

## Eyes on the Prize

**ARTISTS' BOOKS** The Sheffield International Artist's Book Prize is an excellent platform for book artists to gain recognition and connect with collectors, writes Sarah Bodman

The fourth Sheffield International Artist's Book Prize (SIABP) event has launched, with a call to artists to submit works by 31 July 2013. Artists are invited to send books for the exhibition which will run at Bank Street Arts, Sheffield, UK from 5 October – 30 November 2013. The SIABP has grown since its debut, with entries from 50 artists in 2008, to over 180 entries from artists in 22 countries for the last event in 2011. In 2009, as the event gained more and more entries and interest, it switched to a biennial prize exhibition to allow winners to exhibit in solo shows at Bank Street Arts in the interim years.

The SIABP aims to promote artists' books to a wide public audience and is unusual in several respects. Firstly, there are no exclusions to the type of artists' books that can be submitted; artists can send one book each, which can exist in any format from large editions to one-offs, fine press productions to publish-on-demand. The second is that visitors are actively encouraged to handle the books in the exhibitions. Also rare is that artists can donate their books to the collection, and still have the opportunity of showing (or even selling) works long after the exhibition ends. Artists' books are often donated after each show (this is not a condition of entry) to Bank Street Arts' SIABP Collection, and each of these has been archived for online viewing (<http://artistsbookprize.co.uk/collection>), searchable by artist's surname. The physical collection of over 230 books is displayed permanently at Bank Street Arts education space, available for viewing and handling by individuals or groups by appointment.

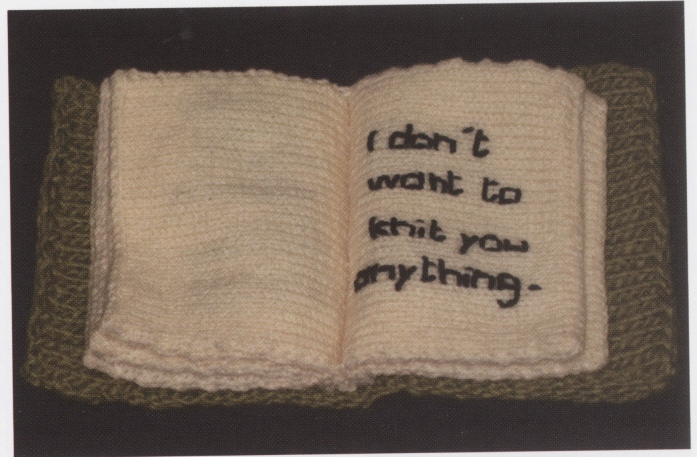
Three Prizes are awarded at each event – the Exhibition Prize, a Jury Prize and a Student Prize, consisting of cash or exhibitions at Bank Street Arts in Sheffield.

Alongside Maria White (Chief Cataloguer, Tate Library, London), I was a juror for two of the prizes in the 2011 exhibition, for which we selected Elisabeth Tonnard's book *A Dialogue in Useful Phrases* for the Jury's Prize ([www.elisabethtonnard.com](http://www.elisabethtonnard.com)), and for the Student Prize, *Inventory: A List of Everything in My Home* by Clare Rogers (<http://clarerogersartist.blogspot.co.uk>).

### Spreading the Word

Public engagement has always been paramount to the SIABP; the events are free and open to all, and to encourage visitors to spend time engaging with the books, the organisers ask them to vote for their favourite book, the prize being a solo show for the winner at Bank Street Arts the following year (in addition to the cash prizes). In 2009 the public voted for the collaborative Danish artists' books group Artrovert ([www.artrovert.dk](http://www.artrovert.dk)), who created a suitcase-based book installation for their show in 2010. The 2011 Exhibition Prize was unanimously awarded to Kaho Kojima's *A Drop of Cloud*, with over 500 votes cast for her book by the public ([www.kahokojima.com](http://www.kahokojima.com)). Kojima's solo show *White Forest* was held at Bank Street Arts in autumn 2012; she created large scale, paper-cut trees as a forest which the audience could wander through, and if they liked, unfold some of the interactive pop-up elements, for which the artist is so well known.

Books within the SIABP Collection are also regularly exhibited



around the UK, and toured to artist's book fairs to promote the biennial prize, and if the artists so wish, their work can be sold at any time. I found this quite surprising, but was very pleased that it is possible. When visiting the SIABP stand at the Leeds International Artist's Book Fair in 2009, shortly after the first exhibition had ended, I was immediately drawn to Katherine Johnson's book *Make*. This wonderfully quirky book is a knitted jumper. After an interesting conversation around a request to knit a jumper. After an interesting conversation with John Clark, Creative Director of Bank Street Arts about how they organise the SIABP, and their future plans, I left clutching my purchase of Johnson's book, which now forms a much admired part of my collection. Johnson has since had two solo exhibitions at Bank Street Arts.

This year's judges for the Jury Prize are: Alison Gibbons (De Montfort University), Elizabeth James (Senior Librarian, National Art Library Collections, V&A, London), Christian Lloyd (Curriculum Leader for Visual Communication, Open College of the Arts) and Karen Sherwood (Director of Cupola Gallery, Sheffield). The SIABP is doing great work to promote artists' books, and to develop opportunities for the artists who exhibit at Bank Street Arts. If you are interested in taking part in this year's SIABP, you can download the entry form to submit your own artist's book for exhibition at: <http://artistsbookprize.co.uk/2013Prize>

#### Images

*White Forest* 2012, by Kaho Kojima, installation at Bank Street Arts  
*Make* 2008 by Katherine Johnson, unique knitted book