

VOLUME 2

# THE CODEX PAPERS

THE BOOK AS A WORK OF ART  
AN INTERNATIONAL REVIEW

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

Issue number two kicks off with an address from our publisher, Peter Rutledge Koch, which was delivered in a slightly more extemporaneous version at *The CODEX Effect* symposium in New York City, October 18, 2019. Hosted by the Grolier Club, the symposium featured a series of talks by a stellar slate of speakers addressing, among other topics, the “third stream book,” collecting artists’ books, critical reception of artists’ books, and fittingly, Peter Koch, Printer. Surrounded by a retrospective exhibition of his work in the Grolier Club’s main gallery, Peter shared the biographical facts that led to his bibliophilic destiny. The talk may be read in a number of ways, but your editor would encourage you to think of it as a philosophy of the book, one that exemplifies a lifelong dedication to the study, production, and dissemination of the book, and, perhaps most significantly, a dedication to bringing fellow travelers together in events such as this most recent symposium—values that this journal reflects and promotes.

This issue features an internationally diverse group of contributors and topics, offering reviews and articles that are a direct product of *The CODEX Effect*. Bringing together artists, poets, writers, printers, and binders has been a hallmark of The CODEX Foundation since its inception in 2005. The last fifteen years have seen progressive growth in the book arts community and collaboration among artists, an expanding marketplace for the sale of artists’ books, and a new outlet for the discussion and interpretation of the book arts where curators and collectors have direct access to the creators of the objects they acquire for their libraries.

Aiming to maintain its investment in the book arts, the present number of *The CODEX Papers* includes: reviews of artists’ books written by artists and scholars; a curator’s guide to interpreting artists’ books for graphic artists and students; a European bookseller’s perspective on institutional collecting; an artist’s insights on her inspirations and process; a profile on the French bookbinder Louise Bescond, whose work is at the forefront of contemporary custom binding; global reports of book arts activity from the Nordic countries and Australia; and a guide to locating artists’ books in Paris.

While the journal maintains its commitment to documenting contemporary activity in the book arts as practiced by scholars, artists, curators, collectors, and booksellers, our job is not done. For the success of this journal and the prolonged health of the book arts, our community requires greater interpretative expression from its primary participants—articles from curators and collectors discussing their methodology and criteria for making acquisitions; articles and reviews from the makers of artists’ books expressing their understanding of craft, the history of the book and its influence on their work; and articles from any member of the CODEX community who has articulate insights on this growing nexus. We look forward to submissions of articles, reviews, field reports, and scholarship from all of these perspectives. And more.

—Gerald W. Cloud, Editor



## NAVIGATING THE THIRD STREAM

The following address was made by Peter R. Koch at the Grolier Club in New York City, October 18, 2019, as the keynote for the CODEX Effect Symposium.

According to William Morris, the aim of art is “to make work happy and rest fruitful.” This formula, so simply stated, demands to be contrasted with Franz Kafka’s dark remarks: “I think we ought to read only the kind of books that wound and stab us. If the book we’re reading doesn’t wake us up with a blow on the head, what are we reading it for? .... A book must be the axe for the frozen sea inside us.”

After forty-five years of printing books and roughly seventy years of reading and collecting I have come to accept the rhythms that rule my life. During most working hours I seek to create order out of chaos, while during hours of leisure I prefer the pleasant drifting of a bibliophile *flâneur*—perusing bookseller’s catalogues and adding to my library. There are hours, however, when I find myself dwelling on the tragic and destructive acts of my fellow man. The darker reveries have resulted in some of my most challenging work—*Liber Ignis*, *The Lost Journals of Sacajewea*, and *Nature Morte*. Each of these books, which are displayed all around you in this most beautiful of rooms [the Public Exhibition Hall at the Grolier Club] explore, in book form, the horror and the tragedy of the human condition.

### EARLY INFLUENCES:

One of the first things you will learn, should we share a bit of time together is that I am from Montana. Montana means a lot more to me than a geographic point of origin—I spent thirty-five years exploring the forests and streams of that distant and isolated valley—a valley perhaps not far different from the fictional utopian community, Shangri-La. I fished icy waters in the summer, and skied all over the snow-capped peaks in the winter. Until I was eight years old, the limit of the world was the ring of mountains that formed the horizon. And it was there that I first witnessed the destruction of the wild on an industrial scale. Open-pit copper mining, strip mining coal, roading the wilderness, clear-cut logging, dam building, dryland agribusiness, to name a few instances.

I come from a family of bibliophiles. On my father’s side there were bishops, scientists, diplomats, and authors as well as adventurers, ship captains, foresters, a banker, and a long line of vicars from Horbelev on the island of Falster just south of Copenhagen. As far as bibliophilia is concerned, I was privileged far beyond most of our neighbors. Great-grandfather Peter was a well-educated Dane and early Montana pioneer. Peter collected and carefully studied the geological and botanical manuals of the day, the zoological records and the journals of the explorers and artists who depicted the country and its inhabitants. He bequeathed to his son Elers a superb collection of eighteenth and nineteenth century Western Americana, focusing primarily on the scientific exploration of the upper-Missouri River. I grew up in that library.

Grandfather Elers, a founding American forester, spent the majority of his life on horseback in the Northern Rocky Mountains. His novel, *The High Trail* (1953) and his memoir, *Forty Years A Forester* (1998), are currently enjoying a revival in the wake of the climate crisis and our present political climate. My father Stanley, Elers' eldest son, was a photojournalist working on his first novel when World War Two broke out and he joined the Navy. He did not survive the war—his ship sank off the beaches of Normandy in 1944 taking with it most of his life's work. I was raised by my widow'd mother and grandfather Elers in a house full of books and memories.

In addition to growing up with a private library at home, I was fortunate to live just a few blocks from the University of Montana where I spent as many hours prowling the library's open stacks as I did fishing for native cutthroat trout in Rattlesnake Creek and the Big Blackfoot River.

My more unorthodox literary tastes were formed during my early teens when I was living much of the time in our neighbor's house, where a cacophony of children and books dominated the lives of some of the most eccentric and brilliant companions I could ever hope for. The paterfamilias, Leslie Fiedler, America's most famous literary critic of the day, was a goateed specter of sheer brilliance. It was in the Fiedler home that I acquired a taste for Henry Miller and was exposed to the familiar green Olympia Press editions of the Marquis de Sade. Leslie was an inveterate book smuggler and if a literary text was banned in the United States, he would have a copy lying conspicuously on the coffee table.

As a young man I traveled as often as I could. There were exploratory journeys to Aspen, New York, Tangier, and the Pacific Coast where I developed a taste for the exotic and seductive clamor of densely-populated cities—their bookstores and their cafés. While travelling, I occasionally worked in literary and antiquarian bookstores including the bohemian Eighth Street Bookshop in downtown Manhattan.

In April 1971, I dropped out of graduate studies and ran off to Paris. I lived for a while with the Fiedler family, writing poetry and just hanging out in art galleries and literary salons. I returned to Montana, simmering with nascent ideas of Cowboy Surrealism and an ambition to start a maverick literary journal. Needing capital, I moved to San Francisco to seek my fortune. No bookstore jobs were forthcoming, but through a mathematician friend, I landed a job in particle physics at the legendary Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory. My job, described as a data-analyst on an experiment to map the topology of the hydrogen nucleus, was my first real attempt to develop a career.

As intellectually challenging as that was, by 1974 I was convinced that I could wait no longer to start a literary career. I returned to Missoula with a few dollars in my pocket and began work on the first issue of *MONTANA GOTHIC*. I was determined to publish an experimental journal dedicated to uncovering and documenting the marvelous and subversive elements that lay buried beneath the surface myths of our violent and self-righteous Western frontier culture.

In addition to intellectual needs, like most humans with two free hands, I craved a creative and challenging physical craft to practice and soon purchased my first printing press, a late nineteenth-century treadle-operated jobbing press just large enough to print post cards or a very small chapbook. To my surprise and delight the press was an immediate commercial success among my many childhood and university friends. I was immediately able to quit my job at the local literary [and hard-core pornography] bookstore to design and print cards and commercial materials for my friends, while studying typographic design and printing history at night and on weekends. Most of my clients were the artists, professors, entrepreneurs, and the occasional drug-dealer that clustered about the University back then—all seeking a safe haven from the bleak social life of dead and dying small-town and rural America.

I partnered with my first wife, Shelley Hoyt, and over the next nine years we operated a small commercial letterpress design and printing business and when not employed by clients, we printed and published a dozen poetry chapbooks and six issues of *Montana Gothic* under the imprint of Black Stone Press. I named the press after a symbol for the un-formed or ur-matter that, through the mastery of the alchemist's craft, could be transformed from real lead into metaphysical gold—thereby turning a little money into even less money—a process that fairly well reflects my financial aptitude.

After thirty years of formal education and five years of self-directed studies in Missoula, my bibliophilia was turning into a severe case of bibliomania and I lit out once and for all to California to dig myself as deep as possible into the magnificent rare book collections that abound in the San Francisco Bay Area.

#### SAN FRANCISCO AND EARNING A LIVING

Soon after I arrived in San Francisco, the MacArthur Prize-winning scholar/printer and book designer, Adrian Wilson, took me into his studio as an apprentice. Working at the legendary Press in Tuscany Alley on San Francisco's Telegraph Hill was not an unpleasant duty. Adrian not only introduced me to everyone in the local bibliosphere, he taught me how to enjoy life in the city.

By choosing one of the most expensive cities in the world in which to settle, I discovered that I had few alternatives but to print for the well-established bibliophile community. My cowboy-surrealist, avant-garde, and situationist credentials were of little help when it came to paying the rent and the medical bills for a small family. On the other hand, the Rare Books and Special Collections curators, private bibliophiles and their social clubs welcomed me with frequent commissions and all the ephemeral printing I could manage in our small shop. From 1979 onwards I pursued a livelihood by printing for the Grabhorn Collection at the San Francisco Public Library, the University of San Francisco's Countess Donohue Rare Book Room at the Gleeson Library, The Bancroft Library at University of California Berkeley, Special Collections at Stanford University Library, The Book Club of California, and The Roxburghe Club of San Francisco.

I was endlessly fascinated by the challenges presented by the design of literary, artistic, and bibliophilic materials. With each new commission I attempted a fresh typographic design that would reflect the subject matter of the book, exhibition, or program that was being announced. *Against Design* (2017), the third volume of my *catalogue raisonné* treats with this subject at length.

#### TYPOGRAPHY AND CRAFT

In the nineteen seventies and eighties, printing, practiced as an art form under the sign of high-craft, was a dying religion with no church. During those years, craft in the service of radical and utopian ideas went entirely against the grain. Art schools were busily encouraging students to de-materialize their ideas while technically-gifted artists hid their craft beneath masks of irony and cynicism. Useful objects were not considered art. Useless objects and performative gestures were.

Running against the grain was just my cup of tea, and up until the mid-nineteen-nineties, I printed exclusively from lead type. Practicing this eccentric and super-annuated craft to make books and prints, including the profession of selling them, was my statement, my art form, while printing for clients allowed me the luxury of a practice from which I could derive a modest living. In any case, during my thirties and through my fifties I was primarily a designer/printer for hire and my art practice survived in the margins.

Eventually, all that changed, and my art practice came to dominate while the design and printing business had to fit into the hours when I was not making my own books. Over the last twenty years a considerable amount of free time was opened up for me by our exceptionally talented apprentices and associates, Richard Seibert, Jonathan Gerken, Dina Pollack, and Sam Pelts—to name the most helpful among them.

#### THOUGHTS ON FORM

Each book that I conceive and produce under my imprint is an expression of an idea about form. I would like to quote from an article by one of my favorite colleagues, Carolee Campbell, on my *Herakleitos* and *Diogenes* projects:

An example of Peter Koch's approach to bookmaking ... lies in a statement he made some years ago in an essay on typography which appeared in the literary quarterly *Zyzzyyva* : "Long ago I had a dream in which I was reading a book. It was the mirror of my innermost self, all that I had ever wished for in a book. The event was so disturbing that I awoke before I had finished reading the first page. I could only remember the form and not the content. Now, whenever I design a book, I am always designing that book and it is always the same book, the original book."

*The Book Club of California Quarterly News-Letter*, vol. LX.I, 1994

From the time that I was a young printer, I was guided by aesthetic principles aligned with the neo-medievalism of John Ruskin and William Morris, and supplemented by my continually-evolving studies in the history of ideas and the history of the book.

From a printer's perspective, the history of the book is a division of art history—similar to that of architecture or painting. Printing history as it is commonly written is primarily about the evolution of typographic form and how technological advancement influenced the industry. My dual perspectives of practicing artist and printing-art historian were not entirely satisfied with the existing literature. I found the usual historical perspectives interesting enough, but I was also seeking the thread that tied beauty to the evolution of ideas—a sort of aesthetic [slash] intellectual history of the book. Subsequent investigations in the complex evolution of ideas in book form uncovered some very unique objects and collaborations that had not been sufficiently recognized or documented. The fruit of these and similar researches were later to become the foundation of the CODEX Foundation's publishing program.

I am going to insert here another autobiographical note intended to point out the source of some of my obsessions about form.

Growing up in the mountains, one sees, not only with the eyes but with the tactile senses as well. Synesthetic awareness and reasoning is a basic survival skill in the wild. In my case, I first trained my eye while alpine skiing, a somewhat dangerous form of winter entertainment, and fly-fishing for trout, up to my waist in the most beautiful rivers imaginable, during the summer months. Identifying form and tracking shape-changes over time are essential skills for the hunter. I was taught these ways of seeing by my best friend Billy Ward, a Flathead Indian whose large and extended family fished and hunted year-round for their table. Bill taught me the gaze of the hunter/marksman and it is, I would imagine, those and associated skills that enable me to succeed as a craftsman.

When I was not outdoors, I was studying. For nine years I attended lectures in most of the liberal arts and sciences with a concentration in the history of science and philosophy. As a war-orphan I received government support to attend college and I took full advantage of the program, which partially explains why it took me nine years to earn a baccalaureate degree. Why rush—I was paid enough to live while I was enrolled. So not only was I fortunate in my literary and outdoor mentors, I was financially supported to study. And I could travel whenever I was a few dollars ahead. In all I was living a young artist's dream life. I was free of most of the restraints of the Montana patriarchy and able to cultivate interests that led me towards the subjective and artistic side of life. Imagine my delight when I stumbled into a class (when I was just 19 years old) taught by Buckminster Fuller, John Cage, Merce Cunningham and the legendary San Francisco poet Kenneth Rexroth! I fairly gorged on a feast of creative genius.

#### THE THEME OF THE GREEKS

At the University of Montana in the late-sixties, I attended lectures delivered by Henry Bugbee, a philosopher who excelled at thinking on his feet. His lectures were a stream

of consciousness introducing us to the pre-Socratic philosophers treating them as if they were contemporary poets and shamans—definitely not the orthodox view at the time. Henry's lectures were peppered with cosmic theory interwoven with tales of medieval mystics, zen Buddhist teachings and contemporary thinkers like Martin Heidegger and the French existentialist, Gabriel Marcel. This was Montana on fire. The mind in the mountains.

Thirty years later, in Berkeley, I befriended Robert Bringhurst, a fellow traveler, at a celebratory printer's dinner at Chez Panisse, our neighborhood restaurant. He mentioned that he admired my *Herakleitos* (1990) translated by the American essayist, Guy Davenport, and we began talking about the fragments of Parmenides as a possible collaborative project. Soon after our meeting Robert favorably reviewed my *Point Lobos* (1987) portfolio of the late Robinson Jeffers' tragic, naturalistic, and philosophical poems accompanied by starkly beautiful photographs of Big Sur and Point Lobos by my friend Wolf von dem Bussche.

*Herakleitos* and *Point Lobos* were, each in their way, studies in the monumentality of the text and the form of the book. Working with the slim fragments of *Herakleitos*, and the extraordinarily-long lines of Jeffers' angry and prophetic Big Sur poems—I paid my respects to the philosophical roots of our contemporary American West and the radical nature of the thinking that underpinned my own convictions about environmental and cultural tragedy—elemental and destructive wind and fire. These two texts directly addressed tragedies that are growing ever more urgent each year.

As our collaboration evolved, Bringhurst's *Parmenides* translation became for me, the quintessential contemporary expression of what is essentially, the origin of dialectical thinking. The ancient fragments in his poetic voice reach forward to our own condition—a poetic and philosophical thinking that shakes our presumptions and breaks the ice with the hammer blows of a shaman poet & philosopher that Kafka would certainly admire.

I wanted to make a book that scholar/printers like Aldus Manutius and Jack Stauffacher would approve and consequently decided to produce an understated and typographically unique *livre d'artist*. I invited Richard Wagener, one of the most accomplished wood engravers of our time to illuminate the text. In line with my vision, the Greek deserved an original typographic treatment. A typeface would have to be invented to suit the text. Although I am no type designer, I could explain well enough what I wanted to my friend and calligrapher/stonecutter Christopher Stinehour who designed a digital archaic Greek typeface that Parmenides himself could have read. It was not long before I learned that Dan Carr was cutting punches and that I could commission a new foundry metal Greek text face for a few thousand dollars and we were off on a grand typographic adventure. The foundry type took more than five years to develop and was worth the wait. I imagined at the time that we were making history by reviving the grand old tradition of hand-carved punches but I soon discovered that those days were over. Typographic history was being made elsewhere and only the

rarest of connoisseurs could appreciate the work. Ultimately, the entire project was a lesson in humility. The difficulty of printing the engravings, the extreme high-craft carving of the punches, the problems encountered in the casting of the type, the writing of essays and subsequent publication of a book about the book, all required a superabundance of patience and attention to detail over a long period of time during which we all had to pursue other means to make a living.

The project that began in conversation at Chez Panisse in 1995 culminated in *The fragments of Parmenides* (2004) ten years later. Now, nearly twenty-five years since its inception, this work remains one of my favorite collaborations.

#### VERTICAL TYPOGRAPHY

In 2015, I published a selection of sonnets by Michelangelo Buonarroti Simoni disguised as an elaborate type specimen. I employed Frederic Warde's Arrighi and Vicentino type faces printed from rare hand-composed foundry types, mechanical Monotype composition from the superb Bixler Typefoundry, and the latest interpretation from the Monotype Corporation's digital re-incarnation. The motivating impulse for this work was the acquisition of the original experimental versions of Arrighi and Vicentino foundry types from the estate of my mentor, Adrian Wilson. The text, a suite of poems by Michelangelo, was suggested by Robert Bringhurst who provided the English translation and a masterfully written colophon that required a second volume. I mention this example to underline the versatility of all forms of typographic technology, and how they can be successfully employed in a single volume. My project was to work with a single letterform interpreted over a span of nearly 500 years of typographic history. I have come to call it "Vertical Typography," and like a vertical wine tasting, to be enjoyed slowly with a dozen beautiful poems for the accompanying meal.

#### THE WESTERN SUITE

With the completion of *The fragments of Parmenides*, the cowboy surrealist began to reappear in my work and at the turn of the millennium, I began experimenting with high-resolution scanning and digital manipulation of images. I was determined to produce a personal critique of the Western mythos that had, to my mind, been responsible for some of the worst environmental disasters that had ever been seen up to that time. The first project, *HARD WORDS* (2000) still resonates on the wall. Words, like swords, have edges that cut to the bone and images, when bonded to words, become manipulative tools in the hands of propagandists. I directed my experiment towards exploring the transgressive power of simple four-letter words like DEAD and HARD conjoined to newspaper portraits of unknown individuals. How much energy could be generated by these techniques? I was becoming a poet of billboard interventions, creating large-scale exhibition-sized prints that spoke of the transgressive power of the photographic image and a four-letter word.



My early experiments with *HARD WORDS* traveled to several western art museums and galleries and I was soon rewarded with a commission from the Holter Art Museum in Helena, Montana. The commission was to create a body of work that would fit in with the celebration of the bicentennial of the Lewis and Clark Expedition that was about to sweep the country. The result, *Nature Morte* (2005), was a response to the destructive aftermath of the expedition—the exploitation and extermination of both the natural resources and the native peoples.

With *Nature Morte*, I was following in the footsteps of my Grandfather Elers' groundbreaking and controversial essay "The Passing of the Lolo Trail" which was published in 1935. In that essay he regretted the national fire-fighting policies and the roading of the wilderness that he himself had been responsible for earlier in the century. His famous line "Is it possible that it was all a ghastly mistake, like plowing up the good buffalo grass sod of the dry prairies?" was ringing in my ears as I composed my two-syllable poems.

The exhibition, which first opened in 2004, was considered controversial and thought provoking, in other words, dangerous! My experiments were proved successful. The engagement of photographic evidence of extinction and disaster on the American frontier with transgressive word combinations like *DEADSTART* and *CROWBAIT* worked like magic—literally. Magic combinations were generated by the viewers who were vocal in their responses according to the museum curators and docents. These were for me encouraging words. Here was my first work that was driven solely by the theme of extraction and the inevitable destruction that followed upon the heedless and greedy march of industrial civilization into tribal lands and cultures.

By 2008, I was collaborating with the Bitterroot-Salish novelist Debra Magpie Earling on *The Lost Journals of Sacajewea* (2010), fictional texts in the form of dream journals and daily observations from the point of view of a young and pregnant Shoshone woman travelling with the army of exploration. My contribution being the book design and a series of photo interventions illustrating the disasters that Sacajewea was foretelling in her journals. The form of the book and its binding alludes to the elkskin covered field-journal that Captain William Clark carried with him on the expedition. Reading Debra's texts, one can readily imagine Sacajewea studying Captain Clark as he made entries in the journal and following suit in what Debra calls her "fractured prose."

*The Lost Journals* is an example of what I have come to call the 'third stream' book... a work that in every detail, from conception, materials, and manufacture to delivery into the hands of the reader embodies the idea and ideal of the book as a total work of art. (Here I use the word 'total' in the sense of *Gesamptkunstwerk* derived from the 19th century German aesthetic concept employed by Richard Wagner when describing his own work). Regarding the binding of *The Lost Journals* the beadwork and .38 caliber bullet casings in combination with a paper wrapper evoking smoked buffalo rawhide are direct material extensions of the text. So too are the semi-transparent double-sided images that illuminate Sacajewea's prophetic dreams. The methods of distribution of the book and the targeted audience are all equally part of the concept.

At the extreme end of the spectrum of materiality and meaning is my recent book, *Liber Ignis* (2015), a critique of mining and the environmental effects of extractive industrial practices. The book is illustrated with historical photographs of the mines and smelters of Butte, Montana, printed on sheets of lead, and bound together with copper wire and hand-woven nylon belting. The poems, by Adam Cornford, are printed in silver ink on interleaving pages of black industrial felt. The compositional materials in themselves are a silent poem of industrial extraction. An ode to the price of electricity.

#### THE BOOK AS METAPHOR

Before ending I would like to say a few words about the *Ur-Text* trilogy (1994–2021), my exploration in the form of an extended metaphor into the history and fate of the book. By tracing the book from its earliest origins as a sacred object to a futuristic profane artwork, I am outlining in briefest form what I consider to be the fate of books and reading and at the same time the fate of the studious sort of life that I so dearly enjoy. *Ur-Text* volume one, printed in gothic fraktur type and bound in velum was meant to symbolize the sacred book in traditional bibliographic terms, while *Ur-Text* volume three, printed in Remington Typewriter type and bound in acid etched zinc and copper covers represents the crowded and profane fate that we may all be facing if civilization continues to break down into warring ideologies and decidedly un-civil behavior.

Volume two of the trilogy, a work-in-progress and the final master-key to all my work, is the opus that I hope will tie my entire bibliographic adventure together into a single graphic and symbolic narrative—the *Ur-text*, the book I have always been making. The content of volume two is no longer the one-word concrete poem *WORDS* that I composed long ago as a gesture of frustration with the failure of language to express the depth of my contempt for the military-industrial complex (a text that, incidentally, caused my departure from the graduate program in philosophy at the University of Montana). *Ur-text* volume two is a ruthless appropriation of biblical-historical monuments to tell the tale of a not so very mythical apocalypse—a sort of dystopian history of the book as carrier of the burden of civilization. The texts range from the entire *Book of Genesis* in Latin to my own version of *Ecclesiastes*. The images compose a brief visual history of war and destruction from creation to the apocalypse, and are appropriated from every source imaginable from the *Nuremberg Chronicle* to nuclear weapons manuals.

What in the beginning I proposed to offer you were the fruits of a lifetime in the bibliosphere. Then, to end it all with an atrocity exhibition, seems a bit too noir-ish.

#### THE CODEX FOUNDATION

Let me add a little something about the more utopian side of my world—the *CODEX* Foundation, which, of course, you will hear more about as our symposium progresses.<sup>1</sup>

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1 Video recordings of *THE CODEX EFFECT* at The Grolier Club:  
Day 1: <https://youtu.be/TbaFSCfNd-k> Day 2: <https://youtu.be/tbvWRgp5g-4>

For all the disappointment in my fellow man (or is it only the politicians and their bosses) who so un-diplomatically fail to protect the earth and the less fortunate among us from deprivation and neglect—I have, as I said earlier, a utopian side as well. At the beginning of my printing adventures, I was modeling myself on a passage from one of T. H. White's Arthurian tales in which King Arthur, carrying a famous but dull sword, has to crawl on his hands and knees into the hovel of a legendary but grumpy old blacksmith to ask him to please sharpen it. The symbolism of the passage was immediately apparent to me and I wanted to be that man—the man whom even the King must approach politely (on bended knee) simply because he needed his most useful of skills. According to this metaphoric tale, craft is the great equalizer. Not born a King, I chose the way of craftsman. This path, in the sense of the WAY described in the ancient Chinese *Tao te Ching*, is a practical path based on controlling one's clumsier impulses and acquiring the wisdom that mastery confers.

Mastery is not achieved in isolation. The path to wisdom is long and difficult and we each need the guidance of others who have gone before us to achieve it. The CODEX Foundation, dedicated to the preservation and protection of our skills and livelihoods, has created the place and the space to meet and to trade in ideas and materials. Originally, inspiration came from the markets in Frankfurt, Tangier, Marrakesh and Istanbul. These grand markets are at the crossroads of many civilizations. San Francisco seemed the perfect place to create an international market for our bibliosphere. We have a world class antiquarian bookfair, City Lights Books and Moe's Books, great academic and private libraries, and a long tradition of being at the forefront of the printing arts and just about everything else that man can invent.

So we decided, I decided, to start an international bookfair and symposium to bring the world together in one place for a few days every two years. CODEX is a concept and an event that has proliferated beyond our early expectations. We have created symposia and exhibits in Berkeley, Palo Alto, Melbourne, Mexico City, Puebla, Washington DC, New York, and we are currently planning exhibitions at Stanford University, the Boston Athenaeum, and the Klingspor Museum in Offenbach. Millions of dollars have been spent at CODEX bookfairs, collections are developed, new friendships made, and countless collaborations, publications, and invitations have resulted. Who knows what the future will hold? But it is clear that artists are meeting collectors and business is good on the one hand, and on the other, we are communicating better and learning more about and from each other at every CODEX event. On the utopian side of things, we are building a bibliosphere, book by book.

**Peter Koch** is a printer who lives in Berkeley with his wife, the art conservator, Susan Filter.

## **BAREFOOT IN SNOW (BARFUSS IM SCHNEE, 2015) AN ARTIST'S BOOK PROJECT**

By Tatjana Bergelt

I would like to share with the reader the journey of an artist's book project that began in 2010, after a visit to Utsjoki, the most northern town in Finland. Utsjoki is the heart of Sápmi, the land where the Sámi live. The Sámi are among the few surviving indigenous people of Europe. They have had over twenty different languages of which they still speak ten, two being on the verge of extinction. They have lived in close contact with the land as hunters, fishermen and reindeer herders for many hundreds of years, yet the state treats them as a minority in the territories they inhabit. Mining, forestry, tourism and military interests continue to disrupt their cultural identity. And when it comes to decisions about their land rights and their power to decide their future, the Sámi remain politically underrepresented.

The beauty of Northern Finland's nothingness touched me—barely anything eye-catching there; no deep woods or much vegetation—it's too cold for much to grow; no mountains, waterfalls or seashore like in Norway, just bare tundra, stones, lakes formed at the time of the last ice age, and reindeer.

Regardless of the immensity of nature, invisibly and scarcely populated, it gave me the feeling of belonging. This feeling intrigued me and I could not let it go. I am a foreigner in Finland, being half-German, half-Russian; and I was a stranger in my own country, a country which ceased to exist after the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989. Finding a way to belong has been one of the driving forces in my life and work. I needed to find out what makes the Sámi happy to live up North, why they still have to fight for their rights and why we hear so little about them in Southern Finland or elsewhere.

The Sámi are the indigenous people of the far north region of Fennoscandia, which includes the northernmost regions of Norway, Sweden, Finland, and the Kola Peninsula of northwestern Russia. The estimated population ranges from between 70,000 to 100,000 depending on how certain individuals identify as Sámi, and how demographic figures are counted.

Hoping to understand more about their culture, my first thought was to look for literature by Sámi writers, so as to hear their voice. With a typical middle-class European up-bringing, and some ignorance, it did not cross my mind that the Sámi are not people of the book, and they did not have a written culture, unlike the centuries-long written record that exists for Jewish, Christian, and Muslim cultures. Sámi culture was nomadic. They have, like many indigenous people, used the spoken word or the art of singing for communication.

All I knew was that the Sámi people had been photographed, examined, measured, described and studied like a different species, and their surrounding neighbors had disrupted their culture. In the sixteenth century the Sámi felt the general expansion of



Nils Aslak Valkeapää on the left photo by P. Sammallahti

the Russian Orthodox church, which built chapels and sent out missionaries to the far North of the Kola Peninsula. In the seventeenth century, Swedish royal forces viewed Sámi shamanism, drumming, and sacrificial rituals as objectionable practices, which were eliminated during forced Christianization. In the early eighteenth century the Sámi experienced forced conversion to the Lutheran faith in Norwegian territories, which entailed in some cases the burning of shamanic drums.

Over time the Sámi were Christianized by the ruling majority, sent off to boarding schools, deprived of their languages and overrun by the majority culture. I certainly did not want my study of their customs to contribute to that corruption. Central to understanding their cultural diversity is not only knowledge of the relationship between the Sámi and their land, but also the basic question of respect, which presupposes and reinforces the sense of an ethical and moral conscience. Respecting somebody means first and foremost finding the means to understand him. Trying to understand the particularity of nomadic culture led me to study a variety of different modern publications written by and about the Sámi. Eventually, I stumbled onto a book with 565 poems composed by the Sámi artist, writer, and musician Nils Aslak Valkeapää (known as Áillohaš, or Ailu, in the Northern Sami language), *Beaivi, Áhcázan (The Sun, my Father)* Kautokeino: DAT, 1988.

The following passage is a transcription of Ailu's words recorded in a film directed by Lennart Mari, *The Winds of the Milky Way* (1977): "I am Ailu and I am Sami, different from the rest. We are a small people and our culture is different. Moving amongst a larger people I even have to use another name. But I'm still a Sami and I don't want our culture to be diluted by larger cultures. The world would be poorer if we had only one culture..."

Ailu's poems spoke to me. They had a very abstract circle of life narration, being existential in that way, without using the elements of European existentialism; that is, the poems are not talking about a problematic existence, with anguish, fear and despair, but rather include the individual into the circle of life represented by events in nature, like wind, "talking" stones, the passage of time. Life seems not to be affected by socio-political or cultural events but by animals, ancestors, and the conscience of transformation. Here, the individual is not singled out to reach the stage of authenticity or seen in a relationship of tension with the environment. In Ailu's work, the individual is not in focus, but rather aligned with the elements like land, stones, birds, wind and time. Little did I know that I stumbled over one of the most respected activists and fighters for Sámi rights. My naivety was a fortunate protection, since the significance of this established Sámi pioneer would have otherwise intimidated my rather free of pre-conceptions approach to his body of work. Inspired to respond to Nils Aslak Valkeapää's work, I requested permission to reproduce some of his poems from DAT Publishing, which holds the rights to his poetry, and fortunately I received it.

Unwilling to follow the footsteps of previous explorers or artists who came, saw, and conquered, I began my project by acquiring knowledge about the different Sámi tribes and their activities. I wanted to find out if their way of life differed from each other independent of their livelihood activities. The most common denominator between bear hunters, fishermen, reindeer herders or shamans was movement in relation to the seasonal changes in order to survive. The movements left an organic morphological pattern, nothing linear or square. Startled by this discovery, I wanted to mirror it in a visual form. The land surrounding the Sámi seems endless, the Kota, a conical shelter with an open fireplace in the middle, is round, the drum—the shaman's instrument—is oval.



Book I: as i was a child I dreamed to be like the birds...



A formal decision was made to stay true to the round, oval form, within the visual *mis en page* of the rectangular book. This is why when I conceptualized the relation between images and poems, form and content, the obliging form was a circle—the circle of life, the circle of movement, the circle of light. As a result the book reflects my respect and understanding for this different life-style, life understanding deriving from the historical and mythological position of Sámi within the land they live on.

The poems of *Beaivi, Áhcázan* (*The Sun, my Father*) are not titled but numbered, and although the author points out that “the poems can be read in isolation... [the book] is best understood when it is read as a continuity” (Valkeapää 2003). My narration was to respect the order and continuity of Ailu’s original sequence of poems. By the time I selected the poems, the need to present them in more than one language was evident. Northern Sámi, the original language, was translated into Finnish as well as into German—a strategy aimed at spreading the work to a wider public. Presenting my work regularly at the International Frankfurt Book Fair in Germany gave me another reason. Thus, blending 12 poems in three different languages with images, demanded creating two books instead of one to accommodate all the necessary elements. The simultaneous interplay of material, fragmentation, time, memory and text would have been too overwhelming if presented all at once to the reader.



Book I: (left) A Sami family in front of their kota, with map of Sami land territories beneath a map covering Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia; (right) Lichen on stone and a Sami family

The really difficult part lies in the translation from the Northern Sámi into German, since these languages are essentially structured very differently. Pekka Sammallahti, who translated the original into Finnish, lives in Utsjoki, is fluent in Northern Sámi and 6 other tongues, knew Ailu and has been teaching Sámi languages at the university of Oulu, Finland. In Finnish and Northern Sámi languages one makes often use of passive expressions, leaving the personal pronominal out. That gives a more objective and inclusive feeling of the act rather than being very explicit about who did what to whom,



such as it is in German. Furthermore there are words of natural phenomena, which do not exist elsewhere than in the Northern hemisphere above the Arctic Circle. They were very difficult to find an equivalent for. A stony hill in the Arctic tundra landscape with no vegetation other than lichen has one name in Northern Sámi and Finnish, in German or English it can be only described by a loanword, like *fjäll*, and thus incomprehensible for many readers. The resulting translation includes compromises based on agreements within the translator's community and Christine Schlosser, who created the German version; they did outstanding work.

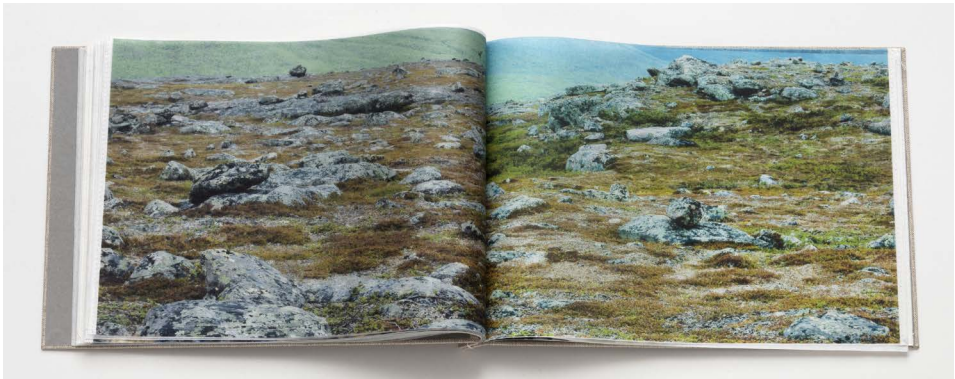
I chose to use fragile paper for the books, obliging the reader to turn the pages slowly and carefully. The rhythm of the appearing sequences allows time to pass by. My intention was to swirl the view into an unknown world and capture the reader's attention by revealing only gradually the visual and linguistic elements of the book. The transparency of the Japanese papers allows multiple dialogues to appear simultaneously through layered pages that can be seen before even turning the page. This effect includes the visibility of the different structures and it breaks the linearity of the reading process. The reader is enabled to re-organize continuously the overlapping images in accordance with a conscious feeling of time. It permits the illusion of movement and creates a multi-layered, complex narration.

Another obliging reason for "the two book decision" was that Ailu had a very particular graphical typography to his poems, which was to be respected. The lines of his poems reach into space, like birds flying through the sky, sometimes stair-like and thus requiring greater space on the page. I struggled how to arrange the given poems, but it rather inspired the search for new solutions. As a result I used two different approaches. For the first book I chose meta-level themes like time, wind, land and dream. The second book, suggests being inside the land and the poems speak about more concrete elements like stones, reindeer lichen, *fjälls* and water. This decision led to the use of a bigger variety of Japanese papers and graphic design arrangements.

The particularity of the different papers employed allowed me to use the back of a printed page—the ghost image—in relation to the next text page.

In the second book I decided for practical purpose, to strengthen the simple sheets by double folding the vertical edge and sewing it, allowing a visual white vertical line to unite the pages like the title *barefoot in snow* suggests. The sewing of those edges was an echo from the last page in the first book. Finally, at the back of the book, suspended between two transparent sheets, which were also sewn together, appeared a piece of lichen, a concrete symbol of the land Ailu was talking about.

With the choice of natural un-dyed linen over cardboard as the binding material for the book covers and light brown dyed linen for the slipcase, I intended to respond to Ailu's sensibilities and his focus on *Sápmi*, the land of the Sámi, the land he walked on:



Book II: photo collage of a fjäll, an important landmark for Sami people



Book II: Three poems



Book II: verso of the previous opening, with ghost image



Book I: (left) Collage with maps and a portrait of a Sami woman; (right) Lichen sample sewn between transparent sheets. photos by J.Tiainen

71. the land  
is different  
when you have lived there  
wandered

sweated  
frozen

seen the sun  
set rise  
disappear return

the land is different  
when you know  
here are  
roots ancestors

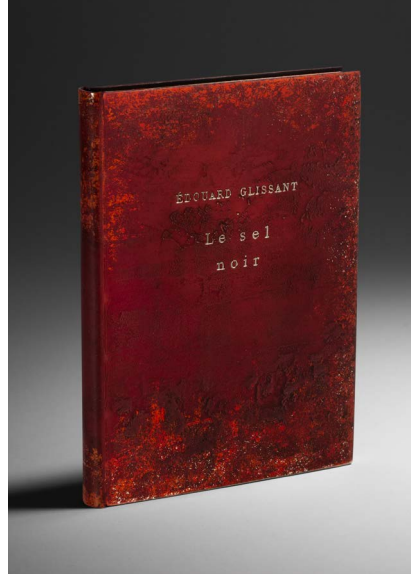
*Translated into English from the original Sami by Harald Gaski, Lars Nordström, and Ralph Salisbury.*

The title *barefoot in snow*, is a metaphor for being vulnerable on your ground, exposed and yet holding onto it with all the senses. My intention was to convert my deepest respect and humble gratitude of Sápmi having touched my life into a complex haptic and visual experience voiced by the rhythm of Nils Aslak Valkeapää's poems.

**Tatjana Bergelt** is a visual artist, born in East Berlin, educated in Germany and France, but now calls Finland her family home. Bergelt's work reflects her multinational and multilingual existence. Her rigorous training combined with extensive research of existential concerns, allows her to explore linguistic metaphors in relation to history in her collages and artists' books. She has also curated numerous artists' book exhibitions for Finnish artists within European countries.

## LOUISE BESCOND: A STAR IS BORN

By Pierre Walusinski



Portrait of Louise Bescond, photo by Ilan Weiss; *Le Sel noir*, Edouard Glissant & Roberto Matta, Seuil, 1960. (2018), photo by Hugo Julliot, copyright Hugo Julliot & Louise Bescond

Imaginez deux jeunes professionnels se rencontrent, sûrs de leurs qualités mais sachant qu'ils ont tout à prouver, et qui ont — disons-le — un peu d'ambition. L'une a le talent, l'énergie et la volonté, l'autre quelques idées pour les mettre en valeur. Ils commencent à travailler ensemble et rêvent aussi parfois au succès futur. L'objectif est un peu culotté, incertain, inatteignable semble-t-il, et ils rient de leur enthousiasme un peu naïf... sans se douter que leur bonne étoile les écoute, et va les exaucer au delà de leurs espérances.

### FLASHBACK 1: PREMIERE CONTACT (2007)

Cette rencontre a eu lieu en 2007, un peu avant l'été. Elle, Louise Bescond, est alors étudiante en reliure depuis 4 ans, et passe l'année suivante son diplôme à la fameuse école de La Cambre à Bruxelles. Lui, eh bien c'est moi, j'ai repris la librairie Nicaise à Paris depuis quelques mois. Cette librairie parisienne est spécialisée depuis plus de 70 ans dans les livres précieux du XXe siècle, la littérature et les livres d'artistes, et elle est assez célèbre chez les amateurs. J'ai 27 ans, elle 23.

## LOUISE BESCOND: A STAR IS BORN

By Pierre Walusinski Translated by Gerald W. Cloud



*Le Sanglot de la Terre*, Jules Laforgue, manuscrit, circa 1880. (2017); *Les Nègres*, Jean Genet, L'Arbalète, 1958. (2017). Photos by Hugo Julliot, copyright Hugo Julliot & Louise Bescond

Imagine two young professionals meeting for the first time, sure of their abilities but aware that they have much to prove, and who have, shall we say, a little ambition. One has the talent, the energy and the will, while the other has the insights to showcase them. They start working together and sometimes dream about future success. Their objective is romantically defiant, uncertain, seemingly unreachable, and they laugh a little at their naïve enthusiasm... all without suspecting that their lucky star is shining on them, and will grant them success beyond their expectations.

### FLASHBACK 1: THE INITIAL MEETING (2007)

We first met in 2007, just before the beginning of summer. She, Louise Bescond, has been a bookbinding student for four years, and will go on to graduate the following year from La Cambre, the famous school in Brussels. Him, well it's me, I have just taken over Librairie Nicaise in Paris a few months earlier. For more than 70 years Nicaise has specialized in the rare and precious books of the twentieth century, literature and artists' books, and is renowned among collectors and bibliophiles. I am 27 years old, she is 23.



Nous avons beaucoup parlé lors de notre première rencontre. Ce jour-là, elle venait se promener à la librairie, dire bonjour, regarder des livres—elle avait déjà rencontré mon assistant et pensait tomber sur lui. Il nous a présenté et nous nous sommes assis pour bavarder, de chaque côté de la grande table en chêne qui trône au milieu du rez-de-chaussée de la librairie. Tous les deux anciens élèves de l'école Estienne—mais de promotion et de spécialité différentes, nous avons ce point commun pour commencer à faire connaissance. Notre petit bavardage dura quatre heures.

Je ne sais plus très bien si je l'ai fait en conscience, mais j'ai vérifié incidemment son état d'esprit : quelle était sa détermination, pourquoi voulait-elle faire ce métier, que lisait-elle, que pensait-elle de la reliure aujourd'hui, où se voyait-elle dans 10 ans. Elle m'a rappelé récemment que j'avais été assez dur ce jour-là, provocateur même. J'avoue n'en avoir aucun souvenir. Sans doute ai-je voulu la brusquer pour mieux la jauger. Elle a eu la délicatesse de ne jamais m'en tenir rigueur.

Nous avons longuement partagé notre vision du livre, des arts du livre, le papier, la typographie; je lui confiais mon désamour latent de la reliure contemporaine, le plus souvent triste pastiche d'elle-même, redondante, ennuyeuse. Cela, ce n'était pas une provocation pour le coup, et ce qu'elle pourrait trouver à répondre m'intéressait. Elle se destinait à ce métier tout de même. Je fus positivement étonné que l'on partage le même regard sur cette question.

Je crois avoir osé quelques conseils sur la manière dont elle devait s'y prendre pour vivre de son travail. L'idée, le secret même, lui avais-je dit très vite, ce ne sont ni les livres, ni les clients, ce sont les libraires. Ils connaissent le goût des collectionneurs, ils les conseillent, voire les influencent, ils connaissent les livres, ceux qu'il faut éviter, ceux qu'il faut choisir: le libraire est le meilleur ami du relieur. Cela elle l'a compris très vite. De toute façon, Louise comprend très vite. Elle possède ce grand pouvoir de réception. Nous ne nous connaissons pas, et pourtant nous parlions la même langue passionnée. Je constatais aussi qu'elle avait ce mélange d'assurance et de réserve qui sied aux artistes. Je voyais qu'elle était attentive, avide d'apprendre. Plus surprenant encore, je sentais qu'elle me faisait confiance, spontanément. Je n'aurais sans doute pas su dire sur le moment combien cela me touchait.

Le comble de cette rencontre, quand j'y repense, c'est que je n'avais encore rien vu de son travail. Elle était venue en flâneuse, n'avait rien prévu de cette rencontre et encore moins de mon interrogatoire, et n'avait aucune reliure à me présenter. Sur la base de notre discussion—de cette véritable rencontre devrais-je écrire—je lui dis tout mon désir de travailler avec elle. Louise me promet de revenir me montrer quelques livres après les vacances d'été.

Elle a travaillé d'arrache pied durant 3 mois, négociant même l'ouverture des ateliers de La Cambre habituellement fermés pendant la coupure estivale, pour pouvoir me montrer en septembre quelques fraîches reliures qui ne me déçurent pas. Je me souviens avoir tout de suite été frappé par son approche esthétique, douce, élégante, discrète. Ses reliures étaient belles de simplicité, sans jamais être austères ni ennuyeuses.

We talked a lot during that first meeting. Louise had come in, politely said hello while browsing the bookshelves—she had already met my assistant and thought she might run into him there. He introduced us and we sat down to chat on either side of the large oak table that stood in the middle of the bookshop's ground floor. We both attended the École Estienne—but from a different graduating class and specialization—but our shared experience gave us an easy opening to get to know each other. Our little chat lasted four hours.

I am not completely certain if I did it consciously, but I decided on the spot to probe her state of mind: what were her goals, why did she want to pursue this *métier*, what did she read, what did she think of contemporary bookbinding, where did she see herself in 10 years? Recently, she reminded me that I had been pretty tough on her that day, to the point of provocation. I confess to having little memory of it. No doubt I wanted to cut to the chase so that I could better gauge her. She has had the delicacy to never reproach me for provoking her.

We shared at length our vision of the book, the book arts, paper, typography; I confided to her my latent disaffection for contemporary binding, most often a sad pastiche of itself, redundant, boring. My remarks were not intended to offend, but I was interested to hear how she would respond. I was pleasantly surprised that she shared the same view on the question of contemporary binding. I concluded that she is simply destined to be a bookbinder.

I believe I dared to give her some advice on how she should go about making her living. The idea, the real secret, I told her straight off, it is not the books, nor the customers, but rather the booksellers who have the key. They know the taste of collectors, often advising them, even influencing them, they know the books, the ones to avoid, the ones to pay attention to: the bookseller is the best friend of the bookbinder. This fact she grasped right away, which is characteristic of Louise: she understands very quickly and is powerfully perceptive. We did not know each other at all, yet we spoke the same passionate language. I also noticed that she had that mixture of self-assurance and reserve that befits artists. I saw that she was attentive, eager to learn. More surprising still, I felt that she trusted me, instantly. No doubt, I did not process at the time how much our mutual understanding touched me.

The remarkable part of this conversation, when I look back, is that I had not yet seen anything of her work. She had come in for a casual look around, had not anticipated such a meeting and even less so my interrogation, and had no bindings to show me. Nonetheless, on the basis of our initial discussion—which, I should emphasize, was the meeting of kindred souls—I told her of my express desire to work with her. Louise promised to come back and show me some books after the summer holidays.

She worked tirelessly for three months, even negotiating the opening of the La Cambre studios, usually closed during the summer break, to be able to show me some fresh bindings in September. They did not disappoint me in the least. I remember being immediately struck by her aesthetic approach, soft, elegant, discreet. Her bindings were beautiful in their simplicity, without ever being austere or boring.





*La Planète des singes*, Pierre Boulle, Julliard, 1963. (2018), photo by Hugo Julliot, copyright Hugo Julliot & Louise Bescond; *Lettres de Rodez*, Antonin Artaud, GLM, 1946. (2012), photo by Marie Leduc, copyright Marie Leduc & Librairie Nicaise

Je connaissais déjà assez bien le monde de la reliure contemporaine, qui s'essouffait à ne plus inventer grand chose depuis de nombreuses années. Or, j'avais en mains des premières reliures d'étudiante, trois ou quatre peut-être, et je voyais déjà une jolie cohérence d'expression et de retenue. Ce raffinement délicat était vraiment très rare; en réalité c'est la première fois que je voyais un travail si personnel et si nouveau à la fois. Je trouvais ses reliures belles bien sûr, mais aussi « inédites ». Et pour ne rien gâcher, la qualité d'exécution m'apparaissait déjà d'un très haut niveau. Là dessus, Louise—aussi humble qu'insatiable perfectionniste—pointait invariablement tous les petits détails à améliorer.

Cette jeune femme avait donc toutes les qualités pour réussir : la passion du livre, son langage propre et singulier, un talent évident pour la technique de son art, et une immense exigence vis-à-vis d'elle-même. Rien que cela, ça ne se voit pas tous les jours. Pourtant, les meilleures atouts ne suffisent pas toujours à faire le succès. Non, il faut autre chose.

De mon côté, depuis mes débuts, j'avais eu la chance de rencontrer des personnes influentes et généreuses qui m'ont fait confiance et m'ont beaucoup aidé. Or cette chance, cela faisait un moment que je voulais essayer de la redistribuer. Le travail de Louise Bescond était l'occasion de tenter quelque chose.

Lorsque qu'elle revint le mois suivant pour acheter des livres à relier pour son diplôme de fin d'année, il est vite apparu que ceux qu'elle choisissait convenaient plus à son budget qu'à son enthousiasme. Je le lui ai fait remarquer, et lui ai alors proposé que l'on inverse cette logique : plutôt qu'elle n'achète ces volumes, pourquoi ce ne serait pas l'occasion de lui passer sa première commande ? Nous choisirions des livres plus importants, plus ambitieux, plus dignes de recevoir le luxueux traitement de son art naissant, et je lui paierai son travail. Le prix serait bien sûr très avantageux pour moi par



*Des hirondelles et de quelques oiseaux connus, méconnus, ou inconnus décrits par le Comte de Buffon & Dado*, Fata Morgana, 1988. (2012), photo by Roland Dreyfus copyright Roland Dreyfus & Librairie Nicaise; *Invention de la pudeur*, Salah Stétié & Pierre Alechinsky, Fata Morgana, 2005. (2008), photo by Marie Leduc, copyright Marie Leduc & Librairie Nicaise

I was quite familiar with the world of contemporary binding, which for the last several years had been running out of steam for lack of innovation. But now, I had in my hands the first bindings of a student, three or four perhaps, and immediately saw a lovely coherence of expression and restraint. This delicate refinement was really very rare; in fact, it was the first time that I had seen binding work so personal and so new at the same time. I found her bindings beautiful of course, but also “*inédites*” in the sense of being entirely new, unique in nature, unseen. And to top it off, the quality of execution already appeared to me at a very high level. Regarding the latter, Louise—as humble as an insatiable perfectionist—pointed out every little detail on which she could improve.

This young woman has all the qualities to succeed: passion for the book, her own unique language, an obvious talent for the techniques of her art, and extremely high standards for herself. Nothing less. And this combination of talents in one person simply does not occur every day. However, these individual qualities are not always enough to make success. No, you need something else.

For my part, since I began my career, I had the good fortune to meet influential and generous people who trusted me and helped me a lot. And now this good fortune appeared before me as a kindness I could redistribute. Louise Bescond’s work provided the ideal occasion to try something daring.

When she returned to Paris the following month to buy books to bind for her final thesis project, it soon became apparent that the books she chose were more suited to her budget than to her enthusiasm. I pointed this out to her, and suggested we reverse this logic: rather than buying these common tomes to bind, why not seize the opportunity

rapport à ceux pratiqués par un relieur établi, mais lui permettrait de couvrir ses frais, de n'avoir aucun argent à avancer, et de pouvoir présenter à son jury des livres comme aucun autre élève n'en avait jamais présenté. D'aucuns y auraient vu une habile manœuvre de commerçant pour exploiter le travail d'une étudiante, mais Louise comprenait mon geste pour ce qu'il était: un encouragement et un petit pari. Elle emporta donc 5 livres, avec pour seule consigne de faire ce qu'elle voulait.

## FLASHBACK 2: NOTRE PARTENARIAT (2008–2012)

Enchanté par le résultat de cette première commande qu'elle me montra en juin ou juillet 2008, je renouvelais l'expérience. Louise me demanda aussi de revoir ses tarifs, et nous tombâmes vite d'accord sur un prix qui lui permette de commencer à gagner sa vie. Mais elle restait très consciente de mes investissements, et prenait soin de rester raisonnable. Le but, pour elle et pour moi, était de construire quelque chose, pas de faire un ou deux coups rentables et «au revoir». Cette prise en compte de mes propres intérêts, qu'il aurait été facile de méjuger—le libraire qui abuse de la candeur d'une jeune artiste—, était encore un signe de sa fine compréhension de notre relation, et c'est aussi cela qui m'encourageait à continuer.

Notre «association» consistait pour moi à lui donner du travail régulièrement (4 ou 5 livres par an, et jusqu'à 10 en 2012 !), pour montrer le résultat à la librairie à des amateurs, en espérant pouvoir lui obtenir des commandes. Je voulais simplement l'aider à prendre son envol. Pour cela, il fallait qu'elle donne à voir du concret, qu'elle se fasse connaître. Il fallait aussi qu'elle s'exerce et explore son répertoire sensible et plastique. Je ne me rappelle pas avoir vendu une seule reliure pendant cette période, mais je lui trouvais un ou deux clients. Louise ne gagnait pas grand chose, moi rien du tout, mais nous n'avons pas désespéré de notre partenariat.

Un jour, Louise me montra un portrait que son ami Ilan Weiss avait fait d'elle, cette photographie où Louise est assise en tailleur sous son immense presse en fonte. C'est une très belle image en noir et blanc : Louise a l'allure d'une figure de l'âge d'or du cinéma, elle regarde hors-champs vers la droite et la lumière—l'avenir—, la contre-plongée révèle l'imposant mécanisme de sa presse à percussion... Il y a de la statuaire dans ce portrait. Je trouvais immédiatement la photo formidable, très puissante, magnétique, et je lui disais de but en blanc que nous allions faire une exposition de ses reliures à la librairie, et que cette image serait la couverture du catalogue. L'idée—l'envie plutôt—de l'exposition m'est littéralement venue de cette photographie.

Nous continuions à parler beaucoup à chacune de ses visites. Je profitais de ses passages réguliers à la librairie pour lui montrer mes acquisitions de belles reliures du XXe siècle, telles celles de Henri Creuzevault, Paul Bonet, Pierre-Lucien Martin, Pierre Legrain, mais aussi des reliures de femmes—tellement moins nombreuses—, comme Germaine de Léotard, Rose Adler, Louise Denise Germain, Monique Mathieu... Nous discutons de ses décors, de ses essais de couleurs, de matières, je tentais de lui remonter le moral

to earn her first commission? We would select more important, more ambitious books, more worthy of receiving the luxurious treatment of her fledgling art, which I would finance. The fees would of course be very advantageous for me compared to those offered to an established bookbinder, but the arrangement would allow her to cover her expenses, eliminate up-front costs, and to be able to present to her academic jury books like no other pupil had ever presented. Some may have perceived a slick move by a crafty businessman exploiting the work of a student, but Louise understood my gesture for what it was: an encouragement and a small wager. She took five books, the only instructions being to do whatever she wanted.

## FLASHBACK 2: GETTING STARTED (2008–2012)

Delighted by the result of this first commission, which Louise presented to me in June or July 2008, I renewed the arrangement. Louise asked me to reconsider her fees, and we soon agreed on a price that would allow her to start making a living. But she remained very conscious of my investments, and took good care to keep costs reasonable. The goal, for her and for me, was to build something, not to make one or two profitable scores and then *au revoir*. The arrangement took into account my own interests, which might have been misjudged by a less intuitive mind—the bookseller who exploits the guileless young artist—and Louise’s subtle understanding of the value of our partnership also encouraged me to continue.

Our “association” meant that I would give her work regularly (four or five books a year, and up to ten in 2012!); as well as exhibit the results at the bookshop to collectors, hoping to generate commissions and sales for her. Ideally, I wanted to help her take flight. For that, she had to show collectors something concrete, to make herself known. She also had to explore and develop her sensitivities and her artistic repertoire. I do not remember selling a single binding during this period, but I found her one or two customers. Louise did not earn much, nor did I, financially, but we did not regret our collaboration.

One day, Louise showed me a portrait that her friend Ilan Weiss had made of her, a photograph in which Louise is sitting cross-legged under her huge cast iron paper press. The black and white composition is very beautiful: Louise resembles a star from the golden age of cinema, looking off in the distance to the right and the light—toward the future—the low angle perfectly framing her within the imposing mechanism of her press... There is something statuesque in this portrait. I immediately found the photo compelling, powerful, magnetic, and I told her in a nutshell that we were going to organize an exhibition of her bindings at Nicaise, and that this striking image would provide the cover for the catalog. The idea—the inspiration—for the exhibition was literally born from this photograph.

We continued to talk a lot during each of her visits. I took advantage of her regular stopovers at the bookshop to show her recent acquisitions of beautiful twentieth-century

quand elle était défaitiste, je lui passais les pages de magazines que j'avais sélectionnées pour elle dans mes lectures, je suggérais des lectures, offrais de recourir aux services des meilleurs artisans si elle voulait travailler la nacre, le métal, ou un autre matériau dont elle aurait eu besoin... Et surtout, je l'ai enfin convaincu de signer de son nom complet.

Il faut que vous sachiez, jusqu'en 2010, Louise signait ses reliures « Louise B. » au 3e plat de couverture. Elle avait fait graver spécialement un très beau fer à dorer, à partir de sa propre écriture. Elle trouvait les signatures traditionnellement en pied du second plat trop voyantes, trop ostentatoires. Et puis « Louise B. » sonnait plus artiste me disait-elle. Elle préférait la discrétion. Toujours ce grand désir de retenue. Mais je parvins à la convaincre qu'elle se cachait trop, et qu'il fallait qu'elle revendique plus haut et fort son travail. Enfin décidée mais sans un sous, je lui offris de prendre à ma charge le prix de ce nouveau fer à dorer. Finalement, il existe 12 reliures et une poignée de chemises signées de son fer première version. Je suis sûr qu'un jour ce détail aura son importance, pour les historiens comme pour les collectionneurs.

### FLASHBACK 3: L'EXPOSITION (2012)

Finalement, il a bien fallu se dire que l'on allait la faire cette exposition. Nous avons lancé une dernière salve de nouvelles reliures pour avoir une bonne vingtaine de pièces à exposer en tout — ce chiffre nous semblait adéquate —, et nous avons arrêté une date pour le printemps 2013. De mon côté, j'ai commencé à penser à ce fameux catalogue. L'importance de ce catalogue était phénoménale pour moi. Une fois l'exposition terminée, il ne resterait que lui pour montrer qu'elle avait bel et bien existé. Rappelons qu'à ce moment là, Louise avait très peu de clients, et son travail était extrêmement confidentiel, pour ne pas dire totalement inconnu. Et comme je peinais à imaginer qu'une simple exposition apporte à Louise, comme ça, immédiatement, les commandes dont elle avait besoin pour vivre, il fallait donc que ce catalogue puisse la légitimer à lui tout seul et qu'il ait une sacrée allure, car Louise devrait s'en servir de carte de visite pour la suite...

D'abord, les photos: pour montrer le merveilleux et poétique travail de Louise, si subtil dans ses couleurs, si riche dans ses matières, il fallait que les images soient à la hauteur. Par ailleurs, je voulais à tout prix éviter cette sinistre habitude communément répandue de photographier le volume frontalement grand ouvert. Ce besoin de présenter une reliure comme un tableau est vraiment la pire façon de mettre en valeur une reliure d'après moi. Pour mes catalogues traditionnels de la librairie, je cassais déjà les pieds à mon photographe habituel pour lui imposer des jeux d'ombres qui mettent en valeur le volume, ou la courbure des pages, etc., ceci pour redonner un peu d'âme et de personnalité aux prises de vues. Pour le catalogue de Louise, je voulais aller encore plus loin. J'ai rapidement pensé à la spécificité de la photographie culinaire, qui joue sans complexe avec la lumière pour magnifier les matières, et qui use — et aussi parfois abuse — des longues focales et des flous. Il y a des effets « esthétisants » parfois exagérés dans ce genre d'images, mais l'esprit me plaisait. Il s'agirait simplement d'être clair avec le photographe

bindings, such as those of Henri Creuzevault, Paul Bonet, Pierre-Lucien Martin, Pierre Legrain, but also bindings by women—less common—like Germaine de Léotard, Rose Adler, Louise Denise Germain, Monique Mathieu. And we discussed her designs, her experiments with color, and choice of materials. I would try to cheer her up when she was feeling discouraged; I also shared with her magazine articles that I drew from my own reading, and offered the services of the best craftsmen I knew if she wanted to work with mother-of-pearl, metal, or any another material that she might desire. And most importantly, I finally convinced her to sign her full name to each binding.

It must be known that, until 2010, Louise signed her bindings “Louise B.” on the inside back cover. She had a specially engraved tool designed based on her own signature. She had always found that binder’s signatures, traditionally found at the bottom of the inside front cover, too showy, too ostentatious. And then, “Louise B.” sounded more artist, she told me. She preferred discretion, always desiring restraint. But I managed to convince her that she was hiding too much, and that she had to raise her work up higher and higher. Finally, I decided, at no cost to her, to have a new gilding tool produced that would include her full signature. In the end, there were just 12 bindings and a handful of slipcases signed with the shortened first-version signature. I am sure that one day this little detail will have importance for binding historians and collectors alike.

### FLASHBACK 3: THE EXHIBITION (2012)

Finally, we had to tell ourselves: we are going to do this exhibition. We launched a final effort to produce new bindings, resulting in a good twenty pieces to exhibit in all—a quantity that seemed adequate to us—and we set a date for spring 2013. For my part, I started thinking about this now famous catalog. The catalog was of phenomenal importance for me. Once the exhibition was over, the catalog would be the only evidence that the event had indeed taken place. Remember that at this time, Louise had very few clients, and her work was well below the radar, not to say completely unknown. And as I was not convinced that a single exhibition would bring Louise, just like that, the orders she needed to make a living. The catalog would document and legitimize her work on its own, and provide an alluring business card that Louise could use in the future.

First, the photographs: to show Louise’s marvelous and poetic work, so subtle in its use of colors, so rich in its materials meant that the images for the catalog were of the greatest importance. Moreover, I wanted at all costs to avoid this disturbingly common habit of photographing bindings frontally, covers wide open. This impulse to present a binding as if it were a painting is, in my opinion, really the worst way to showcase it. For the traditional catalogs I issued at Nicaise, I had already given my usual photographer a great deal of trouble regarding unconventional use of shadows that highlight the three-dimensional volume of a book, or the curvature of pages, etc., intending to provide the final images with some substance and personality. For Louise’s catalog, I wanted to go even further. I immediately thought of culinary photography, which plays with light





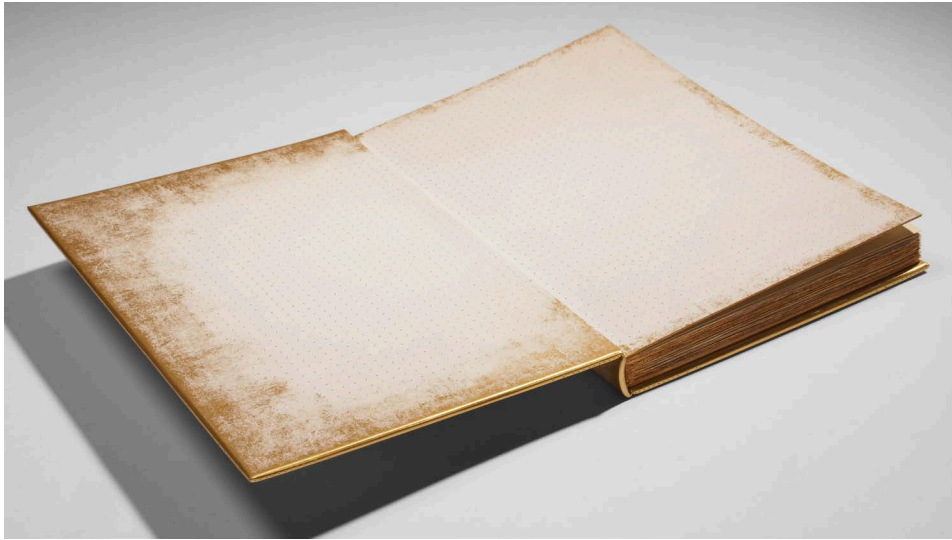
*Mincing words, a collection of duets, Nancy Gifford, Patricia Pistner & Tideline Press, 2017. (2018), photo by Hugo Julliot, copyright Hugo Julliot & Louise Bescond*

pour éviter ces écueils ampoulés. J'ai contacté Marie Leduc par email, d'après ce que j'avais pu voir sur son site. Ma demande l'a un peu décontenancé mais elle aime les défis, et a accepté de se prêter au jeu. Ce qu'elle a finalement réalisé correspondait exactement à ce que j'avais en tête.

Un bon catalogue d'exposition s'accompagne aussi de bons textes. J'espérais pouvoir me servir de cet élément pour enfoncer le clou et confirmer par une autorité reconnue l'intérêt du travail de Louise. Je connaissais Marie Minssieux-Chamonard, conservatrice à la réserve des livres rares de la Bibliothèque nationale de France, et l'ai invité à venir rencontrer Louise et voir ses merveilles à la librairie. Elle nous donna un très joli texte d'introduction, inspiré et enthousiaste. Zéno Bianu, poète et écrivain, que je connaissais par mes accointances avec le Prix Apollinaire, nous a offert quant à lui le second regard que je souhaitais—on dirait une appoggiature en musique—sur l'Œuvre en construction de Louise, plus lyrique, plus exalté. Ces deux textes placés au début et à la fin du catalogue fonctionnent comme des guillemets. Je ne manque jamais une occasion de les remercier pour les lignes qu'ils ont données, encore aujourd'hui.

Le design du catalogue, enfin. Cette partie n'était pas vraiment un souci. Depuis mes débuts à la librairie, c'est Jean-Baptiste Levée et sa société Production Type qui s'occupe de la création visuelle de Nicaise. C'est un ancien d'Estienne lui aussi, excellent dessinateur de caractère, travailleur acharné, nous nous entendons très bien. Ultra pointu dans son domaine, il ne donne pas dans le graphisme habituellement, mais notre relation amicale vaut cette exception. Je lui laisse carte blanche ou presque pour la mise en forme du catalogue : ma seule demande a dû être quelque chose comme : ça doit «déchirer».





*Le Siège de Jérusalem*, Max Jacob & Pablo Picasso, Kahnweiler, 1914. (2014), photo by Hugo Julliot, copyright Hugo Julliot & Louise Bescond

without shamelessly magnifying the material, and uses—and also sometimes abuses—long focal lengths and soft focus. There are aesthetic effects that are sometimes exaggerated in these kinds of images, but I liked the spirit of it. It would simply require being clear with the photographer to avoid these pitfalls. I contacted the photographer Marie Leduc by email, based on what I could see from her website. At first my parameters disconcerted her a little, but she enjoys a challenge, and agreed to give it a go. What she finally achieved was exactly what I had in mind.

A good exhibition catalog is also accompanied by good texts. I hoped to be able to combine text and image and confirm by way of a recognized expert the interest and value of Louise's work. I knew Marie Minssieux-Chamonard, the curator for modern rare books at the Bibliothèque Nationale, and invited her to come meet Louise and see her wonderful achievements at the bookshop. Madame Minssieux-Chamonard gave us a very nice introductory text, inspired, enthusiastic, and technically astute. Zeno Bianu, a poet and writer, and also a member of the jury for the Prix Apollinaire (sponsored by Librairie Nicaise), offered us the second perspective that I wanted—like an *appoggiatura* in music, Bianu's text addressed the construction of Louise's work, from a more lyrical, more exalted point of view. These two texts placed at the beginning and at the end of the catalog work like bookends. To this day, I never miss an opportunity to thank both of them for the lines they provided.

Finally, the design of the catalog. This part was not really a problem. Since my debut at the Librairie Nicaise, Jean-Baptiste Levée and his Production Type have provided the visual identity for the bookshop. He is an Estienne graduate as well, an excellent type

L'exposition s'est tenue du 4 avril au 18 mai 2013 au rez-de-chaussée de la librairie Nicaise. Le monde—la foule littéralement, pour notre petit lieu— lors du vernissage nous a énormément surpris: nous n'attendions pas une telle affluence. Les clients, les libraires, les bibliothécaires, ils s'étaient donné le mot, la librairie n'a pas désempli de toute la soirée. Et des compliments de toutes parts sur le travail de Louise. Quelle émotion! Quelle satisfaction après tous ces efforts! Et enfin, enfin, je vendais des reliures de Louise Bescond. Deux, trois, quatre, le bibliothécaire d'un important collectionneur a fait une razzia, plusieurs confrères ont pris leurs tickets pour de futurs commandes... Ce soir-là, il s'est passé quelque chose.

Un aparté ici, sur son répertoire plastique. Les mots pour décrire ses premières reliures ne sont pas très différents de ceux que j'emploierais pour évoquer son travail plus récent, et ce malgré toutes les évolutions qu'elle a opérées depuis qu'elle a débuté. Cette constance de ton dans un processus créatif en perpétuel mouvement, c'est la marque des œuvres véritables. Oui, ses décors sont intimistes. Non, ils ne se révèlent pas aisément. Déroulez le champ lexical du rêve et de l'harmonie, voyez du côté de celui de la contemplation. Ses reliures il faut les regarder longtemps, s'en imprégner, se laisser emporter. Admirez-en une le matin, puis regardez-là de nouveau le soir, vous ne verrez pas la même chose, elle ne cesse d'évoluer. Les vers d'un poème de Rimbaud ne font pas autre chose.

Il s'agit de toucher aussi, comprendre ce grain si particulier qu'elle obtient en estampant ses veaux naturels de matières organiques, de cheveux, de sable, de plaques de métal gravés à l'acide. Sa palette de couleurs était assez réduite au début, des couleurs sombres et sourdes, de terre, d'ardoise, de mastic. Elle réservait la couleur pour les gardes le plus souvent, vives et même flashy parfois, comme une explosion visuelle à l'ouverture du premier plat. Et puis elle a pris confiance, et plaisir aussi sûrement, à explorer petit à petit les couleurs. Mais rien d'exubérant, toujours beaucoup de délicatesse, c'est une partition de nuances, de consonances, d'allitérations, d'euphonies. Même la dorure et l'argent—éléments clés dans l'histoire de la reliure—, qui sont apparus très vite dans son vocabulaire esthétique, jusqu'à recouvrir presque entièrement certains livres (Artaud ou Wols ou Bianu), ne se sont jamais transformés en «boîtes de chocolats». Louise possède ce don admirable et naturel de savoir composer la poésie de la couleur.

Mais tout ceci n'existerait pas, si d'abord, avant toute chose, Louise n'aimait pas les livres. Par aimer, j'entends qu'elle est presque intimidée, à tout le moins entièrement subjuguée, immensément respectueuse, pétrie d'admiration, follement amoureuse. Jamais son travail ne débordera du livre. Jamais elle ne cherchera à exister au delà du livre. L'élégante distinction de ses décors, précisément, vient de sa modestie face à l'objet de son art. Combien de relieurs cherchent vainement à paraître alors qu'il leur faudrait surtout tenter de disparaître? Et je vous assure que cette qualité, qui fait l'intensité souveraine des reliures de Louise Bescond, a convaincu bien des collectionneurs, qui pensaient jusque-là détester la reliure de création.

designer, a hard worker, and we get along very well. Ultra sharp in his field of high-end design, he does not usually do graphic design work for catalogs such as this, but out of respect for our friendship he made an exception. For the formatting of Louise's catalog, I give him *carte blanche*, or almost: my only request being something like: it has to *shred*.

## 2013: SHOW TIME

The exhibition ran from April 4 to May 18, 2013 on the ground floor of Librairie Nicaise. The turnout for the opening—a real crowd, for our small place—left us enormously surprised: we did not expect such multitudes. The customers, the booksellers, the librarians, all put the word out, and the bookshop was packed the whole evening. And Louise received only compliments from all sides on her work. What a joy! What satisfaction after all these efforts! And finally, finally, I sold Louise Bescond bindings. Two, three, four; the librarian of a major collector made a real raid, several colleagues placed their bids for future orders... That evening, something happened.

An aside on Louise's artistic repertoire. The words that I would use to describe her first bindings are not so different from those I would use to evoke her more recent work, despite the evolution her work has seen since she began. This consistency of tone in a creative process, which is in perpetual motion, is the mark of authentic work. Yes, her designs are restrained. No, they do not reveal themselves easily. But unroll the lexical field of dream and harmony, and you will catch a glimpse of deeper contemplation. Her bindings must be studied for an extended period, allowing one to soak up their subtleties, allowing one to be carried away. Admire a binding in the morning, then look at it again in the evening, you will not see the same thing twice, Louise's work keeps evolving. The verses of a poem by Rimbaud do nothing less.

Understanding her work is also tactile, comprehending that particular texture obtained by stamping natural calfskin with organic materials, like hair, sand, or acid-etched metal plates can only come through touching the leather. Her color palette was quite narrow at first, dark, muted colors, earth tones, slate, putty. She reserved color for the endpapers most often, bright and even flashy at times, like a visual explosion at the opening of the front cover. But she progressively became more confident, eventually taking pleasure in exploring color little by little. But nothing exuberant, always a lot of delicacy, a palate of nuances, richness, correspondences, and harmonies. Even the gold and silver stamping, key elements in the history of binding, which appeared very early in her aesthetic vocabulary, nearly covered some books (*Lettres de Rodez*, Antonin Artaud, 1941, and *Répertoire des apparitions*, Zéno Bianu, 2008), yet never turned her work into the false luxury of chocolate boxes. Louise possesses the wonderful and natural gift of knowing how to compose the poetry of color.

But all this would not exist, if at first, before anything else, Louise did not love books. By loving, I mean that she is completely subjugated, or at the very least slightly intimidated, immensely respectful, admiring, madly in love. Never will her work over

## AUJOURD'HUI

Louise Bescond poursuit son chemin sur la route de l'excellence, et son chemin continue de forcer l'admiration. Elle relie pour les meilleures collections, ses œuvres sont entrées dans de prestigieuses institutions, en France et aux États-Unis. Certains des livres qu'elle a relié depuis 2008 ont été vendus aux enchères (*Le Siège de Jerusalem*, Henry Kahnweiler, 1914, collection Pierre Bergé, vente du 12/11/2015 chez Pierre Bergé & Associés). Elle a exposé chez Sotheby's à Paris en 2017. Les livres qui passent désormais entre ses mains expertes ne sont jamais moins que rares, exclusifs, voire uniques (*Le Sanglot de la Terre*, Jules Laforgue, manuscrit, circa 1880; *Henry Rousseau Sculpteur ?*, André Breton, manuscrit, 1961), parfois même réalisés exprès pour être reliés par elle (*Mincing words, a collection of duets*, Nancy Gifford, Patricia Pistner & Tideline Press, 2017). Les tarifs sont soutenus et le délai—3 ans environ pour pouvoir accéder au privilège de posséder un témoignage de son art—est bien le signe d'un engouement qui ne se dément pas.

Guidée par le maître d'art Renaud Vernier auprès duquel elle continue de se perfectionner aujourd'hui, elle décuple sa puissance et maestria technique. De plus jeunes relieurs s'essaient à imiter son style de veau naturel estampé et de couleurs méditatives. Son nom est sur toutes les lèvres. Son compte Instagram affiche plus de 9000 *followers*; rien qu'au Codex 2019, une simple « story » indiquant que je présentais quelques-unes de ses premières reliures sur mon stand m'ont apporté la visite d'une dizaine d'amateurs américains! En avril 2019, le salon des Livres rares et Objets d'art qui se tient chaque année au Grand-Palais à Paris ne comptait pas moins de 15 de ses reliures réparties sur plusieurs stands de prestigieuses librairies, ce qui doit être un record pour un relieur en activité.

En moins de 10 ans Louise Bescond a rejoint le cercle très fermé des très grands.

Comme je l'ai dit, j'ai toujours eu beaucoup de chance dans mon parcours. Chez Nicaise, j'ai eu l'immense bonheur d'avoir entre les mains des livres merveilleux, rares, uniques, des livres vendus aux plus grands musées du monde ou à quelques collectionneurs d'élite. Et pourtant, Louise Bescond, son travail, sa première exposition à la librairie Nicaise en 2013, son succès aujourd'hui, c'est ce dont je reste le plus fier.

**Pierre Walusinski** est spécialisé dans les livres d'artistes du XXe et XXIe siècle. Formé à la gravure, à la typographie, et à la gravure de poinçons typographiques, il a dirigé la librairie-galerie Nicaise à Paris pendant 10 ans. Il est maintenant éditeur, installé à Nantes, non loin des embruns de la côte bretonne.

take the book. Never will she attempt to exist beyond the book. The elegant distinction of her decorations comes precisely from her modesty when facing the object of her art. How many bookbinders vainly seek to stand out when they should rather try to hold back? And I assure you that this quality, which is the ruling characteristic of Louise Bescond's bindings, has convinced many collectors, who previously thought they hated bespoke bindings.

## TODAY

Louise Bescond makes her way down the road to excellence, and her approach continues to compel admiration. She binds books for the best private collections; her works have been acquired by prestigious institutions in France and the United States. Some of the books she has bound since 2008 have been offered at auction (*Le Siège de Jerusalem*, Henry Kahnweiler, 1914; Pierre Bergé collection, 12/11/2015 at Pierre Bergé & Associés), and her work was exhibited at Sotheby's, Paris in 2017. The books that now pass through her expert hands are never less than rare, exclusive, even unique (*Le Sanglot de la Terre*, Jules Laforgue, manuscript, circa 1880, *Henry Rousseau Sculpteur ?*, André Breton, manuscript, 1961), sometimes even made expressly to be bound by her (*Mincing words, a collection of duets*, Nancy Gifford, Patricia Pistner and Tideline Press, 2017). Her fees are on the rise and the wait-time—about three years for the privilege of obtaining an expression of her art—is indicative of the demand that continues unabated.

Guided by the master bookbinder, maître d'art Renaud Vernier, with whom she continues to perfect her work, her power and technical mastery move ever upward. Younger bookbinders try to imitate her embossed natural-calf style and meditative color palate. Her name is on everyone's lips. Her Instagram account shows more than 9000 followers; and nothing more than a brief posting during Codex 2019, indicating that I would be exhibiting some of her earliest bindings on my stand, resulted in visits from a dozen American collectors. In April 2019, the annual International Rare Book & Fine Art Fair at the Grand Palais in Paris had no less than 15 of her bindings spread over several stands of prestigious booksellers, which just might be a record for a living bookbinder.

In less than 10 years Louise Bescond has joined the inner circle of the very best.

As I said, I have always been very lucky in my career. At Librairie Nicaise, I had the immense pleasure of having at my fingertips wonderful, rare, legendary books, books sold to the richest institutions in the world and to some of the most elite collectors. And yet, Louise Bescond, her work, her first exhibition at Librairie Nicaise in 2013, her success today, is what makes me most proud.

**Pierre Walusinski** specializes in 20th- and 21st-century artists' books. Trained in engraving, typography and typographic punch cutting, former director of the Parisian bookshop and gallery Librairie Nicaise, he is now a publisher based in Nantes, on the Atlantic coast in Brittany.

# **MAKERS AND MATERIALS: GRAPHIC DESIGNERS AND ARTISTS' BOOKS AT LETTERFORM ARCHIVE**

By Amelia Grounds

This essay is structured around three texts exchanged with a close friend on the topic of art, books, and beauty:

Beauty is About Ideas  
Ideas Take a Material Form  
Why I Love the Books I Love

Let's take them in reverse order.

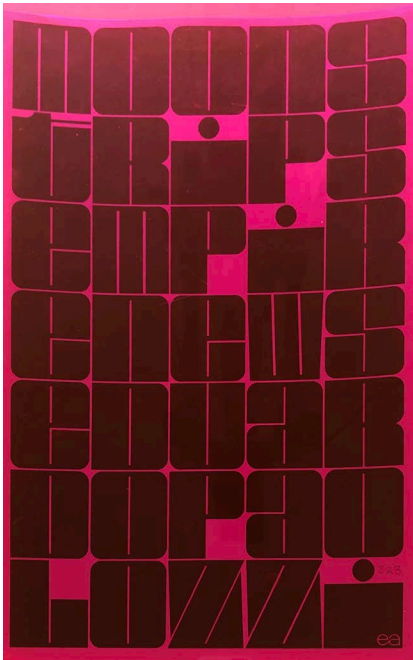
## **WHY I LOVE WHAT I LOVE**

Before becoming a librarian I was an art historian and medievalist interested in how all of the elements of a book come together—more specifically, I researched text and image relationships in devotional books of the late medieval and early modern period. I wanted to know how the decisions around text and image affected the reader's experience of the book as an object. I wanted to know how all the choices that go into making a book came together and that's a thread that has continued through my professional life. As a librarian I have been endlessly curious about not just the history of the book, but how materials, forms, and ideas coalesce into making an object.

Now I work as the head librarian at the Letterform Archive, a special collection library in San Francisco devoted to preserving graphic design history with a special interest in letterforms. At the Archive, we lead interpretive, hands-on visits that highlight the various aspects of the Archive's collection from medieval manuscripts through type design history, and 20th century graphic design through to contemporary artists' books. Interpreting artists' books for a graphic design audience is a particularly satisfying challenge for me: the audience is by nature highly visual, but not always especially attuned to the materials or conventions of book making. For me, introducing graphic designers to the book arts inspires them to think about their own work in new ways.

The books that I love at the Archive are those that defy expectation. Books like Eduardo Paolozzi's *Moonstrip Empire News* (1967). It is a collected portfolio of 101 screen prints of images and texts, printed by Kelpra Studio in London, loosely housed in a day-glo acrylic box. It is a giant file of text-and-image collages printed on a variety of papers and transparent mylar sheets. The images are drawn from science fiction magazines, movie strips, scientific, industrial, weather and news photography, Disney cartoons, and advertising slogans. It is an image bank of pop culture interpreted and collected by Paolozzi into a non-narrative portfolio book. Filled with bright colors, iridescent inks and let's not so quickly forget the glowing box. But, one must ask, is it a book? You as the reader can





Eduardo Paolozzi, Moonstrips Empire News

edit and rearrange the prints in whatever order you wish. The transparencies can end up overlaid with different text or image pages, giving you a different contextual interpretation each time. Does a book need to be bound to be a book? Or does the assemblage of elements into a box constitute *book-ness*? What are our expectation around the form and format of a book? These are just a few of the questions that I ask visitors to the Archive whenever I show it.

Irma Boom is a contemporary Dutch book designer who creates brilliantly designed books such as *De best verzorgde boeken 1989* (*Best Book Designs 1989*) (1990). It is an awards book and it conforms to that format: it shows a picture of the winning design on the left with a textual rundown on the facing page of the credits for that book. However, when you flip through the pages from back to front—as opposed to front to back—a totally different book materializes. With glossy pages and colored images, this hidden book is jazzy, and unexpected. It is magic. So, how did she do it? There are a couple factors that make this function reliably. The first is alternating paper stock, glossy vs. dull papers, which respond to a kind of static stickiness that ensures when flipping through the book one way or the other you're catching the correct pages for a given orientation. The other element that helps with this is a differential trim on the fore-edge of the book: it looks like a little fan at the front edge, and it helps your fingers catch consistently as you turn the pages.



Raymond Queneau, *One Hundred Million Million Poems*

Boom stated in an interview that she went through over 50 paper prototypes for this book to ensure that this trick would work consistently every time. And that's the thing that impresses me about Irma Boom: she prototypes her work like a book artist in the service of an idea. She creates highly idea-driven books, filled with thoughtful considerations of materials, form, experience. She always makes her own handmade version of book ideas, which she takes to clients for approval. Once a concept is approved though, she works with commercial printers and binders to make her ideas work at scale. That's the real magic of her designs, they feel like artists' books, but must function at production scale.

#### IDEAS TAKE A MATERIAL FORM

This book by Raymond Queneau, and designed by Robert Massin, *One Hundred Million Million Poems* (1961), is a set of ten sonnets printed on stiff card stock with each line of verse on a separate strip. All ten sonnets have not just the same rhyme scheme, but also the same rhyme sounds, which means that any line from a sonnet can be combined with the nine others. Queneau's inspiration for the structure of this book follows that of children's "crazy body" books, where each page is cut into horizontal strips that can be

turned independently. He also mentions a few ground rules he followed when composing the poems:

- 1) The rhymes had to be neither too banal (to avoid flatness and monotony) nor too uncommon.
- 2) it was necessary for each sonnet, if not to be crystal clear, at least to have a theme and continuity of its own; and each needed to have a similar level of charm and readability.
- 3) The grammatical structure had to be the same and remain unvarying in order for the lines to be interchangeable.

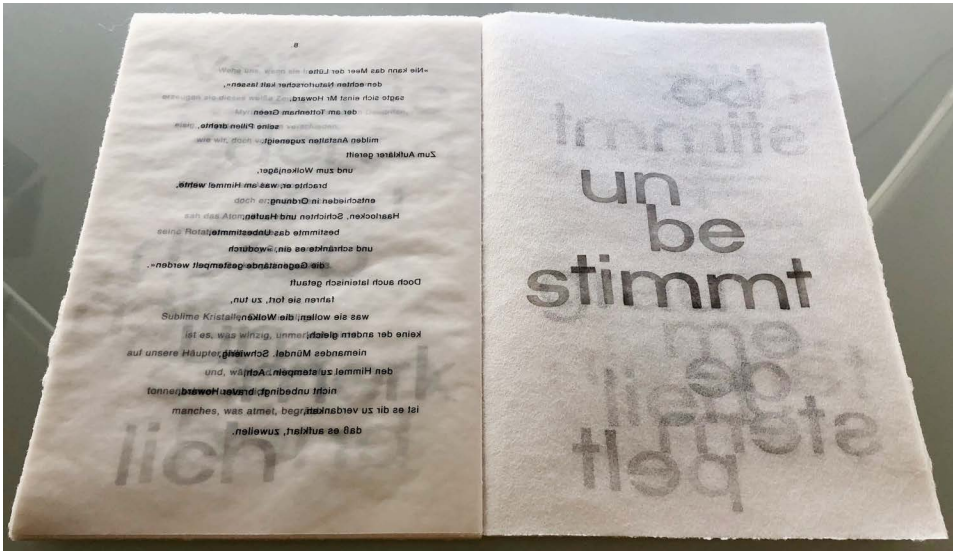
For those of you who may question whether the math checks out on this one, be assured that Queneau worked with a mathematician. He includes this note (here excerpted from the English translation):

*To be more explicit for the benefit of skeptics: each of the first ten lines can be combined with ten different second lines; there are thus a hundred different possible combinations of the first two lines. Adding the third line will raise the number to a thousand, and so on. Until for the ten complete, fourteen-line sonnets, the total of one hundred million million poems is reached.*

He's also keen to let you know how long it would take you to read all of those poems: "Allowing 45 seconds to read one sonnet and 15 seconds to turn the strips, at a rate of 8 hours per day, 200 days per year, the reader may look forward to over one million years of reading!" I'm glad Queneau gives us nights and weekends off on this project!

With this book, I like to talk to designers not just about the conceptual limitations inherent to the format of this book, but also the sensory nature of the materials used. We have both the French original, printed on card stock, as well as the English edition, printed on a softer, yet still heavy, paper. So there is a tactile difference between these two editions, of course, but there is also an auditory difference. The French original cracks and clatters as the page strips are turned while the English copy silently sways. It is worth noting that a popular request at the Archive are works of graphic design or typography that explore sound. Examples of Futurist sound poetry such as *Zang Tumb Tuum* (Milan, 1914) by Filippo Marinetti is a good example of this; however, so is the physical rattle of materials like that in *One hundred Million Million Poems*, which provides an alternative manifestation of sound in design.

Another book from Kickshaws Press, the publisher of the English reprint of *One Hundred Million Million Poems*, is *Only Connect* (1984). The text of this book is printed on paper stock arranged much like a four-flap housing, that is, small sheets of paper alternately bound at one edge, which can be unfolded and refolded in any order. Each leaf of text may be ordered and reordered, and in the process the narrative content of the book can be read in any number of different ways: it may be read backwards as well as forwards, as the pages have no proscribed order. After a few different reader's explorations the



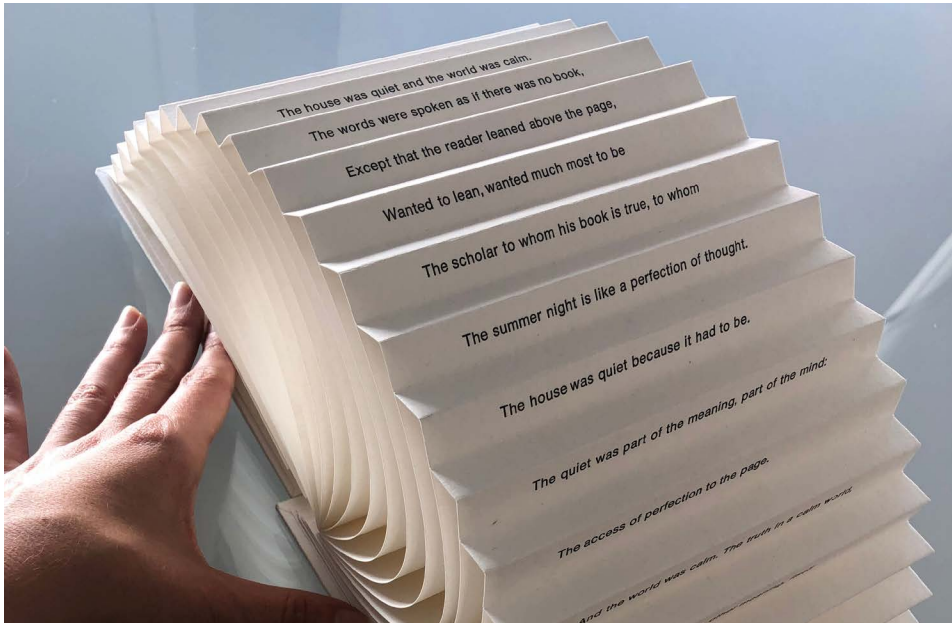
Sabine Golde, *Die Geschichte der Wolken* (*The Story of Clouds*)

order of the leaves will have changed completely from the original published order. As the instructional preface reads:

*Imagine if you will, that you've read through, unfolding all the flaps. A satisfied reader will fold all the leaves back in their reverse order without a second thought and go away happily. The unsatisfied or frankly dissatisfied reader may prefer to read on back, from end to beginning. She will have full freedom to restructure the story, folding back the leaves in any order whatsoever and in the process leave an entirely new story to be read in the forward direction the next time.*

Exploring book design and narrative structure are some of my favorite themes when engaging with visitors to the Archive. When I introduce visitors to medieval manuscripts, I talk about book design conventions in books before printing and how readers would navigate without page numbers or chapter titles. Similarly, showing contemporary books that defy the normal conventions in page design and narrative flow helps to inspire and shape new ideas in designers' imaginations.

One of my favorite material themes in books is transparent and translucent paper stock. *Die Geschichte der Wolken* (*The Story of Clouds*) (2010) by Sabine Golde is one of my favorites; it uses vlieseline, sort of a drier-sheet material, to evoke the feeling and translucency of clouds. The text of the poem is rubber stamped by hand and I love the way that you can see the words and characters stacking up and receding into the distance as you turn the pages; for me, the mood and the scene of words floating in clouds marries well with the textual content. Between the "drier-sheet" pages there are translucent Japanese



Ximena Pérez Grobet, *Words*

vellum pages with the poem typed-up in straight text. These pages are paginated while the “cloud” pages are not, creating a thematic contrast between a conventional reading of the poem and that of floating through the air. For visitors to the Archive, this book is often a new experience in paper variation—non-woven linen of this sort is not commonly used by designers and it provides both a tactile and conceptual element to this book that students and designers respond to.

Another book with translucent pages is David Abel’s *Selected Durations* (2017), a work that is a poem and a score for performance, capturing, analyzing, quantifying and archiving time. The poem was originally compiled by David from a reference book in his personal library, *Durations: An Encyclopedia of how long things take*. Selected entries were winnowed down to the overall spoken length of two minutes so that it would be performed in a poetry venue with a strict time limit. David would read the poem with an alarm clock set to two minutes and the interrelationship of the temporal nature of the text and the passage of time for the reading come together to reinforce the exploration of time. Additionally, the form of the book, by Black Rock Press, the student press of University of Nevada, Reno, makes tangible the feeling of passing time explored by the oral reading of the text. The translucent paper gives a hint and a shadow of what’s on the adjacent pages and the progression of time from a starting point to the conclusion. It stands alone from the originally oral performance of the poem, but also makes manifest the concept of the poem in a physical form.



Another physical book form that I love to show visitors to the Archive are books of unusual formats. *Words* (2016) plays with the space and form of letters in the context of a single text while simultaneously utilizing a unique structure. The artist, Ximena Pérez Grobet, says it this way: “Words are not only letters, their order and their space are as important to make words possible.” She makes this point by presenting a single poem by setting on each page of the book only a single letter, placing it where it appears in the complete poem—the first page gives the letter ‘e’, in order to highlight the space that ‘e’ occupies in each word and its place on the page. A unique folding structure of the paper allows the full poem to be printed on the verso of the leaves as well as on the final leaf. The individual pages can be folded back and forth creating an interplay of each of the letters on each sheet, giving material form to the spacing of each letter.

Equally novel in its physical form, as well as its typographic experimentation, is a book made by a Korean designer, Xianlu Yi, who grew up in China. The poem is *Grass* (2019), by Kim Su-young, a Korean poet who has become a symbol of freedom and revolution during the democratization of Korea. The structure and movement of the book evokes leaves of grass, which can, potentially, also be seen as the movement of social change. The material form means that the text of the poem can be read on each page of the book, or the reader can expand the binding structure, which allows the text to spring up like blades of grass.

The final book in my trio of physical form explorations is *A-Z* by Tom Ockerse. Tom was a design graduate student in Yale when he created this book in 1964; a few years after he finished his degree, the Museum of Modern Art asked to publish it, but production costs ended up being too high for the museum. However, one of the production bidders took it on and printed around 2,000 copies of the book as part of a new art book series they wanted to launch. Here, Tom explores the form of the alphabet as a vehicle for the visual transition from one page to the next in a dynamic cut paper book; the letterforms are not in alphabetical sequence, but the book is less about finding the journey from A to B to C, but rather the surprising physical metamorphosis from A to W, V to M as each page is flipped. Every page of the book required skilled handcraft to execute the complex cuts as part of the production, and the binding too required more handwork that made automated/machine production impossible. My favorite part of this is that it isn’t a straight A-Z book, but it functions well nonetheless. For each of these last three books, the motion and the interrelation of forms really embodies what I love about ideas taking a material form: it is not just paper, it is movement and interaction between reader and book that can make books like these come fully alive.

## BEAUTY IS ABOUT IDEAS

A new love for me are those books that are even more greatly conceptual: the beauty of ideas in their purest form. The reader might think that some of the books I have discussed so far were in many ways conceptual. But I have examples that go even deeper.



*What I Saw II* (2011) by Alida Sayer is a stack of hand rubber-stamped pages repeating the words “What I saw wasn’t a ghost [only myself]” a quote from Haruki Murakami’s novel *Kafka on the Shore*. Alida took a stack of hand stamped pages...cut them into topographic relief...and then glue-sticked them together into a mountain-like shape. My favorite thing about this “book,” if we are still comfortable calling a text-based literary sculpture a book, is how visitors to the Archive respond to it. Recently, a student asked me if it opened. When I said no, he said, “...but I really want it to. Like inside is the reflection of what I saw inside myself.”

Primarily, I love books that are about a journey. You pick them up once, and your response is simply, *what?* But then you keep looking and you get something about the idea that you had not realized before. My first example is *Some Texts* (1982), by Maurizio Nannucci. The book contains a series of poems and texts that explore the geography of color and language across the printed page. “When red is red, blue is blue, and yellow is yellow” reads the first page—each statement is printed in the corresponding color. The sheets of the book have been folded so that the top-edge bolts are unopened, and the type runs in different directions along the outside edges of the page, as well as deeper inside the folds enclosed by the uncut pages. By leaving the pages uncut, the book reveals the manner of its making, while simultaneously concealing parts of the text. “The missing poem is the poem,” reads one line of blue type, running vertically along the edge of the page. But the poem isn’t really missing, it must be sought out, obscured by the structure of the book it is there, but obscured.

The little piece *Your Word—and Mine* by Karen Bleitz comes from the 2015 CODEX collection *Alchimie du Verbe*. It is effectively a balance between paper, a magnet, a needle and a metal ball on an elastic string; the structure of the book is as follows: on the inside front cover a metal ball is attached to an elastic string, the single “page” of the book is formed by two sheets glued together, with a magnet sandwiched inside; at the back cover a needle is attached to a short length of thread, so that when aligned properly the metal ball and the needle are both connected to the magnet. If the covers are opened too far the magnetic connection is broken. Karen describes this piece in her artist statement as,

... a conversation I hear time and time again. It’s a dialogue with no end, a conflict with no resolution. Someone establishes a point, someone else draws the line...and the play? Well, it just goes on and on. This interactive book allows readers to draw out the conversation. Each turn of the page alters the tone and tempo of the debate. Playful stretches shift to angry snaps and sharp jabs erupt from silent quivers. Every movement causes a shift in the opposing gravitational fields which, in turn, destabilizes the elements within each matrix. A victim of seen and unseen forces, our alignment, it seems, will forever be skewed.

For me this piece is as much about the imagined conversation described in the artist statement as it is contriving a mechanism to reliably hold the two elements in order, divided by a wall like Pyramus and Thisbe. It is performative, having an auditory response when the magnet stretches to the point of release the elastic snaps back and

hits the board. After a recent visit, a graphic design student told me this was the favorite thing she'd seen in the whole visit because it made her redefine everything she thought a book could be.

*Tea-Room: Abode of Fancy, Vacancy and the Unsymmetrical* (2015) by Yasutomo Ota, the book takes the form of a tea bag, complete with string and label. Ota created this book as part of a project on the subject of “memory” in his book art course with Sabine Golde, whose cloud book was discussed above. The texts are excerpts from the *Book of Tea* printed in Japanese, English, and German on each left hand page. Across the spread is a series of tea colored squares showing the printing composition patterns of the texts on the facing text page. For me, it is not just that the form of the book looks like a teabag, but that the ritual and process that a reader must navigate through evokes the structure and process of a Japanese tea ceremony. So why a title that highlights the unsymmetrical, when the structure feel so clearly mirrored? The absence of symmetry in Japanese art objects has often been commented on by Western critics and the dynamic nature of Taoist and Zen conceptions of perfection placed more value upon the process of seeking perfection than on perfection itself. Perhaps the union of languages, symmetrical format, and unsymmetrical cultures is the way that this book strives for perfection while remaining an incomplete and ephemeral vessel for perfection to reside.

Veronika Schäpers' *White Verbs* (2017) is a book screen printed on translucent paper with white ink. The text is Durs Grünbein's poem inspired by his visit to Kazimir Malevich's painting, *White on White*. A seminal piece of abstract painting, *White on White* was incredibly impactful when it was painted in 1918, but when Grünbein visited it, he expected a revelation and instead was left with a sense of disappointment. He found that the picture had lost its impact, become more pitiful and human through aging: its varnish crackled, its brushstrokes visible. Affected by this encounter, Grünbein made a list of all of the verbs he associated with the color white and wrote a poem using those verbs. The book takes that poem and encapsulates it within pages of Malevich's artist manifestos—these manifestos are screen printed as a negative white text on transparent paper in a camouflage pattern and the poem is worked into a watermark where each stanza forms a square, the only formal reference to Malevich's painting. But there's another dimension to this book and that is the other side of the symmetrically folded piece. Here the enclosing pages are printed with Grünbein's comments about his poem—nestled inside of these pages is the only color element of the piece, a grid of colors representing the poem in the form of a color code developed by the synesthete, Eva-Maria Bolz. Each block of color stands for one letter in the text. Whereas Malevich's painting explores the treatment of the color white as an expression of pure abstraction, and Grünbein's poem explores white as a metaphor for the inevitable aging process, Bolz can't read a text without seeing color—her synesthesia means that traditional color symbolism is lost on her. The structure of this book means that there is no proscribed order for experiencing it; it is completely up to chance whether the reader finds the watermark of the poem or the graphic representation of the color code. The various levels of historical context

combined with the complexity of the book's form makes this a rich item to discuss with visitors to the Archive. Describing how the various conceptual elements come together to make an engaging and intriguing object is something that I enjoy highlighting alongside the materials, form and structure of the object. All of which are important pieces of why this book is an effective piece.

The last book I'd like to talk about is *foew&ombwhnw* (1969) by Dick Higgins. It looks a lot more like a mass produced book. In fact, it looks a lot like a hymnal or a mass-market bible. It is bound in black leatherette with a black satin bookmark. The page edges are stained a deep red, the corners are rounded, and the paper is thin bible-paper stock. So what is this thing? Its title page tells us that it is, "A Grammar of the Mind and a Phenomenology of Love and a Science of the Arts as seen by the stalker of the wild mushroom." So not traditionally religious, but maybe part of a new belief system? He is certainly aware of the assumptions that the book's construction and materials leads us to make. The comparisons with a mass-market bible continue with the interior layout: each page is ruled down the middle creating spreads of four columns, each column has a subheading that tracks the textual contents. You can see that the first text, on "Intermedia," begins in the right hand column, and it stays in the right hand column as additional texts begin in those columns on the left. There are diagrams, images, photographs as well as short plays, essays, poems, etc. Throughout the entire work the four-column layout is maintained. Perhaps it is the intersection and contextual relationship of these texts that is the key to the concept. As the publisher's preface states: there are many similar mushrooms which are unaware that they are unrelated even though botanists have put them into separate phyla. This is why the book is structured as it is, into four separate columns, running simultaneously. To read everything in the book in sequence, the reader would have to read, say, all the left-hand columns, then all the next-to-left-hand columns, and so on. He would have to read through the book four times. And he would have missed the point—of confrontation at every turn with other elements of the same overall picture or situation. Hopefully the reader will get the point and read the four columns more or less together, keeping clear in his mind the correlations as well as the divergences.

I cannot end this discussion without some further exploration of the title. And really, the commentary given in the publisher's preface (and let me let you in on a secret, the publisher is also the author) cannot be improved:

*It sounds like a horse's whinny, a fragment of a sound poem maybe. We know that the letters are supposed to stand for 'Freaked out Electronic Wizards & Other Marvelous Bartenders who have no wings,' which [the author] tells us is a title that came to him, amused him for a moment, and then was scrapped, as being a ridiculous cluster of words, hopelessly hippie and typed in the 1960s mold. But why did he save the shell of the title? It seems to be the same kind of thing as the style of the binding—saving the shell of something, wondering what will grow up next to replace it. We'll have a long wait, I suppose, before he tells us.*

Again, a return to the idea that saving a portion of an expected tradition, a reference to religion or convention, and then choosing to fill that vessel with a new mode, a new art, a new culture. This is a book that plays on all of our expected conventions not just around the form of the book, although that too, but also around society, art, social expectation. It makes you question what it is you're seeing and as you delve deeper into the form and the writings within, you begin to question and explore the expectations you brought to the piece yourself. Arguably, it is not an artist's book in the sense of a handmade, small press edition of a text, but on the other hand, its conceptual underpinnings and use of the book form to create an artistic expression fits the mold for me of an artist's book. When I discuss this book with visitors to the Archive, usually everyone is confused: why have a hymnal out on a table surrounded by highly visual, structurally interesting books? However, the journey that we go on together, diving into the book, discussing all of these details usually brings everyone to a new appreciation, or at least a place of new questions. Not everyone gets it, or cares, but opening up a dialogue about what it means to make books, or use a book form in an artist practice, is something that I return to again and again with books like these.

So these are the books I love: books that defy expectation, play with movement and interaction, and books that take you on a journey. Some are truly small edition artists' books and some are conceptual books that use the form of the book to convey an idea using larger print runs and production processes. All of them provide plenty of opportunities for discussions of materials, ideas, and expectations among the graphic designers who visit the Archive.

**Amelia Grounds** is the Acquisitions and Curatorial support coordinator at the Bancroft Library At UC Berkeley. At the time of writing this article, she worked at the Letterform Archive in San Francisco where she was the Archive's first librarian. She has also worked at numerous other libraries and special collections in the Bay Area and the U.K. She is especially interested in the materiality of books and the history of book making from early manuscripts through to contemporary artists' books and concrete poetry.

## THE BIXLER TYPE FOUNDRY: A PHOTO ESSAY

Photographs by Annie Schlechter  
Captions by Michael Bixler



1. I designed and built this traditional oak Monotype cabinet many years ago, to organize, store, and protect the most vital and irreplaceable component parts of the shop: our matrix cases with their respective wedges, molds, and sorts drawers, containing several thousand duplicate and accented mats. Monotype casting machines have no value or use without these parts; it is these tools that produce a particular typeface, cast on a specific body size. We acquired our casters rather inexpensively over many years of collecting, but the matrices for such typefaces as Centaur, Dante, Lutetia, and Joanna were purchased new (and expensively for a craft) from the Monotype Corporation in England.





2. Pictured here are our three Monotype composition casters and beyond, our great, English Supercaster, a Thompson, and a Material Maker. The comp casters, with respective component molds, will 'read' a perforated keyboard ribbon and automatically cast justified lines of individually cast types, from 8- to 18-pt., or fonts to fill a type case. Caster No. 1, pictured in the immediate foreground, was given to me as junk in 1967. Mechanically as sound and perfect as when made by Lanston in the 1920s, much of my life's income and many of our most significant books were produced on this caster. And, the Supercaster, is used to cast display type up to 72-pt.





3. This crucible of molten (740 degrees) type metal rotates to a point under the caster's mold. When the piston (handle in hand) is driven downward under spring pressure, liquid metal is driven vertically through the casting nozzle and into the empty mold cavity. With each revolution of the caster an individual type character or space is produced, the type metal cooling and solidifying almost instantaneously, as it is ejected.



4. We have and use several Monotype keyboards, all acquired for free, as junk. Their commercial use and value in trade typesetting ended almost fifty years ago. Our building and the hand blown glass windows go back to 1867. Through the woods in back of our building flows Skaneateles Creek, used for water power a hundred years ago, and now a home for delicious trout and a habitat for deer, fox and ducks.





5. Winnie and I, with dog, Rosie.



6. A Monotype mat case removed from the caster, containing 255 matrix character positions, capable of carrying letters from 8- to 14-pt., providing the simultaneous use of Roman, Italic, and Small Cap alphabets.





7. The composing room with Monotype keyboards, Vandercook proof presses, galley cabinets, 700 cases of Bixler-cast type, and two dogs.



8. English Monotype display mats for 72-pt. Albertus. Each matrix can cast an unlimited number of types from the Supercaster.





9. Newly cast 36-pt. type, emerging from the Supercaster mold. In the background is the surface of the molten type metal, an incredible alloy of tin and antimony with precious lead.

**Annie Schlechter** is a native New Yorker who has been working as a photographer since 2000. She enjoys eating, books, travel & polka dots.

**Michael and Winifred Bixler** started their letterpress shop near Boston in 1973, with the encouragement and inspiration of Robert Grabhorn. Monotype composition supported the business as they combined meticulous typesetting with rare English Monotype typefaces such as Dante, Lutetia, Joanna, and Gill Sans. Each year brought limited edition letterpress book projects, including a network of supportive friends such as David Godine. In 1983 the Bixler shop was moved to rural Skaneateles, N.Y., where today much of the work is in casting composition and fonts for a new letterpress community.

## BOOKSHOPS IN PARIS

By Gerald W. Cloud

In the service of this journal your editor has taken on the arduous task of roaming the streets of Paris in search of bookshops that might appeal to your sensibilities. The list that follows is meant to be broad, and it is also subjective to your editor's tastes, and the limits of his knowledge. Nonetheless, there are addresses here that I feel sure will not disappoint.

In Paris there is no shortage of bookshops. Nearly every neighborhood has at least a small shop where new books and classic *livres de poches* can be bought, frequently alongside periodicals, newspapers, and stationery. There are also many specialized bookshops in Paris, focused on individual cultures, languages, and topics, plus scores of more generalized secondhand shops. Of greater interest to CODEX readers, there are many options for finding artists' books, *livres d'artistes*, photo books, custom and fine bindings, and shops where the book and art meet. Focusing on the latter category, the summary of addresses below makes no pretensions toward completeness, but attempts to provide a rich list of options and variety. With the closing of **Librairie Nicaise's** retail gallery in the Blvd. Saint-Germain, Paris lost one of the central sources for artist's books; however, Nicaise continues to issue catalogs and appointments can be made to see books in Paris. Their website provides full details: [www.nicaise.com](http://www.nicaise.com)

If you have time to visit only one bookshop while in Paris and you are keen to see French bibliophile books, *livres d'artistes*, and contemporary fine bindings, then the **Librairie Auguste Blaizot**, 164 Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré, 75008, should be at the top of your list. One of the most elegant bookshops in Paris, or anywhere, Blaizot has been in business since 1840, and at their current address since 1941. Their stock focuses on French literature, rare and first editions, illustrated books, fine and custom bindings by celebrated contemporary binders, and a rich selection of *livre d'artiste*, fine press, limited editions, and art books—a feast for bibliophiles of all tastes and dispositions. Blaizot also frequently exhibits decorated and fine bindings, including the prize-winning books from their annual competition for book bindings constructed of wood. The shop also works directly with living bookbinders from whom collectors commission custom bindings.

### THE MARAIS

There are a number of bookshops in or near the Marais, many near the Musée Picasso, and the neighborhood merits attention.

**Librairie du Centre Pompidou**, Place Georges-Pompidou, 75004. New books. Everything you want from a museum bookshop and more, simply one of the best of its kind, particularly for modern and contemporary art, including monographs, exhibition catalogs, coffee table books, architecture, street art, design, photobooks, scholarly editions on art

history and art reference books, as well as art-related fiction and children's books. The selection here is limited to new books, but the depth of the stock is outstanding.

**Florence Loewy, gallery / books**, 9 rue de Thorigny, 75003. Since 2017, the shop reconfigured the bookstore-and-gallery space by focusing more on the gallery, although they do still stock books. Programming activities are associated with the projects of the artists represented, which include French and other European artists, and the bookstore space presents book & art exhibitions, openings, and collaborations around the artist's book.

**Espace Despalles**, 16 Rue Sainte Anastase, 75003. Just around the corner from Florence Loewy, Espace Despalles hosts occasional exhibitions and events that alternate between presentations of artists devoted to drawing, printmaking or artists whose books are an integral part of their creation. Important to note: the space is that of Despalles Editions, founded by Françoise Despalles and Johannes Strugalla in 1982, publishing visual artists and poets in artist's books, frequently in German-French bilingual editions, and have provided a continental contact point for CODEX from the foundation's inauguration.

**Yvon Lambert Bookshop**, 14 rue des Filles du Calvaire 75003. A handsome bookshop-gallery space which specializes in art books, exhibition catalogues, artists books, rare and out-of-print books, limited edition prints, posters, DVDs, CDs, t-shirts and art objects. Yvon Lambert publishes and supports projects with international artists, young or well-established. The shop also stocks a "bibliophile" collection of limited edition books conceived as artworks, on view at the shop by appointment. The space hosts an active event and exhibition schedule with a gallery space for art exhibitions.

**Librairie Ofr**, 20 Rue Dupetit-Thouars, 75003. New & secondhand books, art & architecture, photography, Fanzines, periodicals, artsy *cartes postales*, publications inédites, well-selected stock, and dynamic atmosphere. Events and frequently changing exhibitions with catalogs and publications make this little shop worth a look.

**Librairie des Archives**, 83 Rue Vieille du Temple, 75003. Hard to find and well-selected stock of new & used art monographs, beaux arts, architecture, design, and exhibition catalog. Typically by appointment, but stop by if in the neighborhood.

#### DROUOT QUARTIER, 9EME ARRONDISSEMENT

The central address for book auctions in Paris is **Hotel Drouot**, 9 rue Drouot, 75009. There are sales almost daily at Drouot, a schedule so busy as to inspire one seasoned Parisian bookseller to throw up his hands and exclaim, "Il y en a trop!" Note: there are frequently open galleries with all manner of books, manuscripts, photographs, maps, furniture, objets d'art, etc., displayed for pre-sale public preview. Worth a walk through

the rooms on your way to lunch at La Cave Drouot, just across the street, or J'Go, one door down from there.

**Librairie du passage Jouffroy**, 48 passage Jouffroy, 75009. New and second-hand books focused on the arts, Catalogues raisonnés, graphic arts, monographs, art history, sculpture, and exhibition catalogs. There are several storefronts in the *passage*, or covered markets that run through the interiors of many of the buildings in this section of Paris, which include artisans, galleries, cafes and wine bars, and odd shops of various sorts.

**Librairie Chamonal**, 5 rue Drouot, 75009. An antiquarian shop run by the indefatigable fourth-generation bookseller Rodolphe Chamonal, specializing in science, medicine, culinary & wine, travel & exploration, illustrated books, engravings, lithography, photography, fine bindings, and dozens of other curious subjects. Open daily (M–F), no appointment necessary.

#### 5<sup>EME</sup> ARRONDISSEMENT

**Librairie Chloé et Denis Ozanne**, 21 Rue Monge, 75005. A sophisticated stock of limited editions, photobooks, artists' books (and democratic multiples), ephemera, graphic arts, posters, and more. Librairie Ozanne produces excellent regular sale catalogs that illustrate the rich variety of their stock. Their shop is a must-see location and the proprietors long standing in the book world makes them a fine source for books related to art of all kinds.

**Un Regarde Moderne**, 10 rue Git le Coeur 75006. A tiny, cramped bookshop specializing in international counterculture, subversive, intriguing, and unusual art books, essays and comics. Worth the side trip down the rue Git le Coeur where the Beat Hotel, now refurbished, still operates.

**Gibert Jeune**, 5 Place Saint-Michel, 75005.

**Gibert Joseph**, 26 Boulevard Saint-Michel, 75006.

I think of the Gibert Jeune & Joseph shops as a sort of Paris version of NYC's Strand Books, with the addition of multiple independent storefronts along the Boulevard Saint-Michel, including a stationery shop and a music shop. Fabulous selection of new and second-hand books. English language books can also be found at Gibert Joseph.

#### LIVRES D'ARTISTES GALLERIES

**La Galerie Maeght**, 42 rue du Bac 75007. Maeght originally opened with an exhibition by Henri Matisse in December 1945, and quickly became a meeting place for artists and poets. Long known as an important art gallery, Editions Maeght has published livres d'artistes since 1948. Today, the gallery and bookshop include exhibitions of books, engravings and original art (paintings, sculptures, drawings, photographs) of historical artists (Mirò, Calder, Braque) and new talents. The premises can feel a bit formal, but for

those interested in tracing the history of art merging with the book they are worth a visit. Plus, the rue du Bac is one of Paris's more charming streets.

**Galerie Lelong**, 13 Rue de Téhéran, 75008. is located at Maeght's original location. They have an art gallery exhibiting prints, lithographs (some printed by Michael Woolworth, see below) and they edit livres d'artistes by their internationally know artists. Worth a visit before or after spending some time at the nearby Musée Jacquemart-André (158 Boulevard Haussmann, 75008), which has no relation to artists' books, but boasts a stunning collection of Old Masters, Italian Renaissance, and French artworks and is one of the hidden gems of Paris museums.

**Michael Woolworth**, 2 rue de la Roquette, Passage du Cheval Blanc, Cour Février, 75011. Woolworth's printing studio specializes in lithography techniques as well as woodcuts, linocuts, monotypes, etchings and multiples, all exclusively on hand presses. Michael Woolworth Publications produces its own editions throughout the year and organizes events in galleries, museums, bookstores, art fairs as well as in the print shop. By appointment.

#### ANTIQUARIAN BOOKS

There are a large number of antiquarian shops in Paris that are described and listed according to specialty in the directory of the *Syndicat national de la Librairie Ancienne et Moderne* (SLAM): [slam-livre.fr/fr/librairesl?city=Paris](http://slam-livre.fr/fr/librairesl?city=Paris)

Personal favorites, bookshops with regular opening hours, exceptional and unique stock that you won't necessarily find elsewhere include two that were mentioned above, (Librairie Auguste Blaizot and Librairie Chamonal), and a few more below.

**Librairie Benoît Forgeot**, 4 rue de l'Odéon 75006. A sophisticated yet pretention-free antiquarian shop in the heart of the Saint-Sulpice quartier, which is replete with antiquarian booksellers. Forgeot merits mention for both a welcoming atmosphere and his expertly chosen stock of early books and manuscripts, literature, illustrated books, bindings, unique modern books and ephemera. Regular M–F hours, no appointment necessary. Librairie Forgeot is a good starting point for book-browsing the little streets between the north end of the Luxembourg Gardens and the Boulevard Saint-Germain.

**Librairie Alain Brieux**, 48, rue Jacob 75006. Librairie Brieux specializes in early books of science and medicine, engravings and scientific and medical instruments, as well as documentation on their history. One of the best vitrines of any bookshop in Paris, the displays are surrealist still-lives.

**Librairie Clavreuil**, 19 Rue de Tournon, 75006. Specializes in early books, including bindings and illustrated books.

## NEW BOOKS

The following shops represent several of the best addresses for new books focusing on literary publishing and French arts & letters. Galignani and WH Smith stock large sections of English language books.

**Librairie Gallimard**, 15 Boulevard Raspail, 75007. The official bookshop of one of France's most storied and leading publishers, packed with literature, philosophy & social sciences, art books, illustrated books, and children's literature.

**L'Eume des Pages**, 174 Boulevard Saint-Germain, 75006. Welcome to Paris: this fabulous bookshop is smack in the middle of Saint-Germain des Pres, one of Paris's prime neighborhoods and counts as its neighbors Les Deux Magots, Café de Flore, Brasserie Lipp, etc., frequented by de Beauvoir, Breton, Camus, Marguerite Duras, Juliette Greco, Hemingway, Mitterand, Picasso, Sartre, Boris Vain, ... I could keep going, but you get the idea.

**Taschen**, 2 rue de Buci 75006. New books by the art book publisher Taschen. The Paris address boasts a well-stocked and large selection of Taschen publications and occasional artist / author events. Makes this list for its attractive premises, central proximity, and dedication to beautiful (if commercially produced) books.

**Librairie Tschann**, 125 Boulevard du Montparnasse, 75006. Long-standing shop with well-selected titles in literature, children's literature, poetry, humanities and religion, psychoanalysis, history, aesthetics, architecture, photography, cinema, theater, music, dance, cooking and travel literature; the shop also hosts readings and events. Also a small section of books on typography and design.

**Librairie Delamain**, 155 Rue Saint-Honoré, 75001. Small shop with new and secondhand books, carefully selected stock, especially for literature, and well located between the Louvre and the Palais Royal.

**Librairie Galignani**, 224 Rue de Rivoli, 75001. Think Rizoli's but Parisian, with French & English books, architecture, art, design, fashion, and large and interesting periodicals. An elegant shop across the rue de Rivoli from the Tuileries garden.

**W.H. Smith**, 248 Rue de Rivoli, 75001. English bookseller of long standing, with large stock and significant selection of periodicals and newspapers.

Gerald W. Cloud is an antiquarian bookseller and an unreformed franco-bibliophile.



## **RISE AND FALL: THE AUSTRALIAN BOOK ARTS SCENE, 2019**

By Caren Florance and Monica Oppen with Deidre Brollo, Helen Cole, Des Cowley, Marian Crawford, Noreen Grahame, Tim Mosely, Vicki Reynolds, Doug Spowart, Alicia Stevenson, and Paul Thompson

Despite the usefulness of the internet, Australia has no formal national book arts associations other than some state craft bookbinding groups. Only one publication, the Print Council of Australia's journal, *Imprint* regularly covers artist's book activity. The book arts scene in Australia is fragmented, pulled together by events. Awards, symposia, book fairs and publications tend to happen for a period of time then disappear. Exhibitions pop up sporadically, depending on the energy and commitment of individuals, usually organized by the artists themselves.

### **BACKGROUND**

Noreen Grahame

The 1970s were heady times for the arts and art institutions in Australia and for artists' books. Bruce Pollard opened his anti-establishment gallery, Pinacotheca, in Melbourne in 1967. A 1969 exhibition at the gallery included Ian Burn's 1968 *Xerox Book* and the following year the gallery published Robert Rooney's *War savings streets*. Another early publisher of artists' books in Australia was Ted Hopkins' Champion Books in Melbourne, which brought out a number of Peter Lyssiotis's early artists' books. Irish-born Noel Sheridan had taken up the reins as inaugural Director of the Adelaide based Experimental Art Foundation (EAF) in 1974. EAF's artists' books publishing program was launched in 1976. It was the first institution to establish an artists' books collection.

The EAF combined resources in 1978 with the Institute of Modern Art (IMA) in Brisbane and the Ewing Gallery and the George Paton Gallery at the University of Melbourne to stage *Artists' Books/Bookworks*,<sup>1</sup> a major exhibition of international and Australian artists' books. The IMA selected works from the 1978 international invitation exhibition *Artworks/Bookworks* at the Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art (LAICA). One-off, hand-made bookworks from Franklin Furnace were sourced by the Ewing and George Paton Galleries, and Noel Sheridan at the EAF put out a call inviting Australian artists to send in books for the section *Australian artists' books*.

Almost ten years after the *Artists' Books/Bookworks* exhibition in 1987, Kay Campbell and Katherine Moline organized *IN PRINT. Vol.1. Artists' Books*,<sup>2</sup> an exhibition of international and Australian artists' books, held at the Power Gallery of Contemporary Art (now Museum of Contemporary Art) in Sydney. Included were both international and Australian artists' books from the 1970s and 1980s.

When I mounted my first exhibition dedicated to the artist's book in 1991, interest seemed to have waned. Of necessity many of the books included in exhibitions were

sourced overseas. By the second exhibition in 1993 this had changed to a degree (see below).

Institutional interest in the genre shifted slowly. The National Gallery of Australia's (NGA) collection dates from 1972 but it wasn't until the late 1980s that two other major institutions started their collections; the State Library of Queensland (SLQ) in 1987 followed by the State Library of Victoria (SLV) in 1988.

## **VICTORIA**

*Marian Crawford, Des Cowley, Doug Spowart, Caren Florance*

In Melbourne the book is taught in the printmaking departments of the three major art schools, the University of Melbourne, RMIT University, and Monash University. The courses run within Fine Art rather than Design departments. The teaching of book arts through printmaking is usual in Australia and influences the type of books being produced.

The 2011 IMPACT 7 printmaking conference, hosted by Monash University,<sup>3</sup> attracted an international and local audience of over 400 participants. Themes of academic papers and exhibitions were generally about international printmaking practice. However the Impact conferences, based in the University of Western England in Bristol, UK and held every two years each time in a new venue, strongly support discussion of the artist's book practice. A large group of Australian printmakers travelled to Santander, Spain, in September 2018 for the tenth international IMPACT printmaking conference. Many of them exhibited artists' books and spoke about their book practices, including Bridget Hillebrand, Tim Mosely, Paul Uhlmann & Marcella Polain, Clyde McGill, Ana Paula Estrada, Caren Florance, Marian Crawford, Gali Weiss, Julie Barratt, Rowan Conroy, Susanna Castleden, Monika Lukowska, Melanie McKee, Layli Raksha, Ann Schilo & Lydia Trethewey, Vanessa Wallace, and Josephine Duffy.

## **SELECTED RECENT EVENTS**

The State Library of Victoria (SLV) has supported the artist's book genre for several decades through exhibitions, fellowships and collection.

Fellowships: Artist's book practitioners who have recently received SLV Creative Fellowships are Petr Herel, Ros Atkins, William Kelly, Martin King, Kyoko Imazu.

Exhibitions: The 2018 exhibition *Self-made: zines & artists' books*, first shown at the SLV<sup>4</sup> toured regional galleries in New South Wales (NSW) and Queensland until January 2020. SLV mounted an exhibition of recent artists' books by Gracia Haby & Louise Jennison in the Dome Reading Room: *Looped: Artists' Books in the Round*.

The library has featured a number of artist's book practitioners in its ongoing exhibition *World of the Book*: Angela Cavaliere, Deanna Hitti, Dorothy Herel, and Alex Selenitsch.

## COLLECTING

SLV has continued to acquire artists' books for its collection, including recent works by John Ryrie, Deanna Hitti, Peter Lyssiotis, Marian Crawford, Deborah Klein, Phil Day, Ros Atkins, Robert Colvin; and continued to acquire letterpress productions, including Wayzgoose Press, Pear Tree Press (NZ) and The Officina Athelstane (Qld)

The Sticky Institute, a shop and resource dedicated to zines, continues to run its annual Zine Fair. The 2019 Fair was in February at Melbourne Trades Hall. Artists' books were featured during Melbourne Rare Book Week, held annually in July, with presentations at SLV, and residencies at Athenaeum Library.

The Baillieu Library, University of Melbourne, mounted a significant exhibition 'Art of the Page' on International and Australian artists' books in 2017–18. The exhibition of works from the University of Melbourne's Rare Book Collection traced the links between the twentieth century European illustrated book tradition and the contemporary Australian context. Featuring works by Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, Joan Miro, and Sonia Delaunay among others, alongside local artists such as Petr Herel, Bruno Leti, Inge King, Peter Lyssiotis, and Angela Cavaliere.

Over the last five years the National Gallery of Victoria (NGV) has presented the Melbourne Art Book Fair, affiliated with Printed Matter, NY. A quick review of the 2019 Melbourne Art Book Fair's 86 table-holders reveals there were only a handful of book artists, a similar number of photobook publishers and a large contingent of zinesters and self-published magazines. Book distributors, bookshops, arts organisations, educational institutions, and art galleries held the bulk of the tables. Artists' books were not significantly represented. Artists who have previously attended the fair and who produce books selling for a higher price have backed away from this fair. The main reason given was that the public handle the books (occasionally causing unintentional damage) but do not purchase them. Interesting also is the retreat from the use of the term "artist book" towards "art book" (also by Printed Matter who championed the artist's book/democratic multiples from the 1960s). The boutique publishing and graphic design industry do not consider themselves to be working within the field of the artist's book.

## PUBLISHING

Based in Melbourne but with an international scope, Alan Loney initiated the publication of *Verso: A magazine for the book as a work of art*,<sup>5</sup> published 2015–2018. It promoted discourse about the materiality of the book. This publication was supported by a devoted team of volunteers. (See *Codex Papers* Vol. 1 2018 p.44–49)

## REGIONAL VICTORIA

In country Victoria, Dianne Longley, formerly from Adelaide, is now based in Trentham; David Frazer (Castlemaine) illustrates his books with wood engravings along with letterpress text printed local printers like Lawrence Finn (Trentham). In Geelong David Delafiora focuses on alternative art practices, in particular mail art, and practices outside

the traditional gallery system. He is the coordinator of the neo-fluxus network, Field Study, and publisher of KART, Wipe, ReSite, and the Journal of Field Study International.

## **NEW SOUTH WALES (NSW)**

*Monica Oppen*

Formal teaching of the artist's book in NSW institutions has been minimal. The art schools that were merged with universities thirty years ago are now suffering severe funding cuts. The schools have lost their autonomy, their right to select students. Sydney College of the Arts has lost its premises. Similarly at Newcastle University and Southern Cross University in Lismore the art schools have been struggling to keep studios open and the breadth and diversity of courses available and artist teachers on the staff. An exception to this is the National Art School (NAS) in Sydney which, for over a decade, fought off mergers to bigger universities and this year announced that the NSW Government had recognized the school as a Significant Cultural Institution with a guaranteed forty-five year lease at its current premises.

Whether an art school has course units focusing on the book depends very much on the interest of faculty. At UNSW Art and Design Michael Kempson had an annual book arts/artist's book unit taught by Rosemarie Jeffers-Palmer but in spite of the unit's popularity lack of funds have seen the course discontinued. The printmaking department at NAS offers a second year three-week unit on the book, a mere taster given the breadth of the field.

Away from the institutions, the NSW Guild of Craft Bookbinders offers the fullest teaching program for those wanting to learn bookbinding.<sup>6</sup>

In Mount Kembla, south of Sydney, artist Liz Jeneid offers regular art courses including the artist's book in her studio. She has instigated two artists' book exhibitions at the local University of Wollongong library.

## **COLLECTING**

Even though the State Library of NSW (SLNSW) has been collecting books by artists and private presses for many decades, it has been late in distinguishing the artist's book as a distinct area of collection. With changes in staff this is shifting. All state libraries show preference for publications made by artists who are resident in their state. SLNSW is no exception, however where other state libraries have shrinking funds and support for 'unusual' artists' books, currently at the SLNSW funds and interest seem to be increasing.

The biggest private collection of artists' books in Australia is in Sydney, The Library for the Artist Book: Bibliotheca Librorum apud Artificum.<sup>7</sup> It currently holds over 1750 books.

## SELECTED RECENT EXHIBITIONS & EVENTS

*Book Club* Lake Macquarie City Art Gallery, 2017, was organized by Meryl Ryan. Rather than focusing solely on the artist's book, Ryan showed a fascination for the book as form and idea, and the show featured eleven artists and one writer.

PLACE, an exhibition organized by Liz Jeneid and Avril Makula, is the most recent and well-travelled exhibition supporting and prompting artists' books. The inaugural exhibition (August–October 2018) was in the Panizzi Room in the library at the University of Wollongong and the show will travel throughout NSW into 2020.

In July 2018 the Sydney Book Art Group had a group exhibition, *Re-Play*, along with a public panel discussion on the current state of artists' books. The panel consisted of Monica Oppen, Caren Florance, Sarah Bowen, and Liz Jeneid.

Wendy Ford at Manly Library, NSW has championed the artist's book through a biennial award, which will continue this year under a new name, the *Northern Beaches Artist's Book Award*. The award exhibition opened and winners were announced 2 May 2019 at the Manly Museum and Art Gallery.

In October 2019, the NSW Guild of Craft Bookbinders is holding a two-and-a-half day National Bookbinding Conference, *Bind 19*, to celebrate its fortieth anniversary.<sup>8</sup>

## CANBERRA AND THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY (ACT)

### *Caren Florance*

Containing the capital of Australia, the ACT is a small geographic region with a rich artist's book history dating from the late 1970s to present. The Graphic Investigations Workshop (1978–1998) within the Canberra School of Art (CSA) had an experimental pedagogy that made extensive use of the affordances of the book as an art form. Currently, a practical course on 'The Book as Art' and 'Typography: Text in Art' are taught for one semester each year within the Printmedia & Drawing Workshop of the ANU School of Art + Design (former CSA).<sup>9</sup>

The Canberra Institute of Technology's collections include zines and books as part of their visual art teaching. The Centre for Creative and Cultural Research within the Faculty of Arts & Design, University of Canberra, has a strong interest in the artist's book, particularly in regards to collaborative work with poets.

Short workshops are regularly taught by the Canberra Guild of Craft Bookbinders (CCBG), which has a strong focus on traditional bindings and also alternative structures. Occasional workshops are taught by the Belconnen and Tuggeranong Arts Centres and by Megalo Studios + Gallery, an open-access printmaking studio.

## COLLECTING

The ACT is home to a number of national institutions. The National Library of Australia (NLA)<sup>10</sup> and the National Gallery of Australia (NGA)<sup>11</sup> both have an extensive collection of fine press and artists' books, along with zines and other printed matter. The

Canberra Museum and Gallery (CMAG) and the ACT Heritage Library also collect local books and zines.

#### SELECTED RECENT EXHIBITIONS & EVENTS

Artists' books are regularly included in exhibitions around the region. The CCBG have an annual showcase of work called *Guild*;<sup>12</sup> Megalo has a book exhibition every few years, and there are often books in the SOAD Graduation Exhibition every Nov/Dec. In April 2017 Caren Florance had a solo exhibition of books to complete her PhD, called *Reading Spaces*.<sup>13</sup> The last dedicated survey of ACT bookmaking was in 2013, with the exhibition *100% Books*, organized by Caren Florance and Mary-Anne Mussared, and put together for Canberra's centenary celebrations.<sup>14</sup>

#### QUEENSLAND

*Doug Spowart, Helen Cole, Alicia Stephenson*

The State Library of Queensland has one of the largest artist's book collections in the country, until recently collecting works by both Australian and international artists. The collection was heavily used by students and artists and in displays and promotional tours. In 2008 a major exhibition of the collection, *Freestyle Books*, was organized with an associated conference.

With funding from the Siganto Foundation the Library instituted a program of artist's book fellowships, seminars, and lectures and workshops with international practitioners. From 2013 to 2017, research fellowships were awarded with the aim of increasing the theoretical discourse on artists' books within Australia. Doug Spowart (*Photos + Books: Towards a nomenclature for the photograph in the artists' book and the photo-book*), Victoria Cooper (*Liminal moments at the edges: reading the montage in artists' books*) and Lyn Ashby (*The nature of stories that are made possible through the medium of the artist's book*) presented the outcome of their fellowships at public seminars. During the same period, Creative Fellowships were awarded to Jan Davis, Julie Barratt, Clyde McGill, Ana Paula Estrada, Marian Crawford, and Peter Charuk to each create an artist's book inspired by the collections of the State Library. From 2012 to 2017, international artists Keith Smith and Scott McCarney (USA), Susan King (USA), Amir Brito Cador (Brazil), Guy Begbie (UK), and Helen Douglas (UK) were invited to lecture about their work and to present workshops and master classes. These were rare and valuable opportunities for local practitioners.

Unfortunately, the State Library of Queensland has now taken a different direction and the artists' books collection is no longer a priority. There is no specifically allocated staff, acquisitions have reduced, and access to the collection is much more restricted than it once was.

The Noosa Regional Gallery on the Sunshine Coast was an important venue both for exhibition of artists' books and gatherings of their creators. From 1999 until 2008





The World of the Book. 2019. Permanent display (updated annually) at the State Library Victoria. Melbourne, Victoria. Photograph: State Library Victoria.



Siganto Foundation white glove event. 2015. State Library Queensland, Brisbane, Queensland. From left: Christene Drewe, Helen Cole, Jeanette Garrad. Photograph: Doug Spowart.



100%: Books by Canberra Artists. 2013. Watson Arts Centre, Canberra, ACT.



Books.06: Works of imagination, Celebrating 10 years of artists books. 2010. Noosa Regional Gallery, Noosa, Queensland.



2018 Libris Award. 2018. Artspace Mackay, Mackay, Queensland. Photograph: Jim Cullen.



Festival of the Photocopier. 2017. Annual zine fair organised by Sticky Institute. Melbourne Town Hall, Melbourne, Victoria. Photograph: Doug Spowart.





Treasures from the Graphic Investigation Workshop, 2013. Australian National University, School of Art. Menzies Library, Australian National University, Canberra, ACT. Photograph: Caren Florance.

exhibitions with entries invited internationally were arranged. The early exhibitions were one of very few Australian venues apart from Noreen Grahame's Artists Book Fairs for book artists to show their work. Noosa Regional Gallery also organized seminars on the artist's book from 2005 to 2008.

In recent years, two Artists Book Brisbane Events (ABBE), coordinated by Dr Tim Mosely at the Queensland College of Art (QCA) at Griffith University have facilitated a significant connection between the American and European scenes with guest speakers like Brad Freeman (*Journal of Artists' Books*, Columbia University), Sarah Bodman (*The Blue Notebook*, Centre for Fine Print Research, The University of the West of England), and Ulrike Stoltz and Uta Schneider (<usus>, Germany). The conferences also have included a place for discussion and review of the discipline by academics and emergent artist practitioners from Masters and Doctoral programs. These two ABBE conferences have provided a platform for academic discourse. Artist's book fairs were also held in conjunction with the conferences. Tim reports that staffing changes at QCA has put the ABBE conferences on the back burner for the time being, despite the art school itself and the printmaking department in particular bursting with students and actively making books. Also operating into the printmaking department under the direction of Mosely is a contemporary fine art publishing project associated with the print program at Queensland College of Art, dc3p.<sup>15</sup>

There are numerous galleries and studios throughout Brisbane and the surrounding regions—like Noosa—that host book arts production and exhibition activity. One notable studio is Studio West End, run by Adele Outteridge and the late Wim deVoss.

In far north Queensland, Artspace Mackay, under the initial directorship of Robert Heather, hosted the first of five Focus on Artists' Books Conferences in 2004 that brought the world's noteworthy practitioners and commentators on the discipline including Sarah Bodman, Marshall Weber, Keith Smith, and Scott McCarney and juxtaposed them with Australia's key practitioners. Those interested in artists' books gathered to participate in lectures, workshops, fairs and a solid community of practice developed. In 2006 Artspace Mackay added the Libris National Artists' Book Award that, with a few breaks, continues to be the premier curated artists' books exhibition and award in Australia. The current curator, Alicia Stevenson, reports:

Artspace Mackay celebrates and explores the medium of artists' books through our signature exhibition *The Libris Awards: The Australian Artists' Book Prize*, various programs and events and holds an ambitious long-term goal to publish our collection online.

The *Libris Awards* have been instrumental in cementing Artspace Mackay as a centre for artists' books. It attracts the latest and best works, introduces the gallery to new artists and provides an opportunity to acquire new works by leaders in the field for the collection. It ensures we keep abreast of what's happening in the world of artists' books and helps bridge the geographical gap we experience as a result of being located so far from our southern counterparts. The awards attract artists at all stages of their careers, emerging to established, and provides an opportunity for artists to exhibit works that may

not suit more specific curatorial rationales. An archive of past *Libris Awards* catalogues featuring finalists' works can be downloaded from the gallery's website, allowing artists and enthusiasts to track development and trends within the genre and enabling artists to connect meaningfully with their contemporaries.

Artspace Mackay is also working toward the long-term goal of online publication of the Mackay Regional Council Art Collection which includes over seven hundred artists' books. Despite resourcing challenges, the gallery remains committed and is currently undergoing foundational work to prepare the database for publication. The driver of this project is the myriad opportunities it provides for artists, art enthusiasts, curators researchers, education professionals and students through increased access to and awareness of this very unique and special collection.

There are a number of printers and book artists operating through central and far north Queensland. Notable mentions are Derek Lamb (Officina Athelstane) in Rockhampton, and Sheree Kinlyside (Red Rag Press) in Townsville.

## **SOUTH AUSTRALIA**

Vicki Reynolds

Artists' books and hand bookbinding are flying a little under the radar currently in South Australia. Adelaide College of the Arts still teaches one semester of book arts for printmaking major students undertaking the Bachelor of Creative Arts, Visual Arts. This covers anything from 'zines and concertina books to Western style stitched books and altered books. Letterpress stands alongside this semester of study.

Many artists in SA produce artists' books but very few would have this as a major part of their practice. Recently at an exhibition at Gallery 1855 in Adelaide, *Collaborative Variations*, well-known makers of artists' books Christobel Kelly and Lorelei Medcalf collaborated to produce *Animal Brides*, a series of monoprints with text, with the originals displayed on the wall and the collection made into a book. Other artists who include book arts in their practice are Anna Austin, Jake Holmes, and Vicki Reynolds. Reynolds produces handmade books made from her own handmade paper, and has been working on a series, *Weeds of the Seasons*, books made with letterpress and nature prints utilizing the same weeds that grow in both Fabriano, Italy and Willunga, South Australia during different seasons of the year.

## **WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

Book-making is part of the printmaking course at Edith Cowan University, headed by Dr Paul Uhlmann. Uhlmann has a personal imprint called Trembling Hands and a collaborative imprint called Fold. Printmaker Vanessa Wallace, also at Edith Cowan, prints books as part of her practice.



A major WA book figure is artist Clyde McGill, twice-winner of the Artspace Mackay Libris Award, whose artists' books incorporate printmaking, drawing, sound, and performance.<sup>16</sup> His work *Witness* was included with other Australian works by Peter Lysiotis, Julie Barratt, Anne Twigg, Judy Watson, Gwen Harrison, and Sue Anderson in the international exhibition *The Politics of Place* co-curated by Monica Oppen and Alexander Campos at the Center for Book Arts in New York, January-March 2019.

#### SELECTED RECENT EXHIBITIONS & EVENTS

The annual *Fremantle Arts Centre Print Award* is a printmaking prize that allows artists to enter books.<sup>17</sup> This supports the pedagogical emphasis of bookmaking taught within printmaking departments around the nation.

*Between the Sheets* is an artist's book exhibition run biannually by David Forrest and Janis Nedela of Gallery East.<sup>18</sup> Gallery East has established a connection with Australian Galleries, Melbourne and the exhibition now has a second showing in Victoria.

#### TASMANIA

The Printmaking Department of the University of Tasmania in Hobart is run by Jan Hogan, graduate of the ANU School of Art + Design, and the book is encouraged as a vehicle for print work. The school also has a full letterpress workshop. One emerging postgraduate artist is Antonia Aitken, who uses the book as part of her environmental focus on walking and landscape. Other artists of note who work with the book are Denise Campbell, Penny Carey Wells, Ruth Hadlow, and Milan Milojevic.

#### NEWS FROM NEW ZEALAND

*Paul Thompson*

Dan Tait-Jamison, secretary of the Print Museum in Wellington, convinced the board to agree to setting up a Centre for the Book Arts in Wellington. The Museum itself supplies cast fonts as a source of income. In 2019, Tara McLeod of Pear Tree Press in Auckland (probably NZ's foremost typographer/letterpress printer) will have a book published about his adventures in print.<sup>19</sup> Paul Thompson ran a week-long course on *Altered Books* at the Victoria University of Wellington Rare Book School at the end of January, 2019.

The Association of Book Crafts supports bookbinding and related arts in New Zealand with chapters around the country located in Auckland, Christchurch, Dunedin, Northland, and Wellington.<sup>20</sup>

In 2019, *Thinking\_Unfolding*, an exhibition of artists' books organised by the Print Council Aotearoa New Zealand<sup>21</sup> will promote the genre of artists' books. Many NZ artists create bookworks but there are few exhibition opportunities in NZ.

## **FINAL OVERVIEW**

### **THEN**

*Noreen Grahame*

The 1994 artist's book fair I organized came at a time when institutions were building their collections and when there was heightened interest by artists in making them. This was the first artist's book fair to be held in Australia and was generously hosted by the State Library of Queensland. The fair offered the opportunity for university departments to represent artists' books made by their students. They included Southern Cross University, Sydney College of the Arts, University of Southern Queensland, University of Wollongong, Monash University Studio Series, Lyre Bird Press/James Cook University, Griffith University/Queensland College of Art, Graphic Investigations Workshop/ANU. Books from these institutions were predominately limited edition books produced in printmaking departments. Individual entries tended to be unique books, many of which were sculptural books. Also included were artists' books by international artists produced in editions of over 100 or higher. For the most part these books offered a stark contrast to the contemporary Australian approach of artist's book production.

### **NOW**

*Des Cowley*

Changes to staffing and budgets of several major institutions have impacted the acquisition of artists' books over the past few years. A number of key staff who took a strong interest in the field have moved on; and as well several institutions have cut their budgets for special collections. In the main, public institutions have been the main buyers of artists' books, rather than private patrons, and these changes to staff and budgets have possibly impacted, in particular, the number of deluxe artists' books being produced. There has been a noticeable drop-off in production of late. I have always said that the artist's book arena is a fragile economy, with most artists relying on a potential six to eight institutional sales for a deluxe book. If the institutional sales fall below that, it makes it difficult to subsidize the work.

There has been a discernible shift in local artists making inexpensive multiples and zines, as opposed to deluxe print-based books. This shift has been fostered by the excitement of the various zine and art books fairs that have been inaugurated in recent years, which offer increased sales of 'affordable' artists' books/zines to private buyers. It is also possible to explore a range of ideas in a short space of time, in comparison to the duration required to make a deluxe work; and also the possibility of constructing all parts of a book, which prevents the need to pay for a binder, for example, and keeps costs to a minimum. Other things that may have squeezed things is a decline in the number of letterpress printers and binders available to collaborate in the production of artists' books.

There has been an increased blurring between categories such as artist's book/ photobook/zine. There is more fluidity with a cross-fertilization taking place between artists/photographers/designers/zinemakers, all drawing sustenance from these various practices. This also feeds into possible distribution networks for multiples and low-cost artists' books via fairs, independent artist-run vendors such as World Food Books, Perimeter, or Sticky Institute.

## **THE FUTURE**

*Doug Spowart*

Ultimately the question is: what is the status of the artist's book in Australia at this time? My impression is that one of the artist's book key strengths is its closeness to the printmaking discipline and the connection between makers, critics and commentators, educators, journals, collectors, and patrons. As the nexus has been the tertiary academic environment and collecting libraries, both of which are fighting for their relevance in a changing education and library world, are we at a defining moment in the history and the future of the artist's book in this country?

## **CONTRIBUTORS**

**Dr Caren Florance** teaches The Book as Art at the ANU School of Art + Design, and Visual Communications at the University of Canberra. Her imprint is Ampersand Duck.

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## ENDNOTES

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9. <http://soad.cass.anu.edu.au/disciplines/printmedia-drawing>. Accessed 17.3.19.
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## **CODEX POLARIS**

By Megan Adie and Eva Hejdström

Articles about artists' books from:

Denmark · Finland · Iceland · Norway · Sweden with Faroe and Åland Islands

### NOTES ON BIBLIOTEK NORDICA

It is an exciting time for artists' books in the Nordic countries. Although individual artists have long been working in the field, there hasn't been much visibility or awareness of the medium. Collections in Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden include printmaking, but rarely artists' books; commercial and independent book designers are thriving, but they have little interest in hand-made publications. Institutions and fairs have been started over the last few years, but are isolated from each other. Recently, however, this is starting to change, and a broader interest in making and collecting artists' books is beginning to take shape. Among the individuals and groups working toward this goal is Codex Polaris, co-founded by the British-born artist Imi Maufe. Raised and educated in a country with a strong and active artist's book community, Imi, who lives in Norway, was aware of the need for a resource of works made by artists in the Nordic countries. She envisioned a portable library that can be shown to the international community but also made available in the national libraries of each of the countries represented in the collection, so that artists, curators, and collectors could freely browse the books on their home turf. The project is intended above all to be a means for making personal and professional connections, bringing people together with similar aims who are working in a shared medium.

The artists in this collection were all requested to make a book to contribute to this common project, with no specific theme, apart from the suggestion to use their local language, geography, and culture as a starting point for the works.

A veritable outpouring of talent was received: production techniques, texts, and incredible generosity in the form of hand-printed, hand-bound works of art. The diversity of approaches came in astonishing breadth. Rather than looking for similarities or themes in the work itself, the project is interested in how individual artists might think about their nationality, heritage, and identity as citizens and residents of the Nordic countries. What are their politics? What birds and plants do they see on a walk? How is their personal experience different from what it might be if they lived in Athens, Hong Kong, or Sao Paolo? The answer is explored through the personal vision and practice of a diverse group of artists living and working in the Nordic region.





An artist's book exists as a portable work of art; as an antidote to technology, or, at other times its champion. They are time-based, narrative objects, with text, or without, made as multiples, or unique. They are meant to be read in many ways: via their content, but also their structure, materials, and workmanship. The book has not disappeared from popular culture, nor have fine art objects like paintings and sculptures. Artists who paint may also make books; a book may be considered a sculpture. An artist interested in rhythm, pacing, and narrative may gravitate to making books because of the range of possibilities for exploring those aspects of making art.

We do, of course, all suffer the joys and disappointments of the digital age. While it is possible to find strangers and make a community on the internet, bonds are made in physical participation toward a shared goal. If *Bibliotek Nordica* was created out of a desire to see artists' books from the Nordic countries collected in one place, it quickly became clear that the larger accomplishment was the community of artists that were formed by the project.

The Nordic countries, in the popular imagination, are joined by a design aesthetic, an interest in craft, and a shared conception of having progressive politics, operating within the economic safety of social democracy. We wondered, will the books in this collection share these similarities? Will there be themes that run throughout?

The books are in Danish, Finnish, Icelandic, Norwegian, Swedish, and English, while some contain no text at all. Though varied, several conceptual and aesthetic themes are present in multiple books. Some, including those by Mette-Sofie D. Ambeck, Alt Går Bra, Jennifer Bergkvist, Leif Elggren, and Sarah Jost, have a political message. The books of Leise Dich Abrahamsen and Randi Annie Strand have no text, and are pure visual explorations. There are maps of places, as in Tero Juuti's book, and of memories, as in the books of Ingrid Rundberg and Anna Snædís Sigmarsdóttir. Some, like the works of Bent Kvisgaard and Thomas Bullinger, use historical sources as their content. The landscape is referred to, overtly or implicitly, as in Eeva Liisa Isomaa and Christel Hansson's books. Others explore language, like Eva Hejdström, process, like Alistair MacIntyre and Ulla West, and heritage, like Karen Helga Maurstig. There are abstract books, like that of Vera Ohlsson, and books using humor to tackle big topics, like those of Eric Saline and John Rasimus.

The books, all handmade, include an array of printmaking techniques: letterpress, risograph and digital printing, screen print, intaglio, wood engraving, linocut, dying, sewing, and folding. One artist melted molded ice filled with iron shavings and pigment onto watercolor paper. The books' techniques and formats stretch the boundaries of what can fit into the rigid constraints of A6 paper size. Some are single sheets; others fold out to much larger sizes; others still are made up of several elements, housed in a wide array of binding techniques, from a simple stitch to more complex and historical structures.

Their diversity demonstrates the range of experiences present in the Nordic countries. The aim of this collection is not to try and show the similarities present amongst

artists of this region, but instead to create a meeting point, a community, and to bring validity to a form that has been up to now largely overlooked in these countries.

—Megan Adie

København, Danmark, 2018

**Megan Adie** is a Copenhagen-based book artist, printmaker, and professional musician. Her books are published under the imprint Aviary Press, and can be found in public and private collections including the Library of Congress, Oxford University, and the Royal Danish Library. Since 2012, Megan has co-run a residency program for printmakers called Edition/Basel, hosting eighty artists from twenty countries at druckwerk studio in Basel, Switzerland. Megan is principal bass and violone with the Danish early music ensemble Concerto Copenhagen.

## COMING TO BOOKS

*A Conversation With Book Artists in Malmö, Sweden*

Malmö, Sweden is home to a collective printmaking studio called Konstnärernas Kollektiva Grafikverkstad, the Artists' Collective Printmaking Workshop. Among its members are four women, Christel Hansson, Eva Hejdström, Jeannette Lindstedt, and Vera Ohlsson, who have been working with artists' books for many years. This conversation, initiated by the American artist and printmaker Megan Adie in December 2018, describes their personal experience with artists' books in a region of the world that has had limited exposure to the form.

**Megan Adie:** How did you all first come to making artists' books?

**Jeannette Lindstedt:** I started in 2004. I had it in mind to make books for a long time, but I'd never done it, and as I was going to Japan I had to have some little gift with me. So I made a little token, a little black book called 5x5. It had small prints in it, which I made in linocut. When I came home from Japan, a number of us were invited to exhibit at the Ystad Museum [in Southern Sweden], where Thomas Millroth was director at the time. So I made my first big book. It was a case in wood with book cloth on it, that I bought in Japan, and a top to close. There were eleven loose pages in the box. Then I started, this was it. It was really the thing for me.

**Christel Hansson:** It was the same exhibition in Ystad, we exhibited together, and I started to examine: What is a book? I was really going to the bottom with it. I thought, it's something you hold in your hand, it must be like a hand. It could be a book of prayer. And the thing about it is, you have the movement when you turn the pages, and then I found out the size of it, and the form. It was interesting because Thomas Millroth wanted us to use the rest of the museum. There is a long corridor with seven doors, and so I had the number of the pages: 7 + 7. I made a concertina, printed on big paper, and

folded it. You could take it out to exhibit it. [The format] was an investigation for me. I hadn't seen so much. It was just things I discovered, the concertina and folding. I didn't know so much about paper grain direction. I think I did it right anyhow!

**Vera Ohlsson:** I did my first book in 1983 in my art school printmaking department. I did it together with two other people there. We knew absolutely nothing about making books, or how much work it would take us. We decided to do ten images each, and ten pages of text, we asked the teacher to write the text and he said yes. We started to print it and it took us half a year to do the printing. I don't really know why we wanted to make a book. We decided to do it without knowing anything. We just got along with it. It was a lot of work but finally when it was finished we sort of missed that work. But then after that, I was in exhibitions with Thomas Millroth in Ystad, he had a show titled *Wasserwegen, Water Ways*. We continued to make books and it has been a lot of making through the years. And also the title of my first book, in 1983, it was *Traces (Tecken)* and that is a title that has followed me for many years, I have done many prints with the title *Traces*. Book arts is connected with printmaking but it also connects with book history and paper history, and that has become a more important part of it now for me, I study with some old guys in Lund who are doing these historical book things, for example leather stamping, leather bindings, parchment.

**Eva Hjedström:** I came into it from a slightly different angle. I studied painting at Glasgow School of Art but I did my own sketchbooks all the time, and I worked a lot with papers, doing collages and things, so it felt quite a natural transition to make. A friend of mine said to me, I think you need to do a bookbinding course. I went to my first course in Edinburgh, I made a hardcover book and was very proud of it. And I continued to study bookbinding, both fine bookbinding, and also more innovative bookbinding and book making techniques. I discovered Hedi Kyle. And I found I can work with artistic content in the book form. At first I was mostly interested in the structures and the sculptural qualities of the books. I did a bit of printmaking when I was a student at Glasgow School of Art, and I'd done printmaking a long time before I'd applied to art school—etching, drypoint, things like that—but it wasn't until I actually came back home to Sweden, and came to KKV Grafik, and I held a course here in artists' books and innovative structures, that I rekindled my interest in printmaking. When I think about it now maybe there is a thread that goes back into printmaking. But I also work with collages and things, and simple methods like photocopying. It has developed over very many years.

**MA:** Do you think that if you had not gone to the UK, do you think you still would have been exposed to artists' books? If, for example, you'd stayed in Sweden?

**EH:** I don't know. I think I had to go to school in the UK.

**MA:** The UK is a place that has a long and very active history of engagement with book arts.

**JL:** I'm also a printmaker, that's my specialty, and I went for school for five years here in Malmö, after I had gone to school in Copenhagen before, and we never heard about artists' books. For five years, it was printmaking, printmaking. This was in the '80s. And I went to school in Copenhagen '62-'66, and we didn't talk about artists' books.

**EH:** I think book arts, or artists' books, have been a very underground movement in Sweden. In Denmark it's way ahead of us, in terms of having a tradition of it, but it's not very established here. It has been happening here for a long time, but very few people have been involved with it.

**VO:** It's very narrow.

**EH:** Very narrow. Schools haven't been involved with it, or anything like that. So I think the chances of being exposed to it are limited. But I think it's growing, there's an interest for it.

**MA:** Did you introduce a number of people to artists' books, when you came back to Sweden?

**EH:** No, I think a lot of people here knew about it.

**JL:** We had courses with Vera before.

**VO:** They were very simple courses, about grain direction, and a little bit about folding and sewing also. Very, very simple. I didn't want to be a teacher in that field because I thought that there were others who could do it more or better. And actually when you came, Eva, I wanted to go to a course, an evening course, adult education, that you were teaching. But it was canceled because not enough people signed up. So I asked them if we could have the course here. And here there were like ten people who wanted to go. So that's how it happened.

**JL:** After Vera had her course—

**VO:** It was in 2010 or 2011? I started here in 2009.

**JL:** Very recently. Vera said [to the KKV members], why don't we do something together? And nobody said anything. And then I said—Yes!! I want to!

**VO:** We couldn't do something together in the large group at that time because the skills were so very diverse. But [in a smaller group] we decided to do a book at once, I think.

**JL:** Yes, we did. And we started Monday, and *schoop!* There it was.

**VO:** It was not only, *There it was*. It was also hard work.

**JL:** We decided a very complicated size, narrow and long, and it was a Japanese binding, so it could open, with a book cloth cover, and I'd never done that before. There was glue all over! I hated it! I thought, I'll never manage it! But I did. And I've done many since. And so we did it, and it's very nice book.

**CH:** I think it's interesting that we were all inspired by Thomas Millroth. He's the only one here in Skåne—

**EH:** I think in Sweden, actually—

**CH:** He's the one who was really moving ahead with artists' books. He's a collector. But there's also another guy, called Leif Eriksson, and he had a wonderful exhibition in Simrishamn, with all these artists' books. And he's wild! It was maybe in the beginning of 1999? He is a collector, but he also made interesting books that were controversial. He has been into this since the '50s. He's an artist, very conceptual.

**JL:** I remember when Thomas Millroth organized his *Wasserwegen*.

**VO:** That was in 1998. In Østerlen and Ystad. He also has a lot of contact with the former East German scene. A lot of books in his collections are from them.

**JL:** We had a later exhibition in the Cloister museum in Ystad, we had a nice exhibition, and had another at Malmö Konsthallen.

**MA:** When do you think you first started using the term artists' books or book arts? How did you become aware of the bigger world of artists' books?

**VO:** It was from Thomas Millroth.

**EH:** He's writing a book about it, I think he's been doing it for a few years now.

**VO:** It's an ongoing story, getting bigger and bigger.



**CH:** I think it's so interesting with this form, because you can develop ideas. Suddenly you can get an idea you wouldn't have in your normal work. Because of that simple word, *book*. I can be totally free to make *My book*. It can be a brick book, or a concertina or whatever—and this form can make me free to think, in one way or another. I think it's very inspiring, with that simple idea: I'm going to make a book. And that gives me space, in a way.

**MA:** What is the state of book collecting in Sweden?

**CH:** There are no libraries who collect artists' books here in Sweden, just private collectors. So now we are starting a small library here at the KKV Grafik in Malmö, and I hope that that will develop into something, I don't know what, but maybe it could grow, slowly. We have many people here who make books, we don't have money to buy books but it could be a sort of library. We don't have so much space, but we should try to get bigger location here, to develop all this about books.

**MA:** Why are you taking this initiative to do more concerning book arts at KKV?

**CH:** We are interested!

**EH:** And I think it's needed, a place is needed that really is serious about putting resources into artists' books, and wanting to work onto it.

**JL:** It's close to printmaking. You can make multiples.

**EH:** I think it'll be an amazing resource in the future. I think that if you are making books, and if you're making an edition, you want those books to get good homes, come out in the world, be seen, have someone really cherish it and looking at it. I think it's a small price if you give KKV Grafik one copy, you know it's getting a good home here, it will be looked at, and it will not be forgotten. It's valuable.

**VO:** We can already see that the space that we've got is too small for this, so I really think you have to put up a goal, to make life also more exciting for yourself. And this is a very good goal to have, to develop a book arts place here in KKV.

**CH:** As a graphic artist making prints, suddenly you can add text. And it grows. So you can express yourself in a wider way. And it doesn't have to be your own text, it can be another's text. So with text it grows in your mind, it's an expression that is richer.

**EH:** You can tell stories. You can tell a literal narrative, or something that is quite random. You can tell stories with a picture as well—there doesn't have to be text in it, but

there's something about it, as a book, it's more intimate, how it's displayed, the three-dimensional qualities of it, and how you're actually reading it. You're telling stories either with or without words.

**VO:** I think it's important to mention that we [at KKV] have an artist exchange with other countries. One is Germany, North Germany (former East) and the place is called *Lukas*. They have also a great interest in arts, printmaking, and text, that's the main subject for them, and has been for a long time. And the other is Women's Studio Workshop, and they are one of North America's biggest publishers of artists' books. And it is very important to keep that going.

**MA:** If you could see into the future, in five years for example, what's happening with artists' books at KKV and in Sweden?

**JL:** It's growing.

**CH:** We have the whole corridor here, with not just one room but several rooms, where we could have, for example, a nice library with artists' books, that we could show people. And then we could have a space for bookbinding and have workshops with that, so we could have this [gesturing to the presses] part of the location as the "black" part and the other [gesturing across the hall] is the "white" part. Plus the glue room! It's interesting with the printmaking—young people are coming here now from different places, in particular Spain, and they are working here—so it's becoming an international space. If we could have a little more foundation money here we could do so many things.

**EH:** I think it's a question of actually teaching people about artists' books, as something that exists, that has a critical history. It's important, showing what an artist's book can actually be. So for young people today and those thinking of becoming an artist, if we had a resource here, of an artist library, you could invite groups up to show them and talk about it and spread information about it. That is very important to do. If you don't know anything about it, how would you become interested in it? We aren't lucky enough to have courses like you have in the States specifically for book arts and printmaking. So I think it's crucial to bring young people in, have a workshop here. Even for kids still in school.

**CH:** I want to say one more thing before we end. I think it's so interesting to get to know about CODEX through making a book [for *Bibliotek Nordica*]. It's wonderful that you invited us to make a book, that there are so many of us that are in this Nordic library. I'm very happy with that.

**EH:** I think BN is a great initiative. It's great to show that things are happening here in the Nordic countries as well. Even though it's on a much smaller scale than what's happening in the States, there is definitely something that's happening.

**CH:** It's easier when this is happening to get people interested here. We have BN, CODEX in the States, why don't we also have library collectors here? Our interest goes to the States, but it also comes back, creating a circle.

**JL:** We also need to continue the Malmö Artist Book Biennale.\* I didn't see as many artists as I would have liked to see there. They didn't even come to visit it, because it was not known really.

**EH:** There needed to be much more information about it. The biggest daily newspaper here didn't even write about it. All this, it really needs to be seen much more, and information should be spread much more about it. We will continue with it. It cannot die after just one time.

*\*The Malmö Art Book Biennale had its inaugural year in 2018.*

**Eva Hejdström** is a Swedish artist and bookbinder/book artist working mainly with Artists' Books, drawing, collages and printmaking. She studied Fine Art at Glasgow School of Art in Scotland where she lived for twenty years. After her studies at GSA, she continued to study bookbinding, both fine binding and more innovative bookbinding. She was a project group member for MABB and will continue to participate in the arrangements for the next biennial in 2020. As well as her own practice as an artist, she teaches art/design courses in the south of Sweden and Copenhagen, particularly bookbinding and Artists' Book projects. She was invited to make an Artist's Book for the Bibliotek Nordica which was shown at the CODEX book fair (2019). She will participate and exhibit her work at Bristol Artist's Book event (BABE) at the end of March 2019.

## IN THE BEST POSSIBLE WAY

*Thomas Bullinger & Bent Kvisgaard*

**Megan Adie:** Could you please describe your careers?

**Bent Kvisgaard:** In 1968 I was qualified in the letterpress technique—as a typesetter—followed by qualification as a master printer 1972. I had lifelong work at newspapers, publishers, advertising agencies, and printing offices—and have seen the changes in methods of production from lead type letterpress to offset and digital communication. From the very beginning I found working with letterpress interesting and inspiring: the products, the techniques, the history of letterpress... After only a decade things changed more and more into photsetting and offset techniques. In 1980 I started to collect lead type and printing equipment to raise my own letterpress printshop, “OFFICINA typographica KVISGAARDENSIS,” for leisure-time activities.

**Thomas Bullinger:** I have worked for more than twenty years at an art museum in Viborg. During these years, the museum has worked with a printing company in the city, and with Bent Kvisgaard as a typographer and organizer. Bent and I have for all these years produced posters, printed matter, programs, books, hundreds of them—in offset. Together we have developed a typographic style that corresponded to a museum’s high demands and its classic subjects. After our retirement, we have been able to continue this work with our own topics.

**MA:** When did you make your first book that could be described as an artist’s book? What brought you to the medium?

**BK:** Around 2007, together with others—and in particular Thomas Bullinger as an everlasting inspiring collaborator—we collectively printed several items that could be defined as artists’ books—and it was obvious: I had the equipment and could operate it, and others wanted to participate—and learn.

**TB:** Our first joint work was an experimental BASEL book with Kurt Schwitter’s funny essay about the Rhine and about Basel’s people. With woodcut and linocut in colors and other experiments in a limited number. But it was also a beginning with a bang!

**MA:** Can you please describe the technical and artistic concerns you have in your own work?

**TB:** Literary quality and good quality book design are basic conditions for my work with letterpress. I choose texts in different languages: Danish, German, Swedish, English. Sometimes I print bilingual. Authors I have printed include Derek Walcott, Inger Christensen, Georges Perec, Wsewolod Iwanow, Paul Celan, Jean Paul, Nelly Sachs, Gunnar Ekelöf, and Erik Lindegren. Hand-setting, letterpress, intaglio, and relief printing are my media. Always in collaboration with Bent, who is the secure typographic organizer.

**BK:** I think it’s important to practice the basic rules of typography in the best possible way, in relation to both the traditions and the aesthetic matters—and additionally to use letters for experiments with form and color. Wood- and linocut have always been of special interest.

**MA:** Do you feel you’re part of a community of artists and printers making artists’ books in Denmark?

**BK:** Except from a few titles, made with friends in Berlin and Basel, Thomas and I mostly have worked on our own with non-commercial editions in “New Graphic Society”—up to now about twenty titles. In 2018 I was invited by Imi Maufe and Lina

Nordenström's "Nordic Letterpress Collaboration" to participate in "Posted/Unposted," a book art project from the Nordic Countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden) with special emphasis on letterpress printing—followed by the actual Bibliotek Nordica project. I'm a member of the Printing Museum "Vingaards Officin" in Viborg, with an almost complete collection of running equipment—just like in the 1950s; my primary tasks are book design and study of the history of the art of printing and typography.

**TB:** Danish is a small language area. Printing books in Denmark means small print runs, even for the large publishers. For book art, it can never become a commercial matter—you print book art exclusively, *con amore*. I even print books in different languages, sometimes bilingual, which gives a slightly larger circle of readers. Important workshops or printers for this collaboration are Bent's officin in Løgstrup, Denmark, and druckwerk in Basel, where Marcel Mayer is the artistic and technical leader.

The NEW GRAPHIC SOCIETY, of which we are both members, gathers writers, translators, visual artists, book graphic artists, and typographers. We come from different countries and contribute with very different topics. We stick to classic bookmaking with especially the production of books. But the group's variegated and diverse composition means that our workshop and our creations do not become narrow.

**BK:** Some years ago—in Basel—I joined this international group of like-minded people from Switzerland, Germany, and USA during a couple of sessions—and they all later visited Thomas and me in Denmark.

**MA:** You both have your own workshops. Can you describe the process of building up the machinery and equipment necessary for producing your own books?

**BK:** The printing presses: An Eickhoff-proofing press from 1955, a Korrex Nürnberg press from 1970, a tabletop proofing press, and four hand platens from the period 1890 to about 1980. A comprehensive collection of lead type and a range of wooden letters keeps the *fascination & pleasure of type, typography, typesetting and letterpress printing* alive today!

**TB:** With Bent's intervention, I have inherited good classical typefaces from the School of Book Crafts in Copenhagen. Later, some newer types came from Basel, later from a Danish printing house: Gill and Univers. I can easily settle for that. What may be missing, I must borrow from Bent or in Vingaards Officin in Viborg. In Germany, I bought a solid KORREX proofing press, and later came a tabletop platen and an intaglio press. More is not needed.



**MA:** How aware have you been of other people making artists' books in Denmark, or beyond?

**BK:** Until recently not so much—but during the last year or so, and especially because of *Posted/Unposted* and *Bibliotek Nordica*, I've made contact with a lot of like-minded people.

**TB:** The Danish Book Crafts Association and The Danish Bookbinding Competition have for many years been an important inspiration for me. The book production in Vingaards Officin in Viborg / Bogtrykmuseet is my closest professional neighbor. But in addition to Viborg, I am not a member of book art associations.

**MA:** Is there anything else related to your practice, history, or your experience of artists' books in the Nordic countries that you'd like to add?

**BK:** I consider that it is important to preserve and promote today's hand-made book as a work of art in the widest possible context and to pass on the technical knowledge to the artists involved—to keep the book alive, so to speak, as the important cultural-bearing element it is. It's important to ensure that letterpress printing not is going to be lost with our generation. At seventy-two years old, I am one of the last to have learned the craft in a professional context, so now we have to think about how we continue and how we can ensure that letterpress printing comes into the future, so the subject's 500-year history and skills will not be lost. It must be considered differently, if the younger generation wants to learn the art of printing. I feel that many artists are fascinated by the technique, and if they can use it as part of their artwork, then they will have an interest to learn it.

København, Ulstrup & Løgstrup, Denmark January 2019

**Thomas Bullinger** and **Bent Kvisgaard** are printers and book artists living near Viborg, Denmark.

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## **COLLECTING ARTISTS' BOOKS IN THE UNITED STATES AND IN EUROPE— AND THE CONSEQUENCES**

*By Susanne Padberg*

It is a wonderful opportunity for me, as an artist's book dealer in Europe who for many years has also been dealing in the United States, to write about my experiences regarding how artists' books are collected in both places, as well as about some consequences of this collecting. While trained as an art historian, for twenty-five years I have owned and run Galerie DRUCK & BUCH, a gallery specializing in international contemporary artists' books. The gallery is currently in Austria, on the Berggasse in Vienna next door to a famous address—the building where Sigmund Freud had his private practice.

In addition to the gallery, I also often curate exhibitions, not only in Europe, but also in the United States, most recently a show called “Freud on the Couch: Psyche in the Book,” with fifty books by artists from both the United States and Europe. It was shown in 2018 and 2019 at all three US institutions for book arts: the Center for Book Arts in New York City, the Minnesota Center for Book Arts in Minneapolis, and the San Francisco Center for the Book.

Here, however, I will present various thoughts I have had while traveling for business—while wheeling and dealing, so to speak—trips to collections, collectors and artists. Indeed, over the years I have not only been busy buying and selling, I have also been noticing things, searching and exploring, categorizing and gathering ideas. In addition to appreciating the aesthetics and artistic value of the books themselves, I have naturally also encountered the various reasons people have for collecting contemporary artists' books and the criteria that guide their choices. These are often based on responses to artists' books that are different than one might expect.

Let me begin with an anecdote—or better, with two:

A private collector in Switzerland, who owns a remarkable book collection but has no descendants or heirs, wanted to give her quite extensive collection to a famous German museum.

The collection was a perfect addition to the types of books already held by that museum, and so the two parties quickly agreed that it was a good plan. A contract was drawn up by the museum's director. Everything was fine until the collector, when she was about to sign the contract, read the last sentence. It stipulated that she, the collector, would no longer be allowed to exhibit her books, either publicly or privately. And worse, she would no longer even be allowed to touch her books—for conservation reasons of course!

The conditions of this contract changed the state of affairs radically: the private collector's passion had turned into the museum director's responsibility for preservation. A collection under lock and key, with no one able to see it, no one able to use it, a

collection no longer touched by anyone, not even by the owner. But it would be a collection for eternity.

As you can imagine, she didn't sign the contract. And in fact, that collector is still alive and well, and enjoys a life surrounded by her books.

The second anecdote concerns a visit I once made to an artist's book collection at an American academic institution. I was visiting the college's collection for the first time—as usual, with my suitcases full of books. The librarian carefully explained a basic rule for his collection—they could not purchase delicate book objects that needed to be handled carefully or with assistance. Any book they bought for the collection had to be robust enough to let a student look at it without supervision. Their books had to be self-explanatory. And so on.

I then showed the librarian a wide range of contemporary artists' books. And in the end, he decided to buy the most fragile object I was carrying. He said, "I know this book won't last very long in our collection, but I also know that our students will love it, that it will inspire them. Thematically, it has a lot to do with where they are at right now, namely, reflections on the body and its vulnerabilities. That's why it's the one I choose, even though I know it might not last more than two or three years. Eventually, we'll have to throw it away. But a lot of our students will have been inspired!"

Of course I do not mean to say that American librarians handle artists' books irresponsibly in an archival sense (and I certainly will not name any names!). And, of course, it is unfair to compare a private collection to a museum's collection or to an academic collection. But these two extreme stories do reveal a major difference in the collecting policies in Europe and the United States.

In Europe, collecting tends to be done with the notion of perpetuity. It is done in the spirit of archiving, conserving and hiding things away, unseen except in a few exhibitions or—even less often—by special appointment. In the United States, there are artists' books in many college and university collections. They are not only used for teaching the form itself, since artists' books are an established artistic form and visual way of thinking, they are also used as a media for teaching in general! This aspect of the artist's book can only be found sporadically in Europe, here and there, although fortunately it is gradually becoming more common. Personally, at my gallery in Vienna, I now offer thematic tours for groups on advance notice. This gives a wider audience an understanding of artists' books as a special form of art—and as a special form of the book.

Thus, collections in the United States, both public and academic, are more directly accessible. Also, many more of them are based on private collecting. In Europe, only a few academic library collections have artists' books, and there are also very few museums with book art collections, the rare exceptions being the Klingspor Museum in Offenbach, Germany, the Applied Art Museums of Hamburg, Frankfurt, and Vienna, and two wonderful museums in the Netherlands, the Huis van het boek and the Van Abbe Museum. Most artists' books are in libraries, especially in European state and national libraries. In Germany, for example, there are artists' books in the collections of the

Bavarian State Library, the Herzog August Library in Wolfenbüttel, and the Anna Amalia Library in Weimar. All of these institutions are public institutions, funded by tax money. As a brief aside, I would venture to say that their budgets seem far lower than the budgets in the United States—maybe because book art has a different meaning?

There is something else that should not be underestimated as a defining feature in these European collections. They are often quite formal in character, that is, they are restrictive and much more directly content-related than in the United States. European libraries are subject to formal acquisition policies. For example, the curators of literature collections buy artists' books containing specific literary references related to their collections; national or state libraries often can only purchase books that have to do with their country or state. Curators who are able to collect books for reasons based purely on their quality or outstanding originality or artistic value are unfortunately quite rare—in Europe that privilege is mostly reserved for private collectors.

I would like to digress here briefly with a few words about artists' books in Eastern Europe. When I moved to Austria a few years ago, I decided to explore the Eastern European artist's book scene in the nearby countries of Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Hungary and, above all, the various countries of former Yugoslavia. It was not an easy proposition, not only for language reasons, but also because there are hardly any galleries or bookstores dealing in artists' books. Nonetheless, it was quickly apparent that in these countries, artists' books are significantly more political. The artist's book was, and still is, used as a medium for political resistance, just as the so-called *samizdat* books were formerly used in East Germany or the Soviet Union. In the past, artists' books published in editions of less than 100 copies were not subject to state censorship, despite their political messages. And that is also why they never developed into products for the market, or as rare objects for private collectors or public collections. Now, as then, artists' books are not marketed objects—their distribution is based on barter or on informal presentation evenings. They are not even *potentially* a "commodity." Still, they are clearly an important political and conceptual medium, a medium with a remarkable profile. They are shown and exchanged; they wander from hand to hand. But to discuss this in more detail would need another article.

So I will return to Western Europe. In Germany (which I use here as an example for Western Europe), the artistic and creative form of the artist's book is instructed, at best, through the techniques needed to construct them. Artists' books are not taught as if they were a medium in their own right, as I have seen at many universities in the United States, or how artists' books are handled at institutions like the Metropolitan Museum or the New York Public Library. In Europe, the concept of the artist's book as an independent medium is growing only very gradually, although Europe does have wonderful historical and systematic collections of books as well as wonderful book artists! Indeed, the German National Library has lately shown a more active interest not only in collecting and exhibiting artists' books, but also in using them as a media for teaching classes. Also other collections and libraries in Germany, if approached, have become more open



to the idea of working with artists' books—as art in and of itself. But in my opinion these steps are still in their infancy.

There is a last point connected to this: collecting as I have described it happening in Germany, as well as keeping collections under wraps, certainly has repercussions on artistic production. If the market for artists' books is small, is their production then slower, more careful, or more weak-willed? Or does the attitude toward collecting influence content?

It is possible that, to some extent, both are correct. And this should be kept in mind. But this point, too, is something that must wait for a future article.

This does not mean, of course, that I am assuming that book artists, in their artistic creativity, are only looking at the market, or that the autonomy of an “artist's book” as a piece of art is endangered by such observations. The fact is, however, that a work of art published as an edition, also if it is a small one, in this case, the artist's book, is aimed not only at an international public but also, for existential reasons, at a buying public. So if a book that appears in a non-English language has a limited market that is largely institutional with formal acquisition criteria, why not produce it at least bilingually? Or choose other authors? Or deal with more US-related topics to gain greater interest and more potential buyers? In the context of artistic freedom, doing so would be quite understandable and even justifiable. And it would not make the books of good artists any worse. They would only become a bit different, albeit a bit that is essential!

**Susanne Padberg** studied literary criticism, art history, and cultural studies in Tübingen (Germany) and Vienna (Austria). She has been the owner of Galerie DRUCK & BUCH since 1994—first in Tübingen and now in Vienna. The gallery, next door to Vienna's Freud Museum, specializes in international contemporary book arts and hosts four to six shows a year. Padberg is regularly engaged as a collection consultant and exhibition curator, most recently for the travelling exhibition “Freud on the Couch, Psyche in the Book,” which was shown in 2018 and 2019 at three book arts institutions in the United States. She also gives lectures, does guest teaching, and writes catalog contributions and essays about contemporary book arts.

## BOOK REVIEWS

THE FOLLOWING BOOKS ARE REVIEWED IN THIS ISSUE:

- *Herakleitos*; translated by Guy Davenport. Berkeley, California: Peter Koch, Printer, 1990.
- *Diogenes: Defictions*, Thomas McEvilley. Berkeley, California: Peter Koch, Printer, 1994.  
Reviewed by Carolee Campbell
  
- *Tipoteca: Una Storia Italiana*. Cornuda, Italy: Antiga Edizioni, 2018.  
Reviewed by Russell Maret
  
- *Words on the Edge: Extraction: Art on the Edge of the Abyss*. Berkeley: The CODEX Foundation, 2019.  
Reviewed by Juan Pascoe
  
- *A Modest Proposal*, Jonathan Swift. Dublin: The Salvage Press, 2017.  
Reviewed by Aaron Parrett
  
- *Taller Martín Pescador : Anecdario Y Bibliografía / 1971–2014*, Juan Pascoe. Museo de Filatelia de Oaxaca, Mexico, 2014.
- *The Printer's Apprentice*, Juan Pascoe. Taller Martín Pescador, Santa Rosa, Las Joyas, Tacámbaro, Michoacán, 2018.  
Reviewed by Felicia Rice
  
- *Exhibition Review: Artists and Their Books / Books and Their Artists*, Getty Research Institute, June 26–October 28, 2018.  
Reviewed by Carolee Campbell

## PETER KOCH, PRINTER

by Carolee Campbell

This article first appeared in *The Book Club of California Quarterly News-Letter* Volume LX Number 1 Winter 1994.

Just what are we to make of a printer who publishes books designed with handsome classical restraint and who, at the same time, produces others that have the look of objects recently disinterred? Do we give him the nod of approbation for the former while dismissing the latter as some sort of fleeting creative dyspepsia? Do we praise him for producing elegant books that, in many examples, emulate the venerable tradition of the best in the printing arts while ducking the chore of considering just exactly what he might be up to by making these *other things* that we are expected to take with equal seriousness—just because *he* does? How shall we reconcile these seemingly disparate creative sensibilities? A clue might lie in a book by the eminent William Everson, *On Printing*, published by The Book Club of California in 1992. The Introduction to the book was written by Peter Rutledge Koch, the bookmaker in question. In it he says, “It is Everson’s thoughtful self-examination that ultimately distinguishes the man as a printer, typographer, and a philosopher.” The operative words are “thoughtful self-examination,” and a closer look at Peter Koch’s books will, in my opinion, reveal the unifying theme of self-scrutiny throughout his book work.

Of all the books published—beginning in 1975 at his Black Stone Press in Missoula, Montana, and to the present day, publishing under the imprint of Peter Koch, Printer, in Berkeley, California—I would like to discuss two in particular which, to me, stand out as quintessential examples of this self-examination: *Herakleitos*, translated by Guy Davenport, and *Diogenes: Defictions*, by Thomas McEvelley.

But first, there are possible misconceptions to be cleared away. Peter Koch was never a guileless cowboy riding the range astride ol’ Paint singing “Git along little doggies....” He grew up surrounded by a great book collection. In his lineage are readers, writers, and historians. His single nod to Western wildness and open space is his love of fly-fishing. After receiving a degree in philosophy he left Missoula for Paris to investigate the Surrealist poets. Philosophy and poetry engaged him deeply, particularly the pre-Socratic philosophers. Back in Missoula he founded both a literary journal, *Montana Gothic*, and his first private press, Black Stone Press. The device he chose as a logo for the press has its roots in alchemy, as did his press name. It is the *ouroboros*—the snake that eats its own tail—first seen in ancient Greek texts, symbolizing opposites which are secretly one. It is an ideal image that graphically sums up Peter’s personal bookmaking aesthetic.

Like Peter Koch, I too am a bookmaker. Because I am the sole designer, printer, and binder at my press, I understand the serious implications inherent in selecting each new project and the time it takes to bring it to fruition. When I look at the work of my colleagues, I assume that an intense and thoughtful consideration has been extended equally to each and every book and that, in the most successful of

those books, every element in design and craftsmanship will be linked together with purposeful unity—book size, shape, materials, typography, artwork—becoming an amalgamate reflecting the organizing principle that overarches the bookmaker’s singular response to the text. By my measure, the best of books reveal themselves at first sight, with the first touch. In that initial moment a book begins to prepare the reader for what it holds. The nature of the binding becomes as valuable to its contents as a reliquary is to the saintly bones within.

That is exactly what *Herakleitos* and *Diogenes: Defictions* do. They are both examples of that best kind of bookmaking, the successful union of word, image, and structure—although two more opposite books can scarcely be found.

Some readers might be fooled into singling out *Herakleitos* as a fine and serious book while dismissing *Diogenes: Defictions* as a book-pun quickie, not to be approached with the same considered attention. After all, everything about *Herakleitos* seems profound. *Herakleitos* (or Heraclitus) was in a real sense the founder of metaphysics. He arrived at the principle of relativity: harmony and unity consist in diversity and multiplicity. Guy Davenport, the translator, is a distinguished poet and literary essayist. The book is accompanied by another book (a book about a book in the guise of a prospectus) containing essays by both translator and typesetter, along with a description of the edition, quoted here in its entirety for the purposes of comparison:

*“This edition of the fragments was designed to reflect in the contemporary idiom a fifth-century Ionian manuscript, the earliest known Egyptian codex and the first Venetian printed translations of classical authors. A book of origins, an exemplary book of Western tradition meant to be read and contemplated repeatedly and at leisure.*

*The Greek, Monotype Gill Sans Light Upright 672, was cast in sorts by Dan Carr at the Golgonooza Letter Foundry, Ashuelot, New Hampshire and hand set by Mark C. Livingston. The translation and Latin fragment 103 were composed in Monotype Bembo 270 and Bembo Condensed Italic 294 by the Mackenzie & Harris typefoundry in San Francisco and Patrick Reagh in Los Angeles.*

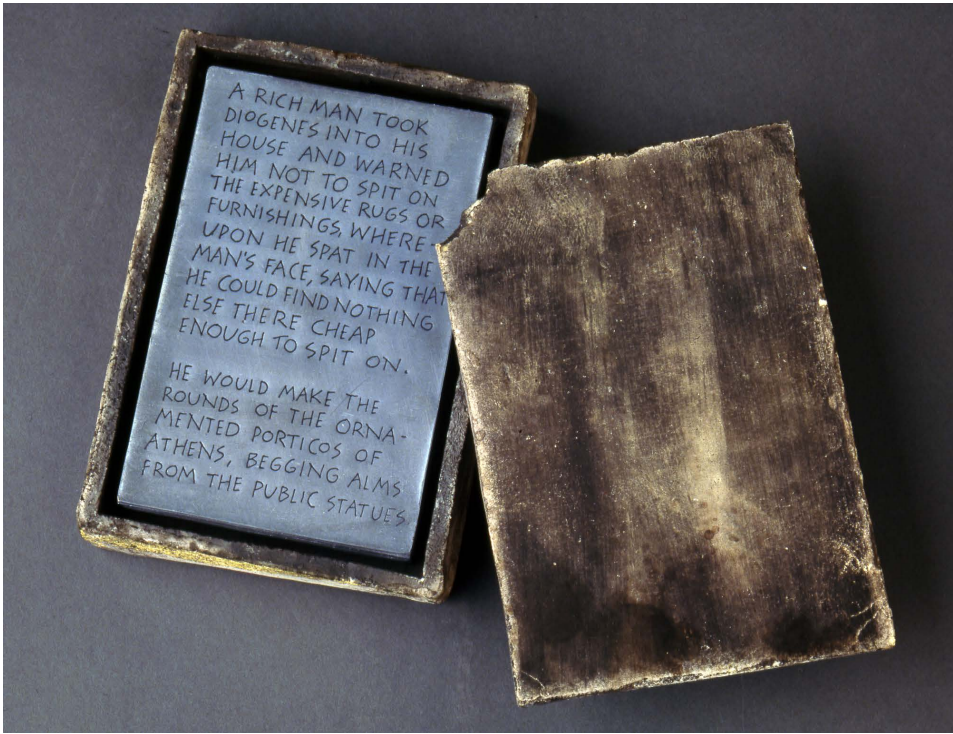
*The edition is limited to 113 copies, each signed by the translator, 100 of which have been printed on Nideggen, an unusually rich German mouldmade paper and 13 of which have been printed on Robert Serpa handmade paper, bound and encased in a special wrapper constructed of PC4, a handmade paper-case paper developed by Timothy Barrett at the University of Iowa Center for the Book.*

*The non-adhesive visible structure binding was designed by Shelly Hoyt and consists of terra cotta paste grained paper over boards, the signature sewn with a Coptic stitch employed by Egyptian bookbinders by the Third Century A.D. The Coptic stitch is a series of chain or linking stitches that attach the signatures one to another and to the front and back covers in such a fashion that the binding opens easily and when open, lies perfectly flat. 31 x 16.2 cm, 48 pages.”*



Herakleitos





Diogenes: Defictions

Between the two essays and the description of the edition, the bookmaker has prepared us thoroughly for *Herakleitos*, a splendid example of restraint and a beautifully integrated book.

Then there is *Diogenes: Defictions*. How to describe it? Is it a book at all? What we are presented with is a roughly fashioned glazed ceramic box whose lid rasps uncomfortably when touched. Each box in the edition of fifty has its own wildly different glaze and color combinations, its various pock marks and fissures. Being a box, it naturally invites examination but, once open, all we see are eleven playing card-sized lead panels incised with mannered lettering. There is no titling or introduction; no colophon or essay to introduce us in any way to the nature of these inscriptions on lead. (In fact, it is only because I have seen a copy from the second paper edition of this work, which is titled and has a foreword, that I know that the text is associated with another Greek philosopher [although technically, not a pre-Socratic.])

Because there are no textual clues to rely on in this first fragile edition of *Diogenes: Defictions*, one's inclination might be to carefully close the lid, write off this effort as haphazardly coy, and turn to another one of Koch's productions like *The Handbook of*

Ornament, a suavely elegant, very white book containing spare, concentrated poems by Michael Poage.

But wait. Don't close the lid on Diogenes yet. Pick up the lead panels. Let them begin to sag as the lead warms in your hand. Or bend them and stand them up on the table. Don't worry about what you don't know about the life and philosophy of Diogenes. Don't feel cheated by the lack of textual information offered. Just read the lead. Read, for instance:

          DIOGENES SAT IN THE PUBLIC SQUARE ONE AFTERNOON  
          GLUEING SHUT THE PAGES OF A BOOK.

          TO SOMEONE WHO WISHED TO BE HIS STUDENT, AND ASKED  
          FOR INSTRUCTIONS, HE GAVE A FISH, AND INSTRUCTED HIM  
          TO CARRY IT WHEREVER HE WENT.

          ONE DAY, OBSERVING A CHILD DRINKING FROM HIS HANDS,  
          HE CAST AWAY THE CUP FROM HIS SACK SAYING 'A CHILD  
          HAS BEATEN ME IN PLAINNESS OF LIVING.'

Accept the inscriptions at face value for the sportive, irreverent things they appear to be. Later, if you have a mind to, you will learn that those "defictions" are actually anecdotal stories of Diogenes' life; that he was a leader of the Cynics and has been credited with going to extremes of impropriety in pursuance of his ideas; that, living in the streets, his absurdist public acts were the embodiment of a life devoted to the performance of philosophy designed to subvert the daily habits of the citizenry.

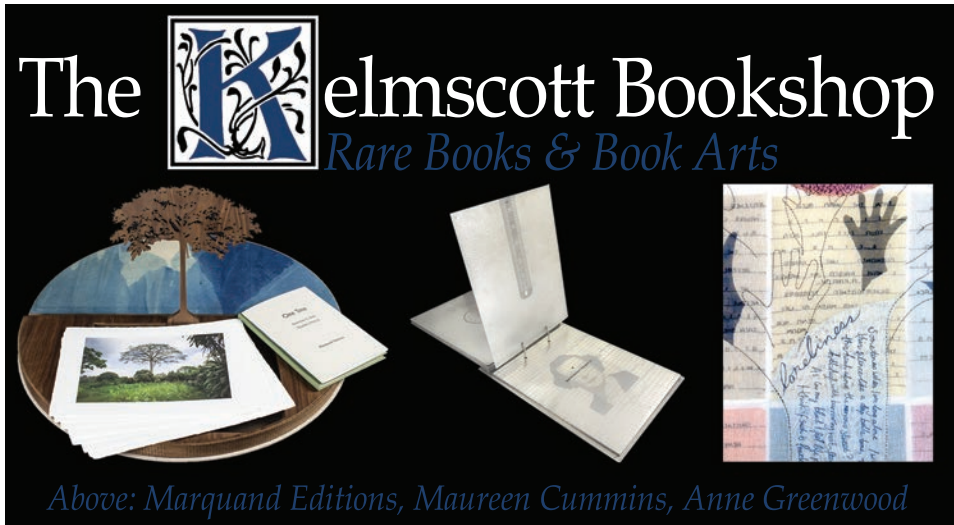
Now take another look at the structure of *Diogenes: Defictions*. This book or "book object" (Peter Koch calls it a "text-transmission object," which is the most accurate) is amplifying the text it holds perfectly. It is a subversionary tactic. It undermines our pre-conceptions of "bookness." It is being rude to us. It is organically resonating the book-maker's comprehension of the essence of Diogenes of Sinope. Further, looking back into the history of the book in embryo, many texts were found to be incised on a variety of metal panels. Pliny cites the existence of ancient books carved entirely on leaden plates. And from the beginning of recorded history, clay vessels have been used to house texts. Thus, looking at this work once more, the structure could scarcely be anything other than what we see.

Both books, then, *Herakleitos* and *Diogenes: Defictions*, have equally inherent, within their design, a philosophical intention that slowly developed from Koch's first encounters with the pre-Socratics and matured over time by the process of self-evaluation and re-examination, to finally arrive at a set of fully developed organizing design principles. The difference between the books is the difference between the men—Herakleitos with his resonant sensibility on the one hand and Diogenes, the "performance philosopher," on the other. Both books bespeak their contents. They can be equated with alembics, alchemical test tubes distilling elements that Koch is continually interested in: the very

nature of thought, together with *logos*, the word, which has been brought forward in time through the history of mark-making and record-keeping. These books are both tangible expressions of the ideas they hold and therefore achieve that standard by which I measure the best of books.

A final example of Peter Koch's approach to bookmaking through self-scrutiny lies in a statement he made some years ago in an essay on typography which appeared in the literary quarterly *Zyzzyva* (Volume III, Number 2): "Long ago I had a dream in which I was reading a book. It was the mirror of my innermost self, all that I had ever wished for in a book. The event was so disturbing that I awoke before I had finished reading the first page. I could only remember the form and not the content. Now, whenever I design a book, I am always designing that book and it is always the same book, *the original book.*"

**Carolee Campbell** inaugurated Ninja Press in Sherman Oaks, CA in 1984. She publishes limited editions of contemporary poetry that she designs, hand sets in metal type, prints letterpress, binds, & often illustrates. Her work is heavily influenced both by her extensive experience as a photographer and by her career as a distinguished actress. Ninja Press books are collected by many of the world's great libraries. The entire Ninja Press archive is held in the University of California, Santa Barbara Library Special Research Collections.



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Above: Marquand Editions, Maureen Cummins, Anne Greenwood

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## TIPOTECA: UNA STORIA ITALIANA

Reviewed by Russell Maret



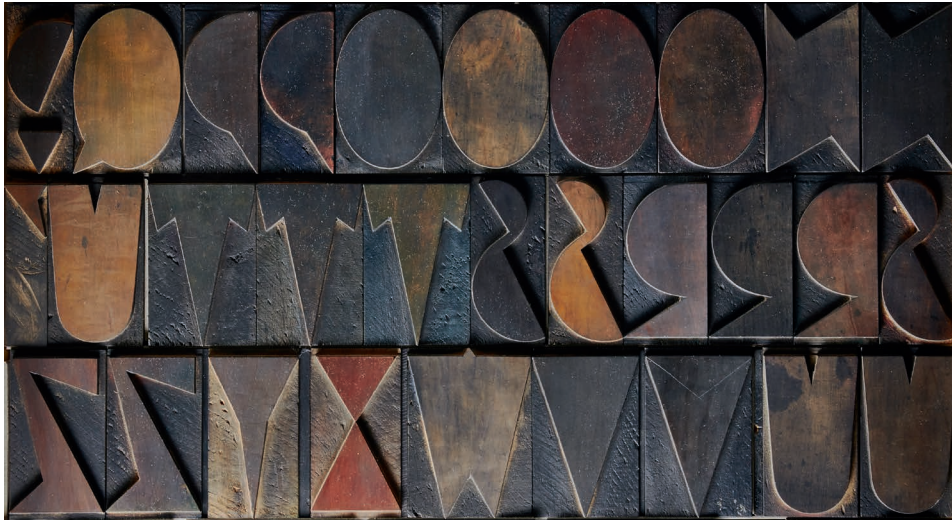
In August of 1968 the parents of Franco, Silvio, Mario, Carlo, and Maria Antonietta Antiga mortgaged their family home so that the siblings could purchase their first printing press, a couple banks of type, and a paper cutter. In the fifty years since, they have built their Grafiche Antiga into a large-scale commercial printshop using the most advanced contemporary printing equipment. As they witnessed the changeover from letterpress to offset technology, the Antigas founded the Tipoteca Italiana Fondazione to collect and preserve typographic material, partly to honor their roots as letterpress printers and partly to satisfy an obsession with the material itself. In celebration of their fiftieth printing anniversary, and to highlight the Tipoteca's collection, they have published *Tipoteca: Una Storia Italiana*.





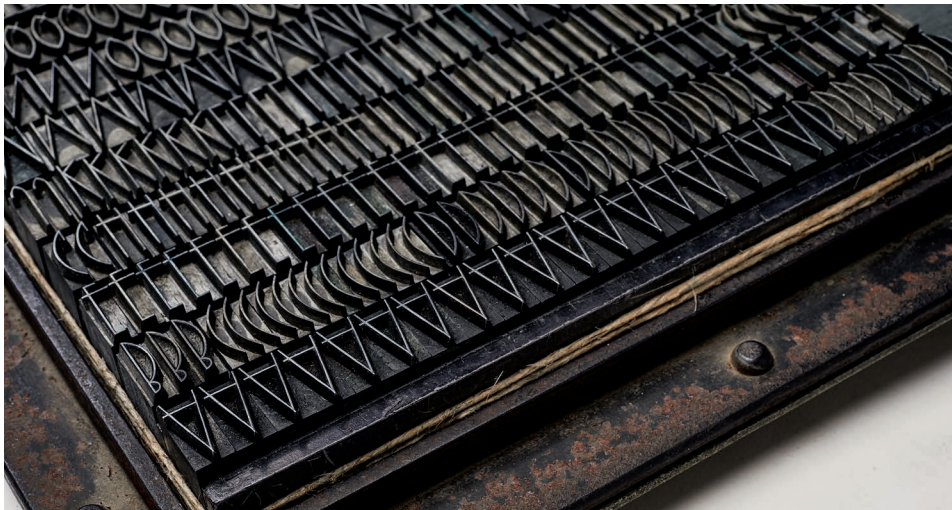
On unwrapping *Tipoteca*, the primary object of the Antiga's obsession is immediately on display: type. The book's slipcase is covered in a beautifully lit photograph of metal type, spiraling diagonally around the case, a seductive hint of the typographic bacchanal to come. Once inside the book we are treated to 320 pages of equally evocative photographs of metal and wood type, rare printing presses, historic books in the Tipoteca's collection, and of classes and gatherings in the Tipoteca's buildings. Together they tell the story of the museum's holdings and a little about how those holdings are used. The photographs are interspersed with two letterpress printed specimens of metal and wood type, and occasional short texts in Italian and English.

Some of the texts are informative, others merely praising, many of the non-English originals suffer from awkward or poor translations. In general the texts function as addenda to the visual story, rather than providing the narrative thread. Neither the sources of the texts, nor their relationship to the images are always clear, which adds a little light rigor to the reading. When trying to tease out the reason for Antonio Zatta's arch tone, for instance, before understanding that his text was written in 1799 and is from the type specimen pictured beside it. Other puzzles include the fact that the first paragraph of James Mosley's text is actually written by Giambattista Bodoni despite it being neither italicized, indented, nor set in quotation marks. Or the inclusion of autobiographical pieces by Alan Kitching, Erik Spiekermann, and Bill and Jim Moran that work as mood pieces but have no direct relationship to the Tipoteca at all. These discordancies make me wonder if the texts in *Tipoteca* were written for it or if they are quoted from other sources. But these editorial issues are perhaps for other kinds of books.



# Caratteri lineari

## Sans serif







What *Tipoteca: Una Storia Italiana* does so well as a book is to convey the totality of the obsession the Antiga siblings have for the equipment they are collecting, preserving, and, importantly, making available for use. All of the historic presses in the Tipoteca Italiana are in working order. Scholars and students are able to handle the typographic material, print from it, and then go to the library to see historic examples of how the types were originally used. All within beautifully designed and attended buildings. The sheer quantity of material is inconceivable without visiting the Tipoteca, or, short of that, paging through this book. People who respond viscerally to the physical quality of printing type and presses will find it almost unbearable to page through for the hunger it inspires. By page 100 I realized I was flush and shaking with envy for the material they have and jealousy for those who have it.

I won't conceal that as a printer it makes me a little sad to see collections like those assembled by the Antigas. The fourth section of the book, "Restoration Workshop," is illustrated with multiple images of presses in warehouses, lined up like cars on a ferry boat. Beautiful machines that, although saved from the scrap heap and being restored to use, will never be *mine*. In turning through this section I become the antithesis of Indiana Jones as a wailing cries out from within me: *These presses do not belong in a museum!* But therein lies the rub. I have neither the physical nor mental resources to restore and



use all of this remarkable equipment. Thankfully the Antigas have both, and the spirit to share them with the rest of us.

No facsimile ever lives up to the real thing. Going to Cornuda and visiting the Tipoteca Italiana, handling the type, printing on the presses, breathing the air—and drinking the prosecco—of the Valdobbiadene hills: *Tipoteca: Una Storia Italiana* will never be a substitute for these experiences. But it comes as close as we can expect a book to get. In some ways it surpasses the actual place in that you see more of the collection reproduced in the book than you would ever be able to see in a single visit to Cornuda. Whether the book is a necessary addition to a scholarly collection is questionable, but anyone who loves type and printing presses should rush out and get a copy as quickly as possible.

**Russell Maret** is a book artist and alphabet designer working in New York City.

## “A MELANCHOLY OBJECT” JAMIE MURPHY’S A MODEST PROPOSAL

By Aaron Parrett

Jonathan Swift’s *A Modest Proposal* (1729), does not at first glance seem to be the sort of text toward which a fine letterpress printer would naturally gravitate. An artistic book is difficult enough to design without the added challenge of composing content so odiously repellent. Swift’s pamphlet, you will recall, was a quick-and-dirty op-ed proposing cannibalism as a solution to “the Irish problem”—hardly the kind of literary artifact that springs to mind for resurrection as a fine book-art project. Swift’s method was satire, we must recall, a genre whose finer points elude many modern readers who have a blind spot for irony or who simply find Swift’s approach repulsive.

But Irish book artist Jamie Murphy saw in *A Modest Proposal* a text perfectly suited to his artistic vision, which is inversely expansive in proportion to Swift’s cramped screed. As Murphy puts it, “Swift’s original pamphlet was a very crude and huddled piece of printing,” a text designed to be read and thrown away. And yet both versions of *A Modest Proposal*, printed nearly three hundred years apart, provoke a similar response, compelling readers to dwell at length upon what they’ve just digested on the page. Producing a beautiful artifact without losing the devastating impact of the original is a singular feat, and Murphy has made a book that recapitulates the original while making something new.

Swift’s short essay has become a paragon of rhetorical technique, an enduring standard text in colleges the world over. I have myself taught the text in dozens of college literature classes, and from my unscientific evaluation of an admittedly small sample size, I would venture to say that the more people tend toward the conservative end of the political spectrum, the less capable they seem of appreciating satire. We may be thankful that a reimagining of *A Modest Proposal* as audacious as Murphy’s transcends politics, even as it preserves Swift’s aim. Murphy saw in the perennial relevance of *A Modest Proposal* an opportunity to create a version of the work that would both honor its author’s 18th-century contribution to *belles-lettres* and express Murphy’s own highly personal investment in the text. The key to understanding Swift’s original is the recognition that horror presented casually intensifies shock, and shock is the most expedient catalyst for exploding complacency. Both writers and teachers appreciate that satire can be a delicate instrument for making slight adjustments to the well-meaning but misfiring machinery of human enterprise, or it can be a powerful bludgeon capable of destroying entire systems of evil.

The moment one opens Murphy’s massive and handsomely bound volume (It measures 15 x 22 inches), it becomes obvious that he’s accomplished something with his edition that ought to force critics of both literary and artistic credentials to think anew about some complex issues that radiate from reappearance of not merely a literary classic, but that particular literary classic. Why not choose a volatile and disturbing text



intended as satire that appeared three hundred years ago as the occasion for a very contemporary contribution to modern art? On the other hand, inasmuch as this book was printed with handset type and illustrated with hand-printed lithographs and bound by hand—how “modern” is it, really? Well, as surely as modern as Swift’s pamphlet must have seemed to any reader in 1729, if we are to judge by the thoughts it inspires.

Opening the covers of Murphy’s book provokes a whole host of interesting questions: what effect does his treatment exert on the original text, for example? At the very least we can agree that an effort like his exemplifies what Pound meant when he insisted that the literary artist must “make it new.” (That injunction, incidentally, flies in the face of the wisdom of Ecclesiastes— “there’s nothing new under the sun”—the sort of zero-sum argument about criticism lying at the heart of another Swift masterpiece, *The Tale of a Tub*). Point and match must here go to innovation, because Murphy has interpolated a series of responsive poems and highly personal illustrations, which, taken along with his typographical and design choices, all make the resulting work something entirely new and different from Swift’s. At the very least, Murphy has made *A Modest Proposal* his own book in a way similar to the manner in which an *auteur* converts a novel for the big screen. He has in short conducted the presentation of a book that goes far beyond the text from which it was inspired and from which it drew its literary material and indeed which it still houses: Swift’s pamphlet has now become merely one thread in a complex knit.



In the same way that reading the text of *A Modest Proposal* gives us insight into the mind of Swift and how he approached the very real problem of persuading his fellows to change their ways, so does a finely-crafted book grant us access to the artist's response to the text it houses. Along the way we reap the added insights of the typographer's vision, his reverence for principles of achieving balance between the weight of words, of letter-forms on the page, and the open space in which they must be permitted to breathe. From the moment I sat down in a private room at the Stanford University Special Collections to read a copy of Murphy's opus, I became acutely conscious of the effort and procedure of reading—*really* reading, which is to say physically engaging with—a book. For more than an hour, I was one with every medieval monk or renaissance scholar who ever ensconced himself in an abbey carrel to purposefully pore over a book. I must emphasize that I mean "reading" in the old-school sense of lugging a book's mass from one place to another; in the sense of levering open its prodigious covers; in the sense of breathing in the odor of its ink and mold-made paper. I mean reading in the sense of mechanically turning folios with care so as not to injure them one at a time, absorbing the content of each page in the same way that one absorbs images and artifacts encountered in the course of meandering through a museum. This is what is at stake with a *real* book as opposed to downloading information through the expedient of a computer screen: making your way through a well-designed book is a tour through the museum of the bookmaker's mind. The experience of a fine letterpress book perforce exceeds the textual transfer of information because the residue of the maker's consciousness remains apparent at every turn, embedded in every fiber of the page.

Certain of these truths would be present and accounted for even in a classroom of students all reading, say, a cheap Signet paperback version of *A Modest Proposal*. But in that case, the apparatus is utilitarian and relegated to the distant background. No one who encounters *A Modest Proposal* in *The Norton Anthology* worries too much over the paper stock, and a classroom discussion on the shock of learning about the best way to prepare an infant for a succulent dining experience does not depend a hell of a lot on the typeface some corporate board approved for the eleventh edition. Yet I can't help but feel students would stand to learn much more about Swift if only every one of them could spend an hour or so with Murphy's book and see what literature looks like when it taken seriously as fine art.

Jamie Murphy studied Visual Communication at the National College of Art & Design (NCAD) in Ireland from 2002 to 2006, where he was introduced to letterpress printing in the context of what he describes as "making expressive graphic work within the discipline of design." As a kid, he spent considerable time in what amounted to an unconscious apprenticeship making "crude books or zines," an instinct that probably led to a moment when, he acknowledges, "at University I fell in love with typography, but I was always a little disappointed that the main method of practice was screen-based." Sitting in front of a computer to make art images frustrates many who prefer a more direct



kinesthetic kinship between imagination and artifact: Jamie yearned for, as he puts it, a more “hands-on approach to typography and book design.”

Following the Irish economic downturn in 2010, he says, “I found myself with more spare time than normal and I decided that I would go back to University and study for a Masters in Design.” He meanwhile volunteered his services at Distillers Press (inhouse at NCAD), and was encouraged by the master printer there, Séan Sills, to make letterpress printing the focus of his graduate work. “It was during this study that I remembered that letterpress offered me everything I enjoyed about design,” Murphy recalls, and then notes wryly, “and I very quickly began making arrangements to have it take over my life.”

*A Modest Proposal* was not the first Swift work Murphy adopted in the cultivation of his letterpress art. A few years prior, he set four Swift poems in Caslon as a means of familiarizing himself with that particular typeface. “I had purchased a large quantity of Caslon type in preparation for an upcoming book,” he says, and he wanted to see how it printed. He chose the Swift poems for two reasons: The first was simply that he prefers to work “with Irish material where possible,” and the second was that the dates of the poems “adhered to dates that are important to the development of Caslon—1725, 1727, 1729, 1731—Caslon being developed during that time period.”

Working with those poems inevitably led to a more thorough study of the Irish literary master and an encounter with his *A Modest Proposal*. “I read *A Modest Proposal* and immediately knew that I must work with it. Its relevance to today’s Irish society is simply frightening.”

As Murphy is quick to point out, the original work was a humble little pamphlet whose writer probably had no inkling that it was destined for canonization as a classic of World Literature. Murphy refers to the original edition as a “throwaway,” a term I have heard modern book artists use to refer to mass market paperbacks, for example—books we all devour with relish, but whose crude manufacture using cheap materials is itself testament to their inherent ephemerality—they are *disposable*. In conceiving a new edition of *A Modest Proposal*, Murphy believed that the book should be “anything but throw-away. I felt it should be held aloft and noticed.”

Consequently, Murphy conceived of his own book in extreme contrast to the original: Instead of a pamphlet to be read and tossed aside, Murphy would render the work in a book format—and a rather large format at that. More importantly, and testament to the enduring power of Swift’s subtle but incisive technique, Murphy wanted to lay the text out on the pages in a way that “allowed time for thought.”

To urge that time for thought even more pointedly, he interpolated into the design a series of original poems commissioned from Jessica Traynor specifically for this project. These poems disrupt the text with compelling effect, at once forcing the reader to engage with Swift’s original in a new, contemporary moment, but also generating an entirely new literary effect of intertextuality. The nine Traynor poems, Murphy says, “bring a new voice to the table, a voice that is again reminding us of the current state of the nation, reminding us that things have not entirely moved as far along as we might

like to think—the issues of homelessness, social housing, immigration and direct provision, abortion and the state’s control of the female reproductive system—these are all issues that are addressed by both Swift and Jessica in the book.”

This effect is further propounded by the integration into the large format text the stunning visualizations rendered by artist David O’Kane. Swift’s original satirical, outlandish ideas for solving the Irish “problem” are reimagined in haunting lithographs both disturbing and surreal. “David is an artist who has a remarkable talent for visualizing an atmosphere, a feeling or a thought,” Murphy says. That talent coupled with Swift’s satire results in an especially haunting set of images.

O’Kane uses a process called “Maniere noire” in which he blackens the litho stone and “then draws into it with the scalpel blades and various other pointed instruments. He also uses sandpaper, and in some instances, a mild acid which creates an unpredictable effect, visually not unlike suminagashi marbling.”

Books such as this are relatively rare, and books whose auteurs succeed in generating, in Pound’s sense, something “new,” are exceedingly rare. One hesitates to call this merely an enhancement of Swift’s original work—it is rather a reimagining of its purpose and intent. In short, this version of *A Modest Proposal* is a book that Murphy calls “wholly considered.”

That sense of consideration is precisely what defines the fine letterpress book as an artform: “I tell my students that every little detail must have been thought through from typeface and paper and ink to binding thread, structure, and format,”

Murphy explains. “If we cannot answer a question like; ‘why is the book that shape?’ or ‘what relevance has the typography?’ then I feel as though we’ve missed the mark.”

Murphy says his approach to *A Modest Proposal* also was influenced by a sudden insight he had while playing with building blocks with his children: the sort of random playfulness inherent in that kind of play was something he wanted to guide him in developing



the structure of the book and the layout of the text. The incongruity of playfulness in the context of what Murphy calls “such a hard-hitting text” in fact reinforces the aim of satire, and Swift’s technique in particular. It is hard to imagine a more ironic use of the word “modest” than in Swift’s title, for example.

Under Murphy’s direction, the elegant Caslon arranged in seemingly random manner on the page to present horrific subject matter, makes for what he calls “an uneasy read.” This, then, is one of the points of genius in Murphy’s *A Modest Proposal*: he has seized on the essential satirical element of Swift’s original—its effect of *uneasiness*—and he has translated it as a guiding aesthetic principle for the book’s design. This uneasiness or “dis-ease” recalls Schelling’s sense of the *unheimlich* as, (in Freud’s words) “that which ought to have remained secret and hidden but has come to light.”

Whereas many modern fine letterpress books avail themselves of the practically infinite spectrum of ink colors, Murphy kept to the traditional red and black, using the red mainly for the Traynor poems. “[T]hese poems act as warnings,” he says, “as moments to stop and acknowledge our surroundings.” The book’s illustrations provide more examples of levity juxtaposed with gravity, of the joyful with the horrific, further amplifying the qualities of Swift’s original.

Moreover, the illustrations reflect a personal investment in the text and its rhetorical force: In “Note on the Typography” at the back of the book, Murphy notes,

This project began as a very personal one for me and over the course of its 18-month gestation became even more so. My son continued to present signs of a rare genetic disorder and my daughter was born showing the same traits. Their health concerns constantly played on my mind. Families across the country, including ours were still suffering greatly as a result of the economic crash. It seemed as though Swift’s text was just as poignant today as it was in 1729—Ireland’s suffering is just as widespread and the landlords are still overseas.

Murphy has also remarked that “The images are full of iconographic material and on a personal level make use of my own children to portray fragility and dependence.” To say the images are disturbing understates their overall effect, because they also evoke some measure of tenderness instinctive to anyone who is a parent: an image of an adorable infant curled up warms the heart until the viewer becomes aware that the child is on a serving platter atop a table set for a lavish feast. The otherworldly, cabinet-of-wonders feel to the book is alluring in the way that many guilty pleasures leave us wondering about the nature of delight itself and the moral problem of finding beauty in images whose content is irredeemably ghastly. This is the nonplus into which Murphy’s book casts us: a baby hanging upon a meat hook repels us even as we marvel over the artist’s technique and fidelity to form. But this is the secret of true beauty: death and other terrors lurk always at its periphery.

Murphy’s Salvage Press edition of *A Modest Proposal* was printed on Imperial Folio sheets (22 x 30 inches) of 250gsm Zerkall mold-made paper. That sheet size is the

largest that his press could accommodate. In point of fact, Murphy used an Adwest double crown proofing press, whose bed size is only 20 x 30 inches, which obliged some creative pressmanship. One can imagine the twinkle in Murphy's eye as he observes with Hibernian understatement that the press "was used beyond its capacity." The images were designed to occupy half the space of a page comfortably, falling within a grid system Murphy used to "bring consistency to the flow of the book." The typography, too, follows the grid system, which belies the seeming randomness of the textual layout: "the resulting designs seeming sporadic and accidental but in fact very precise in their location and shape."

Murphy has in fact laid out Swift's words on the page in a way that maximizes the white space, further enhancing the semantic effect of the text. Murphy does not refer to the unprinted or unillustrated parts of the page as "negative space," but instead carefully uses the term "quiet space," which accords perfectly with the fundamental design principle of forcing the reader to read slowly, with frequent opportunities for pausing and reflection. By compelling this deliberate consideration, the design leads the reader to confront the text in a visual way that surely echoes the manner in which Swift's satire was originally designed to compel readers to face the plight of the Irish poor in 1729.

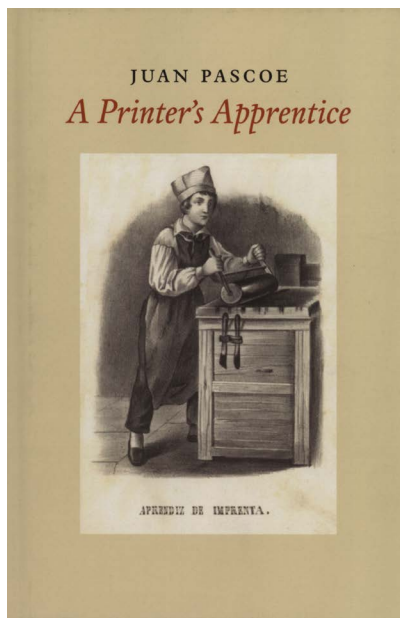
The original pamphlet had been printed by Sarah Harding, and contained numerous spelling errors. As was common with such impromptu pamphlets and other ephemera, the printer mixed roman and italic somewhat indiscriminately, probably because of a shortage of sorts. Murphy chose to duplicate the errors and the apparently random use of italics. Coupled with lines that are arranged on the page without typical justification creates presentation whose felicity works well with the illustrations, as both text and idea waver similarly between innocence and the profane. The marbled paper, Murphy says, was patterned after stone found at St. Patrick's Cathedral, where Swift himself was famously Dean. The standard edition comes housed in an exquisite box with a porcelain cartouche that was produced at the Russborough House, a country estate that once was home to a landlord family who were the putative targets of Swift's original satire.

Though Murphy is responsible for the design of the ultimate artifact, getting there was a collaborative process. "As collaborators we all worked both in unison and as individuals," Murphy notes. They met and exchanged ideas and feedback, which led to the fully integrated end product, or as Murphy puts it, "a work that is singular in its vision." As each element of the book is organically rooted in Irish history and craft, the end product is an expansion of the original humble effort into a work of modern art, made all the more relevant for being cast in the idiom of "the art preservative of all art."

**Aaron Parrett** is a professor of English at University of Providence in Montana and author of numerous books and essays, including the award-winning collection *Maple & Lead*. He lives in Helena with his wife and daughter.

## THE PRINTER'S APPRENTICE: JUAN PASCOE ONWARD!

By Felicia Rice



Juan Pascoe, *Taller Martín Pescador : Anecdario Y Bibliografía / 1971–2014*. Museo de Filatelia de Oaxaca, Mexico, 2014. 208 pp. ISBN 9786078357062

Juan Pascoe, *The Printer's Apprentice*. Taller Martín Pescador, Santa Rosa, Las Joyas, Tacámbaro, Michoacán, 2018. 203 pp.

This review focuses on the printer Juan Pascoe's English-language autobiographical book, titled *The Printer's Apprentice*. Interwoven with the story of Juan's apprenticeship with handpress printer and publisher Harry Duncan, the renowned Midwestern handpress printer and publisher of contemporary poetry, is the equally compelling narrative of his life prior to his apprenticeship and the fascinating history of his family going back three generations. Most importantly, we also learn in depth about the development of his press, Taller Martín Pescador, and the backstories of many of the books he produced over a forty-three year period. The Spanish language version of this book takes the form of an exhibition catalog, titled *Taller Martín Pescador : Anecdario Y Bibliografía / 1971–2014*. The catalog is richly illustrated and includes an exhaustive bibliography of Taller Martín Pescador publications. I found both books fascinating, the first for the rich introduction



TEPITON

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*MEXICACOPA IHUAN CAXTILLANGOPA / EN LENGUAS MEXICANA Y CASTELLANA*



IN TEPUZTLACOPINTLI INIC ILHUIQUIXTILILIZ ITETLAPALOLITZIN PAPA

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JUAN PABLO II

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A LA CIUDAD DE

MEXICO



GOBIERNO DE LA CIUDAD DE MEXICO / 1999

to Juan Pascoe the printer, and the second, as someone with limited Spanish, for the historic photographs of the press and its inhabitants, and the many reproductions of printed pages from his publications.

My introduction to Juan Pascoe goes back over forty years to my own beginnings as a letterpress printer. In 1978 I graduated from the University of California, Santa Cruz with a BA in an independent major, “Fine Printing in the 1970s.” I came as a student to the university to work with Jack Stauffacher, the renowned San Francisco typographer and printer, and William Everson, poet and handpress printer. I was one of a very small group of students who apprenticed with Everson at the Lime Kiln Press on the second floor of the main library. We used an Acorn hand press to print *Granite & Cypress: Rubbings from the Rock*, selected poems by Robinson Jeffers. I worked at the Lime Kiln Press for a year, participating in the final stages of the book production and its prospectus. Juan Pascoe’s experiences with Harry Duncan parallel my year with William Everson. I learned about Harry Duncan’s work at that time and quickly learned that Duncan and Everson were two of the most important practitioners of the art of handpress printing of the second half of the 20th century. It is clear that for both Juan and I, our apprenticeships were critical to our development as a letterpress printers and established our commitment to poetry.

Another link to Pascoe is based on my family history in Mexico. Before I was born, my father had attempted to relocate the family from New York to San Miguel de Allende in Mexico in 1949 with the intention of apprenticing with David Alfaro Orozco, one of the three most recognized Mexican muralists of the 20th century. My sisters, 1 and 4, became deathly ill and the family was forced to return across the border, eventually settling in the San Francisco Bay Area where I was born in 1954. I was raised among the former apprentices of Diego Rivera and personal friends of Frida Kahlo. As a young woman I began to wonder about my own generation of California artists who were influenced by the Mexican Art Movement, particularly the founders of the Chicano Art Movement. I became fascinated with the provocative prints of turn-of-the-century Mexican printmaker José Guadalupe Posada, copies of which I had discovered on my father’s bookshelf as a child.

Upon graduation from UCSC in 1978, I sought out my colleagues, the small number of letterpress printers who were situated in the Santa Cruz / San Francisco Bay Area. I had established Moving Parts Press in 1977 and it was important to introduce myself and compare notes about equipment, materials, type, about how to carry on the rapidly disappearing craft of letterpress printing, and what we were printing—largely poetry. That summer I made a pilgrimage to the museums, galleries, and libraries of Mexico City where I was researching the work of the printmaker Posada. I sought out the one colleague I was aware of in Mexico, Juan Nicanor Pascoe, who was printing poetry on a hand press at Taller Martín Pescador, the first home of Juan’s printing and publishing operation in southern Mexico City. I remember a stone room (Juan will have to correct me if this is wrong) dominated by a hand press, a young man several years older than me and his assistant. Most importantly, I came away with a strong sense that Juan and I

were on the same page, both aspiring to achieve perfectly printed sheets of the absolute best paper impressed with precisely inked handset metal type designed by the best type designers in the Western world—and all within our financial limitations!

My memory being limited, it was with great interest that I began reading Juan Pascoe's story, starting as a nineteen-year-old in 1971 with his apprenticeship with Harry Duncan. Duncan was active in the book world for sixty years from the 1939–1997 under his imprint the Cummington Press. Pascoe's apprenticeship with Harry Duncan lasted only ten months but it impressed the author deeply. Duncan's books were almost purely typographic with an idiosyncratic treatment of the titling, the text block, their hierarchy, and page proportions. His typefaces were chosen largely from those available during his active period from European or American type foundries, such as Poliphilus and Blado, Romanée, American Uncial, and Spectrum. Papers were the finest available in Europe and the US, and bindings were largely executed in-house. During this time Pascoe gathered his dedication to craft, typography, and commitment to making and publishing literary and historical books. It was a push-pull relationship, Harry was not an easy task master, largely ignoring his apprentices, then bringing them up short for their mistakes in the press room. Pascoe soaked up the trade of fine-press printing and publishing, and even started to print his own pieces on the model provided by Duncan. The press was there in the house, right next to preparing dinner and minding the kids—something else Juan and I also share, we have both literally lived with our work throughout our creative lives. Pascoe had formed a deep bond with Nancy, Harry's wife, whom he first met when she was his teacher at the Quaker boarding school, Scattergood School. When Pascoe left the Duncan household, he took away lifelong relationships that informed and challenged his work as a printer. Duncan remembered him with real warmth and Pascoe returned to assist and visit various times over the coming decades. The master-apprentice relationship is not strictly defined in the contemporary work environment outside of the unionized trades; the apprentice looks to the master as a role model, but not necessarily as a teacher, for if the master were a teacher we would name them by the word "teacher." The apprentice observes the master closely and mimics their movements, while the master holds the expectation that the quality of their work will be up to the task of producing a fine outcome, up to par both in the shop and in the apprentice's subsequent work. This does not always come to pass, and the question of who is to blame can roll around in each of their heads for years after the fact. It's a powerful relationship with big questions at stake.

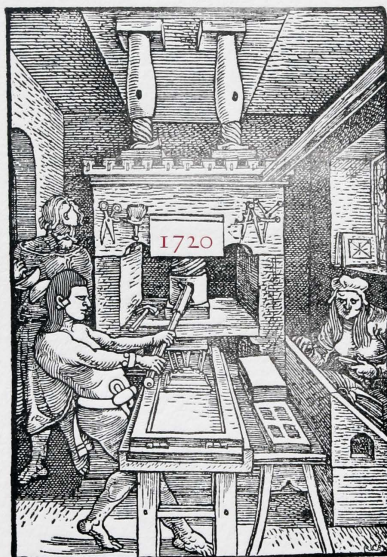
Interwoven with this tale of Juan's life story is the history of his family going back three generations, beginning with his great-grandfather's arrival in Mexico, leading to that of his immediate family. It is a fascinating story of immigration to Mexico in the 1800s, a land of opportunity, and the establishment of a new Pascoe family by a patriarch who set a significant precedent as he both printed and published. Pascoe's own Quaker parents met in college in the US—one Mexican, the other American—and led a very full life, locating and relocating to work for international agencies worldwide, raising four

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sons, and supporting their sons' efforts as adults. The love and support of Pascoe's family, though not entirely consistent, underlies his successes and again I feel some kinship with Pascoe as I also had the interest of loving parents.

When Pascoe leaves his apprenticeship he makes a deliberate decision to situate his own press in Mexico, where he perceives there to be opportunity. In the United States he feels the acute pressure of more established printers and competition from other newcomers. He perceives an opportunity in Mexico because he knows of no other practicing printers there and he senses the potential for patronage. Throughout the book, Pascoe describes his struggle to generate adequate financial support for his work, and against all odds the press survives. For an eight year period, printing takes a back seat to music as he travels the country very successfully with Grupo Mono Blanco making and recording traditional jarocho music from the state of Veracruz. Juan's experiences leads one to ask, would any of us who make books have started if we had known just how exacting a task master the work would be and how expensive in every way? If we had fully realized just how much any success, despite our efforts, would be the result of dumb luck?

But skill and patience also play a role in the production of letterpress printing. In his book, Pascoe gives a full report on his successes and failures as a craftsman, presenting in-depth accounts of the production of a series of publications, both books and ephemeral material, such as wedding, birthday, birth, and baptism cards. Pascoe's press has gone through several iterations, changing locations and names several times since 1971: Imprenta Rascuache (West Branch, Iowa, 1971–1973 and Mixcoac, Mexico, 1973–1975), Taller Martín Pescador (Mixcoac, Mexico, 1976–1982), Taller Martín Pescador (Santa Rosa, Las Joyas, Tacámbaro, Michoacán 1983–present). At the time of the publication of the Spanish-language version of *A Printer's Apprentice*, the exhibition catalog that featured Pascoe's printed works from 1971–2014, he had produced a total of 579 pieces. (In an email to me dated January 25, 2020, Pascoe informed me his count was up to 773.)

It was a rocky start in Mexico City, but with time Pascoe had an acceptable hand press and type to create his first books of poems from the cluster of poets who had gathered around the press. Pascoe recounts wonderful publication parties with music and drink and strong sales (as well as others that were less fruitful). He produces editions that win prizes and praise (and those that don't). He reaches a point of disillusionment, and pursues a new dream, playing, touring, and recording with Grupo Mono Blanco. This lasts for eight years and with income from the music, some dumb luck, and a bit of help he is able to buy a greatly deteriorated country house, Santa Rosa, in Michoacán. In 1987 he established the new home of Taller Martín Pescador in Santa Rosa, a former sugar mill dating from 1775, where the press continues to this day.

In *The Printer's Apprentice* Pascoe recounts the details of approximately two dozen books: the editorial process, the trials of obtaining funding and materials (paper and type), of designing, typesetting and printing each book on the hand press, then binding the edition, and finally the reception of readers and critics. He gives due to each of his apprentices and it is clear that his own experience shapes these productive relationships.



Early on he published primarily books of poetry, the work of young unknown contemporary Mexican poets. As an editor, Pascoe writes “I had to trust my intuition and instinct; I had to trust my friendships.” The first book under Taller Martín Pescador imprint was published in 1976, *Eólicas* by Cristina de la Peña, a student in the English language classes Pascoe taught to support himself at that time. It was Cristina who hit on Taller Martín Pescador as the new press name—*martín pescador* is a bird, a fisher martin or kingfisher, the busy bird which nests near rivers has been ever present in the places Pascoe has lived, Arizona, Costa Rica, Iowa, Bolivia, Sudan, Mexico. Among the poets gathered around the press was a very young Roberto Bolaño, the Chilean expatriate in Mexico whose radical politics led to a radical poetry and fiction and a worldwide reputation, and whose first publication, the long poem, *Reinventar el amor*, was printed and published by Pascoe soon after *Eólicas* in 1976. Pascoe’s book design was—and still is—largely typographic with a judicious touch of ornamentation, modeled on the work of Harry Duncan. The type, paper, and bindings were the best that his funding could support. The public reception of his work went from cool to hot, with weak to very strong sales and a bit of public notice in the media. The publication parties were as memorable as the books themselves. And through the ups and downs, Juan Pascoe persisted and most importantly, maintained his integrity as a fine press printer and publisher.

Another book, published almost twenty years after his first efforts captured my attention, *Enigmas ofrecidos a la Casa del Placer* by Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1995), the great Mexican colonial nun poet. The text is from a small unpublished book of poems found by Antonio Alatorre, the philologist and literary scholar in the National Library of Portugal, originally a handwritten book shared among a group of cloistered Portuguese and Spanish nuns whose love was poetry, a book made by hand that brings to mind Emily Dickinson’s fascicles. Pascoe writes, “...it wasn’t really an unpublished manuscript; it was a private book that had never meant to be printed.” And yet Pascoe designed and printed 300 copies on commission from the *Colegio de México*, and “an unknown printer ha[s] the chance to give form to the first edition of an unknown, unpublished work by a figure the dimension of John Milton or John Donne.” This is the stuff that makes our work incredibly compelling: the serendipitous discoveries that lead to the interpretation of meaningful texts in book form. Pascoe has struggled for recognition as an artist in Mexico, status that would have put him in line for significant grant funding. *Enigmas* is the stuff the makes our work an art, not simply an “industry.”

Pascoe has also done a remarkable job of publishing original research into the beginnings Mexican printing history dating back 450 years. He has unearthed a wealth of material, largely printed matter dating from the arrival of the Spanish through the 19th century, in the National Library in Mexico City among others, and in the hands of antiquarian book dealers who may or may not know what they have. Pascoe describes an exciting treasure hunt that reveals the story of the earliest printers in the New World, including Cornelio Adrián César and Enrico Martínez, their relationship, and the role of the Inquisition in this pre-eminent moment in Mexican typography. Although these

works were underappreciated in Mexico, Pascoe persisted in printing three big books in homage to Mexican printing treating the establishment of the industries of type founding and printing, and the patronage that made this possible. The first book, published in 1991 and titled *Cornelio Adrián César. Impresor in Mexico 1597–1633*, was the result of extensive research into the life and work of this early 17th century Flemish printer in Mexico. It was made up of two parts with two very distinct typographic treatments: the texts of three original contracts, the folios numbered in arabic, sandwiched by a modern book, the folios numbered in roman, which began with the introduction by Rodríguez Buckingham and ended with Pascoe's notes and colophon. The next book is *Impresos universitarios novohispanos del siglo XVI* (1993). The book presents full size facsimiles of forty-four university examination invitation broadsides (most of them seen here for the first time) printed in Mexico between 1584 and 1600 by five different printers: Pedro Ocharte, Pedro Balli, Melchor Ocharte, Cornelio Adrián César, and Enrico Martínez. The third book, *La obra de Enrico Martínez* (1997), gathers together the writings and printing of Enrico Martínez, a wood and type cutter, briefly a printer, most famous as the engineer of the project to drain the lakes of the valley of Mexico. These books explore an experimental presentation of facsimiles of early printed matter flanked by scholarly material presented in a modern style. Pascoe seems to identify with these early immigrants as they struggle to create their tools and learn to use them, and I share this sense of being an outsider and an autodidact.

Juan Pascoe's compelling narrative closes with Harry Duncan's death in 1997. I am left musing, from one printer to another, "We have given this effort our all. We have been our own worst critics, and achieved as close an approximation to perfection as our used presses, antique and outmoded, have allowed. We have surrounded ourselves with a constellation of poets and writers, friends and allies, from which to cull texts for our finely printed books. We have approached the larger world from behind our presses as outsiders, like a spider working industriously at its web every day to capture just the right flies. And there is no end in sight..."

As Harry Duncan wrote to Juan in 1992: "Have you any idea how enviable your own prospects are?—going home to face the unknown, & regular solitary life & work seems to me just about the best possible future. Because you've proved already that you can do these things with the utmost possible felicity, which leaves no doubt whatever of your bringing the unknown to some surprising conclusion that will affirm enduring values against the flux everywhere."

Perseverance furthers. Onward!

**Felicia Rice** has collaborated with visual artists, performing artists and writers under the Moving Parts Press imprint since 1977. Work from the Press has been included in exhibitions from New York to Tokyo. Her books are held in library and museum collections worldwide and she has been the recipient of many awards and grants from the NEA to the French Ministry of Culture. Rice writes, "As a printer, my job is to confront complex issues and render my response to them in book form. As an artist, my job is to do so with profound integrity. As a publisher, my job is make these issues public."



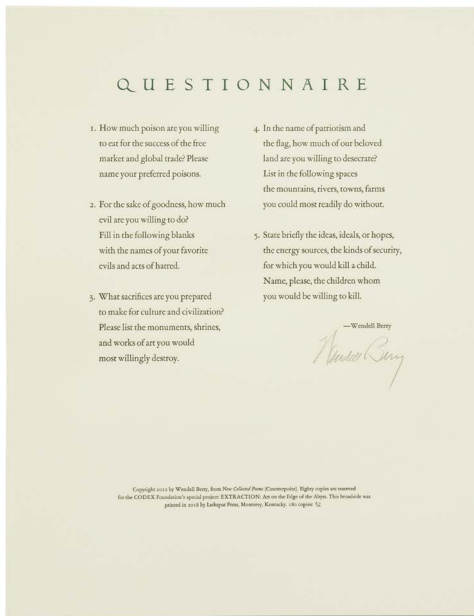
## WORDS ON THE EDGE: A REVIEW

By Juan Pascoe

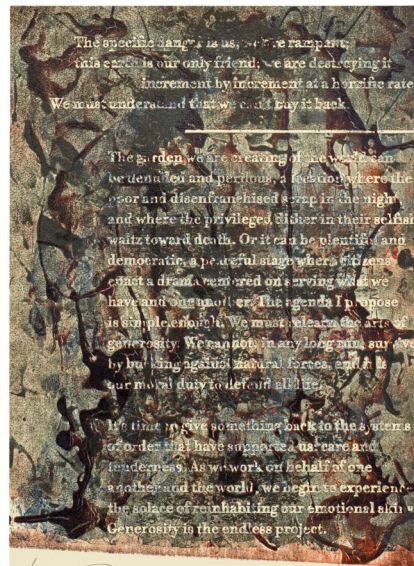
I.

In 2018, out of the blue, came an invitation to me (a Mexican printer) from Peter Koch (printer, writer, organizer, leader) of the Codex Foundation in Berkeley, to print a broadside, one of twenty-six, for a projected portfolio aimed at the apocalyptic ecological crisis mankind has brought upon the planet. I had, in 2016, participated in a group portfolio in honor of the centenary of The Cummington Press printer Harry Duncan. In that same year, I had voluntarily printed one of Shakespeare's sonnets for the Bodleian Library's online call for letterpress renderings. These were my only credentials, although I suspected that the Codex committee had searched for at least one printer from south of the Wall.

I asked to see the list of printers and poets. Of the presses, I recognized three from the *Fine Print* days, but had never heard of the others (I was a subscriber neither to *Matrix* nor *Parenthesis*, the publications around which the US and English printers were now gathered). I had only heard of three of the poets: Gary Snyder, the world's last connection with the Beats; Robert Bringhurst, typographer, poet, and spokesperson of global admiration; and Forrest Gander, friend of Mexican poets (including ones I have printed), and translator of their work into English. I asked if I might not print his poem. When it arrived, I found a long, musical, inventive, geological poem. I was moved and honored.



Wendell Berry, "Questionnaire" Grey Zeitz, Printer



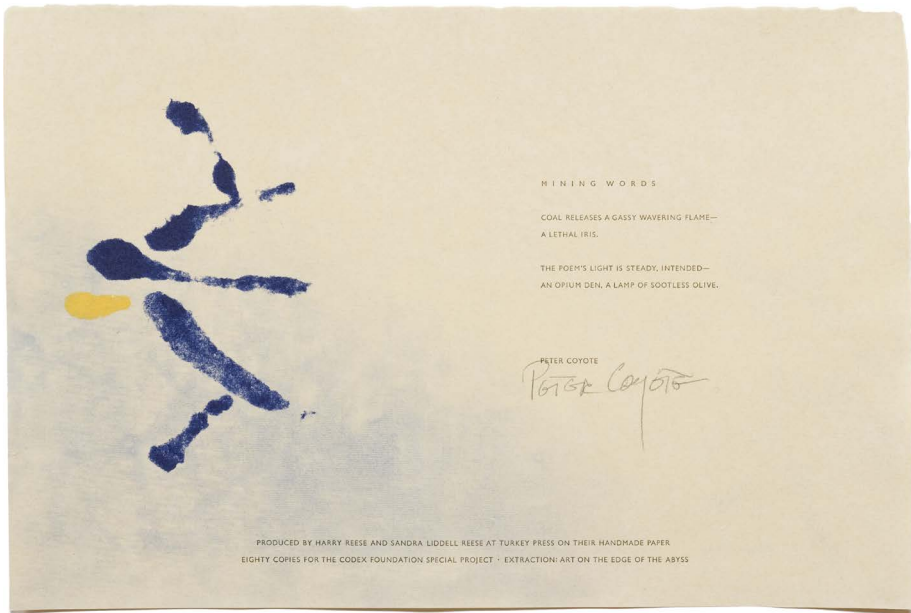
William Kittredge, *The Nature of Generosity*

William Kittredge, "The specific danger is us..."  
Aaron Cohick, Printer

There had been the suggestion from Codex that the broadsides might benefit from illustration, but Gander's poem sounded to me like one that required reading in silence, a poem that took care of itself. I printed it in an austere mode.

Almost a year later, it was announced to the participants that the broadsides were printed, the collection was compiled and on its way. I wrote Peter Koch several weeks later and asked if there had been any reviews. "Why don't you write one?" he answered. I didn't take him seriously and didn't reply. Months later, asking if it really had been sent to me, he advised patience and again suggested I write a review. I replied that he was the center of a literary and typographic movement: he could ask anybody on the honors list: a writer, a publisher, a critic, a famous one, a brilliant observer: why me? I was not only a nobody, I hadn't even seen the portfolio yet—and furthermore, I was one of the printers, and if I wrote, I'd be obliged to skip over my contribution. That day it was announced that Forrest Gander had been awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry 2019. Out of loyalty to Gander, in support of the printers, I realized that I couldn't refuse.

One day, weeks later, I checked out the Post Office in town, and the package was there: a big box, and inside, well-protected, elegantly wrapped, the portfolio: 32 x 48 x 3 cm. in size, the clamshell box covered and lined in black and white linen cloth, a paper spine label printed in red and black: "Words on the Edge." The cover, black, impressed in red and white, a great splash of Japanese calligraphic brush work, which presumably translated the title: *Extraction: Words on the Edge of the Abyss*. Very handsome.



Peter Coyote, “Mining Words” Harry & Sandra Liddell Reese, Printers

## II.

By *Extraction*, the organizers refer to the industrial procedure of opening up the earth to remove and make use of what minerals ancient geological activity left behind. The great gashes made by strip mining, by quarries, by all manner of digging, are never healed, and the damage to the planet is brutal. The burning of coal, the use of trace elements for our digital endeavors, the drilling for oil, the plastic industry: all these represent mankind as an inventive species, but which is also sawing off the limb upon which it stands.

The portfolio of poems (all the texts are not poems) and printing—two activities which pertain to the creative and non-predatory category of human existence—is the first in a crusade planned by the committee to generate awareness, discussion, solutions: all, as the group states, intent on fomenting “an international artistic ruckus”: a noisy commotion, a heated controversy.

A portfolio of “beautifully written texts beautifully composed and printed” (each of the texts is different, but every one is written with craft, brain and heart) does not cause a ruckus. On the contrary, it is an act of educated and sophisticated civility, of pleasure in the intelligence and skill of humanity. To be sure, its theme renews our concern for the state of the planet, and it serves to raise funds, but it also acts as a showcase for the state of contemporary linguistic and typographic arts.

As a genre of printing, portfolios are cousins to leaf books, and they are both appreciated by the same people: librarians, well-off bibliophiles, hard-up printers. Persons of



# ONE RIVER

## I HAVE FRIENDS IN SALMONY PLACES...

My wise friend Wendell Berry says there are just two kinds of places on earth: sacred places and desecrated places.

To enfranchise the beautiful old hearts of our watershed and address the desecration we must repudiate religious and cultural chauvinism and recognize this truth: ...The migration of salmon from headwater to sea back to headwaters forms a cosmic prayer wheel as central to the tribes as is the Host to the Mass. The streams and landscapes sanctified by salmon runs are tribal holy lands. To ask Indians to "be realistic" and give up on that sanctification is like asking a Pope Francis or Mother Teresa to get real and knock off the old hocus pocus about the Body and Blood of Christ. Love itself is knowledge, and John of the Cross sounds as much Nez Perce elder as christic mystic when he says: "We live in what we love." Native people inhabiting their ancient watersheds are doing exactly that, and their refusal to give up on extirpated salmon and inundated homelands is a time-transcending spiritual necessity that, in the end, will prove timely as well: no dam is forever.

When I was four years old I stood at Celilo Falls in its last month as a living glory doomed to become slackwater. The faces of the tribal fishermen, the oceanic roar so far from the sea, join my heart to theirs and send the dip net inside me scooping down, where I catch nothing, and it wrecks me still. When I was five I had my first close encounter with a big male coho in a ruined urban stream, and his totem red, white and black face assails me still. When I was eight I hooked my first winter steelhead in a little tributary that exploded the creek and my heart both at once. It hurts, it hurts, it hurts to remember how much wild wealth and beauty and joy have been lost, diminished, destroyed. But when it's the loving heart that hurts, I say, Let it. Mountains, broken and broken and broken again, become the pebbles of our beloved salmon's birth houses.  
May our hearts be like the mountains.

— David James Duncan



— Excerpted from a talk presented in May 2018 at a gathering of 15 American Tribes and Canadian First Nations to prepare to negotiate the Columbia River Treaty between the United States and Canada. A few days before the gathering, the Trump and Trudeau administrations reneged on their promises to attend and excluded the Tribes and First Nations from participating in the treaty process.

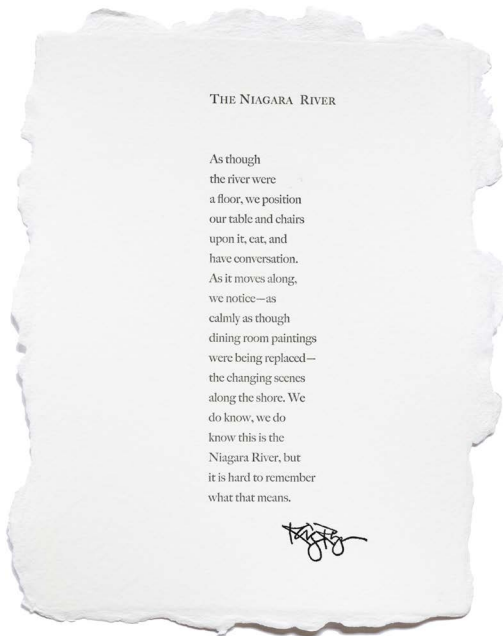
David James Duncan, "One River" Chad Pastotnik, Printer

the third category view them a way to have direct contact with the printing taking place among their own generation.

The first portfolio I ever saw, entitled *A Keepsake for Alfred A. Knopf*, 1965, was on the shelves of The Cummington Press in West Branch, Iowa, where I had gone in late 1971 in the hopes of learning to handle the cast iron hand press. The printers included Lewis Allen, Merle Armitage, Joseph Blumenthal, Will Carter, Muir Dawson, Saul Marks, Victor Hammer, Ward Ritchie, Jack Stauffacher, Roderick Stinehour, Hermann Zapf, as well as Harry Duncan, the printer whose house I was visiting. It was this group of typographers that formed the foundation upon which I began my own press. Duncan, at that time, was the only one of which I had ever heard. His contribution was a text "set in Cloister Old Style type, printed on Rives [with an Ostrander Seymour hand press]", a light-hearted remembrance of Knopf by John Crowe Ransom, "The Poets Go Along". Towards the end, this line: "What a poet wants more than anything in the world is to give a feeling of fluidity, power, and speed. He will try anything..."

### III.

Upon opening the cover of *Extraction: Words on the Edge of the Abyss*, a title page appears as the first sheet, similar in design to the cover, which, except for the red "Words," everything else is the opposite in color, the background is now white paper, the printing and calligraphy are printed in black. The result is majestic, and we are prepared for a



Kay Ryan, "The Niagara River" Marie Dern, Printer



Rick Bass, "The Wild Marsh" Jason Dewinetz, Printer

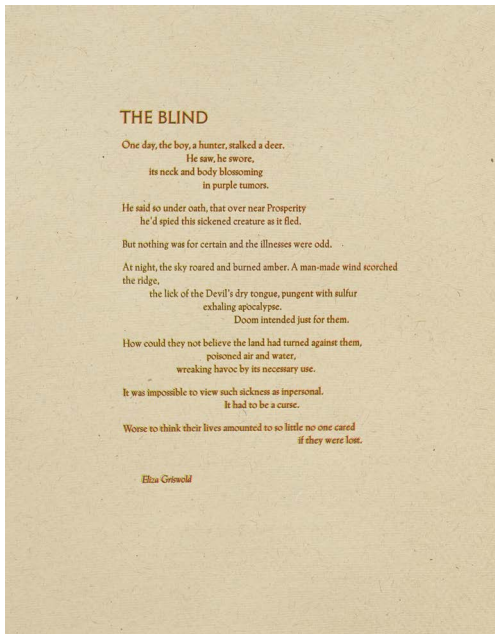
Japanese presence. The next sheet is the Table of Contents, also attractive, listing the authors in alphabetical order (from Margaret Atwood to Jan Zwicky), the titles of their works, the presses, and their printers.

But wait! There is something on the verso of the title page. Reading it I see that it is an introductory text by Robert Bringham, "The Edge." It presents a portrait of the fragile Universe, and of the self-destructive compulsion of humanity: all true, well-stated, but due to its placement, I wonder if came as an afterthought. Even if that were so, why would such an important text, a preface to the poetic and typographic journey before us, not be worthy of a page all its own, possibly set in a shorter measure, some added leading and maybe a touch of red?

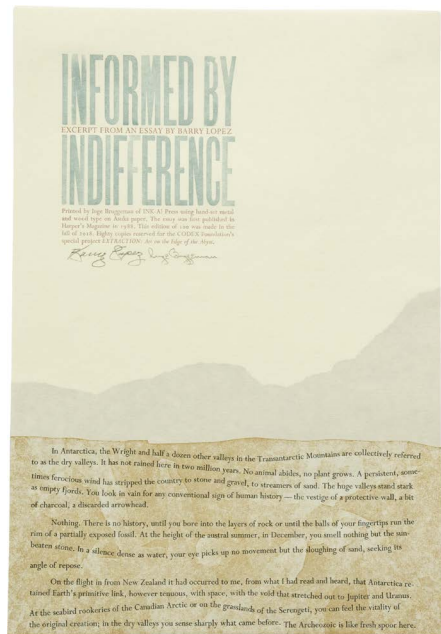
And then, forewarned, on the verso of the Table of Contents I find the legal notice, acknowledgements, the colophon and the following statement:

*Poets and printers are spiritual cousins. We share in the discipline of the craft, the word on the page, and the inkiness of the letter forms. The Words on the Edge are, in the end, ours—dwelling in a world of the artist's magic—a message to the future.*

Is this not, also, an important enough pronouncement to warrant a page of its own, a proper space for us to contemplate and weigh the words?



Eliza Griswold, "The Blind" Russell Maret, Printer



Barry Lopez, "In Antarctica ..."  
Inge Bruggeman, Printer

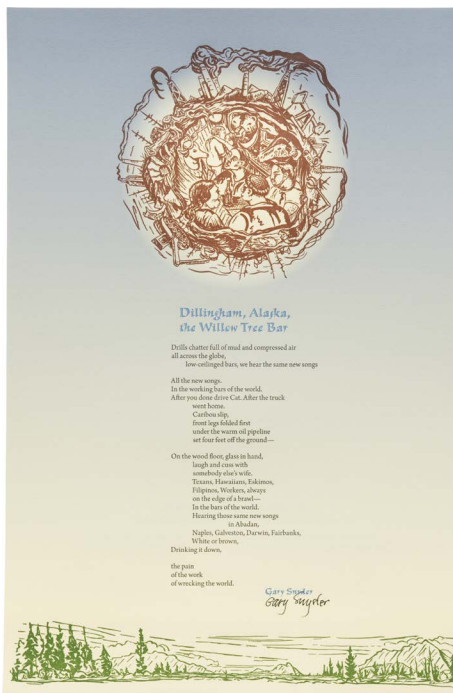
I think:

The printer would hope the poets looked upon him as a cousin, but might be excused for suspecting otherwise: after all, the authors want to be read, and although they probably like the look, the feel, and the smell of a finely printed volume, bound up with skill, and recognize the resonance such treatment confers upon their work, the tome will be priced in guineas: it will sell slowly and it will be read with cloth-gloved hands. For both the author and the reader, a chapbook produced with a mushy mimeograph machine and stapled at the spine might serve the poem just as well.

But a letterpress printer looks upon himself not as a maker of frivolous expensive rarities, an alchemist dabbling in magic, but as a skilled artisan, the heir protector of the art which serves all the arts—an art which began (so far as Western civilization is concerned) in Germany half a millennium ago, and changed the world forever (and in a certain way made possible the technical development which has caused the climactic apocalypse.) Although the process of printing itself has been progressively dehumanized, to the point that now a book can be made by a robot (which for many purposes is fine), there is still in existence a tiny—and ever renewed—cadre of journeymen/master printers who bear the torch, certain that works of imaginative creation benefit from the collaboration of written words with imprinted ones. Literary art mates with applied art, and bibliographic art comes [can come] into being.



Brenda Hillman, “Triple Moments of Light & Industry” Crispin & Jan Elsted, Printers



Gary Snyder, “Dillingham, Alaska, the Willow Tree Bar” Jonathan Clark, Printer

#### IV.

#### Excerpt from the publisher’s Instructions to Printers:

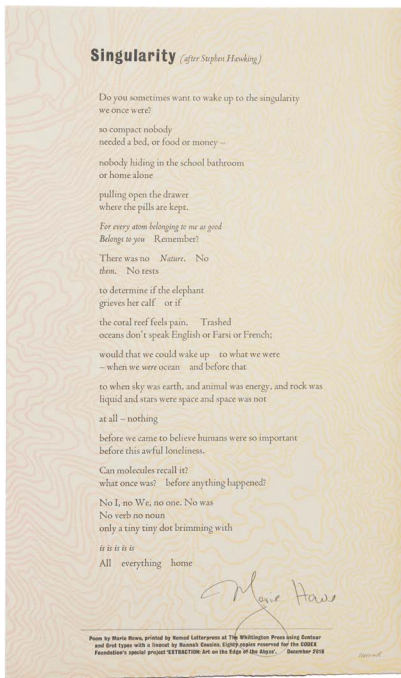
Twenty-six poems and lyrical texts addressing the theme of extraction by leading American and Canadian writers have been selected and paired with an equivalent number of notable letterpress printers, each of whom have been invited to produce [100 copies of] a broadside.

Poets & Writers include: Jane Hirshfield, Jan Zwicky, Arthur Sze, Joy Harjo, Natalie Diaz, Brenda Hillman, Emily McGiffin, Forrest Gander, Robert Hass, David Duncan, Margaret Atwood, Robert Bringham, Wendell Berry, Gary Snyder, Eliza Griswold, Kay Ryan, Barry Lopez, Peter Coyote, Terry Tempest Williams, Edwin Dobb, William Kittredge, Rick Bass, etc.

Participating printers include: The Press of the Palace of the Governors, Ninja Press, Jungle Garden Press, The Territorial Press, Moving Parts Press, Peter Koch Printers, Artichoke Press, Russell Maret, Larkspur Press, Brighton Press, Patrick Reagh, Printer, Greenboathouse Press, Turkey Press, Black Rock Press, Robin Price, Printer, and more.

Maximum sheet size: 12 by 18 inches (orientation is up to the printer)

We ask you to sign the broadsides and arrange for the author to sign as well.”



Marie Howe, “Singularity” Pat Randle, Printer

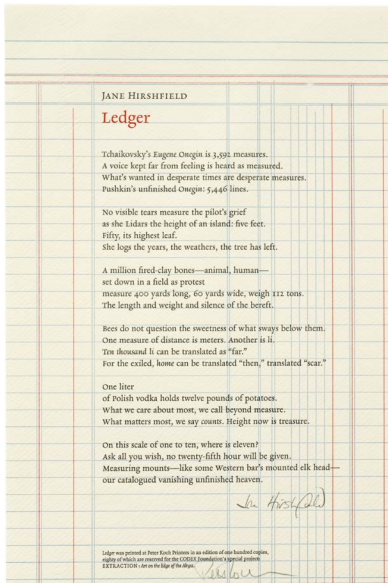


Margaret Atwood, “Time capsule found on the dead planet” Peter Koch, Printer

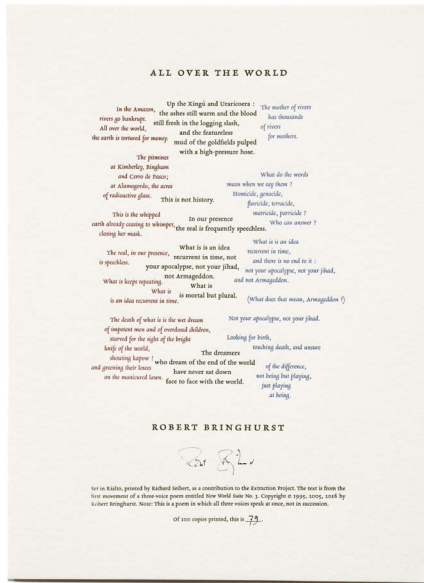
I will consider six of them:

“Time Capsule Found on the Dead Planet,” Margaret Atwood • Peter Koch, printer. The first broad-side—they are ordered alphabetically by the author’s surnames— is instantly arresting for four reasons: the illustration, the paper (Umbria, Italy) the author, and the printer. We notice the gorgeous illustration, which takes up a fifth of the sheet: subtle pastel colors, a scene in which half of the space is a desolate bulldozed rural scene, and the other half a high-rise, good-looking but empty cityscape: a perfect scenario for the grim prose time capsule. I suppose it was digitally printed with an uncommonly fine ink jet printer (I could not see any dots with a magnifying glass, nor detect the pressure of plates on the verso.) The type is perhaps 16-point Blado and Poliphilus, with maybe some 10-point Joanna for the colophon, all beautifully inked, the pressure evenly and perfectly applied. Margaret Atwood was given a structural space within which to sign her name, but the printer did not sign. Even so, it’s impossible to ignore the presence and influence of Peter Koch on the contemporary printing scene: the bi-annual CODEX Book Fair in California would not exist if it were not for him, he organized a celebrated itinerant exhibition of active contemporary California fine printers; and he is first and foremost a printer himself, with a superb shop in lower Berkeley: a shop connected—through type





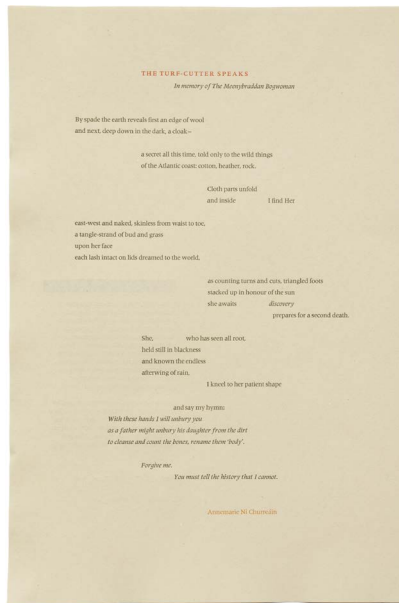
Jane Hirshfield, "Ledger" Peter Koch, Printer



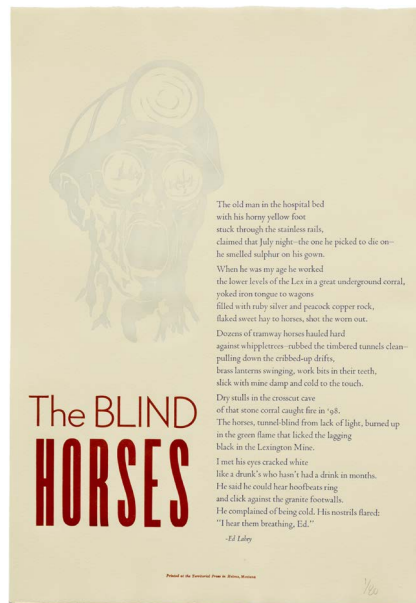
Robert Bringhamst, "All Over the World"  
Richard Seibert, Printer

handed down, through presses, through friendship—directly to Adrian Wilson and Jack Stauffacher. He has a three-volume *catalogue raisonné* to his name. A retrospective exhibition of his work has recently opened at The Grolier Club in Manhattan. The photographs I have seen show a varied, creative, ever-different collection of works. I have always been impressed by his typographic construction, in which he excels, even though he does not ignore the obvious matters of paper, illustration, and binding.

"All Over the World," Robert Bringhamst • Richard Seibert, printer. "The text is from the first movement of a three-voice poem entitled *New World Suite*... This is a poem in which all three voices speak at once, not in succession." The paper is not identified, but is smaller than the maximum size, 10<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>" x 14<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub>" , a strange-seeming dimension until the measurement is made in centimeters: 28 x 38 cm, meaning probably that the sheet is an European handmade. The typeface is Rialto, which is digital, and so this impression—deep and crisp—was probably made by three polymer plates (in three colors) with a cylinder press. Richard Seibert is a printer based in Berkeley. What is arresting is the poem itself, printed in three variously spaced columns, purposely off register, the first in red italic, the second in black roman, the third in blue italic. Reading it requires time and effort, first down each column, then laterally in its bumpy trajectory, and finally in a mind-expanding attempt to take it all in in a single triple composition: not unlike how it must be to be able to play a pipe organ, each hand at its own keyboard, the feet playing the bass line with the pedals. This is poetry whose time for gentlemanly order has ended: it



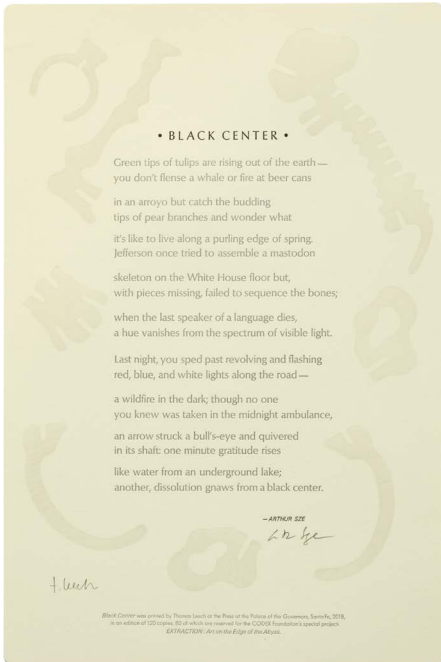
Annemarie Ní Churraíin, “The Turf-Cutter Speaks”  
Jamie Murphy, Printer



Ed Lahey, “The Blind Horses”  
Aaron Parrett, Printer

is poetry at the edge of the abyss. Robert Bringhurst, multi-talented in typography and literature, born in Los Angeles, living in British Columbia, author of twenty-two books of poetry and fifteen books of prose, &c., requires no introduction. If we cannot quite split our minds in three to grasp this poem, we clearly must keep returning to it; he knows what he is doing, we're the ones with the stiff brains.

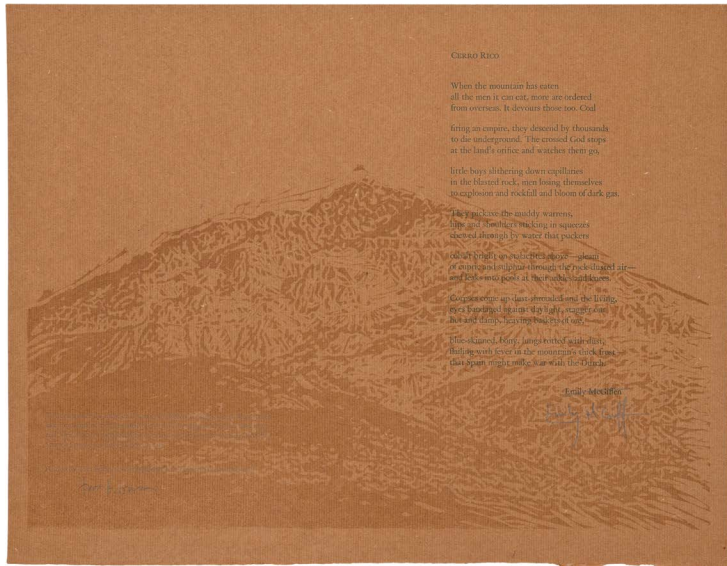
“The Turf-Cutter Speaks,” Annemarie Ní Churraíin • *The Salvage Press*, Jamie Murphy, printer. The spirit of this broadside is different from the others. To begin, it is a poem to which a story has been appended: “In May 1978, while hand-cutting turf on Meenybraddan bog in County Donegal, a woolen cloak was uncovered about one meter below the surface. When opened, the cloak was found to contain a partially preserved human body. A sample of bone established a date of c. 1570, confirming the late medieval period suggested by the cloak.” So, we are in Ireland, hand-set verse alongside prose, reminding us of Elizabeth Yeats, the Cuala Press, floor-length frocks, Albion presses, literature. The paper, an Irish handmade from the Griffen Mill, is a warm tan color, thin and strong; the type is Méridien, designed by the Swiss Adrian Frutiger, and cast by the French Deberny et Peignot; the printing was likely done on a cylinder press. Gone are the frocks, we are in the 21st century, in the European Union: the typesetting and the imposition are confident, and take exactly the space the lines of verse require in their movement down the sheet of paper straight to the hymn: “You must tell the history that I cannot.” A fine poem at



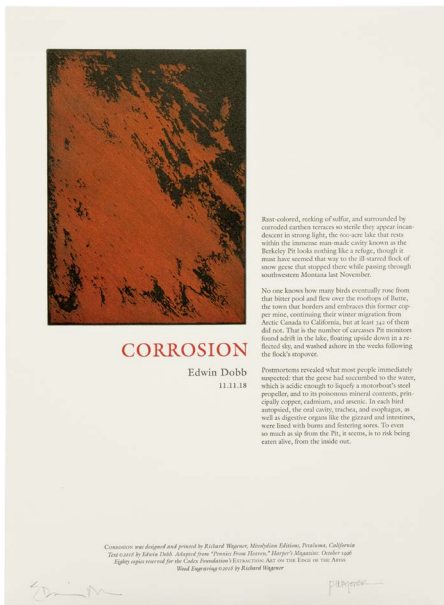
Arthur Sze, "Black Center" Thomas Leech, Printer



Joy Harjo, "A Map to the Next World" Norman Clayton, Printer



Emily McGiffin, "Cerro Rico" Tara Bryan, Printer



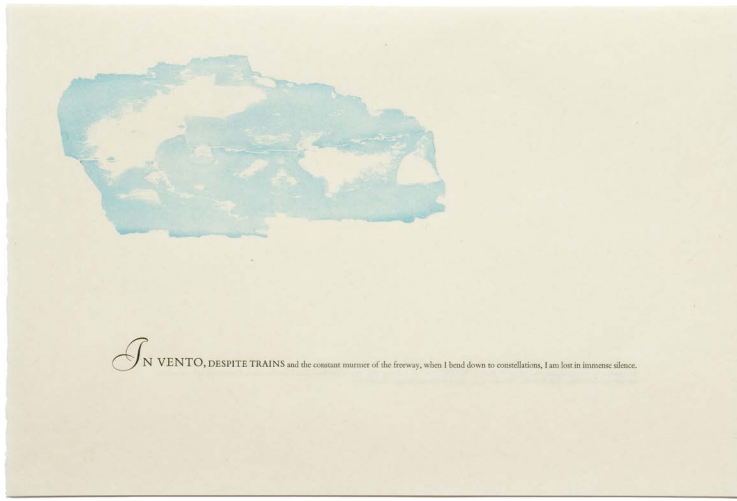
Edwin Dobb, “Corrosion” Richard Wagener, Printer



Linda Hogan, “Trail of Tears: Our Removal” Felicia Rice, Printer

the edge of an ancient pit. The black ink of the text, the orange-red color of the title, and the yellow-brown color of the author’s name sustain the poem’s speech...but wait! There are a few items printed on the verso, including a curious strip printed with “an ink base mixed with peat” (the dividing line between what is above ground and what is below?) Beneath this, the poet and the printer sign their names in pencil.

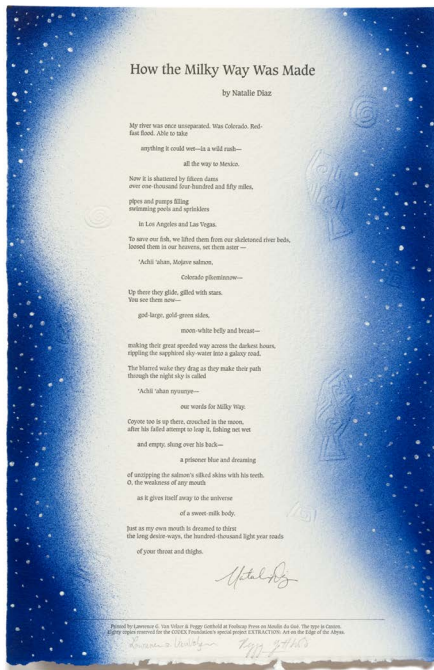
“Corrosion,” Edwin Dobb • Mixolydian Editions, Richard Wagener, printer. This broadside is notable even before catching the name of the author: this is because of the woodcut, its rusty color as well as the exceedingly fine lines, and because the typographic elements—even though the sheet itself, 11 x 15 inches, is smaller than the norm—sit together skillfully, dramatically. “I approach each block as the abstract painter confronts an empty canvas, thinking about how to use this space to make a statement...” the wood engraver and printer states on his webpage. I would expand on that: Wagener approaches each sheet of blank paper as if it were an empty canvas, and he constructs the spaces as if he were an abstract painter. The text is not a poem, but rather three exquisitely written paragraphs of descriptive prose, water birds caught up in an ecological disaster. The author, Edwin Dobb, an environmental journalist, was one of the founding fathers of the Codex Extraction project. He died suddenly in August 2019. He signed the sheets of “Corrosion,” in pencil, at the bottom (as did the printer): and we are left with an emotionally charged, appropriate memorial.



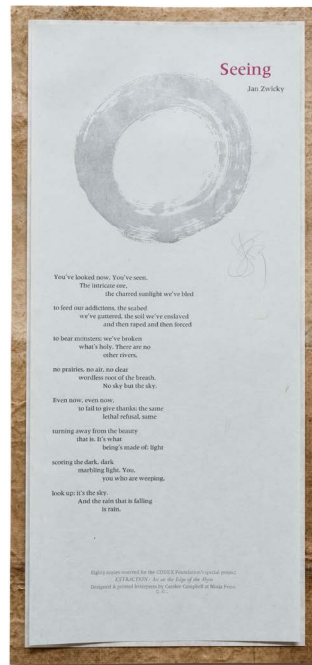
Gaylord Schanilec, "In Vento" Gaylord Schanilec, Printer

"Trail of Tears: Our Removal," Linda Hogan • Moving Parts Press, Felicia Rice, printer. There are three Native American poets in this group of authors, possibly because of the high-country Western origin of the organizers, for whom tribes and reservations and coexistence are a natural part of the world. A third of the printers and just under half of the poets are women. This illustrated poem encompasses the three groups: Linda Hogan is a Chickasaw novelist, essayist, poet and environmentalist, and Felicia Rice is a Californian printer who descends directly from the finest of the Bay Area traditions: Jack Stauffacher, William Everson, Adrian Wilson, and Sherwood Grover. "Felicia is not just a book artist. She is also what insiders call a 'letterpress printer,' which means that she masterfully utilizes raised metal type and combines it with new digital tools. In this sense Felicia's praxis extends from ancient book making techniques all the way to cyber-art. Her collaborative projects create book structures in which word and image meet and merge into a total experience" (Guillermo Gómez-Peña). The Moving Parts Press has published books, broadsides, and prints under the direction of Felicia Rice since 1977. Here, the Baskerville type is set in such a way as to circle about the four illustrations, two to each side of the poem: the first ten lines curved to the left, then twelve lines curved to the right, fifteen lines again to the right—the design printed in a different color—and finally ten lines to the left, a space, and the author's name. Thus the poem is visually a "trail", and the designs, ancient-looking, can be seen as the "trail of tears" of the title. "With lines unseen the land was broken. / When surveyors came, we knew / what the prophet had said was true, / this land with unseen lines would be taken." Neither this poet, nor any of the others in this compilation, unsettles us with poetic ambition. John Crowe Ransom's claim that poets would "do anything" to achieve their aim, seems petty. This poem is sure of itself, it has a voice and was lucky to find its perfect printer.





Natalie Diaz, “How the Milky Way Was Made”  
Peggy Gotthold & Lawrence Van Velzer, Printers



Jan Zwicky, “Seeing”  
Carolee Campbell, Printer

“Seeing,” Jan Zwicky • Ninja Press, Carolee Campbell, printer. The illustration is printed from a magnesium plate of a jagged circle which does not wish to be perfectly round, appropriated by the printer from an 18th century Zen Buddhist painting. This broadside was designed in a painterly way, seemingly with a Japanese influence. The poet’s signature, swift and light, placed between the title and the poem, underneath the illustration, manages to balance the whole construction perfectly. The printer, the architect of the sheet, has signed her name with two almost invisible lower case “c” centered just below the colophon. The poem is printed in strong black ink, the title is in red, and the circle and the colophon in light grey ink; the paper is of Japanese light blue mulberry fiber stock, 7 inches wide and 16¾ inches long. This is affixed to a sheet of off-white mulberry 1/8th of an inch wider, all around, which is in turn affixed to a sheet of thick brown paper, almost bark, 1/2 inch wider all around. This broadside would be happiest outside the confines of a boxed portfolio, framed and hung in a place designed for meditation, for frequent re-reading. It ends: “...You, / you who are weeping, / look up: it’s the sky. / And the rain that is falling / is rain.” Meditation previous to pulling on a pair of comfortable sandals, grabbing a wide-brimmed felt hat, an umbrella, and going out to join Greta Thunberg on the world’s streets, because while we have been writing poems, cutting wood blocks, setting type and oiling the presses, the ruckus has, from a different quarter, begun.

September, Inverness

ROBERT HASS

*Tomales Bay is flat blue in the Indian summer heat.  
This is the time when hikers on Inverness Ridge  
Stand on tiptoe to pick ripe huckleberries  
That the deer can't reach. This is the season of halls—  
Egrets hunting in the tidal shallows, a ribbon  
Of sandpipers fluttering over mudflats, white,  
Then not. A drift of mist wiping off the bay.  
This is the moment when bliss is what you glimpse  
From the corner of your eye, as you drive past  
Running errands, and the wind comes up,  
And the surface of the water glitters hard against it.*

Robert Hass

Pat Reagh

September, Inverness, by Robert Hass was printed letterpress by Patrick Reagh's in Perpetua types. Eighty copies reserved for the CODEX Foundation's EXTRACTION: Art on the Edge of the Alps.

Robert Hass, "September, Inverness" Patrick Reagh, Printer

A Clearing: Forest Gander • Printed by Juan Pascoe at the Teller Martin Press, near Tallahassee, Michigan, Mexico / Mexico

What is it as you goings? Glances with dust. From where have you come?  
The dull consciousness of the stone heap, a barren monument.  
Wildflowers, dense as clouds, reverent with dust at the ridge's edge.

What comes here gone forged or spliced and drawn in color from the ground.  
Xanthic shadow at the edge.  
Where are we going? Glances with dust. From where have you come?

Something shadowed with click by a suspended rock slide.  
What does it mean, a resonant typography?  
One step forward and he is with us. One step back, another mile always lies.

The sense of speech loosened, unstringing.  
Each one thinking in the air who would like a button.  
The microphone stage visible under his skin.

I cannot be disarmed, his eyes say.  
A flame that plays over one. A flare.  
In the open air or none, not waiting in brightness.

I can be read, say the rocks, but not by you.  
The air hummed, almost missed, like a thin pool of mist.  
Mist in the photograph, mist in the eye.

What does it mean, a resonant typography?  
To submerge rocks the color of all of them in the color of each.  
I can be read, say her eyes, but not by you.

As if the landscape had dissolved itself?  
Rain shadow from distant hills, the wet powder, in wind.  
One step forward and we are with them. One step back, another mile always lies.

Don't pick up the rocks, he says, because rocks belong to the dead.  
Xanthic shadow at the edge.  
The distance for a whole hair planet, all depth sponged away.

Black knoll of hollows.  
There is nothing between his eyes and ours, not even attention.  
Each one carrying the dead summer into the autumn world.

The weight coming down and not being.  
The sense of speech loosened, unstringing.  
Light broken off in the air.

The twig's shadow has the same quality as the shadow of a man.  
Glance held, an afterglow.  
All depth sponged away, the distance flat as horse-hair planet.

It is in an eye, missed in the photograph.  
Don't pick him up, rocks say, because the dead belong to the rocks.  
Enclosed with dust at the ridge's edge, half-glimpse for the time of a hand.

A man's shadow has the same quality as the shadow of a twig.  
What comes here gone forged or spliced and drawn in color from the ground.  
The air hummed, almost missed.

Set in the Didot's roman type and a Calligrapher's printed in an edition of 100 copies on Young's De Ponce paper with an Ollivander Seymore Extra Heavy hand press. 80 copies are reserved for the CODEX Foundation's special project EXTRACTION: Art on the Edge of the Alps.

Juan Pascoe

Forrest Gander, "A Clearing" Juan Pascoe, Printer

V.

I once asked Harry Duncan how it felt, in the 1940s, to be printing the likes of Wallace Stevens, William Carlos Williams, Allen Tate, Robert Lowell, and Marianne Moore. He said, “You’ve got to realize: times were different, the world was at war, poetry was not on the public mind: those poets were read by a few people, but weren’t thought of then as they are now.”

Let us suppose that the destruction of the fragile chemical and organic system within which life has flourished these several million years does not take place, and that in eighty years there will still exist readers wishing to know the work of we who have passed into history: those readers will look at this portfolio and say: “Yeah, pretty amazing!”

In 1960, **Juan Pascoe**, half Mexican, half “American” was taught art and typing by Nancy Duncan (wife of Harry Duncan, The Cummington Press) at a Quaker boarding school near West Branch, Iowa. In his Junior year he was taken to help move the Ostrander Seymour hand press into the rebuilt front porch of the Duncan’s “new” house. That was when the boy realized how splendid it was to produce modern books with such a magnificent tool—and in a workshop next to the house! Later, he apprenticed to Duncan for a year, and learnt enough to set up on his own in Mexico: a country in which there was a booming literary community, but without craft printers. He found a Washington press and began to print in 1973 under the Taller Martin Pescador (Kingfisher Workshop) imprint; he lists, up to the present, 773 items in his bibliography.

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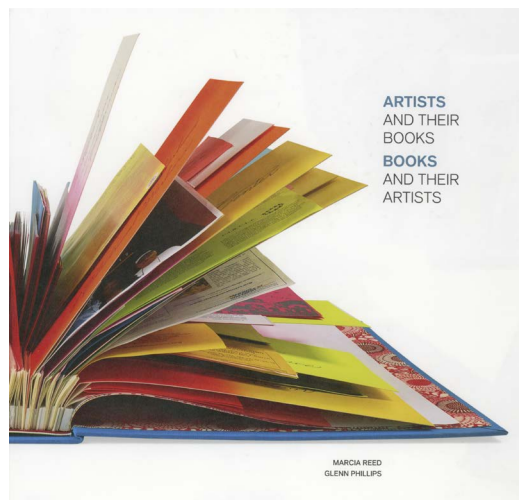
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## EXHIBITION REVIEW: ARTISTS AND THEIR BOOKS / BOOKS AND THEIR ARTISTS, GETTY RESEARCH INSTITUTE

By Carolee Campbell



There are many reasons to make a book. What I mean by that is, there are many reasons to literally *make* a book, to design and craft one by hand. That has never been so obvious, if possibly initially misunderstood, as seen in the notable book exhibition in the galleries of the Getty Research Institute at the Getty Center in Los Angeles.

The GRI has opened their vaults that hold a world-class collection of more than 6,000 artists' books and book-like objects in order to select some 100, made by over forty contemporary artists, to put on display for several months. In addition, the GRI has produced a publication, edited by Marcia Reed and Glenn Phillips and published by Getty Publications. It is not a catalogue of the exhibition per se but a survey and description of some of the most important examples that make up the Getty's vast artist's book collection. Both the exhibition and the publication are entitled *Artists and Their Books / Books and Their Artists*. The exhibition was on display from June 26 through October 28, 2018.

The publication also presents precursors to the artist's book, such as Joris Hoefnagel's sixteenth-century calligraphy masterpiece, *Mira calligraphiae monumenta* (1561–62) and Paul Éluard's *Facile* (1935), with photographs by Man Ray of the nude body of the poet's wife, Nusch Éluard, flowing across loose pages that can be rearranged for alternate viewings. And those are only two of the selections discussed in the publication.

To better understand the exhibition beyond what I saw on the several occasions that I visited the galleries, I needed to be reminded of the history behind the artist's book collection and the Getty Research Institute itself. I didn't have to go far.

In her opening essay in the publication, Marcia Reed—chief curator and associate director of the Getty Research Institute—writes that the GRI was established in 1983 when she first arrived there. It began as a small curatorial library with three rare books. “It was a time when collecting early-twentieth-century rare books felt transgressive.” However by 1985, only two years later, the GRI had acquired the Jean Brown Archive, principally for its Dada and Surrealist holdings. What both fascinated and challenged Marcia at that pivotal time, having been trained as a rare book and print curator in early modern history, were the more than 4,000 artists’ books in the Jean Brown Archive. Keen to integrate these materials into the GRI collections, Marcia made it her business to visit Jean Brown, who had repaired to Tyringham, Massachusetts in 1971 after the death of her husband and fellow collector, Leonard Brown.

Jean Brown’s home in Tyringham was originally the Shaker Seed House where the Shakers had printed their seed envelopes. The Tyringham Shaker settlement was a celibate community founded in 1792. They lived a rigorous life in isolated communities sharing everything they owned in the spirit of the earliest Christians. The community was made up of mills, workshops, communal housing, and spaces for worship. The settlement declined in the 1870s and eventually became a rural residential community.

There, at the Shaker Seed House, building on the collection that Jean Brown and her husband had created, she became a collector of Fluxus, along with work adjacent to the Fluxus movement: artists’ books, concrete poetry, happenings, and performance art. The Shaker Seed House became an important center for both Fluxus artists and scholars, with Jean Brown alternately cooking meals and showing her guests her collection. The house became an ever-evolving installation, archive, and library.

Marcia Reed visited the Shaker Seed House several times in the late 1980s and 1990s and “enjoyed many lengthy, enthusiastic, and highly informative conversations with Jean.” There, she learned Jean’s collecting strategy, her key insights and instincts, which were motivated by a need to see more and know more. She had “an almost irrational passion for collecting.” She assembled her archive intuitively, connecting with artists and then remembering them through their works. Her methods were social, personal, and engaged—and not driven by art dealers. (Artists’ books were hardly on the radar in the 1970s and early 1980s anyway.) Jean Brown’s collecting strategies—“collecting by connecting”—essentially became the template for Marcia’s explorations into the world of artists’ books.

Through the intervening years, it has been my personal experience as a book artist myself, to see that the Jean Brown strategy of “collecting by connecting” is alive and well in Marcia’s approach to new acquisitions for the artists’ book collection. It is evident as well, when Marcia gives a tour of the *Artists and Their Books / Books and Their Artists* exhibition, which she did with frequency each Tuesday afternoon during the run of the show. She knows both the books and the artists intimately and speaks of them in a chattily charming way, as one would of old friends. By the end of the tour, visitors lean in to



listen to why a book looks like a pack of pencils (*Memories*, Buzz Spector, 1976) or like hanging, white fox tails with knots at their ends (*Chanccanni Quipu*, Cecelia Vicuña, 2012).

And why is that? The answer takes us back to the original idea for *Artists and Their Books / Books and Their Artists*, the publication. The publication had been in production for some time before it was noticed that there was an opening on the Getty's complex exhibition calendar to include an artists' books show. And thus the exhibition was spawned.

The exhibition as well as the publication has been co-curated by Marcia Reed and Glenn Phillips, the GRI's head of Modern and Contemporary Collections. The organizing principal of the exhibition is to bring to light "often enigmatic and open-ended hybrid works which agitate against exclusive categories and questions the compartmentalization of the art establishment. It includes more than a hundred postwar works that trace the trajectory of this complex art form as it has intersected with nearly every major movement in modern and contemporary art." At its most basic, the books on display are the artifacts of what these artists are studying, exploring, passionate about, compelled by.

By example, jumping off from my earlier remark, "why a book looks like hanging, white fox tails with knots at their ends," this artists' book is by Chilean artist, Cecelia Vicuña, a poet, artist, filmmaker, and activist who has been in exile since the early 1970s after the military coup against Salvador Allende. She creates what she calls "precarious works" (i.e., fragile objects), along with many and varying contemporary forms of the ancient *quipu*, a 5,000-year old method of knotting cord. *Quipus* were used in place of a writing system dating as far back as the Inca period in order to communicate and keep records.

To engage with the form of the *quipu* here, Cecelia Vicuña used five unspun woolen fleeces hanging from a bamboo bar with words printed in red on them. The words take the place of the knots and the wool stands in for the twisted threads of the ancient *quipu*. Cecelia has stated that her works become transformative acts that bridge the gap between art and life, the ancestral and the avant-garde.

We see in this work entitled *Chanccanni Quipu*, that the slightest breeze will move the fleeces from their static hanging positions in the gallery. This delights Marcia Reed during a tour, as she blows on the fleeces, proving that the ephemeral nature of this book-like object and its ancestral roots is perfect for inclusion in the exhibition. Here, on display, is manifested the artist's original intent rather than being captured in a box on a shelf. This is but one example of an artist exploring his or her passion ever and ever deeper with such constant insistence, an insistence that has shaped and become emblematic of the exhibition itself.

I will confess that that was not this writer's original observation when I first took in the show. It seemed helter-skelter and capricious and, with a few exceptions, there was little in it I could find to draw me in. It simply didn't make sense to me. Although now that I'm in the spirit of confessing, I was thrilled to have a book of mine selected out of 6,000 others for inclusion in the publication. But my original cool reaction

occurred before I did my homework. It was before I understood the reasons behind the determining factors upon which selections for the exhibition were based.

As I understand it, there were two. The first now seems so obvious, it makes me feel foolish not to have caught on. One only need walk through the galleries to see that the notion of “bookness” as it is generally understood in the everyday realm has been laid to waste. This show shakes up and destroys that notion. It presents the artist’s book as occupying a creative space between traditional books and contemporary works of art, often questioning what a book can be, in all its myriad incarnations.

The second determining factor is that it highlights what the GRI artists’ book collection was based upon from the beginning and continues to amplify, starting from postwar work into contemporary times: from building upon Jean Brown’s Dada, Surrealist, and Fluxus works, all the way up to and including German artist, Katherina Grosse’s *Untitled (Painted Parkett Volume)* (2017). Her bookwork was received so recently at the GRI that it was too late to be considered for the publication but made it into the exhibition nonetheless.

Upon reflection, it was essential that Swiss artist, Dieter Roth’s work be included. And it is—in spades—with twenty-four examples emblematic of the Fluxus movement. And I cannot help but point out that amongst them is his confrontational book of urine. (*Poetrie*, 1967. 21 clear vinyl envelopes containing urine for pages on which are printed poems. Edition of 30.) In the fifty-one years since the book was published, the “pages” have become desiccated, yellow green, and (apparently) still retain their distinctive odor although it is not discernable behind glass. Another of the Dieter Roth books, *Poemetric* from 1968, is also on display. It contains cheese.

But besides these examples from the Fluxus movement which, among other things, thumbs its collective nose at what was considered to be the elitist art establishment of its time, this exhibition along with its companion publication, “illuminates the increasing understanding of artists’ books as freestanding works of art presenting ideas or animating literary works with all the complexity of creations in other media.”

To highlight but two examples, one is *DOC/UNDOC: Undocumented: Ars Shamánica Performática* by Felicia Rice and Guillermo Gómez-Peña, published by Moving Parts Press in Santa Cruz, CA (2014). This is a modern-day cabinet of curiosities in a high-tech aluminum case, altar-like, holding various objects including mirrors, a Mexican wrestling mask, electric lights, and headphones. Opening the lid triggers lights and music. This, from the Moving Parts Press website: “The object itself carries within a crisis of identity: What is it exactly? A stage for an intimate one-on-one performance? An unusual video screening room? A personal multi-media altar? A “vanity” used for preparing for a performance? It is all these things and it is also an original book, a performative artists’ book in search of a new format and a new audience.” Here, the Getty’s audience is the new audience.

At the other end of the spectrum is Russell Maret’s 2014 *Interstices & Intersections: or, An Autodidact Comprehends a Cube*. This book is the artifact that remains after an artist has

pushed his obsessions to the max, turning a youthful gift for understanding the complexities of geometry into an autodidactic study of Euclidean geometric propositions, along with his ever-present obsessions with letter forms and letterpress color printing; then pushing the envelope further by using hand-ground inks for hundreds of press runs and thousands of hand-cranks on his Vandercook III press.

Russell Maret writes, “My method for working was similar to the one I used in my tenth-grade classroom. I began the project by reading through Euclid’s thirteen books and drawing proofs for all of his 465 propositions. In the process, certain propositions stood out as having a particular interest or relevance for me: sparking associations in literature, letter forms, or life experience (or all three). Eventually, I chose one proposition from each of the thirteen books, pairing them with accompanying textual and visual commentaries of my own.” *Interstices & Intersections* dominates the center of the largest gallery, unfurled to the fullest length of its accordion-style pages.

Both *DOC/UNDOC* and *Interstices & Intersections* are far and away more complex both in concept and execution than I have room to discuss here. And thus it is, alas, with a number of other artists’ books in the exhibition.

As rich, complex, and deep as these two books are, the shallowest in the exhibition must be *Selections from Stains* by Ed Ruscha (1969). Described as “various substances on paper,” it is exactly that. That and no more. They are framed and hang across one wall of the last gallery in the exhibition. All the stains are small streaks centered on twenty-four sheets of white paper. From left to right, the first twelve are titled, “Pacific Ocean Salt Water,” “Bleach (Clorox),” “Sperm (Human),” “Ant,” “Gunpowder (Dupont Superfine),” “Rust Solvent (Liquid Wrench),” “Beer (Coors),” “Sulfuric Acid (Mallinckrodt),” “Wine (Chateau Latour, 1962),” “Glue (Wilhold Glu-Bird),” “Leather Dye (Shinola),” “Urine (Human).” I could list the other twelve but you get the idea.

*Stains* is a portfolio of seventy-six mixed media single sheets that the Museum of Modern Art in New York described as “—a little treasure chest of overlooked things.” Yes, I agree. I’m just not certain about the “treasure” part. By the way, it was not lost on me that Dieter Roth’s urine is in that same narrow gallery with Ed Ruscha’s. Such humor is mighty refreshing however, in a museum of art.

By the time this issue of the *Codex Papers* is published, *Artists and Their Books / Books and Their Artists* will have closed but the publication will still be available. I recommend it. It is not scholarly in concept. Rather, it is a survey that includes striking photographs with each book inhabiting its own double-page spread along with brief remarks written by one of fifteen contributors; nearly half by Marcia Reed. I would use the book as a jumping off place to discover and research further those artists you would like to understand in more depth. I certainly will.

Each time Marcia engages with the public on her tours, she emphatically invites them to come visit the books in the collection. It is a little known fact that the books are available for anyone to come see and look through on their own at the GRI. Special qualifications are not needed. The collections are open to all and a catalogue of the collection

is available online to seek out what you may be curious about. All that's needed is an appointment ahead to request what you want. Try picking an artist or a press and ask for everything that artist or press has made that exists in the collection. They will be all laid out for you.

Come see these distinctive cultural objects that expand our notion of what a book can be. Take advantage of this collection, little known by the wider audience but rich in books that hold a special status, all the way from the sixteenth-century into today's contemporary art practice.

**Carolee Campbell** inaugurated Ninja Press in Sherman Oaks, CA in 1984. She publishes limited editions of contemporary poetry that she designs, hand sets in metal type, prints letterpress, binds, & often illustrates. Her work is heavily influenced both by her extensive experience as a photographer and by her career as a distinguished actress. Ninja Press books are collected by many of the world's great libraries. The entire Ninja Press archive is held in the University of California, Santa Barbara Library Special Research Collections.

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