

# The New Bookbinder

JOURNAL OF DESIGNER BOOKBINDERS

VOLUME THIRTY-FIVE

2015



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*'Of Space and Place: Ornament in Action'*

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**Palimpsest (detail)**  
Sara Bowen, Australia  
Edition of 8  
720 x 185mm  
300gsm Somerset  
rough etching paper  
with paint, etching ink,  
pop-up mechanism,  
paper cutting. Made for  
the 'Al-Mutanabbi Street  
Starts Here' project.

Research at the Centre is based on the production of the physical artefact, primarily print. All aspects of traditional processes and new technologies that relate to the core philosophy of 'making' are central to the Centre's ethos. As part of the CFPR's research interests in the physical artefact, we investigate the international field of book arts: from compiling free guides, assisting artists with production processes or marketing, surveying traditional and emerging creative processes, to testing current developments in the field of artists' books. Through these projects and collaborations, we hope to widen dialogue within the subject and promote the study of artists' books nationally and internationally. It is particularly important to both of us – as artists as well as researchers – that our findings are disseminated freely and accessibly to a wide audience. We launched our website: [www.bookarts.uwe.ac.uk](http://www.bookarts.uwe.ac.uk), in 2002 with the purpose of sharing information internationally, and now have over one million visitors each year. Our projects also feed into and support schemes and events at institutions and organisations around the world.

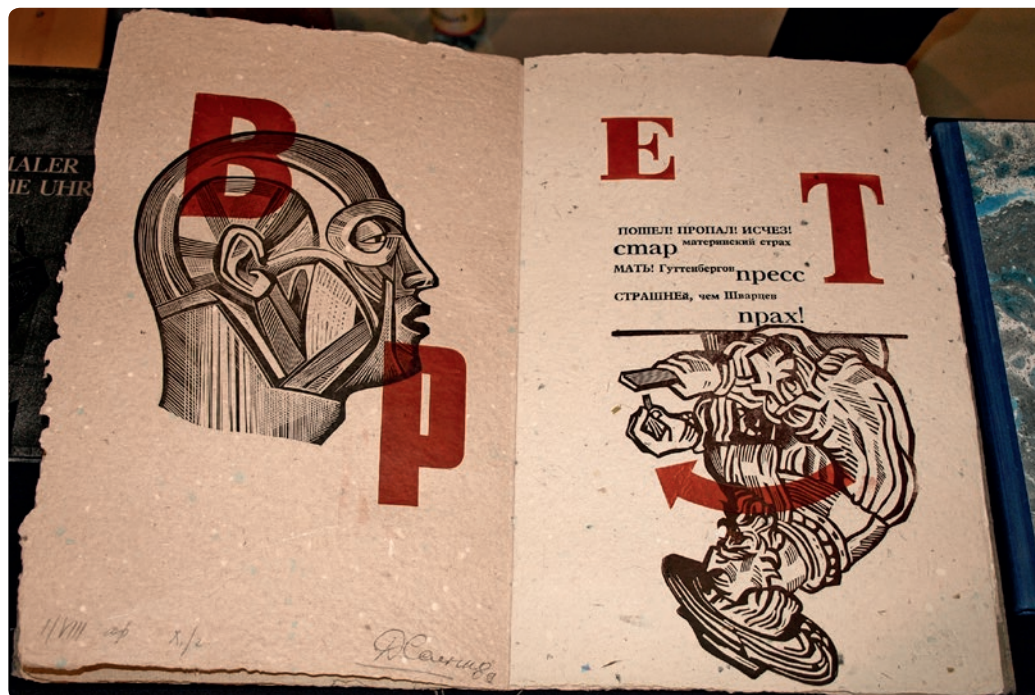
Wherever possible, our research is participatory. As practitioners ourselves, who have each been making our own artists' books for many years, we often ask questions from the perspective of makers and are inspired to respond to the conversations we have with other artists. These can occur from casual observations at artists' book fairs, where a writer is looking for a journal in which they could publish non-traditional essays about artists' books,

to helping newer artists understand where their work fits into the field. We also enjoy helping artists to make contact with others – to form groups, work together on collaborative projects, or join forces for exhibitions and book fairs. Everything we do is from an approach of genuine curiosity to find out what is happening around us, and a desire to give book artists opportunities to test their ideas and discuss their practice with their peers in a sympathetic environment.

As part of this, we publish a free, downloadable *Book Arts Newsletter* every four to six weeks. This functions as an up-to-date resource with sections on exhibitions, fairs, lectures, courses, and workshops, conferences, and symposia, opportunities, new publications, and reports and reviews. More formal publications include the *Artist's Book Yearbook*, a biennial publication with essays and information on many aspects of the book arts, and *The Blue Notebook* journal for artists' books, published twice a year. These publications are international in focus, and aim to provide an overview of current practice in the field. The *Artist's Book Yearbook* in particular is a great way for us to measure the scope of activity around the world. Seeing examples of recent books that artists have made, discovering new galleries, bookshops, and collections as the field grows, and noticing particular flurries of activity is really exciting.



**Readers of Newspapers**  
 Dmitry Sayenko, 2009  
 400 x 250mm  
 Text by Marina Tsvetaeva,  
 images by Dmitry Sayenko.  
 Edition of 8, 16 pages with  
 woodcut images on paper  
 handmade by the artist  
 incorporating old newspa-  
 pers. Leather spine, housed  
 in handmade slipcase.  
 Photograph by Tom Sowden.



Our larger projects have included two investigations funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council: *What will be the canon for the artist's book in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?*<sup>1</sup>, and *Paper Models: investigating laser-cutting technology to develop new artists' books and paper-based creative practice for arts, crafts and design*<sup>2</sup>. Each of these projects investigated how artists are working with books in the 21<sup>st</sup> century – from preserving traditional skills, discussing terminology, practice and teaching, to physically demonstrating the use of new technologies.

The 'Canon' project investigated the current state of book arts, aiming to promote international debate, understanding and an appreciation of what constitutes an artist's book in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We conducted interviews with individual artists, professionals, curators, academics, publishers, and collectors in Brazil, Europe, Australia, Asia, South Africa, and the USA to discuss their definitions of artists' books and their current practice. Many of these interviews also discussed the future of the book and how artists working across many areas of the field might interact with each other's practice. Conversational topics and a diagram were posted online, asking respondents to make their own version of an 'ABTREE' (a family tree of book arts) and to discuss questions such as "Do you have

any proposals for what can and cannot be included in the description 'book?'" and "Do we use the term Artists' Books or Artists' Publications?" Interviewees included: John Risseeuw, Director of Arizona State University's Pyracantha Press on establishing a university-based press and teaching; Dmitry Sayenko of Nikodim Press, St Petersburg, on his use of traditional printmaking and binding for his 'primeval books'; the Swedish book artist and bookbinder Monica Langwe on learning traditional skills; and Ulrike Stoltz, artist and Professor of Typography at Braunschweig University of Art, Germany, on her own practice with books, and teaching letterpress. From the project's conference we published presentations by, amongst others, Katarzyna Bazarnik and Zenon Fajfer, founders of the Liberature movement – which considers the book as a unified whole from the perspective of the intentions of writers as well as artists. Countering growing divisions in the field between artists using traditional printmaking processes and those using new technologies, the project also introduced new means of publishing to artists. The forty-five case studies and our publication *A Manifesto for the Book* can all be downloaded from the project's archive page.

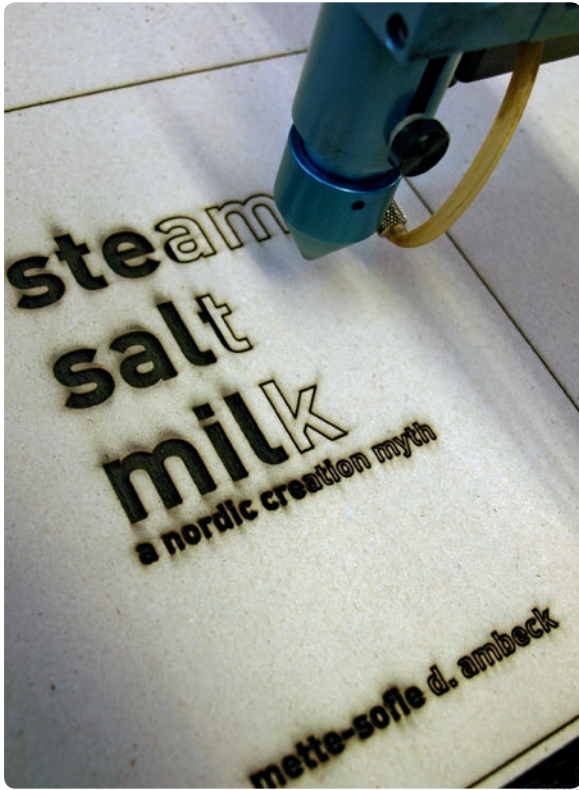


Two of Monica Langwe's design bindings for Nobel Prize-winning novels, made each year for exhibition as part of the 'Bokbindarmästarföreningen' at the Nobel Museum, Stockholm, Sweden.

'Paper Models' investigated the practical use of the laser cutter as a tool for the manipulation of paper and card, and how it might be used by book and paper-based artists. This project also involved hosting a symposium and exhibition, and saw the production of new bookworks through a series of residencies, and the publication of free cutting guides (all available for download from our website). Mette-Sofie D. Ambeck (Denmark) and Su Blackwell (UK), artists with well-established practices in hand-cutting paper with a knife, were each invited for a residency to produce artists' books in the laser studio at the Centre for Fine Print Research. The purpose of the residencies was to see if using a laser cutter as the cutting tool would enhance, alter or detract from their established method of working. Su Blackwell's residency was used to produce a new body of work for two exhibitions. For the first exhibition, 'Remnants' at the Brontë Parsonage Museum, her work was a response to the works and family life of the Brontës. She used the laser to cut into antique clothing, fabric and pages from an old copy of *Arabian Nights*, all of which were later installed in rooms within the house. Mette-Sofie

D. Ambeck chose to reproduce a unique book she had produced by hand ten years previously, titled *Steam, Salt, Milk*. The book was an English translation of the Nordic creation myth, with a large number of apertures running through the pages, pop-up sections and hand-burnt elements – ideal for re-creation as a laser-cut edition. The reproduction, made in an edition of ten on the laser cutter, is very faithful to the original. The printed elements are very similar, and the cuts remain true on the pages. The previously hand-burnt sections now feature stylized flame marks, retaining a suitably brown and slightly scorched edge. In September 2010, Ambeck was presented with the Birgit Skiöld Memorial Award at the London Art Book Fair, held at the Whitechapel Gallery, for her new version of *Steam, Salt, Milk*. Tom Sowden, as project leader, also produced a new body of work utilizing the laser cutter. The project fed directly into the development of new bookworks, particularly in the case of Ambeck, who has since created three more editions of laser-cut artists' books: *Dust to Dust* in 2012, *Day Return* (also made during her residency in 2010), and *Al-Mutanabbi Street – a vicious circle* (2013), which was awarded the Birgit Skiöld Memorial Trust Award of Excellence at the London Art Book Fair in 2013.





**Steam, Salt, Milk**, Mette-Sofie D. Ambeck, 2010 edition. A remake of the unique book from 2000 of the same name. 200 x 200mm, 72 pages, inkjet-printed text, laser-cut illustrations and pop-ups. Laser-engraved covers and grey slipcase. Detail of the laser in progress, engraving the cover during Ambeck's residency at the Centre for Fine Print Research, July 2010.

There are also many connections between artists' books and printmaking at UWE through our Multidisciplinary Printmaking Masters programme, the student-led Artists' Books Club, Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Masterclasses, and with study at doctoral level. For example, recent Masters graduate Corinne Welch was awarded the CFPR's Agassi Book Prize in 2014 for her degree show installation 'The Domestic Miscellany', a collection of handmade books, documenting household advice from a bygone age. A set of these books: *The Etiquette of Afternoon Tea*, *The Art of the Folded Napkin*, *Vegetable Guidance*, and *The Apt Glass*, was purchased in December 2014 by the Rare Books Collection at the Yale Center for British Art. Current doctoral studies within CFPR include Angie Butler's PhD investigation into how artists learn to design and create books through the letterpress process. Butler has been interviewing



contemporary book artists who also teach letterpress, such as the American artist Roni Gross and the British artist Helen Douglas. Alongside this investigation, Butler's practice as an artist allows her to reflect on her research through the production of letterpress-printed works, including a suite of four books made during a residency at Douglas's studio in July 2014.

A selection of books by Guy Begbie who will be running his Bookbinding for Book Artists and Advanced Bookbinding for Book Artists CPD summer classes for the 20th year at UWE in 2015.

We also host occasional study visits for printmaking and artists' books. Recent visitors have included groups from the Royal Institute of Art in Sweden and MA Printmaking / Book Arts students from Camberwell College of Arts, London. Our students and staff also participate in artist's book-making exchange projects with external institutions, for example: 'Regards Croisés: France-UK' with the Faculté d'Arts, Lettres, Langues at the Université Jean Monnet, Saint-Etienne, France. Recent projects include 'SketchLook' from the Stephen F. Austin State University, Texas, USA. SketchLook visited the CFPR in late 2014, with thirty-five students and staff each completing a blank book sent by SFA students and returning it to their collection.

We collaborate with external institutions such as Arnolfini, Bristol, for the biennial Bristol Artist's Book Event (BABE), which we enjoy immensely. We also work regularly with staff at ArteZ Institute of the Arts (Enschede), The Netherlands, for laser cutting, bookmaking and printmaking workshops and exhibitions, the London Centre for Book Arts for artist's book surgeries, and many other national and international organisations. These collaborations allow us to share some of our knowledge and also find out more about artists' practice and needs so we can tailor some of our advice to meet their requirements, for example how to price their books or how to plan to make the most of attending a book fair.

We have also been actively involved since 2008, in the 'Al-Mutanabbi Street Starts Here'



The Domestic Miscellany, artist's book installation by Corinne Welch, 2014.



Dessert Displays, Corinne Welch, 2014. Clothbound concertina book of collage illustrations and hand-drawn typography, 2014.



Paris, France, Hazel Grainger, 2012, for 'Regards Croisés: France-UK'. A hardcover book that opens like a clamshell or compact to reveal a folded atlas page representing an area of France. Overprinted in letterpress with numbers and letters indicating the coordinates of Paris according to the index of the atlas.





One of the filled-in sketchbooks sent by artists at Stephen F. Austin State University (SFA), Texas, USA.



**Metamorphosis**,  
Charlotte Hall, MA  
Printmaking alumna.  
Edition of 15, 2013.  
Screenprint on Somerset  
Satin, 315 x 103mm. Two  
double-sided concertinas  
stitched into a  
hardback cover using the  
snowshoe stitch.



project founded by American poet and bookseller Beau Beausoleil. For this we have co-ordinated calls for letterpress artists, writers and printers to join in and create 130 broadsides and 260 artists' books to date<sup>3</sup>. We have also organised exhibitions, readings, talks and events for the project in association with national and international centres, including the John Rylands Library in Manchester, the Mosaic Rooms and Arab British Centre in London, and the Center for Book Arts in New York.

On campus at UWE we have two collections of artists' books, one at the Bower Ashton library, an open-access collection built as a study resource, and the second at CFPR. The collection at the library consists of around 800 examples and has been built from an initial undertaking in the late 1970s, with more recent additions over the last ten years. This educational resource also offers public access and is intended as a handling collection. The books are housed in open cabinets for browsing, and are purchased to demonstrate examples of good concept, content and design, and as inspiration for students. The collection includes artists predominantly from Europe, Australia and the USA who produce books that mostly fall into the category of the 'democratic multiple', i.e. affordable editions rather than high-end, valuable pieces.

The library also hosts a regular artists' books exhibition programme that we oversee, with 158 national and international exhibitions held since the programme's launch in May 2002. These have included individual



A Fork in the Road (title no.35), Avril Makula for BookArtObject Edition 4, 2013. 200 x 140mm. Oriental binding with corrugated paper wrap cover; pigment ink prints on Hahnemühle photo rag paper.

artists such as Tracey Bush, Otto, Jackie Batey, John Bently, Loretta Cappanera, Karen Hanmer, Les Coleman, and Stephen Fowler. Touring and group shows have included: 'The Caserom Press and Kurt Schwitters' Merz Fairy Tales', 'Boccaccio and the Artist's Book', 'BookArtObject' from Australia, and artists' collectives in the USA, Russia, and Scandinavia.

Lastly, at the CFPR we also have an in-house collection of around 1000 artists' books that Sarah Bodman has collected over the last ten years. These books range in subject matter from nature and landscape to humour and performative works. Key artists in the collection include Kurt Johannessen, Gracia + Louise, Otto, Sharon Kivland, Tim Mosely, Elisabeth Tonnard, and Heidi Neilson. Rather than having these beautiful books sitting idly on the shelves, we decided to set up the Artists' Books Partnership Exhibition Programme (ABPP) in response to requests for help from artists running workshops or putting together projects or exhibitions who needed examples of books for inspiration. We set up the ABPP twelve years ago to loan books out on a no-fee basis for workshops, themed exhibitions or community projects. The books have had eighty-seven outings to date, from schools and



The Centre for Fine Print Research collection of artists' books out for handling.

libraries to international galleries and smaller-scale projects such as mental health organisations.

The projects and collections mentioned above offer a brief idea of the work that we undertake with artists' books at CFPR. Please do visit our website for more information. We welcome contact from interested parties: if you would like to borrow some artists' books, write a review or article for publication, join in a future project or just be on the mailing list for news, do feel free to get in touch with us at the Centre for Fine Print Research, UWE, Bristol, Kennel Lodge Road, Bristol, BS3 2JT, United Kingdom. [www.bookarts.uwe.ac.uk](http://www.bookarts.uwe.ac.uk)

#### REFERENCES:

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