

## Bristol Fashion

‘Making Books in Bristol’ is a project organised by academics in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Bristol, UK who research books and the culture of books from historical and linguistic perspectives. This includes the history of publishing and publishers, editing, manuscript and print, the history of reading, book collecting, and artists’ books.

Over the summer their latest project has been investigating the physical creation and production of books in the city of Bristol – meeting with publishers, printers, binders and artists working with the book format today. The group’s aim is to extend knowledge of the culture of books within the city’s history and to build links between those working with them. A series of free public talks were held over May and June in the city, with publishers, printers, writers, artists and the public discussing how we understand the book as a physical cultural artefact.

There is plenty of book-based activity in the city, from independent publishers Tangent Books and Book Island, to Bristol Bound Bookbinding - a well known local institution for specialist works; Ken Campbell’s artist’s book *You all know the words* (2016), was recently bound by them in leather and goatskin. The Letterpress Collective has hosted artists such as Imi Maufe to print editions such as her *A-Ö Finnish Countryside Alphabet* book (2015). Bookmaking courses run each year at Spike Print Studio, UWE Bristol and at pop-up venues across the city.

The city has also featured in some editions of books; as an avid collector of photographic memorabilia, poet and artist Jeremy Dixon of Hazard Press in Wales made his micro-book *Banged Up In Bristol* from historic images of the zoo. *Bristol Retail Centres* by Otto of OttoGraphic is collection of ten screenprints in a cloth bound folio edition of 10, detailing iconic architectural features of the city’s shopping arcades. Tom Sowden’s *A 4-Hour Walk on Every Road in the Southville Residents’ Parking Scheme* (2016) used the keypads of local parking meters to describe elements of the walk, the book is a dual tribute to the art practice of Richard Long and to Ed Ruscha’s artists books which Sowden is well known for appropriating. Collective Investigations’ work *Alignment* (2017) came from a residency at Arnolfini gallery to coincide with the Bristol Artist’s Book Event. For this they studied the connecting points on a Ley line traced between Arnolfini, The Library of Trinity College (Dublin), Bookseller’s Staircase (Rouen Cathedral), The Library of Alexandria and many other historic sites of importance to the book. They named it the *Arnolfini Ley*.

Alongside the talks and interactions held this summer, the group has commissioned Bristol-based artist and letterpress expert Angie Butler to create an artist’s book that responds to the discussions as an artwork in its own right. Butler has attended each of the group’s sessions and is now busily printing a letterpress edition that will bear witness to the city’s bookish activities. Her commissioned piece will also explore how a book’s content is mediated and conveyed to the viewer through its physical format, something that the academics’ research project is also investigating. Butler has plenty of insight into responding to people and places, having produced artists’ books in the city for many years. Her works celebrate the ordinary events and occurrences within everyday life, bringing to light aspects we often overlook and asking us to take a little time to realise how extraordinary some of these moments can be. Butler’s editions

have introduced viewers to local hair salon through an 18-month artist's residency (*Behind The Shop Window: My Life With Miss Carol*, 2011), to volunteers who help Bristol Dogs & Cats Home (*Mrs Derrick's Blankets*, 2011) and even her own house through a collaboration with Philippa Wood of The Caserom Press, (*Open House: No.18 & No.42*, 2012) which featured in Vol 21 No 4. Butler is known for hand producing her artists' books with exquisite attention to detail, and I am looking forward to seeing how the conversations around making books in Bristol will be revealed through her meticulous artwork. Butler says: It is such a rewarding experience to produce an artist's book with Bristol's community of readers, makers, designers, printers, binders, publishers and researchers who have contributed its contents. In turning its pages this book tells the story of how it was made through reading and interaction with its textual and physical properties. It imparts what books mean to us, and the significance of making a book in our city.

Angie Butler's commissioned artist's book will launch in Bristol this autumn. For more information visit the website: <https://booksatbristol.wordpress.com> or follow the Twitter feed: [@booksatbristol](https://twitter.com/booksatbristol)