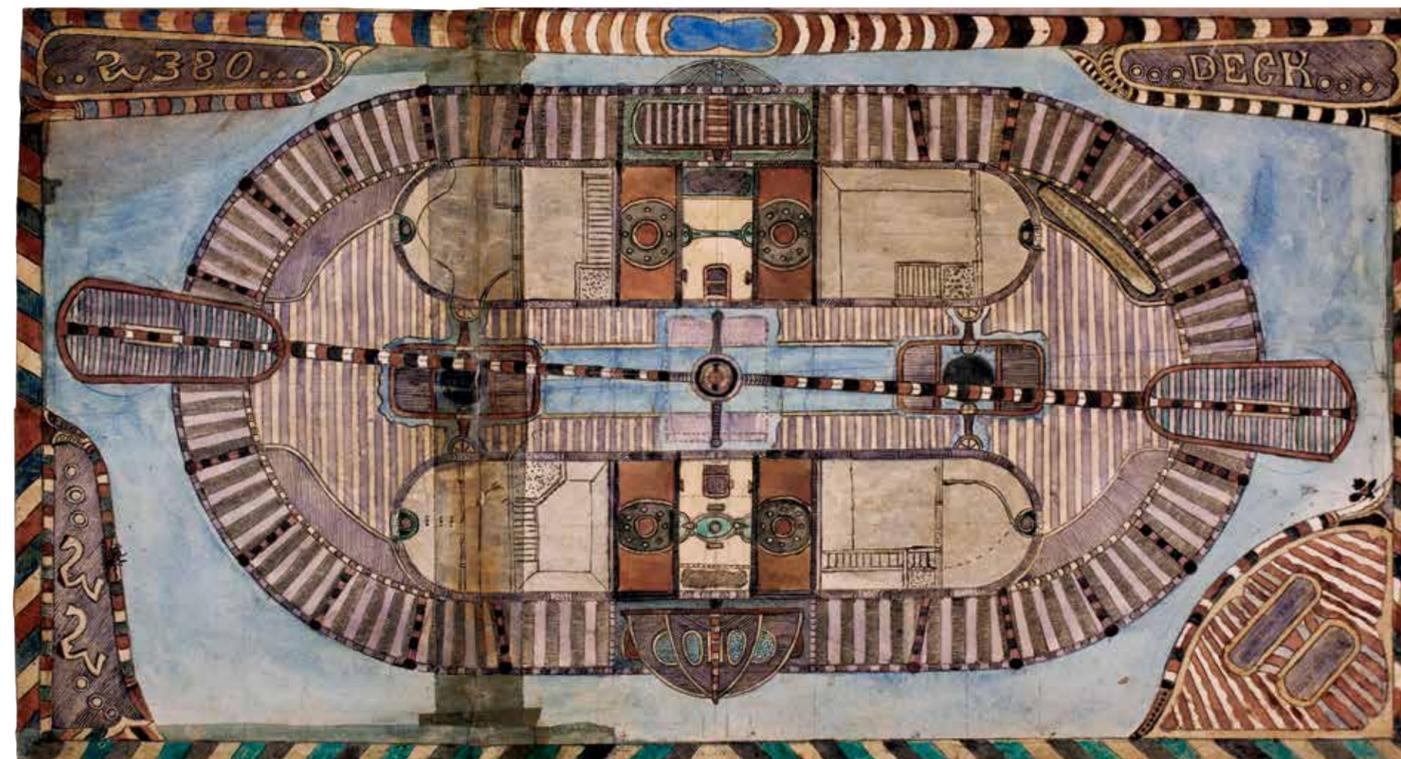




Plate 2392 Aero Warrior Flanck, August 11, 1911,
15½ × 18¾ in.
Collection of Dr. Siri Von Reis, New York

Plate 2393 Aero Warrior Front Rear,
August 14, 1911, 15½ × 18¾ in.
Collection of Dr. Siri Von Reis, New York

Plate 2450 Aero Doobey Broad Cutt, November 11, 1911,
19½ × 16½ in.
The Menil Collection, Houston

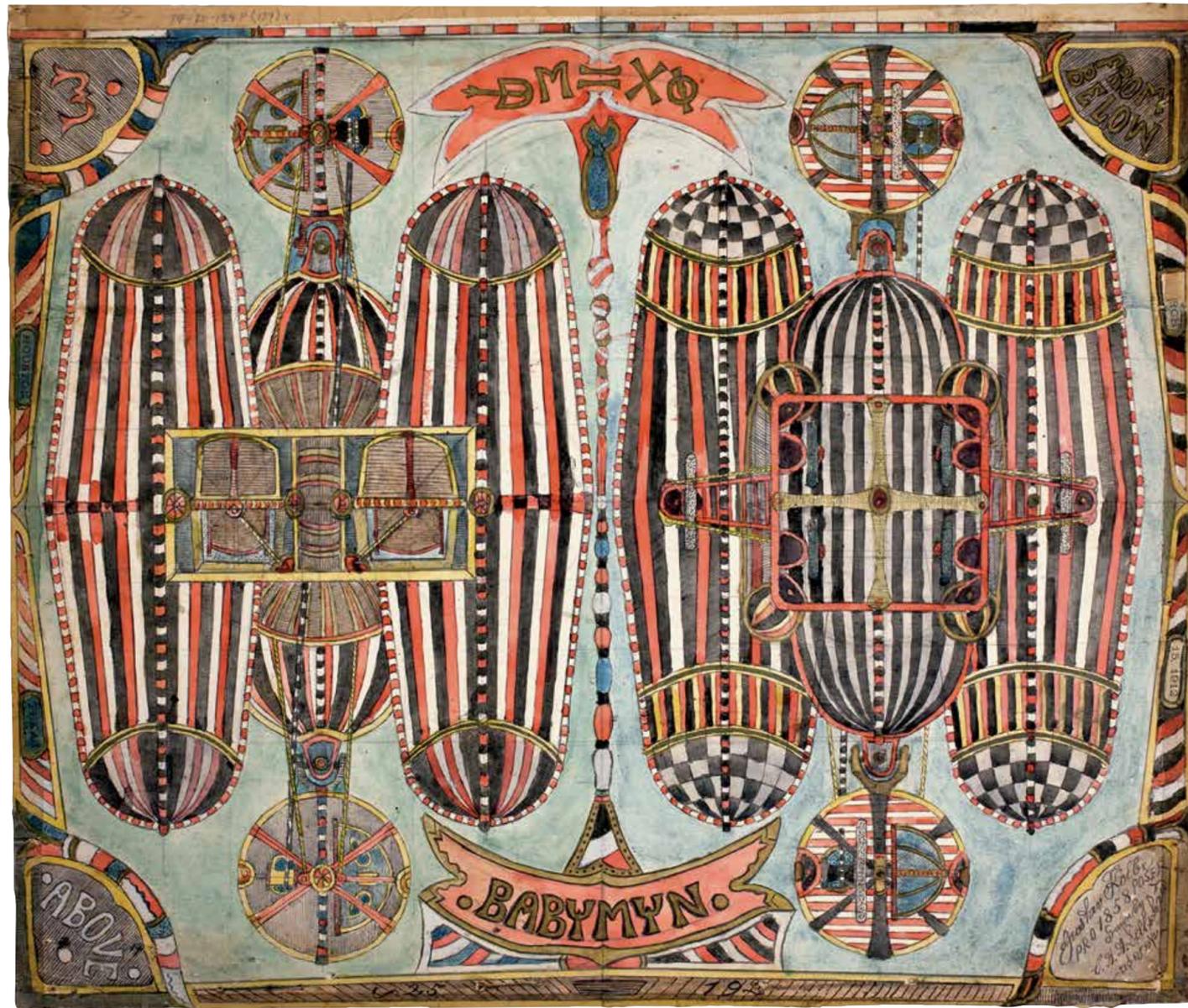


Plate 2519 Babymyn Above from Below, March 15, 1912, 16 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 19 in.
The Witte Museum, San Antonio



Plate 2549 Max Misers Aero Buster Front or Rear, April 25, 1912, 17 x 19 $\frac{1}{8}$ in.
San Antonio Museum of Art



Plate 2552 Buster from Below, May 1, 1912, 16 3/8 x 19 1/4 in.
San Antonio Museum of Art

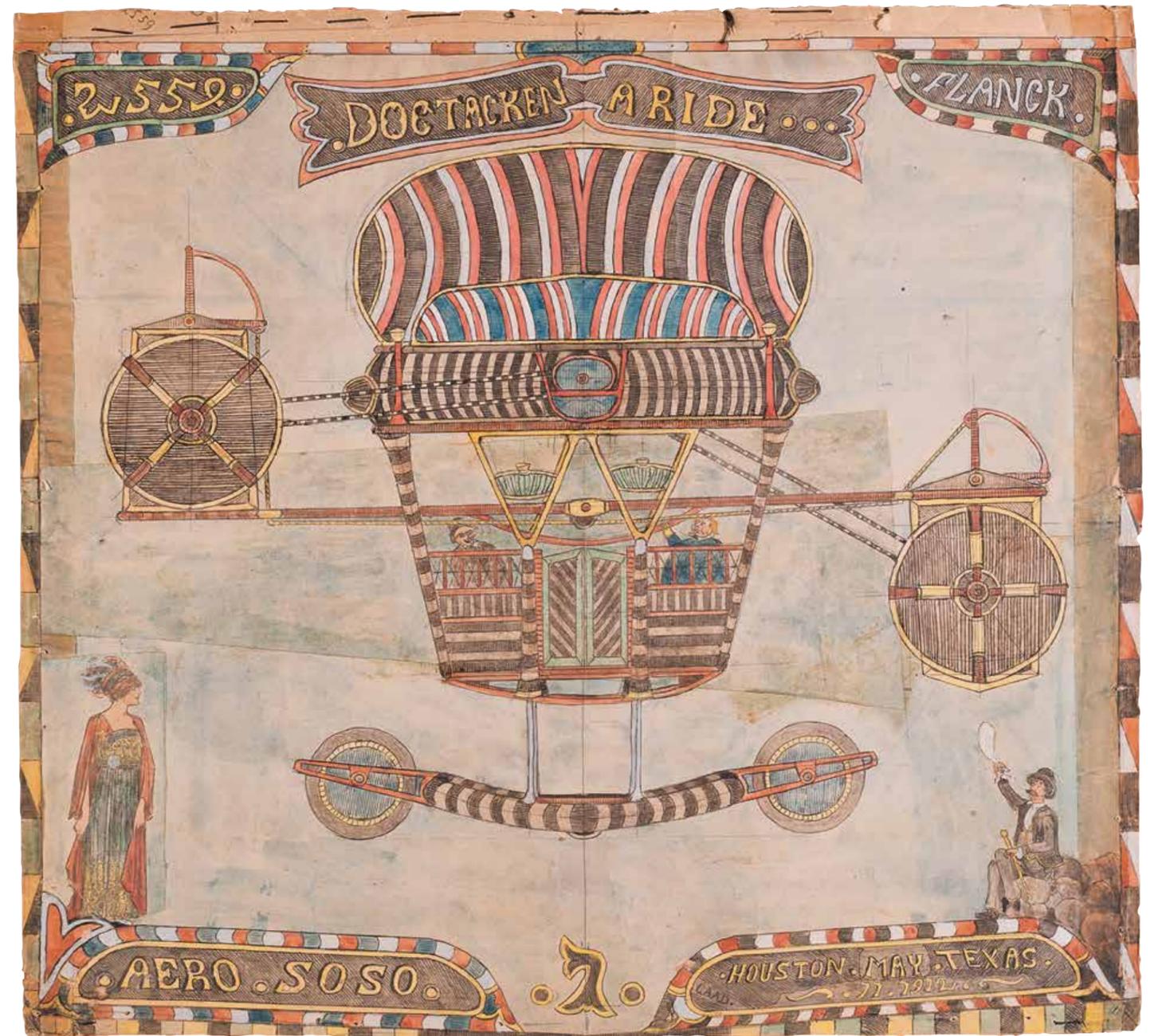


Plate 2559 Aero Soso Flanck Doc Tacken a Ride, May 11, 1912, 17 7/8 x 19 1/4 in.
San Antonio Museum of Art



Plate 2566 Soso Compair, May 22, 1912, 12 3/8 x 18 1/8 in.
The Witte Museum, San Antonio



Plate 2573 Long Anna Long Cross Cutt, June 10, 1912, 13 x 19 1/8 in.
San Antonio Museum of Art

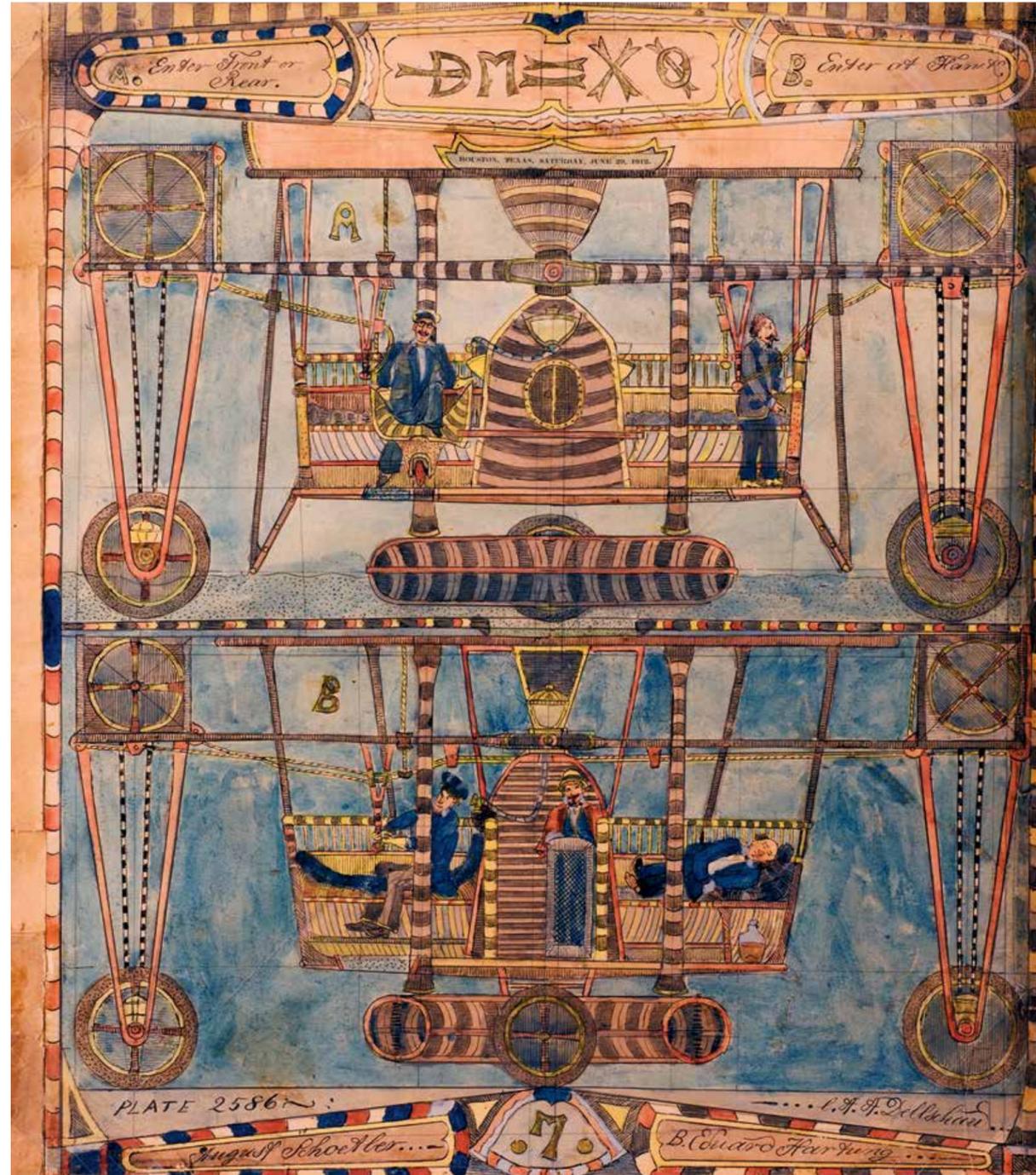


Plate 2586 August Schoetler Eduard Hartung, June 20, 1912,
19 1/8 x 15 7/8 in.
Collection of Dr. Siri Von Reis, New York

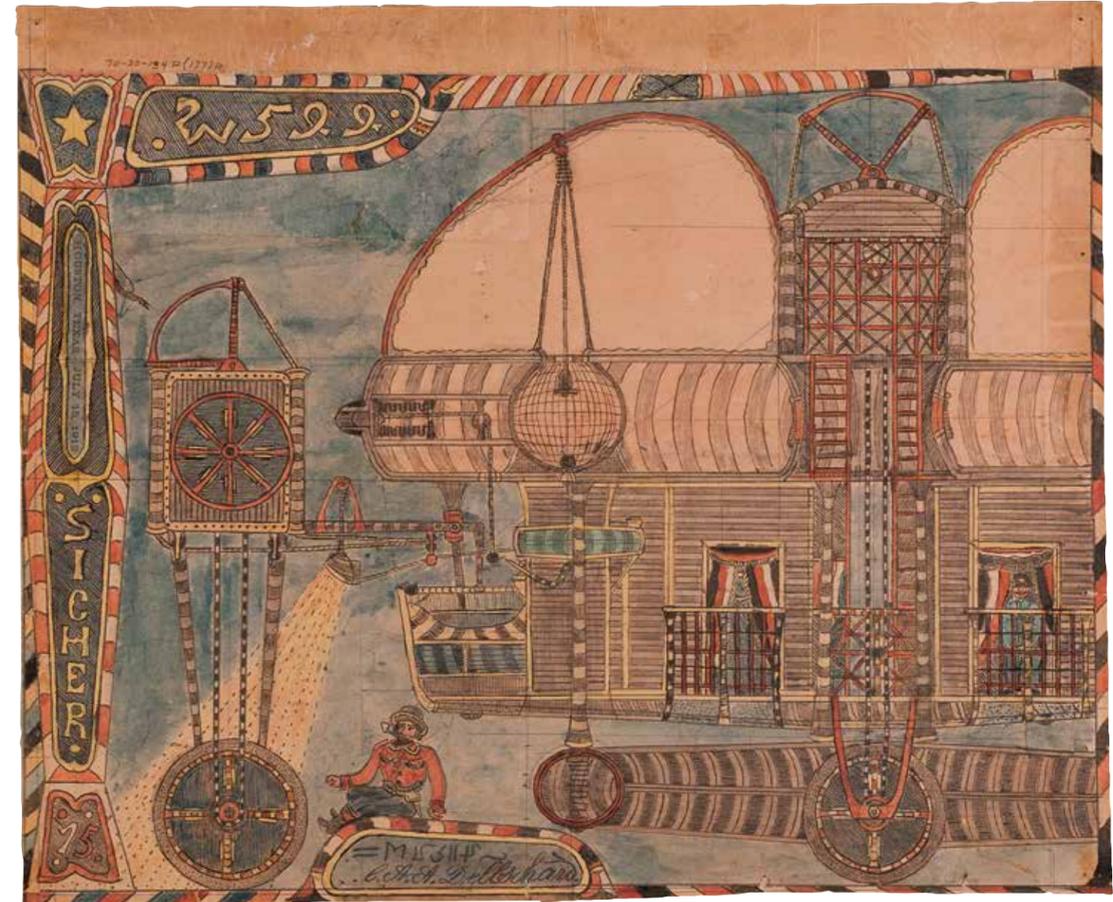


Plate 2599 Sicher, July 15, 1912, 15 7/8 x 19 1/8 in.
San Antonio Museum of Art

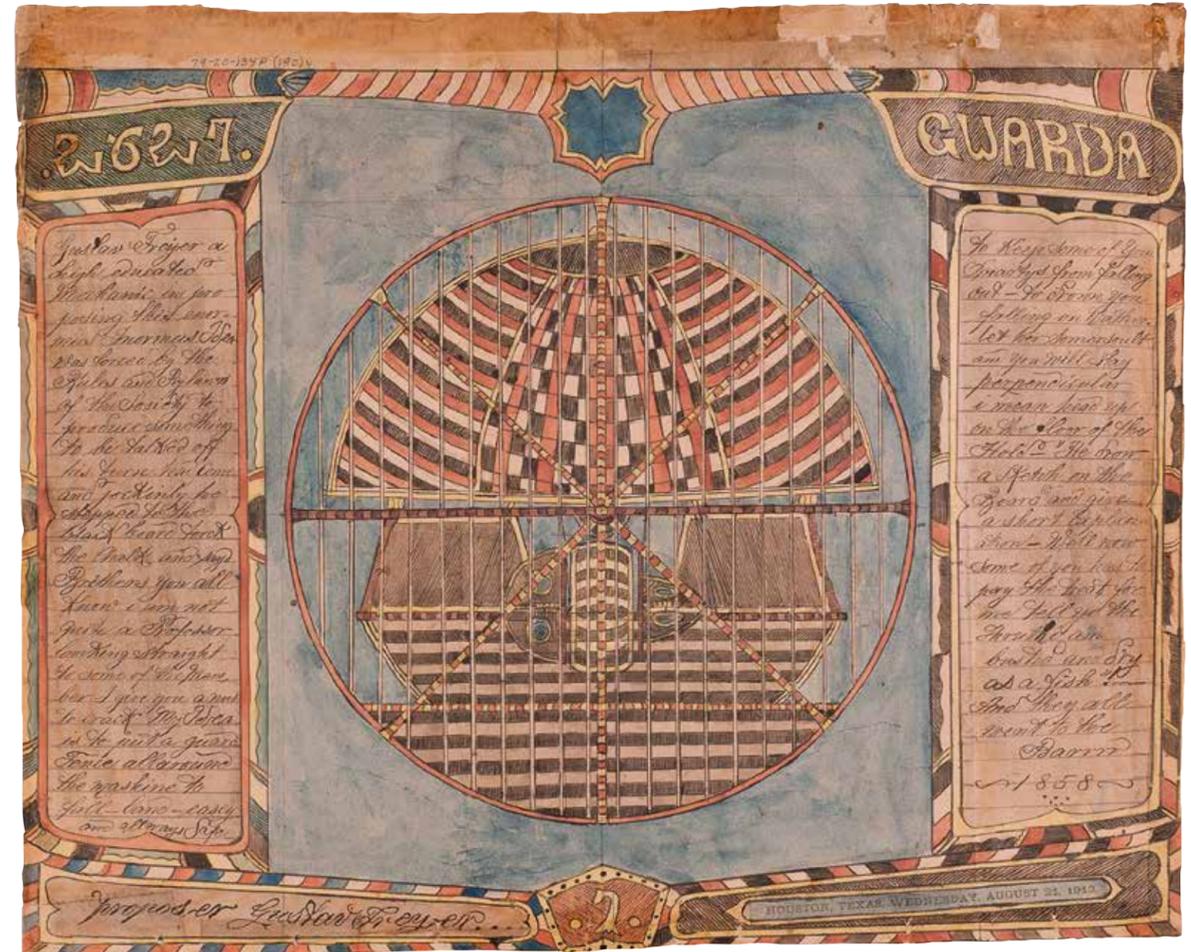




Plate 3238 Outside of Aero Mina War, December 30, 1914,
16 x 19 1/4 in.
San Antonio Museum of Art

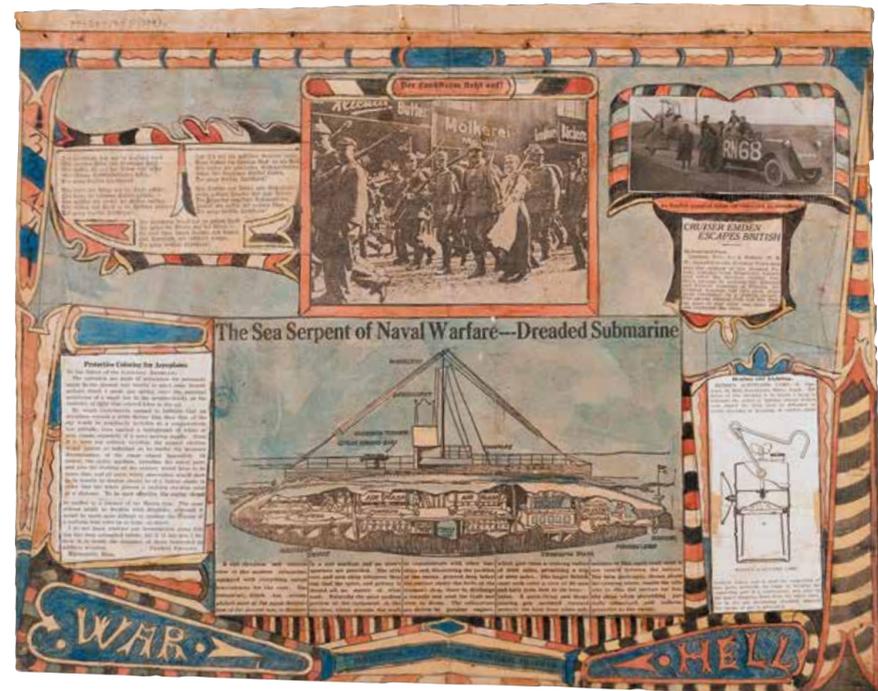


Plate 3214 War Hell, November 19, 1914,
14 1/2 x 18 1/2 in.
San Antonio Museum of Art

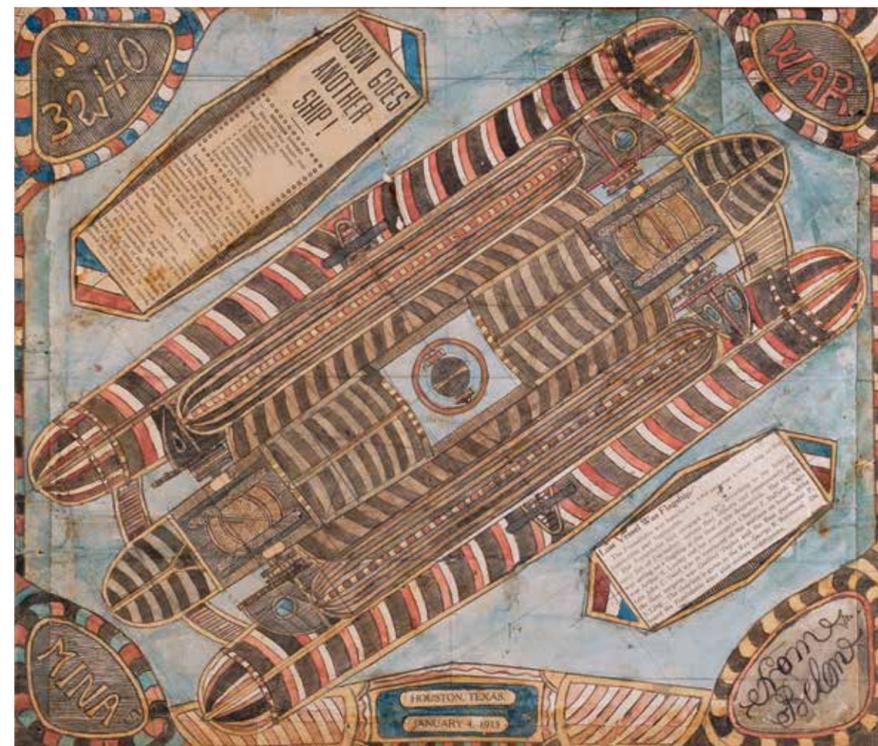


Plate 3240 Mina from Below War, January 4, 1915,
16 7/8 x 19 in.
San Antonio Museum of Art



Plate 3352 War Press Blooms (Eight Members of the New British War Cabinet), May 27, 1915, 16 3/4 x 19 3/16 in. San Antonio Museum of Art



Plate 3612 Men at Deck, September 6, 1916, 16 1/4 x 18 1/4 in. The Menil Collection, Houston

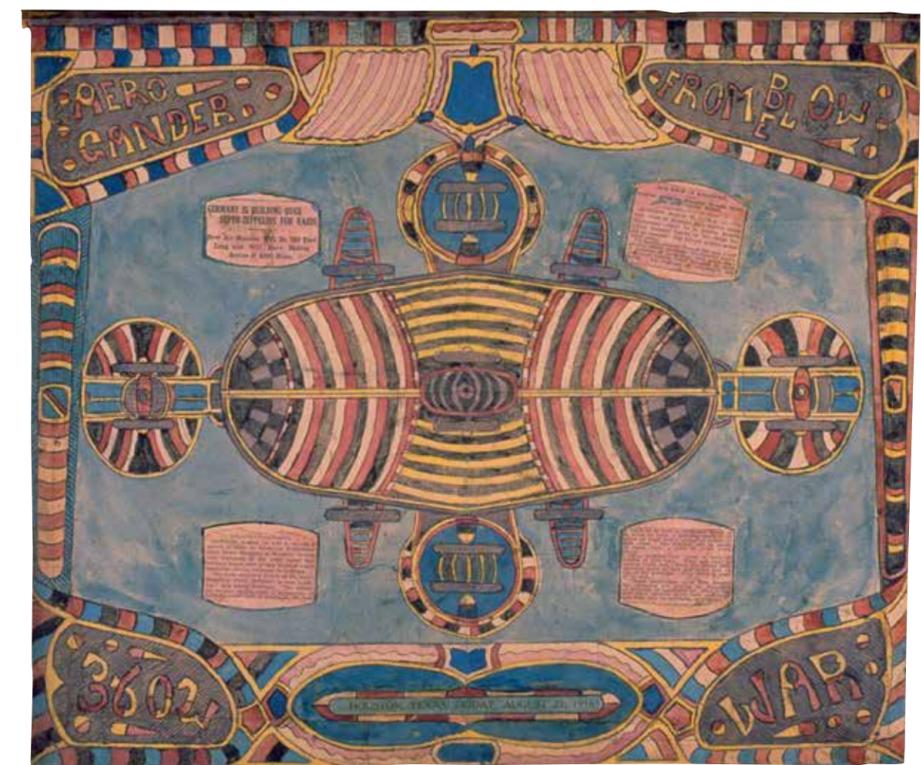


Plate 3602 Aero Gander from Below, August 25, 1916, 16 x 18 3/4 in. The Menil Collection, Houston



Plate 3603 Aero Miooo Flanck Press Blooms, April 26, 1916, 16 x 26 in. The Menil Collection, Houston



Plate 3635 Gus Baumans Aero Norma from Below from Above,
June 2, 1916, 16¼ x 18 in.
The Menil Collection, Houston



Plate 3634 What Would Become of Norma, June 2, 1916, 16¼ x 18 in.
The Menil Collection, Houston

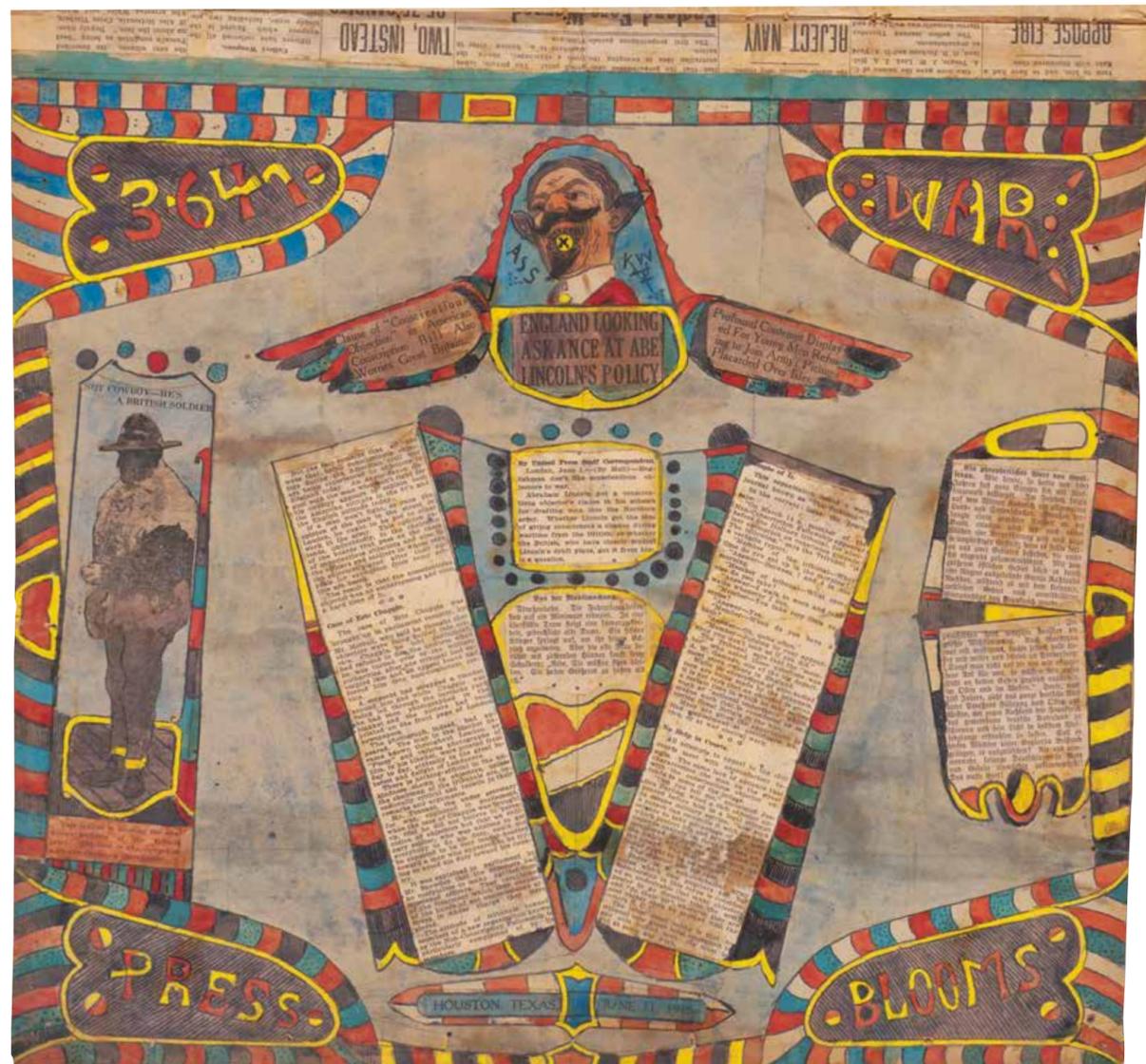


Plate 3641 War Press Blooms, June 11, 1916, 16 1/4 x 18 in.
The Menil Collection, Houston



Plate 4301 Cutting 2 Aero EEE, February 6, 1919, 17 x 16 1/2 in.
Courtesy Stephen Romano, New York

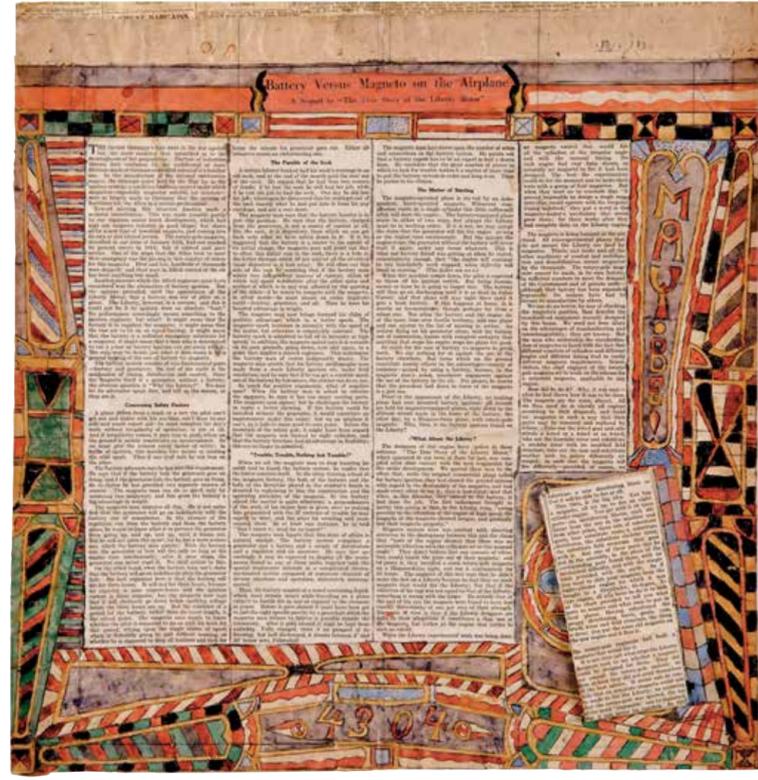


Plate 4302 War Trial Aero, February 1, 1919,
17 x 16½ in.
Courtesy Stephen Romano, New York

Plate 4304 Maybe, n.d. (February 1919),
17 x 16½ in.
Courtesy Stephen Romano, New York

Plate 4315 Aeroy, February 26, 1919, 16½ x 15 in.
Courtesy Stephen Romano, New York

Plate 4322 Bosh Nonsense, March 4, 1919, 17 x 16½ in.
Courtesy Stephen Romano, New York

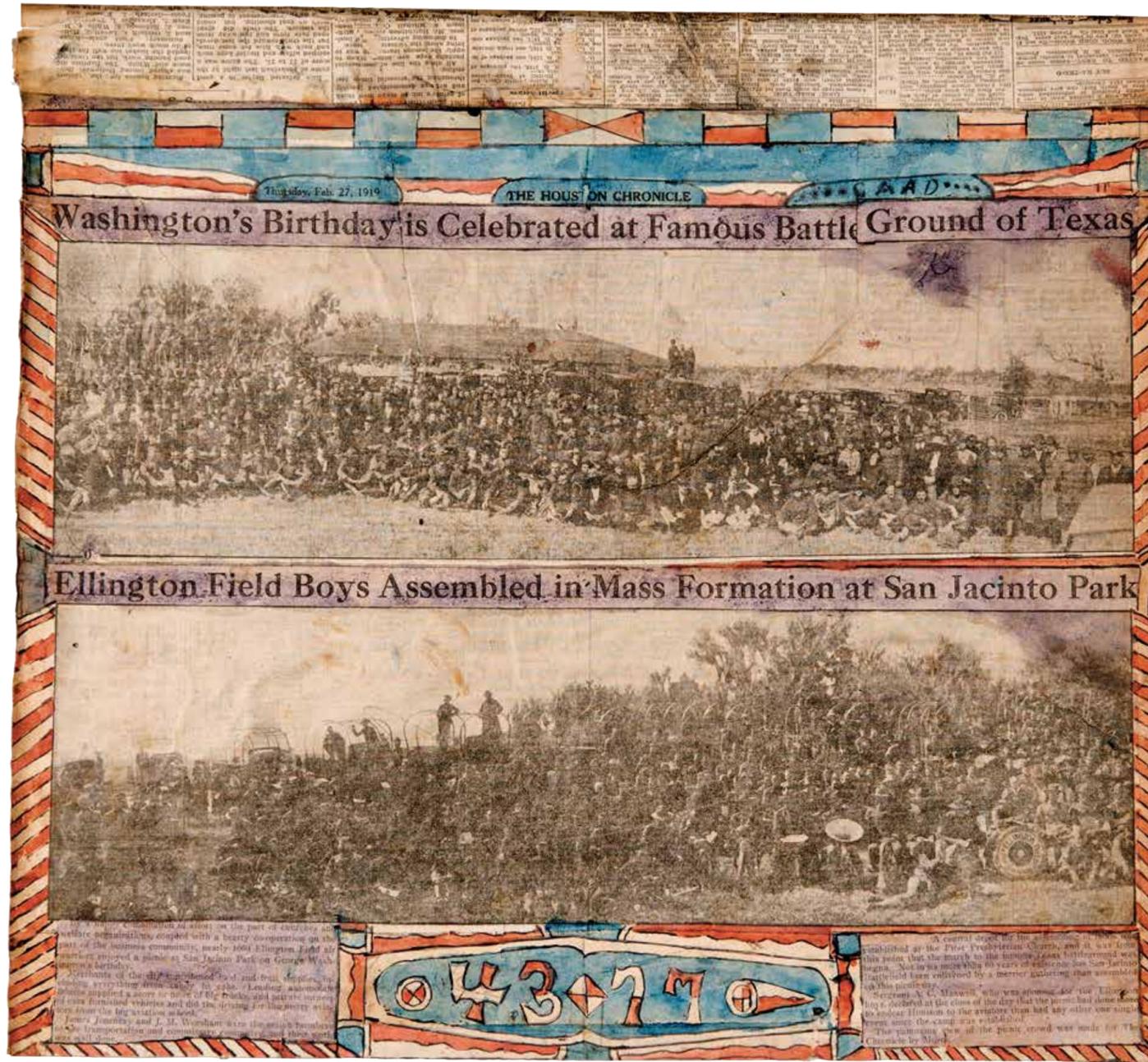


Plate 4317 Press Blooms (Washington's Birthday is Celebrated), February 27, 1919, 15 x 16 1/2 in. Courtesy Stephen Romano, New York

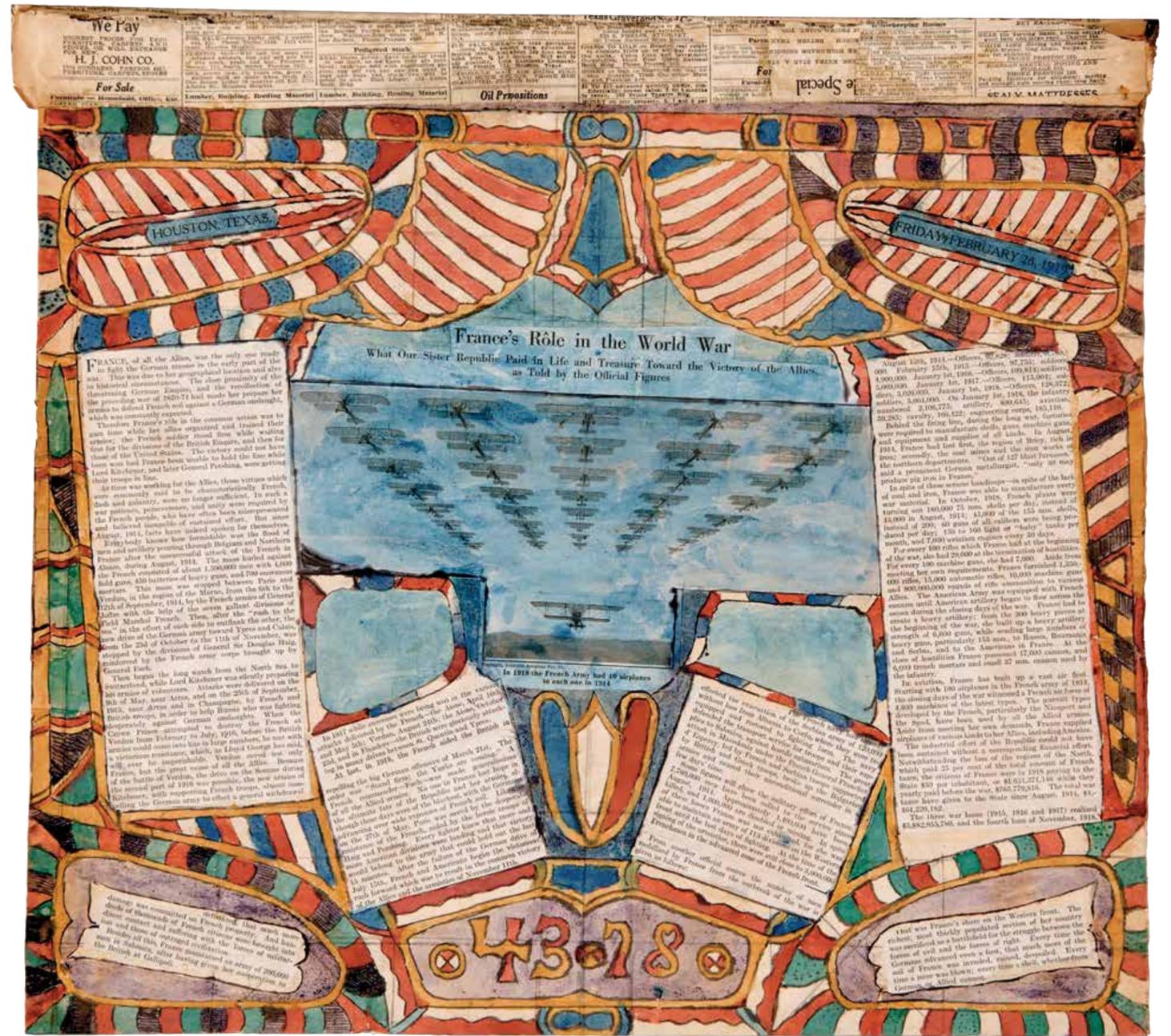


Plate 4318 Press Blooms (France's Rôle in the World War), February 28, 1919, 16 x 16 1/2 in. Courtesy Stephen Romano, New York

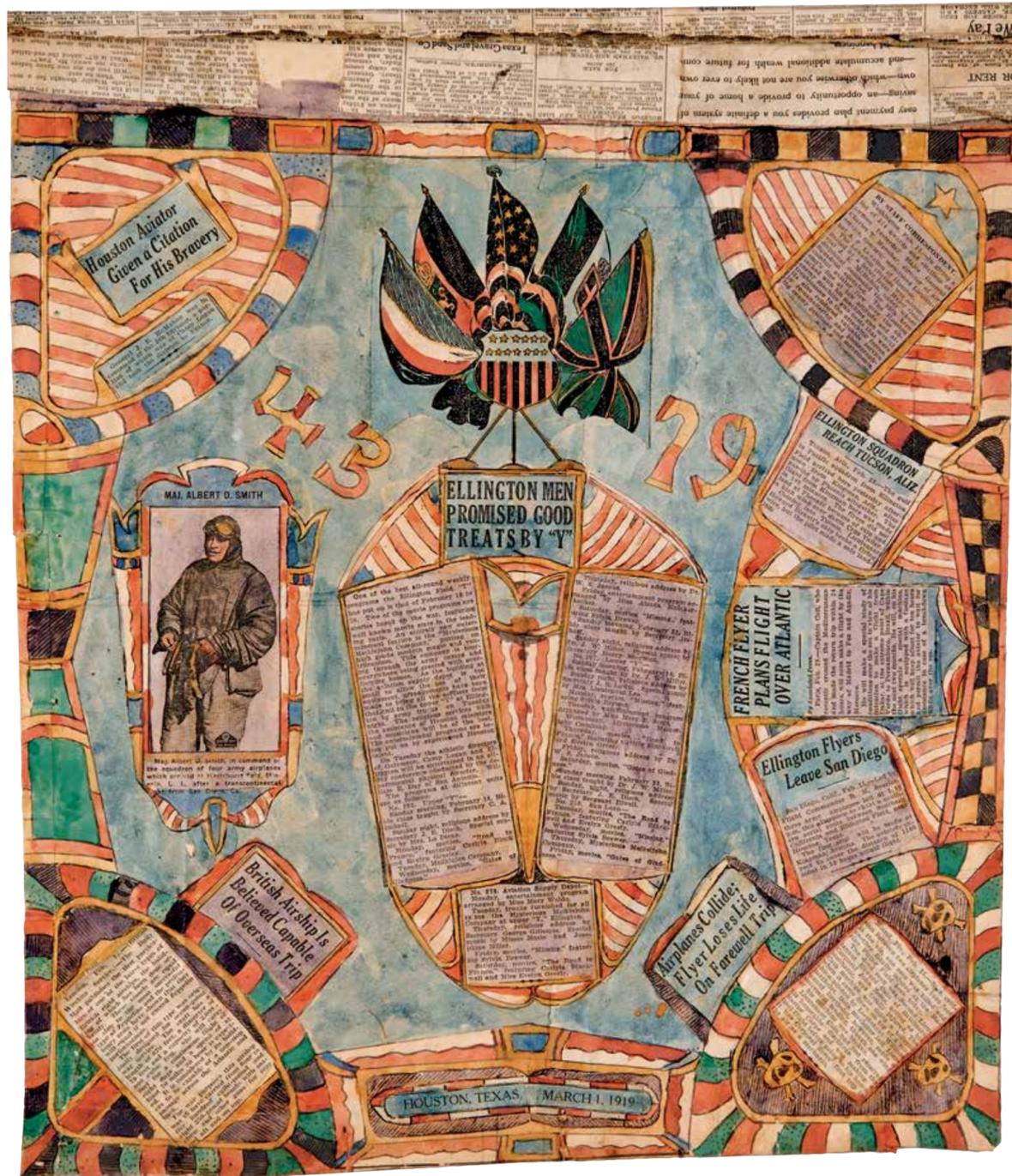


Plate 4319 Press Blooms (Ellington Men Promised Good Treats by "Y"), March 1, 1919, 17 x 16 1/4 in.
 Courtesy Stephen Romano, New York

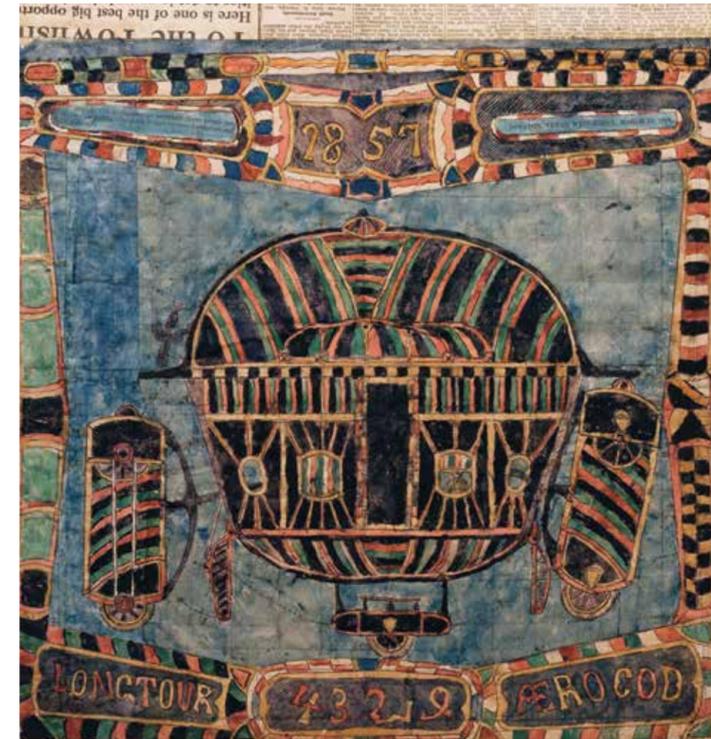


Plate 4329 Long Tour Aero Cod, March 12, 1919, 17 x 16 1/4 in.
 Courtesy Stephen Romano, New York

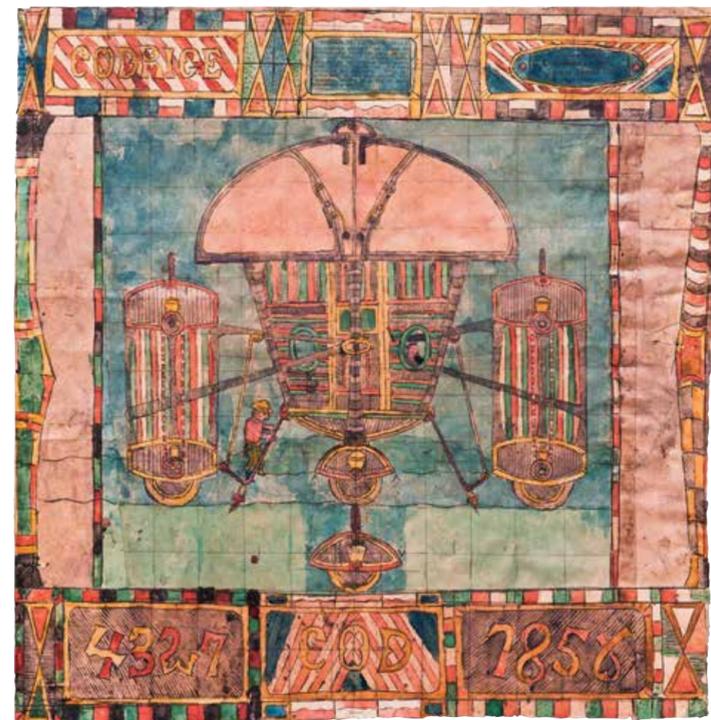


Plate 4327 Codrige Cod, March 10, 1919, 17 x 16 1/4 in.
 Collection of Tom Duncan, New York

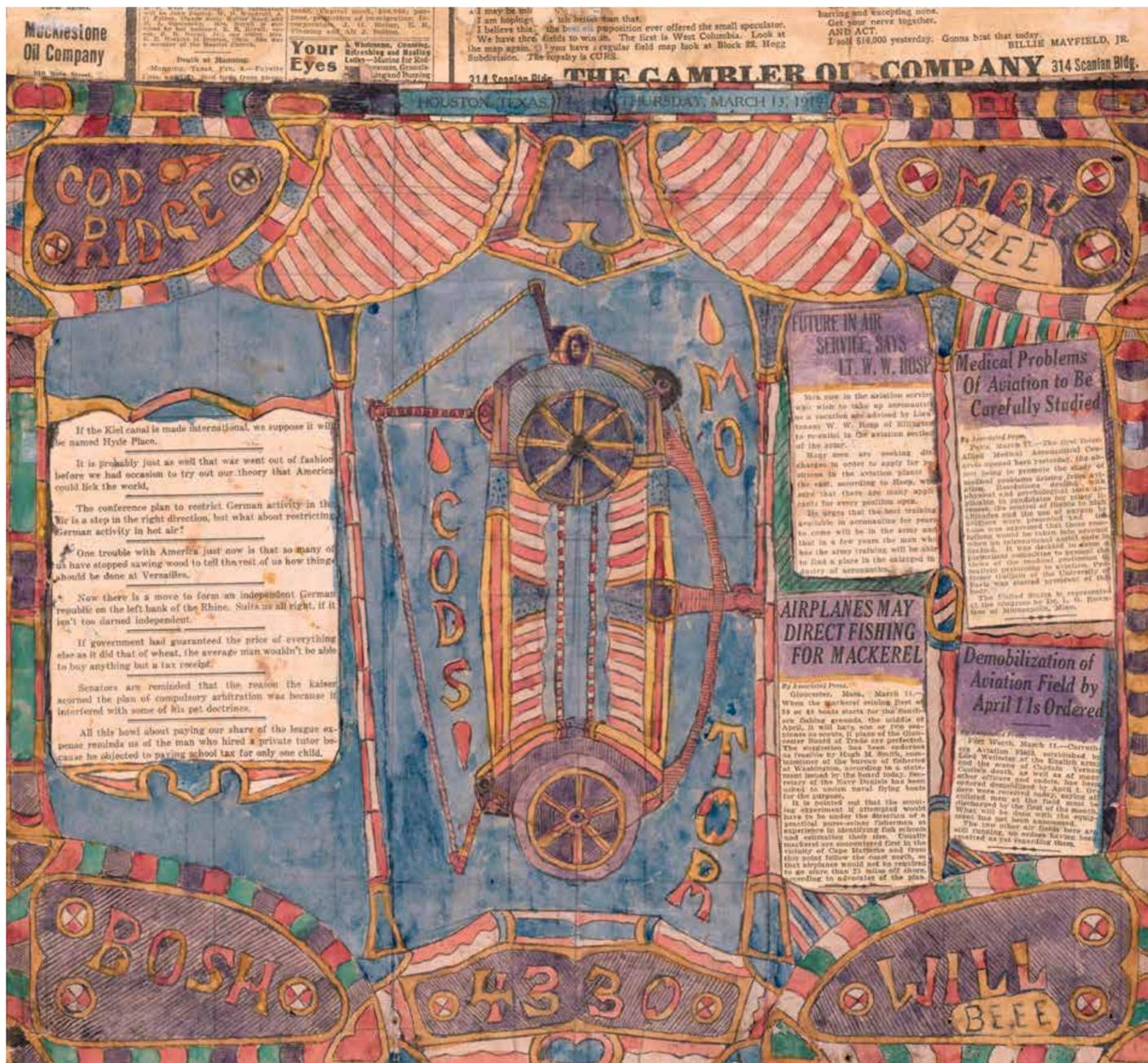


Plate 4330 Cod Ridge Bosh May Bee Will Bee, March 13, 1919, 17 x 16 1/2 in.
The Museum of Everything, London

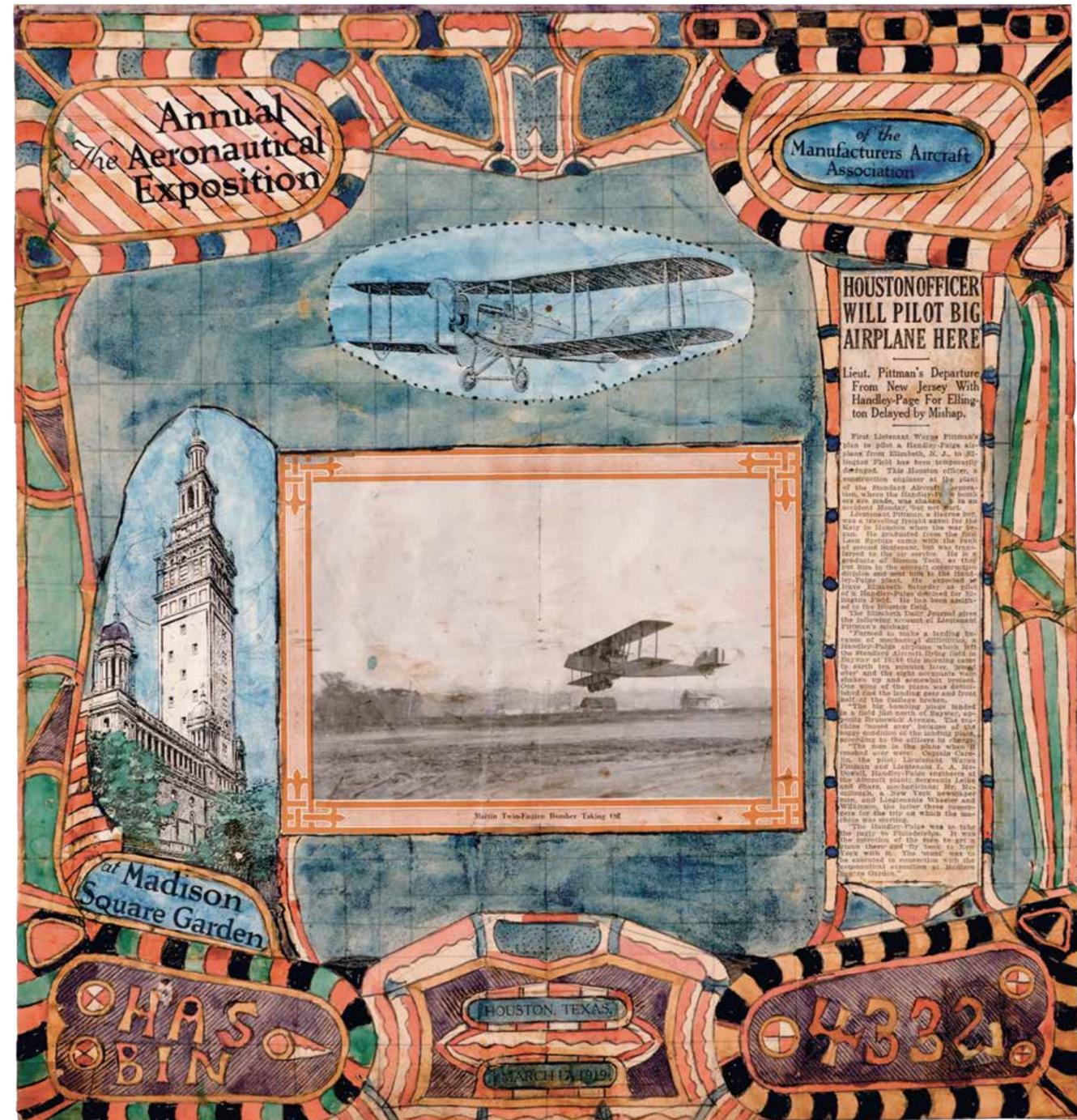


Plate 4332 Has Bin, March 17, 1919, 17 x 16 1/2 in.
Courtesy Stephen Romano, New York



Plate 4334 Cod Codridges Fallease, March 20, 1919, 17 x 16½ in.
The Museum of Everything, London



Plate 4335 Self Lob Absurd, March 21, 1919, 17 x 16½ in.
Courtesy Stephen Romano, New York

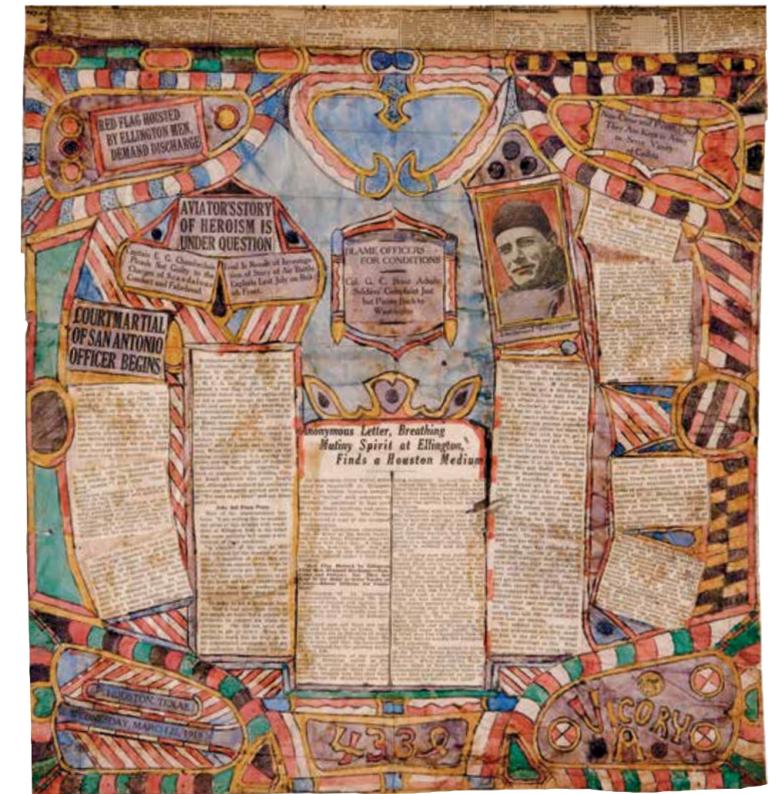


Plate 4339 Vicory A, March 26, 1919, 17 x 16½ in.
Courtesy Stephen Romano, New York

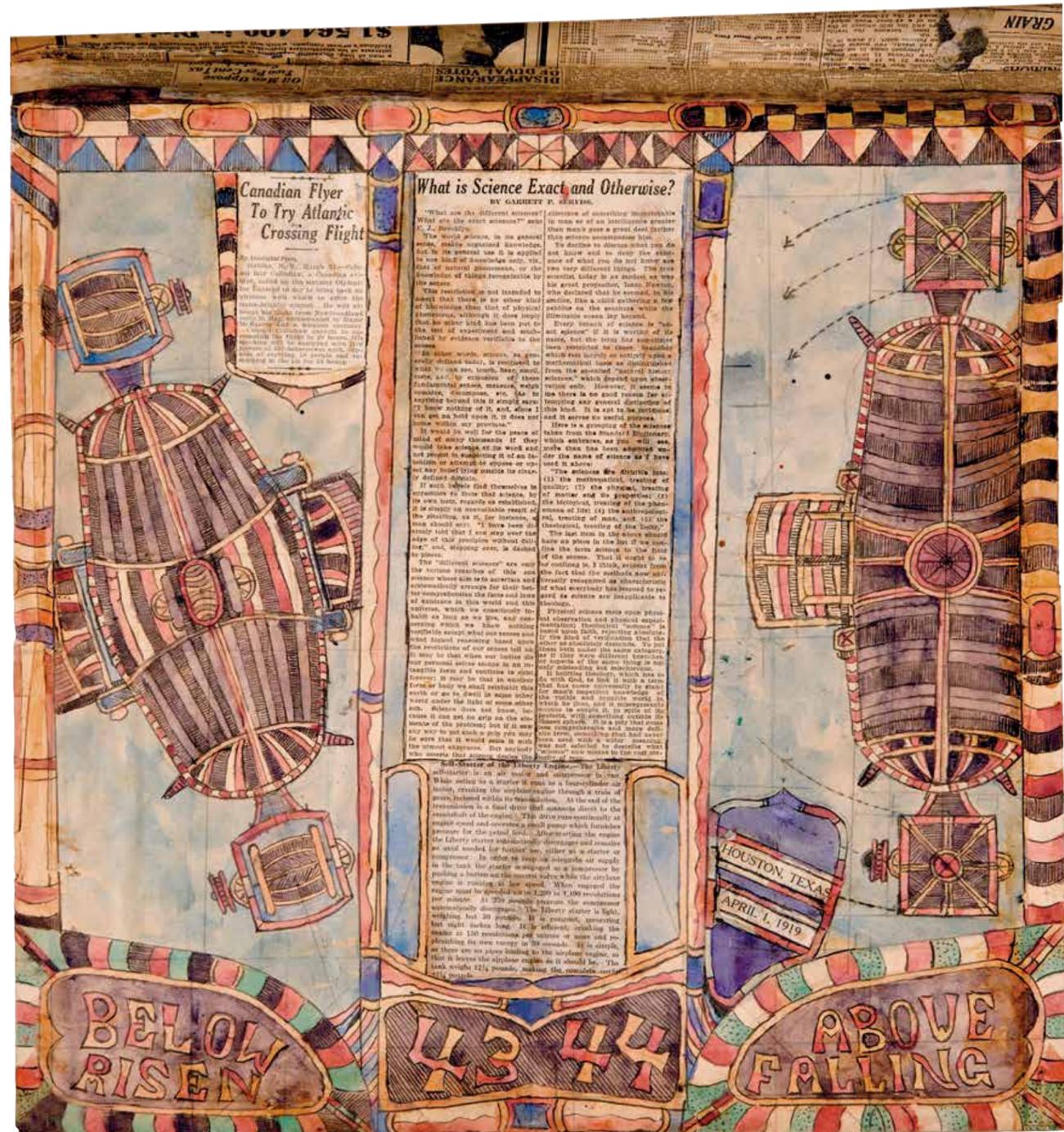


Plate 4344 Below Risen Above Falling, April 1, 1919, 16½ × 16½ in. Courtesy Stephen Romano, New York

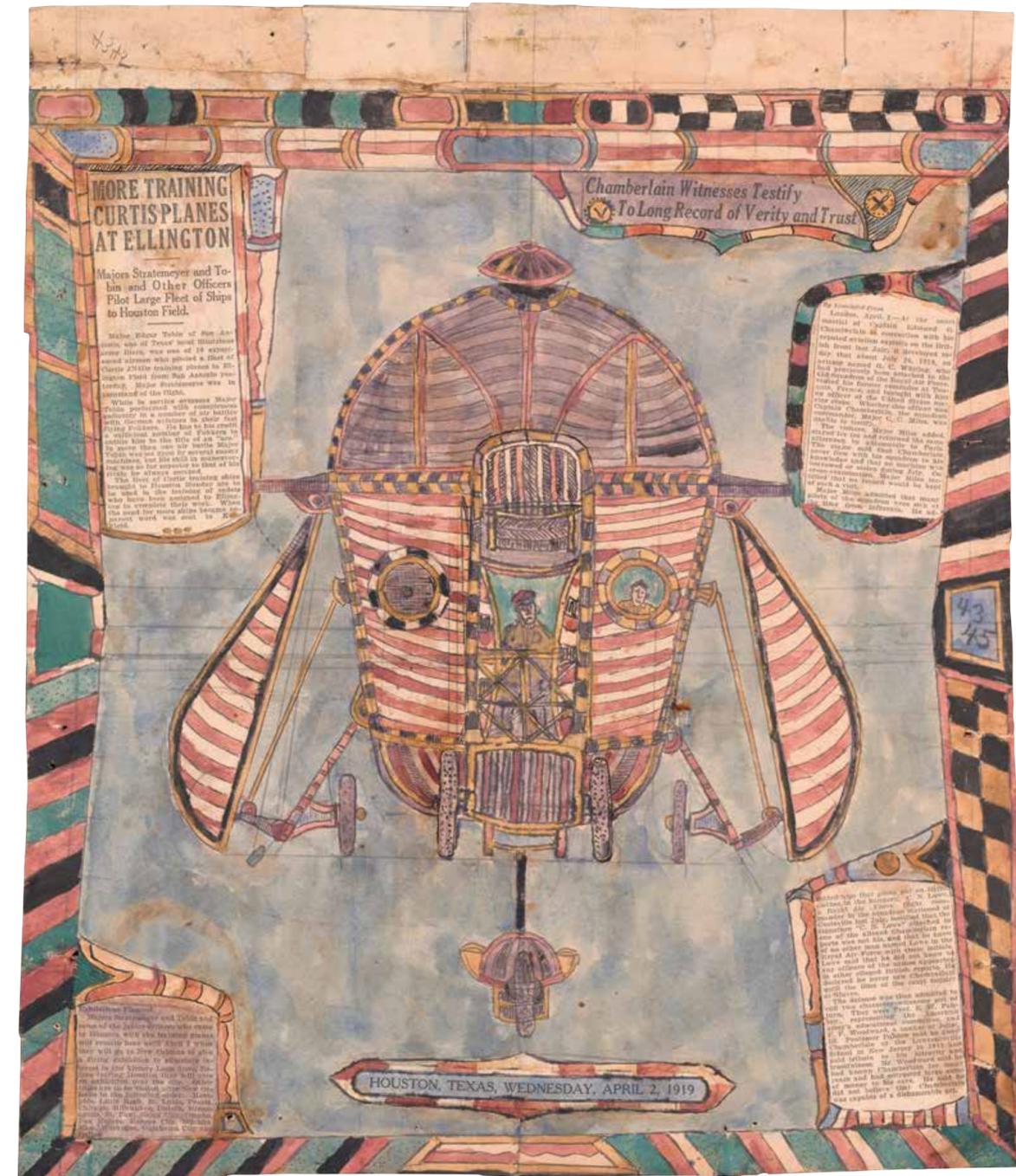


Plate 4345(a) Press Blooms (More Training Curtiss Planes at Ellington), April 2, 1919, 17 × 16 in. The Museum of Everything, London

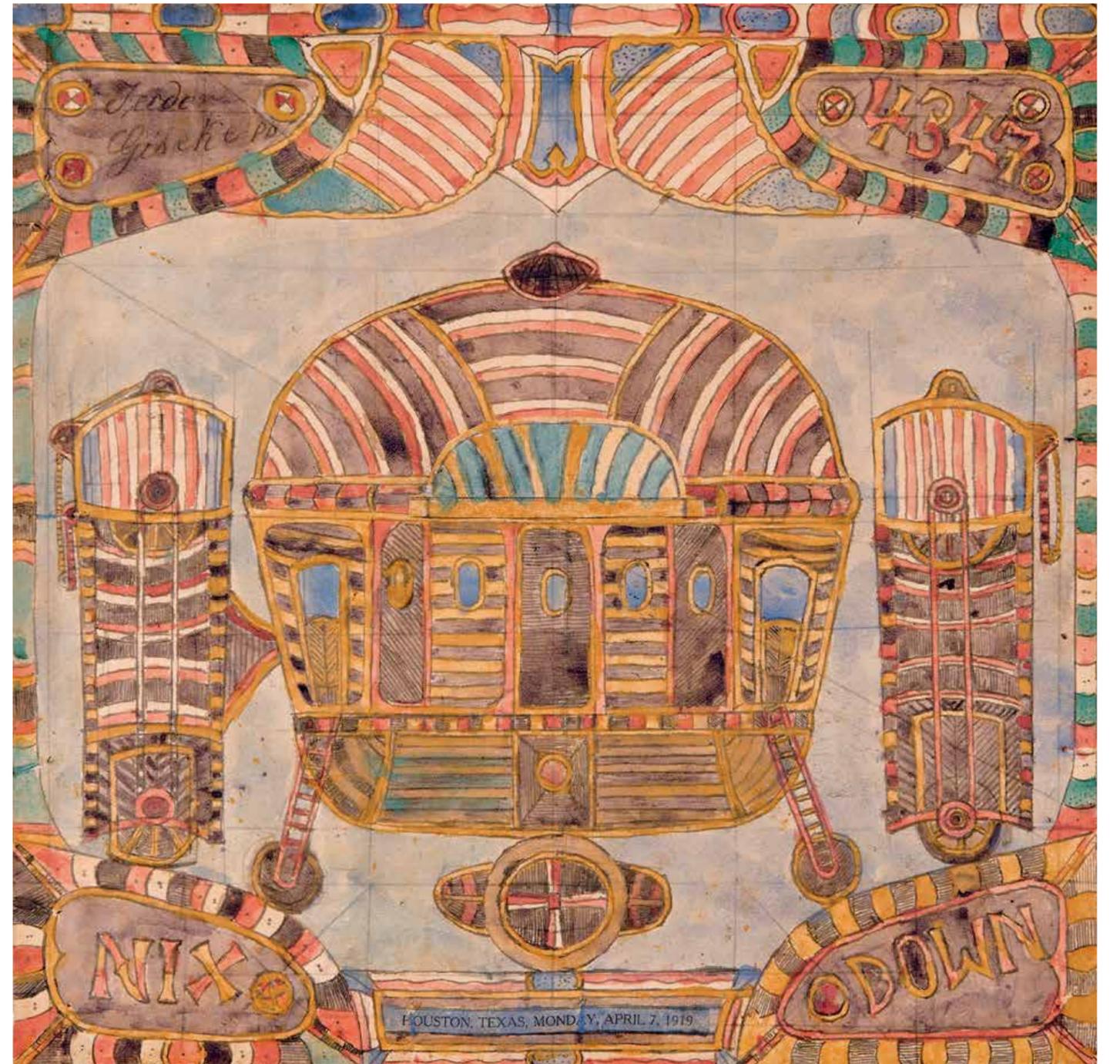




Plate 4358 Aero Mir Long Trip, April 22, 1919, 16½ x 16½ in.
Collection of Michael Burke, New York



Plate 4373 Will Serve Maybe Hadleef, n.d. (May 1919), 16½ x 16½ in.
Collection of Larry Dumont, Pennsylvania

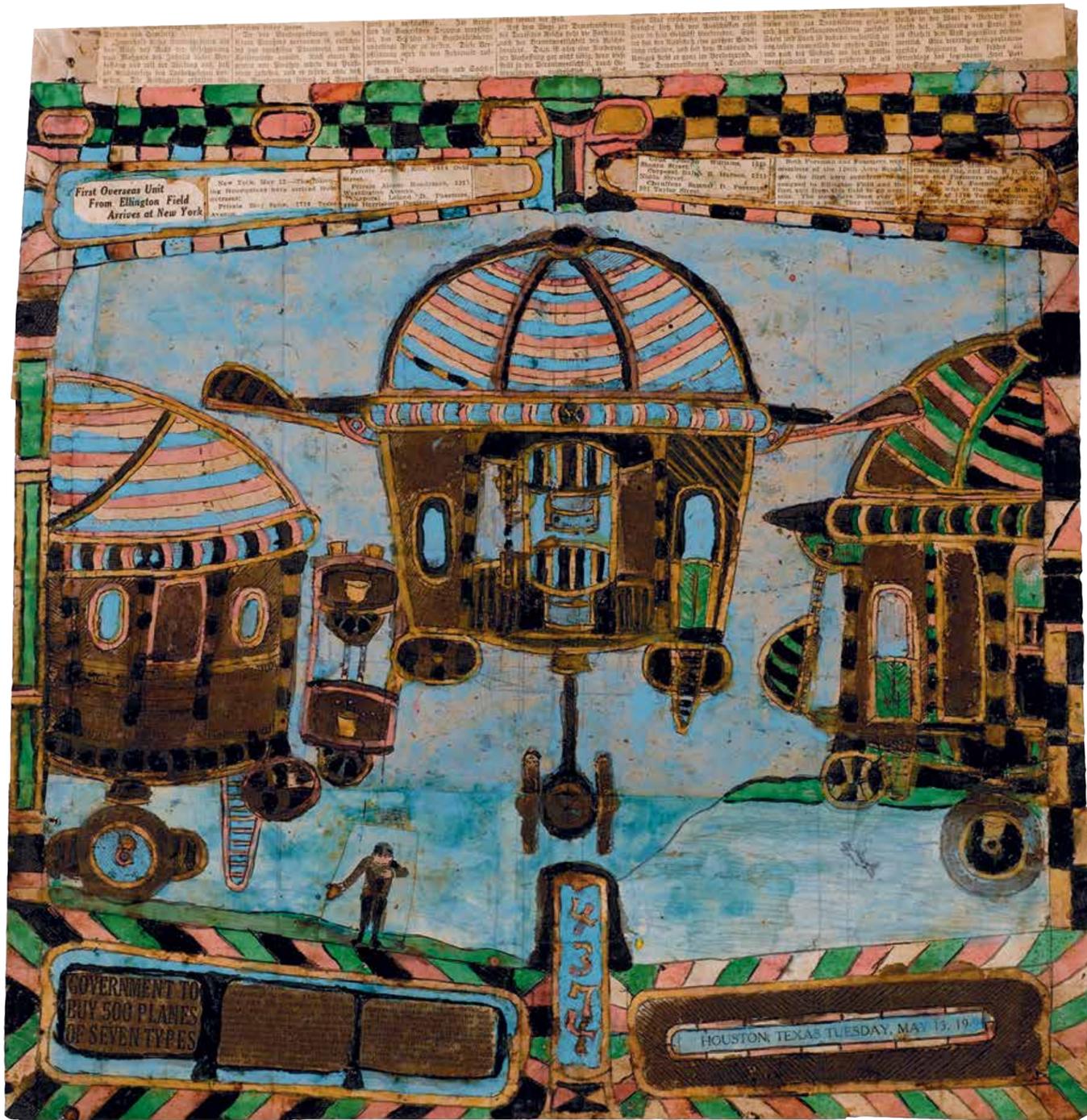


Plate 4374 Press Blooms (Government To Buy 500 Planes of Seven Types), May 13, 1919, 16½ x 16½ in. Collection of Larry Dumont, Pennsylvania



Plate 4376 Press Blooms (Navy Balloon Ends Day and Night Trip), n.d. (May 1919), 17 x 16½ in. Courtesy Stephen Romano, New York



Plate 4393 Nixon Down Fallen, June 9, 1919, 16½ x 16½ in.
 Courtesy Stephen Romano, New York

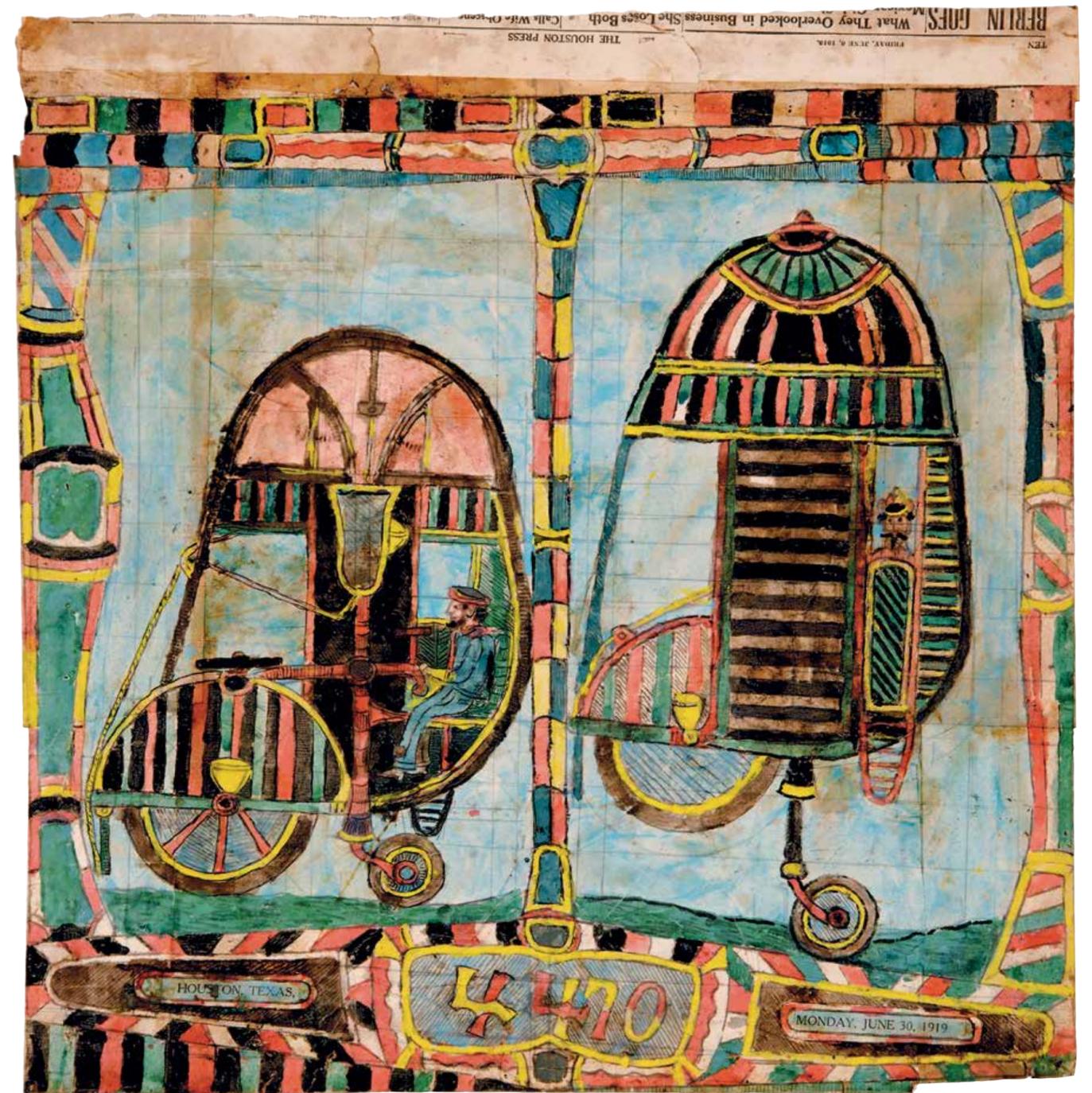


Plate 4410 June 30, 1919, 16½ x 16½ in.
 Courtesy Stephen Romano, New York

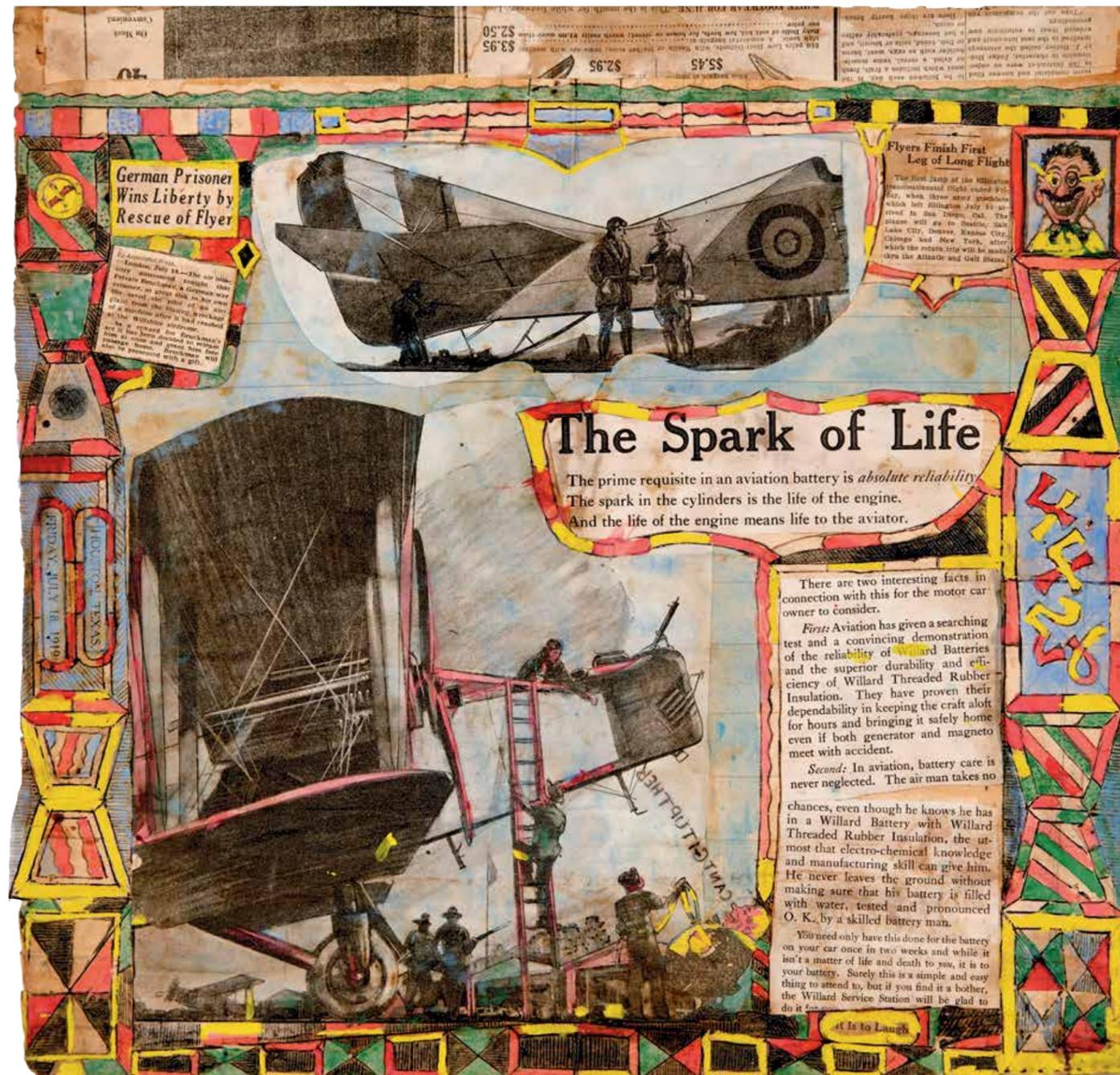


Plate 4426 Press Blooms (The Spark of Life), July 18, 1919, 16 1/2 x 16 1/2 in. Courtesy Stephen Romano, New York



Plate 4441 Press Blooms (Attacking Forest Fires with Gas Bombs), August 6, 1919, 16 1/2 x 16 1/2 in. Collection of J. Kevin O'Rourke, Maryland



Plate 4427 Mira, n.d. (July 1919), 16½ x 16½ in.
 Courtesy Stephen Romano, New York

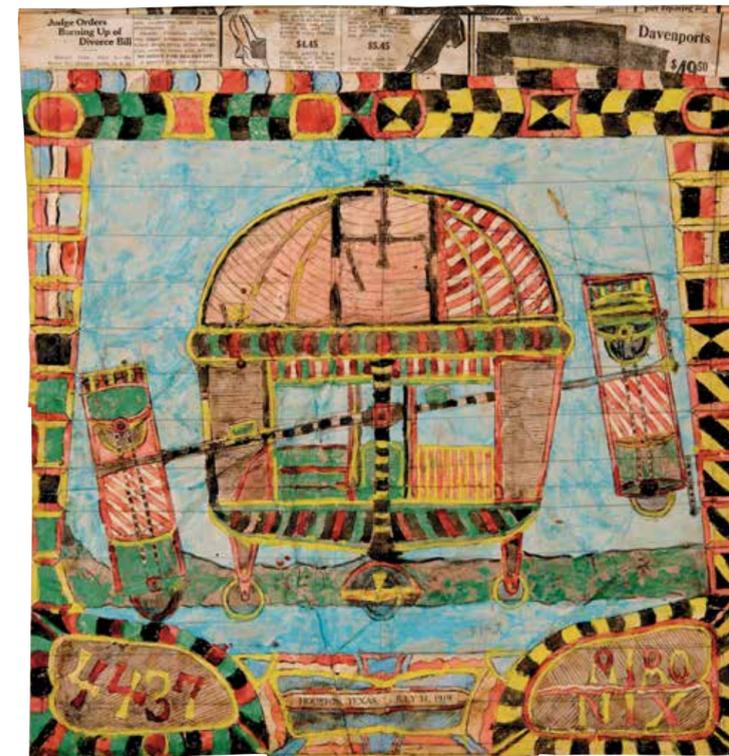


Plate 4437 Airo Nix, July 31, 1919, 16½ x 16½ in.
 Courtesy Stephen Romano, New York

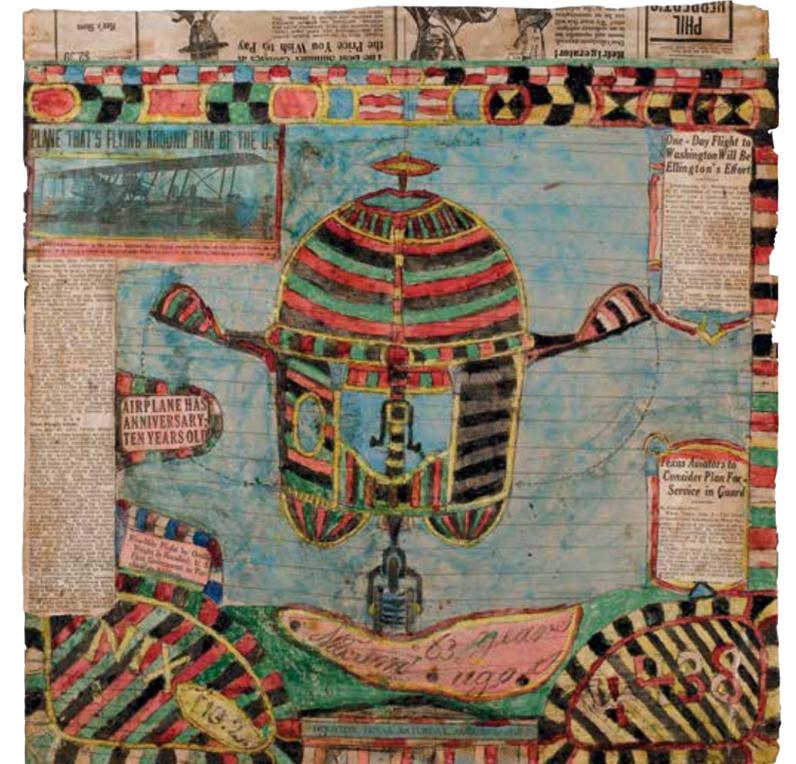


Plate 4438 Nix Nixon 63 Years Ago, August 6, 1919,
 16½ x 16½ in.
 Collection of Phil Allocco



Plate 4459 Gander Boddy Alive Shutoff, August 29, 1919, 16 1/2 x 16 in.
Courtesy Stephen Romano, New York



Plate 4463 Press Blooms (Delivering Mail to Steamer After It Has Sailed), August 30, 1919, 14 x 16 in.
Courtesy Stephen Romano, New York

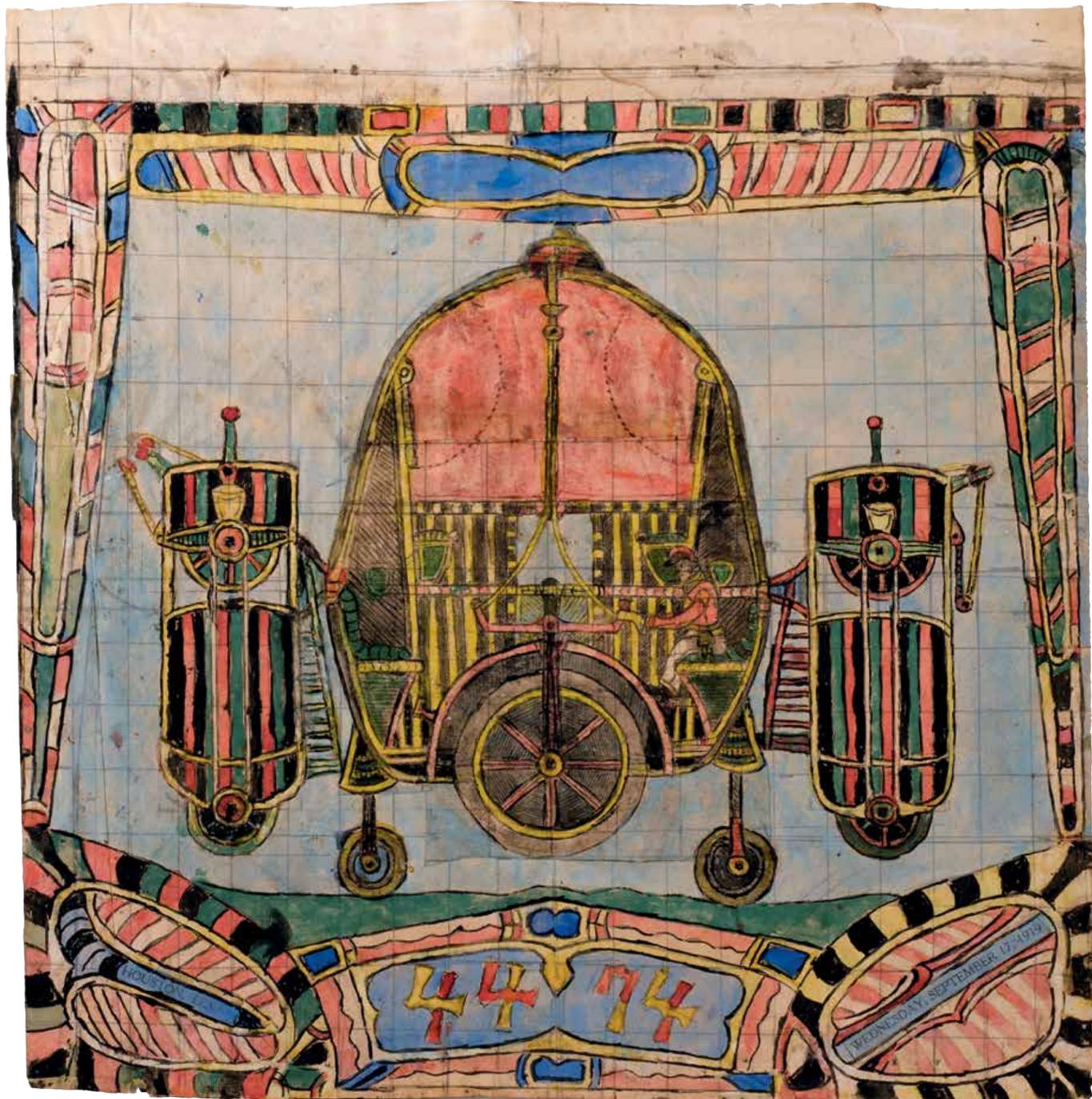


Plate 4474 September 17, 1919, 17 x 16½ in.
Collection of Stephen Romano, New York



Plate 4487 Myos Deck, October 7, 1919, 16½ x 16½ in.
Collection of J. Kevin O'Rourke, Maryland



Plate 4488 Central Broad Aero Myo, October 11, 1919,
16½ x 16½ in.
Collection of J. Kevin O'Rourke, Maryland



Plate 4489 Long Center Myo, October 12, 1919, 16½ × 16½ in.
Collection of J. Kevin O'Rourke, Maryland



Plate 4490 Aero Mio, October 14, 1919, 16½ × 16½ in.
Collection of J. Kevin O'Rourke, Maryland

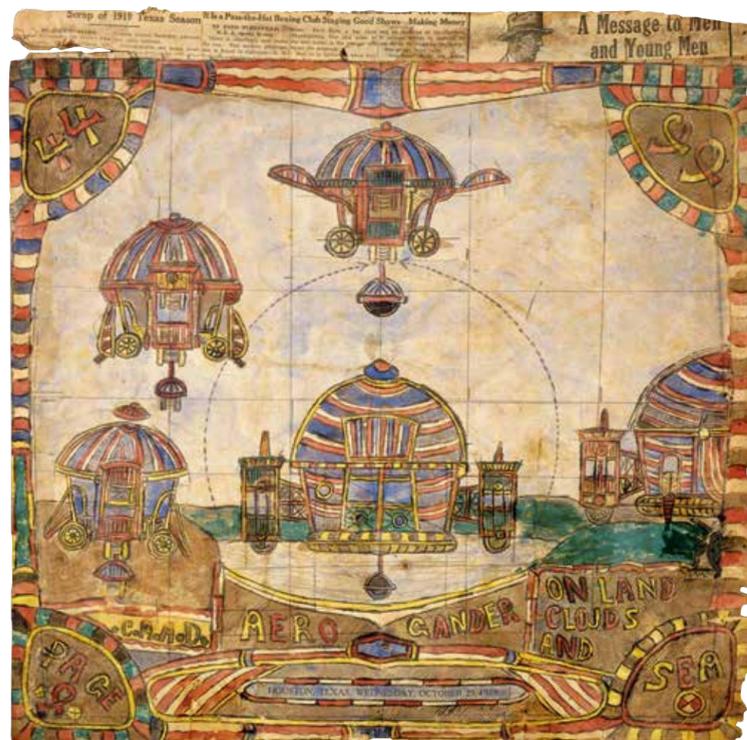


Plate 4499 Aero Gander on Land Clouds and Sea, October 29, 1919, 17 x 16½ in. Collection of Selig and Angela Sacks, New York

Plate 4501 Aero Gander from Below, November 1, 1919, 17 x 16½ in. Private collection



Plate 4504 Press Blooms (Giant Airplane on "Round the Rim" Trip), November 4, 1919, 17 x 16½ in. Courtesy Stephen Romano, New York



Plate 4506 Goosey Air Press Motor,
November 5, 1919, 17 × 16½ in.
Collection of Flora and Adam Hanft, New York



Plate 4507 Aero Gander, November 8, 1919, 17 × 16½ in.
Collection of Flora and Adam Hanft, New York



Plate 4509 Olds, November 10, 1919, 17 1/2 x 17 in. Courtesy Stephen Romano, New York



Plate 4510 Aero Gander Above, November 13, 1919, 17 1/2 x 17 in. Courtesy Stephen Romano, New York



Plate 4511 Aero Gander Up from Below, November 11, 1919, 17 x 17 in.
 Courtesy Stephen Romano, New York



Plate 4513 What May Happn Wont Pay, November 17, 1919, 17 x 17 in.
 Collection of J. Kevin O'Rourke, Maryland

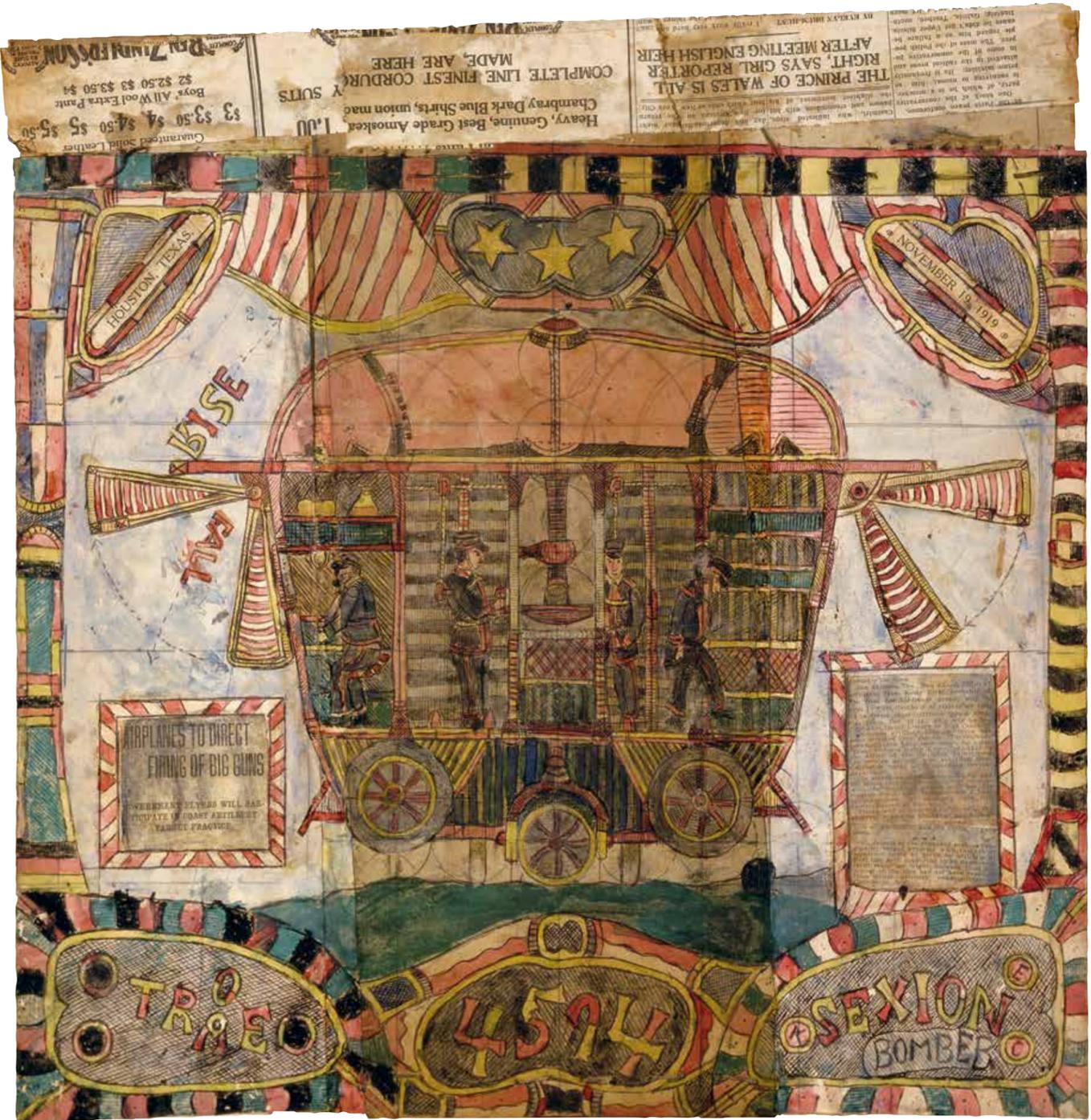


Plate 4514 Troae Sexion Bomber, November 19, 1919, 17 x 17 in.
Collection of J. Kevin O'Rourke, Maryland

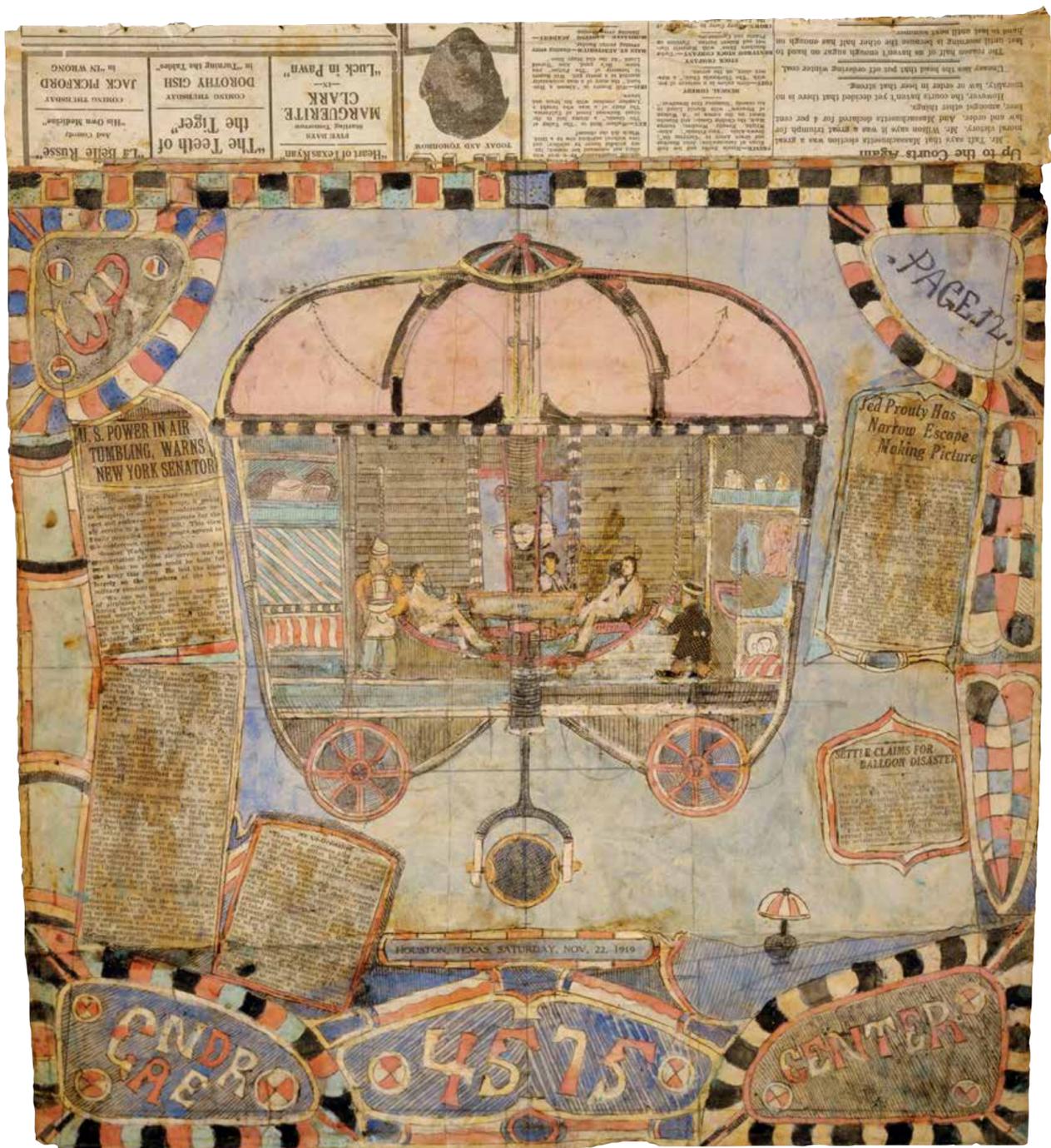


Plate 4515 Gander Center Up, November 22, 1919, 19 x 17 in.
High Museum of Art, Atlanta, Georgia, Norfolk Southern Collection of
Self-Taught Art

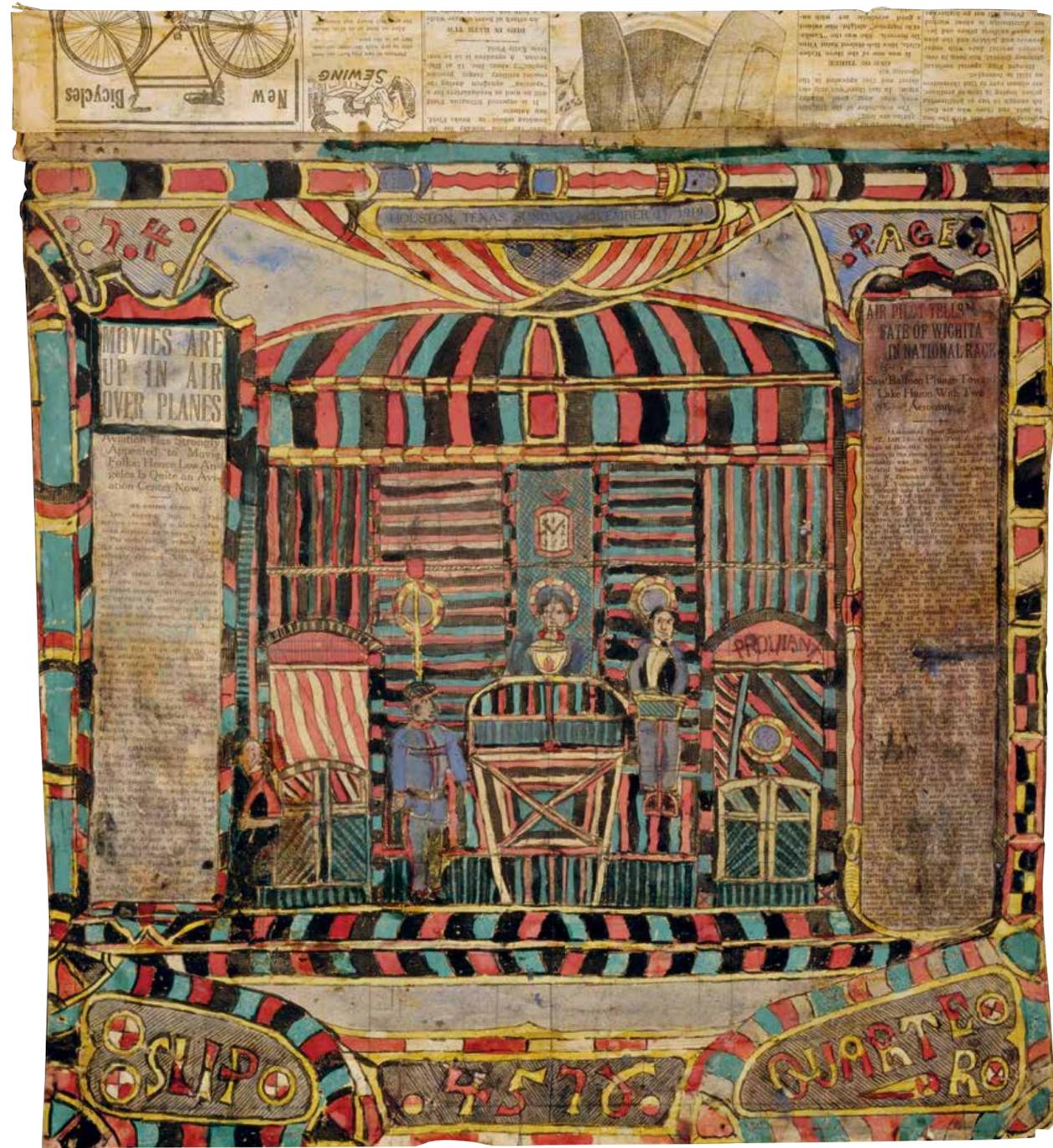


Plate 4516 Slip Quarter, November 23, 1919, 19 x 17 in.
High Museum of Art, Atlanta, Georgia, Norfolk Southern Collection of
Self-Taught Art

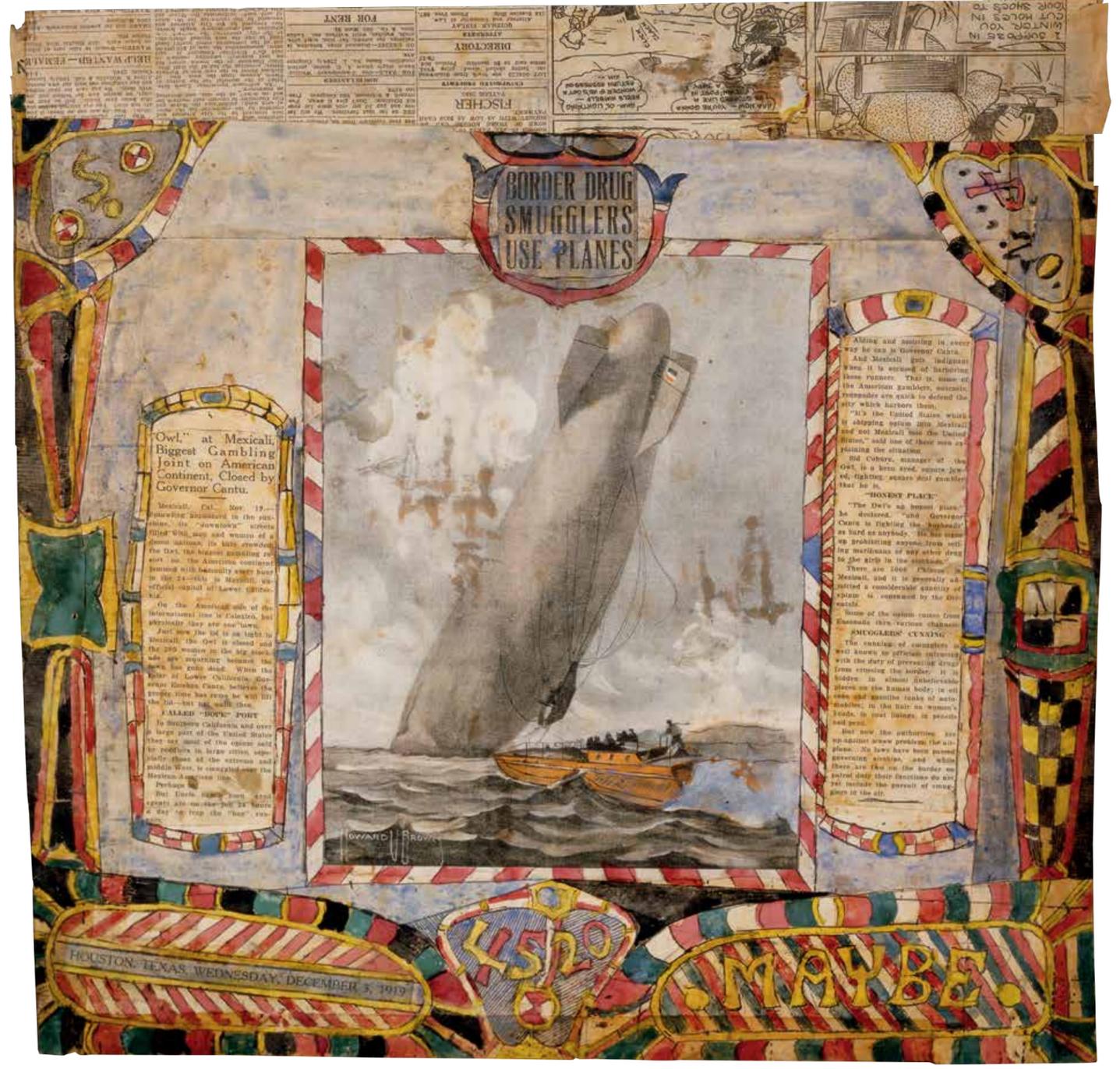


Plate 4520 Maybe, December 3, 1919, 17 x 17 in.
The Museum of Everything, London



Plate 4523 Self Acting Fall Ease, December 8, 1919, 17 x 17 in. Courtesy Stephen Romano, New York



Plate 4524 Press Blooms (A Seventy-Mile Hydrodrome), December 12, 1919, 16 1/2 x 31 in. (open) Collection of Stephen Romano, New York



Plate 4527 Gander Up, December 12, 1919, 16 1/2 x 31 in. (verso flap open) Collection of Stephen Romano, New York



Plate 4528 Danedr Landin Body Front or Rear,
December 13, 1919, 17 x 16½ in.
Collection of Thomas Isenberg, New York



Plate 4529 Below Above, December 15, 1919, 16 x 17 in.
Collection of Thomas Isenberg, New York



Plate 4533 Rondo Flanck, December 23, 1919, 17 x 17 in.
Collection of Carole Kraus, New York

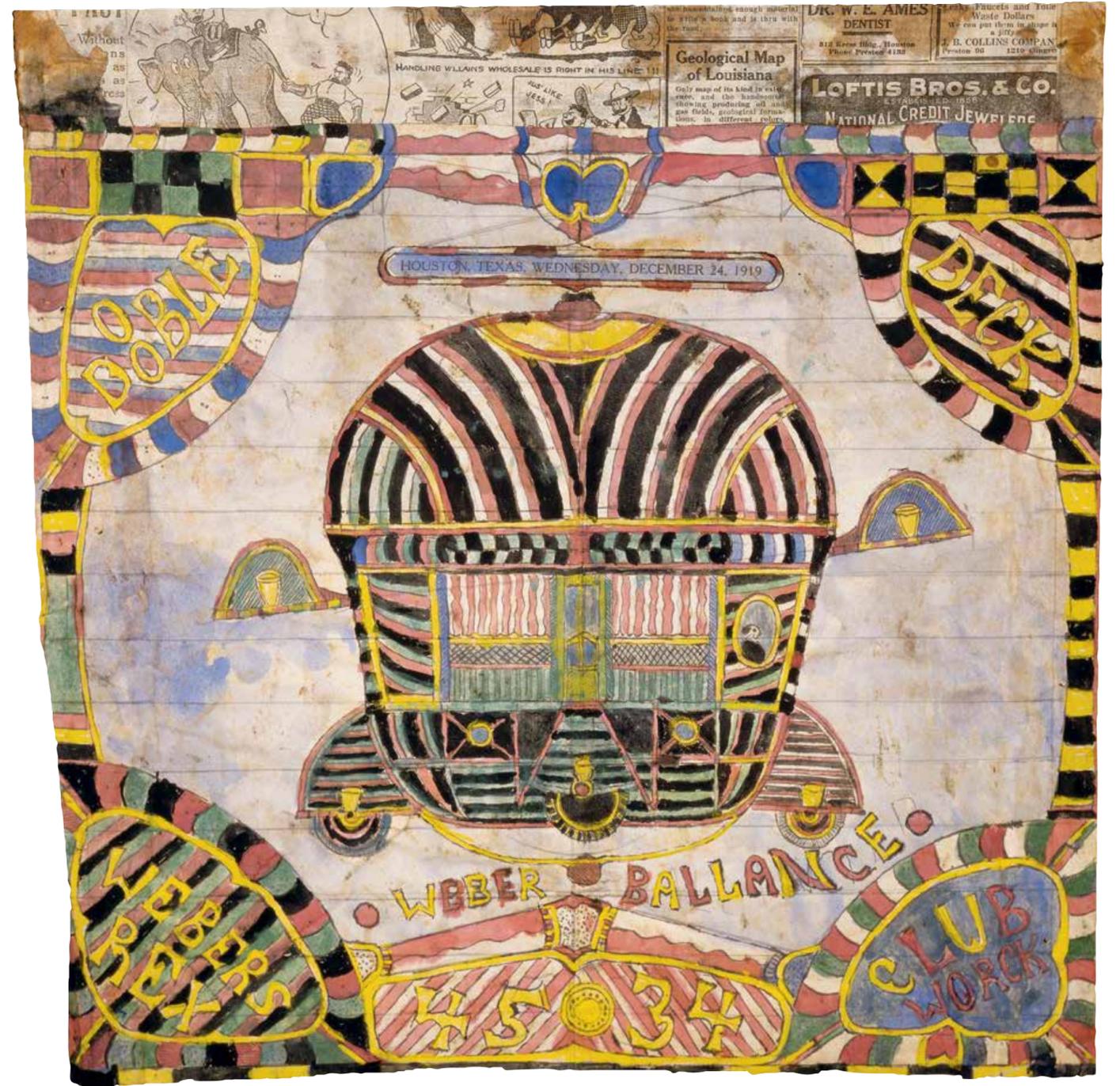


Plate 4534 Webers Rex Club Worck Dooble Deck, December 24, 1919, 17 x 17 in.
Collection of Carole Kraus, New York

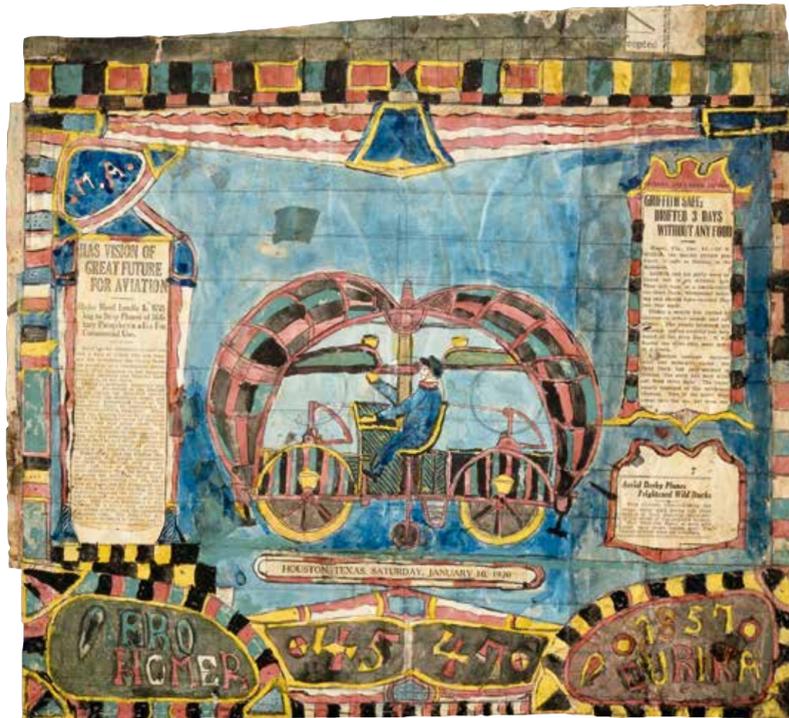


Plate 4547 Aro Homer Eurika, January 10, 1920, 16 x 17 in. The Museum of Everything, London

Plate 4549 Homer Flank Outside, January 14, 1920, 15 3/8 x 16 7/8 in. Private collection

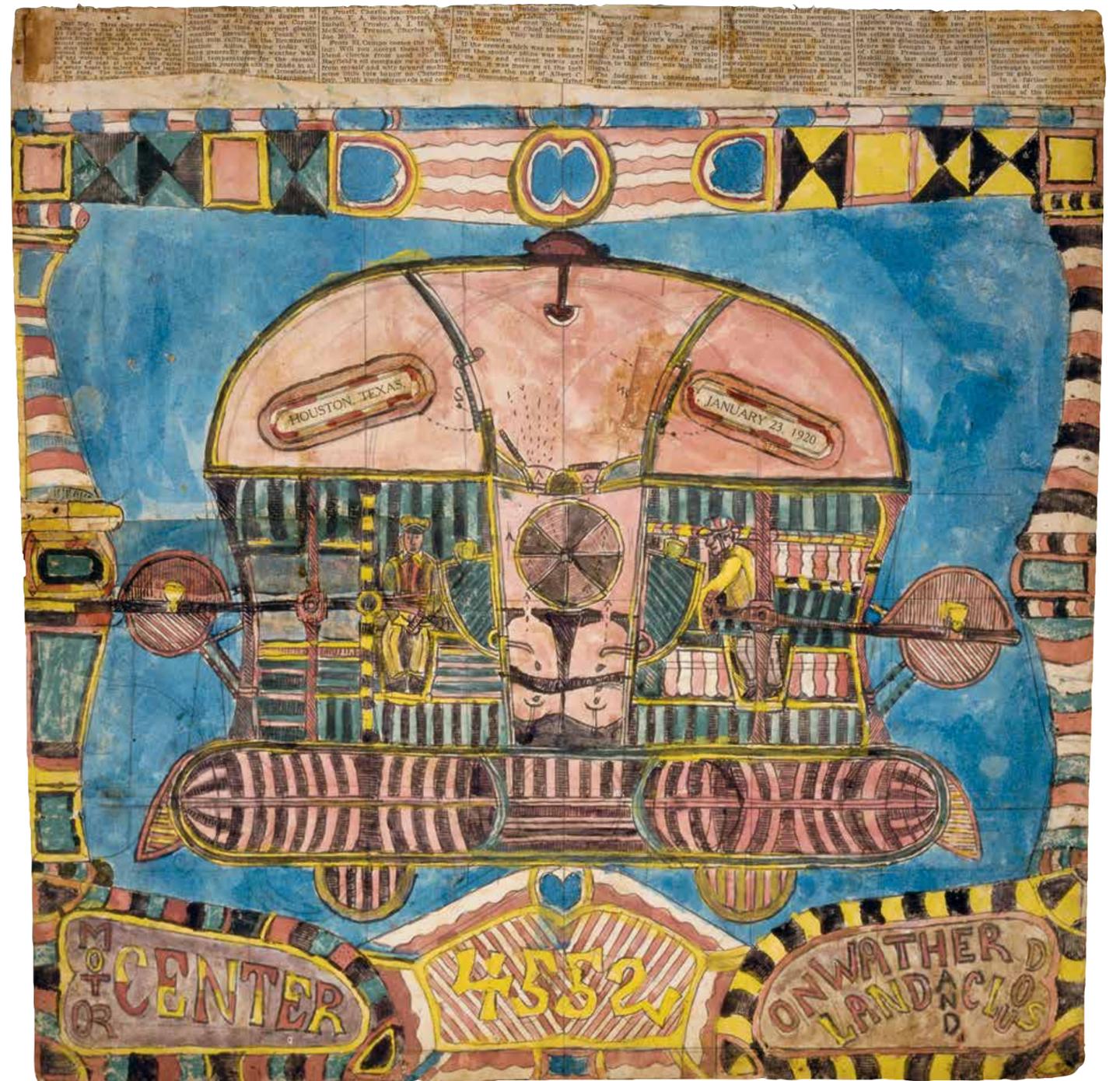


Plate 4552 Motor Center on Wather Land and Clouds, January 23, 1920, 17 x 17 in. Collection of J. Kevin O'Rourke, Maryland



Plate 4553 Centers Deck, January 31, 1920, 17 x 17 in. Collection of J. Kevin O'Rourke, Maryland



Plate 4557 Centras Iner Center, n.d. (February 1920), 15 1/4 x 20 in. The Museum of Everything, London



Plate 4559 Centra Caibn, February 19, 1920, 17 x 16 in.
Courtesy Stephen Romano, New York



Plate 4560 Centra Below, January 30, 1920, 17 1/2 x 16 1/2 in.
Private collection

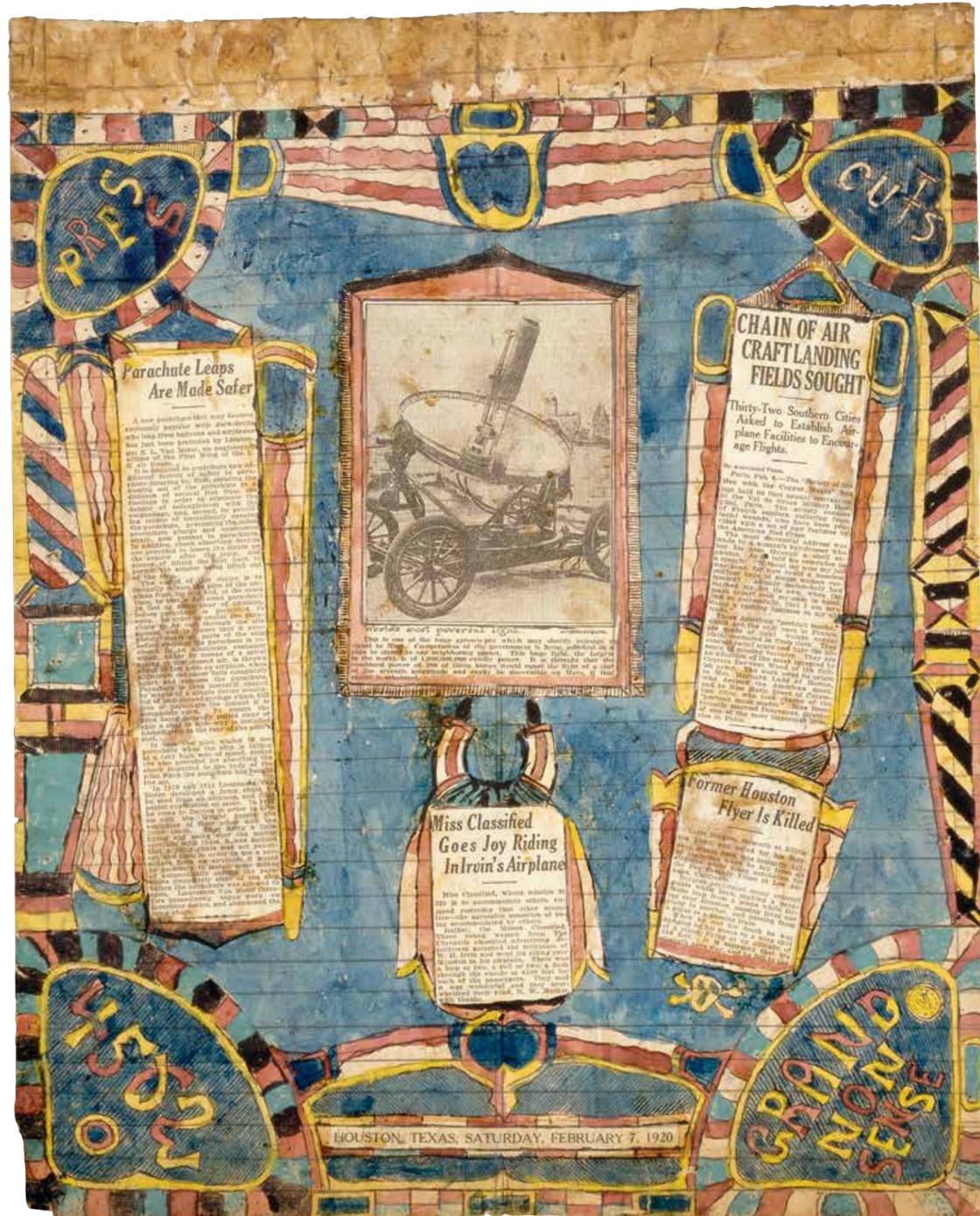


Plate 4562 Grand Nonsense Press Cutts, February 7, 1920, 18 3/4 x 15 in. Collection of Francois Meyer, Switzerland



Plate 4563 Aro Centra Left Flanck, February 9, 1920, 18 3/4 x 15 in. Collection of Francois Meyer, Switzerland



Plate 4567 Short Centralia Outside Flanck, March 4, 1920, 18 x 17 in.
 Courtesy Stephen Romano, New York



Plate 4568 Hope, March 7, 1920, 18 x 17 in.
 Courtesy Stephen Romano, New York



Plate 4569 Old Iron Maybs Has Binn Greath Mechans, n.d. (March 1920), 17 x 16½ in. Collection of Scott and Susan Glazer, Chicago



Plate 4570 Burnt Mike Mik Goré, March 10, 1920, 17 x 16½ in. Collection of Scott and Susan Glazer, Chicago



Plate 4577 Press Blooms (Men Who Did),
March 20, 1920, 17 x 16½ in.
The Museum of Everything, London

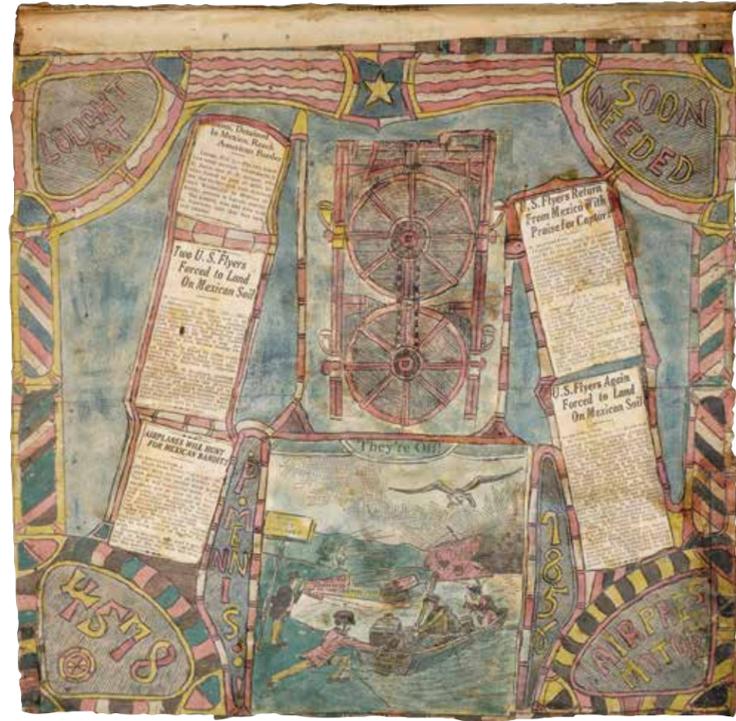


Plate 4578 Air Press Motor Lought At Soon Needed,
n.d. (March 1920), 17 x 16½ in.
The Museum of Everything, London



Plate 4586 Aero Trump, March 29, 1920, 19½ x 16½ in.
Collection of Audrey Heckler, New York

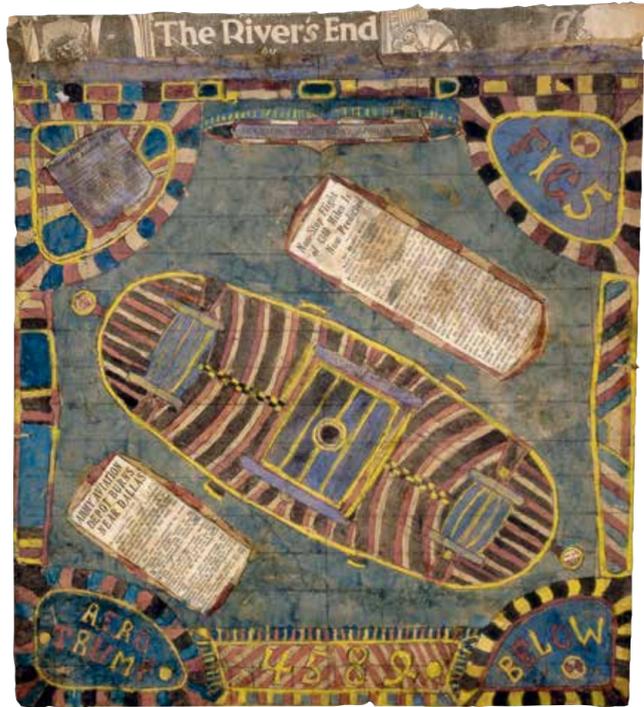


Plate 4566 Motor Stearen, March 1, 1920,
17 x 17 in.
Collection of Jay and Victoria Wehnert, Houston

Plate 4589 Aero Trump Below, April 9, 1920,
18½ x 16½ in.
Courtesy Stephen Romano, New York



Plate 4599 Trump Flanck, April 24, 1920, 16 x 26 in.
Collection of J. Kevin O'Rourke, Maryland



Plate 4602 No Fier Homer Lower Part Dream and Real,
 April 27, 1920, 17 x 16½ in.
 Private collection

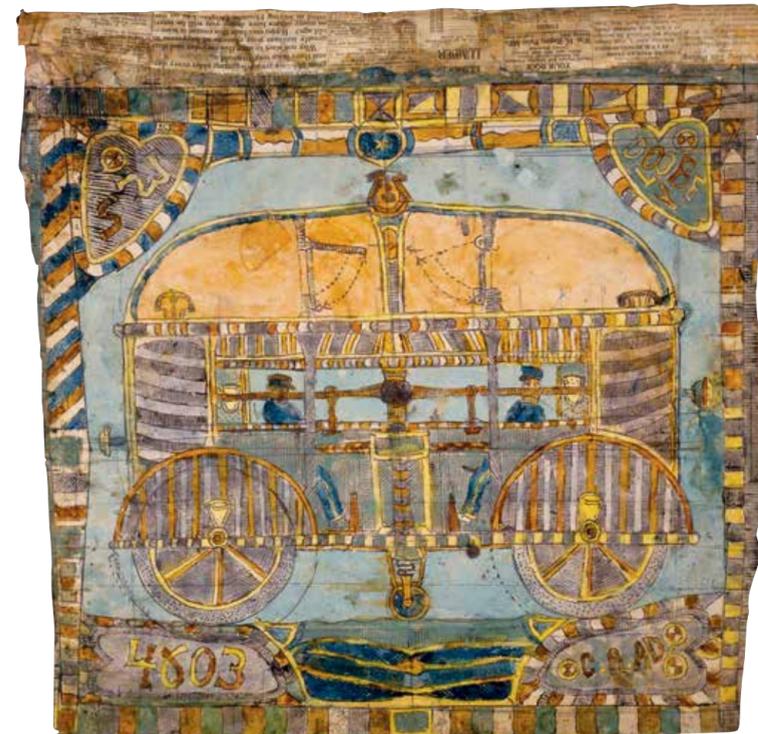


Plate 4603 Doobely, April 28, 1920, 17½ x 16 in.
 Private collection

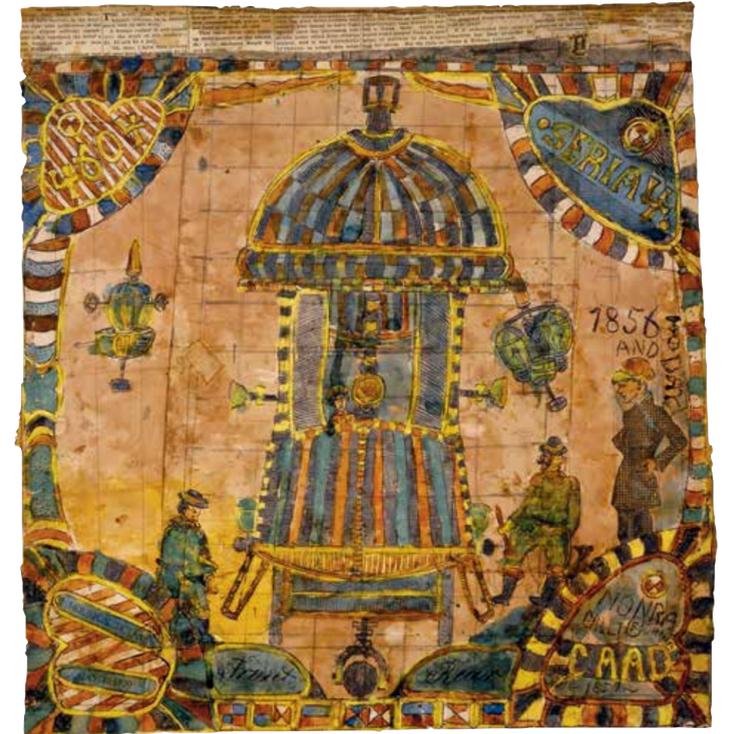


Plate 4604 Seria 4, May 1, 1920, 17½ x 16 in.
 Private collection



Plate 4610 On Land Sea and Clouds, May 9, 1920, 17½ × 16 in.
Collection of Michael J. Levinthal, Utah



Plate 4614 Aero Gander Central Motors Michael Goré, May 15, 1920, 17½ × 16 in.
Collection of Thomas Isenberg, New York



Plate 4615 Gander Flanck Central Motors, n.d. (May 1920), 17½ × 16 in. Collection of Thomas Isenberg, New York



Plate 4616 Flyers on Paper, May 18, 1920, 17½ × 16 in. Courtesy Stephen Romano, New York

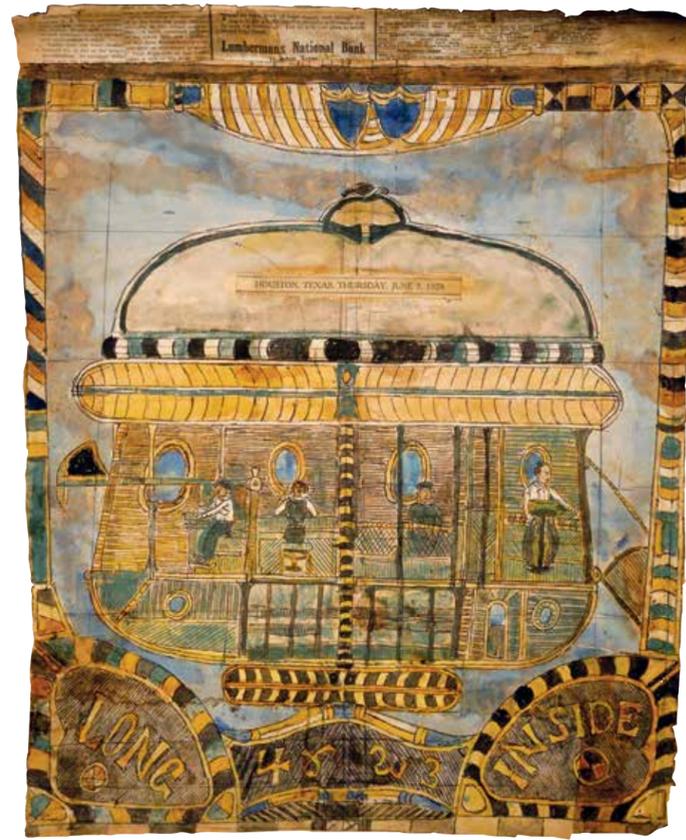


Plate 4619 Homer Flanck Sonora California
Cross the Plans, May 24, 1920, 17½ x 16 in.
The Museum of Everything, London

Plate 4623 Long Inside, June 3, 1920, 18 x 16½ in.
Private collection

Plate 4630 Cos Danger and Expeses Weigh Goods, June 13, 1920, 17 x 16½ in.
Private collection



Plate 4643 Weater Proof Nix Self, July 3, 1920, 17 x 16½ in.
The Museum of Everything, London



Plate 4651 Airo Swallo Fall Easey Top Short, July 15, 1920, 17½ x 17 in.
Collection of Francois Meyer, Switzerland



Plate 4652 Press Blooms (Navy Sale of Seaplanes), July 16, 1920, 17 1/2 x 17 in. Collection of Francois Meyer, Switzerland



Plate 4653 Aero Mose, July 18, 1920, 17 1/2 x 17 in. Collection of Lael and Eugenie Johnson, Chicago



Plate 4677 Has Ben Will Be, August 20, 1920, 19 x 17 1/4 in.
(flap closed and open)
Courtesy Stephen Romano, New York



Plate 4670 Below Fall, August 10, 1920, 19 x 15 1/4 in.
Courtesy Stephen Romano, New York



Plate 4671 LWF Ol Rye, August 12, 1920, 18 x 15 1/4 in.
 Courtesy Stephen Romano, New York



Plate 4693 Club Differ, September 13, 1920, 18 x 16 1/2 in.
 Collection of J. Kevin O'Rourke, Maryland

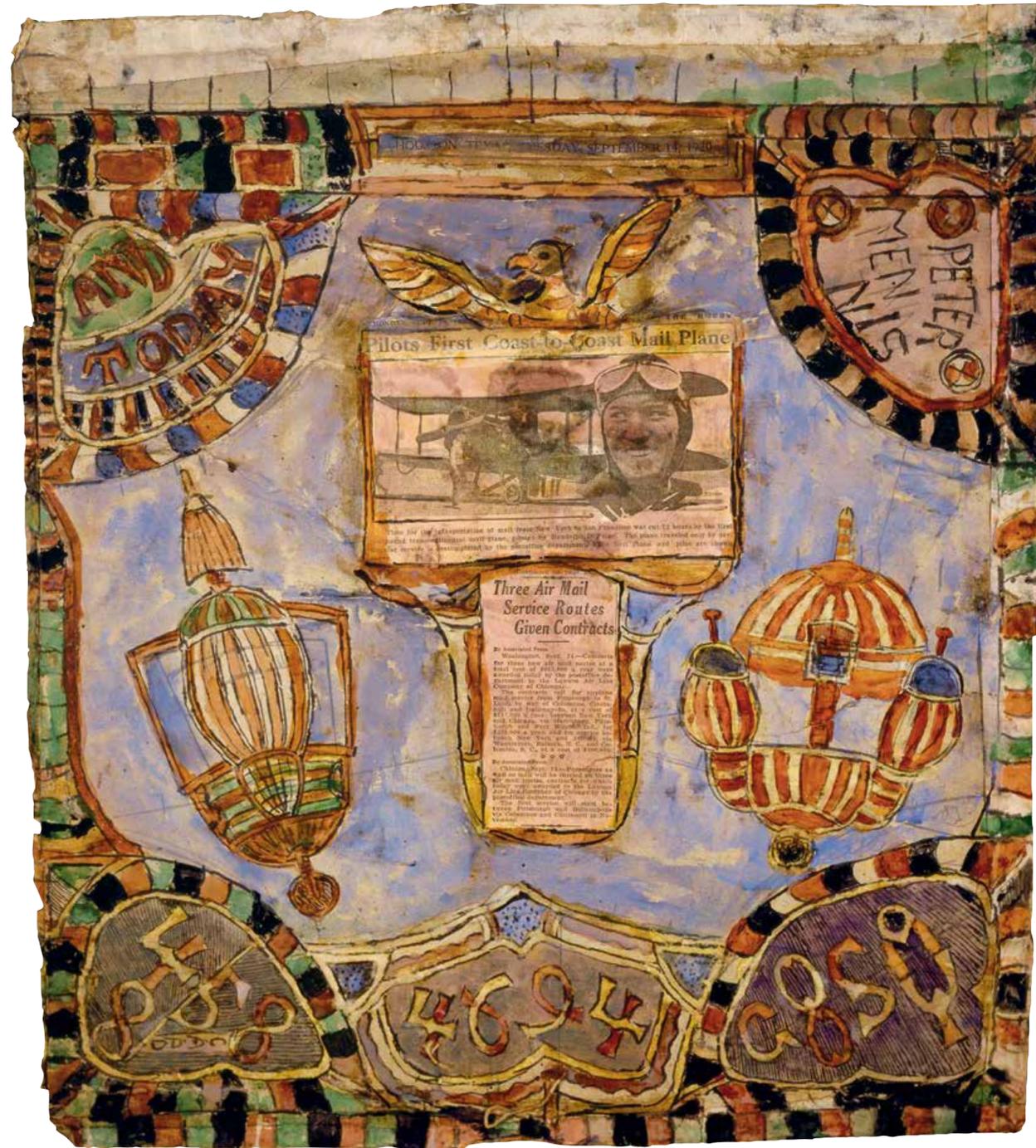


Plate 4694 Goosay, September 14, 1920, 18 x 16 1/2 in.
Collection of J. Kevin O'Rourke, Maryland



Plate 4685 Mina Front Rear, September 9, 1920, 18 x 16 1/2 in.
Collection of Stuart and René Zweibel, New York



Plate 4695 Press Blooms (Flies Across Channel), September 17, 1920, 17 x 17 in. Collection of Carole Kraus, New York



Plate 4696 Airo Mina Flanck, September 19, 1920, 17 x 17 in. Collection of Carole Kraus, New York

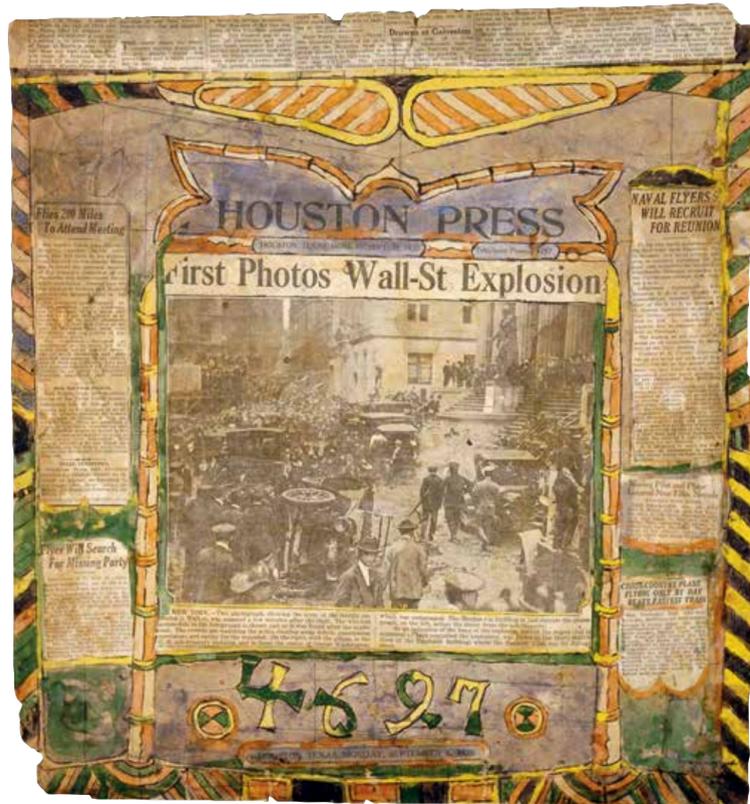


Plate 4697 Press Blooms (First Photos Wall-St Explosion), September 6, 1920, 17 x 17 in. Collection of Thomas Isenberg, New York



Plate 4699 Enter, September 22, 1920, 17 x 17 in. Collection of Thomas Isenberg, New York

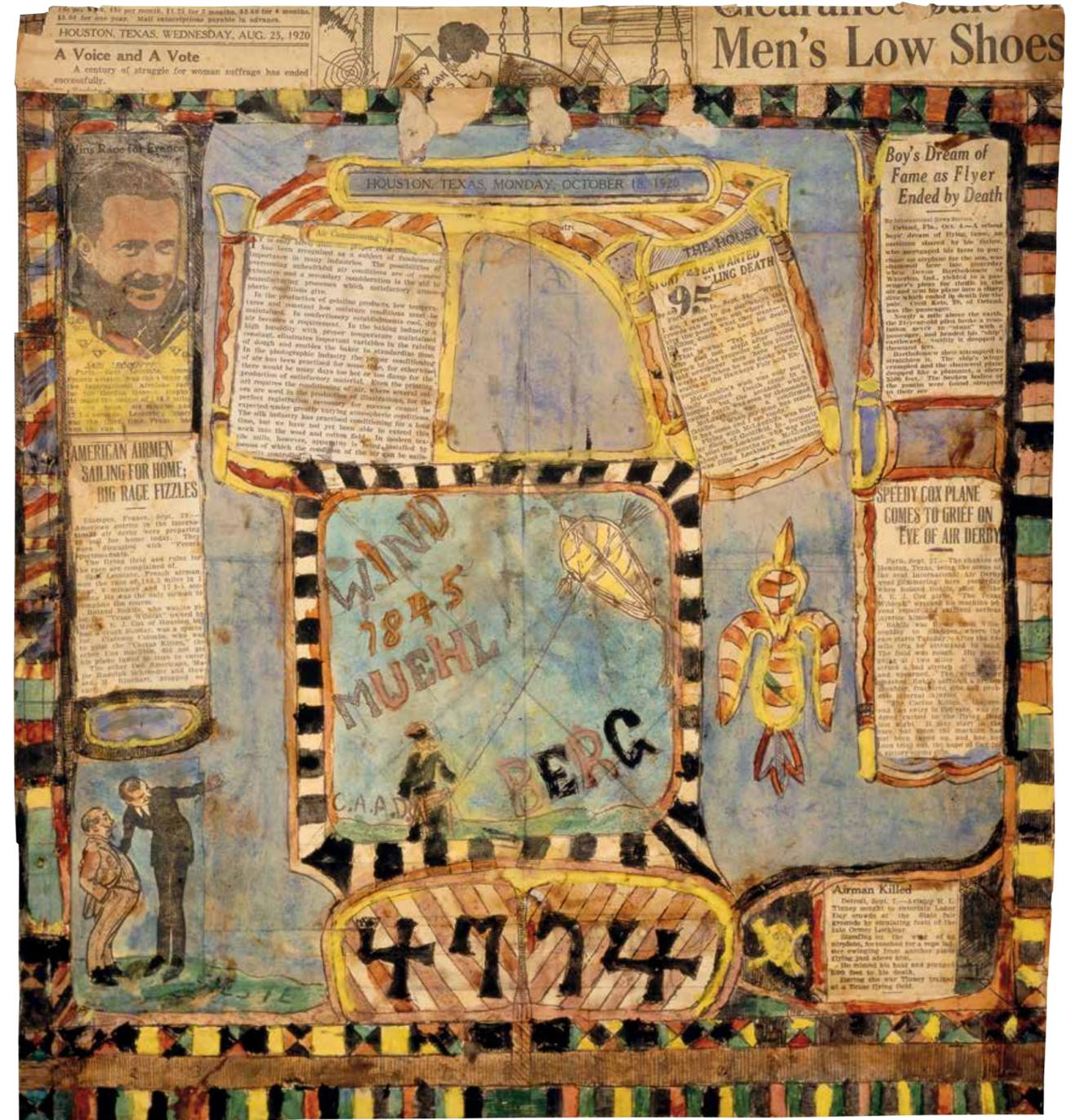


Plate 4714 Wind 1845 Muehl Berg, October 18, 1920, 17 x 17 in. Courtesy Stephen Romano, New York

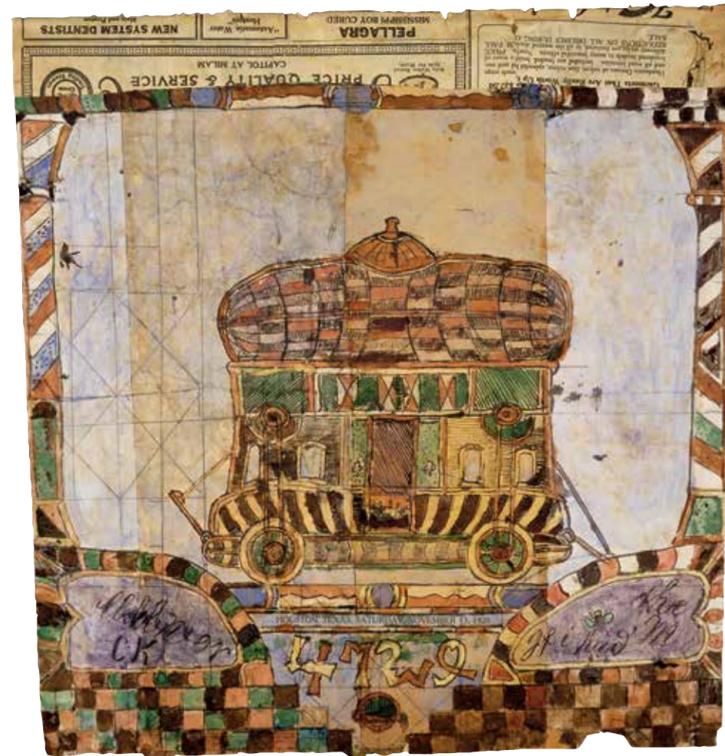
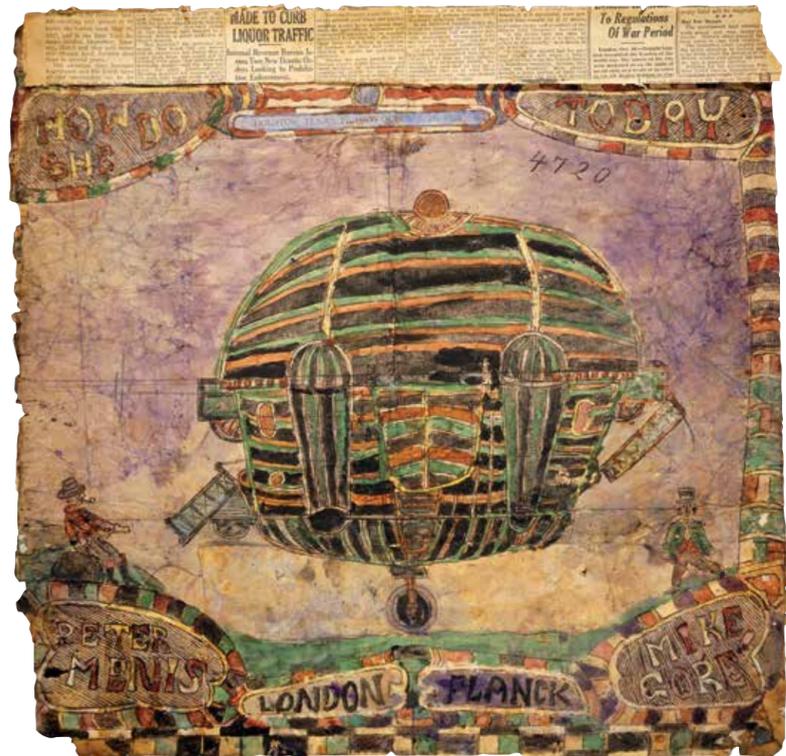
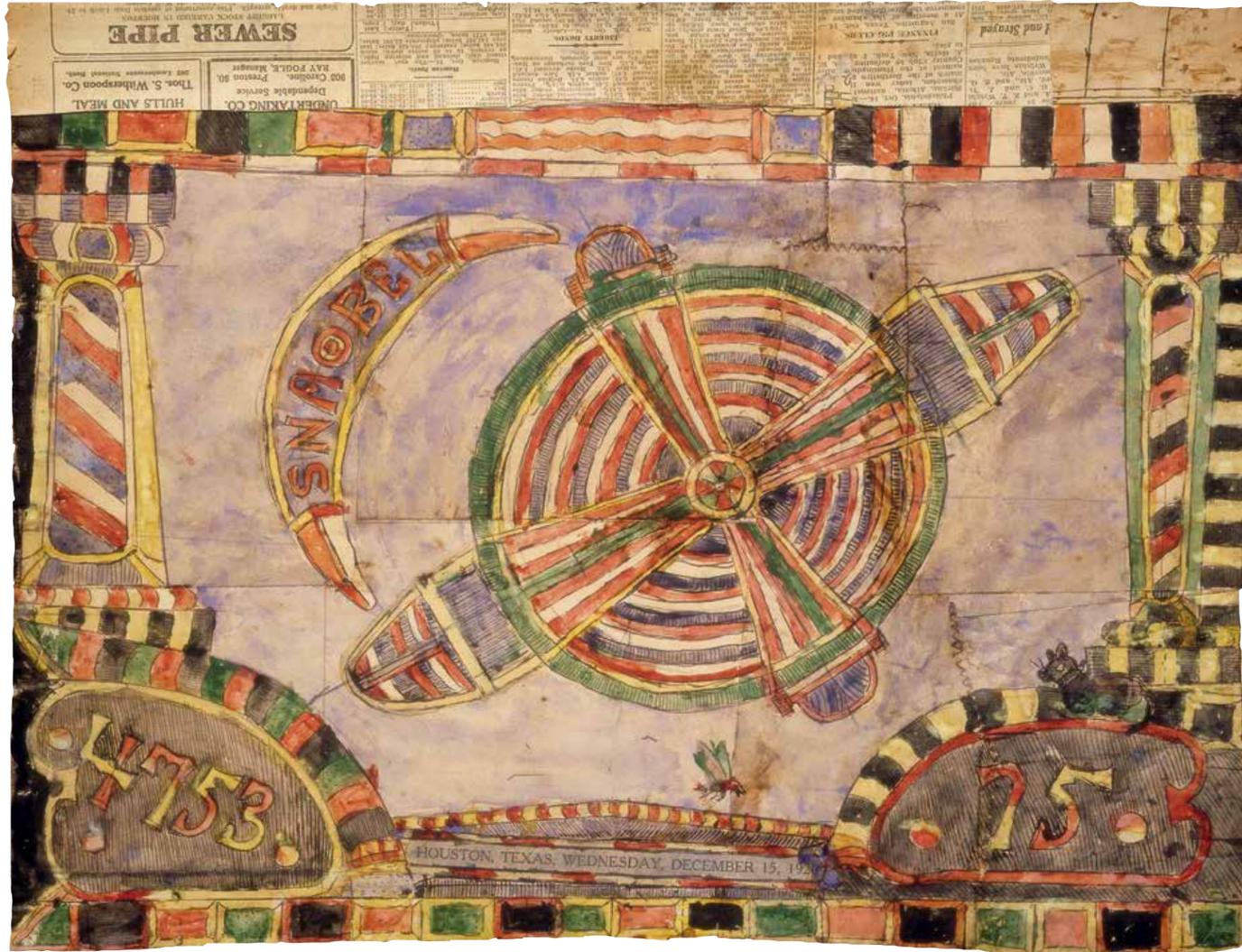


Plate 4720 London Flanck How She Do Today,
October 29, 1920, 17 x 17 in.
Collection of Carole Kraus, New York

Plate 4729 Clubwork If i had the M,
November 13, 1920, 18 x 17 in.
Courtesy Stephen Romano, New York

Plate 4734 Below, November 23, 1920, 15 x 17 in.
Collection of Cheryl Rivers and Steven Simons, Brooklyn





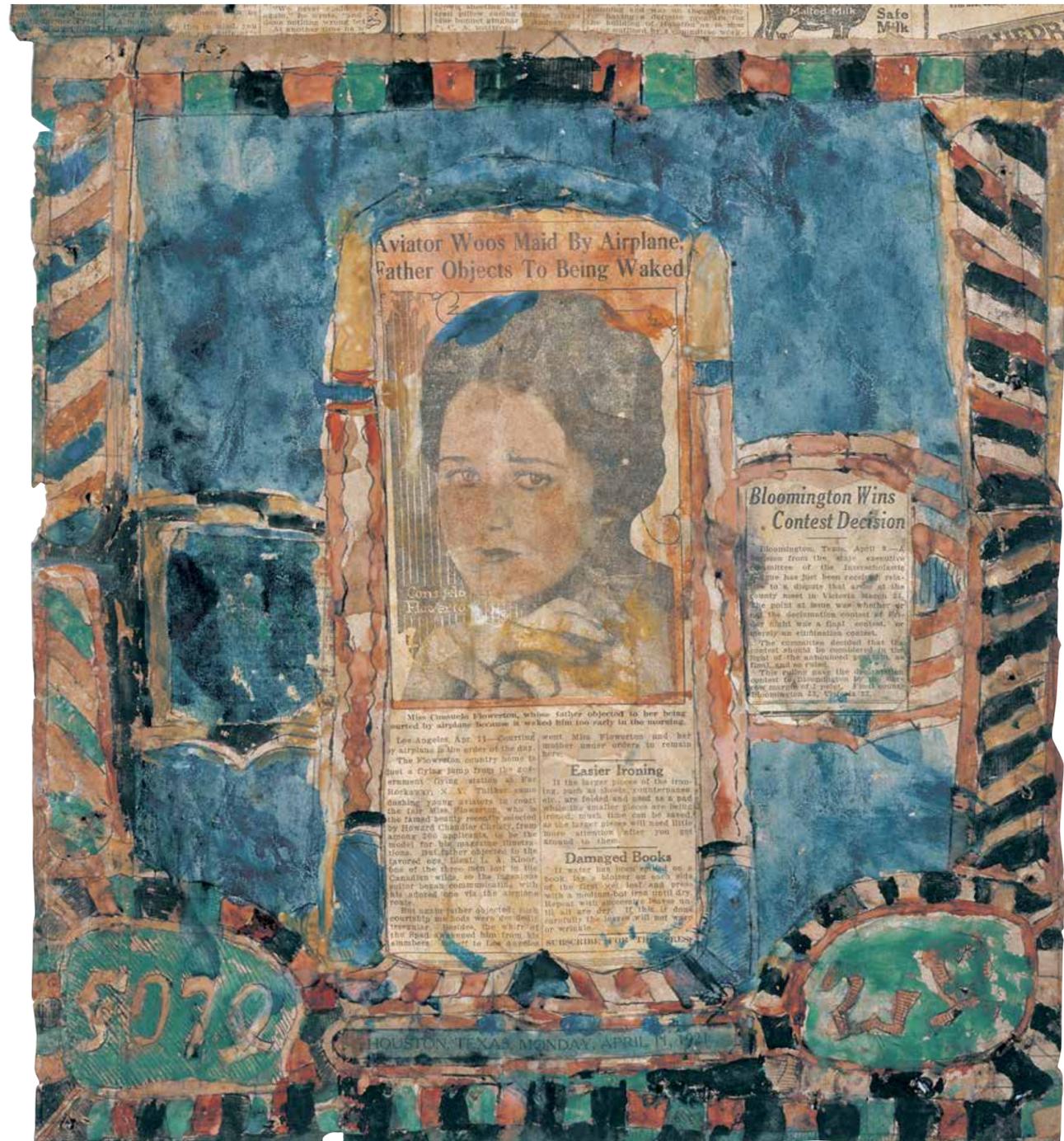
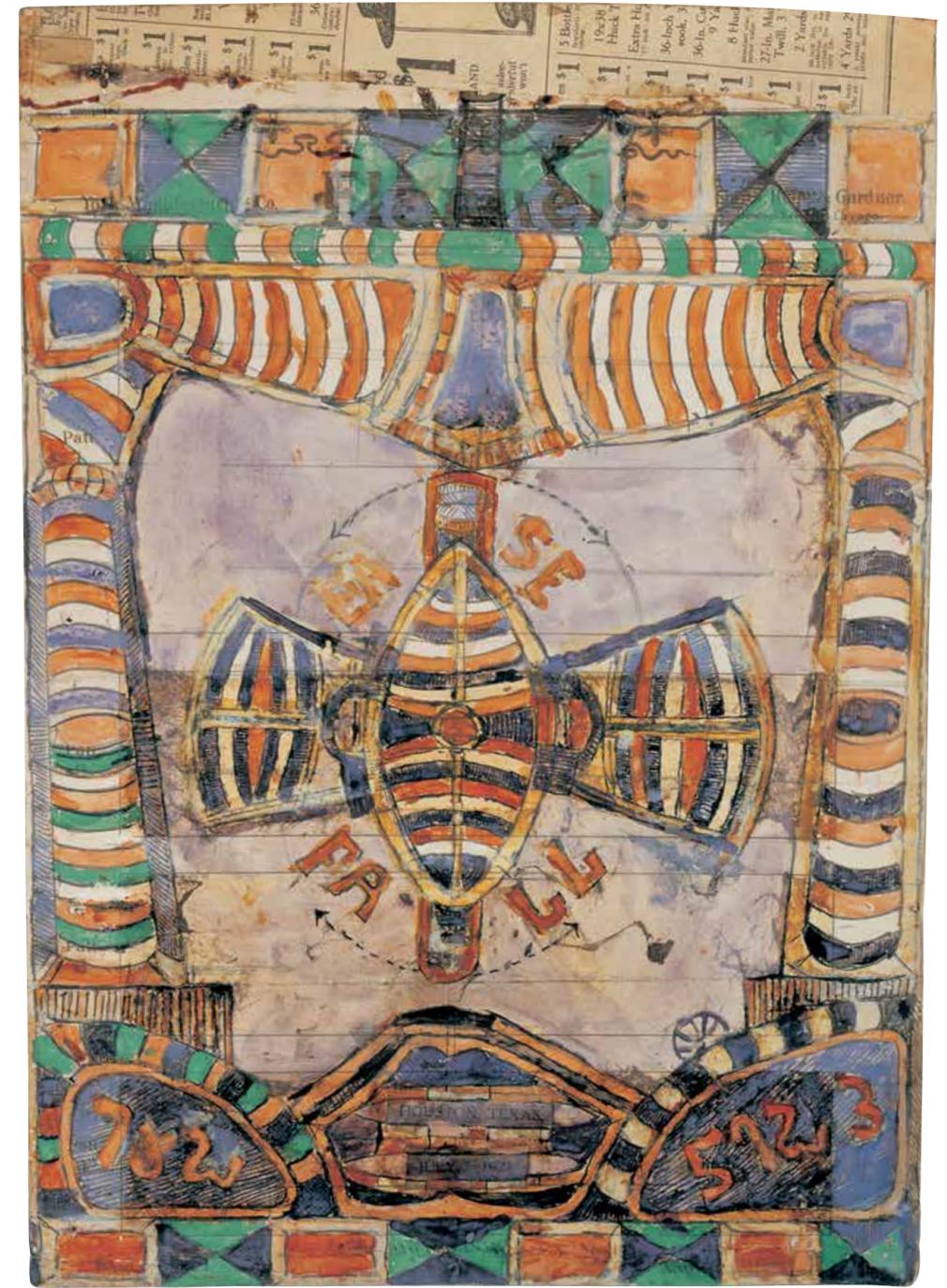
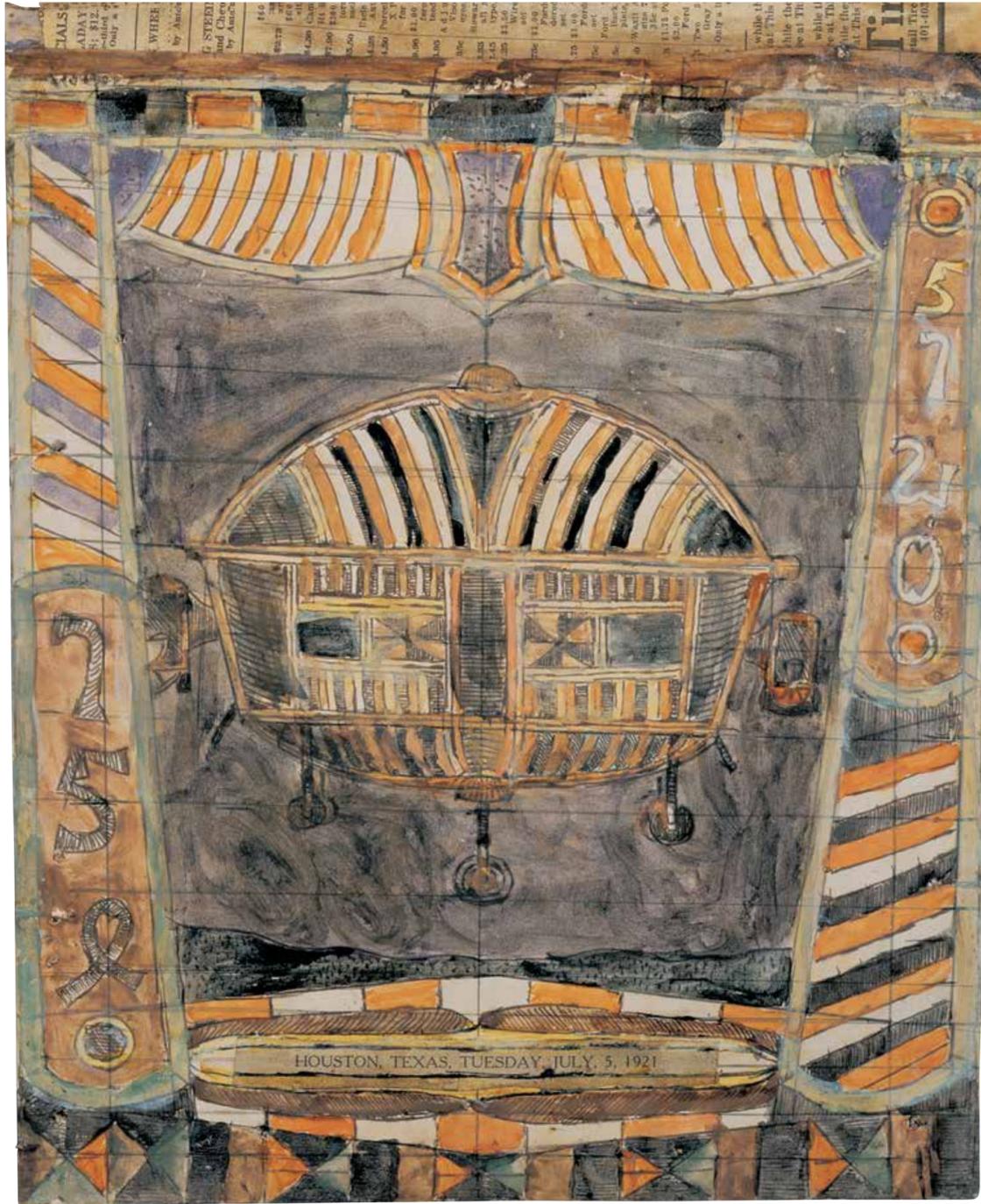
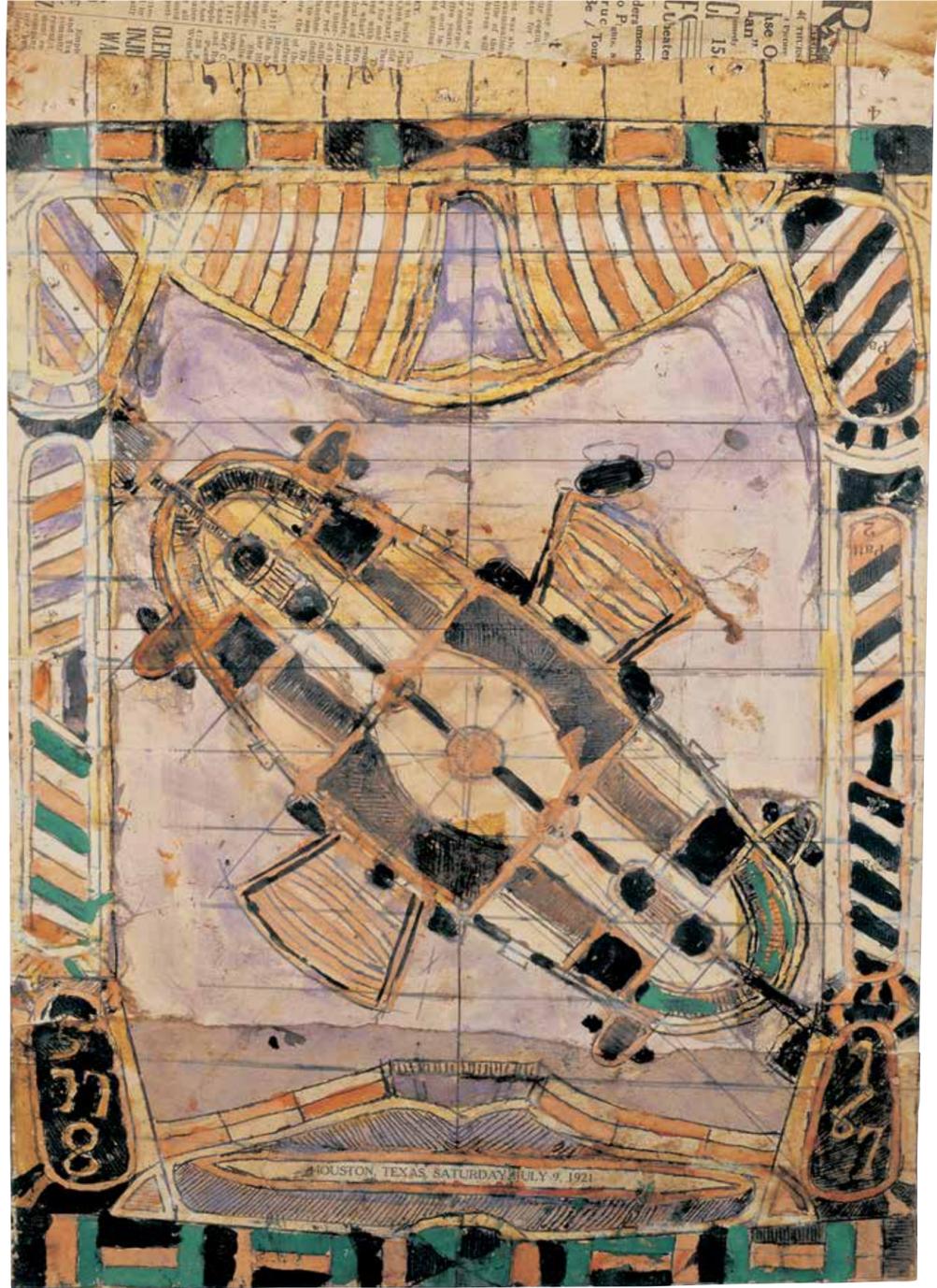


Plate 5019 Press Blooms (Aviator Woos Maid By Airplane), April 11, 1921, 17 x 12 in. abcd collection, Paris



Plate 5118(a) July 4, 1921, 17 x 12 in. abcd collection, Paris





Contributors

James Brett, whose background includes film, media, art, design, and architecture, is the founder of The Museum of Everything, in London—Britain’s first and only institution dedicated to the untrained, unintentional, and undiscovered artists of the modern era.

Stephen Romano is a private art dealer in New York specializing in the field of self-taught and visionary art.

Thomas McEvilley is an art critic, novelist, curator, editor, and professor. He lives in New York City and in the Catskill Mountains region of upstate New York. He has held appointments at Rice University, Yale University, the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, the School of Visual Arts, and elsewhere. He holds a Ph.D. in classical philology and has taught numerous courses in philosophy, art history, the Greek and Latin languages, Greek and Indian culture and philosophy, history of religions, and film studies. Dozens of his monographs have appeared in a variety of journals, and a major work of interdisciplinary scholarship, *The Shape of Ancient Thought: Comparative Studies in Greek and Indian Philosophies*, was published in 2001. For his writings as an art critic he has received a Fulbright grant, a National Endowment for the Arts grant, and the Frank Jewett Mather Award for Distinction in Art Criticism, given by the College Art Association. Major works in art criticism include *The Triumph of Anti-Art: Conceptual and Performance Art in the Formation of Post-Modernism* (2012), *Art, Love, Friendship: Marina Abramovic and Ulay, Together & Apart* (2010), *Yves the Provocateur: Yves Klein and Twentieth-Century Art* (2010), *Sculpture in the Age of Doubt* (2001), *The Exile’s Return: Toward a Redefinition of Painting for the Post-Modern Era* (1994), *Fusion: West African Artists at the Venice Biennale* (1993), as well as essays on Anselm Kiefer, Paul McCarthy, and Dennis Oppenheim.

Tracy Baker-White worked for twenty years as a curator of education and an arts administrator at the San Antonio Museum of Art, the Southwest School of Art and Craft, in San Antonio, and the Corcoran College of Art and Design, in Washington, DC. In 1999, while at the San Antonio Museum of Art, she served as project director for a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to study the works of Charles A. A. Dellschau. Her research resulted in the exhibition “Flight or Fancy: The Secret Life of Charles A. A. Dellschau,” which traveled to the Mennello Museum of American Art, in Orlando, Florida. She published an article of the same name in *Folk Art* 25, no. 3 (Fall 2000).

Roger Cardinal wrote the pioneering *Outsider Art* in 1972, and has published widely on individual outsider artists, including Ilija Bosilj, Madge Gill, Ted Gordon, Karl Junker, Michel Nedjar, Guillaume Pujolle, and Clarence Schmidt. He has also produced essays on such topics as outsider architecture, prison art, autistic artists, and memory painting. A contributing editor of *Raw Vision* magazine, he has organized exhibitions in Britain, France, Greece, Slovakia, Switzerland, and the United States.

Tom D. Crouch serves as senior curator of aeronautics at the National Air and Space Museum, in Washington, DC. A Smithsonian employee for thirty-eight years, he holds a Ph.D. in history from the Ohio State University and is the award-winning author or editor of some twenty books—including *Wings:*

A History of Aviation from Kites to the Space Age (2003), *Military Ballooning During the Early Civil War* (2000, with F. Stansbury Haydon), and *The Eagle Aloft: Two Centuries of the Balloon in America* (1983)—and many articles for magazines and journals.

Barbara Safarova is the president of abcd—art brut connaissance & diffusion—a Paris-based non-profit organization working with the collection of *art brut* formed by the French filmmaker Bruno Decharme. Her Ph.D. thesis has been devoted to the artistic productions of Achilles G. Rizzoli and Unica Zürn. A professor of aesthetics, she has taught the subject of *art brut* since 2010 at the Collège International de Philosophie, in Paris, exploring this concept from an interdisciplinary point of view by focusing on its meaning in different geographical and historical contexts, collections, and its signification within the field of modern and contemporary art. She has written a number of essays on artists whose work has been linked to *art brut*—A.C.M. (Alfred Corinne Marié), Zdenek Kosek, Lubos Plny, and Unica Zürn.

Randall Morris is a writer and curator and the co-owner of Cavin-Morris Gallery, New York, which mounts more than a dozen exhibitions each year. He taught the first in-depth classes in the United States on *art brut* and self-taught artists for the education department of the American Folk Art Museum, New York, and has organized exhibitions of the work of Jamaican intuitive artists and Justin McCarthy. He is the author of numerous articles and catalog essays on ethnographic art, contemporary ceramics, basketry sculpture, and non-mainstream artists from the United States, the Caribbean, Europe, Africa, Asia, Australia, and New Guinea, including African American artists, Emery Blagdon, Martín Ramírez, and Joseph Yoakum. He is also a contributor to the forthcoming catalog for a 2013 exhibition of the work of Jon Serl at the Natalie & James Thompson Art Gallery at San Jose State University School of Art & Design, San Jose, California.

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René Pierre Allain: Book 8; Plates 1952, 1953, 2332, 2360, 2364, 2378, 2392, 2393, 2586, 4301, 4302, 4304, 4306, 4315, 4317, 4318, 4319, 4322, 4329, 4332, 4335, 4339, 4340, 4341, 4342, 4344, 4347, 4358, 4373, 4374, 4376, 4393, 4410, 4426, 4427, 4437, 4438, 4441, 4459, 4463, 4474, 4487, 4488, 4489, 4490, 4504, 4509, 4510, 4511, 4513, 4514, 4523, 4524, 4527, 4538, 4567, 4568, 4589, 4599, 4670, 4671, 4677, 4714, 4805

Charles Bechtold (courtesy Ricco/Maresca Gallery, New York): Books 9, 10; Plates 1992, 1993, 2316, 2317, 4499, 4501, 4506, 4507, 4515, 4516, 4520, 4528, 4529, 4533, 4534, 4547, 4549, 4552, 4553, 4557, 4559, 4560, 4562, 4563, 4566, 4575, 4577, 4578, 4586, 4602, 4603, 4604, 4614, 4615, 4616, 4619, 4623, 4630, 4643, 4651, 4652, 4653, 4685, 4693, 4694, 4695, 4696, 4697, 4699, 4720, 4729, 4734, 4753, 4790, 4795, 4807

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The Witte Museum, San Antonio: Plates 1902, 1903, 1907, 1911, 1917, 1972, 1977, 1984, 1985, 2008, 2009, 2017, 2028, 2031, 2064, 2068, 2075, 2380, 2519, 2566

Image, page 2: Plate 4306 Auto Fallease, February 13, 1919, 17 × 16¹/₂ in., courtesy Stephen Romano, New York

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Charles A.A. Dellschau, 1830–1923 / James Brett, Thomas McEvelley, Tracy Baker-White, Roger Cardinal, Tom D. Crouch, Barbara Safarova, Randall Morris.

pages cm

ISBN 978-1-935202-90-5 (alk. paper)

1. Dellschau, Charles A. A., 1830–1923—Criticism and interpretation. I. McEvelley, Thomas, 1939– Charles A.A. Dellschau's aporetic archive. II. Dellschau, Charles A. A., 1830–1923. Works. Selections.

N6537.D4387C49 2013

709.2—dc23

2012041462

Published by Marquand Books, Inc., Seattle

www.marquand.com

Co-published and distributed by

D.A.P./Distributed Art Publishers, Inc.

155 Sixth Avenue, 2nd floor

New York, New York 10013

Tel: (212) 627-1999

Fax: (212) 627-9484

www.artbook.com

Edited by Tanya Heinrich

Designed by Jeff Wincapaw

Layout by Ryan Polich

Typeset in Meta Plus by Brynn Warriner

Color management by iocolor, Seattle

Printed and bound in China by Artron Color Printing Co.