

Books by Artists

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Books by Artists

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The original version of this catalogue also contains artists images, illustrations and listings for the 111 artists involved in the exhibition.

We have reproduced the essays here to allow you to download them. The images have not been included because the catalogue was scanned and printed in 1999, and due to the changes in technologies, we no longer have copies of the original image files.

Copies of the original catalogue are still available from Impact Press, full details are on the publications page.

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Preface

The exhibition *Books by Artists* is part of the Impact international multi-disciplinary printmaking conference hosted by UWE, Bristol.

This has been a wonderful opportunity to showcase some of the best in British artists' books to an international audience. Over 100 artists have participated in the exhibition and survey by filling in and returning a questionnaire along with their book. The information amassed from this survey has shown that printmaking and artists' books are more than a means to an end. Artists are as passionate about the methods of production used to make their books as they are about the finished piece itself. When asked to define the processes used (and why) to make their work, answers have ranged from one specific process, to "photocopy, inkjet, stencil printing (roneo, gestetner and gocco), rubber stamping, collage... immediacy, accessibility, ownership of means of production".¹

Many artists view the developing computer and print technologies as "another string to my bow",² or the "scanner and computer often provide a short cut, quicker way of producing work".³ The benefits of applying new technology to traditional methods are evident in the number of artists who have turned to artists' books as a format with which they can produce their own works in multiple without the need to hand over the production to someone else.

Helen Douglas of Weproductions has been producing artists' books with an offset-litho press for years, and has now found that "working with Apple-Mac it is possible to work with colour and prepare pages and artwork... gives back control to the originator" and modern technology "will change and develop my work in books."⁴

As for artists' books existing in their current form in the future, many feel that they will still exist as "hand-held, interactive objects as opposed to purely virtual or computer based".⁵ There will of course be new formats created in book making in the future, but as Patrick Eyres states, with the exciting potential of new CD-Rom, video and web bookworks "what happens to the pleasure of handling the book?... This is a key reason for maintaining the existing format".⁶

It is very likely that alongside the new developments in technology, artists' books will still be recognisable in their current format. As Penelope Downes has pointed out "artists' books have always been around. In the last 10 years they have become more fashionable, personally I like artists' books because they bring together so many of the arts in one object".⁷

Artists' books are also popular as a means of artists collaborating on a single piece, whether through a text

and image collaboration, or working together on the entire contents. Julia Farrer and Ian Tyson have collaborated on the *Partwork* imprint over a three year period "...the experience of two Partwork collaborations has strengthened and broadened both our work and has been a strong influence on its subsequent development".⁸ This format of producing joint works is part of the appeal of artists' books. The opportunity to make work with others and the democracy of production and distribution is part of the essence of why artists make books.

I would like to thank all the artists who have participated in this exhibition with both their artwork and their form completions. Opening the post each morning has never been such fun, receiving parcels that only artists' book makers could have sent; even the packaging was a delight.

The following artists and authors have also very kindly contributed written pieces for the catalogue, and I would like to thank them for their time spent and the thoughtful essays that have resulted from their interests: Iain Biggs, Dr Stephen Bury, Meg Duff, Deirdre Kelly, Carinna Parraman and Chris Taylor.

Thanks are also due to Colin Sackett, and Jane Rolo of Book Works who have both also contributed written pieces for the catalogue, and to Annabel Other of the Bristol Art Library for arranging a visit and providing the information for my written contribution to this catalogue.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank both the Arts and Humanities Research Board and the UWE Faculty Research Committee for their generous support of this project. Thanks are also due to the Centre for Fine Print Research, EPI and Print Centre staff for their help, with particular thanks to Carinna Parraman for her dedication to this project, Emmeline Brewer for her proof reading, and to Keith Jones for his expert help in the production of this catalogue.

Sarah Bodman

notes

1 Mark Pawson, 2 John Dilnot, 3 Patricia Collins, 4 Helen Douglas, 5 Sue Doggett, 6 Patrick Eyres, 7 Penny Downes, 8 Julia Farrer (all quotes above are from the artists' exhibition survey forms)

Mortality, Immortality and Books ¹

Harmless an event as it may seem, the artist's book fair plays a pivotal role in the development and continuity of the artist's book genre, greater than what is readily perceived.

Let's assume artists make books with the intention that not only will they be 'read', but also handled by the viewer as part and parcel of the experience of that particular medium. Displayed behind glass, as more often they are, the function of an artist's book as an artefact requiring proactive intervention through touch and timing is completely lost. The books take the form of historical remnants, museum pieces rendered useless because we, the viewers, are forbidden to interact.

By preceding 'book' with the word 'artists' do we subjugate these objects to the same artificial reverentialism that we apply to the majority of art works in other media? Are we denying ourselves the one thing which makes artists' books quite different and special in the visual arts world - the requirement to touch, hold and manoeuvre?

Encouraging as it is to see exhibitions of artists' books in galleries, they often fall foul of those incessant conservation and/or insurance indemnity problems that rear their ugly heads at the slightest sniff of an artwork run loose. Whatever the arguments for protecting these book works, whether rarity and value, curatorial inexperience or insurance constraints, the fact remains that the handling of such objects is essential to their conceptual as well as physical existence. As we are well aware, many artists' books are constructed of materials that will neither stand the test of time due to environmental conditions nor the physical stresses of handling over long periods. So, is it not a *fait accompli* that many of these books will eventually end up as a pile of debris, the result of an ongoing natural process and finite material existence?

During the last decade three artist's book exhibitions in particular; *Bookworks*², *Change the Context: Change the Text*³ and *Work & Turn*⁴ broached the handling issue head on, successfully demonstrating that if the viewer is allowed to manipulate the exhibits freely the books will in turn be treated sympathetically incurring no greater damage than what would normally be expected when handling any artifact of a delicate nature. Displaying a single or double page spread behind glass may illustrate a sense of space or textual interaction, but only partially. The role of the book and its concept as a whole from cover to cover, is being ignored.

By allowing the freedom of access the viewer experiences the book's third dimension. A book is not a painting, a book is not a film. A book is a three dimensional object that requires handling. It has its own set of values that

single it out within contemporary art practice whilst highlighting its particular status and importance as part of an expanded field of disciplines.

As long as the context and environment in which artists' books are being encountered is one of mutual respect (together with a certain amount of faith on the part of the exhibitor and curator) then a dialogue between artist, curator and viewer can be formed. Within this dialogue, the role of the curator is a major factor with involvement encountered at a number of different levels. As the originator of an exhibition, the exhibition designer, the commissioner or simply the facilitator, a curator is fundamental in the continual development and expansion of the areas in which we can engage with the artist's book. Some might argue that the curator is unnecessary within the sequence; that the contents of the book, the pages, are the 'exhibition' self-curated within a space wholly defined by the front and rear covers. A simple and neat concept maybe, but one that possibly results in the exclusion of artists' books from 'serious' critical research and prominent curatorial consideration - their insularity being a cause for concern within a traditionally extrovert environment.

The portability of a book allows it to be easily removed/transferred from the gallery/exhibition context into the personal and, dare I say it, domestic environment, a venue some would argue, more suitable to craft rather than the fine arts. In many ways, this flexibility, together with the general historical understanding of the book as a channel/vehicle for disseminating information (as opposed to being an object of critical debate in relation to its visual aesthetic and conceptual qualities) has created its own set of problems and issues from which it may never be able to escape. The book can document, can respond to, can be as a result of - the book has many possibilities. When the artist's book is produced in conjunction with an exhibition is it a work of art or merely a catalogue? Even within the realm of the converted the overlap between these possibilities can be problematic.

An alternative arena for viewing/reading book works in whatever form is the book fair. Where many galleries fail, the book fair can succeed, appealing to both a specialist and mass audience with an ever increasing diversity of participating artists and imprints. Most importantly, it provides an opportunity for the viewer to experience the exhibited works in a manner appropriate to their function. The 'fair' might at first seem like a cattle-market way of encountering this particular genre of contemporary art practice, but the nature of the book, usually small scale, handleable and primarily a one to one experience, is perfect for this type of occasion.

Whilst gallery policies continue to deny hands-on access to artists' books in exhibition situations the book fair, book shop (of which there are a small number stocking artists' books) and specialist galleries such as the Hardware and Eagle will remain the most enjoyable places to encounter this type of work.

Outside London the availability is negligible. Despite the North having one of the most comprehensive collections of artists' books based at Manchester's All Saints' Library⁵, retail outlets are few and far between. However, the instigation of an annual Artist's Book Fair located centrally in the UK⁶ will hopefully help to solve this dilemma to a degree, providing greater exposure of the art form and an increased market from a new and broader audience.

For the past eight years the London Artist's Book Fair⁷ has acted as a magnet to the interested and the curious, building up a reputation second to none with a high percentage of international imprints regularly taking part. With humble beginnings on the South Bank, it has become the main event in the UK's book art calendar. Such fairs as the one now held annually at The Dean Clough Galleries in Halifax aim to fill a gap that has always existed outside the capital, though undoubtedly they will always lack the concentration of artists, buyers and the kudos that London commands.

Only through the sheer determination of the participants and the will of the organisers will the book fair in the regions continue to exist and flourish. Yet the fair is not immune to its own set of problems. Over the past few years major players in artist's book publishing have been noticeable by their absence at the annual events. Maybe these particular publishers have become disinterested in what can be a long, drawn-out period sitting behind a stand, have created their own particular niche markets that dispel the need to publicly sell, or have found foreign interests to be a more lucrative and valuable pursuit? In both Europe and North America the book fair has a long and successful history, one of the reasons why a number of major UK book artists spend a larger proportion of their time abroad promoting and selling their work and, as in a number of cases, have actually emigrated.

Whatever the reason, their absence must be viewed positively, providing space for artists new to the genre to participate, bringing fresh faces and products to what could easily become a repetitive and stagnant event. The fair plays a pivotal role, a high-point or low-point depending on your experience, a kick-start to another year of creativity, publishing and marketing. The fair may not provide the financial return that one would obviously desire but it does encourage appreciation, development and investment into a practice more and more relevant to an increasing number of artists.

To encourage and strengthen the discourse currently surrounding artists' books and to uphold the momentum and position that has been created during the last decade, the book fair has to be complemented by the temporary exhibition and the retail outlet (despite the afore-mentioned problems). Only through the continual interplay of these three avenues of access will the genre succeed during the next decade and beyond, from being a specialist area for a relatively small number of collectors and the occasional buyer to becoming a generally accepted art form for the gallery visitor and curator alike.

Chris Taylor
Artist, curator and lecturer,
Department of Fine Art, University of Leeds

notes

1 Adapted by the author from *Dust to Dust, Ashes to Ashes*, also by the author and published in Contact Point magazine, Leeds, Summer 1998

2 *Bookworks*, Gallery II, University of Bradford, 14 November-9 December 1994

3 *Change the Context: Change the Text*, The Dean Clough Galleries, Halifax, 9 March-28 April 1996

4 *Work & Turn*, curated by David Blamey, touring 1992-94

5 All Saints' Library, Manchester Metropolitan University (curated by Gaye Smith, Senior Subject Librarian)

6 Contemporary Artist's Book Fair, The Dean Clough Galleries, Halifax

7 The London Artist's Book Fair, currently held annually at the Barbican Centre, London and organised by Marcus Campbell and Isabella Oulton

REREADER

In 1989 I published *Black Bob* which marked for me the beginning of a continuing project of work concerned with the 'direction' of reading; whereby a book could offer a compositional structure beyond a linear, or sequential form. I had previously made several books that presented small texts in non-sequential structures, but this title seemed to involve an engagement with the reader where virtually nothing was prescribed in terms of 'how' one was to read the book. The repetition of the identical image throughout the sixty-three spreads is a formally static device (with a tentative reference to the lineage of the minimal 'blank' book). Conversely, the 'reading' of the first (or first-encountered) individual image is narrative and directional: the passage from left to right of the shepherd, sheep-dog, sheep and flowing river. This representation of movement implies that there is to be a similar, larger development in the whole book, from beginning to end. Although the content is wholly visual, the problem is inherently one of reading.

My view of the accumulation of the fifty or sixty publications during this period, is not that each new work is simply an addition to a linear progression: a mono-directional and handicapping structure contrary to the active structures of the books themselves. Rather, each publication finds a position on the perimeter of a potentially expanding circle. It is the interrelationships between works that define and articulate the specific concerns of each individual work. (*Black Bob* is, in relative terms, by far the most 'known' of my books; the most direct in its intent and arguably the most visually seductive; it has been in more exhibitions and there has been more discussion of its nature than any other of my titles.) For the purposes of this survey exhibition I felt it most appropriate to propose the inclusion of a publication which was made with the intention of investigating the nature of these sorts of reflex and which 'used' as material the work itself.

During the first half of 1996 I edited and published a relatively extensive work, comprising nearly six hundred texts, ordered alphabetically. This work is a broad selection from the publications and their workings made during the period of the previous five or six years, along with unpublished texts and direct references or 'readings' that I felt informed my work. The texts are alphabetical: this is probably the most random form, all proximities are made and determined by spelling alone. While most entries consist of a single word or two, the texts vary in extent from a single two-letter word to passages of up to a hundred words; the accumulation and equality of structure and typography propose or imply a reading best described by drawing a parallel with the continual use, while listening, of the fast-forward and rewind buttons of a tape machine. The overall 'meaning' or subject of *Rereader* is its entirety: the intention of its editing and format is to provide via the detail of the single part, and the relationship of each single part to the whole, some critical overview of the project of my work during the period.

Colin Sackett

The Ordinary made Extraordinary

Why books? I am reminded of *The Ordinary made Extraordinary* by Les Bicknell, one of the most memorable artists' books exhibitions at Hardware Gallery. His use of the familiarity and simplicity of the book format, in experimental book forms and typography (made during his residency at the University of Essex in 1994) surprised and delighted viewers.

Hardware Gallery was established in London in 1986, to focus on contemporary printmaking. In 1988 with the exhibition *Curved Space* it firmly launched itself as a leading exponent of the artist's book. The gallery has had a continued interest in promoting and exhibiting artists' publications ever since and the recent resurgence of interest in artists' books, make it one of the most vibrant areas in British art today.

Curved Space: New British Livres d'Artiste was presented in collaboration with Matthew Tyson, who arrived with the books in a suitcase, a common mode of transport for artists' books. Cathy Courtney describes the exhibition

Curved Space was one of those rare exhibitions which positively encouraged visitors to touch and examine the books on show. They were displayed on shelves at eye-height against walls washed with colour; to leave little shrines of blank space behind individual books. Information about each volume - materials and processes used, edition size and price - was revealed only when the book was taken down, having been pencilled in the wall behind it. ... Readers were able to savour the quality of the various papers used and to feel the differences in weight and form of the fifteen books included. ¹

The show was enormously successful with visitors from as far afield as Scotland and Devon! The key factor was the lack of white gloves and glass cases, as reported by Sarah Kent "a final plus is that one can handle the items, which makes this an absorbing look at the book". ² Whether in a book shop, library, or gallery, the bookwork does not fit in easily; the context can often be defined in terms of accessibility. If the book shop shelf is home to the book, the library a repository, then the gallery must be the display case. Simon Cutts opened Coracle in 1976 on Camberwell New Road and spent 5 years exploring the gallery as a format, through exhibitions and publications. *The Itinerant Bookshop* in 1984 even involved installing an active book shop in one of the gallery spaces at the Serpentine Gallery. The book shop offers an established distribution network for the circulation of published books, and the possibility of a wider mainstream audience. Some bookworks which may contain intimate or complicated ideas do not fit easily within this

environment. Be reassured however, by the fact that in major galleries, visitors often spend more time in the book shop than in the gallery itself.

Art galleries can be seen as either shrines or shops and sometimes both. Their business is to act as promoters and purveyors of artworks. Two galleries I have been associated with, Coracle Press and Hardware Gallery, were originally built as shops giving them a functionality not normally associated with the exhibiting of art. Both these shop/gallery spaces have qualities that I found suggestive of creative possibilities. My exhibition *Made to Measure* at Hardware Gallery in 1995... provided me with the opportunity for the space to become an active, rather than passive, aspect of the work so that each informed the other. Without the commitment of galleries like Hardware, who in my case were prepared to support an exhibition of sited, temporary sculptures, I am aware that certain aspects of imaginative development are being denied by an art market increasingly eager to encourage 'commodity'. ³

In 1993, Hardware Gallery launched a new premises in Highgate, with a renewed commitment to promoting artists' publications, by establishing a regular programme of artist's book exhibitions. *Threshold: an exhibition of unique books* was the first in a series aiming to maximise the potential of the gallery as a place for viewing books. Sixteen invited artists contributed diaries, sketchbooks, 'found' books, sealed and concealed books ranging from miniature ceramic pages by Sophie Artemis, to sculptural lead pages by Adam Reynolds in *Alchemists' Dictionary*. "Few of them tell straight stories... using an alchemy of materials... they create a synaesthetic mixing of objects for the 'reader' to see, touch or smell." ⁴

This was a vibrant time with regular private views, poetry readings and performances. The gallery floor became a living platform of artists, publishers, collectors and visitors; making introductions, developing ideas and hatching projects. The artist's book world thrives on a small network of passionate and enthusiastic individuals. Guiding influences and motivation for projects relies on networks and long term relationships and is not necessarily market-led. Many of the reasons why artists have made books in the past remain true today. *Crevice/Map*, was a journey by Susan Johanknecht and Jenifer Newson, a collaboration mapped out in the gallery space, by hanging and projected pages. *Forget Us, Not...* with Chris Taylor & Simon Lewandowski was another journey documented by a film, book and a set of rings.

The gallery played an important role in these collaborations where the means of conception, production and dissemination, must be seen as part of the whole experience.

The book has been the starting point for, the focus of, and/or a product of, many exhibitions. *Bound to Happen* curated by Jonathan Ward in 1996 to showcase the work of Plaatsmaken (a Dutch publishing company) and MakingSpace his own imprint, illustrated the potential for diversity in production which has been facilitated by the advent of desk-top publishing. Hardware has been showing and selling their publications ever since. "I find the Hardware Gallery makes my bookarts 40% fluffier than other outlets specialising in artists' books. The text survives at lower temperatures too."⁵

There are a few artists for whom artists' books are a principal means of expression, in this respect few can match Ron King of Circle Press. His support and encouragement over the years has been invaluable, and his imagination continues to fuel new book projects. There are few opportunities to view such an output since books are produced, launched and distributed via networks which are very often as individual and innovative as the publishers themselves. *Some of a Kind* in 1994, was a rare opportunity to see an exhibition of bookworks by Ian Tyson, whose relationship with Ron King and the Circle Press spans 30 years of publishing. This retrospective, 'off the bookshelf' included his collaborations with Jerome Rothenburg, from *Sightings I-IX* published by Circle Press in 1967, to *Six Gematria* (1992) represented for the first time in one place.

Hardware Gallery provided an excellent solution to the problem of showing a book 'on the wall'. It was a very deep frame without glass in which the book could sit leaning against the backboard. These frames together with free standing boxes made it possible to mount a chronological display of the work. As the show was a retrospective this was a wonderful facility. The whole exhibition was mounted with great care.⁶

Books are as noted for their similarities as for their differences. Individual shelves and reading lights were designed for each individual book, in *Looking at Words, Reading Pictures* (funded by London Arts Board 1994), to create a reverential atmosphere. More than 2000 visitors made the pilgrimage to see publications by Pavel Büchler, Andy Goldsworthy, Ian Hamilton-Finlay, Cornelia Parker, Richard Long and other British artists, curated by David Blamey, and memorable performances by Brian Catling and Les Coleman.

Bookworks have been sold to collectors from all around the globe; whether they be artists, writers, musicians, designers, typographers, illustrators, educationalists, publishers, or librarians, they all share the same passion.

As a gallery maintaining a permanent selection of artist's bookworks available for inspection, the Hardware is a place where I can discover new bookworks and meet other collectors and artists.

My first encounter with Deb Rindl was at the Hardware when we both admired the same exhibit. Subsequently, I discovered I was the first collector to purchase one of her bookworks.⁷

Bookworks are part of a broader world of publishing which extends from mail art, to limited edition prints. The gallery has twice featured at the London Art Fair, by invitation from the Contemporary Art Society, presenting work by 40 artists including Patrick Caulfield, David Hockney, Richard Long, Bruce McLean and Simon Patterson, and also presents books annually at the Contemporary Print Show held at the Barbican Centre.

"10 years at the Hardware: energy and enthusiasm; artists' books to be touched and read; walked through and listened to. I'm glad that my books are there too!"⁸

Perhaps it is because bookworks have a propensity to deliver a 'new' experience to each viewer; that they retain a freshness and fascination for those interested in making, buying, collecting, and even exhibiting them!

Deirdre Kelly
Director, Hardware Gallery, London

notes

- 1 Cathy Courtney, Art Monthly, March 1989
- 2 Sarah Kent, Time Out, January 1989
- 3 Les Coleman, June 1999
- 4 David Lillington, Time Out, 1993
- 5 Jonathan Ward, June 1999
- 6 Ian Tyson, June 1999
- 7 Neil Crawford, June 1999
- 8 Sophie Artemis, June 1999

The Dictatorial Perpendicular: the Artist's Print and the Book

If centuries ago it (writing) began gradually to lie down, passing from the upright inscription to the manuscript resting on sloping desks before finally taking to bed in the printed book, it now begins just as slowly to rise again from the ground. The newspaper is read more in the vertical than in the horizontal plane, while film and advertisement force the printed word into the dictatorial perpendicular.¹

The abandoning of narrative can be seen as one of the characteristics of modernism: avant-garde painting, sculpture (and perhaps relatively belatedly) printmaking replaced the narrative conventions of history and literature in favour of an investigation of formal properties of their particular medium. For over three centuries subject-matter derived from The Bible, Bunyan, Shakespeare and Milton, had held sway over English art - and printmaking in the form of engraving and etching had almost been the dominant art form, with some paintings almost being marketing ploys for subscriptions to print series.²

At the same time, the book format was becoming available again as a possible medium for the artist. In early manuscripts, decorative initials, borders and carpet pages suggested the exuberance that scribes - whether we call them 'artists' too is debatable - felt about the texts they were copying and their concern for the total appearance of the book. The spread of printing in the late fifteenth century changed all this: the artist was reduced to becoming a provider of woodcut-block or plate, and often merely of a design to be transferred to a block or plate by someone else.³

William Blake, in such books as *Songs of Innocence* (1789) and *Songs of Experience* (1794) using text and image, engraved together (in a process that is still not completely understood) and hand coloured, and William Morris at the Kelmscott Press (founded in 1890), protested in their different ways against this development. But it was the adoption of technological advances in reproduction that enabled the artist to recapture control over the final appearance of the book. Henri Matisse, hand-writing and decorating the text directly in wax-crayon on lithographic stone as in *Jazz* (1947) or Alexandr Kruchenykh's use of transfer paper and lithographic pen in *The Letter as Such* (1913) showed what the artist could do if he had control of the means of reproduction. As if in a refutation of Walter Benjamin's thesis that mechanical means of reproduction would erode the aura of art works, these books do have 'aura'.

The exclusion of narrative from the picture plane and, at the same time, the availability of the book format to artistic control would help explain the vogue for the livre d'artiste, which coincides with the onset of

modernism. Patrick Caulfield's *Some poems of Jules Laforgue* (1973) for the Petersburg Press as a later example. Artistic control is exercised by the choice of screenprint process, the paper - Neobond synthetic, grey leather covers, typeface - Futura Bold, with its typographical layout by Eric Ayers "as agreed by the artist", Twenty-two studies were made for the original screenprints: the print process is used as a means of reproduction, not as an end in itself. The result is a satisfying sense of closure as text and image meet, mix and meld together. The prints, however, also exist as a separate suite.

The artist's book has a similar pedigree: it allowed the artist to exploit such means of reproduction as offset or photocopying and to explore notions of narrative which had largely been expelled from the pictureplane: and during the hegemony of conceptual art - for some the 'golden age' of artists' books - it permitted the continued existence of some trace of an art object, and therefore something to sell. However paratactic the construction, through a process of metonymy, the juxtaposition in the book format of text and text, image and text, image and image, inevitably generates narrative, as in Victor Burgin's *Family* (1977) or John Baldessari's *Brutus killed Caesar* (1976).

Books too are self-evidently three dimensional as opposed to the (usually) two dimensional print. Compare Daniel Spoerri's three dimensional tableaupiège, the pop-up photolithograph and matchstick collage mounted on board for *Les Nouveaux Réalistes* portfolio (1973) with his Something Else Press book, *An Anecdoted Topography of Chance* (re-anecdoted version) (1966): the book alone allows access to temporal incrustations and anecdotal accumulations to the objects on Spoerri's table, as it allows the reader to shuffle forward and back through the book and its notes: it also suggests that the reader can make accidental addition of his/her own marks.⁴

The book format in its one-to-oneness also allows a degree of intimacy between reader and artist that has been used to explain the popularity of the genre with women artists.⁵ But the relative horizontality of the book against the phallic vertical may well be another attractive quality of the artist's book to women.⁶ Nevertheless, the horizontal qualities - ergonomic, psychological, or sexual - of the book are to be considered by anyone setting out to make an artist's book. The question must be constantly asked and answered: why have you chosen the artist's book as the vehicle for your idea rather than a print, or, to put it another way, why have you turned your back on the 'dictatorial perpendicular'?

Dr Stephen Bury
Chelsea College of Art & Design, The London Institute

notes

1 Walter Benjamin, *One Way Street*, London 1979, p62

2 See Ronald Paulson, *Book and Painting: Shakespeare, Milton and the Bible; literary texts and the emergence of English painting*, Knoxville, 1982

3 I qualify these simplifications in *artists' books: the book as a work of art*, 1963-1995, Aldershot, 1995, p5

4 The Spoerri print is reproduced in Weny Weitman, *Pop Impressions Europe/USA: prints and multiples from the Museum of Modern Art*, New York, 1999, pp 30-1

5 See *My Grandmother, My Mother, Myself: artists' books with poetry and storytelling*, Southampton, 1994

6 See Rosalind E. Krauss 'Horizontalité' in *Formless: a user's guide*, New York, 1997, pp 93-103, and 'Dans cette affaire de point de vue, pouvons-nous compter plus loin que "un"?' in *Féminin/Masculin: le sexe de l'art*, Paris, 1995, pp 312-21

I set up Wild Conversations Press in 1997, in part as a result of having made screenprints since I was a student, and in part because of acting for some years as the commissioning editor for *Drawing Fire: the Journal of the National Association for Fine Art Education* - something which gave me a taste of the joys and frustrations of publishing. My original intention was simply that it would be a good strategy to give a more personal and practical focus and identity to my growing interest in the artist's book, seen largely as a particular form of collaborative art practice. I was encouraged to develop this idea by a number of other staff working in the Faculty of Art, Media and Design at the University of the West of England, Bristol, who not only shared my interest but had also set up group projects to create books of various sorts to which I had contributed. Although hardly more than a competent printer myself, I felt that there was scope to use the notion of a press to explore some of the areas of overlap between my educational work and my own concerns as an artist.

Although not seen officially as 'research' in the strict academic sense now so important to art and design institutions, I believe that, in a wider social and cultural context, truly collaborative art practice involves some of the most radical aspects of research available to us. Making collaborative books is, it seems to me, an ideal way to develop this alternative approach to art practice. Looking at this from another angle, as our understanding of the constitution of the self changes, and as its relationship to the shared social world is seen to be more complex, so collaborative creative work must become more important within our culture.

In retrospect, the circumstances which led up to the creation of Wild Conversations Press derive from at least two, rather different, areas of my work and experience. The first area is my long-term engagement with groups of people from a psychological perspective, something that has always gone beyond my work as a lecturer and artist, together with my interest in the writing of James Hillman and associated thinkers. Both educational practice and theoretical study have convinced me that there are compelling practical, social and psychological reasons for the growing interest in collaborative, project-based artmaking and, in addition, that this form of work has real value as a model for badly needed creative collective activity in our society. A number of artists I knew were equally interested in collaboration, as were many of my students; so making artists' books with some of them seemed an ideal starting point to test out an alternative way of working from the model I absorbed through my own education as a painter and printmaker. Since I wanted control of the process of publishing, I applied for ten ISBN numbers and, without more ado, set up my very own press. The second area of interest is more specifically to do with ideas I had

been trying to articulate, through my teaching, conference papers and book chapters. This has to do with cultural issues focused on ideas of place and region, many of them ultimately derived from Paul Ricoeur and Kenneth Frampton's writings on 'Critical Regionalism'.

To date the press has published three books, each part funded by research money from the Faculty of Art, Media and Design at UWE, Bristol. There are two further books currently in production and a commitment to producing at least two more. Building on experience elsewhere, I am now seeking more exposure for the press' output, with the intention of eventually looking for a distribution deal of some sort.

In 1997 the press published its first book, *Berlin-Bristol/Bristol-Berlin*, in conjunction with Jonathan Ward of MakingSpace publishers, who did the typography and binding. The book was made jointly between the German artist Tanja Isbarn and myself. It is colour screenprinted throughout in an edition of 15. It measures 65.5cm x 48cm and has 33 pages, including 1 cover sheet, 26 pages of images and 6 pages of text. Made in part in both cities, although printed in Bristol, it offers a complex reflection of the exchange between two artists, each with an interest in the home city of the other. In many respects this first book reflects the type of collaboration and outcome I had in mind when I established the press. Needless to say, it is the only one which has done so to date. A textless book with the artist Jane Millar, begun in the same year but delayed for a number of reasons, is currently nearing completion.

Through my work with Jane Millar I became involved with *FOLD*, a project to publish a newspaper of the unconscious. This now involves some 40 artists and designers and is jointly edited by Jane Millar, Andrea Duncan (from the University of East London), and myself. Although the press will not be publishing the paper itself, it has had a major part in its conception, funding and production and I feel that the experience will feed back into the press' work in future. In 1997 I inadvertently talked myself into finding the funds to produce and publish *Art Works*, a collection of artists' prints in slip cases, bound with an introductory text, as a book. This project was established to help the Arts Dyslexia Trust raise funds for its work. The book was produced in an edition of 50 velvet bound copies, with an additional unique leather bound copy, signed by all the artists, for auction. The book includes work by 20 artists, architects and designers; some directly associated with the trust and its work in the UK, others major international figures, for example Robert Rauschenberg and Antony Gormley. A complex project done on a shoe string budget and a great deal of good will, the logistics involved tested the production team in the Centre for Fine Print Research at UWE to the full. This book was launched by the trust at a special international gathering at the House of Lords on June 14th 1999.

This year the press has also published Alexander Gorlizki's *Seven (Unknown) Famous Belgians*, which accompanied the exhibition of the same name at De Chiara / Stewart Gallery, New York. Put together by Gorlizki in collaboration with the designer Nick Eagleton, this book reflects Gorlizki's commitment to working with artists and craftspeople, sixteen of whom are credited in the book as contributing to the project. In addition to the main run, a special edition with knitted cover, CD and loose prints was also produced. In this case, the press left design and production to Eagleton and Gorlizki, and took on the role of enabling the project through finding funding. My role being little more than that of an advisory editor.

Working on a current project, to produce a book provisionally entitled *Osmosis* in collaboration with the sculptor Helen Smith, has demonstrated the very real value of making collaborative books as a means of bringing two artists to the point where they are 'in tune' with each other. Helen and I have been astonished at the way in which what we had seen, as relative strangers, as our rather different practices and ideas, have gradually drawn together; without there being any sense of loss or compromise of quality from our perspective as individual makers. As such the book has provided us with the ideal basis for other, more complex, joint projects where we will be working with larger teams of people.

Increasingly, the collaborative side of working with other artists is drawing me away from the concern with artists' books with which I started. This seems all to the good, and it may be that Wild Conversations Press will become little more than a means to facilitate the documentation and dissemination of the work of groups of artists produced through these larger projects; but in a printed form which itself allows for creative work with beautiful materials and design possibilities. At least the income derived from larger projects might resolve one of the ongoing problems facing anyone running a small press - namely, where on earth does the money for the next project come from? That said, the pleasures of making collaborative artists' books is such that, in the end, the money to continue always gets found.

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If it hasn't got a spine - is it a book?

What can the book format achieve that cannot be achieved in another form? Stephen Bury suggests,

The book is intended as a work of art in itself. They are not reproductions of an artist's work, about an artist, or just with a text or illustrations of an artist. In practice, this definition breaks down as artists challenge it, pushing the book format in unexpected directions.¹

The book therefore can be seen as integral to the conceptual repertoire of the artist's creative output. It is not a secondary work that lies in the shadow of painting, sculpture or print but an original means of expression. But what is a book?

Traditional notions of what might constitute a book would include a cover, a spine, and pages with text and illustrations. It might contain a narrative, leading the viewer along a journey, either through image or text or both. In the area of artists' books and especially sculptural books, their format might be considered as a very distant cousin. This article will look at books made by artists that combine sculptural elements, found materials and a variety of print processes. The article will present and investigate the type of novel books made by artists who are included in this survey exhibition.

The notion of the sculptural book has long held a fascination for myself. My own books have included paper folding and mixed media. I was therefore interested in investigating this area in relation to other artists in this survey. Pop-up, mechanical, sculptural or three dimensional are terms that could be used to describe books that conceal, reveal, surprise or take the viewer on a journey of the unexpected. The art of pop-up is closely linked with a childish desire to play and interact with the object. Traditional books may be viewed as one directional or solely for imparting information where no interaction is involved other than turning the page. The desire to interact is born out of our need to play, to engage, be entertained or perhaps just be inspired.

Historically, books that had moveable sections originated mainly to entertain and educate children. Many modern children's books have used a similar approach but include buttons for activating sound and light, which enhance the enjoyment and understanding of the story. Some books include complicated paper engineering. They combine all the traditional paper folds of transformational slats, pull out and pull up flaps or folded sections, which are rendered with innovative, rich and colourful illustrations. Many of these paper engineering techniques can be traced back to the turn of the century through the work of German artist

Lather Meggendorf. He made a variety of pop-up and moveable books, which were based on his interest in puppetry and the theatre.

The criteria for the books chosen from this survey are based on an investigation of material, form and text to create a book of sculptural quality. Books range from a simple concertina or three dimensional structure, to boxes containing books and artefacts. Perhaps for the artist, during the decision process of making, extra consideration and planning is required to achieve a sculptural book. These considerations might include the type of paper, the materials used and the three dimensional visual effect of the book. Similarly, how the paper is folded might contain more significance with the subject matter.

The concertina fold or leperello is the simplest form of sculptural book. A length of paper is folded backwards and forwards upon itself. When opened the book reveals a series of images, as exemplified by Kate Farley, or a panorama if extended fully as in the works of Tracey Bush. Farley's book, *Two Sides of the Same Street* (1998), provides a scene of a series of terraced houses that can be appreciated as single houses on the separate pages or as a street when elongated. She uses the notion of a narrative as a journey as the eye walks along the street. The journey is similar, but from a bird's eye view, as we look down on Bush's historical *London's Lost Rivers* (1997). She presents a historical narrative of the changes that occur to the river spanning some several centuries. Some of the rivers have been lost over the passage of time, and can only be recognised now as London street names. The folding of her book relates to how maps or in the case of Bush's reference source, how sea charts are folded.

The concertina structure is also utilised by Julia Farrer and Ian Tyson in *Dedication I and II* (1989). The eye is guided by the use of broad areas of intersecting colour to create a three dimensional space. Here these works are concerned with the interplay of the vertical lines of the concertina fold and the strong shapes produced by the areas of colour. Similarly Mark Hudson's *Cley* (1998) utilises the folded paper as integral to sculptural expression. He only introduces a nuance of colour in the form of a continuous horizontal band of coloured precious metal leaf. My own book, which does not involve any folding, is an elongated image on a length of paper. It is scrolled into a vertical cylindrical cover entitled *Circular Walk* (1998). The tube is bisected vertically to form a spine and front opening. The length of paper is scrolled and tightened to fit into the tube. The image is generated from a leaf collected during one of a series of walks in Malaysia.

More complicated folded, or paper engineered books can be seen in the work of Les Bicknell. He combines computer-generated text and folded paper to create a

three dimensional book. The structure of *Cosmic Maths* (1996) is intended to be viewed at all angles. His work can be seen as a combination of the concertina and pop up and the book as object. Brendan Hansbro's book, *The Third Ark* (1998) is one of a series of popups. He has combined text, dry point and collage. Pages and intersecting elements of the image are glued together, so that when the book is opened we are presented with an image of an ark, which expands beyond the confines of its cover. These intersecting engraved elements contribute to the sense of three dimensional space. Similar to Bicknell's book one can look at the ark from different angles. By looking from the top we can see parts of the picture that are hidden if viewed from another angle. Hansbro's book reflects the sense of fun associated with pop-up and the visual voyage of discovery.

A sense of fun, the interplay with words, an understanding of shape are important elements of the sculptural book. Patricia Collins' *Apple Pie Order* (1994) perhaps reflects all three. It is very simply bound, comprises 10 pages and is arranged so that the pages are opened to reflect the shape of an apple. Each page has the name of an apple, such as Cox's Orange Pippin. The book is beguilingly uncomplicated, but presents a synthesis of idea, text and shape integral to the notions of what constitutes a sculptural book.

So far I have explored books that use paper as the primary medium, however artists such as Elizabeth Hobbs, Helen Snell, Andrea Hill and Susan Johanknecht have introduced other textures. Hobbs has printed onto blocks of wood and then binds her book *Françoise* (1997) with ribbon to create a traditional Jacob's Ladder. The Jacob's Ladder is a series of blocks, which when held vertically drop down to reveal an animated series of images. She has recently become interested in the moving image and animation - perhaps this book reflects her interest.

Helen Snell combines lino-cut images onto pre printed floral fabrics for her book *Cautionary Tales of Two Armchair Travellers* (1995). She is interested in what she refers to as to the 'accessibility and inherent irony in the production of multiples', which is also informed by her chosen subject matter of birth and reproduction. She will often print the same image onto a variety of surfaces, exploring the notion of combining the multiple and the unique. The material on which she prints suggests elements of domesticity and a sense of security, whilst her subject matter might suggest an altogether different notion. Andrea Hill combines a variety of media and found objects. In her work *Achévé* (1993), she uses scrim, wax, plaster, silk and black and white photocopies. The photographic image is pivotal to the narrative and her use of different materials reflects the significance of an autobiographical element to the work. In *Emissions* (1992) Susan Johanknecht combines text, written by Katherine Meynell, onto clear polyester and encapsulates hair, wax

and wire. The lines generated by the hair and wire become her drawing medium. She combines fragments of image, material and text which, due to its transparent nature interact with other pages of the book to alter the composition of each page.

A common link to all the book works is the open invitation to touch. We are prohibited from touching so much art, such as paintings or sculpture, even though the compulsion is overriding. Similarly, with the books we want to touch, hold, open, close and turn over in our hands. In this instance the book through its structure, hidden text or images, its series of folds and flaps invites us to do so. The fascination for the book and its tactile quality encourages interplay, where the same book can mean different things to different people, thus creating a highly personal relationship. The combination of sculpture, text, image, texture and the ability to handle the work provides the potency, perhaps unavailable in other art forms. Here in these works, we can see the development of a rich history of sculptural books. I hope it will continue.

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notes

1 Stephen Bury *Artists' Books - The book as a work of Art* 1963-1995, Scolar Press, 1995, p1

A few comments about a few books

Artists' books should be read, not written about. They should be handled, not locked in glass cases. Only by examining them can we appreciate them. Only by turning the pages can we see their meaning emerging. It is therefore perverse of me to accept an invitation to write about some of the books in this exhibition. I have chosen them arbitrarily, the only criterion being that they are also represented in the Tate Gallery Library's extensive collection. This has given me the opportunity to examine them at leisure. I could have made other selections, because we are fortunate in owning many more of the books displayed than I can possibly comment on. I was spoiled for choice. What follows is a personal interpretation. My aim is to explain how these books work for me.

To me a successful artist's book is one in which form and meaning are in harmony. An idea of extreme simplicity may be presented with great sophistication. In Deb Rindl's *The Thin Blue Line* every physical detail, from the blue and white striped cord used in the binding to the clear perspex box in which the whole is housed, suggests the sensuous experience of swimming. The object in its box has the proportions of a swimming pool. This book can be displayed as a free standing sculpture with the thin blue line, clearly visible, running through it, but it is best experienced as a book where the turning of the pages indicates the progression from the shallow end, with its short white pages, to the longer dark blue page of the deep end. The pages, with their curved edges, sometimes translucent paper, increasing width, and deepening colour, are like a series of waves, super-imposed. The text is a series of single words or very brief phrases summarising the sensations of swimming and deployed in the manner of concrete poetry. The pages themselves are cut and folded with ingenuity, to emphasise the idea of gliding through the water, and even the notion of breath is expressed as a gap shaped like the mouth of a fish. It is beautifully constructed. Everything in this book is recognisable but seen afresh through the artist's eyes.

The quality of personal experience is found in many other books. Andi McGarry's *Campsite* celebrates an evening spent at a rainy campsite. This small book, completely hand-made and hand-lettered, has a sense of artless spontaneity. Each copy is unique; there are small variants in the text (and probably in the spelling!) while the freely-washed illustrations, torn and collaged, are lively and bright. They reflect the text, with its fleeting but contrasting images: a girl's laughter; nightshrouded mountains; and air that was 'damp, delicious and full of expectancy...'

An even smaller book, by Stuart Mugridge, records a similarly ephemeral moment, but in a completely different manner. *Undwelt-in-Wood* is tiny but impeccably

made, its narrow green box containing a minute, neat book with minuscule text. This records a specific place and incident, capturing the moment much more formally than McGarry does. The text is distilled into a few words, delicately typeset, suggesting deer footprints and the vanishing deer itself. The colours used - grey and green pages, the cover a black and white tangle of undergrowth, dull green for the containing box - evoke the shadowy thicket. In scale this book is very private and enclosed. The final element, therefore, comes as something of a shock, as the box also contains a found object, mentioned in the text - a spent shotgun cartridge, corroded and brutal.

Artists have a habit of seeing things that no-one else has noticed and drawing them to our attention, to delight and surprise us. Zoë Irvine's *By Air and Sea* invites us to consider a detail of modern life that we would normally overlook - the franking marks on envelopes, which she has reproduced using a set of rubber stamps. Without the title, and the list of places and dates which she provides at the beginning of the book, we might be contemplating a series of minimalist seascapes. The list itself is curiously exotic. Where is Campibisenzio? The book is appropriately coloured, with a sky-blue cover and sea-blue stamps, or it could be the other way round. I find this book strangely satisfying, and in a few years' time, as communications technology changes the postal service beyond recognition, it will probably be seen as an historic record.

Not all books are so easy to interpret. *Emissions book*, by Susan Johanknecht and Katharine Meynell, contains many uncertainties within its transparent pages. When the book is viewed from the central opening everything it contains is visible through its crystalline layers - the blood-coloured text, a diagram, small transparencies and film footage, wire, hair, 'body prints', and indeterminate fluids in plastic containers. However, it is not entirely clear what we are looking at, although the book is heavy with suggestion, from its title to the whitish fluid found towards the back of the book. The diagram looks scientific, but it has no label. (I have discovered that it is in fact a diagram of the immune system, evoking the fear of AIDS. The sample body fluids turn out to be representative of spittle and semen, rather than the real thing.)¹

Although printed with clinical precision, the text is subjective, flowing in a stream of consciousness. Recurrent themes are of lust, eroticism, pain, flowing, milk, blood and fear. The transparencies are small and difficult to decipher: the old fashioned sink and (possible) toilet bowl could be institutional or domestic; a meaty object on a tray could be an organ in a hospital or it could come from the butcher's counter of a supermarket. The way in which the images are stitched to the pages, reminiscent of surgical stitches, makes me favour the hospital, but I can't be sure. Not being entirely sure leads to a sense of unease, especially as the objects and substances depicted have many emotional associations.

While a card accompanying it explains that the book 'comes from the realisation that fear of body fluids has gone beyond the menstrual taboo...Emissions is a container for words and images taken from the notion of the body being a receptacle for liquid, slime and solids, ideas, banalities and prejudices', I feel that the book deliberately presents the reader with ambiguities that allow for a range of personal responses. There is a tension here between the personal and the sociological, between privacy and transparency.

Similarly, *The Collector*, by Sarah Bodman is not all it seems. An elegant and restrained book, it has no formal text but relies for its effect on an accumulation of images and their suggestive placement. On the left side of each opening there appears an image of plants in a greenhouse; on the right side, reproductions of biological slides, whose labels are hand-written or typed on an ancient typewriter. The colour wash used in conjunction with the screenprints gives a muted, old-fashioned look to the images. Faded pinks, yellows, sepia tints and gloomy browns evoke the Victorian era in which the unnamed collector may have lived.

No explanation is given of either the plants depicted or the arrangement of slides. No information is given about the collector. Many of the plant images are not crisp but blurred, either bleached or dark, so that not all the background details are clear. It is up to the reader to work out which plants are represented. I identified chrysanthemums, pitcher plants, venus fly traps and cacti. Chrysanthemums suggest old ladies and Queen Mother hats, but pitcher plants and venus fly traps are carnivorous plants which devour insects, and cacti are spiky. The glass slides may represent the objectivity of science and the discipline of collecting, but the labels that are decipherable suggest otherwise. Certain words stand out: 'legs of spider, foot of house fly, section of tongue, proboscis of house fly, sting of wasp, feet of house fly, jaws of garden spider, tongue of bee...' and so on. And then there are the human parts represented: 'thymus gland (human), spermatozoa (human), hair human from head...' The cumulative effect of these details is at odds with the subdued beauty of the book's presentation. The words which appear are evocative of spells and potions, potential ingredients of a witch's brew; they have a sinister poetry. The choice of plants (no surprise to anyone familiar with Sarah Bodman's other books) reminds us that plants can sting, cut, consume and poison. *The Collector* may not be so benign after all. The world presented here is not clearly explained; it seems remote in time, and mysterious. Yet laboratories, greenhouses and scientific experimentation, especially the genetic engineering of plants, are very much of our own time.

The world of *The Collector* does not strike me as emerging directly from the artist's personal experience, but rather from her imagination. Imagined worlds abound in artists' books, as numerous as the artists themselves.

Such a world is Randy Klein's *Florida (or, You can't fight progress)* which bears only a passing resemblance to the real thing. In this epic tale of creation and destruction, the car and the television - but particularly the car - play major roles. These icons of American life are joined by images of freeways and rockets, suntanned surfers and curling waves, Florida oranges, yachts and suburban houses. The text, beginning grandiloquently 'In the beginning there was the void...' is gloriously subverted by the images chosen to accompany it: the first appearance of man on earth is represented by a diver in flippers and mask; 'the lands which became more bountiful' are illustrated by a picture of a dolphin leaping through a rubber ring. Folded pages, cutouts and pop-ups are used to excellent effect to conceal and reveal meaning, to slow down the text and then to twist it in unexpected directions, as in the sequence 'It was a new race... (picture of jet, cutout behind of yachts and dirigible)...to the home...(four layers of tightly packed clapboard houses)...pink messy birds'...(picture of flamingoes). The text soars biblically then dives into banality. The final image is of palms in the sunset. The illustrations include the artist's drawings, collages and many found images. The flavour of naïve 1950's America is strong, and nowhere more extravagantly celebrated than in the cloth binding with its stiff, swimsuited couple, palm trees and tropical fruit. The book comments ironically on the American way of life, then and now. In a moment of crisis: 'We tried to ignore it...even when the sky belched black...' 'it will pass', we thought... 'We will wait in our cars'. Every stereotype is lovingly illustrated. The variety of techniques employed and the shifting narrative make this a lively book full of mostly delightful surprises. However, even this light-hearted depiction of the American dream has a darker side. Beneath the quirky humour lie images of slavery, race riots and the depredations of progress, hinted at in the subtitle. The book's structure allows us to follow a narrative and to uncover layers of meaning in a way that could not be done with any other form of art.

Although the books described above in no way encompass the whole range of this exhibition, they indicate a wide diversity of subject matter and technique. Each book needs to be examined on its own terms, and, if the artist has been successful, every aspect of the book will contribute to the impact made by the whole. Text (or absence of it), materials, dimensions, structure, what is included and what left out, all communicate some sort of meaning. I have attempted to enumerate some of the ways in which individual artists have succeeded in drawing forth very different responses. Contact with the books themselves is the ideal path to understanding.

Meg Duff
Librarian, Tate Gallery

I Speaking of book art: interviews with British and American book artists, Cathy Courtney, Los Altos Hills: Anderson Lovelace; London, Red Gull Press, 1999, pp183-4

A Throw of the Dice

It was purely by chance that I first discovered the *Bristol Art Library*, during its infancy in March 1998. Since then, the library has amassed 75 volumes, 450 ticket holding members and has travelled throughout Britain, to the USA and Spain. The artist Andrew Lanyon describes the Bristol Art Library as a "truly mediaeval idea" which in essence it is. Mediaeval court audiences were entertained by travelling players, magicians and storytellers who brought with them new experiences of encounters with the world at large. It is in this vein that the Bristol Art Library has made its way around the country, as a work of informative entertainment, since its first official appointment in October 1998. The collection so far includes books by artists, poets, musicians, animators, a mathematician and a heating engineer, all offering their view of a particular subject.

The library operates as a performance piece, complete with head librarian Annabel Other, who meticulously unfolds the case, sets up the library desk and issues tickets for new members at each venue. Readers are invited to browse the shelves, or use the Dewey cataloguing system to select three books at a time during the library's visit.

The whole library is catalogued by both name and subject, but it is far more rewarding to take a gamble and select at random from the shelves. Chance discoveries set the reader on a metaphysical journey which leaves much more of an imprint when there has been no prior indication of its nature. Readers of all backgrounds will appreciate many of the topics covered, the loss of a parent, the tribulations of growing old, pop-up swimmers or a collection of old shreds of stamps. Every book within the library contains something that people can engage with on a visual level. The collection of books crosses the boundaries of high art and popular culture very easily, and is received with equal fascination in venues ranging from private houses to community centres and museums.

Each of the books in this miniature art tour is made as a one-off piece for the library, although it may be adapted from the artists' editions. Contributing artists are supplied with the blank pages to use as they wish. The finished pages are returned to the head librarian, who binds them all in regulation brown bookcloth and hand tools the name and title on the cover. Apart from the Dewey classification number on the spine, the books appear to be identical when shelved, but as each book is selected it is apparent that they are all very individual.

The theatrical nature of the library's visits has included a viewer sight reading a musical score to the room, to elderly ladies laughing knowingly on reading *Body*

Language by the library's oldest contributor Graham Wilson. This book of wittily observed drawings is full of snippets of life as a pensioner: Old men greet each other in the street with "you're not dead then", others take great delight in annoying visitors to their care home, proving that old people can be as aggravating and amusing as the next generation. Part of the fun of the library is the absolute chance by which stories are found, and the diversity of contents in the collection; love affairs, arms and legs, bullets, insects, mathematical equations, music, the reverse sides of labels, darkness, conversations, all spill out of the books as the first page is turned. Each of these unique books opens up a new world to viewer after viewer, and their reactions, in turn, add another dimension to the history of each book. The readers become an important part of each book's past as they divulge their own feelings about the subject. The head librarian may pass this on to a subsequent viewer, the books then becoming like a game of chinese whispers as information is received and forwarded.

The range of subjects enclosed within the library is infinite, *Music for Inert Repetitions* by Joanna Hoffmann is a heartfelt testament of "how little time we have to fulfil ourselves, how little of ourselves we have to fill up time" the two statements interspersed with light sensitive photographs which will eventually fade out in time. The text is printed in tiny white type on a black background, shining out from the depths of the darkness. The *Hoppo Stencil Book* by David Hopkinson is a series of stencils for the viewer to spray through and create a copy of the artist's name and a caricature of his face, in true comic book style. *Tragic Magic, or Conjuring for Christians* by Jonathan Allen is an irreverent series of magic tricks for Christians. Conjurers' wands combine into a cross, magicians' balloons are sculpted to spell GOD, matches levitate above their box and poker cards land on 666. The objects appear out of thin air, unattached to any reality with no linking perspective to any form of landscape, like an apparition they float in unreal time. This book was made for the library's launch at a New York party which fittingly included a troupe of magicians as part of the soiree. In situations like these the library seems to have a magnetic quality which captures everything around it, incorporating it into the theatre.

Some visitors to the library have noticed an unfilled category in the Dewey system, and have offered to make a book to fill the gap. This way the library builds a collection of all the subjects usually found in traditional libraries. Quite often, enquiries about a favourite subject result in a book being made by an expert who is not an artist, and so the variety of styles within the library widens. This brings a diversity of language; books made by a mathematician or engineer will vary in their text or image style from books by poets or visual artists. It is this exchange of ideas within such a compact arena which makes the *Bristol Art Library* so fascinating, that such a vast selection of information can fit into something so small.

In spirit, the *Bristol Art Library* is a public amenity, and encourages people with little experience of art culture to involve themselves through its quirky approachability. Although some libraries can be quite intimidating in their austerity, universally, they are places of discovery and cultural enrichment. The advantage of this library is that its portable nature keeps it small enough in size to encourage participation in visitors.

As more libraries now are increasingly under threat of closure, or suffering from lack of funds, the existence of the *Bristol Art Library* (named after the now defunct art library in Bristol) is a welcome addition to both art and popular culture. If this experience encourages people to visit a library, or make a book then it has provided a public service.

The Bristol Art Library has developed its own services as it has grown. The library has a miniature notice-board for exhibitions, adverts and exchanges, and has recently published the first issue of *The Contributor* its own newsletter in the style of a parish journal, complete with cartoons and listings. The head librarian has also expanded on the educational aspects of the library, and works with many sections of the community to encourage others to make artists' books. There will be a new branch library created and run by 13-18 year olds in the Bath area as part of the *Babel* project for Bath Festival. This is part of a commitment by the head librarian to bring art in this format to those who would not usually make the visit themselves.

Each time the library pays another visit, it brings new ideas and another perspective on life to an unsuspecting audience. It does entertain in the manner of the mediaeval, by tricks and surprises the books can trigger reactions and play with words and images to draw in even the most apprehensive visitor; curiosity often overwhelms any doubts. As Mallarmé said "all earthly existence must ultimately be contained in a book",¹ so, if you see a librarian walking your way, with a bulky yet unassuming looking trolley case, follow her; you never know what you may discover:

Sarah Bodman
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notes

1 Stéphane Mallarmé; *Selected Poetry and Prose* ed. M. Caws, New Directions, New York, 1982

Book Works

Book Works is a London based organisation dedicated to publishing work by contemporary artists either in traditional or experimental formats. It was founded in 1984, and has grown since then to include a wide variety of commercial work and commissioning artists to work on new pieces, from books and exhibitions to installation works. Book Works has published artists' books and text works by artists including: Susan Hiller, Sharon Kivland, Douglas Gordon, Lothar Baumgarten, Brian Catling, Verdi Yhooda, Jimmie Durham, Joseph Kosuth and Liam Gillick in the forms of limited editions and multiples. It has also commissioned installations and performance pieces by Cornelia Parker, Langlands and Bell, and Richard Layzell (*Site Works I* in 1986) and more recently two major event-based works, *The Reading Room* (1994) and *Itinerant Texts* (1996), for which Book Works commissioned a series of texts, artworks and performances.

In 1992 Book Works organised the first international conference on women's artists' books to be held in the UK, *Book Works: A Women's Perspective*. Speakers included Susan Johanknecht, Joan Lyons, Ulrike Stolz and an interview and talk with representatives of the New York based 'Guerilla Girls'. A major exhibition of artists' books by women was also held in conjunction with this conference, providing views of the ways in which women have worked with the book format.

Book Works has created two new series of books within a varied publishing programme, the *New Writing Series* and the *Format Series*. *The Format Series* is represented in this exhibition by *Rex Reason* a book playing on the associations of chemical symbols and word associations by Simon Patterson, and *The Brazen Oracle* by Mel Jackson made as part of *Library Relocations* at the University of London in 1997. *The Brazen Oracle* was originally a book of legends about the philosopher Roger Bacon, and this work is a result of Mel Jackson's research and interpretation of the brazen oracle. *The Palaver*, a collaboration between the artist Andrew Bick and writer Gad Hollander (also part of the *Format Series* featured in this exhibition) is a personal, seamless rhythm of text and photographs, a thread of blue hand-rendered loops stringing their way across the pages, the whole work a continuous uninterrupted flow of text and image.

From the *New Writing Series* David Shrigley's *Err* and Virgil Tracy's *Under Hempel's Sofa* are also included. *Under Hempel's Sofa*, is a totally absorbing catalogue of owned items, their histories and reasons for purchase. *Err* by David Shrigley is full of hand drawn diagrams and lists of a multitude of ideas, from a version of things that come in threes, to stories and charts which can amuse and confuse in a thoroughly entertaining manner, even down to the design for the book jacket. Book Works is one of the largest UK organisations

devoted to artists' books, and the size of their back catalogue of publications and related output is indicative of the scale of their commitment. The amount of writers and artists involved in their projects over the years is inspiring to all those involved in the book arts. Participants and exhibitors have ranged from Ron King, Natalie d'Arbeloff, Laurie Anderson and Tom Phillips to Sophie Calle, Barbara Kruger and Adrian Piper. Book Works has succeeded in bringing contemporary, experimental art to the attention of mainstream culture through affordable, innovative and appealing publishing. The selection of Book Works publications in this exhibition is a small part of their work from the last fifteen years.

For further information about Book Works publications contact:

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www.bookworks.org.uk