

THE BUNEFOLDER

an e-journal for the book binder and book artist

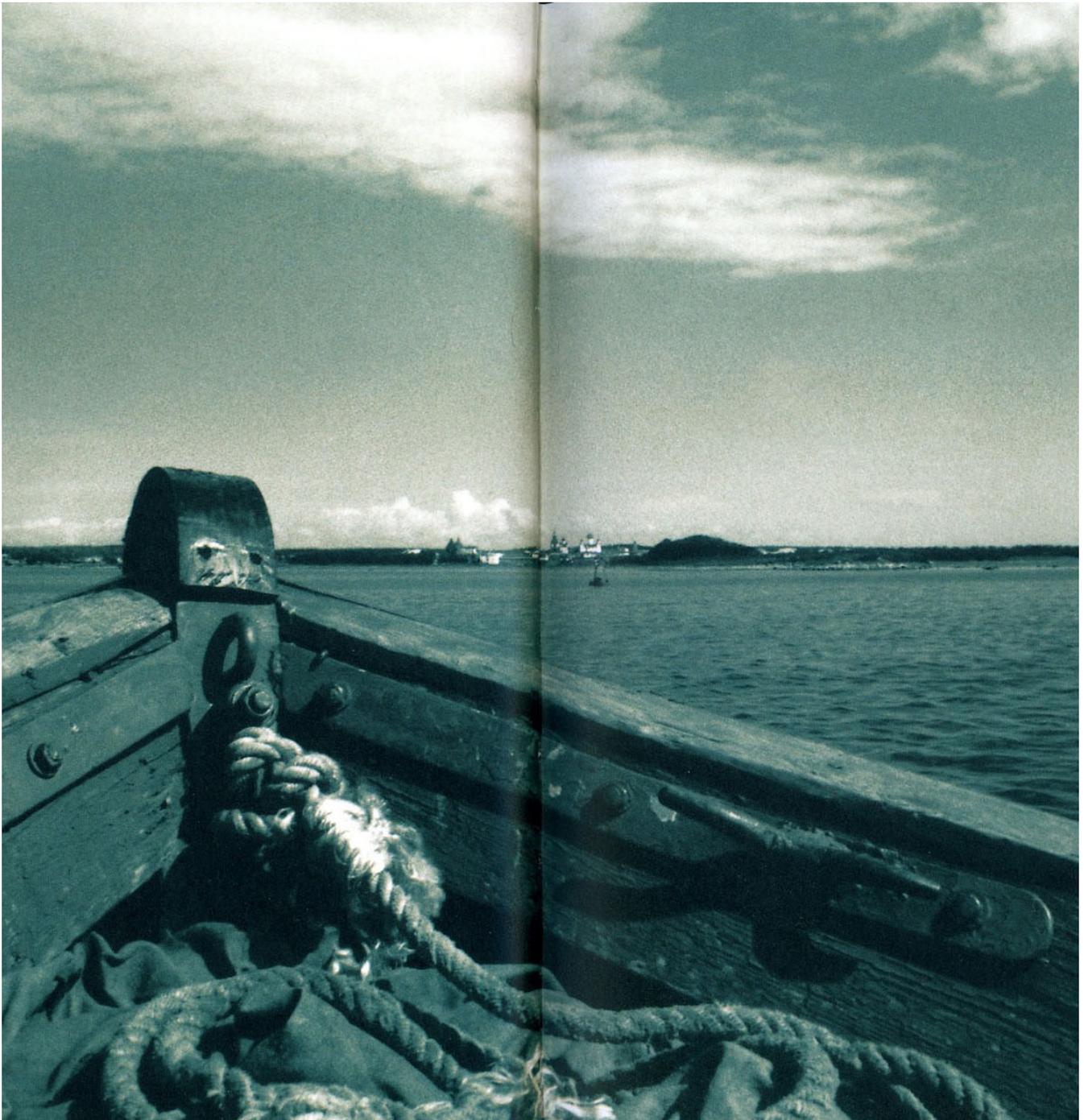


Image from Clif Meador's *Memory Lapse*

Volume 6, Number 2, Spring 2010

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A Perspex Partnership: Plexiglas Downunder

By Christine Campbell

Subtropical Brisbane, which promotes itself as ‘Australia’s most liveable city’, is the capital of Queensland, the northernmost state on the country’s east coast. Once considered more of a country town than a city, Brisbane blossomed after hosting the Commonwealth Games in 1982 and World EXPO in 1988. Retirees from southern states traditionally migrated to southeast Queensland for its mild climate and laid-back lifestyle, sacrificing cultural for hedonistic pursuits in the process, while those of a more intellectual or artistic disposition headed south or overseas.

This has changed, however, in recent years. The Southbank precinct, which houses a number of cultural venues within the extensive parklands created on the former EXPO site, is the hub of mainstream arts and culture. Of a weekend, hundreds of residents and visitors flock to galleries and performances here, a phenomenon hard to imagine 25 years ago. Across from the riverside Gallery of Modern Art, opened in 2006 to complement the Queensland Art Gallery, is the equally modern State Library of Queensland. With approximately 1100 artists’ books in its collection, the Library has become the central reference for a burgeoning interest in book arts, which has resulted in major exhibitions and artform-specific conferences in regional centres throughout the state, as well as in Brisbane itself.

On the other side of the State Library past the Queensland Museum and nestled in a meander of the Brisbane River, is the inner city suburb of West End. Here new apartment buildings, designed to complement the award-winning architecture of Southbank, rub shoulders with the remains of former industrial sites and charming old timber houses known as “Queenslanders.” Ethnic European delicatessens co-exist alongside Asian eateries and ‘nouvelle cuisine’ restaurants that have sprung up to cater to the trendy set moving into the area. Lining the main streets are funky boutiques, discount shops and market stalls, plus the occasional design gallery and experimental space featuring works by emerging artists and, quite often, the artists themselves ‘in action’.

The Studio West End is located on the first floor of an old factory building which now houses ABSOE, a business selling office furniture, shop fittings and industrial shelving. Freelance journalist Gerry O’Connor once described it as having a Renaissance atmosphere, “a place where a great deal of hard work and very little navel gazing takes place ... where

artworks are ‘made’.” (O’Connor, Gerry (2000). *Meeting of creative minds* in The Courier-Mail, December 29).



Wim de Vos in The Studio West End

Wander in on one of the regular workshops and you understand what O’Connor meant. ‘Hot off the press’ takes on new meaning and momentum as participants watch their etching plates morph into subtle prints, the whole process directed by the Studio’s principals, Willem (Wim) de Vos and Adele (Del) Outteridge.



Adele Outteridge at her desk

Those who enroll for weekly classes generally come from other (often dauntingly impressive) careers. A typical group might include a magistrate, a retired architect, a clinical psychologist, some high-achieving university students looking to extend their practice and an Insect Collection Manager and illustrator with the Queensland Museum (who just happens to be a Queensland-Smithsonian fellow). They have come because “the nurturing of my creative side gives me energy for other parts of my life” (Betsy Stoltz); “to explore and develop our own ideas with support and sound advice on how to achieve our goals” (Elisa Ristuccia); to get “a charge from the collective energy of Wim, Del and the group” (Geoff Thompson); because “we share a dislike of

gurus and acolytes” (Jeraldene Just et al); and “thrive on in the intoxicating mixture of artistic expression, liberal thought and conviviality” they find at Studio West End (James and Julianne McDougall). They prove the point, without needing to do so, that artists can ‘emerge’ at any age and stage in life.

As Helen Cole, from the Australian Library of Art at the State Library of Queensland enthuses: “There are those people who don’t need a surname for everyone to know who you’re talking about and what they represent. Kylie. Madonna. In book arts it’s Wim and Del. Even their studio doesn’t need further definition. It’s just The Studio and we all know what it stands for. Welcome. Support. Friendly advice. Gentle teaching. Experimentation. Wonderful works. And stuff! Lots of Stuff!”

One never enters The Studio – quite a process in itself as there are multiple possibilities, one via a key-padded back door, others via front or side stairs and through the corridors of the furniture showroom – without a sense of bemusement at the eclectic collection of curios that comprise its centrepiece, familiarly referred to as “the stuff wall.” These range from shells and seedpods to snake skins, etching plate offcuts and the ashes of former diaries. Studio aficionado Geoff Thompson describes it as “a collection of beautiful natural and industrial detritus, housed in a wall of sealed (and stepped) Perspex cubes.”



The “Stuff Wall”

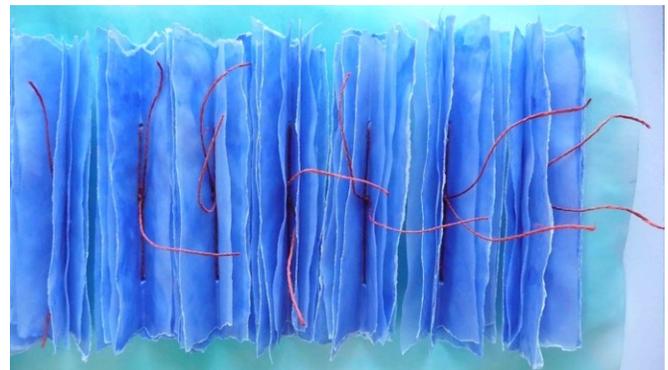
Adele Outteridge explains its evolution this way: “Setting up the stuff wall was a good way to ‘mark territory’ in a new space with familiar and loved objects. The 10cm cube seemed a good size. Since then, both of us being avid pickers-up and collectors, our wall has grown to over 100 boxes. We have moved studio twice in that time, from a small space under Wim’s family home to an enormous one above the old West End Market (formerly the Tristram’s soft drink factory) and then to our present space in the ABSOE building (formerly the Peter’s Ice Cream factory).”

She tells the story of the time the Director of the Albury Library/Museum in New South Wales visited with a view to hosting a small foyer display of their work. He promptly requested that they “box up the whole studio and send the lot.” “The lot” eventually comprised 43 boxes or 300 items, including books, sculptures and paintings as well as the ever-changing stuff wall. It took four and a half days to assemble and filled a 14 x 14 metre gallery space.

Stuff outside of the wall itself includes books, mainly Coptic sewn, 97 of which were the basis of a 4 metre long display in their *Bookworks* exhibition at the Noosa Regional Gallery in 2006. There is a collection of works by other artists and students (including a larger-than-Barbie-brunette-doll slumped in a martini glass) and treasured gifts ranging from bronze Egyptian cats to a couple of Perspex handbags that Wim happened upon in a local antiques emporium. The walls, which house group exhibitions at the end of each year, are currently hung with Wim’s North Queensland seascapes. The back table is covered with two 800+ millimetre lengths of Del’s *Monsoon Opal Reef* and *Monsoon Low Isles*, made for the Go Troppo Arts Festival in Port Douglas, North Queensland last October, where Wim and Del were both exhibitors and artists-in-residence.



*Wim de Vos, Four Mile Beach North Queensland (above),
Aele Outteridge, Monsoon Low Isles (below)*



Between them, The Studio partners cover many disciplines and a wealth of cultural experience. Del, whose background is Russian/Turkish as well as French and Welsh (an ancestor on her mother's side arrived in Australia as a convict on the First Fleet in January 1788), began her professional life as an experimental scientist in Melbourne. She started making books in 1989, everything from carefully bound artists' books, journals and drawing books to 'feral' ones using materials such as old envelopes, junk mail, newspaper and metal.

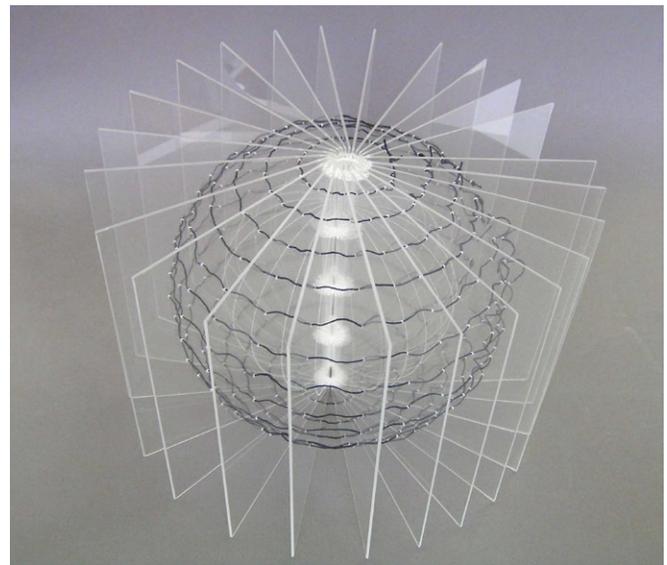


Adele Outteridge, Teabag Book

One of her signatures is the *Teabag Book* series, which began with Wim's and Del's participation as artists in residence at the McGregor Summer School at the University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba, in 1995. She explains its origin as she plays with the latest book, teasing it into shapes ranging from an Elizabethan ruff to a caterpillar that has a special rapport with young viewers.

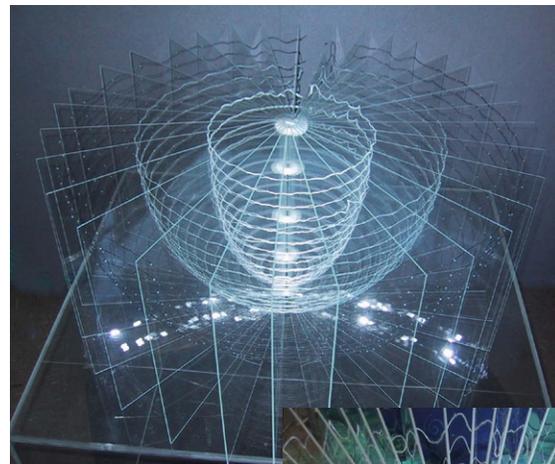
"I was intrigued by fellow artist Joanne Smith's wonderful collages and assemblages, one of which included dried tea bags. I immediately realised that teabags were made from very beautiful paper that had to be strong yet porous and could be used to make books. When dried and unpicked the tea stains resulted in lovely images reflecting the structure and folds of the tea bags."

She has made many teabag books since, the largest containing more than 1200 bags.



Adele Outteridge, Saturn

Engagingly Del admits to having a personal favourite among her prolific output. She opens *Saturn*, a 16 page Perspex creation, and splays it out to create what at first looks to be a single sphere suspended in space, but, on closer inspection of the intersection of black threads and engraved circular lines that connect the pages, becomes three. "When I showed the maquette to Wim the first time, he was speechless," she laughs. "I knew it must be good!"



*Adele Outteridge,
Vessels (above)
Vessels partially
closed (at right)*

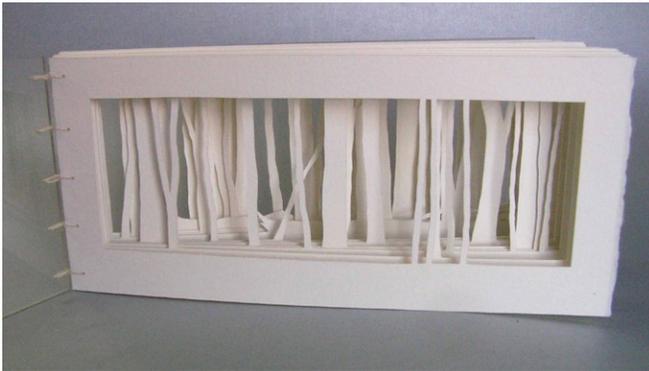


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Saturn's successor was *Vessels*, the 'hemisphere that happened' when she was experimenting with the concept behind *Saturn*. "This time I started the circular lines from the bottom. Opening the maquette up partway through the process I suddenly realised I had created something quite different." *Vessels* is on a larger scale than *Saturn*, each of the 32 pages comprising a 30 centimetre Perspex square. The scribble threads, reminiscent of chromosomes, graduate from black through grey to white.

6 "I love the idea of the book as a vessel," she writes in her artist's statement. "It divides this information into small sequential units of space, also into units of time and movement when these pages are read and turned. Many of my books have no text or imagery at all. The book itself imparts the information." Her *Envelope Book* appeared as part of the *Freestyle Books* exhibition at the State Library of Queensland and *Vessels* will be exhibited in the *Open Book* exhibition at Eastern Michigan University this year.

Quizzed about influences, she quotes sculptor Henry Moore's "Look at this beautiful little piece of curved air" as a source of inspiration and explains how the air between the pages creates the spaces and volume in *The Forest by the Rabbit Fence*. This tribute to a regrowth forest of spotted gum trees on cleared land near Warwick, west of Brisbane, is nothing more than a series of superimposed cut outs on heavy, ivory-coloured watercolour paper. It is stunningly effective in its simplicity.



Adele Outteridge, *Forest by the Rabbit Fence*

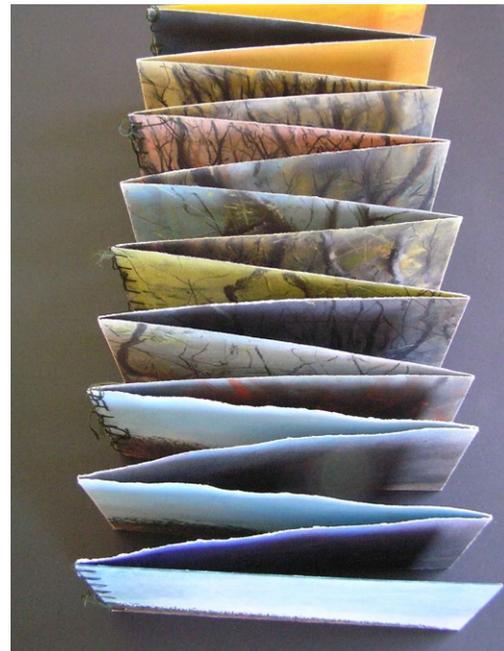
Wim, who retains his Dutch citizenship, after moving with his family from The Hague in 1959, trained as a graphic artist, later graduating with a Diploma of Fine Arts from the Queensland College of Art, but launched his artistic career in Brisbane as a '60s rock 'n' roller. Sound and performance continue to play an important role in his work. *Sound and Flight of the Currawong* (1989), a series of ten *la poupee* wiped etchings from copper plates, hand coloured and bound, was envisaged as scored for five to seven instruments, with a theme based on the distinctive cry of the Australian

Currawong. His most recent works, three Monsoon Passage paintings, explore silence and sound in the physical landscape.



Wim de Vos, *Sound and Flight of the Currawong* detail

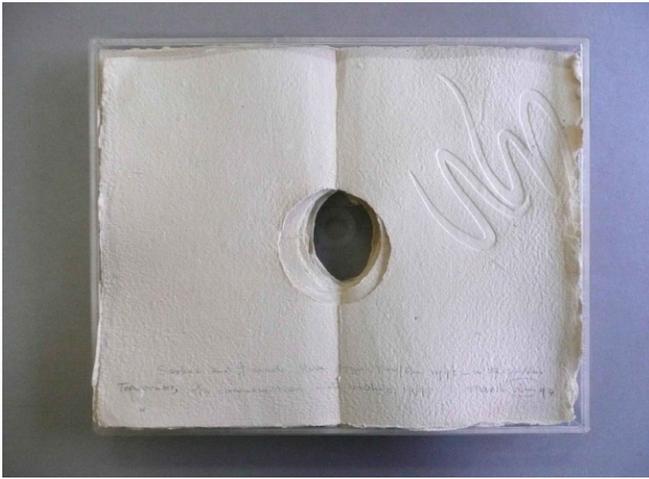
"My starting point is usually a theme with a series of images in mind, which are planned as drawings on paper or directly onto metal plates. It is this putting together of themes that, over the years, has brought me to the artist's book and its infinite variety of interpretations."



Wim de Vos, *Regeneration*

Everything in his work is related to first-hand experience or topical events such as the accordion fold book, *Regeneration*, which tells the story of the 1994 bushfires in the Hawkesbury region of New South Wales. *In Conversation with Saskia* is much more personal. Composed of a series of embossed variations on the letters 'W' and 'S', it is an eloquent tribute

to Wim's special relationship with his daughter. Like many of his works on paper the book is made from recycled fibres. In this case, the pages were formed by Saskia and Wim in the back garden where many of the conversations took place.



Wim de Vos, *In Conversation with Saskia*

The exquisite *Travel Tales* editioned on Japanese tableau paper in 1989 with a copy held by the State Library of Queensland, represents many years of travelling between Toowoomba (where he lived and taught at the Institute of TAFE) and Brisbane (where he now lives and still teaches part-time at the Brisbane Institute of Art). What is particularly interesting about this book is its reincarnation as a xylophone-shaped sculpture, encased, as many of his paper books are, in clear acrylic (Perspex, better known in the northern hemisphere as Plexiglas or Lucite, with related materials being polycarbonate and Lexan). In the later book, the colour inked, etched copper and zinc plates that produced the 1989 printed images become artworks in their own right, alternated to suggest the contrast between rural and urban lifestyles, organic and mechanical worlds.

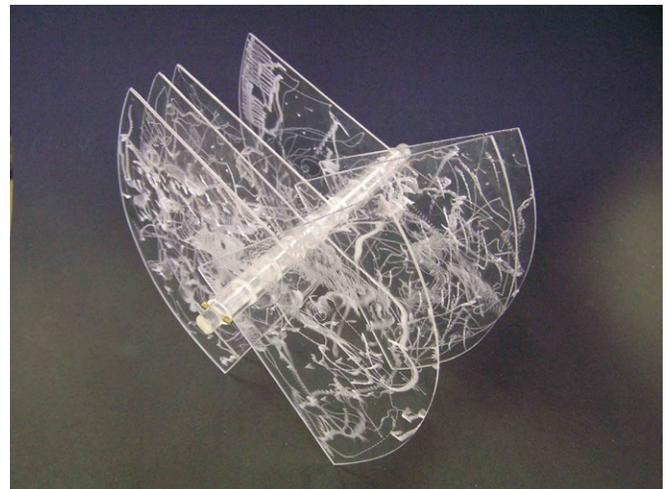


Wim de Vos, *Travel Tales*



Wim de Vos, *Travel Tales plates*

Many of the works are sculptural, such as the fan-shaped “dancing book,” *Re-generation* (a variation on a title that is a favourite theme with Wim). He is standing beside something that looks like a clear totem pole as he explains. “That’s a scroll book,” he says, in answer to the unasked question: “It’s called *Harmonic Sound Cylinder*,” he adds, before the second question is even formulated. Both pieces are made of Perspex, a material that he admits has almost totally taken over in his art making since he ‘discovered’ it in the 1970s and became aware of “the importance of artificial and natural light in controlling reflections and shadows in this very clear, highly reflective material”, of achieving three dimensionality through volume, line and light.



Wim de Vos, *Re-generation*

He illustrates the point with *Marks in Time 3*, on first impression nothing more than two dozen threads of galvanised iron wire alternating with copper in slide in/slide out trays, the whole enclosed in a Perspex box. Placed upright on the wall, the calligraphic scribbles create their own shadows. Lit from above it gains what Elisa Ristuccia describes as a “luminous sculptural presence”.



Wim de Vos, *Marks in Time*

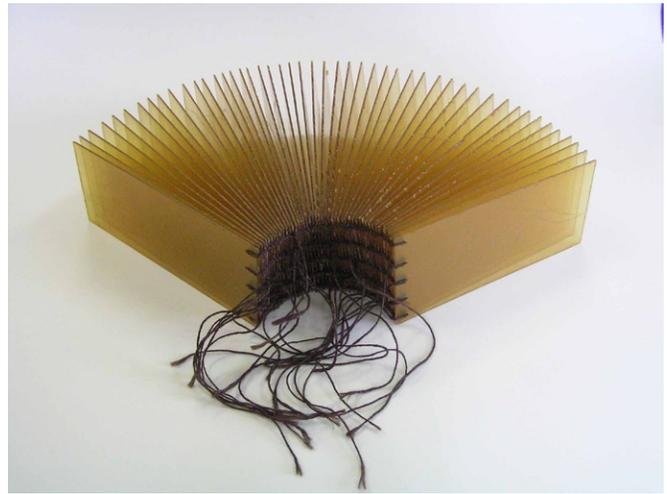
Wim demonstrates an artist's obsession when it comes to Perspex. "You can paint, print, engrave and collage on it. It's easy to cut, manipulate with heat and to assemble". In his hands it becomes almost animate, a medium in the fullest sense of the word, one that can be used to 'expose' objects or to 'contain' everything from artworks and 'stuff' to memories. He recalls how revisiting small open-plan apartments in Europe reminded him of living in a Plexiglas aquarium and how this led to the realisation that he was 'pre-ordained' to work with Perspex, as part of his heritage.



Wim de Vos, *Fifteen Mysteries of the Rosary*

His homage to Piero della Francesca's *Fifteen Mysteries of the Rosary* is a sentimental favourite with Del. She opens it out reverentially as she explains: "The beauty of making books with transparent media such as Perspex, acetate or tracing paper is that all the pages are visible and the whole book can be read at once, even when it is closed". Suspended in space and backlit by the morning sun, the images become surreal.

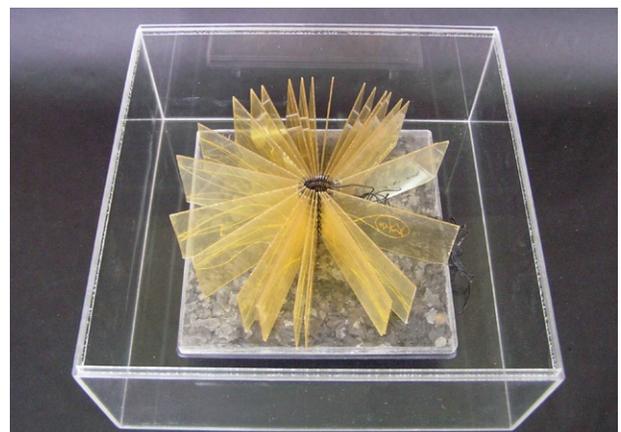
In a sense, The Studio's partnership was formed in Perspex. Del describes how their paths crossed when she enrolled in one of Wim's printmaking classes at the Brisbane Institute of Art (where he still teaches) in 1992.



Adele Outteridge, Wim de Vos, *The Book of Golden Light*

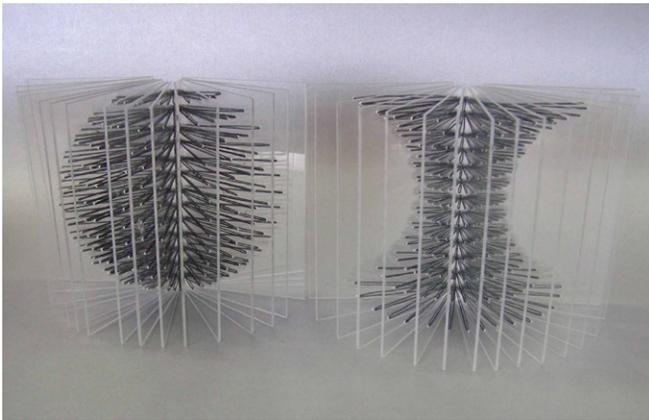
"When I saw his wonderful Perspex works, I thought I could gain favour with a gift of polycarbonate strips (I thought they were plastic), which I had acquired at Reverse Garbage when I was living in Sydney. I handed the stack to him one day with great pride, not realising that polycarbonate was a bit of a "no-no" for those seriously working with Perspex. To his credit he accepted them graciously. The next week he handed me a parcel containing the strips, cut into short lengths, each with five holes drilled across one end saying: "It's your turn now, make a book with them."

For several weeks I played with these pages, trying to work out a way to sew them together. I tried many different structures before eventually working out a sort of blanket stitch with knots that held the pages together and formed a slightly wobbly book with lots of long threads hanging off where I had joined new ones. I took it back to Wim, saying, "It's your turn now, put something in it. He made engraved drawings on the pages and a Perspex slip case for it. The result was *The Book of Golden Light*, so named when the polycarbonate strips oxidised from the original soft pink to their present rich gold.



Wim de Vos, Adele Outteridge, *Burnt Words and The Book of Golden Light*

Del points out that the structures explored while devising a sewing path for *The Book of Golden Light* have led to 90 percent of her current work, including *Gaia I* and *II*, both lyrical exercises in pure form and shape.

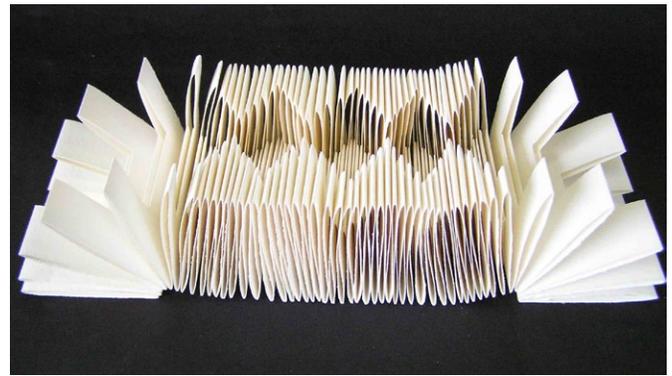


Adele Outteridge, *Gaia I* and *Gaia II*

This verbal and visual repartee, the teasing out of each other's creativity – daring the other to explore new territories, to push boundaries and take risks – is a trademark of their partnership. Wim explains how the relationship developed from being her mentor to being transported by Del's energy; of how their different areas of knowledge and expertise – textiles and design in her case, imaginative use of materials in his – led to a dynamic interaction; of how they pursued – and continue to do so – individual ways of working though processes, challenging the definition of the artist's book in the process.

Their collaborative *Whispering Rhythm* is a 20 metre long accordion fold book of free flowing marks, suggestive of movement. It folds neatly into its Perspex case and can be opened in different ways – vertically, horizontally, from right to left and vice versa. "It's a 'slinky' book." Del says: "You can perform it," Wim adds. "You could call us book 'installers' who practice artistry in installation". Del's small mock-up accompanies the larger work.

Caverns is made from a strip of the 10 metre roll of Magnani watercolour paper left over from *Whispering Rhythm*. "So that we finished up with the middle 10 metres – the bit without deckles, which became *Caverns*," Del explains.

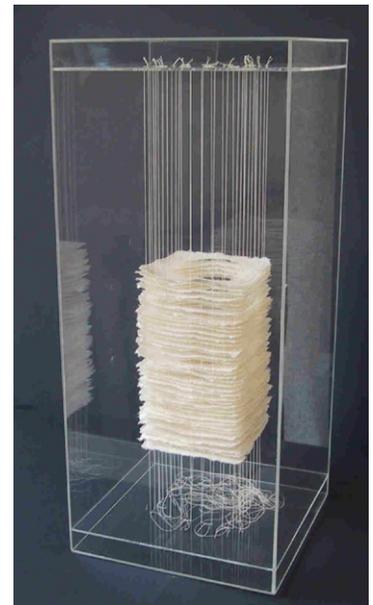


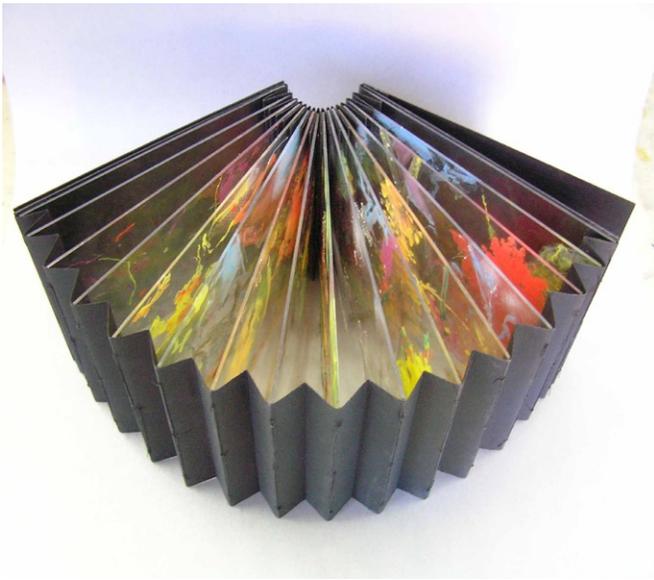
Adele Outteridge, *Caverns*

Even on individual pieces, the other partner generally leaves a subtle "mark" that attests to some level of input and involvement. Del might design a structure for an idea Wim will 'contain' in Perspex as was the case with *Steps to Enlightenment*.

Adele Outteridge, *Steps to Enlightenment* (at right)

He commissions her to make and sew books in which he sketches the vast tracts of countryside they traverse en route to teaching commissions in regional areas, interstate and overseas. She devised the structure for what they describe as Wim's recent 'tunnel books' – *Rachmaninoff in America*, created after a visit to the composer's grave in Valhalla, New York, and *On 42nd Street*, also based on his 2008 visit to the USA. The tunnel books are minimalist works, nothing more than splotches of colour, representing musical notation plus pitch and autumn (fall) colours respectively, both 'arbitrarily' leafed through Perspex. "Wim creates chaos in the form of abstraction out of order," Del says, "whereas I'm the reverse. Look at our desks. His is so neat, so Dutch! Mine is really messy. I create order out of chaos".





Wim de Vos, *Rachmaninoff in America* (above)
Wim de Vos, *On 42nd Street* (below)



Nowhere is this order more evident than in the Drawing a Day (DaD) project instigated by Del in 1998. Originally inspired by a simple exercise set by Kimon Nicolaidis in his classic *The Natural Way to Draw*, DaD has now become central to their practice. Wim, who has personally completed 54 volumes (six per year, bound by Del), goes so far as to describe it as his “lifestyle.” Along the way, “the rules” were bent in the cause of creativity and flexibility. As Inga Hunter, one of the original group of six artists, who each completed a very large book of a full year’s drawings, rationalised: “Keeping up was a discipline which actually forced everybody to find their own particular strategies to help them work. Looking at it in retrospect ... this was one of the best outcomes.” (Hunter, Inga (2001). *The Drawing a Day Project* (1998) in *Textile Fibre Forum* No. 61). Those strategies included the “legitimising” of blank pages for days (or weeks) when inspiration failed; a “bank” for depositing

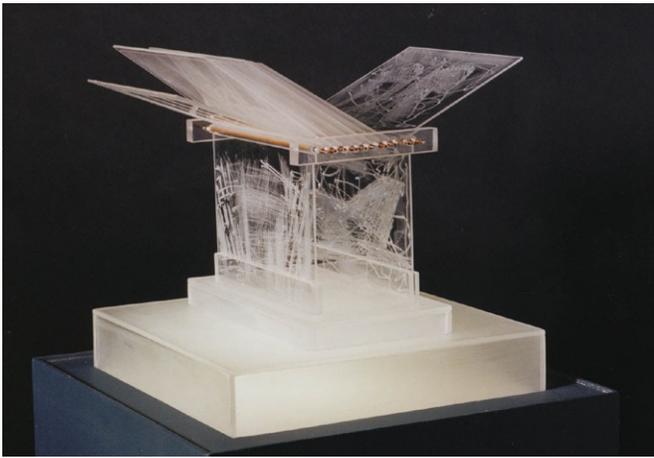
multiple works created on days where creativity flowed; and Del’s invention of a new binding technique to cope with the thickness of some of the books. In typical partnership fashion, Wim restarted the DaD in 2001: Del resumed in 2006, launching an email group that has grown from 35 to 120 current participants.



Adele Outteridge, *Drawing a Day* books

Del’s DaD drawings are analytical, exploring structure and line with “millimetre tight precision”, combining what Karla Meursing describes as “fluidity with rigour”. Wim’s are spontaneous, free flowing and poetic. For both they are a vital stimulus for ideas – not that there seems to have been a lack of these in the sixteen years they have shared a studio space. Content to remain at a remove from the lure of funding bodies and local arts politics, The Studio and its directors have not only survived but actually prospered through changes in government, shifts in premises and local and global economic downturn.

Aside from their regular class commitments, both travel extensively in a teaching capacity and as artists in residence. On the whole Wim prefers to stay close to home, favouring regional teaching as well as the special lure and colours of far north Queensland, which have inspired a plethora of tonal paintings and a return to traditional ways of doing things. There have been notable exceptions such as in 2008 when he took time out to attend the wedding in New York City of his son, also called Wim (a French horn player who works with several New York orchestras and on Broadway). In 1981 he returned to Europe to complete postgraduate studies in Maastricht (which he fondly describes as “the hub of Netherlands culture”) and revisit his heritage. All such occasions result in a shift of perspective and a proliferation of new work.



Wim de Vos, 11th September 2001

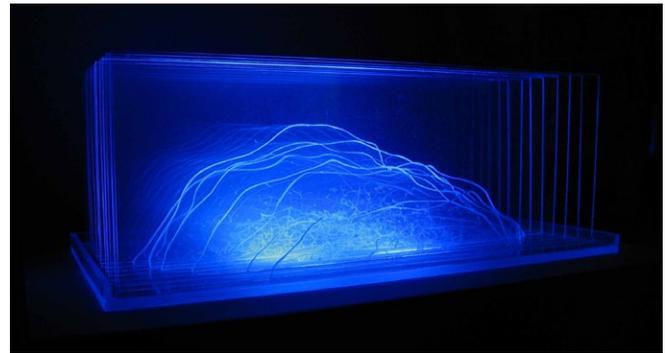
More the international traveller, Del readily accepted invitations in 2003 to teach at the Arrowmont School in Tennessee (US) and the Women's Studio Workshop, New York. From these experiences came *America Recycled*, nineteen little books constructed from materials including (amongst many other things) paper bath mats, coffee filters, cocktail sticks, supermarket bags, brown paper, a pack of Elvis playing cards, maps and tourist brochures. She has toured New Zealand and taught in all Australian capital cities and many regional centres, including the Ramingining aboriginal community in Arnhem Land, the Northern Territory, where she found that artists' books could speak across linguistic and cultural divides.



Adele Outteridge, America Recycled

The Studio's bi-annual newsletters reach an extended family of nearly 500 readers, colleagues and friends whom Wim and Del 'collect' much as they collect precious objects. They have also cultivated special relationships with organizations including regional galleries such as Artspace Mackay in Northern Queensland which hosts the biennial Libris awards and Artists' Book Forum, both of which attract a national and international audience. The State Library of Queensland has

featured their work over many years and recently included them in a new Artists' Books Online project in partnership with Education Queensland. All are kept informed of The Studio's latest workshop projects (currently self portraits); experimental techniques (soldering and soap stone carving as well as printing (from inked etching plates using dental plaster); exhibitions (works for six group shows completed in 2009); new works (a series of paintings by Wim reflecting far north Queensland seascapes along with a collection of Del's books inspired by fire, drought, tropical gardens and the Barrier Reef); workshops (at numerous schools and tertiary institutes); and sundry other achievements and planned activities (their own as well as those of workshop attendees).



Wim de Vos, Postcards from the Island (above)

Wim de Vos, Forest Garden (below)



Asked about their formula for success, Wim reiterates the importance of being unafraid to push boundaries and Del speaks of the satisfaction of solving creative challenges. Professional colleagues who contributed to the catalogue for their *Bookworks* exhibition at the Noosa Regional Gallery in 2006 collectively pay tribute to their knowledge, passion, insight, good sense, fellowship and good humour. Self publishing American book artists Keith Smith and Scott McCarney, who completed an international residency at The Studio in 2006, make special mention of their dedication, energy and generosity in teaching. Del and Wim both have

work included in several of Keith's seminal volumes on *Non Adhesive Binding*. (Del is particularly proud of Keith's dedication to her of his fourth volume, *Smith's Sewing Single Sheets*.)

Christine Campbell, a freelance writer, was CEO of Flying Arts Inc. from 1994 to 2006. Flying Arts has often been described as a cultural counterpart to Queensland's Royal Flying Doctor Service. In addition to being leading practitioners in their field, the teachers Flying Arts contracts to run visual arts workshops in 70 or more regional and remote centres each year are, like Wim and Del, chosen for their adaptability, resourcefulness and 'people skills'. The Studio West End is located at 35 Mollison Street, West End, Queensland Australia 4101. Phone/Fax: +61 7 3844 8469. She can be reached via email at <delidge@uq.net.au>.

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Adele Outteridge, Wim de Vos, Awakening

Fittingly, it is one of their workshop participants, Karla Meursing, who identifies what might be described as the 'X factor' - something beyond *PerspeX*, though that certainly plays an important role. When asked what it was about Wim and Del that most impressed her, she responded: "It is seeing how much enjoyment each derives from his/her creativity, how this is expressed in so many different ways, how they respect each other's experience and areas of special expertise and thus inspire each other".

Point of View in the Artist's Book

By Susan Viguers

The six books that I am going to discuss I admire, but my primary motivation for this article is my interest in developing and articulating a lens that can be useful in approaching other works as well. Indeed, I would suggest that such a lens could contribute to understanding the nature of the accomplishment of many artists' books

Not every artist's book is a narrative, but perhaps no art medium, except film and video, has as much affinity to storytelling. And it is through narrative theory that I am approaching these books. Even books that aren't explicit narratives frequently have narrative elements and thus could also be approached using narrative tools.

My ideas about narrative are influenced most significantly by Mieke Bal's seminal writings, most centrally her *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), but I am using neither the principles nor terminology of narrative theory in a rigorous way. Most significant for this paper (and potentially problematic), I am not distinguishing between concepts of narrator and focalizer, the character from whose point of view the story is told. My justification is simply that the distinction does not significantly contribute to my particular discussion and adds a layer of academic confiscation. This is not, moreover, an essay in narratology. I am simply appropriating one of its most important tenets and considering artists' books through that.

Narrative, as I am defining it, is a construction of connected events caused or experienced by actors presented through a point of view. And my focus is on that idea of point of view, an old concept, something introduced to most of us by high school: the first person voice or that of the third person, a perspective that is omniscient, selected, or that of a character within the text (character-bound in more recent terminology). Jane Austen's remarkable irony in *Emma* results from her silently slipping from a selective omniscient perspective into a character-bound one and then back into that greater omniscience.

The fact that artists' books are a hybrid medium—linguistic, visual (two as well as three dimensional), temporal, and tactile—means that point of view is comparably complex. Central to that complexity is the idea of the narrator as not only a speaker, but also a presenter.

Valerie Carrigan – Messenger

Valerie Carrigan's *Messenger* (Messenger Press, 2004) is a boxed set of folios, text printed on the outside of each folio, with the image printed on a single sheet within it: we first read the text, and then turn the page to see the image, which eliminates most of the complexities of a visual/verbal combination. And, indeed, the text, which precedes each image, falls easily into narrative analysis.

The text is presented in the third person with an implied external narrator, but the perspective is conflated almost all the time with internal characters (primarily one person). Occasionally, the focalization is so intense and partial as to leave all sense of an external narrator behind, for example, this line from the third folio: "This was her one chance to save something." That is not an objective statement, but a subjective thought, a character-bound voice.

One of the striking features of this artist's book is the importance of allusions to events—childhood, the death of a sister, a marriage—outside the present story. The primary story is about encounters with five species of birds.

This is the first folio:

This was the same window that she and her sister gazed through as children. From their seat at the table they watched deer move at dusk and birds fly in and out of the feeder. On tiptoes, they watched small animals scurry across the snow on winter mornings.

She missed her sister.

On the day of the funeral her mother and father called out to her from the kitchen. "Twelve northern flickers!" She rushed to join them at the window. All three stood motionless, holding their breath, not wanting the birds to leave. They sensed somehow that a messenger had come, and this eased their sorrow. [Image 1]

The text is presented near the top of a large white page (14 by 11 ½ inches). Its visual presence—placement, type, color—suspend the experience in space and time. We are primarily, however, in a world of verbal art, with a verbal narrator and perspective created by language.

When we turn the page to the image, the narrative strategy changes radically. [Image 2] Here is the image, a northern flicker, not a flock, just one—elegant in its feathers and bright eye. The birds that follow each page of words are huge, taking up all of the 14 by 11 ½ inches, much bigger than life, at times even frightening in their immediacy. [Image 3, Image 4] Each is a portrait of the bird around which the text is spun, but the point of view has changed. Rather than being



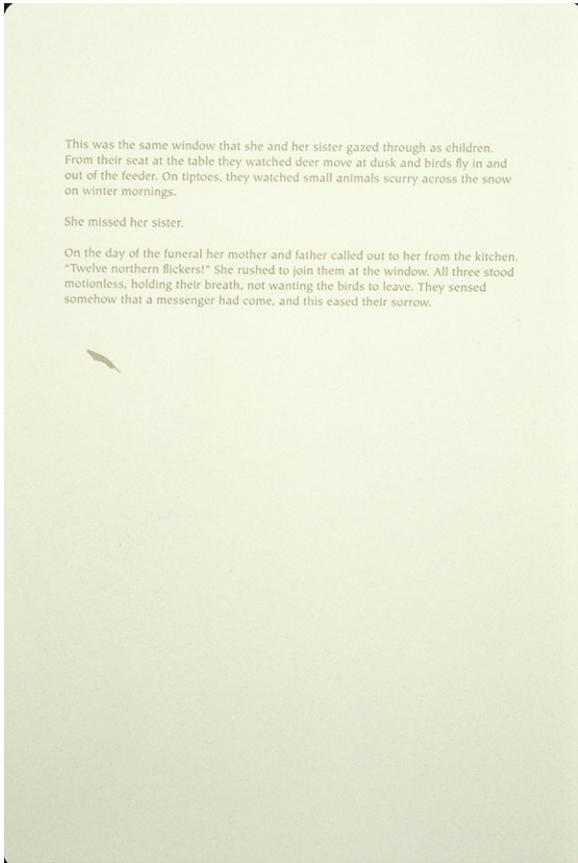


Image 1



Image 3



Image 2



Image 4

a character within a story, the bird's presence is the story. With the movement from words to image comes a movement from a character-bound point of view to that of an external presenter. An external narrator always has, of course, a perspective: as monoprints, these show the artist's hand; we see the marks that make up the birds' feathers, and beaks, and eyes; although illusionistic, they are interpretations of reality. And we have, in fact, heard from that narrator before—in the title of the piece, *Messenger*, a gloss on the story's meaning.

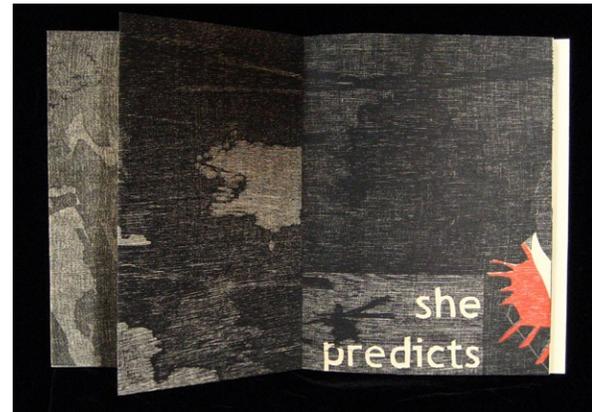
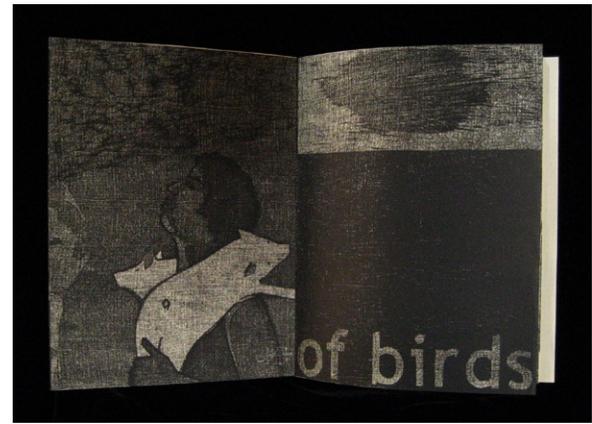
Katie Baldwin – *Storm Prediction*

The colophon at the end of *Messenger* reveals a connection between the external narrator and the characters within the text. In Katie Baldwin's *Storm Prediction* (Queen Anne's Revenge Press, 2006) there is no self-reference in text or imagery. The primary narrator is explicitly external. That presenter reveals itself not only as speaker (in the third person voice of the text), but also as shaper of the narrative. We see this even in the graphic presence of the text. [Image 5] The words "OF BIRDS" anchor the reader low on the page below a space evoking the sky, within its own expanse of darkness, and the figuration of the narrative depends on the movement to white lettering that follows in the next spread. [Image 6]

But although in some art—verbal and visual—it is possible for the primary narrator/presenter to seem god-like and the reader not to be immediately cognizant of a perspective with its inevitable biases and cultural assumptions, with the kind of mark making in this book, subjectivity is apparent. We are aware of the mind set of the external narrator as we read the way the wood block matrix participates in the creation of contour, texture, and atmosphere and as we read the postures of the iconic, yet expressive figures: [Image 7] the androgynous youth ("a sailor") holding two pigs in a casual, intimate gesture that imparts to them the quality of toddler-aged babies and [Image 8] the two men as at a table, a red flame image layered on the lapel area of their suits.

And, also significant, within the external narrator/presenter is embedded a character-bound perspective—that of the sailor, not that of the men with whom the book ends. That perspective is given to us by the text itself: "When a sailor dreams of birds water & fire she predicts a storm." It is with her we identify, with whom we witness the coming of the storm. The storm for that sailor at least in the text is one of nature; but for the reader its intensity, its ponderousness, is a metaphor for the crisis of civilization, perhaps war conceived and designed in a boardroom. The sailor, herself, in her iconic vulnerability, participates in that metaphor, but the broadening of the vision is that of the external narrator.

From top, images 5-8



Clarissa Sligh – *Wrongly Bodied Two*

In Clarissa Sligh's *Wrongly Bodied Two* (Rosendale, NY: Women's Studio Workshop, 2004.) there are three stories: that of Deborah/Jake, "the slim young white woman" who transitions into a male; that of Ellen and William Craft, two slaves in the mid-nineteenth century who escaped from the south, she disguised as a young white invalid gentleman and her husband as her black slave; and that of the artist herself, Clarissa Sligh, who is photographing Jake's transition.

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There is clearly an external narrator who presents all the stories, a narrator whose perspective is implicit in both the visual and verbal orchestration of the various stories, in the design of the pages [Image 9], in the photographs [Image 10], and other images [Image 11]. Pull quotes such as this [Image 12] make us aware of an external focalizer, interpreting the words. In that example and in numerous longer passages the narrative itself takes the visual form of poetry, its graphic layout revealing the voice of that narrator. We read:

*Since laws prevented slaves from
Learning to read or write, they
Sat looking at words neither of
Them could understand.* [Image 13]

The active "Learning to" at the beginning of the second line is in the same position as the passive "Sat looking" in the next line, the spatial separation of subject and verb ("they" and "Sat") underscoring the paralysis of "Sat."

Sometimes characters speak or present themselves, such as the doctor who recommends Jake's gender reassignment and often Jake himself. This is not only true in his first-person accounts of his story, but also the photographs themselves, which frequently have the quality of self-portraits. [Image 14] "My task," the narrator tells us at one point "was to document the physical change. But I found it difficult to preconceptualize the frame." Jake often seems to direct the images of himself, posing in a posture that even flaunts his selfhood.

The external narrator is also a character herself, the story she tells in part her story, her encountering of events, those experienced by Ellen and William Craft, which horrify and move her, and those of Jake, which challenge "her world view." As a character in the story she interacts with Deborah/Jake and recounts her responses to the extraordinary painful and demanding transsexual procedures, the psychological dimensions of Jake's experience, and the implications for herself as a woman—a woman who as an African American would be even less welcome in Jake's family than his gender change. One series of photographs of Jake shaving includes Jake and the photographer herself as she is reflected in the

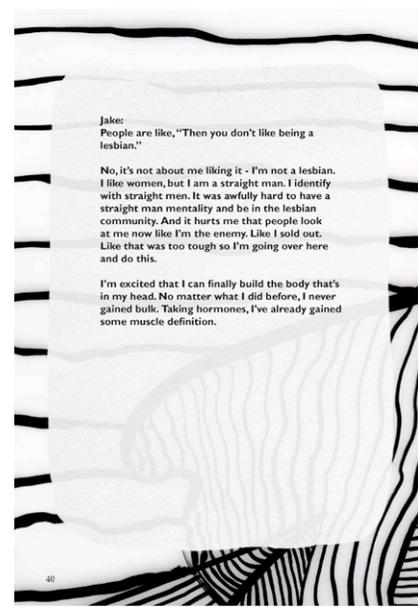


Image 9



Image 10



Image 11

mirror. [Image 15] At other times, too, the book includes photographs of the narrator. [Image 16] That black and white are not equal and that for Jake the male is stereotypically dominant add to the complexity of the intersection of stories.

The narrator tells us, “Me as voyeur and Jake as performer seemed to entwine us more and more. Neither of us was conscious of us. His loneliness and isolation mirrored my own.” The character-bound narrator is not “conscious,” but the external narrator is acutely so, as she presents the point of view of both her alter ego and the story’s protagonist, Jake, visions that both contrast and echo each other.

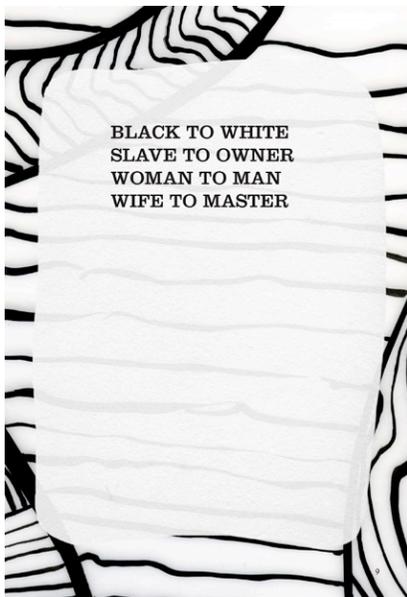


Image 12

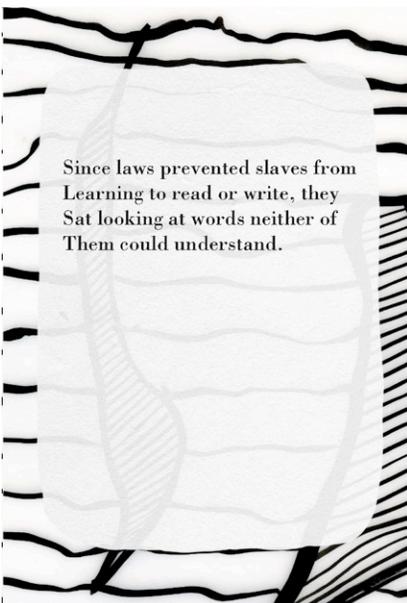


Image 13



Image 14



Image 15



Image 16

Clif Meador – Memory Lapse

From top, images 17-20

Although the speaker in Clif Meador’s *Memory Lapse* (Atlanta: Nexus Press, 1999) never uses the first-person—no “I” or “we”—a character-bound narrator who has the immediacy of the first-person is central to the book. To quote from several spreads, “The train slowly winds its way through the forest for hours. . . . The air smells fantastic. . . . Hours pass with scant evidence of human habitation” And we see photographs from that character’s perspective out the train window [Image 17], and later at the station at which he arrives. The book is presented as a journey by an unnamed traveler to and through the Solovetski monastery and GULAG prison camps in northern Russia’s White Sea. It is a physical journey, but also one of learning and imagining.

The internal narrator is embedded in an external narrator. The book—with its archived photographs, occasional diagrams or maps, images from Russian art [Image 18], even shots of the pages on which are printed Stalin’s “Fundamental Rights and Duties of Citizens” [Image 19]—is clearly a construction of an outside narrator. When we view material (visual or verbal) that does not reflect a physical temporally defined journey, we are aware of a perspective that is differentiated from the character-bound one. Sometimes the narrative has the quality of an experience that is not immediate, but recollected, for example, when the text evokes labels, as in an album of photographs put together after a journey: “The harbor side of the Kremlin, with the main gate facing the sea” or “The Holy Gate to the monastery.”

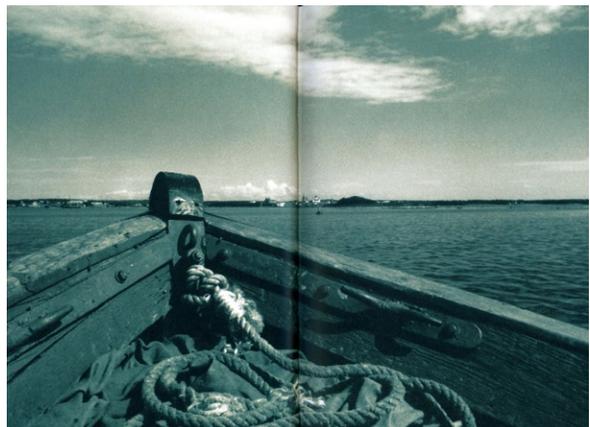
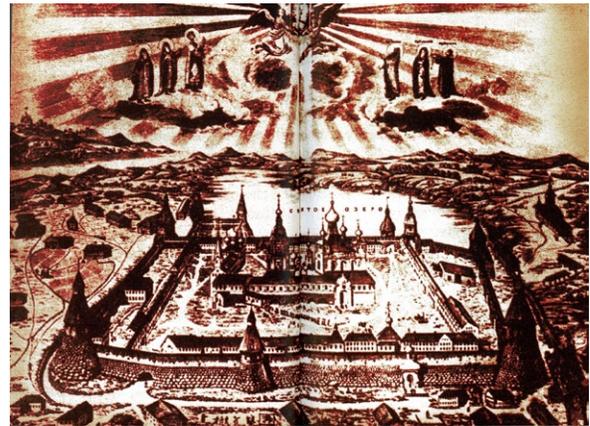
Second-person narration is rare in literature, but present, for one example, in the popular novel by Jay McInerney, *Bright Lights, Big City* (NY: Vintage, 1984). As Bal argues about another novel, the “you” is the first person in disguise. The immediacy of “you,” however, I argue, pushes beyond the perspective of the first-person. The book constructs the fiction that the reader, him or herself, is encountering the events of the story. That fiction is at work in Meador’s *Memory Lapse*. This is partly the result of Meador’s use of photographs, which like film, in their illusionistic capabilities, encourage unawareness of the presenter’s hand. But the sense of a second-person perspective is also created by the absence of “I.” [Image 20] You, the reader, see with the eyes of the unnamed character-bound narrator, across the boat’s prow to the water.

The immediacy of the reader’s experience in *Memory Lapse*, the sense of the second-person perspective, is a result in part of the pacing of images and text and the understanding of what each communicates. To cite one of many examples, the reader moves through photographs of the complex ruins of a chapel, through arches, to a patch of words underneath an

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The train slowly winds its way through the forest for hours. The woods are damp, buggy; lichens grow profusely on the trunks. The air smells fantastic, like pine resin and dried smoke.



archway to a small door, anchoring him or her on that door. [Image 21] In the spread after this one we are beyond that archway and we read the words “a very small doorway with a story” only if we take the time to see them. The text on the next spread [Image 22] telling us what once happened there, the bodies that were piled up, is similarly almost hidden, readable only if one looks carefully, beyond the present ruins. With the next page turn [Image 23], we have moved to a larger expanse within the chapel complex. The words “The courtyard seems different, somehow” evoke the reader’s sense of being changed by what he or she has experienced, but they are ostensibly spoken by the character-bound narrator. That narrator is an everyman figure, his own perceptions and growing understanding a model for ours. “Imagine,” he says to himself—and to the reader. And the fact that the story of the past is captured in words, rather than images, reminds us, as it does him, that it is in the imagination, in memory, that the past primarily resides.

Michelle Wilson – *El Proceso*

In Michelle Wilson’s *El Proceso* (Rocinante Press, 2007), the dominant point of view is of that of a first-person narrator, who is sewing the book we are reading, moving from one signature to the next, and in the process telling two stories that intertwine, that of the dirty war in Argentina, during which thousands of innocent men, women, and children died and that of the migration of the endangered bird, the red knot. “Between my finger, the fragments tremble,” we read, “I can feel the frantic heartbeat, a fragile struggle of wings.” We feel through the text the power of the fusion of perspectives: the first-person narrator merges with the exhausted birds who drop into the sea and the people, terrified, pushed out of planes over the ocean.

There are no images in this book, but the color of the type and, more important, its placement and the space surrounding it and the large pages of handmade paper extend the narrative beyond the verbal. [Image 24] The book’s physicality evokes the second-person perspective—the reader him/herself turns the pages, hears the rustle of paper, feels its complex tactility, its return from one’s hands to drape over the book stand. [Image 25 – see top of following page] Reading the book takes on qualities of participating in a performance. The paper’s metaphoric evocation of birds or flight, however, reminds us that this is a constructed perspective of a covert omniscient presenter, who stands behind the reader and the second-person perspective and behind the character bound first-person narrator who speaks the text.

From top, images 21-23

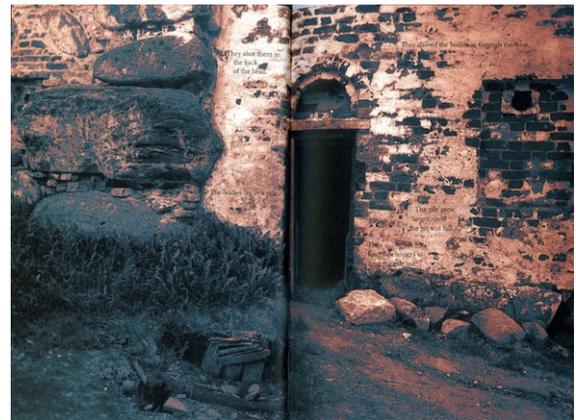
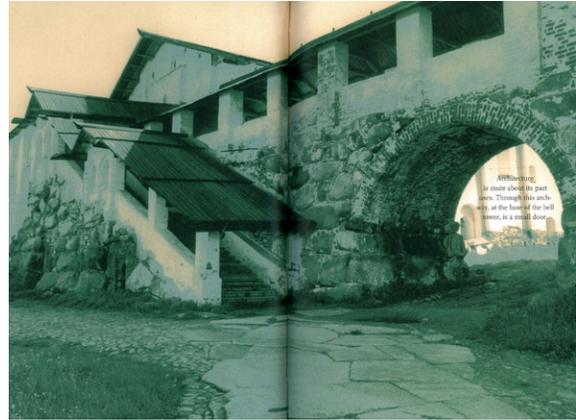


Image 24

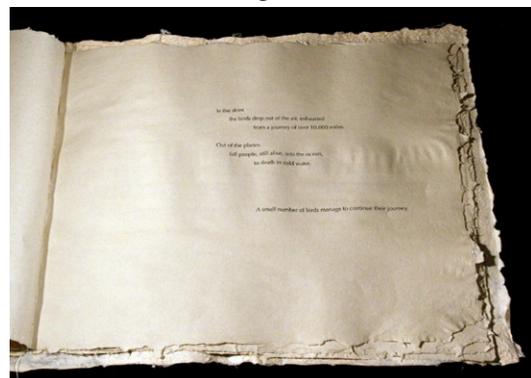
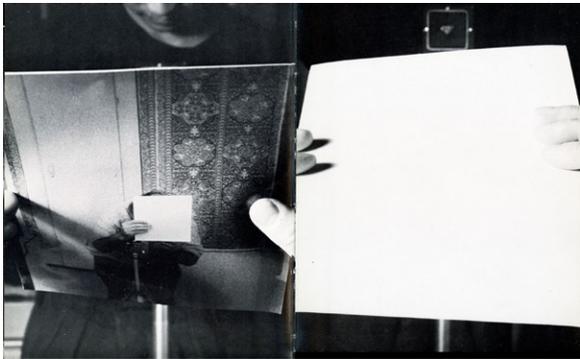




Image 25 (description on previous page)

From top, images 26-29



Michael Snow – Cover to Cover

The very subject of Michael Snow's well-known *Cover to Cover* (Halifax, NS: Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1975) is point of view. We open the book, the covers of which are imaged as a door, and follow the back of a man going through that door [Image 26] and from the other direction his coming through the door. After several page the focalizers are made explicit as we see the two photographers, whose cameras are now focused on each other. The point of view of one takes over and we see the image of the other holding a piece of paper in front of his camera [Image 27] until soon the paper with the fingers holding it takes up the whole recto page. Following that point, however, the image of the photographer holding the page becomes a page held by someone else. [Image 28]

The book's narrative takes us out of a house and into a car and eventually into a gallery—but the focalizing perspective is turned inside out. The point of view would seem to be external, but then we see that it's internal—a photograph held in someone's hands, turned upside down and so forth. The fact that the book is the door and we are holding it, just as the hands are holding and moving around photographs within the book, destabilizes us. [Image 29] The book ends with the central actor picking up a book that turns out to be an image of this very book and the camera, an external point of view, focusing on that image which becomes the book in our hands, the focalizer in the end becoming ourselves, the second-person perspective.

Snow's book is a tour de force, playing with the idea of focalization, but for all the books in this discussion point of view is essential. There is always an external perspective: "whenever events are presented," says Bal, "they are always presented from within a certain 'vision.'" (*Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997, p. 142) And that vision inevitably projects personal and societal values and conceptions. But in narrative works other points of view are also essential. Perspectives can have varying relationships to the external one and merge with or imbed others.

Indeed, the power of narrative is indebted to that structuring tool. We see and understand by absorbing multiple perspectives, often in complicated relationships to each other. That is also, of course, true in novels; in artists' books, however, the visual and the physical add a particular complexity to the modes of point of view. And that, I would argue, contributes to the unique richness of many narrative artists' books.

Susan Viguers is presently Director of the MFA Book Arts/Printmaking Program at The University of the Arts. She has a Ph.D. in English from Bryn Mawr College and has published extensively— scholarship, primarily in Renaissance drama and children’s literature, and creative non-fiction (*With Child*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich) and poetry. In 1991 she joined the MFA Book Arts/Printmaking faculty to teach a course that focused on text and its relation to image and structure. The move into the program proved for her a conceptual and creative breakthrough. She studied letterpress, lithography, screenprinting, and bookbinding with faculty at the university, in the end taking most of the courses in the MFA Book Arts/Printmaking program. Since 1994 she has made artist’s books. They have been exhibited in numerous juried and invitational shows (group and solo), and are included in Special Collections at many institutions. She is a professor and recipient of two major teaching awards. She can be reached at <SViguers@uarts.edu>.



Beautiful & Clever (As Well As Technically Correct): A collection of five essays

By A. Kendra Greene

1.

Mountain Splices, Why Do You Spurn Me So?

Other people discover Led Zeppelin or The Cure or Nine Inch Nails while sampling an older sibling's music collection. My brother introduced me to the accordion-driven lyric parodies of Weird Al Yankovic. Years later, on my own, I would discover Robert Palmer, The Rolling Stones, Joan Jett, Queen—everyone, it seemed—and recognize their melodies from one Weird Al polka or another. It was the 1980s when my brother began playing his Weird Al tapes for me, a point in American culture when the accordion virtually implied farce. Maybe you remember when Wesley had to take music lessons on the sitcom *Mr. Belvedere*, and how the accordion was the obvious punch line. Perhaps you noticed the stereotype stubbornly entrenched even into the 1990s when the instrument was featured prominently, necessarily, as the comic accessory strapped to uber-geek Steve Urkel on the long-running *Family Matters*.

It would be an exaggeration to say the accordion gets no respect, but even the accordion as a style of book suffers from certain misconceptions. It suffers mostly from an apparent simplicity. Just as a jellyfish is generally held to be less complex than a vertebrate, so, too, the spineless book appears uncomplicated, unevolved next to its bound-spine cousins. I think about this assumption as I fold pages, as I line the paper against itself and crease a mountain or a valley into being. Holding the pleat of pages together, I marvel how the top edge can be smooth and neat while the bottom of the text block runs in rippled, ragged teeth. I sweep the bone folder across a crease and wonder if I've pressed in place a page that's a smidge too short—it's as likely I've just smoothed out the paper the very fraction of an inch that will make it jut out from the rest. But if I am lucky, it's just another anonymous pleat, no different from any other in its soldierly file.

In most endeavors, and accordion books are no exception, it takes a lot of skill to make a thing look easy. Though it appears seamless, it's possible that every page of an accordion be joined to the next by a tab, the whole chain of paper fixed in place with a splice at every turn, linked at each fold by a cupping valley splice and then the carefully met kiss of a mountain splice. In some Sempu-yo, that most restrained accordion, every outward facing peak might meet in a mountain splice, arranged from a quiet frenzy of alignment and glue management and pages threatening to stick together where they should open.

If a page in a spine-bound book ever seemed constrained, finite, split from its brethren, the accordion offers a nearly endless run of paper. Open one page and you may open the whole book, your arms held wide and a story swirling at your feet. Pages may spill like waters. In a thicker stock, they will slap and fall like shingles of a Jacob's ladder. Rigidly interdependent, each page is a push or pull on the next, a sequence, a reaction. Like dominoes. Like a house of cards.

Only the scroll rivals the accordion for flow, for extension, for space. In the company of other books, accordions are notably three dimensional, so clearly things with angles, objects with shifting sides. In its expansive Orihon form, it is quite literally a book with a back-story. A species of mobius strip. Even in the careful constriction of a fluttering Sempu-yo, where the beauty of the far pleated edge hides demurely behind a thin screen, the pages lose the strict anatomy of front and back as they instead sway in the current of back and forth. They balance between an old order and an unpredictable new form. They respond to the reader. They teeter. They threaten to fall apart.

The Sempu-yo wrapper is the thin veil of a robe, defining, obscuring. It is the teacup that contains the borderless tea. It is a vessel of waters, of pages lapping against its covers; and it is the banks astride rivers, it is the shores met by waves. The Sempu-yo form lends itself to the sheltering of delicate pages, the weight of pale thin leaves sustained by the support of its casing, the way a sapling braced against a stake is trained to grow straight and strong.

The elegance of an accordion, like a dovetail joint, lies in its integrity. Despite its many constituent parts, the finished accordion seems to be all of a piece. The slim square makes the cover blocks only two more leaves, a little thicker than the rest perhaps, but only the natural bulk of exterior protection, just what you'd expect to feel in a shell or a crust or a skin.

Yet I can scarcely imagine an accordion book with its covers closed. No sooner do I try than it is opened, impossible to collapse, as if its zigzag was the spring of a jack-in-the-box, a lively surprise barely contained, anxious to burst forth. Closed, the accordion is a roof shingle, an armor plate; opened it moves, it breathes, it plays. Its bellows fill like sails, like lungs. It flirts. It laughs. It sings.

The features that make the accordion as book so unassuming, so easy to underestimate, are perhaps also what make the accordion as instrument so vulnerable to humor and derision. Yet oddity and antiquity are, too, the very attributes that make the accordion distinctive, exotic, and ultimately sought after. If you were paying attention in the 1980s, you might have noticed The Talking Heads, Bruce



Springsteen, Los Lobos, The Grateful Dead—everyone, it would seem—performing or recording with accordion. Even the Piano Man, Billy Joel, believed in the accordion, long before its electric version found favor with Paul McCartney and Madonna. That would have been back when Jimmy Page called himself a Yankovic fan while nonetheless denying permission for a Led Zeppelin polka medley—back before Weird Al went platinum.

2. Sea to Sea

Should you pinch the metal knob at the top and pivot the spring dividers from one pointy leg to the other, you are suddenly a navigator strolling a course across the ocean in great arcing sweeps. It's reason enough to own a pair.

Spring dividers are not as springy as their name suggests—it's just the opposite, in fact. They are as rigid and exacting as a ballerina en pointe. Unmarked by numbers or ticks, these curveless calipers are faithful to specific distance, which they hold in an iron memory. This leadless twin to the geometer's compass leaves a mark of its own: its tiny footprint a mere pinprick, a sting. Each such divot, each infinitesimal bite, is set perfectly equidistant from the last. As a purely personal system of measure, spring dividers reject the arbitrary abstraction of inches, the tyranny of predetermined scales, and trade instead in absolute equivalency. *This is that*, they say. *That is this*.

Flax paper is earthy. Its fine down of fiber warbles, uneven like the undulations of tilled soil. I handle a sheet of gray that looks like flannel, soft and stiff as heavy winter clothes. Then I pick up a sheet of cream and it seems lighter in every way. It relaxes. It holds a crease more forgivingly. In color and weight, the cream flax begins to approach that of the pages, the Torchglow paper I have cut down with a knife by jagged strokes until it gave me twelve sections, each eight sheets thick. Paired this way, the cream and the Torchglow, the transition from cover to page seems remarkably gentle, so very soft and seamless.

The rough cut of the sections, torn and bitten by a blade too dull for the job, echoes the deckled edges of the flax paper. I trim one side of the sections, taming the wild and frayed edges that lunge and rage out at the air. The tears have knit some edges together, entangled them, and on opening a section there is a crackle of pages breaking apart. I think of Fall and harvest, of leaves drying to a brittle curl and crunching under foot. I think of maple and oak leaves pressed between pages, their resplendent reds and yellows preserved flat and forgotten. I begin to think I can bind Autumn itself, the rough rustle of leaves stitched together with rust and

golden threads. I reach for a bark brown thread, hold it against the spine, and reconsider.

It's something about the flax. Its surface won't flatten, won't level. It has a warp and ripple, unruly as a living thing, and restless. It's something, too, about the Torchglow, its edges rough like whitecaps. Pointed down, as the tail, the effect is a disappearing, an unraveling, an erasure; as if the block of pages was being lost in fog and mist. Pointed up, less conventionally as the head, it is the rollick of a choppy sea. I smell the start of a squall. I know now that I am binding the ocean.

Twelve sections, I think; *twelve months*, *twelve apostles*, *twelve Olympians*. I pierce sewing stations into the crease of each section and stand them up again. They look like a stand of pale bamboo, each puncture the ridge between segments. No wonder they call this a spine, each white rupture like a bony vertebrae. I almost expect these joints to powder my hands in a calcium dust. I think about the Philippines and Malaysia, I think about the stories of Japan. *Is it true that humanity emerged from a bamboo stem?* I wonder, *Did we come from a rib or a garden?*

I look at the stations again and see them as portholes in the pages. Running my finger down them, I recognize them instead as barnacles: a texture of my childhood, of bobbing docks and hulls. I sink into thoughts about barnacles, those coarse volcanoes with their deep pits, their chalky coronas, and their abrasive endurance. And then I plunge the sections into the waiting gap of the cover, sewing each into place.

Of the four threads I'm using, the blue and the green threads must be waxed. I pull the lengths of thread I've cut through grooves in the beeswax, each taut string angled to cut the lump of wax deeper still, a sharp action totally divorced from the round motions of waxing a boat or a board. The gray and the aqua colored threads come already prepared, are in fact too waxy. Drawing these threads between my fingernails, scraping the wax away, I think of build-up, of how salt, too, will coat a thing and preserve it.

Weaving a pair of thin cotton threads back and forth at the head and the tail of the spine completes the binding, ensures the shoulders of the book won't shrug off the binding thread of the first or last sections like a stray spaghetti strap. Weaving so clearly belongs to the earth, to the ground that yields the fibers in employs, and yet, I think, weaving is an ocean art. In Ireland, fisherman set sail clad in cables knit from the wooly sheep that stay on shore. And far from land they drop nets into the depths and pull up life.



I wonder, for a moment, if it might be better for this ocean book I'm binding to have a waterproof paper, something truly seaworthy? But no, I think, it should be of the earth, durable and vulnerable like earthly things, and if it loses integrity in contact with water, if it is in fact washed away, so much the better, I think: ashes to ashes, dust to dust.

3.

Sutures, Secrets, Sects

I was in the home of one Amelia Bird, in a central area of the house that isn't a room in itself but rather the open space joining living room to sun porch, sun porch to kitchen, kitchen to bath. I was there in the heart of the house, in front of a brood of bookshelves, kneeling, the first time I saw a Coptic binding. I was so taken by the stripped-down simplicity of its bare spine, the sections of paper linked together like a group of school children I once saw snaking through the Bronze Age relics of a Greek museum, each holding firm her place along a white knotted rope. Opening the book, bending its spine, I may actually have gasped. Certainly my eyes grew wide and I know my throat tightened into the silence of awe: this was a book that lay flat—wherever you opened it! Democratically, even-tempered, as if any page was as good as any another. As if you might stay forever at any one spread.

I remain utterly disarmed by the way an open page stays open. Surely it is a kind of patience, a humility. To fill the leaves of such a book is doubtless its own meditation. My sister has painted little birds and branches for half her life, nesting them in papers delicate to substantial. I've seen these fierce finches and bowing songbirds sometimes grouped in frames and sometimes sent as postcards—occasionally set in a somber scroll—but once I discovered a Coptic binding I knew they were meant to live in a book like this. Imagine: a flock of them together but every one with the breathing room of its own page, each given its due and never the rustle of pages curling impatient and ready to turn themselves.

Looking at the Coptic book I'm sewing now, I squint at it and knit my brows. The four sewing threads, stiff with wax, run out from the paper like wires, like electrodes. I look at the thumb on my right hand, the nail broken and skin slashed by a knife blade two weeks ago while chopping tomatoes. Two weeks and still not healed. If I pinch a needle enough to pull it through, my thumb throbs. I pause often. I eye the split that isn't mending, watch it move towards and away from the spine as the threads cross over and duck in and pop through the sewing stations pierced precisely through each section. I wonder if I would have been better off with stitches myself. The needles that slip and bob so beautifully into a link stitch, tying section to section, are curved as a surgeon's needles are.

The half book before me is laid out so very still, so vulnerable on the table. The red apron tied high on my waist seems a bloodstained butcher's garment. I look at my patient the book. *I'm sorry*, I think. *We did all we could*.

Despite my best efforts, I'm growing cross with this book. This book, for which I so carefully folded so many sections of six sheets each, which I should have cut long and somber as a Tibetan prayer book but instead cut haplessly into something short and stocky—an imperfect and charmless brick. This book deformed by my every intervention, it's this book that starts to make me mad. I'm still disappointed with its square-covered predecessor, the way the binding thread heaps up on one side and, with nothing to balance it on the opposite side, causes the cover to slope at an angle so that the book fails to lie as I had intended: flat and solid as a marble slab.

I imagine a book with so many sections and so much sewing that it would arc from cover to cover like a rainbow, curve in on itself, lie on a shelf like a bridge. I imagine a book with still more sections and more sewing, a book that completes the wheel, binds back into itself, a circle unbroken. I like the idea of a book that keeps its own counsel, a book complete without a reader. I smile at this book that would make physical all the difficulties of text and literacy and accessibility and stories forgotten and tomes out of print and the way every story exists in the context of every other. Then I remember the book in front of me. I frown.

I know it's my own fault. I was thinking about books as nothing more than objects of weight and dimension, geometric solids that might vary only in density—which is to say, I had forgotten to plan not only for thread but for color, for the temperament and character of anything but the milky Torchglow text block. How else to explain the languorous marbled paper I chose for the covers, the lilting ripples of yellow and green, the bubbles of blue as lazy and distended as the clumsy blobs in a lava lamp? It's a beautiful thing, handmade and effervescent, but the whimsy of such a cover is at odds with the very girth of this book. I know, even as I sew, that I don't have to put in all twenty-one sections I've prepared; I could stop at eleven and it wouldn't look bad, could probably have stopped at eight, but I was aiming for something more ambitious when I started, something substantial, and I am loathe to give it up. So I sew in another section. Another and another. Resignedly. The book begins to remind me of a phone book, dense and more useless than it should be. I keep sewing, and contemplate the hubris of thinking I could bind a monument.

The cover paper is doubly wrong. Not only is the timbre of the pattern ill-suited to the shape, the fibers themselves are weak. The stress of punching and sewing is told in rips



and splits, stretch marks and loss that disfigure the final look of both my books, though happily their function seems unmarred by the tears. In the interest of cosmetics I consider mixing paint in just the colors to take a fine-tipped brush and spot away the hairline cracks, the way one would retouch a photograph, but I am afraid of making it worse. I think about the pottery I tried to glue back together after my last move, how much prettier the shards were than the chipped and marred bowls I resurrected from the broken pieces. No, I think, it's not worth another procedure. This book will just have to live with the scars.

A bookbinder recently whispered to me, *whispered* though none but the two of us were in the room, that her boards don't seem to slip in the nipping press, that they stay as straight and square as she set them, are spared the approximation of sanding down the edge that juts away—provided she brushes glue down on *one* board of the pair instead of onto both. *What a secret*, I think, quietly, all to myself, and delight that this most secret binding, associated as it is with the clandestine reading of a 4th century Christian sect, this binding has its secrets, too.

And how fitting that these books harboring the text of revolution should be revolutionary in form as well. Surely this was the greater scandal, the codex format departing from the scroll, the insistence on separation, on discrete pages in the face of a tradition of continuity. Imagine the shock of so many edges, such sharpness! And not even a perfect flatness to eclipse the scroll's perfect circle—no, what with the bulk of sewing that slants the cover to one side, the Coptic-bound book wears its flat face crooked. Or at least it will for a while, a kind of youthful smirk that gravity will iron out with age. Eventually the spine will push out, like a yoga pose or a Roman arch, and bring the covers in parallel, to lie as flat as the fourth century earth. It's the very curve of a cat's raised back, and yet in the book's spine it is a sign of relaxing, of submission. I think of the curves in my own spine, the ones doctors didn't notice while there was still time to correct them, the same ones I wouldn't notice at all if the doctors since didn't mention them every once and again. These very curves you perhaps don't suspect even now, me sitting straight as I can, my sewing to my side, as I pull the last needle through the last waiting hole.

It ends here.

I close the sutures. I tie off in square knots. I clip the threads and pick up an English backing hammer, the broad slight curve of its head dull yet gleaming, and I pound the thread into the flesh of the board. I pound until it reads smooth and flush under my fingers as I draw them gingerly along the hinge, probing the surface, tracing the wound.

4. Case By Case

I am, it would appear, simply incapable of learning a new binding style without making each of two exclamations. First, "It's like a real book!" And second, "This is taking forever!" Repetition has drained all originality out of these twin epiphanies, and yet, according to my ritual, when I invoke them this time, for the Quarter-Cloth Flat-Spine Case-Binding, it is with the knowledge that *this time* they are really true, true for the first time true, true as they were never true before, and I say them with the breathless surprise and conviction of someone who has just fallen in love, again. How could I have thought the slap of a thick pamphlet was just like a real book; how innocent was I to cover two boards in sekishu-backed cloth and think the same thing? Surely I was deceived when I creased a flax cover into a flat spine, even if I sewed in sections enough to pen a novel. I had made, I know now, no *real* book before the flat spine case binding.

Just look at it. Look at the stiff covers with a healthy square protecting a clean-edged text block; look at the spine fabric wrapping the spine with a quarter width overlap on front and back. Look at the *end bands*, for goodness' sake! In every attribute it matches no less august an object than the library book I've just borrowed. True, they aren't identical. The square of the library book is wider, for instance—the robust bumper of a working book, compared to the proportions of my more delicate and parlor-like versions. And, admittedly, the library book's spine fabric seems to fall a little shy of one quarter the cover width. A matter of style, I first suspect, no different from the changing fashions which make men's ties a little wider one year, downright skinny the next. But no, I note, running the pad of my finger down the seam of cloth and fabric, it's that the cover paper overlaps the spine fabric by such a hearty margin, far more than the thin flirtation I've allowed to the books I'm making. And, while we're cataloguing the little variances between the books I'm making and the one I've borrowed, I should perhaps note that I've picked a spark of color for my end bands and hand-painted paste papers for the covers, while the library book is accorded camouflaged black end bands to match the spine cloth and an institutional solid-color paper for the cover. Yet the differences between these books are no more than the distinct proportions and markings of two closely related species of bird.

Small environmental adaptations aside, the point is, *this time*, I've bound not just a book that looks like a book, but a book that looks like *the* book, the archetypal what-springs-to-mind Platonic-form kind of *book*. The flat spine case binding is simply the quintessential book. It is a book for the ages—and appropriately enough, it takes forever to make one.





Marathons of any kind are a little somber, and here I include *Law and Order* marathons right alongside ambitious running events. They are venerable in the way of ancient and consuming things. They inspire something of the same reverent mood conjured by a stately flat spine case binding with quarter cloth cover, but the underlying trait of a marathon, the real parallel between an hours-long foot race and an epic book binding project, is the demand for extensive preparation.

When you decide to run 26.2 miles in this day and age, you almost certainly commit to a training plan principled on the oscillation between active training and the periods of rest necessary to adapt to and accept that activity. Not to suggest too neat an analogy, but the case binding is built on the very same sense of alternation. You cut down sections, for instance, then leave them to press flat. With the book snug in the lying press as if in a cradle, you apply layers of wheat paste and kozo and cotton hinge fabric and western paper all in waves, waiting as long as it takes for each new layer to dry before adding the next. Indeed it's during the waiting that the book comes together, integrates parts into a single thing, makes a kind of peace with itself and settles in. This happens as fiber accepts creases, as moisture comes and goes, the book itself expanding and contracting in long, slow breaths. And just as the runner tapers, builds to a peak of long days and then reaps the equal rewards of repose, so the work sessions of binding finally give way to a book that in its final stages can only be finished by a good, long rest.

What you get is a book that opens like a cellar door. If you've been careful, it is sturdy and utterly utilitarian, familiar and formal as an encyclopedia volume; if you've been careless, it creaks and sticks. The flat spine case binding suggests the status of something that will be around a long time, something that deserves special attention. It would be the binding for your dissertation, your genealogy records. It connotes the elegance and authority of classic literature and law libraries, would elevate a collection of sketches into something that looks like an oeuvre. Yet for all the associations of austerity and accomplishment, it is the humanness that draws me to this style. It is, after all, a book you rub with the palm of your hand, a book that responds to that heat, its layers bonding under your warmth. It's a book you test with your fingers, feeling for bubbles and pressing down the edges while it's still too fragile to open wide enough for a look inside. It is, and I don't know why I find this so charming, a book where you leave the end sheets and cover boards much too wide at first, waiting for each progressive incarnation of what will eventually become the book to find its own particular shape before you can know what is excess and what is true.

Which may be why this feat of endurance requires such a sense of balance, such a gentle touch. The process is a litany of decisions and consequences, and you can't fret too much about any of them or you will be paralyzed and never take the next step. It is painstaking and unpredictable. I pull the kettle stitches linking the sections a little too tight, and the French sewing appears to swell and distend between the head and tail kettles. My end bands, which I have been whittling down, respectively, in crimson and butter slivers, look far too narrow and still I am told they are entirely too wide. So I stop trusting my eyes and put faith in my fingers. With the forwarding done and the text block knocked back in the lapped case, I pinch at the spine as if it were a fruit and I was unsure whether it was ripe enough to eat. I learn that what I can't see, I must feel.

Normally I crank the nipping press as if I were a Salem torturer and Giles Corey himself was calling out "More weight!" However with brass-edge boards sandwiching my book, I am mindful of the real ability to do harm, and I turn the press just until the book presses back—then I walk away and, on my first try, return to a perfect bite crisply pressed where minutes before I'd left a lazy curve of untrained gutter along the spine.

I glue out the pastedowns earnestly, yet get worse with practice. I worry over a hair's width and it matters. All my successes, I find, are conditional on the next success. And yet my failures, some of them anyway, are forgiven. I learn it isn't enough to double-check the measurements; I must also allow for what I cannot measure. This is real world, after all. And this is, unmistakably, a real book.

5. Boxing Days

Outside, it is dark. The light within the bindery bounces against the counter tops and cupboard doors and back from the windows like mirrors, doubling me and the board shears and the glue brushes hung to dry and the irons heavy in stacks. Earlier there was a sloping hill and a walk, not the hilltop path that brought me here, but a lower one, wrapping along the frozen river and crossing over a bridge to the break of bare-limbed trees on the other shore. But that was earlier, when I could see out. Now the world stops at the panes.

I touch the pad of my index finger to the PVA before me, a shallow pool of it in a plastic Tupperware dish. For just a moment, it resists. PVA is quick to dry, and, with the lid off, the surface will grow a skin, like milk left to heat a little too long, thickening against the air. Just opened, though, this still supple pool of glue depresses under my touch, clings to my finger, and leaves an even white glaze over the fingerprint

when I draw my hand away. It's like dipping into a bowl of icing, but instead of touching the white-frosted finger to my tongue, I hold it against the edge of a 60-point board, the edge of glue just kissing the edge of board, and pull my finger down its side, turning the finger as I go until I have spun the adhesive in a clean board's-width border from top to tail.

It's important to move quickly. Dry, the edges that don't meet flush can be sanded into fluff and blown away like eraser dust. If that's done, then the lid must be fitted similarly, each compromise holding the tail of the last, but it's like telling new lies to cover up old ones. It's just easier if you can get an honest start.

The panels of book board I've cut have dimensions like graham crackers, some whole and some the long rectangles or square pieces snapped apart. They lie flat against the counter until the last is trimmed in glue and I draw them up suddenly on their edges, like a gingerbread barn-raising, rigid walls tacked together with this icing-like glue.

Though I will wrap them in books' clothing, in scraps of book cloth and paste paper and two precious strips of hand-marbled paper gifted from a friend who makes artist's books, I am not covering these boxes the way I cover books—I can't. I have too much a sense of *up*, of sides and fences, of walls that will stay put instead of gates that swing open.

The boxes I'm making now are of two varieties. The tall square-bottomed ones are towers, would soon become lanterns if I would only fit handles to their tops, and I imagine them as wells of light. The low rectangular one, soon to be clad in a black paper with gothic red swirls, is a darker thing. Its proportions a bit narrower and more shallow than a box of checks, it looks rather like a diminutive coffin.

Of course boxes should be made with the bits and bobs of books. Books are containers, too, vessels that shape and hold and carry. And when they moor and come to rest in boxes, it is like one hand cupped in the other.

These shapes of shelter, so hollow, dry sooner and also slower than I'd like. The panels slip and squirm where they should join. But a moment later, the glue dry, they are inseparable. Solid. I drop them on the tabletop and they make a satisfying empty knock. It's like an elevator cut from its cables jolting a few stories. I can't imagine they benefit from these short falls, but it's such a delightful percussion—they sound so exactly like boxes, and not until this moment had I known that boxes even *have* a sound!—that I cannot resist making them fill with the note again and again.

Covered all over in a crisp sheet of craft paper, however, the boxes are as brown paper packages, all sharp creases and

smooth sides and the faintly acidic scent of library stacks. Whatever structural support this skin adds, it has the look of order, of starched bedsheets tucked into hospital corners. Why putting paper around boxes should be so satisfying I don't know, but there's no denying the pleasure of it, of wrapping presents, of sharp scissors and double stick tape. And making boxes is better still than wrapping them. Making boxes unites content with form, the noun with the verb, the box as a thing that *is* and a thing that *does*. Which is to say, a proper box, a truly beautiful box, is complete in itself, with or without anything else to add to its contents.

My boxes, as I look at them, as I plan the lids and bases that will stick out with a dramatic 3/16th square, horizontal lines like the lintels and pediments of a Craftsman home—these boxes seem to deserve an offering, are compact shrines and pagodas.

I've never been much good at thrift stores. I am hopeless in secondhand shops. But give me a minute to rummage the scrap paper drawer in the binding studio and I'll come up grinning. This time the margin of a broadside yields up the edge of an ink drawing, a leafless tree on a hill, its black branches so many dark scratches, and it is just the right size to line my small coffin box—a box which, coincidentally, fits as if custom-made a blood-red long-stitch book I bound a month or two earlier from a different scrap drawer scrap.

The taller boxes are trouble. I congratulate myself on the foresight to make them wide enough I can actually fit my hand inside and touch the bottom, a feature that pretty well marks my first and final act of good planning for them. Pasting down the long flaps—first in craft paper, then the decorative skins of a birch-colored cloth for one and a gold-embellished ice-blue paper for the other—I am cautious, hesitant, careful not to smear glue on the sides I've already put down, which proves harder than you'd think. I keep marring them with sticky white lines and I begin to wish I'd spent more time at the sleepover parties of my youth playing the battery-powered game Operation, which I grow convinced would have steeled in me superior spatial planning and a steady hand, had I only subjected myself to the unrelenting reprimand of its jarring buzz and tremor.

I do better with the bottom squares, the color that will glint and wink from the bottom of the box when the lid comes off and light pours in. The squares for both the lantern boxes have a warm metallic sheen, one dull and the other textured like a foil gum wrapper crumpled and then smoothed out again. These, too, are scrap drawer finds. I myself am usually loathe to give up remnants, as if all excess could be put up in jars to get through the winter, but the ample generosity of the scrap drawer moves me to share the pieces I have no plans for, that



we might all build from fragments and make a thing whole. It reassures me. It restores my faith that it can only get so dark, that scraps can be resurrected and redeemed.

Reaching in to press down the corners of the bright bottom squares, my knuckles scraping against the side walls, I think of the raccoon in *Where the Red Fern Grows*: one hand caught in a rigged tree stump, a ring of carpenter's nails pointing in and pinning its fist clutching something shiny, the oily black hand that will not let go. But I grasp at nothing, and because of that, because my hand relaxes and the fingers curl away from the palm and I release, I walk away. I walk away full with the pride of seeing every corner seamed exactly in its place, and I carry no small joy in having planted a secret worth uncovering.

And then there is nothing left but to tap down the lid. I turn out the lights as I pull the door closed behind me. I step into the night that keeps getting longer, and greet the darkness I will walk home in no matter how early I leave the bindery.

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A hand printed edition of "Beautiful and Clever" is currently underway at the University of Iowa Center for the Book. Faculty and students are setting type and engraving blocks as we speak in anticipation of a December 2010 release date. A prospectus and ordering information will be available in November. For information on UICB publications check our web site <<http://www.uiowa.edu/~ctrbook/>> or write us at <center-for-the-book@uiowa.edu> if you would like to be added to our mailing list.



Adventures in the Future of the Book

By Gary Frost

This paper was presented to the Boston Society of Printers, March 10, 2007.

Discussions of the future of the book frequently contrast paper books and digital books. But every conceptual work is now born digital, what counts is how they grow-up.

Being born digital is advantageous. Indeed, digital technologies and network communication have advanced print reading much more than screen based reading. This is because print reading began with a more refined installed base and was quicker to take advantage of the production and delivery attributes of digital technologies. In this country the conversion from composition keyboard strokes based on physical cams to those based on code occurred in the early 1970's. Likewise, library classification was converted to electronic access during the same early period.

In addition, the print book was already optimized for linear transmission of conceptual works. Economical comprehension in screen reading, however, was immediately forestalled by a need for rapid and extensive deletion of presented material. In fact, the advent of the "delete" key itself marks the transition from analog to digital technologies.

A simple demonstration of the current inefficiency of screen reading is the Google search or your daily purge of unneeded e-mail. The reading process requires a skill set for rapid deletion or de-selection of results which forestalls and interrupts efficient assimilation of concepts. This is a crippling circumstance for screen based reading and it may be endemic.

Meanwhile the future e-book device remains unclear. Various hand held electronic devices such as the Rocket Book and Softbook are no longer supported and extended reading at a PC is not popular. There is surprising evidence that the cell phone display is a possible incubation niche for the e-book. Such a trend on such a small screen indicates that lack of resolution is not the issue. Perhaps a deeper, embedded need for personal possession of conceptual works is at play.

The latest surge of interest in the hand-held book reader is based on electronic ink display. E Ink forms text by electronically arranging thousands of tiny black and white capsules. Unlike the liquid-crystal display screens used in personal digital assistants, there is no backlight to strain readers' eyes, and characters show up sharp and clear, even in full sunlight.

This course of development continues the focus on resolution and paper mimicry. The underlying print attributes of legibility (immediacy of display and navigation), haptic efficiency and persistence are still in play. Finally the fully hidden aspect of virtualizing for the sake of virtualizing, should be considered.

Perhaps a better approach would be adaptation of the hand-held reader to a kind of GPS/GIS (a global positioning system interfaced to a geographical information system) capability for on-line text. In this function the reader would be oriented, not to books, but to graphic and text interpretation of physical locations or events – cultural tourism. The needed realization is that the ebook reader is a traditional blank book awaiting field notes and travel journal uses.

The future of paper versus screen book comparisons must encompass interface engineering, library services, consumer web devices, book studies programs, the economics of book publishing and technologies of book production. Another factor to consider is persistence of individual books into the future. Only eye legible books on materials such as paper, as compared with those transmitted by code on computer media, have proven their capacity to survive centuries and even millennia. For various reasons, works committed to computer media and network servers frequently expire within a decade.

The Night Sky

Everyone loves to read from the screen. The popularity of on-line communication confirms this. This is just a different kind of reading than extended linear reading in a book but like book reading, screen reading is timeless. The first screen was the night sky – high resolution, wide field. Electronic screens still work best in the dark. Pages in the daytime and screens in the nighttime. It's timeless. Reading the screen of the night sky societies began to connect the dots. Mythologies, news omens and astrophysics have all been imposed on the screen of the night sky.

But the night sky also presents us with the universe, or so it seems. In this way it is like network communication and screen based research. It dwarfs the individual reader and so the reader wants to see a mirror and not the universe. Enclave blogs, live journals, Wikis, Google searches, listservs are all used as mirrors to reflect personas, rather than universes. A mirror puts the reader in front of the universe.

To guide yourself through the universe you also need a cursor. The first cursor was the pointed finger. You will see them drawn in manuscripts and see the "fists" in period printing. The cursor is also represented by the Yad, the small silver hand used to track recital from Judaic scriptures.



And the same function is presented by the cursor in the teleprompter screen which also prompts recitation in a contemporary context. From the papyrus scroll to the teleprompter to any longer computer text display, the endemic need to utilize the scroll format and to impose tracking with a cursor appears timeless.

The Missal Missile

Now let's adventure a bit with the timeless physical book. My question here is whether it possible that the practiced manipulation of codex reading also conveys conceptual patterns to the mind. Does the physical paper book somehow enable the manual understanding of print concepts? Stranger still, does the action and physicality of a book impose a particular receptivity to the content of a book? Is there a haptics of comprehension?

Watch yourself reading. You will find that you begin to turn the page at the start of the page reading and that your fingers will glide under the leaf to coincide the page turning with the completed page reading. You will also find, pages later, that you can recall the physical location of an encountered idea.

At first the hand-to-mind path seems difficult to define and historians remark on the lack of documentation of the hand skills. The needed realization is that dexterity itself is a medium of information. Hand skills have been conveyed for hundreds of thousands of years by direct exchange from hands to hands. Perhaps the practiced deftness of page turning is a clock that moves us through content; a punctuation of the page.

Let's go a bit further in a consideration of the deeply embedded attributes of the traditional book. Is the book a legacy of neurological development across the hominid series and across millions of years? Where did those bloated brains come from anyway? Is the materiality of the book the counterpoint of the embodiment of the person? Now this gets really strange!

For millions of years primate dexterity preceded the increase of brain size in the hominid genealogy. This circumstance engendered a learning pathway based on discovery by manipulation and tactile observation. This perceptive channel of primate dexterity then prompted the mind toward conceptual thought.

The African savanna of the Pliocene was a dangerous and unpredictable place. To survive, small ground foraging primates had to be dangerous and unpredictable as well. The hominid species differentiated themselves by an innovative behavior of projectile predation or throwing of rocks. This one arm behavior and its endless practice led to the bilaterally

asymmetric development of the human brain, essentially doubling its potential. As a result, we are the only species that is either right or left handed.

So what's my point? It is that the haptic feature most embedded in the traditional book is that of conveying concepts as if they were physical projectiles.

If this projection, relating the book to throwing stones, is too remote, let's move forward to the Upper Paleolithic and people just like us. It was in this time frame, tens of thousands of years ago that conceptual fluidity between domains of knowledge engendered symbolic thought.

"...the physical acts of throwing and pointing actually lead to iconic gestures, which in turn made possible the transformation of communication into language. The fact that a gesture could be a meaningful object for perception facilitated the remarkable symbolic discovery that one thing can stand for another." J. Wentzell van Huyssteen, P.231-2.

These cognitive capacities enabled the grasping and tossing of concepts. Books do not fly across time and cultures; they are thrown. The author weighs each concept, calculates their trajectories, carefully aims and releases with the hope of stunning the target.

Secondary haptic features of the traditional book follow as the hands prompt the mind in an ergonomic of comprehension. At first it is odd that concepts should be conveyed by physical objects. Electronic transmission better mimics the neural connectivity of the mind, but the physical book better engages the hands to prompt the mind.

In contrast to the manual punctuation of the page and the physical clock of content of the codex, the on-line page is manipulated with impaired haptic feedback. The "previous/next" click, the cursor slider and scroll tabs utilize grip and finger motion directed to the mouse and keyboard, but not to the substrate of the text. At least two other layers of interruption intervene. There is the electrified, rather than manual, instigation and an indirect interfacing via the navigational software. With a print book, the reader is the interface.

That is pretty much the end of the story...except for one factor; we have not escaped this deep learning pathway of hands prompting the mind. In accord with this circumstance, cultures have directed young learners to hand skills for thousands of years, including the expressive skills of crafts, visual arts and instrumental music. We may be the first generation to demote this educational approach as we seek to



strip education of manual activities and supplant them with purely visual learning. What is achieved in such displacements is the amputation of the hand to mind discovery pathway. Even more risky is the influence of such displacement at an early age.

So reading must be, in part at least, a handcraft. It would be interesting to compare books in languages with cover lifting to the left and those with cover lifting to the right to see if that reflects the 11% species left handedness. It would be fun to know if the adoption of the codex format by sectarians in the deserts of north and eastern Africa reflected a need to throw or project a scripture and if the codex was invented in a context of a new craft of sending off folded letters.

At least we see...from this perspective...that on-line reading technologies take a backward step to try to mimic the hand induced print reading mode. How did we somehow know that all along...contrary to all the hype and hyperbole? Do the hands prompt the mind?

Good News, Bad News

On the bright side, computers augment our native abilities to sort, search and discover. On the dark side, the search results, unbeknown to the reader, can be pre-selected, manipulated or censored. So, contrasts between print and screen reading include issues of democratic governance. These issues are not much different than those posed by paper ballots vs. electronic voting.

“Under a secret ballot system, there is no known input, nor is there any expected output with which to compare electoral results. Hence, electronic electoral result cannot be verified by humans and the people need to have an absolute faith in the accuracy, honesty and security of the whole electoral apparatus (people, software and hardware). Requiring reliance on such faith may not be considered compatible with democracy.” Wikipedia

Surprisingly, there is also not that much hand ringing over the persistence of electronic resources. It is frequently mentioned that the computer can “store” vastly greater quantities of documentary materials. But for how long? And for how long without modification?

The fourth century codices found in a jar at Nag Hammadi were immediately readable after 16 centuries. In a few decades they have enriched the understanding of sources of New Testament scripture and the understanding of sectarian life of the period. Just as miraculous, we know that they were unmodified during that long time. For reliable transmission across time and cultures, which technology, the papyrus

codex or the digital network, is more advanced?

There is also not much regret expressed, especially by network advocates, of the eclipsing of the bibliographical identity of a book. Computers can mirror books but they should not be confused with books. Screen based reading actually dissolves books. Search engines provide a reading method that eliminates the coherence of individual books digesting and parsing whole libraries down to word frequencies, search terms and tagged images. The cultural transmission concern is no longer deterioration of paper, but digital dissolution of books.

This digital dissolution is now advancing from books to library classification. The Library of Congress is in the process of discontinuing catalog classification in favor of inventory control software augmented with Google search. As a trend this atrophy may not end this side of a new dark age and this time the dark age will have begun in the libraries.

The Future of the Book

It is remarked that as new media emerge they mimic older media. It is less remarked that old media return the complement as they exploit patterns of the new. For example, Google now plans to image on-line the older research library print collections. It would be ironic of this massive effort to bring print books to the screen resulted in their reprinting.

We should realize that scanners are really printing presses. Once captured, the books are actually returned to print and to the production streams of digital print-on-demand operations. Are we verging on the post-digital era when the book at its best will assimilate paper and screen into a unified publishing system?

Will the Google “digital copy” really access out of copyright books? Certainly Google Print will provide a different bibliographical utility or indexing for these books, but why presume that a precisely formatted conceptual work will suddenly be more easily referenced, assimilated and comprehended on the screen? That’s something like saying these books will be easier to use if they are on television. PowerPoint format has taken over live presentation in much the same way that Google Book Search will take over book reading. Screen reading presents a string of bullets just like PowerPoint, crippling both assimilation and comprehension.



Now Google is very protective of its “digital copy” assuming that the screen parsing and presentation is the proprietary product. But what if readers turn Google Print into a different kind of engine? What if an Amazon-like blog, front end simply processes Google finds across different reading communities, identifies titles of interest and goes to the stacks to scan for print-on-demand?

Screen based reading and on-line publications and their attributes of discovery and interactivity all pose a refreshing challenge for the traditional paper book. Up to now the book has been a presumed tool of culture and it is time to more critically consider its attributes and its disadvantages. The larger adjustment to new reading behaviors will take their course and it is too early to say that we are headed to a post digital era.

We are headed toward a tertiary orality, toward wide experiment in learning and reading and toward new and virtual social behaviors. Perhaps only the book can enlighten the future itself. And the role of books is just that. At any era including a future post-digital era, books will bring expansive conceptual works and complex evaluations of our destiny into our hands.

Gary Frost's life in the book arts and conservation began while working at the Newberry Library in Chicago in 1969 when he joined the staff under the supervision of Paul Banks and Norvell Jones working his way up to managing the Newberry's conservation program. In 1981, he joined founder Paul Banks as a member of the faculty at Columbia University's School of Library Service Preservation/Conservation training, and followed it on its move to become the Preservation and Conservation Studies Program (PCS) at the University of Texas at Austin, where he remained until 1999. He also taught at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and developed innovative new methods of treating circulating collections, which were based on early binding styles while at BookLab. A co-founder of Paper and Book Intensive (PBI) in 1983, he continues to serve on its board. In 1999, he came to the University of Iowa to lead the conservation program started by Bill Anthony. He has published numerous articles on the theory and practice of book conservation as well as the implication of digitization for reading. Website at <<http://www.futureofthebook.com>>.



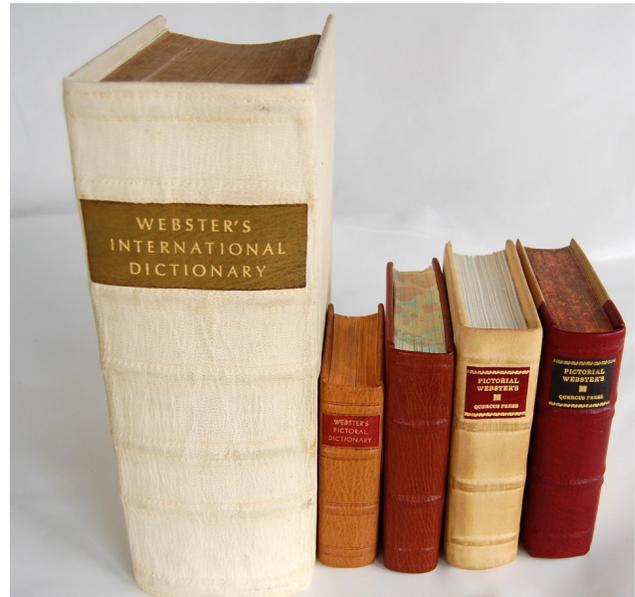
Making the Original *Pictorial Webster's*, a Fine Press Artist's Book of Reference

By Johnny Carrera

This Fall Chronicle Books is publishing a trade edition based on my hand printed, hand bound *Pictorial Webster's*; *G & C Merriam Dictionary Engravings of the Nineteenth Century Printed Alphabetically as a Source for Creativity in the Human Brain*. The trade book is called *Pictorial Webster's*; *A Visual Dictionary of Curiosities*. I view them both as Artist's Books. One happens to be expensive and heavy on hand craftsmanship while the other is easily affordable due to mass production and inexpensive binding. I think it is important that the trade edition was always part of the plan for *Pictorial Webster's* and that it is not simply a reproduction of the other work. The Chronicle book is not only larger for better visual impact, but there are dozens of new or improved engravings to help it better realize my vision for the work. Both books have roughly the same content, though, and so can be "read" the same way.

What follows is a retelling of the making of the fine press book based on a less technical version that was originally to be included in the "Pancreas" section of the Chronicle version. Though the copy editor lobbied to save it, it has not been published before now. I believe the details of production will be of interest to the Bonfolder reader. I would also like to share a new way of approaching and reading Artist's Books relating to this project, a work of reference, and how it has reshaped my views first published here in 2005.

The story begins when I found a well-used 1898 *International Dictionary* under my Grandfather's Reading Chair. In 1996 I finished repairing the dilapidated *Webster's* as one of my second year conservation projects at the North Bennet Street School where I was studying under the tutelage of Sally Key. At that time I made a miniature picture dictionary from images ganged together and printed in the back as was a convention in Webster's Dictionaries until the *Third International* of 1950. The pages were all falling out anyway so it was easy to throw them onto the photocopier and make up folios for a little book. I remember thinking "Wow, this could be a quick little money-maker after I graduate from school."



Here is the *Moby Dick* alum tawed rebound *International*. The small book to the right is the first dummy. The next is the dummy filled entirely by printings of the first print run. (I like to study how the images slowly begin to print as the underlay was brought up bit-by-bit before I had the dial indicator.) The next is a dummy when I had printed up to the I's and the red spine quarter binding with oak boards was bound after I finished printing all of the engravings in 2004 or 2005

My departure from doing the book with xerography came when the Boston Globe ran an article about the Merriam-Webster Company in Springfield, MA. I thought, "Perhaps they still have the original blocks." I called them up and it started me on a quest that eventually led me to the Arts of the Book Collection at Yale University.

I spent 1997 organizing and identifying the engravings I would use in the book. After the two-hour drive to New Haven, I would check in with the curator of the collection and receive a key on the end of a long piece of iron furniture, enter the ornate gothic archway leading to the dark narrow stacks of the Sterling Library, pass through the door that reads "Emergency Exit Only," climb down to the basement hallway that goes by the custodial break-room to a brown wooden door at the end of the hall, put the key in the brass keyhole that read "Yale," and enter the press room. The room is dimly lit and has a distinctive odor, a mix of metal and wood shavings and powdered cleanser. An old transistor radio that warmed up as I opened the tiny leaded window was my only company. I got to work immediately as it was always a race against time and the hours passed like minutes until the library was about to close. Exam week was a blessing as the library remained open until Midnight but then I had to hurry out to avoid being locked in alone in the dark waiting for security to let me out.



Cases containing 12,000 or so G. & C. Merriam engravings at the entrance to the pressroom of the Arts of the Book Collection in the Sterling Library

After vacuuming a fine coating of dust off the tops of all the engravings, the first thing that needed to be done was to identify the images. The cases appeared to be in an incoherent jumble when I first encountered the collection. Using my liberal arts education I started out identifying as many of the images as I could. We determined the best way to access the collection in the future was to group engravings by categories such as fishes, insects, trees, small weaponry, forms of torture, gods & goddesses, etc.



Here is a case now filled with Crustaceans.”

I soon realized I needed help identifying the hundreds of fishes, some seemingly identical, so I purchased copies of each of the editions of the *Webster's Dictionaries* with illustrations, photocopied the images from the backs of the

book, and used those to match the engravings and identify in which edition an image first appeared. In order to label the engravings I cut up little pieces of “post-it” notes to affix a name to each engraving. After identifying the engravings I began to alphabetize all of the images I would print. During the organizing process I emptied twenty-six of the drawers, one for each letter, so that that I could stage the engravings for transporting back to Massachusetts.

As the months rolled by and the miles piled up on the car my grandmother had given me when she gave up driving, (the grandmother of the farm where I found the book), I sometimes wondered if this was all worth it. I had failed to get a contract for a trade edition of the book even though some presses, including Merriam-Webster Inc., had expressed interest. I quit my part-time job at the New England Historic Genealogical Society as it took too much time from the project and I relied on my then girlfriend (now wife)’s income, assuring her and my family that eventually the book would be able to re-pay the loans and start supporting us. But as soon as I got back among the engravings my doubts were replaced by the joy and fascination of spending time with these beautifully carved pieces of wood.

I was intrigued by the little numbers pressed into the sides and the photographically transferred imagery on the un-engraved portions of blocks that was still visible. The additional scenery gives an idea of the source material for many of the images of the 1890 International Dictionary. It is interesting to think about what the engraver, W. F. Hopson, chose to keep in an image. For some birds he kept the branches upon which they were perched and on for others he didn’t. Was he making choices based on artistic considerations, size, time, or was it mostly a function of what he enjoyed engraving? While cleaning the old underlay I discovered manuscript on the bottom of the old blocks, written beautifully and clearly in various shades of blue or sepia ink. The manuscript text usually names the image and cites the source and page from which it was copied. It was hidden by old underlay. This manuscript thrilled me as it gave me an additional sense of almost being able to touch the hand of the engravers.



This is a scan of the manuscript I took of Q's and R's after the underlay was cleaned off to prepare for the new underlay. Notice some were copied or "detached" from the Imperial Dictionary of 1850.

Eventually a loan agreement was signed. I based it upon the form used by the Davis Art Museum. I saw this when I attended a New England Conservation Association lecture at Wellesley College. I received the help of a lawyer for the arts to review the loan. I took out an insurance policy to cover the engravings while they were in my possession, and the day came when I could take a padded briefcase full of the engravings (accompanied by an assistant on all trips) back to my shop. The first time I brought engravings back to Boston my friend and then assistant, Luke Hepler, accompanied me down to New Haven and Ruth Lingen of Poote Press who also works at Pace Editions in New York came up on the train and met us. We filled out sheets to document each of the engravings we were taking so that we could account for every one making it back to Yale and brought a couple hundred of them in a metal suitcase I outfitted with foam and museum board trays to carry the blocks. I remember taking this heavy box to the security guard at the door with the curator of the AOB collection to make sure we got out. I held my breath as the guard took one glance at the open suitcase and then, with one unimpressed wave from the guard over my precious cargo, we were on our way, practically floating, as I drove back to Waltham to begin printing what I thought would take one or two years at the most.

In order to prepare for the first print run I spent hours figuring out how many engravings would fit comfortably on an average page. I wanted the book to be small, as the full pages of engravings printed in the back of the old dictionaries are so overwhelming one cannot take in all of the images at once. In the smaller groupings the images work together better to create a single play. (Though even with only nine images on a page, one will notice a new image on that same page in subsequent viewings.) To figure out the optimal "text-block" size I cut out photocopies of engravings from the 1890 edition and played with them until I arrived at a size that

would consistently hold nine or ten images. Then we had to figure out how many pages I could print at once on my press. Ruth Lingen is not only a master printer at Pace Editions in New York City, but her years of experience printing old wood engravings at Baum & Co. at the South Street Seaport made her the perfect consultant to help get the best printing results, balancing makeready and underlay without putting undue wear on the blocks. Ruth suggested the brand of ink (finely ground oil based Hostmann-Steinberg Special Matte Black), taught me how to keep consistent registration, and helped set up a system for keeping all of the many pieces of the project together. In anticipation of the project I had purchased a linotype, which I had no idea how to use, for \$180, and a beautiful Battleship Grey Universal III Vandercook Letterpress that I drove to Boston from Norfolk, Virginia, where it had been used to print certificates for men and women of the U.S. Navy. Due to a fluke snowstorm on April 1, 1997, one of the two certified Linotype repairmen on the East Coast, by the name of Greg Timko, became snowbound and spent an unscheduled day at my studio helping me get the 1938 Model 8 Linotype (which had sat untouched for a year in the corner of my shop) working again. With the use of a neighbor's machine shop and help, Greg, and my friend Carter, and I spent a day fixing, cleaning, and adjusting it. Greg showed us the 148 or so ports for routine oiling and grease application and gave me a crash course in running the machine, which would prove to be invaluable for setting the 6- point type used in the book to print captions for each of the images. It was hard enough getting all of the images and slugs to sit up straight in the press, imagine the headache using hand-sort type!



Here I am showing the way a slug made on the linotype fits to an engraving. A page that has just been set in a page setting jig is resting on my lap.



Ruth Lingen helped me set up the form in the bed of the press so we could print eight pages at a time. The reverse would be the remaining eight pages of a sixteen page section. Unfortunately, when we pulled the first print only four or five of the eighty or so images showed up at all on the first proof because they were in need of so much underlay to bring them up to type height. That first weekend of printing was intense as I had to make many decisions fast. I also wanted to bind a copy of the book so I could see if it was actually going to work. One of my concerns was how the alphabet that runs down the side of the pages was going to look. It turns out the 12 point type I chose was too big. Luckily I had 10 point of the same Gothic 545 which approximates the sans serif type used in the International for the letter guides. I like to point out to students that I have made over eight dummies of one sort or another for this project. I got lucky many times, but I made that luck happen by doing a lot of grunt work.

Printmaker, glassblower, sometime wood engraver, jack-of all trades including watch and steam-engine repair, Fred Widmer was my neighbor at the Waltham Mills with the machine shop who made a dial indicator for this project using a stand he salvaged from the old Waltham Watch Factory. This instrument allowed me to pinpoint the exact amount of material needed to bring an engraving up to type height and sped the project along immensely as I did not want to use too much pressure to print these old blocks.



Dial Indicator shown with a bit of boxwood in need of .085" of paper underlay.

It took about an hour per page to clean the old paper off of each engraving and put new underlay on using the dial indicator. Luckily I had a steady stream of talented interns who could help with this part of the process. I then would look up each entry to make sure it was spelled correctly, find its Latin name or any parts that would need additional labeling, and by cross-referencing the copies of the old dictionaries I could discover in which dictionary it was in which the entry first appeared. I measured each engraving so I could match the length of the linotype text pieces to each engraving.

Now I was ready to fire up the linotype. While the crucible was heating the hot metal to its melting point I would clean the spacebands that create the spaces between the words. If they are not cleaned with every use, metal builds up along the edge and will ruin the entire font of brass matrices the linotype uses to cast molds of lines of text. After cleaning the spacebands, I would oil and clean the most important components of the machine. As the manual that came with my linotype points out, the name of the contraption is quite descriptive, as with each cycle of the many gears in the back it casts a "line O' type." First it has a magazine filled with little brass matrices that are assembled into a line of text by typing into a special keyboard. Each stroke of the key lifts a cam that pushes against a long metal bar that pushes a toggle which releases one of the matrices that goes down a shoot and slides along a little rubber conveyor belt to land in the "composing elevator." Once the line is long enough a bell rings. Sometimes in the short lines I was setting with few spaces the bell might ring but the line wasn't actually long enough. If it is not long enough the line will not press tightly enough in front of the mouthpiece where the hot metal is extruded into the form. On these occasions there is a bright flash of silver metal spraying on of the left side of the operator's peripheral vision, accompanied by a cry of surprise, followed by cursing and hair grabbing, etc. The machine is designed very well so that one never gets seriously burned by a "squirt," only terribly delayed by hours of cleaning metal out of metal and fixing or replacing bent pieces of machinery. The operator must be careful not to over-fill a line, too, or else it will jam in the jaws of the machine, requiring manually turning back the cams to remove the extra mat.

Also when changing type sizes from the six point Garamond to the ten point Garamond one needs to remember to open up the trimming vise etc. But on a good night, when all went smoothly, after an hour or so of heating, the temperature gauge on the crucible would make it's first slow, buzzing double click, letting me know it was time to start setting the text to accompany the engravings. With the list of the text and measurements clipped onto the copy

holder above the keyboard I was ready to go. And if there was a Red Sox game on the radio and there were no adjustments needed that evening, I might even have a Guinness. Yes, a pint of stout, a good baseball game, and a linotype are a wonderful combination.

After all of the text was linotyped, the slugs of metal with the type on them was trimmed to the width of the engravings so the blocks and text could be set firmly together as part of a page. I made a number of jigs that were the size of the text-block of the page and I would set the images into these jigs, remembering that when everything is printed it appears opposite (so the unprinted engravings and text must be read right to left). This step was one of the fun creative moments of the process, where I got to play with the engravings and see what might begin to happen as they assembled themselves into pages, —sometimes easily, sometimes needing some coercion. To set a page for printing, little bits of leading needed to be put between all of the engravings to keep their position on the page and so nothing would shift around in the press. By the end of the book I could set a page in a little over an hour but I had interns who took up to four hours setting a single page. Of course, it was sometimes the case that I decided we needed an image in a page that we didn't have and I would have to prepare a block and engrave it taking anywhere from five to fifty additional hours.



Printing a run on my Vandercook Universal III while my first born sleeps.

I will not delve into all of the minutiae of preparing the print run itself but simply list some of the steps; setting the blocks into the press; replacing the old packing and checking the roller height; carefully doing “makeready,” which consists of proofing the run then adding bits of packing for blocks that compress during printing, or removing packing just at the location of blocks that were over type-height; making sure the pages are all registering properly on the page; proofreading and correcting; getting ink consistency set; and so on. [For a more in depth description of the printing process I published two articles including a “how to” in the Wood Engraver’s Network Block and Burin #39. It is available as a PDF online at <<http://www.woodengravers.net/B&B39.pdf>>] The two days spent printing each side of a run of a section were mostly enjoyably spent listening to music and printing, but sometimes fraught with concern over whether the inking was consistent, or too light or too dark. I will never forget printing while weeping on September 12, 2001, nor print runs wearing my infant daughter in a carrier on my chest, nor the final print run attended by a host of friends while holding my infant son in my left arm for hours.

After six solid years of printing I felt as if the book was nearly complete, but after the glow of finishing the printing faded I realized that the task of binding all of the books was equally daunting. It took me a month with two helpers, and then some help from a folding machine, to cut and fold the pages for the edition of 100 books. So I devised a plan to speed the sewing of the books. After reading that 100 books were sewn in a day in 1864, I gathered a group of bookbinding friends to see if we could sew 100 books in a weekend. Eleven bookbinders came to Martha Kearsley’s Strong Arm Bindery in Portland, Maine, and for one weekend we all sat around a very long table (feeling like so many monks) and sewed books for two days straight.



In an old shipyard in Portland, ME, on a cool October weekend.”



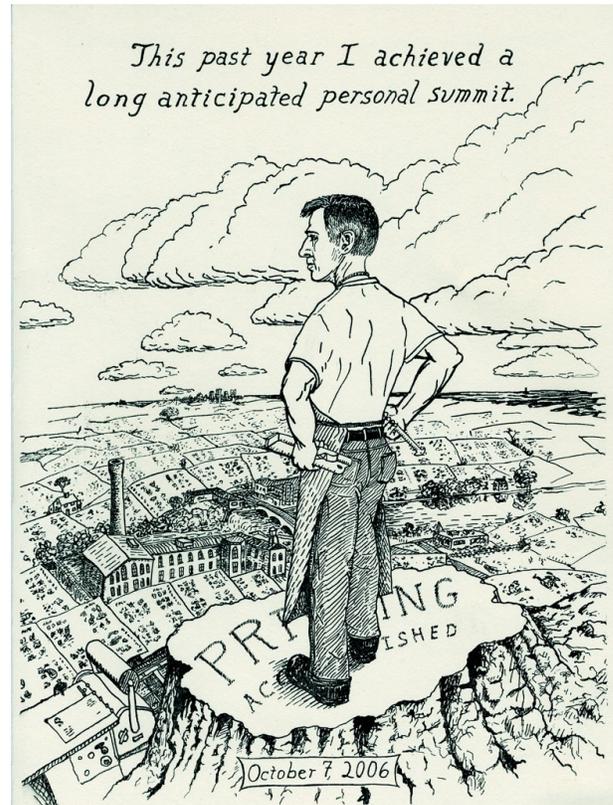
Sewing onto raised supports, using a sewing frame just as they did over a hundred years ago, my group of professional hand-bookbinders took between two to four hours to sew each book. We managed to bind fifty books, but I soon realized that with the complicated edge decoration, hand-sewn endbands, and involved leatherwork I would not complete bindings on more than twenty books in a year.

When I began this project I was twenty-six and felt I had my entire life ahead of me. Someone asked me during the early going stages, "How does it feel to make your life's work at such an early age?" I laughed at the ridiculous thought, thinking I would be finished in a year's time and that I couldn't wait to be done with this project. During the course of printing I got married, started a family, and now feel I now see more clearly the landscape of the experience of life. (I will be forty when this trade edition is first released to the public.) I have traveled down many paths while printing this book and I imagine I will spend a few more years chasing the connections that fate provides within the pages of *Pictorial Webster's*.

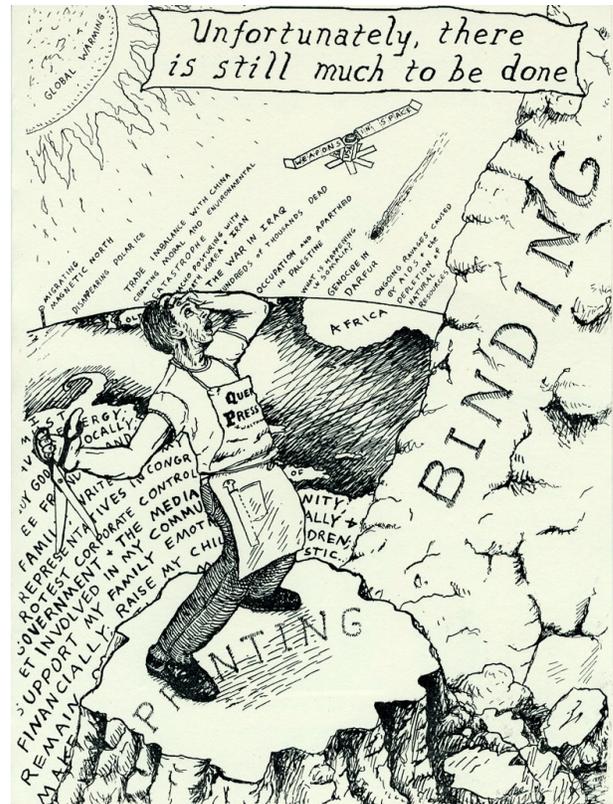
One of the first signs that this book was going to affect all of my future work came in the spring of 2006 when I had the chance to teach "Table of Contents" at the School at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. I approached the class as a chance to make and understand artist's books through the discipline of trying to "read them."

I was an English Major in college and I have long wondered what it means to engage in literary criticism. Book art criticism is even more complex as we draw from both Art Historical and Literary Traditions. In a fully integrated artist's book *Craft/Structure* must also be considered, being more than just an aesthetic consideration but part of the intellectual content as well. In teaching the course I wondered: "how useful would it be to look at a book and ask if this was just a regular book – and in order to do this we need to make a kind of projection, making the visual into text in many cases, to ask "Where a librarian would place it within the stacks of the library?" as the Library of Congress Subject Heading of "Artist's Book" is useless. Better to wonder "What Dewey Decimal number should be assigned to each artist's book?" (Identifying things with a number seems so scientific and of course, every engraving in *Pictorial Webster's* has a number...)

The majority of artist's books might be considered poetry, thus being part of the 800's or Literature. Anything with a narrative or that references the convention of novel should also be labeled as Literature.



This is side one of a card I made celebrating the situation upon achieving the printing milestone.



On side two I not only questioned the merits of how I had spent my time for the past decade but whether it would be another decade before real completion.

There are also many scientific artist's books that would be right in with the 500's. And, of course, there are also a great number of biographical artist's books – most of them autobiographical, thus 900's. In the class I taught, we made the autobiographical artist's book a part of the class curriculum as understanding where autobiography becomes of universal interest is an important lesson.

But many Artist's Books are less narrative than they are collections of images or objects around a theme. I was wondering what to do with the plethora of alphabet books and then it struck me. These are all reference books. So is the artist book that has no text other than a collection of different marks on every page, or one filled with a collection of photographs – they are akin to visual encyclopedias. They should be in the 000's.

And though I try to make the case for deriving a narrative for the entirety of *Pictorial Webster's*, it is most obviously a work of reference. Because I conceived of the book as a work of art I did what artists are supposed to do. I explored and played with the many conventions of dictionaries that are used in the book. There are also numerous literary, artistic, and musical references within *Pictorial Webster's*. Like many encyclopedic reference works, because of the enormous volume of information, I was able to make some of these references quite personal or esoteric without any fear, as each reader will have a different point of reference for reading the book. I am most pleased about the trade edition in that I hope people will enjoy spending time with the book and find personal meaning and ideas within the pages. My fear with the fine press edition is that they will spend most of their time tucked safely away, when our whole goal in making books is that they be held and read.

Johnny Carrera printed his first letterpress edition under the name Quercus Press in 1993. His shop has been in Waltham, MA, since 1996. Currently still binding copies of Pictorial Webster's (yes, there are copies still available), he is also editing "The Smallest violin in the World" a book written just as he began the Webster's project. A description of making the Chronicle Books edition of Pictorial Webster's will soon be published in an upcoming issue of Ampersand. He can be reached via his website at <<http://www.quercuspress.com>>.



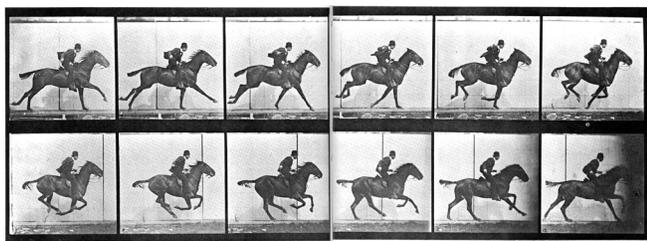
Exploring Artists' Flipbooks

By Deborah Kogan

Deborah Kogan is a photographer and book artist who lives in Santa Cruz County, California. An earlier version of this article was initially published in the Winter and Spring 2007 issues of *Ampersand*, the journal issued by the Pacific Center for the Book Arts in San Francisco. For this issue of *The Bonefolder*, Kogan has consolidated the article and updated its contents. The article reviews the history of the flipbook as a book structure and medium used by contemporary book artists, provides an annotated gallery of images of flipbooks by contemporary artists, and discusses technical considerations in the making of flipbooks from advice provided by other book artists and the author's experiences making a flipbook of her own.

History of Flipbooks

The best source for information about the history of flipbooks is <<http://www.flipbook.info>>, a website and blog created by Pascal Fouché (2009), a Frenchman who has amassed a personal collection of over 5,450 flipbooks illustrating the history and breadth of this genre. Fouché defines a flipbook as “a collection of combined pictures intended to be flipped over to give the illusion of movement and create an animated sequence from a simple small book without a machine.” Most flipbooks are diminutive in size—made to be held in the palm of one hand while you flick the pages with the thumb of the other hand, either from back to front or front to back. Flipbooks originated as part of the investigation of “moving pictures” after the invention of photography in the 1830s and before the commercial release of the cinema in the 1890s.



Muybridge's *The Horse in Motion*, 1878.

The idea of deconstructing motion into a series of still images using photography was fascinating to artists, engineers, and scientists alike during this period. In the 1870s the artist-photographer Edward Muybridge explored the movements of humans and animals using an elaborate set-up of multiple cameras to freeze motion (see Image 1). It was only a short step from this investigation to the reconstruction of the illusion of motion by combining the frozen frames

back into a flipbook. Muybridge's images are often used in contemporary flipbooks, although Muybridge did not himself present his images this way.

First patented in England in 1868 and in the United States in 1882, the idea of the flipbook spread rapidly throughout France, England, Germany, and the U.S. Flipbooks were often sold for modest amounts in toy shops or joke shops, or as promotional gifts for marketing specific brands of products or stores (cigarettes and department stores in France, bubblegum and Crackerjacks in the U.S.) or celebrating sports events or movies. A niche market of erotic flipbooks also emerged in the early years of flipbooks and has continued to flourish.

On his website, Fouché suggests ten different categories of flipbooks from his analysis of his personal collection, based on the variations in their content/audience, source of imagery, structure, and intentions. He uses these categories to distinguish flipbooks primarily concerned with film, sports, erotic images, advertising, news, drawn images (animation/cartoon), artists' flipbooks, standard books with sections or drawings in the margins that can be viewed by flipping the pages, flipbooks sold as stickers or leaves that can be assembled into flipbooks, and Internet-based flipbooks, with images presented for downloading and assembling into flipbooks or providing digital animations of the experience of flipping through one-of-a-kind or editioned flipbooks.

Flipbooks have not received much attention in book art critical sources (there is only a passing reference to flip books in Johanna Drucker's *The Century of Artists Books* in the chapter on “The Book as Sequence: Narrative and Non-Narrative Approaches” (2004, p. 257)). The flipbook format received its first focused attention in fine art circles in a major exhibition called “Daumenkino: The Flipbook Show” held at the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf in Germany during the summer of 2005. This exhibition and its illustrated catalogue focused on the use of flipbooks by over 170 contemporary artists and filmmakers. (e-flux, 2005)

Contemporary artists and filmmakers have been attracted to flipbooks as an art medium for a variety of reasons. By their nature, flipbooks are good for content that addresses movement and flux. Although most flipbooks are playful in tone, some explore rather serious content. Because flipbooks have a history of being a low-cost medium that can be marketed to the masses, they are attractive to artists who want to make their images available to a broad audience. In addition, because such books are primarily visual, they can reach an international audience without needing to be translated into multiple languages.

However, flipbooks are also limited in their range and scope by the short time it takes to “read” them—the content is usually revealed in two to three seconds of flipping. Moreover, by their nature, flipbooks are tools of repetition. They repeat the same drama over and over again, as the viewer flips and re-flips through the pages. It is interesting that none of the artists whose work is described in this article makes flipbooks exclusively. This seems to be a medium that is too narrow for a long-term or full-time commitment, but that offers a nice change of pace or is appropriate for a particular project.

Annotated Gallery of Flipbooks by Contemporary Artists

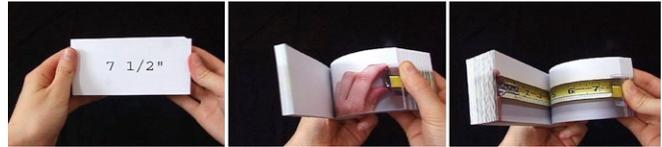
Below, we describe how four contemporary artists have used the flipbook form.

Mary Lucking creates public artworks, installations, and computer-based art. She was working on an MFA in Art and Technology when she started making flipbooks. Lucking describes her attraction to flipbooks as “a bit of a reaction against all the very complicated, big, expensive video presentation equipment that we were using” in this program. Lucking says that her flipbooks are “attempts to encourage people to explore their physical environment slowly and carefully.” (Lucking, 2007) The sources for her flipbook images are two-second video clips of subtle movements in nature—ripples in water, a bird taking off from a branch, waving grass—that the viewer can control by viewing it over and over, “breaking it down into its component parts, even playing it backwards.” In 2004, she presented a series of 14 flipbooks (each in an edition of 5 copies) in an exhibition titled *Haiku for Right Thumb* in her hometown of Tucson, Arizona. The strip of pelican images (below), is from Lucking’s layout for a new flipbook.



Julia Featheringill is a photographer and video installation artist in the Boston area who has completed a number of flipbooks that describe mundane activities, including watching a washing machine in the laundromat, toasting bread in the toaster, making a move in a chess game, and pulling out a tape measure to a length of 7 ½ inches (Featheringill, 2009). In her flipbook *7 ½”* (see next image), Featheringill makes use of

both sides of the page as a single image spread. The hand that reaches out to pull out the tape measure within the flip book image is roughly the same scale as the hand of the viewer holding the book, thus pulling the viewer into the pictured space and drawing a parallel between the mundane and repeatable actions of pulling out the tape measure and flipping the book. Her flipbooks are available from Printed Matter in New York City for \$35.00 each. (Featheringill, 2007).



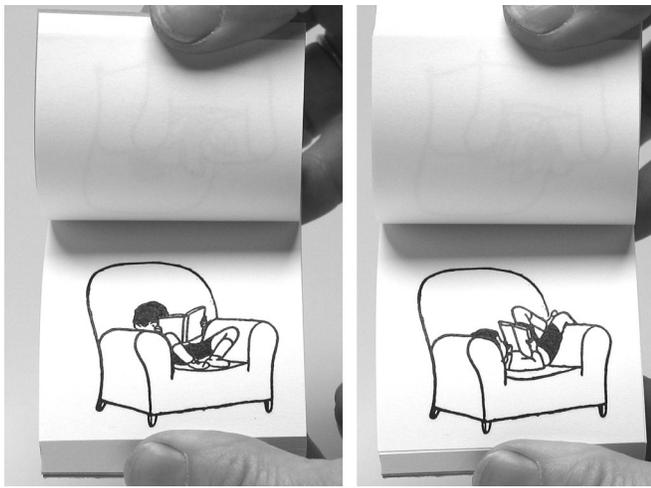
Margaret Tedesco is a San Francisco performance and installation artist who uses references to film in most of her work. Within the context of a 2006 exhibition in San Francisco on the occasion of the centennial of the San Francisco earthquake of 1906, Tedesco decided to make a series of 100 flipbooks (an edition of 10 copies each of 10 different books) with images from a variety of film genres to refer to the 100 years of film history as well as the centennial of the earthquake. The pictured images are from the flipbook

jump jump. For Tedesco, making flipbooks offers a way to play with the pacing and tempo of the movie sequences that she chooses to use as her source material. Through her flipbooks, she “renarrates” these films by reconstructing the image framing and sequencing. One of her goals in her flipbooks, as well as in other performance works in which she repeats the same gesture over and over again, is to “slow the viewer down and have them realize other associations with the pictured gestures” as they look at her books. Although Tedesco wanted her recent flipbooks to be marketed at a cost that would make them “affordable,” the gallery in which she exhibited this work put a price tag of \$1,000 on the set of 10 flipbooks in this series (Tedesco, 2007).



Susan Angebrannt is a letterpress printer and book artist in the San Francisco Bay Area whose fine press work centers on limited-edition “poem books.” Making flipbooks gives Angebrannt the chance to experiment with more playful content. She has made three flipbooks, using her own or appropriated line drawings reproduced in black and white. These books present humorous vignettes—“of a kid twisting in a chair as he reads; a cat sleeping, and then suddenly jumping up, catching a fly, and then going back to sleep; and a ballerina turning into a hip hop dancer.” She sells these books for about \$5 at local book fairs and from her web site. Her artistic goal in compiling these flipbooks is to “get the pacing right” and tell a small story that makes sense and entertains (Angebrannt, 2007). Below are two images from her flipbook, *A Good Read*.

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Making My Own Flipbook

At about the same time that I was learning about how other artists have used flipbooks to investigate movement and change; I photographed my 15 year-old daughter while she was showing me a hip-hop dance that she had choreographed. What a great subject, I thought, for a flipbook. This book form would be ideal for recreating the accented and jerky movements of hip hop dance. It would also enable me to freeze and relive over and over again the nostalgia that wells up as I realize the rapidity with which a glamorous young woman has come to occupy my daughter’s face and figure, eclipsing her younger elfin self. Below I describe how I used the information and advice that I learned from other flipbook artists to design and fabricate my first flipbook, *hip hop at 15*.

My personal guides to flipbook making included three of the artists described in the above gallery. When I was preparing to write this article, Mary Lucking, Julia Featheringill, and Susan Angebrannt were my guides. Each was generous in sharing lessons learned from her experience working in this format through e-mail conversations. Based on

their information and advice, I have identified the following overall advice for consideration at the beginning of any flipbook project:

In planning the book, think about the movement created by flipping the images on the pages. Smooth movement requires a large number of images (and pages) and usually small image changes from one page to the next. Most flipbooks employ at least 40 pages to achieve their effects.

The placement of images on the page is extremely important. Make the images from exactly the same angle and perspective and locate them in the same depicted space on the printed page, so that they don’t “jump around” erratically as the reader flips the pages of the book.

Be prepared to make a number of different book models, using different types of paper, different image sizes, and different placement of images on the page to see which model best realizes your intentions.

Invite a number of different people to interact with your book before you make your final design decisions. As Mary Lucking put it, “Watch lots of people play with your books—you’ll see what’s working and what’s not, how they handle them, how different people flip, what confuses and what delights.”

Think carefully about how large an edition you want to make, which will probably influence all your other decisions. If you are making only five copies of your book, you may be willing to trace the images, do hand coloring, and cut out each printed page. On the other hand, if you are making or will make 100 copies or more of your flipbook, you may want to streamline the process as much as possible, or even hire an outside printer and binder to fabricate the books.

Generating the Image

My flipbook guides modeled several different ways to generate the images for a flipbook. Susan Angebrannt starts by making line drawings to illustrate her book concept. Julia Featheringill and Mary Lucking both start with digital video footage and then select and capture still frames from the video footage. I followed a different strategy—using a digital camera to capture a series of still images that I put together to create the illusion of continuous movement. We each had to decide how many images we wanted to generate for use in our flipbooks and how much real or imaginary elapsed time we wanted between each image.

Featheringill’s flipbooks each tell the story of a simple everyday activity, like toasting a piece of bread in the toaster, tying a shoelace, or making a move in a chess game. After

making her video depicting the story she wants to tell, she edits the video footage to capture the desired number of still images using Final Cut Pro, a software program created by Apple Inc. Featheringill thinks that 100 pages is about the right number for a flipbook. She says her goal is to create a book with a “comfortable thickness to fit in the hand” as well as to tell the story. She told me that she had made a book that was almost 200 pages long, but it was “tricky to use.” On the other hand, she made the book *Cards* with only about 30 pages, because the time it takes to flip this book is about how long it takes to perform the action of shuffling cards depicted in the book.

Lucking uses 60 images for each of her books. The video clips she uses focus in on subtle movements in nature—ripples in water, a bird taking off from a branch, waving grass. Her strategy is to select a two-second video clip and then to use iMovie software to capture all the available still frames from that sequence. This is consistent with her interest in “encouraging people to explore their physical environment slowly and carefully.”

In making *hip hop at 15*, I wanted to use my 35mm camera to take individual images. However, I discovered that my digital camera couldn’t process the high resolution images fast enough to take more than 5 or 6 consecutive images using its auto shoot mode, and I had difficulty freezing the motion in the individual shots. So I shifted to another strategy: I had my daughter freeze her motion every few seconds, which allowed me to capture each pose before she continued on. Although this tested her patience and may have interfered with the smooth flow of the movement to some extent, I felt like I could capture the images I wanted. I ended up with a sequence of 34 high-resolution (6 megabyte) color images (see adjacent). I’m thinking I might be able to use these high-resolution images to make a huge flipbook someday. Next time I make a flipbook, I plan to use a video camera or a still camera with continuous auto shoot capability in order to capture a larger number of still images.

Preparing the Images Prior to Printing

Each of my flipbook guides has developed a slightly different set of tools and procedures to prepare her flipbook pages for printing. To prepare her line drawings for

reproduction in a flipbook, Susan Angebrannt scans them on her flatbed scanner and then scales each image to the same size. To make sure the positioning and pacing of the images is right, she reads the scanned images into her iMovie software and previews them as a movie. If the story needs a few more images to “make more sense,” she will either draw additional images that add a small movement between two of the existing images or repeat a page as needed to change the pacing.

Since Featheringill and Lucking generate their still images from video footage, they are more assured of recreating a convincing illusion of movement from their stills. Mary Lucking uses Adobe Photoshop to manipulate her images prior to laying them out for printing. She resizes, crops, and adjusts the color of each still using Photoshop, before she imports them into her printing layout software. Since each image requires the same adjustments, her advice to flipbook makers is to learn how to define “actions” and then tell Photoshop to perform the same actions on an entire batch of images. She says, “If you haven’t looked into automating tasks in Photoshop before, this is the time.”

I followed Lucking’s lead and used Photoshop to resize my images for use on the flipbook page. Because I hadn’t been careful enough about making sure my camera was oriented at exactly the same angle for each image, I also had to carefully align the backgrounds in each image, so they would remain still while the dancing figure moved. After I resized and cropped the images, I used the slide show presentation option in Adobe Bridge to preview the transitions from image to image as I assembled the image sequence.

Laying out the Book Pages

Most flipbooks use only a single side of the paper and portray only one view of an event or action. However, I was particularly attracted to the visual complexity of some flipbooks that placed images on both sides of each page. I decided that I wanted to present two sequences of the hip-hop dance—a full-figure view in color on the right-hand sides of the page, and an enlarged negative-image in a brown tone on the back side of each page.



I don't know how much of this I was consciously thinking about at the time—but when I look at this double layout now, It seems to me that the colored images describe the sequence in “real time” which can only move ahead, step by step, while the negative images describe the images captured in my memory, which become increasingly insubstantial as I attempt to rewind or replay them to revisit the past. To realize my intention of placing an enlarged negative image of the dancing figure on the reverse side of each page, I sized and saved this second version of each image at a different size and cropping, removed the saturated color, and selected a brown tonality for these images. Since I hadn't yet learned how to process batches, I made the same sets of changes to each of the 34 images individually.

I accomplished some additional page layout tasks using *Photoshop*. If I had been familiar with *InDesign*, I would have used this software for page layout instead. I decided to see what would happen if I added text from the chorus to a hip hop song by the group Blackalicious, which refers to creativity “from a source that is forever flowing.” As I laid out the pages of the book, I repeated each line of lyrics on three consecutive pages, to see if this would be enough to make the lyrics readable while the pages are being flipped. It turns out that you can't read the text at all when you flip the book. However, I think the presence of the text might tempt some viewers to take a second slower look at the images and text by leafing through the book page by page.

I then created a page printing layout for *hip hop at 15* that printed four images per page, with room for trimming between each image (see above). To ensure that the back of each page would be lined up directly underneath the front of the page, I created the layout template for the backs by creating a “mirror image” of the front layout by flipping the template on its vertical axis. I also had to remember to flip the page images from side to side in between printing the first side and the second side, so that the front and back sides of each page would be appropriately superimposed.



Choosing the Paper

I found selecting the paper to be one of the most important decisions I made in designing my flipbook. My flipbook guides cautioned me to carefully consider paper weight and paper surface.

Julia Featheringill prefers a heavy matte surface paper for her flipbooks. For flipbooks printed on one-side only, she uses Epson's coated matte-surface paper. For books that have images on both sides of the paper, she did a lot of research into double-sided matte paper and ended up with Mitsubishi

Diamond Jet paper, which, she says “is kind of hard to find and it is quite expensive but had the best image quality for the Epson ink I was using and the correct thickness.” Susan Angebrannt recommends using a paper that is not too thin and not too thick, but “just right” for flipping—she has found that 70 lb. text weight paper works best for her flipbooks.

Following Featheringill's example, I initially tried printing my flipbook on matte paper coated for photographic use. While the image quality was quite nice, I wasn't satisfied with the flipping performance of this paper—it felt heavy enough, but too thick and sluggish. The pages dragged against each other as they turned, and I was worried about abrasion of the clay-coated page surface over time. I decided to look further. For my next printing test, I used a double-sided semi-gloss finish photographic paper. Fairly sturdy but dense rather than thick (285 gsm but only 11.8 mil), this paper had a semi-gloss finish that was pleasing to my eye. When I flipped about four sheets trimmed down to flipbook size, I knew that I had found my paper—it moved quickly and easily as I flipped the sheets, and made a satisfying snapping noise as it flipped.

Since I was using high resolution photographic content, I was initially tempted to make a flipbook on the large side, so that the viewer would be able to appreciate the image quality. Early in the page layout process, I printed out sample flipbook pages in three different sizes (with slightly different proportions): 3½” x 8”, 2.2” x 7½”, and 1¾” x 3.8”. The middle size was just right: I thought it fit in my hand nicely, and I could read the text without squinting too much.

However, when I sent a copy of my completed book to Pascal Fouché—the flipbook expert—and asked for his opinion, he suggested that the book was a little too long in its longest dimension to fit easily in the hand. He suggested 6” or 6 ½” in length would have worked better.

Printing the Pages

My flipbook guides had used a variety of printing technologies. Mary Lucking prints her flipbooks on her color laser printer. Susan Angebrannt uses a black and white laser printer for her black and white flipbook pages. Julia Featheringill started off by printing her own flipbooks on an Epson inkjet printer. After realizing that she would be selling a number of her books, she started having the single-sided flipbooks printed offset at a commercial print shop. She continues to print her two-sided books herself, because the commercial print shops could not provide the exact superimposition of front and back images that she needed.

For *hip hop at 15*, I knew that I wanted to use my Epson inkjet printer with pigmented inks. The only change from my normal practice—required by the semi-gloss paper—was to switch out my black ink cartridge from matte black to photo black ink. I was very pleased by the quality of the printed pages.

Binding

As relatively low-cost mass-market items, flipbooks do not usually attract very elaborate binding materials or methods. Julia Featheringill cuts down her flipbooks books to approximately page size using a guillotine style paper cutter that can cut a few sheets at a time. She then takes the cut-down books to a shop that has a hydraulic paper cutter that trims the edges of each book to make them “nice and clean.” She then glues the binding with several coats of padding adhesive (the kind of glue that is used for notepads). Finally, she glues on a paper cover. Susan Angebrannt uses a staple gun to bind her flipbooks. After stapling, she glues a piece of book cloth over the staple and the spine. Finding a staple gun to go through 3/8” of paper was one of the harder challenges she had to overcome in making her book. Mary Lucking uses a metal binder clip from a stationery store to bind her flipbooks. She likes the way the “low-tech qualities of the books contrast with the computer-heavy aspects of collecting and editing the images.”

To bind my book with its somewhat slippery pages, I decided to drill three small holes through the book block about ¼” from the spine edge and sew the pages together with linen thread using a pamphlet stitch. I then adhered the cover to the book spine and inner edge of the book cover using high-tack 3M #415 double-sided tape.

Results



I am now the proud parent of a hip hop dancer and a flipbook, *hip hop at 15*. Now that I watch people flipping through my book, I am struck by the fact that most of them start at the back of the book and flip forward. I think this is a more natural way to flip, and will build this observation in my design decisions when I make my next flipbook. a video is at <<http://www.guildofbookworkers.org/gallery/markingtime/artists/bookimages/Kogan.avi>>.

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- Deborah Kogan completed an MFA in photography from the California College of the Arts in 1988. She is active in Bay Area Book Artists and the Pacific Center for the Book Arts and teaches occasional book arts classes at the San Francisco Center for the Book. As a book artist, she is interested in books as physical objects and as containers of meaning. She can be reached at <debbie_kogan@sbcglobal.net>.*

Notes On The Making Of Books In The 21st Century

By Michael Keller

“First of all, the printed sheet must be folded.” In R. R. Bowker’s 1887 overview of the book publishing trades, he begins part VII (post- printing procedures) with this sentence, and without much prior explanation. It speaks directly to the general understanding of what a *book* represented as a physical structure in the 19th century.

For centuries the norm of text printing has been ‘bi-foliate’, meaning the juxtaposition of multiple pages on a single sheet of paper, whether it be a chapbook or elephant folio, pamphlet or newspaper. This, of necessity, required the sheet to be folded before being attached to others like it, to form a whole.

In the 20th century the printed page began to appear on single leaves which resulted in a pile of separate pieces of paper which had to be attached one to the other somehow. The commonest method was to just use adhesive on the spine side. While dramatically reducing production costs over the traditional method of “sewing through the fold”, the greatest drawback was structural durability.

Trying not to belabor the obvious, when a traditional sewn book is opened, the only real stress on the structure is the flexing of paper fibers along the fold of each sheet; something that reasonably good quality paper can do many, many times without significant wear. This has the added advantage of permitting the book to more or less lie flat without injury from direct structural stress.

Now I apologize for the very basic nature of this preamble as most everyone with any interest and experience in book related fields would know the above, at least on some instinctive level. The problem is that the average person has no appreciation whatever of the basics of book construction and this has made for a situation undreamed of in 1887.

With the fast spread of adhesive bindings in the mid 20th century, I hold that a number of rather subtle but negative social changes happened to the general concept of the *book*.

A large part of the problem, I believe, was a short-coming in modern English usage. The every-day language simply did not accommodate such an important change in one of culture’s essential icons. At the very least, this new innovation in the publishing industry should have been given a new word or descriptive qualifier all its own. The early term “paperback” proved not only inadequate but misleading, as the presence

or absence of a hard-cover has nothing whatever to do with how the text block is structured. The only other term I know of which was in general use is the bizarre “perfect bound”. Something so ludicrous as to beggar ridicule. The publishing industry seems to have allowed this situation to evolve in order to pass off a fundamentally inferior product on an unsuspecting book buying public. Obviously they had no intention of educating with more accurate consumer information and advertising language.

So how might one correct this linguistic flaw? I suggest some descriptive qualifying words such as ‘tablet-book’, ‘pad-book’, or even the obvious ‘glued-book’. Any of these would make for much more truthfulness in book-trade advertising.

OK, so why all the fuss? After all, “let the (book) buyer beware”. Someone pays a rather hefty price for a large, sumptuously illustrated ‘coffee-table *book*’, only to have it start to disintegrate 5, 10, or 15 years after purchase. Or one finally completes that family history, representing many months work, pays rather a lot of money to have the text made into a dozen copies of a *book*, and long before one would expect to be passing the copies on to the next generation, there are only piles of loose pages left.

This loss of *book* longevity has led, I would argue, to an inevitable social denigration in the popular concept of the book.

Most seem to agree that in the mind of the average citizen of the western world in the 19th century, the *idea* of the book had a much higher status in the overall scheme of things. Again, that may sound obvious to you, but I think it worthy of further comment. Let’s use the term “transgenerational” to focus attention on that traditional aspect peculiar to books. Historically speaking, to author a book carried with it the promise of fame and a sort of limited yet substantial immortality. To collect books carried with it the premise that one was a link in a chain far bigger than the individual. Today not so much. I suggest the average modern reader thinks only in terms of a decade or two at most, when considering the physical book. Certainly nothing approaching a physical thing capable of spanning generations. There must also be an inevitable diminishment of esteem, through association, towards the content of books if the packaging is so marginalized and temporary. Yet it remains a mystery to me why most book readers don’t seem to care all that much about this state of affairs. And what these social subtleties ultimately mean are deep waters not within the scope of these ‘notes’.

The often spirited discussions of a decade ago (and still going on) over whether the book is threatened by digital



text has always been a non-starter to me. If a traditional book structure is used for reading *pleasure*, it simply has no competition. It has evolved into something which accommodates the human body too well to be seriously threatened by light-emitting-diodes in any form.

On the other hand, digital text has the huge advantage in the storage, retrieval and manipulation of *information*. These are two very different things. In other words, I can see a day when public libraries limit their book buying to fiction, while non-fiction would be almost exclusively digital.

Yes, that may be somewhat of an oversimplification.

Having, I hope, explained the importance I put on the concept and survival of 'real' books; we come now to the actual point of this article. I have always wanted to make books. To be responsible for new books which did not exist before. Why this is so, I have no clue. It's just been a deeply felt need. Given my strong prejudice towards anything short of the traditional book, this predilection would normally have led to a printing press, type, ink, and at least the basic skills to use them properly. Such a serious commitment of time and resources never was practical to my situation however, so with a few minor exceptions over the years, making books was a dream for some future day.

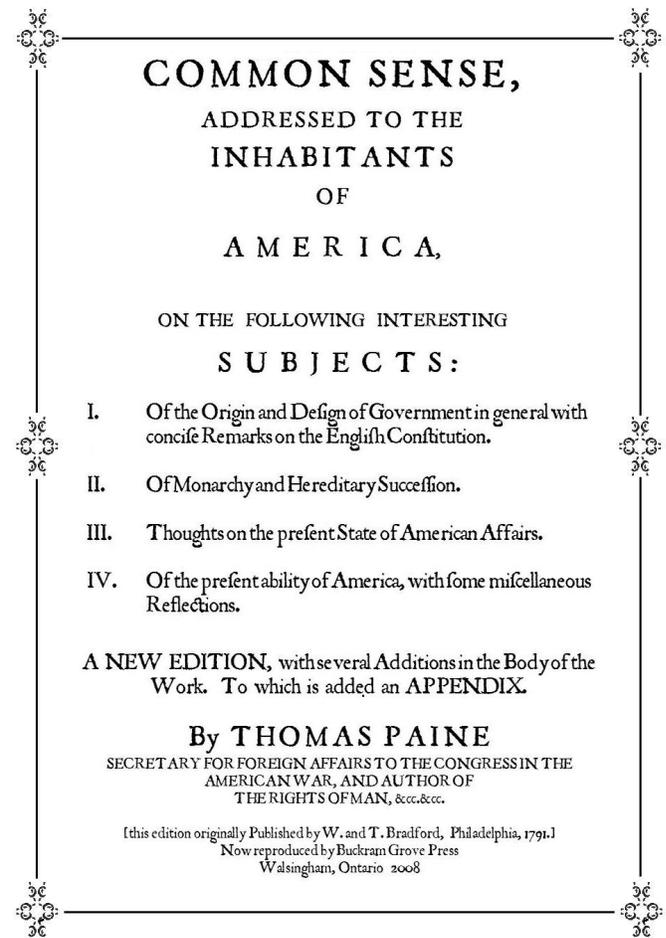
Enter the computer age. I was a relatively late comer to it all; initially limited by a lack of any formal education in the field, though I eventually became the worst kind of geek, the Self-Made Geek - by reading every 'Help file' I could find. Lack of substantial disposable income was also pretty limiting. My computing resources were always free or used and 'out-of-date' (though I would argue that 'out-of-date' is a highly over-rated phrase in this context).

As I started thinking about the application of software and hardware towards the making of books, it was obvious that there was no 'quick 'n easy' program for the creation of quality books which could then be rendered into bi-foliate format (signatures); at least nothing available to me. By *quality* I am referring to academic enhancements (indexing, etc.) and aesthetics with the hundreds of visual niceties, each with its myriad of variables, developed over the centuries by, and available to the traditional printing craft.

To explain the next step in this progression requires a 'plug' for a specific commercial product, my only endorsement, and I have no connection with the company whatsoever. WordPerfect 5.1 was for years one of the most sophisticated text editors with many 'bells and whistles'. The first choice of academics with PCs, its biggest limitation from my perspective was the very small number of fonts available. WordPerfect 6 resolved that and suddenly the huge world

of TrueType fonts became accessible. WP6 also had the advantage of a new graphic interface, making the inclusion and manipulation of graphics within the text a practicality. Finally, what made the finished work translatable into printed signatures is a WP printing option called 'print as booklet'. Once the entire work is *put to bed* as a single large file, I then break it up into smaller files relating to whatever size (number of folded sheets times 4 = number of pages) signature I choose. About this time I had also graduated to a second-hand Pentium I with Windows 95. Finally I felt I was ready for my first book.

Not knowing any better, I decided that my first effort should be the most difficult printing challenge I could think of. If I could resolve the really tough stuff, anything else would be possible.



I have always admired the writings of Thomas Paine (American Revolution pamphleteer), in particular his "Common Sense". So I posed the premise: what if there was a 'Gentleman Printer' active in the American Colonies when the first rough copies of "Common Sense" were being distributed, and recognizing the importance of the thing, decided to produce the best rendering he could, given the limitations of his day. Such was my goal.

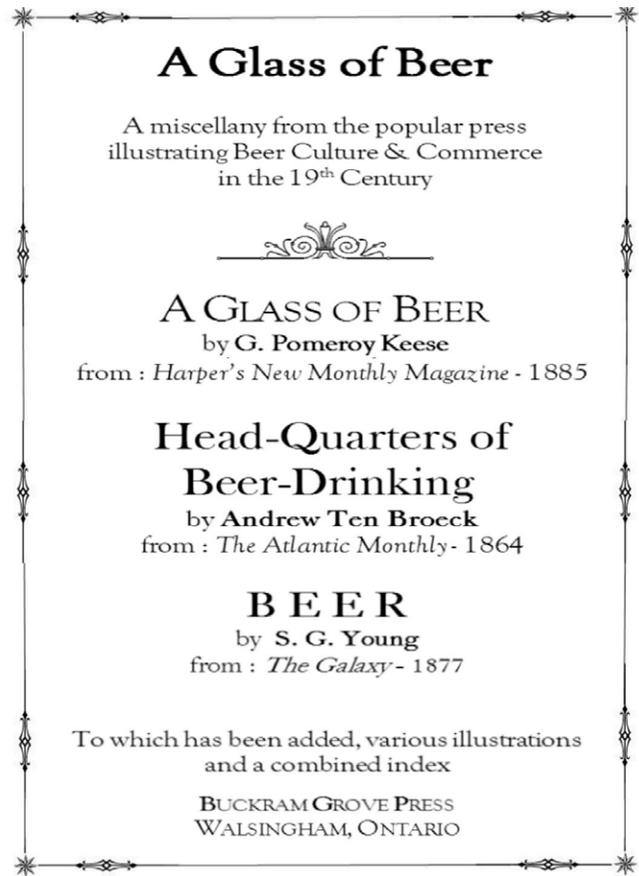
First problem was an appropriate 18th century font with ligatures (combined letter types), long S's, etc. Fortunately a man named Jeff S. Lee had recently produced just such a font and made it freely available on-line, along with a text conversion utility. Problem solved. The rest was long and all about the learning curve; but in the end I had an authentic looking book I could be proud of, and a lot of new found self-confidence. That is not to say there were no problems and frustrations. Most were memory-related (more the computer's than mine) given the underpowered hardware and the relatively large size of the main file. This resolved itself finally with my current 6 year old Pentium IV, and WordPerfect 11 with its superior memory management and even more 'bells and whistles'.

Since then I have done a few private commissions for people who appreciate the traditional and *permanent* book structure and want to see their work in nothing less, in spite of the considerable expense.

While always satisfying in the end, these commercial projects were less so than the satisfaction of producing my very own productions; where I make all of the aesthetic and editorial decisions. So a few years ago I started looking for potential sources of 'new' material which, to the best of my knowledge, had never been seen in book form. The topics of course would always be of some personal interest to myself, and hopefully to others.

My tastes generally tend to the antiquarian and I have collected odd, bound volumes of Victorian-era periodicals throughout most of my adult life. I find the content for the most part fascinating on many levels and largely unknown today the reprinting of the text into any format being a very rare occurrence. The need for a digital source of these texts was met by the far-sighted and very worthy 'Gutenberg' and 'The Making of America' Projects; both freely accessible to anyone from the Internet. I should also mention that I have been collecting all manner of digital fonts and printers' devices (vignettes, head/tailpieces, dingbats, etc.) since the beginning. With patience, there is an enormous amount of free material available on-line to anyone who cares to seek it out.

The first Victorian-era project was G. Pomeroy Keese's "A Glass Of Beer" (Harper's Monthly, 1885). An overview of the American beer industry to date, and generally I think, a fun and informative read to anyone interested in such things. This was later expanded to create a 'miscellany' of sorts, with the addition of two other mid-19th century pieces regarding the beer culture of Munich. The miscellany idea of grouping two or three feature articles together is now my usual form. For a fuller list of titles see the bibliography.



I think it is worth mentioning one other important aspect of this sort of book-making before closing. Since each copy is printed (on a very common standard-issue inkjet printer) and bound by hand individually, the content is never really finished, that is, set in stone. It is usual for me to tweak, add or correct minor elements between copies, thus making each copy technically its own *edition* of one, the ultimate in limited editions. Even without any changes, all of my books contain a colophon with the exact date of printing along with a provenantial citation stating for whom the *copy* was specifically made. All of this being a rather new concept in bookmaking, there seems to be no established nomenclature to adequately describe the thing. After much thought, the best I can come up with is a "Unique Copy" book. Use of the word 'edition' or even 'publish' would be, I believe, misleading without a qualifier. I would welcome any ideas on the topic. And that brings me to some final thoughts on what this bookmaking method is NOT, and why confusion in wording should be avoided.

This is NOT "desk-top publishing". This term has come to imply work printed with a computer / printer (usually double-sided) as single leaves, one page after another, thereby making it appropriate for adhesive binding, ring binders, spiral bound, etc. Nothing at all wrong with that assuming the inherent limitations are appreciated by the maker. It's just

not the same as bi-foliate printing-binding. And as already discussed, I would even argue against the unqualified use of the term *book* applied to those finished products.

Nor is my work 'Fine Press' or 'Fine Printing'. Yes, it is real ink (well actually a dye) on real paper, and the term 'Private Press' is accurate enough I think. But 'Fine Press' has always meant only one thing: real printers using real type in real presses. When executed with skill and taste, the resulting work has always been, and will always be the ultimate in printed word beauty. Most importantly, my printed page lacks the sensual 3 dimensional feel of real print-work impressed into thick, dampened paper. The best I strive for is a 2 dimensional approximation. Also is the limitation of finished dimensions. While I can, and do, fool around with 16pp. chapbooks, and use 8 1/2 X 14" stock for printed wraps, the usual book size is dictated by the folded 8 1/2 X 11" (landscape) standard.

After all else is said, this is the best possible hobby for someone like myself. Potential is limitless. And in keeping with the *self-made* mind-set, I believe: "if I can do it, anyone with enough motivation and patience can do it". Lack of resources should no longer be a fatally limiting factor; at least not in the western world with our great surplus of second-hand, and the mind-numbing free assets available to all on the Internet.

So as I write this in 2009, I wonder what Mssr. Bowker, Evans, Morris and the founders of the Typophiles and the Grolier Club would think of it all.

For the most part, they made books, and obviously they all cared deeply about the subject. I flatter myself with the thought that they would share my concern at the modern confusion in terms and loss in popular status of the traditional book.

As to what they might make of the idea of an individual living in rural Canada, largely isolated, essentially self-taught, without press or anything else they would recognize; yet having access to millions of pages of copyright-free text, hundreds of fonts and every known printers' bling... and making his own books...

...Signs and wonders.

Bibliography of the Buckram Grove Press April 2009

Binding formats include: (trimmed foredge always optional) hand-sewn, in printed paper wraps; hand-sewn onto cloth tapes, backed with cloth, case bound with 1/4 muslin spine and printed boards (or plain art paper covered boards),

paper spine label; hand-sewn onto cloth tapes, backed with cloth, bound in 1/2 leather with decorative paste or marbled paper.]

Common Sense by Thomas Paine from the Bradford, 1791 ed. [104pp / 6 signatures; 5 illustrations added; with new index.]

A Glass of Beer by G. Pomeroy Keese; from *Harper's New Monthly*, 1885. [90pp / 5 signatures; 17 original illustrations added; with new index]

The Grolier Club. by Brander Matthews; from *The Century Illustrated*, 1889. [88pp / 5 signatures; 19 original illustrations added; with new index]

A Miscellany of 19th Cent. American Base-Ball. "Base-Ball for the Spectator" by W. Camp from *The Century Magazine*, 1889; "Our National Game" by William R. Hooper from *Appletons' Journal*, 1871; *Popular Amusements*, Chapter V: Base-Ball by Rev. J.T. Crane 1869. [104pp / 5 signatures; 17 original illustrations added; with combined index.]



A MISCELLANY OF 19TH CENTURY AMERICAN BASE-BALL

BASE-BALL —
FOR THE SPECTATOR
by Walter Camp
The Century Magazine 1889

OUR NATIONAL GAME
by William R. Hooper
Appletons' Journal 1871

POPULAR AMUSEMENTS:
Chapter V. Base-Ball 1869
by Rev. J.T. Crane

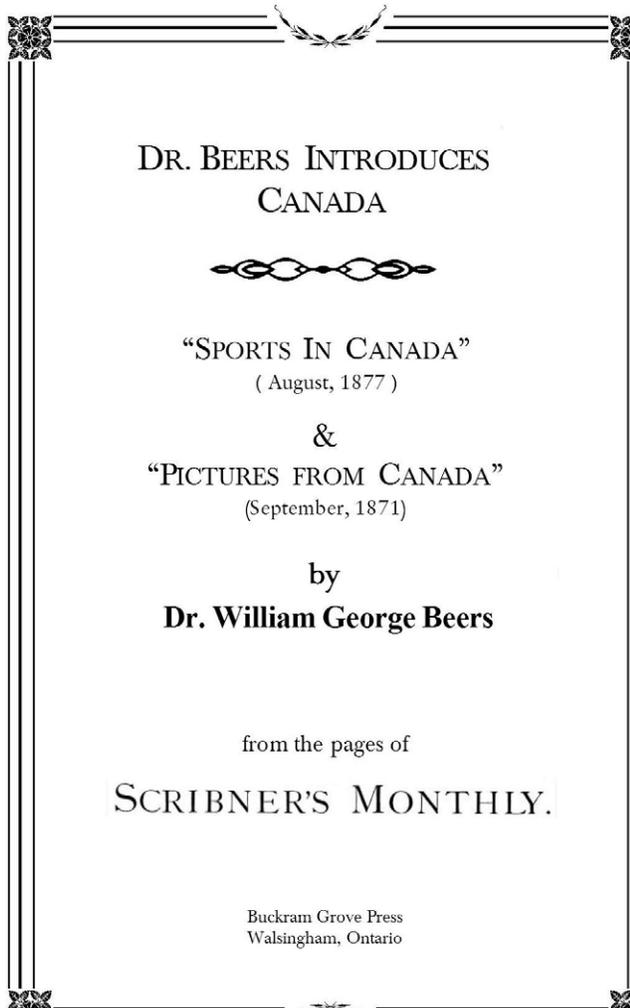
copied verbatim with original graphics

Buckram Grove Press
Walsingham, Ontario

On the Duty of Civil Disobedience by H. D. Thoreau. [60pp / 3 signatures; 3 illustrations added]



Dr. Beers Introduces Canada. Includes “Sports In Canada” August, 1877 and “Pictures from Canada,” September, 1871 by Dr. William George Beers. From *Scribner’s Monthly Magazine*. [180pp / 9 signatures; 41 original illustrations added; with combined index]



Brander Matthews on Books & Related Matters. “The Grolier Club,” 1889; “Commercial Bookbinding,” 1894; “Books In Paper Covers,” 1895, all from *The Century Magazine*. [180pp / 9 signatures; 42 original illustrations added; with combined index]

A Glass of Beer (A miscellany). “A Glass of Beer” by G. Pomeroy Keese from *Harper’s New Monthly*, 1885; “Head-Quarters of Beer-Drinking” by Andrew Ten Broeck from *The Atlantic Monthly*, 1864; “B E E R” by S. G. Young from *The Galaxy*, 1877. [180pp / 9 signatures; 32 original illustrations added; with combined index]

A Printed Book by R. R. Bowker. From *Harper’s New Monthly*, 1887. [approximately 140pp. / 9 signatures; 20 original illustrations added; with new index and to which is added “Notes on the making of books in the 21st Century” by Michael Keller]

Future subjects currently being considered for the Victorian era Periodical series include:

Quackery, Snake-Oil and Medicine in 19th Century America.

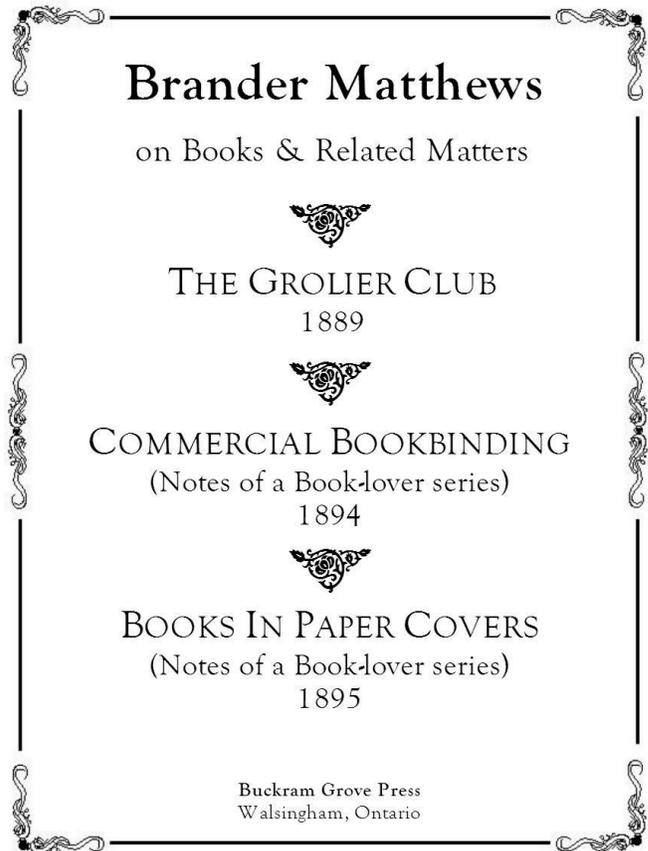
Newspapers; their rise and development in 19th Century America.

Firearms; important advancements in 19th Century America.

‘Communism’ and Shakerism - 1891

This article originally appeared as an addition to my rendering of A Printed Book by R. R. Bowker that was originally published Harper’s New Monthly, 1887. While the software referenced in the article is dated, the principles behind the author’s work are still very relevant]

Michael Keller is a hand bookbinder, restorer, and proprietor of the Buckram Grove Press in Walsingham, Ontario, Canada. He can be reached via his website at <<http://www.kwic.com/~bkeller/binding>>.



Exhibition Reviews

Marking Time: The 2009 – 2011 Traveling Exhibition of the Guild of Book Workers

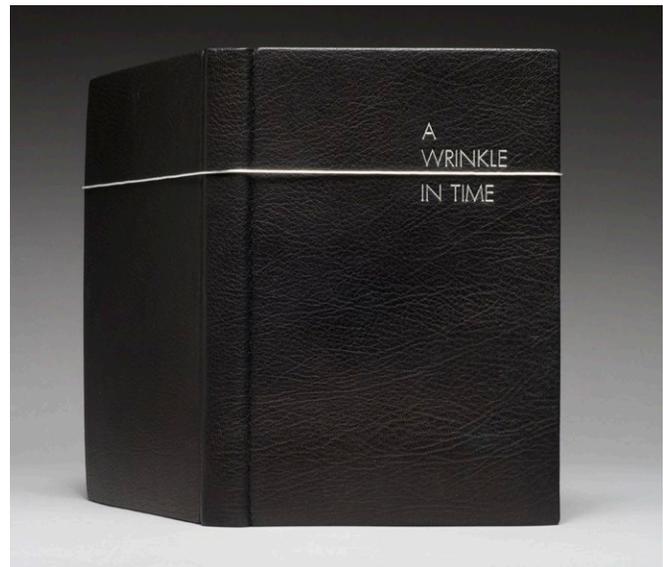
An Exhibition Review by Rebecca Smyrl

As Hanmer and Reid-Cunningham both note, *Marking Time* demonstrates the diversity of talent among Guild members, with work from binders, book artists, printers, and conservators offering a wide range of interpretations of the show's theme. As Hanmer writes,

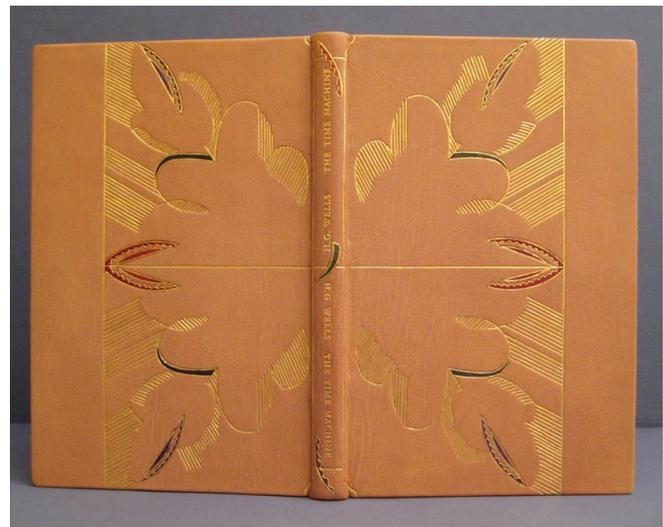
“Traditional leather bindings stand alongside contemporary bindings that have been dyed, collaged, or incorporate photographs or handwriting. Texts selected to be bound are as likely to be poetry or classics as they are science fiction or hard science. The show includes work in the codex format, complex folded structures, wooden constructions, hand-held toys, and sculptural objects. Text and imagery is produced by the most ancient and the most modern mark-making methods: calligraphy, painting, woodcut, letterpress, and digital output.”

This lively mix speaks well of the dynamic nature of the field and its role in keeping books relevant by embracing new technologies while retaining old traditions.

Since books typically impart meaning through complex combinations of intellectual, visible, tactile, and above all mobile interactions with their readers, unique challenges lie in creating and/or presenting them as exhibit objects that must convey dimension, movement, and content while enclosed in glass exhibit cases or captured in two photos. Given this context, books with content explicitly reflected by their form or by another outer aspect were particularly effective. Similarly, books whose contents could be readily “read” or understood at a glance lent themselves well to the challenges of exhibition. Artists found a number of ways to accomplish this, in some cases by employing structures that allowed all pages to be seen at once, as in the case of Claire Jeanine Satin's *Pentaminto/Marking Time*, or by eliminating traditional textual content in favor of a focus on structure. Choice of iconic literary work—for example, Madeline L'Engle's *A Wrinkle in Time*, bound by Deborah Howe, or H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine*, bound by Jamie Kamph—also served artists well, with the large-scale familiarity of the text allowing it to act as a signifier upon whose implicit meaning the binding could build.



A Wrinkle in Time – Binding by Deborah Howe

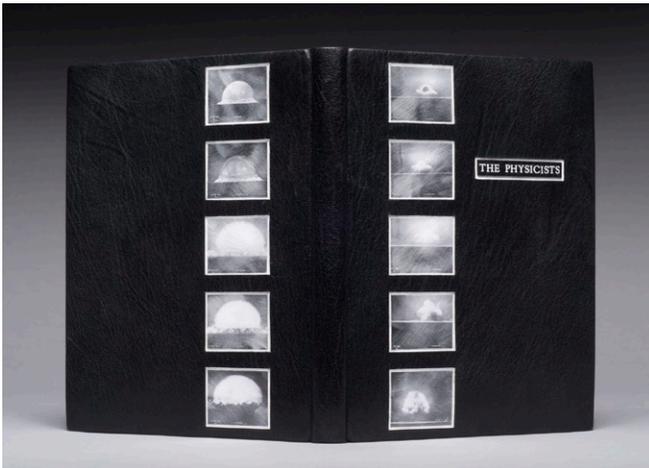


The Time Machine – Binding by Jamie Kamph

Several artists devised literal interpretations of the show's theme, incorporating actual timekeeping devices into their work, or incorporating their work into timekeeping devices. Alicia Bailey's *December 1: The Hunt* features an accordion book enclosed in a functional metronome case. David Esselmont's binding of watchmaker George Daniels's autobiography *All in Good Time*, with its deceptively simple and beautifully executed gold-tooled spiral watch spring design, has at its center a sunken panel containing a watch wheel made by Daniels. Madelyn Garrett mingles wristwatch pieces with a multitude of other small, luminescent materials to create sparkling images for *A Book of Hours*.

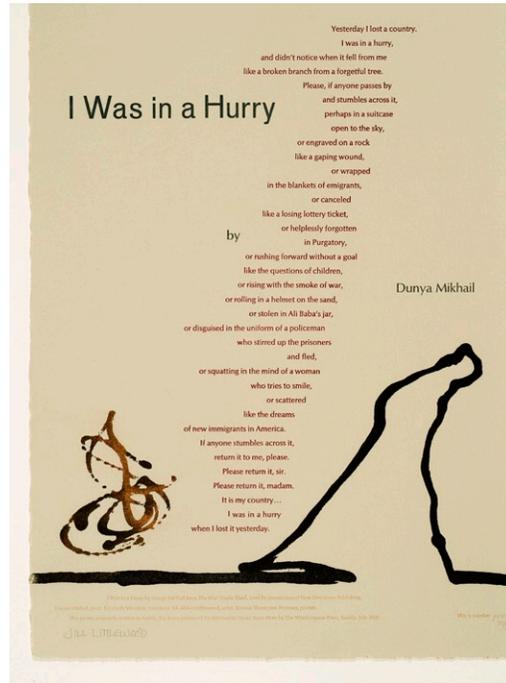


A Book of Hours created by Madelyn Garrett



The Physicists – Binding by Lesa Dowd

Other contributors abstract the show's theme to address larger social issues. Lesa Dowd's black goatskin binding of *The Physicists* by C.P. Snow uses small inlaid cover images of the Trinity Test nuclear explosion to powerful effect, the science of their orderly arrangement and controlled sequence soberly contrasting the chaotic terror of the resulting nuclear warfare. Wilber "Chip" Schilling's *Half Life/Full Life*, while thematically related, employs brightly colored images and oversized, truncated text to directly depict the apocalyptic consequences of a nuclear age. Conversely, Bonnie Thompson Norman's letterpress broadside of Dunya Mikhail's poem *I was in a Hurry*, about violence inflicted in Baghdad during the Iraq War, and Chela Metzger's goatskin binding of Oscar Wilde's *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*, a poem documenting the author's imprisonment for homosexuality, showcase the consequences of hatred and intolerance on a more intimate, human scale. Norman's arrangement of the poem's words alongside a photoengraved image from Jill Alden Littlewood demonstrates the high level of expression that can be achieved through printing. Metzger's technique of lettering words from Wilde's text into the goatskin cover with a woodburning tool conveys the raw feeling of the writing.



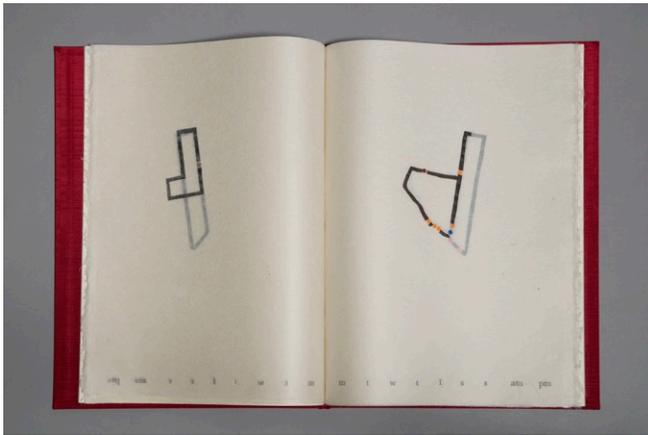
I Was in a Hurry – Broadside by Bonnie Thompson Norman



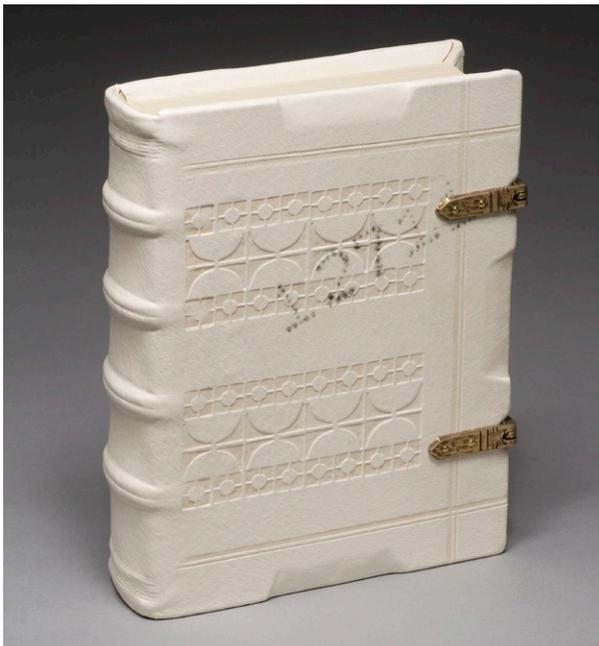
Half Life/Full Life by Wilber "Chip" Schilling



The Ballad of Reading Gaol – Binding by Chela Metzger



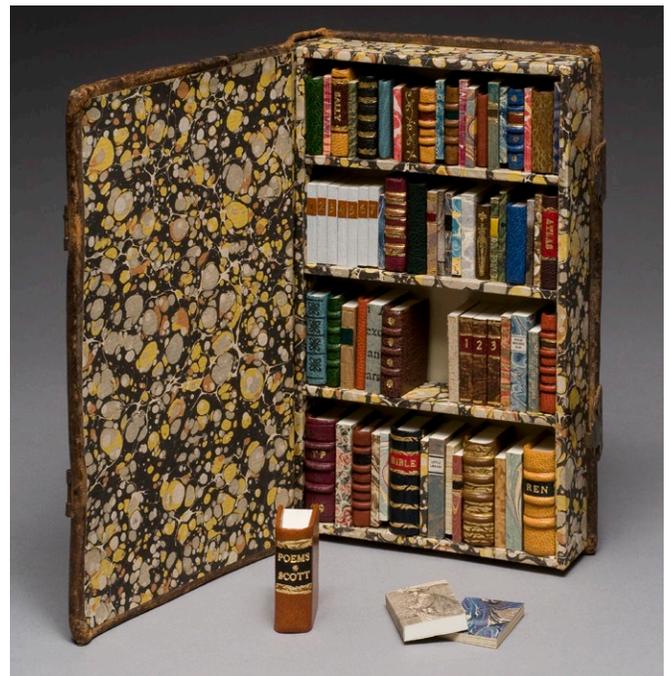
Walks with Rosie by Andrew Huot



12711 by Jeffrey Altepeter

Many participants applied the *Marking Time* theme to their own lives, harnessing materials and structures to depict their personal stories and journeys. Andrew Huot's *Walks with Rosie* uses bold images on translucent paper to map daily walks taken with his dog; the images transpose on each other to emphasize the ways that life patterns are both informed by, and deviate from, past and future events. Ellen Knudson's *Self-Dual* uses a dos-a-dos structure to externalize the division created by commuting between home and graduate school over a two-year period. In *Esther*, a winning hand of mah-jongg cards created by Shu-Ju Wang with family memorabilia is strung together to represent the constant presence of the card game in the life of her subject. Jessica Spring configures glass plate negative images found in her home into a physical geography in *Parts Unknown*, with the overall structure of the work suggesting the same sense of place found in the images.

Not surprisingly, several participants examine the passage of time as it affects books and book structures. Jeffrey Altepeter's *12711*, a Gothic model bound in alum tawed pigskin with a prominent number stamp, juxtaposes obviously new materials with much older structure and techniques (Altepeter cut his own tools) to point out that, while many aspects of bookbinding have stood the test of time, modernity has also literally imprinted itself onto the practice. Melissa Jay Craig's *Passage*, a book-shaped paper fiber shell, offers—and perhaps also requires—the fewest words of explanation in the exhibit. Evoking both a decaying tree and a decaying book, the hollow space left by the absent text casts attention and meaning onto structural concerns. Todd Pattison's *Little Library* also employs a hollowed book structure; in this case miniature books in a wide variety of structures replace the text, embodying the idea that each book contains the multitude of others that have influenced and informed it—both textually and structurally—over time.



Little Library by Todd Pattison

Library and conservation work also receive attention in the exhibit. Stamped due date cards sewn together and assembled into a long stitch binding by Jody Alexander in *Due Date* give a collective picture of use over time, with fraying mull threads at the edges of the pages accentuating the feeling of heavy use that permeates the piece. Donald Glaister's *A Few Questions*, in which a bound series of conservation-style encapsulations contain the text and illustrations, does indeed raise a few questions and provoke discussion, perhaps about the aim of conservation. The encapsulations, which protect and obscure the layered objects within, freezing them in time and rendering them at once more and less accessible; in this

context they foster thought about the current and future effects of trying to stave off the inevitable.



Due Date by Jody Alexander



A Few Questions by Donald Glaister

In his description of his binding of Ruth Vassos's *Ultimo*, juror Peter D. Verheyen compares the protagonist's marking of time before emigrating to a new world to his own fourteen year project of binding the text. The challenge of finding time and motivation to make books is no doubt familiar to most exhibit viewers. The fact that Verheyen and the rest of his exhibiting colleagues made the time not only to complete these projects, but to do so with style and creativity, is a source of much gratitude and inspiration among this community.

Marking Time, the Guild of Book Workers triennial members' exhibition, opened at the Minnesota Center for Book Arts in Minneapolis in May 2009, and will appear in eight other cities before its close in March 2011. In the fall of 2009, it traveled to San Francisco in conjunction with the Guild of Book Workers Standards of Excellence Seminar where attendees enjoyed the show during the conference's opening reception at the San Francisco Public Library. The exhibit is curated by Guild Exhibitions Chair Karen Hanmer and consists of fifty works chosen by jurors Jeffrey Altepeter,

Melissa Jay Craig, and Peter D. Verheyen out of the 152 submitted. A printed catalog designed by Julie Leonard and Sara T. Sauers accompanies the exhibit. The catalog features full color photographs by Jerry Mathiason, and complete descriptions of all fifty exhibited works, along with biographies of the artists. It also includes statements from Guild President James Reid-Cunningham, Karen Hanmer, and the three jurors.

All works from the exhibition along with the full text of the catalog may be perused online at <http://www.guildofbookworkers.org/gallery/markingtime>. There you will also find a catalog order form, an up-to-date schedule for the exhibition, and more. Copies of the catalog are at \$35 that includes postage in the USA.

Exhibition Venues:

Minnesota Center for Book Arts, San Francisco Public Library, the University of Washington's Suzzallo Libraries, Book Arts Program at the J. Willard Marriott Library, University of Utah, Denver Public Library, Western History/ Genealogy Department, The Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County, Main Library, David Bishop Skillman Library, Lafayette College, and Dartmouth College Library.

Rebecca Smyrl is a 2005 graduate of the North Bennet Street School's bookbinding program and recently received her MSIS from the University of Texas at Austin. She is currently completing an advanced conservation internship at the Newberry Library. She can be reached at <rsmysl@gmail.com>.

Artists Books: The View from the Other Side.
The 2009 Southern Cross University
Acquisitive Artists Book Award. Barratt Galleries,
Alstonville, Australia. August 15 – September 24, 2009.

An exhibition review by Doug Spowart

The 2009 Southern Cross University Acquisitive Artists Book Award was opened on Saturday August 15. This year 78 books were presented for consideration by the judge from artists' book creators across the country and overseas. Entries included works from some the significant exponents of the art in Australia including; Tommaso Durante, Monica Oppen, Lyn Ashby, David Fraser, Tim Mosely, Adele Outteridge, Wim de Vos, Judy Bourke, Julie Barratt, Ann-Maree Hunter, Angela Gardiner. This year several books were received from international entrants including works from Tom Sowden and Sara Bodman.



Tara O'Brien speaking at opening of exhibition

This year's judge was Tara O'Brien, an internationally recognised artists book artist from Philadelphia in the United States of America. Apart from her arts practice she is a conservator and also a teacher of artists' book making. Her judging process was directed by the need for her selection to enhance the range and representative examples of artists' book practice held by the SCU collection. To do this she reviewed the collection before judging process began and then followed on with a full day and evening of engagement with the works at the exhibition venue. Her three-step evaluation process includes an evaluation of the content, the binding and how the book works as a whole product.

The announcement of selected works was accompanied by O'Brien's commentary on the artists' book along with her observations of Australian artists' book making based on her connection with the award. Her dissertation presented a view of the local product from a luminary from outside our shores.

She was impressed by the depth of practice represented by the works attracted to the award. Acknowledged also was quality of the fine press and the conceptual nature of the work.

Tara O'Brien has strong opinions about how books are made and expressed a desire for certain book making practices to be discouraged. She commented that, "it could have been interesting to select books for inclusion in the collection to show students what not to do." As O'Brien proceeded through her discussion she announced her dislike of some book construction forms — in particular the screw-post and the stab stitch. Both because the reader needs to 'fight' to hold the book open, "it doesn't lie flat" she commented. The stab stitch was singled out for its connection with Oriental forms of the book and the inappropriateness of its use in Western book making unless it is intended to pay homage to the style. The use of buckram as a cover material was also a contentious issue particularly, in her opinion, when there were so many other materials that are so much more suitable. "You need to source some good book-making suppliers to access a wider variety of materials" she commented.



Barry Smith (Aus) – "Censored." Material: timber, rusted metal, paper, ink, 15cm cube, edition unique

The judge then progressed through the ten selected books describing the special attributes that each held and the way that each touched her as artist's communication in book form. Her selection and comments seemed to place her strongly in what might be called the 'book arts' genre as the function and appearance of the book seemed to define the reason for the book's selection. The acquired works were:



Artrovert (Denmark) – *TAKE IT EASY*
Julie Barratt (Aus) – *Wilcannia Wilderness*
Jonathon Carson & Rosie Miller(UK) – *Things We Have Seen*
Trudy Goodwin & Wendy Ford (Aus) – *Rhubarb & Junket*
Taycee-Lee Jones (Aus) – *Just Turn The Key*
Sumi Perera (UK) – *Building Blocks XIV*
Wendy Shortland (Aus) – *Belogna La Rosa*
Michele Skelton (Aus) – *The Oyster*
Barry Smith (Aus) – *Censored*
Amanda Watson-Wills (Aus) – *Like Weather*

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These selections add to the collection that SCU began building in 1999. The Acquisitive Artists' Book Award was initiated by SCU next Art Gallery in 2005. The aim of this annual event is to contribute to the development of artists' books as an art form in their own right and, importantly, add to the SCU Artists Book Collection. Acquisitions are made possible by financial support from The Co-op Bookshop, SCU Library & SCU next Art gallery. For more about the book arts activities at Southern Cross University see <<http://www.scu.edu.au/schools/sass/visarts/next/>>.



Amanda Watson-Wills (Aus) – "Like Weather."
Material: archival inkjet, 16x48x12cm, edition 1/3.

The suggestion of Tara O'Brien as judge for the 2009 award came from Julie Barratt who had met her at a Korean Artist Book Symposium in 2008 where both were speakers. O'Brien accepted the invitation and travelled from America to Lismore to carry out the judging. It should be also recognised that she also provided conservation advice to the University librarians, presented a lecture to SCU students as well as a gallery workshop on the Sunday after the judging. She was very generous of her knowledge, skills and time and very approachable for personal conversation and critiques. The award exhibition was complimented by an exhibition of selected O'Brien's artists' books one of which was purchased for the State Library of Queensland.

As the Southern Cross University Acquisitive Artists' Book Award enters its fifth year the collection has grown to around forty books. Challenges to the existing model relate to the nature of the collection and the diversity of practice

represented by it. A limited prize funding means that high value books particularly from the fine press, rarity and grand scale works are unlikely to be purchased. The value of the collection as a teaching resource most certainly will remain as an inspiration to students in their formative studies. However an ability to experience exemplars of the high end of the discipline will be limited. Certainly the once a year exhibition provided by the award will continue provide an infusion for students and regional practitioners. However in time the entrants of higher value items may not participate as the potential of selection and purchase does not eventuate.

From comments received from around the Lismore region Tara O'Brien has *stirred the possum (stirred things up)*. The comfort of the local book-making scene has been challenged by an external view and now some time honoured and accepted practices are needing justification or reconfiguring. New ideas and techniques have presented new ways of making and considering the book. This year the SCU Acquisitive Artists Book Award enters a new era brought about by an international observer parachuting in, and through their scrutiny and commentary they have created a new chapter for this award.

Doug Spowart is a photographer, lecturer and artists' bookmaker. For fifteen years he was director of Imagery Gallery in Brisbane before taking up a full-time TAFE teaching position in photoimaging. He is currently a PhD candidate at James Cook University where his research question deals with the emergence of the photobook in contemporary self-publishing. Doug Spowart can be reached at <Greatdivide@a1.com.au>.

Book Reviews

Jen Lindsay. *Fine Bookbinding: A Technical Guide*. New Castle, Delaware, and London: Oak Knoll Press and The British Library, 2009. 9 x 9.75 inches, 216 pages, \$59.95 (paperback).

A review by Karen Hanmer

First, a cut to the chase: if you are interested in the process of creating a full leather binding, no matter your level of skill or experience, buy this book.

Jen Lindsay's *Fine Bookbinding: A Technical Guide* is not only another reference book to be shelved, it is a highly detailed manual designed to be left open on the bench to guide the binder step by step through the process of crafting a full leather binding in the English tradition. Lindsay is a UK trained bookbinder with extensive experience in teaching, lecturing, and writing on bookbinding and the history of the book. You may already be familiar with her work in *The New Bookbinder*, where she served first as joint editor, then editor from 1993-2000.

The book has three main components. It begins with a sixty-five step numbered sequence of binding operations, beginning with opening a day book for the job and measuring the text block, all they way through to placement of the leather doublures. Sixteen subsequent chapters elaborate on these steps, first with a thorough narrative "rationale" of what is to be done and why, followed by highly detailed instructions, which are broken down into numerous steps. The sequence of operations, rationale, and instructions share the same numbering system and topic headings, so it is easy to refer back and forth between these components.

The manual is heavily illustrated, with almost 300 photographs and diagrams including detailed sequences on such steps as guarding the signatures of a disbound book, rounding and backing, lacing in boards, sewing the endbands, forming the headcap, and the process of trimming out for the leather joint.

Fine Bookbinding: A Technical Guide guides the binder through the steps of making a binding that is at once both lavish and lean. Decorative techniques are not discussed, nor are contemporary binding structures or materials, nor is box making. Lindsay defines a "fine binding" as "a book fully covered in leather, with leather-jointed endpapers, gilt edges and leather doublures." These features along with multi colored headbands and all the less glamorous aspects of book construction first are introduced with a discussion of the universe of possibilities, then Lindsay selects one method for

detailed instruction. Resources for techniques not discussed can be found in the bibliographies, conveniently sorted first by author, then by subject.

A fine binding is not a beginner's structure. But in her introduction, Lindsay suggests to novices, "why wait?" that "making a fine binding is a good education in observation, attention to detail, and meticulous workmanship: all essential wherever you think your real interest lies – repair and conservation, edition binding, artists' books, jobbing binding, box-making or even fine binding... if you can make a fine binding, you will have learned much more than just that." The tone of her writing is very encouraging and reminiscent of Laura Young's *Bookbinding & Conservation by Hand*. Whether the next step is paring, edge gilding, or merely measuring the text block, Lindsay has every confidence that the binder is up to the task. No step in the process seems so intimidating or difficult that the reader should not just dive in or continue on.

Lindsay writes with a poetic matter-of-factness that makes the manual an engaging read:

"There is no rule about which way round you should cut the cover from the skin, i.e. horizontally, vertically or diagonally, but the position and orientation of the grain of the skin on the finished book should have the inevitability that springs from integrity and necessity, rather than the contrivance that comes from whimsy or false economy"

"Putting in the doublures is very often the last task on the book, but it is not just for that reason that it is one of the more enjoyable tasks in bookbinding, it is because they dignify the book"

The book ends with two pages on "How to apprise your work," a follow-up of the process taking a critical view of the finished binding. This detailed evaluation protocol alone is probably worth the price of the book, and for the most part would be applicable to a leather binding executed in any technique, whether the English, French, German, or a more production-oriented style.

One audience that will find *Fine Bookbinding: A Technical Guide* particularly valuable is those who have received their bookbinding education through brief workshops or an intensive or two, rather than through a sustained period of ongoing study. Often in these instances there is not adequate time to discuss or understand the engineering concepts behind the choices that one must make later when working outside the class on one's own, there is only time to do what one is told and immediately move on to the next step. This type of education may provide little guidance on how to determine number of sewing stations, depth and angle of the shoulder, thickness of sewing thread, material for and



number of spine linings, the purpose of the loose guard, which adhesive to use, how far from the board edge to lace in, how thin the leather should be pared to cover various areas of the book, how long to let the leather absorb paste before covering, and so on. Lindsay fully explains these mechanical aspects with clear, detailed writing, often providing historical context. She usually offers guidelines rather than setting rules, thus empowering (and requiring) the binder to make informed decisions. Lindsay also shares many tips on establishing consistent practices for efficient workflow, studio safety and ergonomics, and studio cleanliness. She anticipates common errors with suggestions such as making board squares and holes for lacing in smaller than the binder may think is necessary.

Lindsay encourages binders to be gentle with their books, and presents reasons to consider not resewing a previously bound book if the original sewing is sound, rounding with fingers only instead of the traditional hammer, perhaps rounding only and not backing the book, and questions the necessity of ever placing the book in a press throughout the entire process.

As an object, the manual is as elegant and functional as the fine binding it describes. The manual is almost square; the shape, hefty page count and sewn binding of this soft cover book give it enough leverage to remain open on the bench without weights. The heavy, off-white, uncoated paper is easy to read and feels nice in the hand. Text is placed in the outer column of each page, and the inner column reserves roughly one third of each page for illustrations to be placed adjacent to the appropriate text. Plenty of white space remains, leaving the pages clean and uncluttered, perhaps providing space for making personal notes – as this is intended to be a working manual.

I have very few reservations with this fine manual. The photographs are sometimes problematic. The black and white photos on uncoated paper occasionally do not provide enough contrast for the image to “read” easily. Also, I might include a section on knife sharpening, since this is so crucial to level of difficulty and ultimate success of working with leather.

To reiterate, if you are interested in the process of creating a full leather binding, no matter your level of skill or experience, you will want Jen Lindsay’s *Fine Bookbinding: A Technical Guide*.

Karen Hanmer’s intimate, playful works fragment and layer text and image to intertwine memory, cultural history, and the history of science. She exhibits widely, and her work is included in numerous collections. Hanmer holds a degree in Economics from Northwestern

University and has studied with many notable binders. She is winner of the 2009 Helen Warren DeGolyer Jury Prize for Binding. She is Exhibitions Chair for the Guild of Book Workers, and serves on the editorial board of The Bonefolder. A complete catalog of her work is available online at <<http://www.karenhanmer.com>>.

Pamela Train Leutz. *The Thread that Binds: Interviews with Private Practice Bookbinders*. New Castle, Delaware: Oak Knoll Press, 2010. 6 x 9 inches, 352 pages, \$34.95 (paperback).

A review by Jeffrey S. Peachey

In a field as small as bookbinding, a book reviewer occupies a precarious position, since they often have personal knowledge of, if not direct relations with, the author. At the very least, the reviewer and author are usually connected by a friend, or friend of a friend. So reviewing a book that includes interviews with 21 leading bookbinders currently working in the field places this author in a position beyond precarious – an ideal chance to anger friends, alienate acquaintances and antagonize colleagues. The book even featured a long, highly complementary blurb from the publisher of this journal, Peter Verheyen on the back cover.

Foregrounded by these preoccupations, my hands trembled as I unwrapped my review copy, a bead of sweat fell with a thud on the corrugated shipping box and a slight heart palpitation became a “petite-mal” in my hyperactive imagination. I attempted to locate my phone, in case a preemptive 911 call was in order. But as I started to read, Pamela Leutz’s clearly defined dual objectives-- simultaneously a personal exploration to see if she could “make-it” in private practice, and recording the often hidden world of those who work and survive outside of institutional jobs – made sense and seemed to avoid personality issues. I sat up a straighter, put down my cell phone (already on speed dial) and started to feel slightly confident in the possibilities of writing a nonpartisan review.

Her book is an oral history of preeminent bookbinders in private practice, and centers around how they got their training and what kind of work they enjoy doing. Most of the interviewees also offer advice for aspiring bookbinders, although Tim Ely’s is perhaps the most pragmatically philosophic: “I almost hate to say anything because no one listens anyway, which is the one piece of advice I have: don’t listen to anybody”. All interviews offer good advice, some even daring to mention the almost taboo subject, at least among bookbinders, of how to price work. This aspect needs much more open discussion if hand bookbinding is to survive, let alone thrive.

One of the most common, if not the most common dream of many entrenched in the spirit sapping drudgery of institutional life is how to be your own boss. After a brief idealization of the freedoms, many pragmatic questions arise. What is life really like on the other side? Can I make enough

money to support myself, and possibly a family? Do I have the personality or ability to survive and possibly flourish in private practice? How did others get to the position they are in? What does it take – in terms of training, sacrifice and dedication? And ultimately, am I good enough, or lucky enough, or ruthless enough in business practices to succeed in private practice? This book, through the multiplicity of voices, offers successful examples of a number of different approaches.

Most of the binders interviewed tend to answer the questions in a straightforward and balanced manner, avoiding tedious self-aggrandizement. Each of the interviewees had discovered or created a specialized aspect of bookbinding to explore their interests and abilities, ranging from edition binding to artist books, design binding, restoration, book repair, teaching and conservation. Many of the rewards and the challenges of life in private practice are recounted. It is easy to solely emphasize the freedom of not having a job, or fall into the trap of bemoaning the difficulties of not having one, yet this book tends to steer clear of both extremes, and along with a laudable honesty on the part of the interviewees, giving a fairly comprehensive snapshot of what life in private practice is currently like. Thankfully, this book avoids most of the clichés and dead ends that abound in books interviewing craft workers: there are no extended meditations about ‘being-in-the-moment’ when working, for example.

I suppose, in keeping with the tradition of bookbinders reviewing books, I should bemoan the incomplete adhesion, at least on my paperback copy, of the signatures and spine, as well as the extraordinarily small margins, which might preclude trimming after resewing for those wishing to rebind this book. But for this relatively modest price, just having acid-free paper and sewn signatures make it a good deal. The most disappointing aspect of the book, however, was the structure of the interviews themselves. Although they were typographically presented as a kind of question and answer, there was no indication the answers were quotes, so I was left wondering if they were actual transcriptions, or edited by the interviewees, or perhaps just cleaned up by an editor. A defect like this limits the usefulness of this book for future historians, since it raises questions about whose voice is being recorded.

But the book is perfect for those considering entering the bookbinding field, generally, and into private practice, specifically. Perhaps, fittingly, the most often repeated ‘thread’ in this book is the importance of repetition and practice, no matter what training path the binder followed. Almost all common routes are represented; self taught, informal apprenticeship, formal apprenticeship, overseas training, workshops, MA level education and most commonly a mishmash of all of these. But for all of the diverse



backgrounds, what is more striking are the similar attributes these binders ended up with – an interest in lifelong learning, a patience for repetition, and a passion for working to the highest standards as possible. None interviewed expressed any regrets entering into private practice, and it seems all would do it over, if given the chance. At the same time, most cautioned the would be binder to carefully analyze their personal strengths and weaknesses, before giving up a day job and hanging up a shingle.

Perhaps the most shocking moment in the book occurs during an interview with Jim Croft. He recounts charging a client \$3.00 for a “full-leather, totally guarded, double cords, packed sewing, wooden cover paperback.” He mentions it may be an all-time low, and he may well be correct, at least during the past 12 centuries. Many other interviewees also mention how easy it is to undervalue their time and expertise, which is an omnipresent, pervasive, and seemingly intractable problem.

There is a behind-the-scenes aspect to this book that propels the essentially disparate interviews into a compelling whole. We, and I suspect Pamela Leutz as well, want to probe the minds of these leaders in the field to discern some secret, some pattern that will allow us to become as successful as they are, or at least replicate, in a more modest manor, some of their accomplishments. And I am not referring strictly to pecuniary matters – most, if not all, of the interviewees emphasized the satisfaction they felt in working on their own as one of the primary rewards for their efforts. I sincerely hope job satisfaction and monetary compensation are not mutually exclusive.

Like any provocative writing, I was left a bit hungry for more information and wanted to ask these binders some questions of my own after finishing the book. Does it get easier the longer you are in private practice? What was the biggest mistake you made in setting up your bindery? What was the smartest thing you did when setting up your practice? Do you have a wife/husband/partner with a real job? How do you afford health insurance? Is there really more freedom in private practice? What is your biggest worry about your future, and the future of books in particular? I suppose I will have to wait for ‘the thread that rebinds’ for answers to these questions.

This is an inspiring book. It elevates the status of all in private practice by documenting the drawbacks and joys, not raising false hopes of massive financial gains, yet not dismissing the attractions of freedom and other non-monetary aspects. All of the interviewees emphasized that with dedication; perhaps a bit of sacrifice and some good luck, it is possible to make a living in often uncertain world of private

practice. After all, as many seemed to intimate, what is the purpose of living, if not to pursue your passions, follow your interests, and share this with others? And what is a better vehicle to accomplish these goals, other than working in private practice as a bookbinder?

Jeffrey S. Peachey owns a New York City-based studio for the conservation of books and also makes conservation tools and machines. He is a Professional Associate in the American Institute for Conservation and a previous Chair of the Conservators in Private Practice (2007-08). For more than 20 years he has specialized in the conservation of books and paper artifacts for institutions and individuals. A consultant to major libraries and university collections in the New York City region and nationwide, he has received numerous grants to support his work. Peachey, a well known teacher, also provides conservation-focused guidance to students in art, archives and bookbinding programs. He can be reached at <<http://jeffpeachey.wordpress.com/>>.



Elaine Koretsky. *Killing Green, An Account of Hand Papermaking in China*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: The Legacy Press, 2009. 6 x 9 inches, 246 pages, \$35.00 (hard cover).

A book review by Jana Pullman

Starting in 1982, when China began to open its doors to foreign travelers, Elaine Koretsky began a series of trips that would span over a quarter of century. This book describes her personal investigations into the tradition of hand papermaking in China.

Much has been written on papermaking in China but this book gives a unique perspective on the craft and the people, representing an unbroken tradition of papermaking by hand. As she traveled across the country accompanied by her husband Sidney and various guides, the author interviewed papermakers and recorded their histories and processes. She also describes the trips, giving us insight into the difficulties and rewards of her travels including tales of being arrested for visiting a papermaking site without the proper permission and of being smuggled across the Chinese border into Burma.

The book includes color and black and white photographs of the papermakers and their surroundings, and documents the processes and fibers used. One can easily believe much has changed in the last few years in many of the villages described in this book. In fact, this book may provide some of the only Western records of these villages and methods of creating handmade paper.

I enjoyed reading about the various trips but the one thing missing for me from the descriptions was the trip preparation done beforehand. How does one research and prepare to visit areas where foreign travel is uncommon or nonexistent? The book does show the determination and unquenchable interest the author has with papermaking and its traditions. As such, it is an important addition to any hand papermaking library.

Jana Pullman is the owner of Western Slope Bindery specializing in custom binding and repair of books in Minneapolis. She earned her MFA from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and in 25 years of book arts experience, she has worked as a printer, papermaker, bookbinder, illustrator, conservator and book artist. She can be reached <wsbindery@yahoo.com> or on the web at <<http://www.westernslopebindery.com>>.



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The *Bonefolder* welcomes submissions of articles for publication. Articles should relate to the fields of bookbinding, book arts, decorative techniques, education, exhibition reviews, tips & tricks, or book reviews. Articles that have not been published elsewhere will be given first consideration.

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