

Artists' Books in the Ginsberg Collection:

With some South African Books from Other Collections

Curated by Jack M. Ginsberg & David M. Paton

An exhibition at the Johannesburg Art Gallery

25th August to 27th October 1996

A Special Edition of the original
catalogue, revised and updated
with new material

Artists' Books in the Ginsberg Collection:

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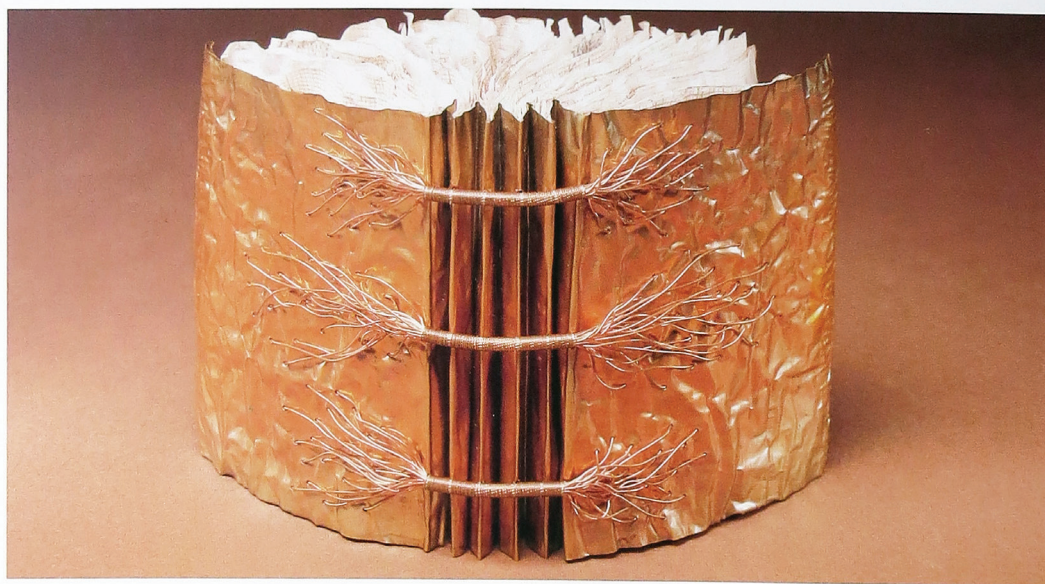
1996 is the centenary of the death of William Morris (1834 – 1896). Over one hundred years after Morris 'defined' the fine press book, his words still hold true:

If I were asked to say what is at once the most important production of Art and the most to be longed for, I should answer. 'A beautiful House'; and if I were further asked to name the production next in importance and a thing next to be longed for. I should answer, 'a beautiful Book'.

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**AN EXHIBITION OF BOOKS
BY PEOPLE WHO DON'T
WRITE.**



**IT SHOULD MAKE FOR
SOME VERY INTERESTING
READING.**

An exhibition of artists' books from the Ginsberg Collection (with some South African artists' books from other collections). Curated by Jack M. Ginsberg and David M. Paton, 27 August - 27 October 1996.

johannesburg
art gallery

On Collecting Artists' Books and the Nature of the Book

Jack M. Ginsberg

"An exhibition of books by people who don't write. It should make for some very interesting reading".

The above slogan was devised by the advertising agency AMC for the poster and invitation to publicise this exhibition, after they had seen the curator's preliminary selection of books in July, 1996. Their desire for an attention-grabbing phrase for the exhibition, set me thinking about their reaction to the books they had seen.

What is the impulse which causes a book collector to move along a continuum from the love of literature to a book-sculpture or a book without content? Although there are obviously book collectors collecting in many fields in South Africa, the majority of collectors probably collect either Africana or 'Modern Firsts', the former suggests an interest in *fact* and the latter in *fiction* (or literature). Artists' books are a move away from both fact and fiction to form itself where the physical object and its attributes become paramount. I am afraid that the obsessional nature of the book collector in all fields is in no way diminished in the collecting of artists' books. The opportunity in many cases to get to know the artist, to interact and perhaps influence with commissions is, however, greatly increased.

What attracted me to artists' books some thirty years ago, just as they started to become a category differentiated from fine press books, was the alliance they seemed to represent between the fine arts and literature. Artists and sculptors began working through the book arts to express aspects of their art which could not be represented in the usual vein. Many of these artists were drawn to the sequential nature of the book as it offered a medium for showing a group or sequence of images in a particular order. Furthermore, as the book represents a three-dimensional object contrasted with the two-dimensional nature of a print or painting, sculptors began to see the potential of the book-object.¹ This development was partly as a consequence of the conceptual art movement where text acquired a significant meaning, but it also appealed to artists working in the graphic arts (in which group I include letterpress printing) where the medium of the book allowed for a full display of their talents. David Blamey² refers to "artists who have embraced the book format as a vehicle for artistic ideas".

Whereas artists had often illustrated books with the publisher acting as an intermediary, the book arts allowed them hands-on production and full control without the necessity of any middleman. While many artists' books are still collaborative efforts, some artists are responsible for the whole product: writing the text, setting the type, creating the illustrations and even printing and binding their own books. In some aspects, the book arts exemplify a return to the very origins of bookmaking where illuminated manuscripts typify the ideal of individual expertise; in others the book arts are at the cutting edge of technological innovation.

One cannot assume that the definition of a book, let alone an artist's book, is understood by all, but indubitably the book arts have infinitely expanded that definition. The definition of a book (like the Duchampian definition of art itself) can now mean any object which a book artist defines as a book! All the usual criteria have been breached, infringed and transgressed. The Oxford English Dictionary (O.E.D.)³ entry for book is surprisingly wide and not just, say, "a repository of information, usually printed on paper and bound for ease of use and portability". Part of the long O.E.D. entry (running to over seven pages) reads:

3. *gen.* A written or printed treatise or series of treatises, occupying several sheets of paper or other substance fastened together so as to compose a material whole.

In this wide sense, referring to all ages and countries, a book comprehends a treatise written on any material (skin, parchment, papyrus, paper, cotton, silk, palm leaves, bark, tablets of wood, ivory, slate, metal, etc.), put together in any portable form, e.g. that of a long roll, or of separate leaves, hinged, strung, stitched, or pasted together.

- a. *spec.* (In reference to modern things.) Such a treatise occupying numerous sheets or leaves fastened together at one edge called the back, so as to be opened at any particular place, the whole being protected by binding or covers of some kind.
- b. The material article so made up, without regard to the nature of its contents, even though its pages are occupied otherwise than with writing or printing, or are entirely blank: e.g. 'a handsome book', i.e. a trophy of the binder's art, 'a tiny book,' one that may be put in the waistcoat pocket.
- c. A literary composition such as would occupy one or more volumes, without regard to the material form or forms in which it actually exists; 'an intellectual composition, in prose or verse, at least of sufficient extent to make one volume' (Littré s.v. *livre*). In this sense Carlyle described himself as 'a writer of books'.

It is not now usual to call a (modern) literary composition in manuscript a 'book', unless we think of its printing as a thing to follow in due course. In sense b every volume is a 'book'; whilst in sense c one 'book' may occupy several volumes; and on the other hand one large volume may contain several 'books,' i.e. literary works originally published as distinct books. No absolute definition of a 'book' in this sense can be given: in general, a short literary composition (especially if ephemeral in character, and therefore also in

form) receives some other name, as *tract*, *pamphlet*, *sketch*, *essay*, etc.

From the above it is apparent that many of the controversies exercising the minds of book artists today were considered, although from a different aspect, by James Murray in the last century when he wrote the entry for book.⁴ Two interesting historical quotes, at about the time when the entry for book was being written, are:

1884. J. A. H. Murray in 13th Addr. Philol. Soc. 22. I do not know what a book is. Was Shakespeare the author of one book or of forty-four books?

1886. Boston Literary World 1 May 150/1. The first matter was to settle the seemingly easy but really difficult question, What is a book? This they solved by defining it as 'a literary work substantial in amount and homogeneous in character'.

Consideration is given to the material from which a book is made "written on any material (skin, parchment, papyrus, paper, cotton, silk, palm leaves, bark, tablets of wood, ivory, slate, metal, etc.)" where he includes some not included on this exhibition. Interestingly (in view of Willem Boshoff's *370 Day Project*), his list includes tablets of wood while excluding many other possibilities. The key point, however, is made with the inclusion of the phrases "paper or other substance" and "any material". The question of content is addressed: "A written or printed treatise" (fact!) "A literary composition" (fiction!), and even a lack of content, "or are entirely blank". Even shape has been considered as a defining characteristic, "But, since either the form of the book or its subject may be mainly or exclusively the object of attention", so I suppose Murray would not have objected to round, triangular, or irregularly shaped books. Artists' books, as with modern children's books in particular, often assume a myriad of shapes (houses, cats, fire-engines, triangles etc.). The book-object or sculpture was not expressly considered by Murray as this is a more modern development and is still the area of most contention in book art studies.

The most interesting aspect of the O.E.D. definition is the fact that the concept of a book has always been ambiguous, with such comments as "without regard to the material form or forms in which it actually exists" (perhaps a reference to shape or sculpture!) and "No absolute definition of a 'book' in this sense can be given, even though its pages are occupied otherwise than with writing or printing, or are entirely blank". While the definition of artists' books is still one of some controversy, when the movement developed in the 1960s and 1970s, an artist's book was then thought of as a unique object made by an artist in the book format. This definition has been extended to include editioned books (i.e. not unique and usually using a graphic process for duplication) with the principle criteria being the artist's input and individuality. David Blamey states: "Sometimes found in bookstores and sometimes found in art galleries, the bookwork does not rest easily in either camp but is nonetheless now widely recognised as an important and valid form of creative expression. The dichotomy is further fuelled by book artists themselves, who subvert the conventions of both

worlds by packaging highly personal or complicated ideas in the form of a popular commodity".⁵

In this exhibition we have used the term artist's book in its broadest, most comprehensive sense to include:

- Finely printed letterpress books in the Private Press tradition
- Books with original graphics in the mediums of: lithography, etching in all its forms, monoprints, collagraphs, woodcuts, linocuts, silk-screen, photography and even photo-offset printing and Xerox (the last two usually being regarded as a move away from fine printing but being important in Drucker's definition of the "democratic multiple").⁶
- Unique and editioned illustrated books using: water-colour, pulp-painting, pochoir, pastels, drawing (graphite, ink, crayon, ballpoint, Tippex!), collage, calligraphy and oils.
- Books using such media as: paper (including many hand-made and Japanese papers), wood, glass, clay, Mylar, plastic, copper, aluminium, silver, zinc, lead, fabric, leather, bamboo, resin, stone, cork, tinfoil, computers etc.
- Books of many shapes, including: rectangular, square, round, triangular, wedge-shaped, house-shaped, hexagonal, parallelogram-shaped, etc. There are also some books and book sculptures of irregular shape.

Included are miniature books and very large books; scrolls "form...that of a long roll" and codices "form...of separate leaves"; accordion-folded and tunnel-shaped books; pop-ups and 'pop-downs'. You will find books incorporating some surprising materials such as dishcloths, cleaning abrasives, insect-boxes, buttons, patchwork, tape measures, wire puppets, candles, condoms, oysters, incense, matches, stamps, stickers, sequins, teeth, beads, feathers, coins, string, ribbons, safety-pins, a miniature US flag, needles and pins, and many others.

It has given me great pleasure over the years to show artists' books to art students and interested friends; to share my bibliomania! This exhibition gives us the opportunity to develop a new audience whom we hope will experience the same fascination as have so many others. More than one viewer has likened the surprise on showing or opening a book to conjuring and, although we lose some of that magic by having to show the books in display cases, there should be a sufficient number of examples to entice the viewer.⁷ More and more artists in South Africa are working in the book arts and would welcome commissions and support for their editioned books.

In recent years the book arts have made great headway particularly in Europe and America with islands of activity in Australia and Canada. It is now time South Africa joined the world in this respect as in so many others. Many libraries now include artists' books with their fine print and rare book collections and, in some academic institutions, there has been some contention as to whether the library or the gallery should have custody of book-objects! This exhibition launches the book arts in South Africa and praise must go to the

Johannesburg Art Gallery and its dedicated staff whose vision has made this possible. David Paton, who is currently engaged on his keenly awaited M.A.F.A. dissertation on *South African Artists' Books and Book Objects Since 1960*, has found far more activity in this field than expected. This exhibition should help to build an audience and expand activity by both those already involved and those who see new opportunities in a relatively new art form.

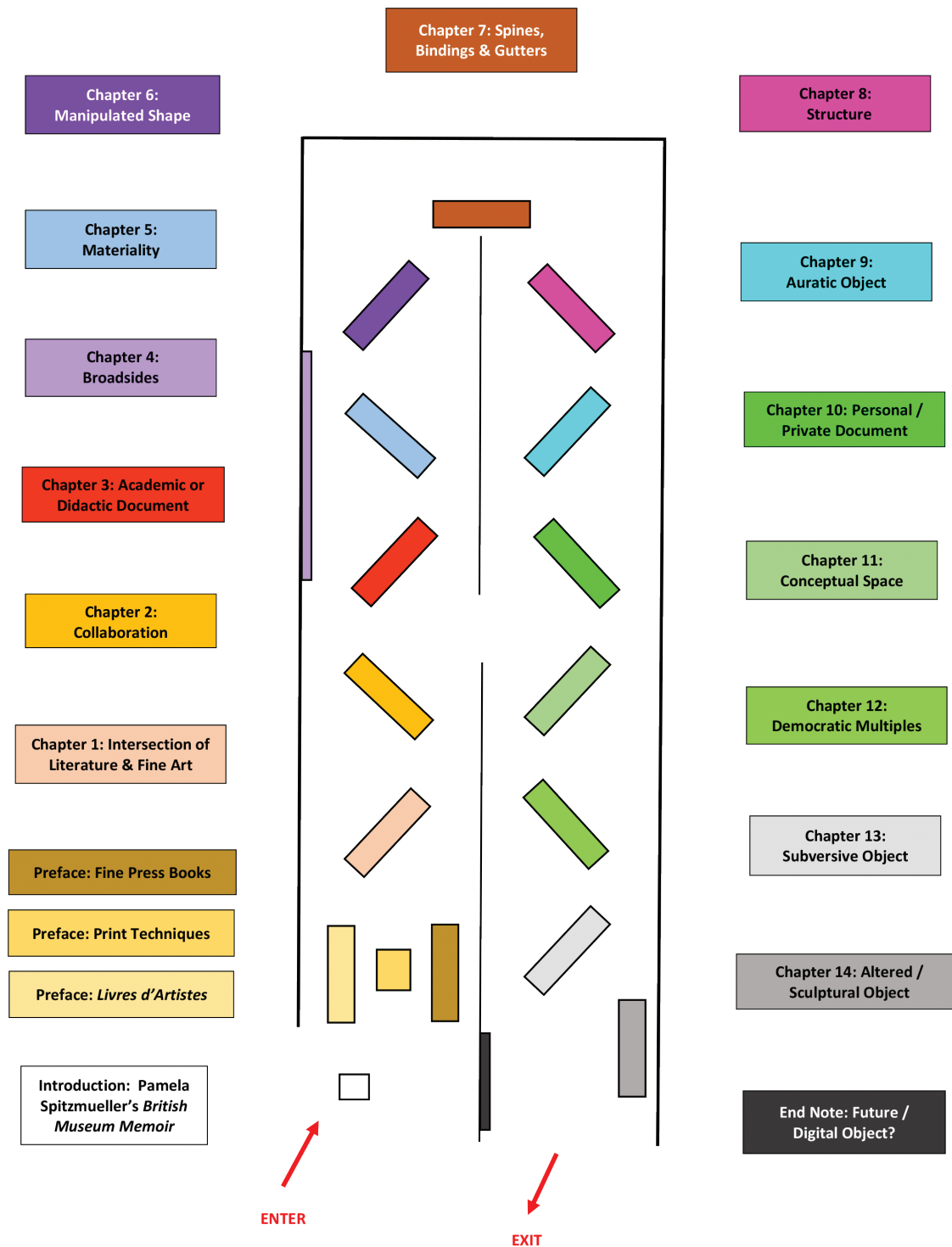
While the Death of the Novel, and more recently the death (or the transformation into electronic form) of the book itself, have been long predicted, the book arts are in their infancy and will be with us for a long time to come.

End Notes:

1.	<i>"The generic book confronts us with its amalgamation of picture plane and sculptural volume." See: Spector, B. 1995. (In the Bibliography).</i>
2.	<i>See: Blamey, D. 1992. (In the Bibliography).</i>
3.	<i>The Oxford English Dictionary. (Second edition.) On Compact Disc. Edited by Murray, J. A. H., Bradley, H., Craigie, W. A. and Onions, C. T. Oxford University Press. All quotes following in the smaller font are from the O.E.D.</i>
4.	<i>ibid.</i>
5.	<i>See: Blamey, D. 1992. (In the Bibliography).</i>
6.	<i>"The vision becomes a book which is able to pass into the world with the fewest obstacles between conception and production, production and distribution. That is the nature of the democratic multiple, the ready availability of an independent artist's vision in book form." See: Drucker, J. 1995. (In the Bibliography).</i>
7.	<i>"The dilemma in staging exhibitions of books as art objects is the denial of access to the work that conservation necessarily demands. Any book that, by virtue of its uniqueness or fragility of materials, would be damaged by handling must be protected, even at the cost of intelligibility." See: Spector, B. 1995. (In the Bibliography).</i>

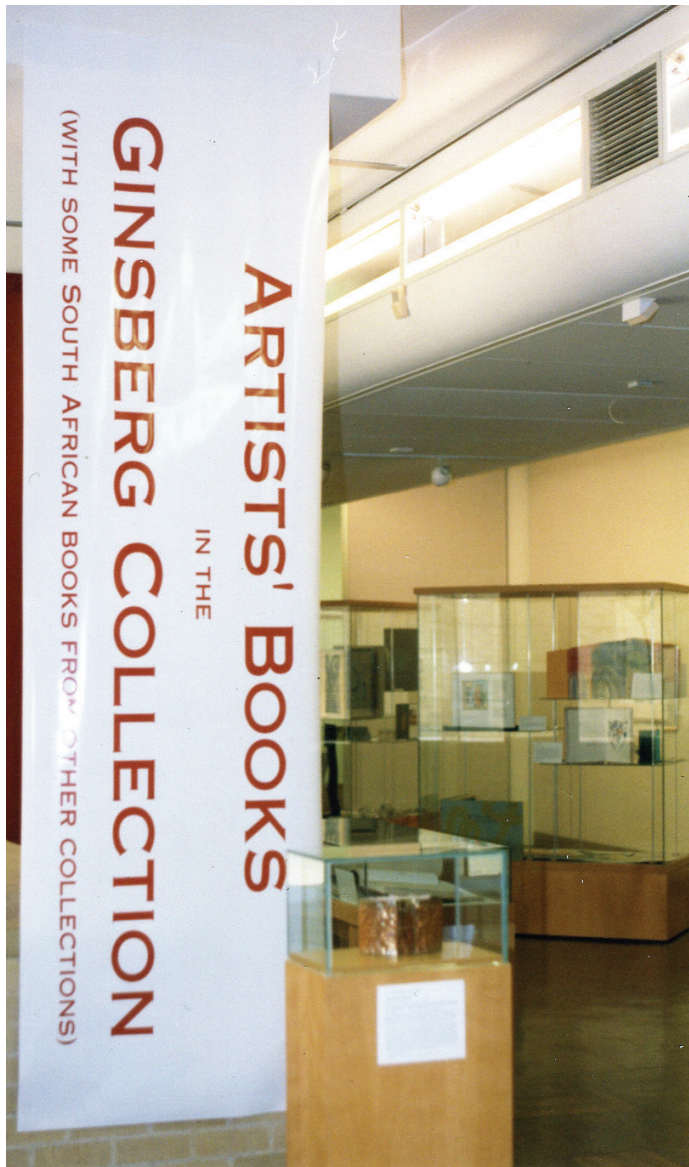
Layout of the Exhibition

David M. Paton



Layout of the 1996 exhibition: lower floor, west wing, Johannesburg Art Gallery

Entrance to the Exhibition with Pamela Spitzmueller's *British Museum Memoir* [Cat.143]



Preface: *Livre d'Artiste*

In this introductory section of the exhibition you will find examples of work which are not, strictly, artists' books. Judith Mason's interpretations of Dante's verse, for example, aligns this collaborative work more with the tradition of the *livres d'artistes* - a book illustrated by an important or celebrated artist, usually of classic verse. The books in the first two cabinets display aspects of the book arts outside of the concerns of the artist's book and emphasise mainly fine press elements and books dealing with illustrative graphic material. Compare Mason's work with that of Wilton Priestner's illustrations of *Voltaire's Candide or Optimism* [Cat.78 and 79].

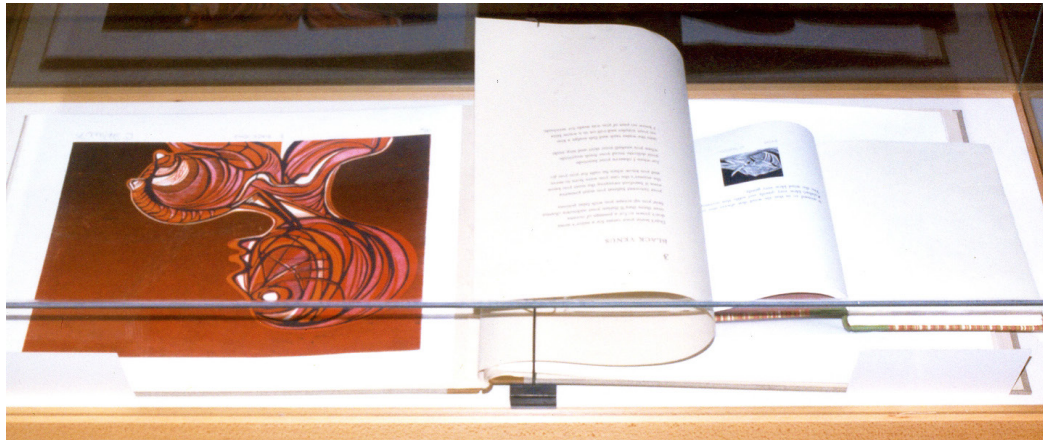
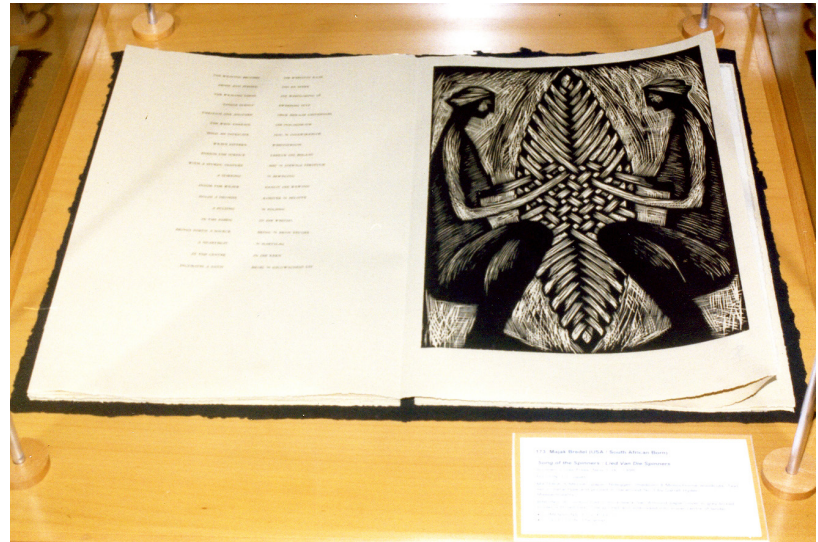


Preface: Fine Press Books

The qualities of typography; the craftsmanship of printing letterpress; creating a dialogue between imagery and text; the choice of paper(s) and excellence in binding typify a fine press book. Here we find examples which move beyond excellence in craftsmanship and which display a particular intention, choice or manipulation on the part of the artist. Look for the dialogue between collaborators and note, particularly, the quality of printing. Many of these books begin to move out of a static category towards the individuality of artists' books and we now encounter examples of artists' books in the cabinets.

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Chapter 1. Artists' Books as Intersection of Literature and Fine Art

These works explore the book as a dynamic meeting place for and dialogue between images and texts, images as texts and texts as images. They move beyond the stasis of illustration as the two signifiers often interact, impinge on each other's space and, indeed, take on each other's characteristics. They however contrive to make the book-carrier a dynamic and rich conceptual space.



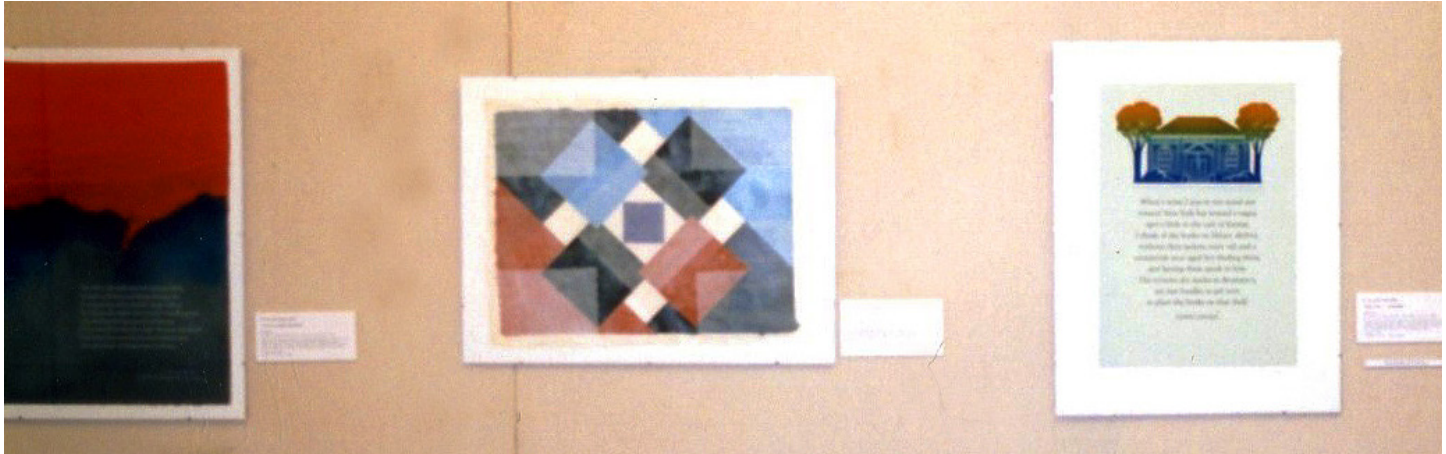
Chapter 2. Artists' Books as Collaboration

Many fine press and artists' books are a result of collaboration between artist(s), printer, type-setter, binder etc. In the case of Malcolm Payne's *Face Value: Old Heads in Modern Masks* [Cat.197], a work which also has a didactic function, the scholarly essays act as a foil for the fine intaglio images which come after them. 34 artists and printers collaborated in the making of *A Printer's Exquisite Corpse* [Cat.140].

Chapter 3. Artists' Books as Academic or Didactic Document

An interesting aspect of the artist's book is its use as a carrier of academic or didactic information. It may operate as a technical guide like Jo Ractliffe and Pippa Skotnes' *Mordant Methods* [Cat.201] or as part of a body of academic research at tertiary Fine Art institutions e.g. Susan Lowdermilk's *Interior Passage* [Cat.107] and Liz Vels's *Logos as Artefact* [Cat.223].



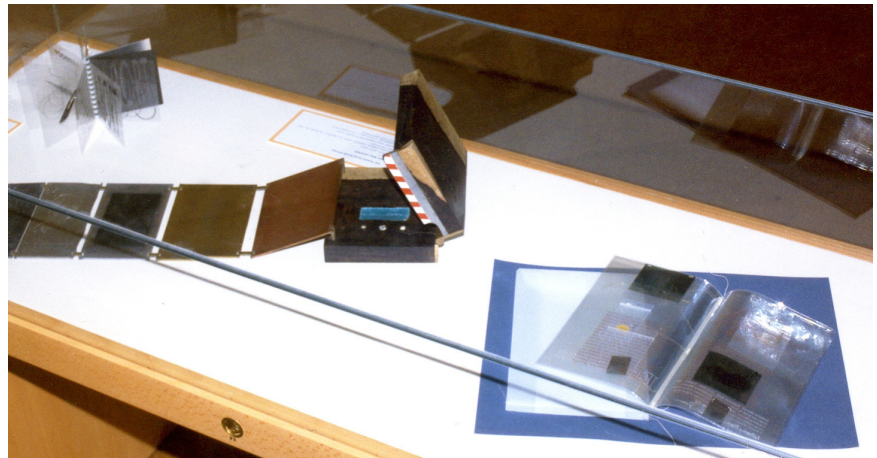


Chapter 4. Artists' Books as Broadside

The Broadside is, in fact, a book consisting of a single page. These books by Claire Van Vliet's Janus Press [Cat.80 – 85] have been framed and hung on the wall in order to create debate around the nature, size, format and expectations of a book.

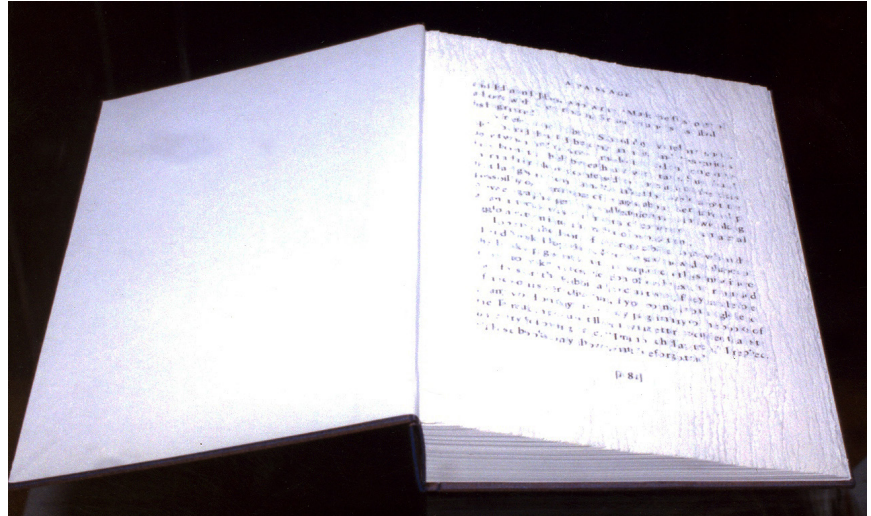
Chapter 5. Artists' Books as Materiality

One aspect of artist's book production is the interrogation of the materiality of the book. In many instances the artist subverts the traditional western material of paper for more provocative, expedient or necessary materials such as acetate, ceramic, glass, plastic, leaves, metal, fabric, etc. Each material is exploited in order to enhance its content. See for example Ronald King's *The Mirror Book* [Cat.31], which makes anything it reflects its content, while Katharine Meynell's *Emissions* [Cat.58] confuses its content by being printed on transparent Mylar, thereby superimposing the text and images of every page.



Chapter 6. Artists' Books as Manipulated Shape

One of the many forms of interrogation through which a book can go in order to make it into an artist's book, is the alteration or manipulation of its shape. The makers of children's books explore ways in which the shape of a book aligns with its content. Artist's book-makers, likewise, subvert the traditional rectangular shape of a book in order to exploit content and create a semiotic dialogue between what one expects and what one finds. It is interesting that a square book is as rare as a circular one.

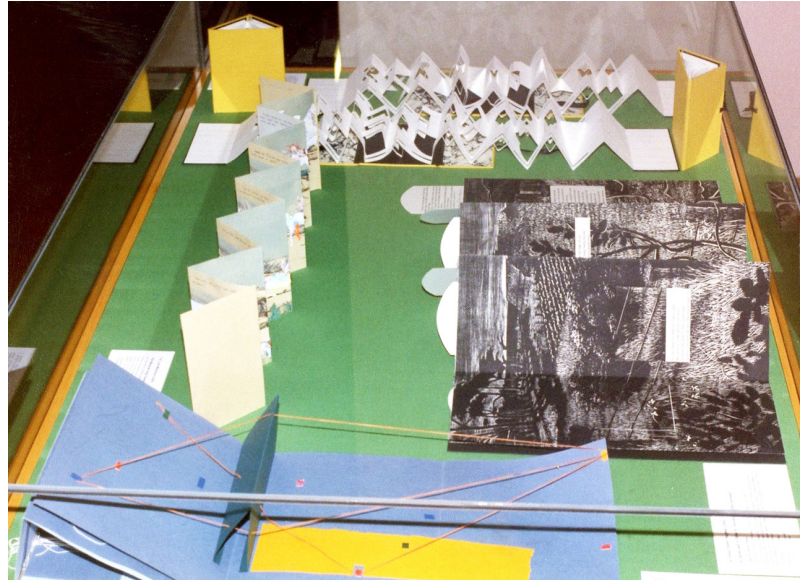


Chapter 7. Artists' Books as Spines, Bindings and Gutters

Although bindings are not specifically identified in this exhibition and constitute an art-form in their own right, the examples operate as the spine of the exhibition. A few books have been identified as having specific attention paid to their spines. Here note Malcolm Payne's *A Chill Down My Spine* [Cat.196] where images inhabit the gutter, a space not conventionally associated with imagery nor text. Note too the extraordinary binding of Toni Dove's *Mesmer* [Cat.63].

Chapter 8. Artists' Books as Structure

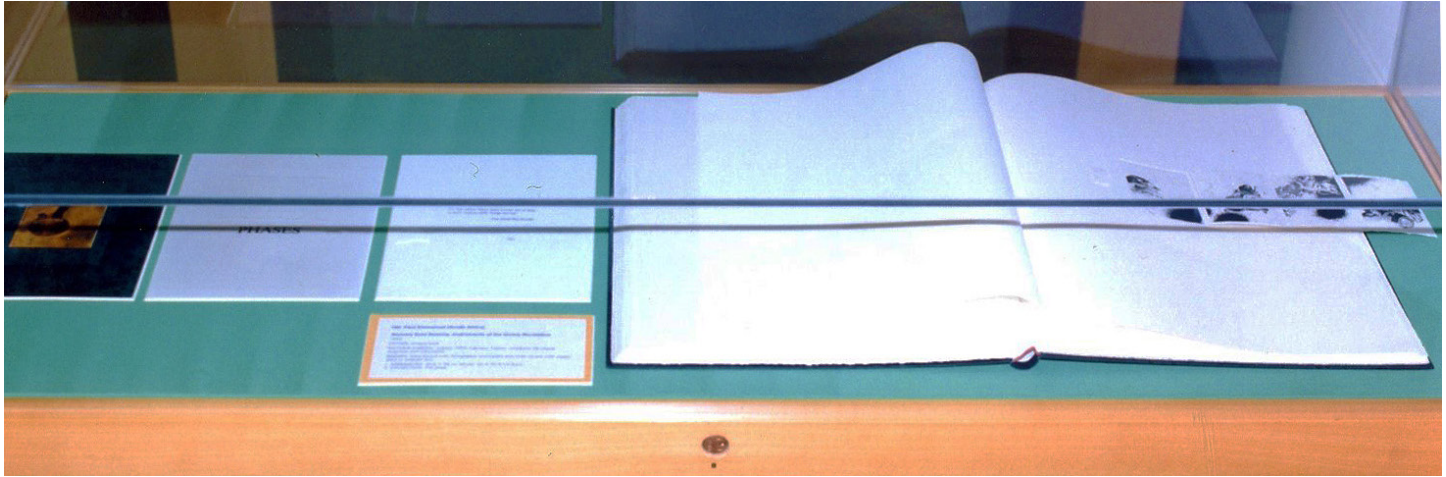
Perhaps the most outstanding aspect of artist's book production is the interrogation of the structure of a book. In the same way that any change of material or shape draws attention to the difference or 'otherness' of a book, structural changes and the ability of a book (or its parts) to be manipulated in ways other than the slow turning of pages identifies it as an artist's book. This chapter is by far the largest and, arguably, the most interesting. Take note of the variety of structural elements from pop-ups, pop-downs and tunnel books to Ronald King's and Roy Fisher's *Left-Handed Punch* [Cat.30].



Chapter 9. Artists' Books as Auratic Object

There is no doubt that certain books have an auratic quality, generating, in the words of Johanna Drucker, a: "Mystique, a sense of charged presence. They seem to bear meaning just in their being, their appearance and their form through their iconography and materials." Drucker directs attention at the critical interplay between the fundamental characteristics of a book and implies that when a certain balance between these fundamentals is struck, that book will generate an aura or presence. We have chosen a few works which we believe have such a quality. Of note is Pamela Spitzmueller's *British Museum Memoir* [Cat.143] chosen for the exhibition poster and entrance, and Timothy C. Ely's *Chart 6* [Cat.40].





Chapter 10. Artists' Books as Personal / Private Document

Some auratic works are personal and often in single editions: See Paul Emmanuel's *Nomina Sunt Numina* [Cat.180], while most private documents are not at all auratic. Although it has been our desire not to impose any definition of artists' books onto the viewer (instead exploring some diverse and overlapping "fields of exploration") some books are, without pretence, a document of very private meditations or concerns. In this chapter we also draw attention to books which have been entirely handmade as an autographic work without any repeatable graphic imagery or text.



Chapter 11. Artists' Books as Conceptual Space

Willem Boshoff's *Bangboek* [Cat.169] is an unreadable encrypted text, yet ironically, one of the few books on the exhibition that is entirely open allowing the whole book to be read. Boshoff thus subverts both the issues of temporality and of reading in a book. The conceptual nature of artists' books is broad and is approached in intriguingly different ways. The space of the book as a container for content is exploited wryly by Steven Bernstein in *Strip Poker* [Cat.51] as the wine bottle becomes the container of a text. In some instances, the work exists only as a result of the book form or container.



Chapter 12. Artists' Books as Democratic Multiple

The artist has always been a mirror of society and a commentator on culture. Art has also challenged the status quo on many levels. Artists' books are a medium of discourse and debate and are activators of and agents for social change. One of the important aspects of democratic multiples is the cost of production and distribution, given the desire for mass circulation. Andrew Putter's books *Dancing With the Machines* and *Under the Sun and Over the Moon* [Cat.198 & 199] have been produced by means of a photocopier and are staple bound. Their small format makes them appear like a tract or pamphlet and thus are easily obtained, held and read.



Chapter 13. Artists' Books as Subversion

If the concept of the democratic multiples works for social change then it is expected that artists, and the art they produce, might from time to time become subversive. This subversion might attach itself to socio-economic or political agendas, in order to bring about meaningful change. Other forms of subversion engage with taboo subjects, such as sexual deviation, while many books engage in a dialogue with the book arts itself and subvert the very notion of a book. It is this subversive dialogue that has, in fact, been exhibited in many cabinets thus far as a simple change in traditional rectangular shape or paper as a material renders a work potentially subversive.



Chapter 14. Artists' Books as Altered or Sculptural Object

These are, in fact, two different categories of the book arts and clearly have intentional as well as material differences. An altered book, as the introductory guidelines state, is the artist's use of another person's work in book form in order to make a new work. Compare Denmark's *Boekenplank* [Cat.35] with Andrew Putter's *War Secrets* [Cat.200] and Jack Ginsberg's *The Transfigured Sackcloth* [Cat.185]. Book-sculptures are more difficult to accept as books due to their overriding power as tactile, material sculptures. Sheila Flynn's *Seat of Wisdom* [Cat.181] and Russell Scott's *Lecturn* [Cat.204] contain books and exist because of their relationship with books, but Suzanne Bothma-Hale's *First Edition* [Cat.171] operates as a book and can be read.

End note. Artists' Books as Future / Digital Object?

In the last paragraph of his catalogue essay, Jack Ginsberg refers to the death of information in book form. It is not desirable to buy a full edition of an encyclopaedia (after all where are you going to put it!) when a more interactive CD-ROM-form of information retrieval exists on a piece of plastic 120mm in diameter by 1mm thick! The cost of sophisticated hardware, access to the Internet and a range of encyclopaedic CDs is far less than that paper edition of the encyclopaedia. The book arts are however, as Jack points out, in their infancy and will be with us for many years to come.

The last bay of the exhibition compares two forms of the Artist's Book: Willem Boshoff's *370 Day Project* [Cat.170] and Michele Sohn's *codex* [Cat.211]. Boshoff's work is a book and is exhibited in its closed form, last seen publicly, over a decade ago. Each block of wood is a page, each encoded sign a signifier of words and meaning. As in *Bangboek* [Cat.169], knowledge of the content is forbidden and *370 Day Project* remains possibly one of the finest and most artistically pertinent personal and auratic books ever made by a South African.



Catalogue of International Artists' Books

Curated by Jack M. Ginsberg and David M. Paton

1. Susan Allix (UK): *The Day Dream (Twelve verses from)*. 1995
2. Susan Allix (UK): *Faces (18)*. 1993
3. Susan Allix (UK): *A Flora*. 1992
4. Susan Allix (UK): *A South Italian Journey*. 1985
5. Kathleen K. Amt (USA): *Kaleidoscopic ABC's*. 1991
6. Kathleen K. Amt (USA): *The Mermaid*. 1989
7. Arion Press, Edwin Abbott (USA): *Flatland, a Romance of Many Dimensions*. 1980
8. Arion Press, Jim Dine (USA): *The Temple of Flora*. 1984
9. Arion Press, Andrew Hoyem and others (USA): *The World is Round*. 1986
10. Carol June Barton (USA): *Everyday Road Signs*. 1988
11. Carol June Barton (USA): *Instructions for Assembly*. 1993
12. Carol June Barton (USA): *Small Gardens*. 1986
13. Carol June Barton (USA): *Tunnel Vision*. 1988
14. Meg Belichick (USA): *Frosting*. 1991
15. Beo Press, Anne Hepler (USA): *Age Rings*. 1993
16. Beo Press, Anne Hepler (USA): *An Insect Alphabet*. 1992
17. Beo Press, Anne Hepler (USA): *One Day, Long Long Ago*. 1991
18. The Burnt Wood Press, Eileen Hogan (UK): *Five Hundred Points of Good Husbandry*. 1981
19. Ken Campbell (UK): *A Knife Romance*. 1988
20. Ken Campbell (UK): *Tilt: The Black-Flagged Streets*. 1988
21. Gerard Charriere (USA): *L'Afrique d'Aujourd'hui*. 1991
22. Cheloniidae Press, Alan James Robinson (USA): *An Odd Bestiary*. 1982
23. Cheloniidae Press, Alan James Robinson (USA): *The Raven*. 1980
24. The Chevington Press, D. R. Wakefield (UK): *Diary and Observations of a Tench Fisher* 1981
25. Deborah Phillips Chodoff (USA): *A Dishwasher is not Magic*. 1993
26. Circle Press, Ronald King & Roy Fisher (UK): *Anansi Company*. 1992
27. Circle Press, Ronald King (UK): *Les Bijoux*. 1996
28. Circle Press, Ronald King & Roy Fisher (UK): *Bluebeard's Castle*. 1972
29. Circle Press, Ronald King & Roy Fisher (UK): *The Half Year Letters*. 1983
30. Circle Press, Ronald King & Roy Fisher (UK): *The Left-Handed Punch*. 1987

31. Circle Press, Ronald King (UK): *The Mirror Book*. 1979
32. The Press at Colorado College, James Trissel (USA): *The Cycle of the Day*. 1991
33. Conceptual Book! (USA): *Norman Conquest (Paperback)*. n.d
34. Natalie D'Arbeloff (UK): *Fergus and Curmudgeonly*. 1979
35. Denmark (Belgium): *Boekenplank*. n.d
36. William Drendel (USA): *A Bale of Straw*. 1987
37. Johanna Drucker (USA): *Narratology*. 1994
38. Editions, Edward Hutchins (USA): *Tags*. 1991
39. Editions, Edward Hutchins (USA): *World Peace*, 1991
40. Timothy C. Ely (USA): *Charts 6*. 1991
41. Timothy C. Ely (USA): *On Telepathy*. 184
42. Emanon Press, Debra Weier (USA): *Between the Lines*. 1980
43. Emanon Press, Debra Weier (USA): *One Cubic Foot*. 1982
44. Emanon Press, Jerome Rothenberg (USA): *A Merz Sonata*. 1985
45. Emanon Press, Debra Weier & Pablo Neruda (USA): *Las Piedras del Cielo – Skystones*. 1981
46. Walter Feldman (USA): *A Packet of Letters*
47. The Figment Press, Diane Weiss (USA): *Carousel*. 1988
48. Vincent Fitz Gerald & Company, Mark Beard & Harry Kondoleon (USA): *The Côte d'Azur Triangle*. 1985
49. Vincent Fitz Gerald & Company, Mark Beard, Kurt Weill & Bertold Brecht (USA): *The Seven Deadly Sins of the Lower Middle Class*. 1992
50. Flockophobic Press, A. S. C. Rowler & Clark Coolidge (USA): *On The Slates*. 1992
51. Flockophobic Press, Steven J. Bernstein (USA): *Strip Poker*. 1991
52. Flying Fish Press, Nancy O'Banion & Julie Chen (USA): *Correspondence Course*. 1993
53. Flying Fish Press, Nancy O'Banion & Julie Chen (USA): *Domestic Science*. 1990
54. Flying Fish Press, Julie Chen (USA): *Listening*. 1992
55. Flying Fish Press, Lois Morrison & Julie Chen (USA): *Ste. Ostrich in Manhattan*. 1990
56. Flying Pyramid Press, David Horton (USA): *Luminous Perceptions*. 1988
57. Karli Frigge (Netherlands): *Marbled Paper*. 1985
58. Gefn Press, Suzan Johanknecht & Katharine Meynell (UK): *Emissions*. 1992
59. Gefn Press, Suzan Johanknecht & Sandra McPherson (UK): *Eve*. 1992
60. Gefn Press, Suzan Johanknecht & Julie O'Callaghan (UK): *Well-Heeled*. 1985
61. Granary Books, Ed Epping (USA): *Abstract Refuse*. 1995

62. Granary Books, Pati Scobey (USA): *The Back of Time*. 1992
63. Granary Books, Toni Dove (USA): *Mesmer*. 1993
64. Granary Books, Buzz spectator (USA): *A Passage*. 1994
65. Gea Grevink (Netherlands): *Moscow*. 1990
66. Paul Heimbach (Germany): *Zigarren in Erinnerung an Kurt Switters*. 1992
67. Gloria Helfgott (USA): *The Scrap Book*. 1989
68. Adriane Herman (USA): *Kentucky Fried Chicken Matchbook*. 1993
69. Adriane Herman (USA): *One tablet on tongue every 2 or 3 hours when needed for throat*. 1992
70. The Heyeck Press, Frances Mayes & Robert Heyeck (USA): *The Arts of Fire*. 1982
71. Sjoerd Hofstra (USA): *Five Empty Bookcases*. 1990
72. Sjoerd Hofstra (USA): *A Study in Averages*. 1990
73. The Holiseventh Press, Patrick E. White (USA): *Eurydice Unbound*. 1988
74. Susan Kiefer Hughes & Edna St. Vincent Millay (USA): *A Landscape of Sonnets*. 1987
75. Inanna Press, Maureen Cummins (USA): *The Garden*. 1993
76. Inanna Press, Maureen Cummins (USA): *Phantasies of a Love Thief*. 1994
77. Inanna Press, Maureen Cummins (USA): *The Song of Songs*. n.d
78. The Inky Parrot Press, Wilton Priestner & François Marie Arouet de Voltaire (UK): *Candide or Optimism*. 1985
79. The Inky Parrot Press, Wilton Priestner & François Marie Arouet de Voltaire (UK): *Candide or Optimism* (hand-coloured edition). 1985
80. The Janus Press, Claire van Vliet & Barry Holstun Lopez (USA): *Arctic Dreams (Broadside)*. 1992
81. The Janus Press, Claire van Vliet & W. R. Johnson (USA): *The Color of Night (Broadside)*. 1982
82. The Janus Press, Claire van Vliet & James Wright (USA): *Fresh Wind for Venice (Broadside)*. 1982
83. The Janus Press, Claire van Vliet & Margaret Kaufman (USA): *Old Quilts (Broadside)*. 1989
84. The Janus Press, Claire van Vliet & Margaret Kaufman (USA): *Pandoras Box (Broadside)*. 1991
85. The Janus Press, Claire van Vliet & John Updike (USA): *"When I write" (Broadside)*. 1982
86. The Janus Press, Claire van Vliet & Margaret Kaufman (USA): *Aunt Sallie's Lament*. 1988
87. The Janus Press, Claire van Vliet & Charles G. Finney (USA): *The Circus of Doctor Lao*. 1984
88. The Janus Press, Claire van Vliet & Katharine Meynell (USA): *Eat Book*. 1990
89. The Janus Press, Claire van Vliet & W. R. Johnson (USA): *Lilac Wind*. 1983
90. Paul Johnson (UK): *A Place in the Country*. 1995
91. Paul Johnson (UK): *The Sanctuary*. 1995
92. Daniel E. Kelm and Michael Maier (USA): *Neo Emblemata Nova*. 1990

93. Kickshaws, John Crombie (France): *All Manner of Things*. 1991
94. Kickshaws, Raymond Queneau (France): *One Hundred Million Million Poems*. 1983
95. The M. Kimberly Press, Mare Blocker & William Blake (USA): *The Printing House in Hell*. 1985
96. Hedi Kyle (USA): *A to Z*. 1990
97. Hedi Kyle (USA): *ABC Book*. 1986
98. The Limited Editions Club, Claire van Vliet & Charles G. Finney (USA): *The Circus of Doctor Lao*. 1982
99. The Limited Editions Club, Sol Lewitt & Jorge Lois Borges (USA): *Ficciones*. 1984
100. The Logan Elm Press, Anthony Rice & David Citino (USA): *A Letter of Columbus*. 1990
101. Angela Lorenz (Italy): *Bologna Sample*. 1992
102. Angela Lorenz (Italy): *Lay Text*. 1993
103. Angela Lorenz (Italy): *Librex Solaris*. 1990
104. Angela Lorenz (Italy): *Pandora's Box*. 1992
105. Angela Lorenz (Italy): *Paper Plates - She's a Dish*. 1993
106. Margot Lovejoy (USA): *Labyrinth*. 1991
107. Susan Lowdermilk (USA): *Interior Passage*. 1991
108. J. G. Lubbock (UK): *From Garden to Galaxy*. 1980
109. M & Co. (France): *A Romance (vol. 4)*. n.d
110. Scott McCarney (USA): *ABC (Alphabook)*. n.d
111. Meadow Press, Maxine Hong Kingston (USA): *Hawai'i One Summer: 1978*. 1987
112. Lois Morrison (USA): *Anthem for Doomed Youth*. 1994
113. Lois Morrison (USA): *Japanese Babies*. 1992
114. Lois Morrison (USA): *The Mexican Dog-Tosser*. 1995
115. Lois Morrison (USA): *My Garden from Weeding Height*. 1993
116. Nexus Press, Scott McCarney (USA): *In Case of Emergency*, 1984
117. Nexus Press, Susan E. King (USA): *Lessons from the South*. 1986
118. Kevin Osborn (USA): *Tropos*. 1988
119. Pequeño Press, Ed Clark & Pat Baldwin (USA): *Micromacrocosm*. 1989
120. The Perishable Press Ltd, Toby Olson & Eilliam Weege (USA): *Fishing*. 1974
121. The Perishable Press Ltd, Walter Hamady (USA): *For the Hundredth Time Gabberjab Number Five*. 1981
122. The Permutation Press, Eve Faulks (USA): *Of Wildflowers*. 1989
123. Nicholas Phillips (UK): *Egyptian Hours*. 1980
124. Jo Anna Poehlman (USA): *Drawings in a Nutshell*. 1985

125. Poole Press, Maryline Poole Adams & Robert Louis Stevenson (USA): *Envoy*. 1992
126. Poole Press, Maryline Poole Adams (USA): *Jack-in-the-Box. An Alphabet*. 1991
127. Poole Press, Maryline Poole Adams (USA): *Matryoshka*. 1993
128. The Poote Press, Donald Trave (USA): *Vessels & Voids*. 1994
129. Rebis Press, Mimi Pond (USA): *Half Off*. 1981
130. Red Angel Press, Ronald Keller & Herman Melville (USA): *Rock Rodondo*. 1981
131. The Red Hen Press, Shirley Jones (UK): *Five Flowers for my Father*. 1990
132. James Renner (USA): *A Concise Physiology of the Soul*. 1994
133. Carol Schwartzott (USA): *Goat Island Journal*. 1992
134. Carol Schwartzott (USA): *Haiku Poems*. 1993
135. Carol Schwartzott (USA): *Ode/Odalisque Matisse*. 1994
136. Carol Schwartzott (USA): *Oviri. Savage. Paul Gauguin*. 1995
137. Pati Scobey (USA): *Internal Change*. 1988
138. Susan Share (USA): *"N" (Re do to fit or)*. n.d
139. Robbin Ami Silverberg (USA): *Brush*. 1995
140. Silver Buckle Press, Barara Tetenbaum (USA): *A Printer's Exquisite Corpse*. 1992
141. Keith Smith (USA): *Book 104*. 1985
142. Joan Soppe (USA): *Trespases*. 1993
143. Pamela Spitzmueller (USA): *British Museum Memoir*. 1986
144. David Stairs (USA): *Boundless*. n.d
145. Swamp Press, Alison Mitchell (USA): *Four Batiks*. 1980
146. Swamp Press, Carole Stone (USA): *Legacy*. 1979
147. The Tern Press, Nicolas Parry & Richard Jefferies (UK): *The Birth of a Naturalist*. 1985
148. The Tern Press, Nicholas Parry (UK): *The History of Susanna*. 1994
149. The Tern Press, Nicholas Parry (UK): *Verses from the Book of Psalms*. 1994
150. Theodore Press, Claire van Vliet & Nahum Tate (USA): *Dido and Aeneas*. 1990
151. Theodore Press, Michael Alpert (USA): *Orfeo ed Euridice*. 1990
152. Beth Thielen (USA): *If a Universe Formed in Your Living Room, Could You Ever Tell?* 1992
153. Peter and Donna Thomas (USA): *Aesop's Frog Fables*. 1990
154. Peter and Donna Thomas (USA): *A Single Day*. 1991
155. Peter and Donna Thomas (USA): *A 1000 Mile Walk to the Gulf*. 1994
156. Triangular Press, Phyllis McGibbon & Barbara Tetenbaum (USA): *A Chronology of Important Events*. 1989

157. The University of Iowa Center for the Book, Amy Clampitt (USA): *Manhattan*. 1990
158. Anne Walker (France): *Les Heures du Jour*. 1991
159. Warwick Press, Carol J. Blinn & Frieda Fitzenmeyer (USA): *Once Upon a Time. Book Six*. 1992
160. Wayzgoose Press, Mike Hudson & Brigid Gaffikin (Australia): *The Bishops' Brothels*. 1994
161. Wisconsin Magic (USA): *H.B.* 1990
162. Anna Wolf (USA): *Hong Kong Tales*. 1995
163. Arne Wolf (USA): *Nine Love Poems*. 1995

Some Thoughts on Artists' Books in General and the Exhibition in Particular

David M. Paton

The concept of the artist's book is a largely misunderstood one, even by those who claim to work within the field. Ranging from notions of a book about artists to sketchbooks of somewhat secondary importance, the artist's book is a sidelined and non-credited genre in the South African art world. Although the international world has recognised and embraced the genre arguably since Ed Ruscha's photo books directed attention towards the book as a carrier of a uniquely artistic statement, it has, rather noticeably, failed to come up with any meaningful definition of what these products represent or in fact are.

What little literature there is on the subject draws attention to the disparate and difficult nature of the genre as a homogeneous entity or enterprise and rather vaguely refers to the fact that if an artist says it is a book then an artist's book it must be. Riva Castleman confuses the issue even further by titling her 1994 swansong exhibition at MoMA, *A Century of Artists Books* without making the distinction between: a livre d'artiste;¹ a fine press book,² a book object,³ and an artist's book.⁴

In response, Johanna Drucker's *The Century of Artists' Books* (1995) wisely places emphasis not on what might be defined as an artist's book, but on the varied approaches and zones within which book artists work, emphasising the "intersection of a number of different disciplines, fields and ideas- rather than the limits."⁵ She does, however, limit her field quite consciously and stringently to those items which are clearly meant to look like, be handled as and read like a book. Book objects and sculptural books have no place in her intersection.

It is hoped that this exhibition will function on many levels and introduce the public to a genre that has an almost thirty year history in South Africa but which is largely unknown for lack of information and exposure. The resulting misconceptions prescribe that a book is suitable only for reproductions and that originals are to be housed -loose leafed- in portfolios. The exhibition aims to demonstrate the wide range of objects that might be accepted as artists' books: and advance Johanna Drucker's notion that the book, as an independent artwork has come of age and matured into a genre of its own, "as a form to interrogate, not merely a vehicle for reproduction."⁶ Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, this exhibition affords an opportunity to view a small part of South Africa's finest private artists' book collection.

Jack Ginsberg has gathered together his unique collection for over thirty years. Propelled by his love of literature, information, the pursuit of knowledge and his love for the visual arts, he was struck by the specific field of artists' books that bore little resemblance to the fine press books such as those published by the Limited Editions Club or the coffee-table *Africana* of many erudite collectors. Travelling to Europe, the

United Kingdom and particularly to the USA, brought Jack into contact with more and more books made by artists who, while often demonstrating the qualities of private press and limited edition books, interrogated the form, structure and materiality of the book. Relationships between images and texts; game playing and witticism; manipulation of the reader by the book; engineered and pop-up books; conceptual and altered books became his collecting passion and which is exhibited in a small number here.

In researching artists' books in South Africa I am struck by the number of works produced in the last thirty years and the growing interest in the book as a form which artists and designers can exploit. In the early 1980s, and under the guidance of Philippa Hobbs, the Wits Technikon [now the University of Johannesburg] introduced a course in book-making and binding allied to printmaking and papermaking. Students soon became proficient in the craft of making books and the Fine Arts Department has been responsible for engendering the love for and knowledge of the craft of bookmaking in many students, a number of whom have continued to develop into proficient and prolific makers of artists' books. Some of the artists who have had contact with this department and who are included on the exhibition include Russell Scott, Sheila Flynn, Sonya Strafella, Flip Hatting, Liz Vels, Giulio Tambellini and, of course, Philippa Hobbs herself. In Cape Town, Pippa Skotnes and Malcolm Payne have not only encouraged an involvement with the book as a Post-Graduate requirement in printmaking (see for example the books by Amanda Darling and Simon Ford), but as an educational resource (see *Mordant Methods* (1990), with Jo Ractliffe [Cat.201]). Ractliffe, now as lecturer in printmaking at Wits University, has encouraged her students to investigate the book as an artistic vehicle and, under John Roome, students engage in the crafts of paper and bookmaking at Natal Technikon [now, Durban University of Technology]. It is clear that tertiary Fine Arts and Design students now have many opportunities to engage with the book as a format, genre and conceptual space.

As founders of the *Axeage Private Press*, Skotnes (*Sound From the Thinking Strings* (1991) [Cat.210], *Heaven's Things* (1992) [Cat.209]) and Payne (*Face Value: Old Heads in Modern Masks* (1993) [Cat.197]), along with Mark Attwood's *The Artist's Press*, have been instrumental in producing artists' books by individuals and as collaborative efforts (see Patrick Cullinan and Judith Mason's *Selected Poems 1961 – 1991* (1992) [Cat.193], *Gif 1* (1993) and *Gif 2* (1994) [Cat.164]).

By far the majority of South African examples come from individual artists working in small editions or unique pieces and the exhibition aims at placing them amongst the international examples where they sit comfortably within established forms or speak loudly by virtue of their independence and differences.

This exhibition traces the development of the genre from the *livre d'artiste* and fine press book, through the varying forms of the artist's book (which here includes the book-object) to its possibilities and boundaries.⁷ It is hoped that through this exhibition, the genre will not only be recognised for the vibrant life that it possesses, but will encourage greater exploration of the book as a vehicle for further interrogation and exploration.

As the names of Buzz Spector, Keith Smith, Pamela Spitzmueller, Walter Hamaday, Heidi Kyle, Claire Van Vliet and Timothy Ely, to mention just a few book artists of international repute, are unknown to both the South African art and book fraternity, this exhibition aims to introduce them and their work to a wider audience and shed some light on just what an artist's book is not (if the defining of what an artist's book might be becomes too convoluted and uncertain).

By taking away the intimate and private relationship which a book shares with its reader and by removing the temporal aspect of that relationship - by placing the books under glass - Jack and I have attempted to problematise the issue of display and discourse. Being aware that this problem has been confronted by many curators of book exhibitions, we have attempted to incorporate the very nature of these difficulties into the curating of the display. Pages will, from day to day, be turned; photographs of alternative page views or bindings will accompany specific books. Where possible, multiple openings of a book and its binding will be displayed, while demonstrations by artists and curators will afford an opportunity to discuss and demonstrate a book in its entirety. By removing the viewer / reader from the intimacy of handling the books, we hope to encourage inquisitiveness and desire to learn more about the genre. A few artists' books will, however, be made especially for this exhibition with the express purpose of being handled by the public.

Finally then, this exhibition pays tribute to Jack Ginsberg, whose individuality, understanding of and passion for artists' books in all their possible permutations has, albeit for a short period here, been shared. Sincerest thanks go to Steven Sack, Teresa Wimberley, Hercules Human, Cheryl Cromie and Kathy Santiago of the Johannesburg Art Gallery without whose vision and tireless work, this exhibition would never have been realised. To the photographers at Beith and the advertising people at AMC, our thanks for generous donations of time, advertising space and photography. Finally, our thanks to the artists and collectors who graciously lent their works to complete the exhibition.

End Notes:

1. A (classic) text illustrated by an artist such as Pierre Bonnard's illustrations for Paul Verlain's *Parallèlement* (1900) or Matisse's for Stephane Mallamé's *Poésies* (1932) or, controversially, for James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1935).
2. A hand-set and highly crafted work such as Edward Burne-Jones and William Morris's *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, Now Newly Imprinted* (1896), often in limited edition.
3. A three-dimensional and often sculptural form functioning in the manner of a book such as Robert Rauschenberg's *Shades* (1964), or an existing book altered in some way by the artist.
4. Where book functioning, material, structure etc. has been interrogated and manipulated, such as Dieter Rot's *Daily Mirror* (1970).
5. Drucker, J. *The Century of Artists' Books*, (1995), p1.
6. Ibid, p9.
7. Compare, on this exhibition, Carol Jane Barton's *Tunnel Vision* (1988), a tunnel-fold book [Cat.13], and Clark Coolidge's *On The Slates* (1991) by the Flockophobic Press - a pair of black shoes with printed bankroll [Cat.50] - with David Stairs's unopenable spiral-bound book, *Boundless* (1983) [Cat.144].

Catalogue of South African Artists' Books

Curated by David M. Paton and Jack M. Ginsberg

164. Mark Attwood and various artists, The Artists' Press & FIG Gallery. *Gif 2*. 1994
165. Mark Attwood and Qgam (Dada) Coexae, Nxabe Eland, Bob (Enni) Coexae, Cgose Ncoxo, Qwa Mangana and Thamae Setshogo, The Artists' Press & the Kura Art Project. *Qauqava*. 1996
166. Walter Battiss, Betambeau Advanced Graphics. (Male) *Fook Book I*. 1973 [1975]. Collection: Dr. Phil du Plessis (a copy now in the JG Collection)
167. Belinda Blignaut, The Artists' Press. *Antibody*. 1993
168. Belinda Blignaut, The Artists' Press. *'I Never Heard of Uglification' Alice Ventured to Say*. 1994
169. Willem Hendrik Adriaan Boshoff. *Bangboek*. 1976. Collection: Gencor Ltd.
170. Willem Hendrik Adriaan Boshoff. *370 Day Project*.
171. Suzanne Bothma-Hale. *First Edition*. 1995. Collection: The artist
172. Suzanne Bothma-Hale. *Personal Edition*. 1994. Collection: The artist
173. Majak Bredell, Southern Cross Press. *Song of the Spinners / Lied van die Spinners*. 1996. Collection: The artist (a copy now in the JG Collection)
174. Peter Clarke. *Miscellania – A Collection of Stuff and Nonsense*. 1978. Collection: The artist
175. Wilma Cruise. *The Artist (Book 3)*. 1996. Collection: Ms. Rene Bub
176. Amanda Darling. *Happily Ever After*. 1983. Collection: The Katrine Harries Print Cabinet, UCT
177. Tracey Derrick. *Breathless*. 1993. Collection: The artist
178. Tracey Derrick. *Shilo and Cake*. 1993. Collection: The artist
179. Phil du Plessis, Wurm. *Hulde uit 1970 (Wurm 12)*. 1970. Collection: The artist (a version now in the JG Collection)
180. Paul Emmanuel. *Nomina Sunt Numina*. 1993. Collection: The artist
181. Sheila Flynn. *Seat of Wisdom*. 1994-5. Collection: Hunt Lascaris
182. Sheila Flynn. *Wo-Men: A Woman's Voice Reverberates*. 1994-5. Collection: The University of Johannesburg
183. Simon Ford. *Street Graphics*. 1983. Collection: The Katrine Harries Print Cabinet, UCT
184. Kendell Geers, Chalkham Hill Press. *Argot*. 1995
185. Jack Ginsberg and Rev. W. L. Watkinson. *The Transfigured Sackcloth*. 1993 [1893].
186. Flip Hattingh. *Female File*. 1995
187. Flip Hattingh, The Artists' Press. *Ark Print Cakes (Joanne of Ark)*. 1994
188. Philippa Hobbs. *176,418 Possible Synoptic Mirages*. 1981

189. Philippa Hobbs. *Paint Brush End*. 1981-2
190. Moshekwa Langa. *No Title (The Halcyon Days)*. 1995-6. Collection: The artist
191. Judith Mason, Ombondi Editions. *A Dante Bestiary*. 1989. Collection: Wilhelm Schmidt (a copy now in the JG Collection)
192. Judith Mason. *Handbook*. 1991. Collection: The artist (now in the JG Collection)
193. Judith Mason and Patrick Cullinan, The Artists' Press. *Selected Poems 1961-1991*. 1992.
194. Judith Mason. *A Very Brief Chaucer Reader*. 1993
195. Lionel Murcott. *Untitled*. 1992. Collection: The artist
196. Malcolm Payne, Axeage Private Press. *A Chill Down my Spine*. 1992. Collection: Pippa Skotnes
197. Malcolm Payne, Axeage Private Press. *Face Value: Old Heads in Modern Masks*. 1993.
Collection: Brenthurst Library (a copy now in the J G Collection)
198. Andrew Putter and Leonard Shapiro. *Dancing With the Machines*. 1992. Collection: The artists
199. Andrew Putter and Heather Robertson, Terror Firma. *Under the Sun & Over the Moon*. 1990.
Collection: Sue Clark
200. Andrew Putter. *War Secrets*. 1995. Collection: The artist
201. Pippa Skotnes and Jo Ractliffe (Eds.) and various artists, KHPC, UCT. *Mordant Methods*. 1990
202. John Roome. *Untitled*. 1995-6. Collection: The artist
203. Ulrich Schwanecke, Artist Proof Studio & The Artists' Press. *Dumbirds*. 1995
204. Russell Scott. *Lectern*. 1985
205. Russell Scott. *Milk, Milk*. 1991-2
206. Stephen Gray and Cecil Skotnes, Egon Guenther Press. *Baudelaire's Voyage*. 1975. John C. Gubbins Africana Library, University of the Witwatersrand
207. Cecil Skotnes and Herman Charles Bosman, Egon Guenther Press. *The Rooinek*. 1981
208. Pippa Skotnes (illustrations) and Stephen Watson (poems). *Cape Town Days*. 1988-9
209. Pippa Skotnes, Axeage Private Press. *Heaven's Things: Extracts from the story of the Day-Heart Star, told to Lucy Lloyd in 1873 by //Kabbo*. 1992. Collection: The artist (a trade edition now in the JG Collection)
210. Pippa Skotnes, Axeage Private Press. *Sound From the Thinking Strings*. 1991. Collection: The Brenthurst Library
211. Michele Sohn. *codex*. 1996. Collection: The public domain
212. Jenny Stadler. *Wild Thing*. 1994. Collection: Jonathan Stadler
213. Simon Stone. *16.9.90*. 1990.
214. Simon Stone. *Erotikos - 7.6.90*. 1990

- 215. Sonja Strafella. *In Honour of the Feather*. 1990
- 216. Sonja Strafella. *The Violinator*. 1991
- 217. Giulio P. Tambellini. *Nice Game Nasty Stuffing*. 1995
- 218. Giulio P. Tambellini. *The Journey (Scriddler Procession Book)*. 1987
- 219. Giulio P. Tambellini. Seps. *The Most you can Give*. 1992-3
- 220. Giulio P. Tambellini. *Shadow Traders*. 1995
- 221. Giulio P. Tambellini. *Book and Box*. 1990
- 222. Elizabeth Vels. *Last Supper Codex*. 1985-6
- 223. Elizabeth Vels. *Logos as Artefact. The Word Became Flesh*. 1993. Collection: The artist
- 224. Wendy Vincent and Olive Schreiner, Egon Guenther Press. *The Hunter*. 1979
- 225. Sue Williamson. *A Tale of Two Cradocks*. 1994. Collection: The artist

Address to the Opening of *Artists' Books in the Ginsberg Collection* at the Johannesburg Art Gallery: 25th August, 1996

Jack M. Ginsberg

Ladies and Gentlemen. I should like to welcome you all here this morning to what is really the launch of the book arts in South Africa. In recent years the book arts have made great headway particularly in Europe and America with islands of activity in Australia and Canada. It is now time South Africa joined the world in this respect as in so many others. The increasing popularity of the book arts is, I believe, largely due to its multifaceted nature which appeals to so many different disciplines.

Some of these are:

- Fine artists especially those working in graphic media but also those using drawing, water-colour and paint.
- Calligraphers and illustrators.
- The design and advertising communities who are often surprised at the innovation shown by book artists.
- The film community who are fascinated by the sequential or filmic nature of the book as a visual medium.
- Authors, poets and propagandists (or as they are sometimes called 'agents for social change') who are increasingly using the book arts for the publication of smaller (and perhaps less commercial) editions.
- Educators in literacy and the arts who have successfully used the book arts for their purposes.
- And lastly, and most importantly, the art collectors who get marvellous value collecting in this field.

To give you an example, with the hope of enticing the collectors among you, a book illustrated by Jim Dine with dozens of prints costs no more than a single Dine graphic. If any of you are feeling acquisitive, there are many South African artists out there making editioned books and awaiting your commissions. There are two new artists' books to be launched in the next few weeks. The marvellous new book from *Artists' Press* in Johannesburg (a copy of which is on exhibition today) and a new editioned water-colour book from Leigh Voight which has just been completed and was too late for our consideration for this show. Both are available at the shop.

Of the exhibition itself, I should like to say a few things:

Firstly: when you peruse the exhibition, some of you might be surprised at the broadly inclusive definition

of the book we have adopted. I would like to assure you that, by international standards, all the objects you see here today fall within the category of the book arts. On international exhibitions, I have seen books made from bean sprouts, kinetic objects and even performance pieces, so, although you might not think so, we are well within the parameters of the book arts.

Secondly: the book is normally a private sequential experience. Obviously, on an exhibition such as this, one has to compromise and make the difficult curatorial decision as to what aspect of a book to show:

- Should it be the cover or the colophon?
- Should it be the best double-page spread or the title page?
- Should it be an atypical but unusual feature?
- And with Artists' Books not in codex form there are often a myriad ways to display the object.

In some cases, where the decision was particularly difficult, we have given a second view of the book, as it were, by placing a photograph of another aspect next to the book itself.

Steven Sack and many others have commented on the surprise often encountered when opening an artist's book. He has suggested that I should show you an example. This is a small feminist book dealing with quilting. [Demonstrate the opening of a Heidi Kyle mechanism]. Now that the conjuring is over, to return to the exhibition.

All book exhibitions are by their nature installations. The space for this exhibition has been curated in the form of a book. We intend the viewer to read the exhibition by moving through labelled chapters of the space.

For example, the spine of the exhibition and this book installation (at the far end) shows books where the spine and gutter are integral to their artistic intention. As you near the end of the exhibition, we question the parameters of the book arts and the nature and possibilities of the artist's book. The wedge shaped positioning of the display cases (or pages) forces the viewer to open the book by moving through the exhibition. We have placed the South African books alongside the international works in their context and the South African labels have an orange surround for easy identification. It isn't difficult to see that South Africa is easily comparable with the best in the world. There are two interesting facts about this exhibition:

Firstly: we are told by Umbrella (an Artist's Book database in California) that (with exception of an exhibition at the Pompidou in Paris some years ago) this is probably the largest artist's book exhibition ever mounted.

Secondly: thanks to Michele Sohn and her company *Greymatter*, this exhibition will be available to anyone world-wide who has access to the Internet. The site address is available from the gallery.

I would like to thank those artists and collectors who have lent work for this exhibition. I would like to thank all the other people who made this show possible especially the dedicated staff of the JAG, and particularly

Hercules Human and Cheryl Cromie. All my family and friends who gave so much help and support during this project. Finally my thanks to my co-curator, David Paton, whose Masters thesis on South African artists' books is eagerly awaited, and which will, I hope, be quickly published. His work surrounds you here today.

During the run up to this exhibition, there have been several media interviews and, the one common question, inevitably, was: "Can you tell us 'what is an artist's book?'".

I hope this exhibition begins to answer that question.

Thank you

Address to the Opening of Artists' Books in the Ginsberg Collection at the Johannesburg Art Gallery: 25th August, 1996

Speaking Volumes: The Weight of Reading in the World

David Bunn (Professor & Head, Dept. of English, University of the
Western Cape)

This exhibition explores the book as subject and as object, as presence in the human world. Most of us, I think, hold dear the memory of a time when books were miraculous objects, shapes and colours glimpsed past the great bulk of reading a parent's body. But I have been trying to remember too when it was that I first realized that one cannot know a book by its cover. I think I can conjure it up for you: I am lying outside in the sun at my grandmother's house, with early afternoon Highveld light, and the second volume of her late Victorian Bible, the *Concise Household Encyclopaedia*. It is unpromising, bilious green, gilt titled, but inside I find 600 pages of text and lithographs on a myriad subjects: making calf's foot jellies for invalids; the modern apiary; the construction of ornamental summer houses. The book towers on my chest, leaving a mark on my thin sternum. In other ways, too, it insists itself upon me, forcing me to change my bodily orientation: there are great concertina folded pages with tinted illustrations of famous desserts; deeper inside, pockets appear, containing tissue paper veiled anatomy drawings where the secrets of human genital disposition are given only in cross section; and finally, there is a gorgeous, spreading display of the eighty most desired species of British cage birds, probably seventy of which would grasp and suffocate in a single South African afternoon.

What I am speaking about, here, is a self-consciousness of the physical aspects of reading that receives very little attention today; in the world of this extraordinary exhibition of artists' books, however, every aspect of this interaction is lovingly attended to: there are volumes that are round, painted and decorated, that unfold when a red ribbon is drawn; another requires you to hunt for 13 French folded pockets in which are cosseted 13 handmade wire and card puppets; still others position you like spectators before a Punch and Judy show, and some only give up their secrets reluctantly, when literally held and stretched so that latex lettering can be read. In each of these objects, the act of reading becomes a weighty attenuated process.

In the old world before the automatization of reading, books insisted themselves upon us not only because they were rarer (in the age of vellum, material had to be scraped with pumice stone and softened before painstaking hand illumination), and weightier (think of those triple-decker Dickens novels), but also because they played a rather different role in the reproduction of culture. In the beginning, few readers read, silently.

As late as the mid-Nineteenth century, reading at home was a frequently public and performative event, often centred on the family patriarch. Silent reading was often regarded as a female disorder, productive of melancholia or wild imaginings. In truth, though, it is in this silent absorption in the act of reading, that we see the outline of a newly modern subjectivity: the private sphere within the larger mass cultural domain.

Any history of readers will show that there is an intriguing tension between the book as an element of mass culture, and modern conceptions of privacy, inwardness, meditation. This tension has its correlative in the act of reading these mass produced objects. There is the quite physical experience of narrative: each text has a weight; as the story unfolds, we turn the pages, orient our bodies to the light, and sense the diminishing volume of the pages ahead. Thus for all texts there is an interesting relationship between the time of the reading experience, as the clock ticks softly, and the imaginary time of the story, and this is something that becomes an object of intense fascination with Artists' Books. Some, for instance, magnify and prolong the moment the narrative begins, the time of the opening of the book. Ronald King's famous *Mirror Book*, for example, has 'covers of bevelled glass mirrors and fifteen pages of silvered Mylar with bolts holding the spine'. You handle it with white gloves. In others, the act of opening is an act of display, as in Julie Chen's *Listening in* in which the book can be worn as a headdress in three variations. Still others actively resist opening altogether, like the *Boekenplank*, or prefer more elaborate processes of revealment like the unrolling of scrolls, fanning out, spiralling, spilling in infinity of gestures that celebrate the body's address to the word.

A fine collection such as this is suggestive about the relationship between privacy and public culture. Each of these objects is a collaboration that celebrates features of the bookmaking process. In every example, we find an aesthetic over-elaboration of the functional elements of the book: end papers are exotically coloured; there is fore-edge illustration; bindings appear in bewildering exaggeration, including metal stitching and tongue in slot connections; bell jar glass covers or magnifying cases substitute for slip-cases; and there is a remarkable range of fine handmade and heavyweight imported papers. Emphasis is therefore placed on the massive investment of individual labour in each book, in its uniqueness, its non-reproducibility. These works rely, in a word, on discovery, that old eighteenth century term for delight in the unexpected appearance of a new prospect, such as hidden inner objects like 'a paper sculpture of a double sided face in the centre of the book'. This play upon notions of the private and public is echoed on the opposition between surfaces and interiors: cases, boxes, bindings, in this genre, are both containing and revealing. A spectacular version of Brecht and Weil's *The Seven Deadly Sins of the Lower Middle Class* is cased in delightful petit bourgeois 'purple fur cloth'; other texts have satin pockets or extrusions, in dialectic of inner and outer spaces in which the book comes to represent a dialogue with the body.

Another way of putting it would be to say that many of these forms are highly fetishistic, in the psychoanalytical sense. That is, they mark the refusal to pass beyond an obsession with part-objects to larger

processes, to move from the relationship between binding and boards to the act of reading or printing as a form of mass mechanical reproduction. They tell of people who have been exquisitely wounded by some primal encounter with the book, and who have never recovered. I mean of course all of us.

And what of the collector? This is our first public view of his private obsession, a range of materials assembled with such brilliance and individual drive, that having Jack Ginsberg here is like watching an exotic crustacean at the edge of its undersea lair. In some senses, this isn't a collection; it's an exoskeleton. But the works have an important story to tell about local, the neighbourhood collective, the capillary, in the modification of public cultures. Some of the most famous artists featured here (Jim Dine for instance) have taken the occasion of the book to work in closely collaborative ways. Given this emphasis on the local, and on small collective endeavours, it is easy to see why Jack Ginsberg's collection has not, until now, been displayed in South Africa. Is it too simplistic to say that, until recently, the relationship of public to private sphere in South Africa necessarily excluded certain forms of artistic production? For good political reasons, in the past, the domain of the erotic as well as that of silent reading had been overwhelmed by the need to produce national political allegories. At the same time, we all know that there have been profoundly negative consequences to this engagement, leading to the proscription of certain forms of visual subject matter.

The Ginsberg Collection introduces us to a genre of artistic endeavour that is sometimes collaborative, sometimes anarchically self-referential. Its unveiling, today, is into an environment still quite ill equipped to receive it. Unlike other politicized environments such as Mexico, where conceptions of the national symbolic culture have gone hand in hand with an understanding of the book as icon and subject, here there is a dominant perception that mass illiteracy necessarily excludes that form of absorption. Thankfully, though, our understanding of literacy is changing now and it is clear to me that a tactile love of book forms is something everywhere present but powerfully repressed in South Africa. This is an exhibition that I believe would be greeted sympathetically by working class communities in rural South Africa, for whom the book is still a symbolically charged form, associated with forms of individual loss and passage.

This exhibition speaks about the inventiveness of its curators, Jack Ginsberg and David Paton, who have come up with ingenious ways of dramatizing our bodily address to these volumes, through their intriguing display methods. It is important to say that this show contains radical gestures, and to insist on the radical tradition that underpins attempts to think together notions of book form, printing, and artmaking. This, of course, was the domain of Britain's most radical Nineteenth Century thinker, William Blake:

Reader! lover of books lover of heaven

And of that God from whom all books are given,

.....

Even from the depths of hell his voice I hear,

Within the unfathomd caverns of my ear.

Therefore I print; nor vain my types shall be:

Heaven, Earth & Hell henceforth shall live in perfect harmony.

Blake's *Jerusalem* imagines a visionary universe in which printing and painting, labour and joy, are no longer sundered. This form of radical exchange between media, productive of new artistic heavens and earths, involves an exquisite sort of revenge by artists on literature: the artist's book explores the entire physical field of the text, and of textual illustration, but it does so often by interrupting the mass circulation of the book as language: it is as though volumes have been captured before moving away from their writers, becoming encrusted, fantastically embellished, non-linguistic, the realm of the hermit crab. In this moment, the book becomes a secret again, like the originary Word, full of iconographic power.

The Jack Ginsberg Collection is being seen for the first time in South Africa, in a climate now more willing to take it seriously. It is an exhibition that requires your full bodily attention and your delight, but it is also an exhibition that opens a new chapter in the history of printmaking in South Africa by showing the work of extraordinary local artists for whom the book has been a major obsession. The show will now also act as a massive archive of images and collaborative practices that will, for the next two months, be exerting an influence on Johannesburg artmaking, with ripples spreading out across the country. Workshops begun at this gallery yesterday are already serving to carry the example of the artist's book into practice in Soweto and Mamelodi. It will also serve to consolidate a history of book objects in South Africa and their unwritten past: I am moved to see my friend Phil du Plessis' outrageous 1970s public indecency, the cover of *Wurm*, in friendly company at last.

In the end, though, I believe that this event represents a peculiar breakthrough in the conception of what it means to manipulate the book into extraordinary forms. Some weeks ago Zackie Achmat, an old political friend and comrade, was sitting in a restaurant with my partner Jane Taylor. They were approached by someone who cried out in delight at seeing Zackie again for the first time in fifteen years after they had spent some very hard time in political detention together. Remarkably, this older man told of a little object he had kept with him since those days, as a sort of talisman. It was a concertina folded tiny volume, made of tissue paper on which was minutely inscribed chapters of Gramsci's *The Prison Notebooks*. There are many such poignant codices in homes throughout this country, and they are kept not because of their historical value, but also because of their miraculous book form. I had not imagined, five years ago, that the beautiful, dramatic, often privately commissioned objects we see about us now could be displayed with ease in a country that has done so much violence to the form of the book. I see now that I was wrong. Jack Ginsberg has kept alive and in trust, as it were, a major genre of artmaking; finally, in allowing the spectacularly encrusted shell of his private collection to be seen now, and here, he has revealed a connection between compulsive individual

labour and public culture that for many new artists and gallery visitors, speaks volumes.

I would like to congratulate the two curators, and I am delighted to declare this exhibition open, this page turned.

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Colophon

This is a special 2017 edition of the original 1996 catalogue of the exhibition *Artists' Books in the Ginsberg Collection: With some South African Books from Other Collections* which was held at the Johannesburg Art Gallery from 25th August to 27th October 1996. The original catalogue was produced by Jack Ginsberg using Microsoft Word version 6 and printed on a Hewlett Packard Laser Jet 4V. The types used were Univers, Comic Sans, Calisto, Times New Roman and Arial. The original catalogue can be found listed on WorldCat at http://www.worldcat.org/title/artists-books-in-the-ginsberg-collection-an-exhibitioien-at-the-johannesburg-art-gallery-from-25th-august-to-27th-october-1996-with-some-south-african-books-from-other-collections/oclc/38468532&referer=brief_results

and is housed in libraries in South Africa as well as Munich and Frankfurt/Main, Germany; Harvard, Yale, Columbia University, University of Vermont, Northwestern University, School of The Art Institute of Chicago, University of California, Santa Barbara, The National Museum of Women in the Arts, the Smithsonian Institution Libraries and the Library of Congress, USA.

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This special edition of the original catalogue is re-edited and includes new material gleaned from the exhibition's analogue archives and from the website http://www.theartistsbook.org.za/view.asp?pg=exhibitions&ex=ex1_001

in the form of the opening addresses of the exhibition by Jack M. Ginsberg and Prof. David Bunn and the layout of the exhibition as illustrated 'chapters'. This special edition also carries an image of the now extremely rare original poster advertising the exhibition. This special edition has been printed in collaboration with the exhibition *Booknesses: Artists' Books from the Jack Ginsberg Collection* held at the University of Johannesburg Art Gallery from 25th March to 5th May 2017 and its accompanying catalogue of the same title. The types used are Futura Std (Font Family: Light, Light Oblique, Book, Book Oblique, Heavy, Heavy Oblique) and printed by Jetline Printers in colour on 120gsm Munken Pure art.

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