

AN ENCHANTMENT OF ELEPHANTS by Emily Gwathmey

Published by Clarkson Potter in 1993

How Elephants got their trunks, became Gods and Republicans, turned White and Pink, stood on their Heads, came to symbolize Luck and Longevity, gave rides to children, warriors, and kings, and countless other wonders of the Oddest and most Amplitudinous animal on Earth.

From the Introduction:

This book is a celebration of the greatest of beasts. My personal enchantment began one night in a dream in which I was journeying through an exotic landscape on the back of an elephant. Then, while awake, I began noticing that their likenesses, whether flat or three dimensional, were everywhere—in museums and stores displays, on T-shirts and shopping bags, in art galleries and card shops, in flea markets and magazine ads. My base of operation is the cityscape of Manhattan, and when on one spring day I serendipitously happened upon the remarkable annual parade of circus elephants through Central Park, I surrendered. The elephants were calling me, and I felt compelled to answer.

As a deltiologist and ephemerist (collector of postcards and printed matter), I began to search for elephant imagery. The depth and breadth of what I found was mind-bending and forms the basis of An Enchantment of Elephants. I discovered extraordinary pictures of elephants in all their endearingly wrinkled splendor—in the jungle, at the zoo, giving rides to children and kings, performing in the circus, the theater, and the water, at work, at play, and at war. I unearthed elephants comical, political, commercial, architectural and mythological. In this book I have tried to include as many different facets of elephantine impact on human society as possible.