

## Lion Stone Books



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### Questions & Answers with Sallie Lowenstein on *Geneses: Alien Creation Myths & Their Descendants*

**Q.** As a sculptor and a painter, how do you manage to find the time to write, design, illustrate, layout your books?

**A.** I think my life's work as a fine artist makes me patient with the artistic process. From my first ventures in book creation, I have been conscious of the importance of the artistic interaction of the text with the composition of the page—the qualities of the paper, the influence of the type and typesetting, as well as the impact of the illustration on a book I am creating.

A great change for me is the increased control that is possible today due to new printing tools that put it within my reach to write, illustrate, compose type, and print and bind a book in a way that was in the past unthinkable. As the author/creator, I can control each aspect of the production. Traditional production is going through significant changes. Fewer kinds of paper are available for offset printing. More resources are being devoted to digital printing. The way I am presently producing my books gives me greater choices of paper, methods of printing and inventory.

**Q.** Do you think your travels through Burma as a child influenced your choice of the subject of alien myths?

**A.** It is ironic. I don't know a single Burmese creation myth. Still, my fascination with the idea of alien worlds grew out of living in a place that was remarkably alien to late 1950's Americans.

**Q.** Then why did you choose Alien Creation Myths as a topic?

**A.** Today we encounter so many different perspectives and cultural misunderstandings on a daily basis that I felt looking at how these perspectives originate is really important to a young person's understanding of their own world. Alien originations also offered an opportunity to highlight the biological connections to cultural perspectives: geography, weather, environmental issues all affect how cultures develop and view the world.

I have always known that promoting imagination, and surprising children with an unexpected idea, is important to developing creative minds.

**Q.** Why did you choose the particular shape and structure of your new book, *Geneses: Alien Creation Myths & Their Descendants*.

**A.** As always, I wanted the physical presentation of the book to complement my approach to the unexpected in the literature—the unusual dimensions, the distinct binding, the unexpected shape of the pages—all these physical elements change how the reader encounters the stories in *Geneses*.

Binding the book with a visible, colored linen thread creates an immediate sense of otherness. Leaving extra space at the top and the bottom of the pages accentuates the sense of the vastness of outer space, which relates to the cover and its sense of “deep” space. And the stand alone, detailed illustrations, floating in “empty” space, add yet another dimension to how the stories are read.

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**Q.** Why did you choose to use a 5 hole Japanese stab binding for *Geneses*?

**A.** It is an homage to the books I collect with beautiful, traditional Japanese bindings. I own one five hole stab binding that is about 82 years old and the binding is as if new. Its dust jacket is a bit frayed, but the binding is intact. In addition, it allows for the binding of single sheets rather than signatures. There are two older forms of binding called Medieval Long Stitch binding and Coptic binding that allow for the binding of signatures that lay flat, that I will also be using in my artisanal books.

**Q.** How do you define an Artisanal Book?

**A.** I use the term Artisanal to indicate that these books pay particular attention to the artisanship of a book as a work of art, but I didn't want to use the term *book as art* because it carries a different connotation. In what is currently termed *books as art*, the artist is usually not an author, but rather uses the form of a book as a structure for a work of art. There are also artists books, and these are designed and illustrated by artists, but are not designed specifically as literary structures. In my books, I am both the author and the artist, the designer and the producer of the books and all these elements are given equal focus. I make very personal books in a mass marketed world.

**Q.** Do you plan to continue to make more handmade books?

**A.** Right now, I have two more planned. One is a collaboration with my brother, Frank Lowenstein, who has been the Director of Forest Health for the The Nature Conservancy's North American Conservation Region and is now the Climate Change Adaptation Strategy Leader for TNC, as well as the author of two non-fiction books. Frank is contributing a twelve page essay on old growth forests he has visited around the world to accompany a series of what I call *photo drawings* of trees I did for an art show. This book will be bound in a Medieval longstitch binding and have a leather cover.

After the art show many, many people told me that the drawings had made them see trees with new eyes. I can't tell you how many told me of this tree, or that tree that I needed to be sure to see. So I'm very excited to be able to make some of the drawings available to more people by putting them into a book.

The second book I've planned is a novel for teens and young adults that doesn't really fall into an exact genre. I'm planning to bind it in a traditional Japanese stab binding, but the pages will be illustrated and folded in such a way so as to create patterns down the edges of the pages when the book is closed.

Like ***Geneses***, both books will have ISBN's and LCCN's in order to be easily available to bookstores, museums bookshops, and libraries.

**Q.** How do you distribute your books?

**A.** Basically I go through the same avenues all book publishers do. I have several wholesalers who distribute my titles; I go to national festivals; I do school visits; I sell to bookstores; and my books can be purchased directly from [www.lionstonebooks.com](http://www.lionstonebooks.com). Even though my books are not institutional books, I have a large school and library following, and my titles have been reviewed by many national review journals, newspapers large and small across the country and been put on many prestigious literary lists.