

The Threads that Bind Us

ARTIST'S BOOKS Women's Studio Workshop residencies offer artists the facilities and funding to create a bookwork, writes **Sarah Bodman**, who admires the limited edition made by Libby Scarlett during a recent residency

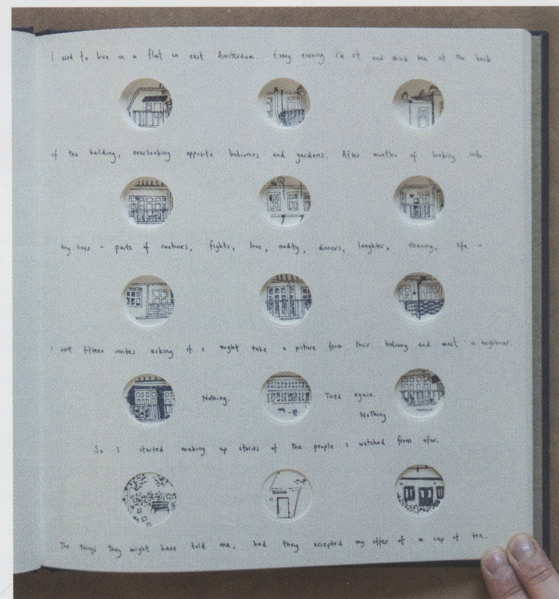
Women's Studio Workshop (WSW), founded in 1974 by Ann Kalmbach, Tatana Kellner, Anita Wetzel and Barbara Leoff Burge, in Rosendale, New York, began as an artist-run venture to support women artists, based in a small, two-storey house. Over the last 40 years WSW has built a reputation as a major facilitator for artists' books, printmaking and papermaking in the USA.

In the early years, printmaking was based in the cramped living room and basement areas, with papermaking in the attic space. In 1983, WSW's successful endeavours allowed expansion into the Binnewater Arts Center, creating space for larger, dedicated facilities and a new gallery. The ethos of WSW has remained the same since the 1970s, offering opportunities for women artists from the USA and further afield to spend dedicated time in the making of artwork. WSW's expertise in printmaking, book and papermaking, and ceramics supports a concentrated programme of artists' residencies, classes and studio access. The Artist's Book Residency Grant is a great opportunity for artists to produce a limited edition bookwork (in an edition of between 50 and 100 copies) at WSW, over six to eight weeks, with technical support in the studio. The grant includes housing, a weekly stipend and a materials allowance. The resulting artist's book edition is split between: WSW archives, exhibition, and display copies, 10% to 20% to the artist depending on edition size, and the rest for general sales.

Artists' books produced at WSW have been purchased for 300 national and international collections, with repositories of all artists' books published by WSW held at nine US institutions including Yale University and the Library of Congress. WSW's residency programmes serve an average of 20 artists each year, with five artists' books produced annually from the Artist's Book Residency Grant. WSW's extensive list of notable artist alumnae includes: Erica Van Horn, Alison Knowles, Angela Lorenz, Susan Mills, Clarissa Sligh and Susan Viguers. The entire WSW collection of artists' books produced in-house can be browsed online by artist, title or year of production at: <http://www.wsworkshop.org/artists-books/the-collection/>

Imaginary meetings

The British artist Libby Scarlett undertook a ten-week residency at WSW to produce her artist's book *A 19-2 View*, which was completed in an edition of 50 earlier this year. Scarlett graduated from Manchester School of Art in 2009, and has continued developing narrative-based projects through artists' books, installations, prints and drawings. Scarlett is also a member of the Parlour Press collective of five British artists from the North of England who have a shared interest in artists' books. Scarlett's book emerged from time spent living in Amsterdam, where she often sat alone at her balcony watching the world go by. In an attempt to meet her near neighbours, she wrote to each of the occupants of the apartment block opposite in English and Dutch, inviting them for a cup of tea, and asking if she could take a photograph from their balconies, but nobody replied. So instead, Scarlett sat and made drawings looking out from her balcony, inventing versions of the lives of the occupants from her observations and imaginary meetings with them. She describes her motive for making the book as 'almost revenge' for her neighbours' disinterest.



The loneliness of living in a new city leads to a much greater awareness of our surroundings, everything is seen in detail when we have no one else to distract us. In Scarlett's book, her stories are presented through peephole circles cut into the pages, allowing a glimpse of each balcony, with a page dedicated to each of the 15 balconies she studied. This careful observation and interpretation of the minutiae of everyday life is typical of Scarlett's work and comes across beautifully (you can read more about the residency and see images of the book's production at: <http://bit.ly/17S8EJs>).

WSW co-founder Tatana Kellner welcomes artists to apply, and says of the Artist's Book Residency Grant: 'What is unique about WSW facilities is the range of media and processes available to each artist. This allows for incorporating processes and materials an artist might not be familiar with, often enriching the project. In the end, not only is a new artist's book born, the artist also walks away with new skills, experiences and friends.' Scarlett adds of her own experience: 'A more immersive and fulfilling experience, I couldn't have asked for. WSW is a dream in the people it brings together, the support it provides and its beautiful location.'

The next deadline is 15 November 2015. Successful applicants undertake a residency between 6 and 18 months after application. For more information visit: <http://www.wsworkshop.org/program/artist-residencies/artists-book/>

Images

A 19-2 View (2015) by Libby Scarlett. Letterpress printed, digitally cut, hardbound covers, 253 x 253 mm, edition of 50, Women's Studio Workshop