

Challenges in Contemporary Mixed Media Collections: Storage and Preventative Conservation of South African Artists' Books at the Jack Ginsberg Centre for Book Arts.

by

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

MSocSci Tangible Heritage Conservation

in the

SCHOOL OF THE ARTS

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

Supervisor: Maggi Loubser

November 2022

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Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to honour Sydney Vos, my late father-in-law. You cared a lot about my development and my success when I first started out on this path. To be honest, until now, I had never met anyone who shared my passion for the arts to the same extent that you do. I know I wouldn't be sitting here writing this if it weren't for you and your encouragement. Sincerely, I miss you and love you.

Secondly, I express my gratitude to my husband, Gerwin Vos. I am incredibly grateful for your unwavering confidence in me and your support. I can always lean on you and find support from you; you are the ultimate cheerleader. Next, I would like to acknowledge my mother's contributions. You've gone out of your way to help me without question and inspire me to pursue my goals. Thirdly, I appreciate my daughters Amelie and Una. Your presence in our lives brightens our days, and you are the reason we keep going.

Finally, I'd like to express my gratitude to everyone who contributed their time, energy, and knowledge to assist me. Thanks to Ms. Maggi Loubser, my supervisor, who gave me the flexibility to investigate this topic and helped allay my fears. I would like to personally thank Jack Ginsberg and Rosalind Cleaver at the Jack Ginsberg Centre for Book Arts who let me take my time exploring the Centre and their collection, as well as the museum professionals who provided me with insightful feedback. My sincere thanks to you all.

This dissertation was supported and funded by the generous contributions of the Andrew W. Mellon Scholarship.

Summary

Title of dissertation: Challenges in Contemporary Mixed Media Collections: Storage and Preventative Conservation of South African Artists' Books at the Jack Ginsberg Centre for Book Arts.

Name of student: Loreal Vos

Supervisor: Maggi Loubser

Degree: M(Soc)(Sci) Tangible Heritage Conservation (School of the Arts)

The purpose of this study is to investigate some of the difficulties encountered by museums when dealing with mixed media/composite artworks in terms of both collection management and preventative conservation. When it comes to preserving mixed media artworks, conservators face a unique difficulty because there is no single, standard method for doing so. The potential conservation measures required for each material used contributes to this. Artists' books are the subject of this analysis; these are books that have been created or altered by an artist, either as a one-of-a-kind work or as part of an edition, and for which no other medium would adequately convey the artist's intentions. Therefore, artists' books can be made from a wide variety of media and materials. With the use of research and case studies from international museums that contain artist's book collections, this project aims to compile a proposed collection management and preventative conservation strategy for the artists' book collection at the Jack Ginsberg Centre for Book Arts. I evaluate the suitability of international museum practices for application in a South African context by comparing them to the Jack Ginsberg Centre for Book Arts' existing approach and provide suggestions for how the local system might be improved. So that the collection can be appreciated for many years to come, the specialised system aims to enhance storage management regarding preservation and preventative conservation measures. This is the first research project to examine the importance of proper preservation and storage for this South African artists' book collection.

KEY TERMS:

Artists' books, conservation, collection management, South African artists' books, mixed media artists' books.

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Introduction to the study

This study seeks to explore the challenges relating to the collection management and preventative conservation of mixed media/composite artworks in museum collections. Conservators face a particular challenge in the case of mixed media artworks, since there cannot be one defined approach in the storage, management, and display of such objects. This is due to the materials used and the potential conservation requirements needed for each material. Early examples of this can be seen in historical composite objects, which can be used as case studies for the future collection management of contemporary artworks that use mixed media in unique ways. According to Julian Stallabrass (2006:101), contemporary art is incomprehensibly complicated and varied. He states that the wide range of contemporary art styles, techniques, and subject matter is truly perplexing, and that painting, sculpture, and printmaking have been integrated with installation and 'new media'. Moreover, David Cottington (2005:43) states that art made today can be made from practically any material. Whereas, at the beginning of the 20th century, the materials that were used in art set it apart from non-art (Cottington 2005:43). According to Glenn Wharton (2007:163), contemporary art questions conservation's core beliefs. He states that conservators are particularly troubled by conceptual and other artworks that question notions of permanence and uses ephemeral mediums, as they are committed to extending the physical life of items in the face of unavoidable change.

This examination focuses on specific mixed media artworks known as artists' books. According to Estelle Liebenberg-Barkhuizen (2009: 66) (a South African book artist and conservator of works on paper), one cannot provide a universal definition of artists' books because of the wide range of styles and subjects covered, both domestically and internationally, and because of the inevitability of a postmodern inclination in such works. However, for the purpose of a broad definition, Liebenberg-Barkhuizen (2009: 66) explains that artist's books are books that have been created or altered by an artist, either as a one-of-a-kind work or as part of an edition, in which the concept of the work cannot be visualised and materialised in any other manner other than in book format. Content,

picture, binding, structure, and chronology all come together in an artist's book to form an interconnected object that can be exhibited either as a one-of-a-kind or limited edition (Liebenberg-Barkhuizen 2009: 66). Liebenberg-Barkhuizen (2009: 66) goes on to state that artworks with or without text are typically constructed into a unique book by an artist or by a group of artists, authors, and bookbinders so that it resembles or serves as a book. In light of this, many different kinds of media and materials are used in the production of artists' books; this is also the case with the books that Liebenberg-Barkhuizen has created. To explore the concepts of conserving and restoring artists' books, it is important to first understand what artists' books are and how they are defined. Sandra Salamony, Peter Thomas, and Donna Thomas (2012) describe artists' books as a form of artistic expression made by an artist in the same way that painting, drawing, and sculpture are a medium of artist expression. Therefore, the book created is considered an artwork. According to Salamony, Thomas and Thomas (2012: 6), the line between what is an artists' book and what is considered a sculpture is blurred and not easily defined. In many cases, they are both. Artists' books do not seem to have clearly defined genres like other mediums do and many unconventional materials are used in their creation (Salamony, Thomas and Thomas 2012: 7).

According to Anne Evenhaugen (2012), artists' books challenge the idea of what constitutes as a book, using the book format to create a work of art. Evenhaugen (2012) further states that "artists' books exist at the intersections of printmaking, photography, poetry, experimental narrative, visual arts, graphic design, and publishing."

The field of tangible heritage conservation in South Africa is currently new and unexplored, as is the preservation of South Africa's collection of artists' books. In 2019, the Jack Ginsberg Centre for Book Arts opened within the envelope of Wits Art Museum (WAM) at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) in Johannesburg. The collection comprises of about 3500 artists' books, with 400 of those by South African artists. Over forty years ago, Jack Ginsberg started collecting artists' books and his collection is now the largest of its kind in Africa and internationally renowned. As a visual artist that employs mixed media within my own work, I am interested in the methods and materials that contemporary artists use to make their art, especially in the cases where the use of

unconventional materials are used. Much like Mr. Ginsberg, my interest in artists' books stems from their amalgamation of literature and the arts as well as the complexity to define them. This ambiguity is extended to their preservation and storage. The place in which these objects are kept in museum spaces is complicated. Evenhaugen (2012) explains that books are meant to be touched and explored and asks the question of where artists' books belong: in traditional museum spaces or in libraries? She further emphasises that since they shouldn't merely be viewed behind glass, how would museum curators, conservators, and librarians manage these issues?

The intention of this study is to curate a suggested collection management and preventative conservation system for the artists' book collection at the Jack Ginsberg Centre for Book Arts using research and case studies from international museums. I compare various international methods in relation to what is currently being done at the Jack Ginsberg Centre for Book Arts to make recommendations towards possible improvements as well as consider whether the international museum methods are suitable in a South African context. This tailored system seeks to improve the storage management of the collection in relation to preservation and preventative conservation techniques so that the collection can be enjoyed for many years to come. This is the first study to focus on the preventative conservation and storage aspects of this South African artists' book collection.

- **Aims of the study:**

The aim of my study is to create a collection management and preventative conservation system for the artists' book collection at the Jack Ginsberg Centre for Book Arts by reviewing and comparing the collection management and preventative conservation strategies in international mixed media artists' book collections. To achieve my aim, my objectives are to conduct a review of texts explaining the collection management and conservation systems of selected international museum's artist book collections. I also endeavor to analyse sources relating to the conservation and storage of historical and contemporary mixed media artworks and mixed media artists' books. Lastly, I conducted visits to the Jack Ginsberg Centre for Books Arts and interviewed those involved with the

management of the artists' book collection in person, as well as conducted online interviews with individuals involved with the management of artists' book collections in various international museums and art centres.

- **Methodology:**

I employ qualitative research methods, in which I focus on critical and comparative analyses to collect my information. I carry out a critical literature survey of methods used to conserve and restore historical and contemporary mixed media artworks, as well as methods used to specifically conserve and restore artists' books. This allows me to identify the various conservation and collection methods of artists' books used by international museums so that I may compare these with those methods used at the Jack Ginsberg Centre for Book Arts. To analyse the collection management and storage/display methods at the Jack Ginsberg Centre for Book Arts, I conducted in person visits to the Centre and interviews with those working and involved with the collection to establish whether any conservation considerations have been taken with regards to the collection. I also conducted online interviews with museum professionals working with artists' book collections at various international museums and art centres that are similar in size and scope to the Jack Ginsberg Centre, as well as bigger, multi-faceted institutions to compare their approaches to collection management and conservation. The following centres/institutions were interviewed: Center for Book Arts (New York, U.S.A), School of the Art Institute of Chicago (Chicago, U.S.A), Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco (San Francisco, U.S.A), Metropolitan Museum of Art (MET) (New York, U.S.A), Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) (New York, U.S.A), Victoria and Albert Museum (V & A) (London, U.K).

There are significant gaps relating to the storage, conservation, and preservation of artists' books in general as well as no current information on these aspects specifically related to artists' books in South Africa. To obtain sufficient research, the study first focuses on historical and contemporary mixed media art, and then focuses on artists' books specifically. Literature focusing on museum strategies for collecting artists books and the challenges related to these collections is the starting point of my research in

relation to the preservation and conservation of international and South African artists' book collections.

- **Theoretical framework:**

I have identified three main fields of literature within which I undertake this study, starting with the use of mixed media and unconventional materials in art. This includes a review of case studies that explore conservation techniques of historical mixed media objects.

Secondly, I focus on conservation techniques of modern and contemporary art that employ the use of mixed media or unconventional materials.

Lastly, literature focusing specifically on artists' books that employ the use of mixed media and unconventional materials are considered, including texts that discuss the storage, display, conservation, and restoration of mixed media artists' books.

- **Structure of this dissertation:**

Each chapter will have their own literature review section in relation to the themes of the relevant chapter.

Chapter One includes an introduction of mixed media art and artists' books, discussing their history. The purpose of this chapter is to present the historical and social context of mixed media artworks and their connection/progression to artists' books. This explains why and how they are made to grasp the complexities of their storage, display, and care by the museums that collect them. Examples of mixed media artworks and artists' books are analysed.

Chapter Two provides an overview of the challenges in the collection management and preventative conservation of mixed media/composite artworks in international museum collections, focusing on artists' books. This chapter includes several texts written by various museum professionals, discussing several complex issues in the storage, conservation, and access in relation to mixed media art and specifically artists' books.

Chapter Three provides an overview of the interviews conducted with various museum professionals that seeks to ascertain the preventative conservation and collection management strategies used by specific international museums that house mixed media artists' books in their collection. Discussions of various mixed media artists' books and the specific strategies used for their storage and conservation are included as case studies. The second part of the chapter provides an overall analysis of the tangible heritage conservation climate in South Africa and how it relates to mixed media artworks/artists' books. This is applied to a discussion of the overall collection management/preventative conservation system at the Jack Ginsberg Centre for Book Arts, looking at specific storage areas and their storage systems. Based on the previous chapter, I analyse positive interventions already undertaken at the Jack Ginsberg Centre and provide discussions on various mixed media artists' books in their collection, focusing on the current specific strategies used for their storage. As such, this chapter reviews the content of the previous two chapters to provide comparisons of the data from the international museums/art centres in relation to the current systems in place at the Jack Ginsberg Centre for Book Arts. This chapter answers the question of which international strategies can realistically be considered and implemented for a South African context. This is followed by the conclusion to the study.

Chapter One: The history of mixed media art and the rise of artists' books

▪ Introduction

As mentioned in my introduction, artists' books refer to artworks that have taken the form of a book. In turn, these can refer to altered books, sculptures that take on the form of books, or pieces of art that use the narrative format of books. In the history of mixed media art, artists' books were quite commonly used as a method of responding to and making commentary on society. To explore the history of mixed media artists' books, I endeavour to examine the trajectory that modern and contemporary art have taken since their inception to decipher how artists' books came to be as well as why they appear the way they do in their current state. The focus of this chapter is to not only explore the innovative concepts present in modern and contemporary art, but also how these concepts are attributed to the various aesthetics found within the art and how they are achieved using mixed media and unconventional materials. Throughout history, there has been a myriad of art that stemmed from the roots of modern and contemporary art, as well as artists who experimented with all forms of media, materials, and technology.

The literature review for this chapter begins with the history of modern and contemporary art, with a focus on the use of mixed media and unconventional materials. Ultimately, I look at several texts to identify the lineage of artists' books in art history. As the history of artists' books has no linear trajectory and is broad, this section will explore the history of modern and contemporary art to examine how these concepts have shaped artists' books as we know them today. The remainder of the literature review will focus on the evolution of artists' books and will seek to explore its relationship with modern and contemporary art through different media such as photography, printed matter, industrial arts, and printmaking. For this study, I will explore artists' books in the early 20th century.

As an introduction to the second chapter, I include literature that explores the complexity of mixed media artworks from the perspective of the museums that collect these works, which is considered in more depth in the following chapter.

In his book *Modern Art: A Very Short Introduction* (2005), David Cottington educates the public by providing thoughts and facts about modern art as well as an explanation of its history and current importance. Cottington also explores the differences between modern and contemporary art and how postmodernism fits within this framework. In the introduction to the book, Cottington (2005: 6) begins by saying that in a bid against capitalism and towards the avant-garde and individualism of the artist, artists began investigations on the concepts of modernism by questioning the materials, norms, and skills of creative practice. Cottington (2005: 6) goes on to say that examples of this can be seen in the Cubist collages and sculptures created by Pablo Picasso from 1912 onwards in his career where he uses “newspaper and wallpaper, old tin cans, and other junk.” Paintings by Jackson Pollock created in the 1950s as part of the Abstract Expressionism movement also display unconventional materials and tools, such as throwing or dripping household enamel straight from the tin (Cottington 2005: 6). Cottington goes on to explore these concepts, exploring the path taken in the rise of the avant-garde. In his book, David Hopkins offers a fresh perspective on the contentious time in art when traditional types of art were challenged. Titled *Modern Art 1945 – 2000* (2000), it concentrates on the interaction between American and European art and upends preconceived notions on the provenance of some of the most avant-garde concepts in contemporary art. Significant artists like Pollock, Jasper Johns, Yves Klein, Andy Warhol, Louise Bourgeois, Cindy Sherman, and Damien Hirst, as well as the art world of the previous fifty years, are all explored. Additionally, significant themes like Pop Art, Minimalism, Conceptualism, Postmodernism, and the art of the 1990s are examined. In the introduction of the book, Hopkins (2000: 1) states that because of the aftermath of the Second World War, the artworks being examined are frequently complex, controversial, and difficult to understand. Due to this complexity, Hopkins (2000:1) says that one of his key goals is to preserve a perception of this time period’s underlying fluidity in art by highlighting the theoretical and critical disputes that gave it life, defined its

circumstances, and continue to give it significance. There are distinct overlaps in these two books, although the former deals with the origins of Modern Art more extensively and the latter focuses on the ripple effect of significant effects and their contribution to the aesthetic direction that Modern Art took to get to its current state. Thirdly, Julian Stallabrass offers a concise perspective on the broad and dynamic contemporary art world in his book titled *Contemporary Art: A Very Short Introduction* (2006). He examines how independent countries and areas, like China, have risen to amazing notoriety and overturned the traditional Euro-American stranglehold on aesthetics by examining the remarkable globalisation of art from the 1990s until now. Stallabrass addresses the reinventing of artists as brands, demonstrating how contemporary art has grown more entwined with fashion and the market for luxury products as artists have mastered the technique of marketing their work. To further explore the shift from modern to contemporary art, which often seem interchangeable, I include *The Historical Dictionary of Contemporary Art* (2017) by Ann Lee Morgan, which illuminates important artists, styles, and movements of the past 70 years. Finally, I include the ideas and concepts of artmaking from John A. Parks, who, as an artist himself, wrote *Universal Principles of Art: 100 Key Concepts for Understanding, Analyzing, and Practicing Art* (2014). Parks examines concepts and processes in artmaking, covering topics like the concept of beauty, glazing techniques, geometric compositional ideas, and minimalist philosophy. I include his explanations throughout the first section to clarify key concepts based on either the way art is made or the historical context thereof. The specifics of collage, which as seen as a precursor to mixed media artists' books is explored in more depth in the book written by Rona Cran titled *Collage in Twentieth-Century Art, Literature and Culture: Joseph Cornell, William Burroughs, Frank O'Hara, and Bob Dylan* (2014). Cran's book examines the function that collage plays in Joseph Cornell's work while highlighting the variety of twentieth-century collage approaches. Collage was a crucial creative trigger for him, and he used it passionately, creatively, and effectively. Considering he couldn't paint or draw but was certain he was an artist, Cornell used collage to enter the art world and demonstrate what he could do with the appropriate medium. Cran demonstrates throughout her book that defining collage rigidly as one thing or another significantly restricts our comprehension of the work of the artists and writers who came to employ it

in unconventional ways. The shift from Cornell's work to artists' books is explored by Ken D. Allan in his paper titled *Ed Ruscha, Pop Art, and Spectatorship in 1960s Los Angeles* (2010). Allan explores how people often see Ed Ruscha's paintings and photographic artist's books as billboards and movie screens or as views of Los Angeles seen through a car window. By looking at how the viewer's interaction with his work as an object shows the material and spatial complexity of his work, Allan shows how we can see the connection between Ruscha's work and important ways of looking at art from the 1960s. Ruscha responded to the space of Los Angeles by playing around with size and scale in his work. This gives the viewer a new way of looking at the city itself, through the lens of an artist's book. The leap from Ruscha's work to a better understanding of artists' books as an art movement is then explored in Johanna Drucker's book titled *The Century of Artists' Books* (2004). Drucker's book is the first comprehensive examination of 20th-century artists' books and places artists' books in the context of visual art movements from Russian Futurism and Surrealism to Fluxus, Conceptual Art, and Postmodernism. Through Drucker's examination of over 200 books for their structure, shape, and conceptualization, she raises crucial and analytical questions to present a historical perspective.

- **The rise of the avant-garde and the first use of alternate media**

According to Cottington (2005: 18), by the start of the First World War, Paris had produced a counterculture within a generation, whose energy and frenetic networking were reflected in the numerous literary and artistic "isms" it gave rise to. These "isms", as Cottington (2005: 18) refers to them, served as stylistic hallmarks that were accepted by this developing "avant-garde," despite being ignored and mocked by the mainstream. Many self-described avant-garde artists, cut off from the mainstream and its financial rewards, channelled their idealistic energy into exploration with their chosen medium and its potential new methods and interpretations, as well as into a conviction that art had a

public role to play and could be elevated from the status of superficial and subjective amusement that it had attained in the Salons¹ (Cottington 2005: 18).

Cottington (2005: 19) states that the avant-garde established the fundamental characteristics of modern art and its relationship to the public in its early years. The rise of the avant-garde was not limited to Paris, with communities of anti-academic artists suddenly appearing in every major city across Europe, and to a lesser extent in the USA, in the years prior to 1914 (Cottington 2005: 19). Cottington (2005: 19) explains that they were a by-product of social and cultural "modernization" in the developed capitalist nations of the Western hemisphere. According to Cottington (2005: 20), a 1974 book claims that the exhibitions of modern art presented in every significant city from New York to Moscow between 1900 and 1916 covered two volumes. Of these art movements that developed during this time, the Dada movement became one of the most influential, especially in terms of artists' books and new media.

According to Parks (2014: 58), Dada paved the way for performance art, photomontage, multimedia events, ready-mades, and assemblage. Over the next few years, the movement advertised itself through publications and manifestos, allowing it to grow across Europe and into the United States (Parks 2014: 58). Artists of the international Dada movement (the meaning of the name is unknown, but it may be an imitation of a baby's babble) attempted to parody, shock, or demonise the bourgeois establishment (Cottington 2005: 21). Parks (2014: 58) more specifically describes the scene in which the Dada movement was born: in 1916, a group of artists working in Zurich, Switzerland, met in and around the Café Voltaire to advocate an art of rejection and extreme behaviour, utilising poetry, drama, painting, and sculpture to oppose the entrenched bourgeois principles that had drove Europe into World War I. Parks (2014: 58) goes on to explain that the movement embraced the irrational and nonsensical in an exuberant and highly

¹ According to Cottington (2005:17), Napoleon III, the Emperor of France, acknowledged a social and aesthetic development that had already begun when he established the "alternative" Salon of rejected artworks, known as the "Salon des Refusés," in Paris in 1863: the steadily rising number of artists seeking to establish careers in his capital. Cottington (2005:17) further states that the increasing number of artists desiring to build a career in his city and needing to show at the annual Salons to that purpose, were being rejected due to the proliferation of aesthetic interests that they were displaying in their works which failed to impress the Salon jurors.

experimental form, led by poet Tristan Tzara and artists Hugo Ball, Hannah Höch, Francis Picabia, and others.

Cottington (2005: 21) goes on to explain that other artists in Berlin also collaborated with the political Left to create artwork, comics, and propaganda that strongly parodied German society after 1918. No less controversial was Marcel Duchamp's campaign in New York, where he nominated several "ready-mades" as works of art, challenging the validity of art, its relationship to language, and the function of the artist (Cottington 2005: 21). According to Hopkins (2000: 38), as early as 1912, Duchamp had forsaken work that was just aesthetic, or what he called "retinal" art. Hopkins (2000: 38) goes on to say that for Duchamp, a new option had presented itself by the conceptual difficulty that the ready-mades presented. The *Bottlerack*, was the first of these to be "built" in Paris in 1914, followed by, among other things, a coat rack that was fastened to the floor called *Trébuchet (Trap)* (Figure 1) (Cottington 2005: 21). Cottington (2005: 21) mentions that the most famous of his ready-mades is a urinal titled *The Fountain* which was entered and subsequently rejected by the jury of an avant-garde art exhibition in New York.

By the middle of the 1920s, other art movements took on certain aspects of these early ideals. For example, Cottington (2005: 21) explains that the Dadaists' antisocial gestures served as the foundation for the surrealist movement, which was created in Paris by the poet and essayist André Breton. These ideals directly questioned the oppressive "rationality" of bourgeois society. These initiatives all helped to "shape an identity for the avant-garde artist as culturally independent, politically as well as aesthetically radical, and socially rebellious" (Cottington 2005: 23).

Many avant-garde artists did assume the role of opposition to capitalist culture and its devices from the productivists, Dadaists, surrealists, and their generation during the middle years of the last century within the various avant-garde communities (Cottington 2005: 25). According to Cottington (2005: 25), they developed ways to combat the institutionalisation of their art by major museums (for example, the Museum of Modern Art in New York, U.S.A), as well as its view as a gallery-based commodity. This was also due to the opposition of their art being categorised as either "high" art, which is collected

by galleries or “low” art, which seems to be more popular and has commercial value (Cottington 2005: 25). For instance, in the middle of the 1950s in the United States, Cottington (2005: 25) describes how Robert Rauschenberg and others parodied both excessive consumerism and "high" art by utilising strange materials like a stuffed goat and rubber tyres in "assemblages" that continued Picasso's small sculptures composed of trash elements mentioned in the introduction. These will be further discussed later in the chapter.

Thereafter, Abstract Expressionism came to the fore. Cottington (2005: 32) states that the first fully developed and commercial creative movement to emerge from the avant-garde was Abstract Expressionism. Morgan (2017: 7) agrees, stating that when Abstract Expressionism and its subsets became increasingly popular, a growing number of collectors turned their attention to contemporary art. Peggy Guggenheim established her Art of This Century gallery on 57th Street in 1942, showing both the work of emerging New York painters as well as European artists (Cottington 2005: 32). According to Cottington (2005: 32), most of the founders of Abstract Expressionism had launched their careers due to this gallery's influence and by the time Art of This Century closed in 1947, other contemporary galleries had followed in its footsteps. This was also partly because, according to Cottington (2005: 32), the knowledgeable, aspirational journalists (and occasionally artists) reviewed exhibitions, asserted out positions, and influenced the tastes of their diverse audiences. The most famous of these critics was Clement Greenberg and Harold Rosenberg, becoming just as well-known, if not more, than the artists they wrote about (Cottington 2005: 32). As a result, these artworks became sought after by the public.

The 1960s saw the emergence of both commercially successful art movements (Pop Art), and art that was deemed greatly praised and lauded, but was difficult to sell (conceptual art and Minimalism) (Cottington 2005: 33). According to Cottington (2005: 33), the latter wrote a lot about their work, and many were established artists with university degrees. However, due to the difficulty of selling these artworks, mainstream art media and processes returned in the 1980s, as artists sought to make a living from selling their art (Cottington 2005: 34). In contrast, Morgan (2017: 5) states that just before the period of

commercialism that was invoked the decade after, the 1970s saw many artists urged to reconsider decorative methods, craft skills, and personal expression due to the political and social movements in the 1960s that changed their way of thinking. Morgan (2017: 5) goes on to explain that the outcomes included bodily meanings, personal story histories, and a disregard for artistic constraints. Morgan (2017: 5) explains that at the same time, artists' criticism of institutions and economic pressures drove them to embrace dematerialised or transitory approaches, such as conceptual art, installation art, and performance art.

Currently, painting is the most saleable form of art, regardless of whether it is in the spotlight of art discourse (Stallabrass 2006: 16). Much like other industries, Stallabrass (2006:16) states that this is due to art still being manufactured and sold to individuals and corporations, with varying degrees of success depending on the health of the economy. Stallabrass (2006: 16) goes on to say that drawing, printmaking, artists' books, and a variety of other practices fall under this category. However, the focus here is on what makes headlines and circulates internationally at the pinnacles of the cosmopolitan art world (Stallabrass 2006: 16).

Cottingham (2005: 43) states that throughout the centuries, no other medium or technique, regardless of the level of talent necessary or the level of inventiveness of the pursuit, held as much cultural weight or as much authority to express the human condition visually as oil on canvas, clay or plaster, bronze, and marble. Cottingham (2005: 43) goes on to say that it's difficult to imagine a material that couldn't, or hasn't, been utilized to create modern art of some sort in current times. Examples include blood (Marc Quinn, *Self 1991*) (Figure 2), chocolate (Anya Gallaccio), cigarettes (Sarah Lucas) (Figure 3), office rubbish (Tomoko Takahashi), and paintings that incorporate elephant dung (Chris Ofili) (Figure 4) (Cottingham 2005: 43). Parks (2014: 114) states that the adoption of mixed media in modern Western art is one of its distinguishing characteristics. Artists have always worked in one media at a time, but a new thirst for experimentation emerged in the mid-nineteenth century (Parks 2014: 114). This approach, according to Parks (2014: 114), broadened in the twentieth century. Picasso, Braque, and Paul Klee frequently used pen and ink, watercolour, collage, and oil in the same work (Parks 2014: 114). Several Pop artists, like

Robert Rauschenberg and Andy Warhol, blended silkscreen prints with acrylic paint later in the century (Parks 2014: 114). Parks (2014: 114) explains that the method of integrating multiple traditional mediums in the same work is referred to as "mixed media."



Figure 1: Marcel Duchamp, *Trébuchet (Trap)*, 1917. Metal and wood, 19 x 100 x 13 cm. Migeat, P.



Figure 2: Marc Quinn, *Self 1991*, 1991. Blood (artist's), stainless steel, Perspex and refrigeration equipment, 208 x 63 x 63 cm.



Figure 3: Sarah Lucas, *Cigarette Tits (Idealized Smokers Chest II)*, 1999. Chair, balls, cigarettes, and bra, 80 x 48 x 52 cm.

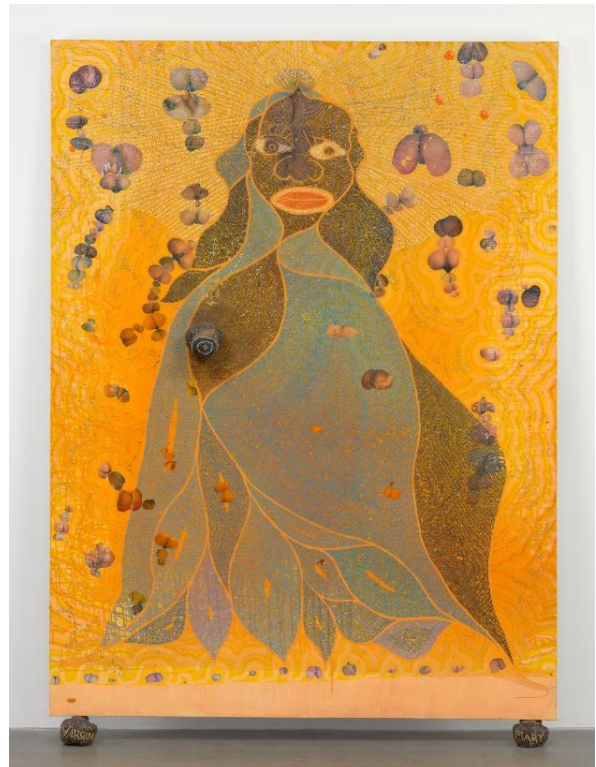


Figure 4: Chris Ofili, *The Holy Virgin Mary*, 1996. Acrylic, oil, polyester resin, paper collage, glitter, map pins, and elephant dung on canvas, 243.8 x 182.8 cm.

Parks (2014: 114) further states that to prevent using materials that will not work well together over time, some technical caution is required. The temptation to use ephemeral collage materials, such as printed matter on low-quality paper, can lead to deterioration and, eventually, disintegration of the piece (Parks 2014: 114).

Cottingham (2005: 44) muses whether the nature of the medium is no longer a criterion of the quality, or potential for depth, of a work of art, much alone of its position as such, or does art made currently no longer have any claim to that privilege because it requires no specific materials? These questions make me ponder whether these aspects are also implied within the case of the conservation of these mixed media modern artworks, which will be discussed later. Stallabrass (2006: 101) agrees, stating that contemporary art is incomprehensibly complicated and varied and that the wide range of contemporary art styles, techniques, and subject matter is truly perplexing. Stallabrass (2006: 101) goes on to state that painting, sculpture, and printmaking have been integrated with installation and 'new media', as mentioned by Cottingham.

Artists used previously non-art media to disrupt categorisation, to break free from, or surpass, what appeared for them to be meaningless limits of an antiquated cultural paradigm, or to bring the obscure perspective of visual experimentation to bear on modern media (Cottingham 2005: 55). Photography was one of the first new visual mediums that was initially studied in these ways (Cottingham 2005: 56). According to Cottingham (2005: 56), it was in fact, since its creation in the 1830s, been in dialogue with painting. Cottingham (2005: 56) goes on to explain that this interaction between the two media was vital for some artists, such as Duchamp, the surrealists, 1920s "new objectivity" painters, and painters of portraits and the figure (e. g. Francis Bacon). In general, the tools and techniques of photography were co-opted for painting rather than paving a route beyond it, with painting being the main objective in its use (Cottingham 2005: 56). The use of photomontage and collage officially disrupted this relationship. Cottingham (2005: 56) introduces two individuals as forerunners: Man Ray, an American artist closely associated with the surrealist movement in Paris, and László Moholy-Nagy, a Hungarian sculptor and filmmaker who taught at the Bauhaus in Germany. Both these artists transferred the aesthetics of abstract painting into photography and experimenting

with the non-representational possibilities of photographic images (Figure 5 and Figure 6) (Cottington 2005: 56). According to Cottington (2005: 56), they eventually did away with cameras and instead created images directly on light-sensitive paper by exposing a variety of objects placed on it to light². Cottington (2005: 56) states that with the enormous growth of this medium in magazines, television, and advertising starting in the 1950s, the attraction of painters to the widely disseminated photographic image expanded swiftly, and the practice of painting has been dramatically enhanced via the consequent interaction with its techniques.



Figure 5: Man Ray, *Untitled (plate 3)* from the album *Champs Délicieux*, 1922. Gelatin silver print after rayograph, 22.2 x 17.5 cm.

² Such "photograms" or "rayograms" as Ray referred to them, opened an entire realm of exploration that was tapped into by several imitators over the course of the next decades (Cottington 2005: 56).

Figure 6: László Moholy-Nagy, *fgm_427*, 1940. Gelatin silver photogram, dimensions unknown.

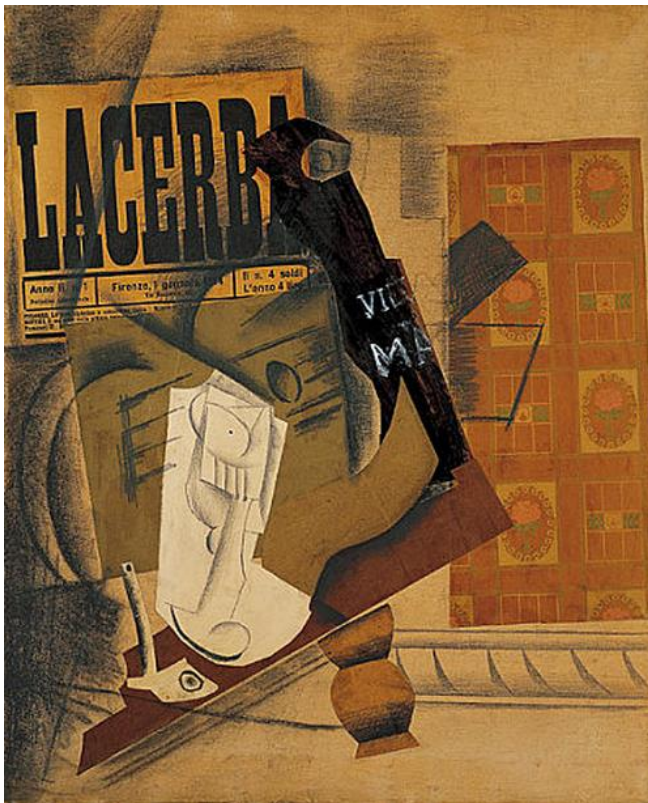


Figure 7: Pablo Picasso, *Pipe, Glass, Bottle of Vieux Marc* (*Pipe, verre, bouteille de Vieux Marc*), 1914. Block-printed, white-laid, wove, and wood pulp paper, newspaper, charcoal, India ink, printer's ink, graphite, and gouache on fine linen unprimed canvas, 73.2 x 59.4 cm.

According to Parks (2014: 36), both Picasso and Braque used newspaper text and other found items in their Cubist works. Kurt Schwitters, a German artist, transformed it into a lyrical form by incorporating collected ephemera into finely crafted compositions (Parks 2014: 36). Parks (2014: 36) further explains that collage was also a favourite of the Surrealists, and it featured prominently in the work of American Surrealist Joseph Cornell. Picasso's invention of "collage"³, according to Cottington (2005: 57), was the most drastic study of non-art media and the most impactful in the precedent it set. The term "collage" as it is now known, refers to Picasso's use of discarded materials such as packaging, wallpaper, and newspaper slivers in his two- and three-dimensional (known as assemblages) artworks (Figure 7) (Cottington 2005: 57). To clarify, Morgan (2017: 35) explains that assemblage is a broad term that refers to works of art that have been assembled entirely or partially from pre-existing or "found" materials and that they are known as collages when they are two-dimensional. According to Morgan (2017: 35), since the early twentieth century, assemblage has had a resurgence in appeal. It was especially important in the mid-century when artists looked for new methods to reengage with everyday life while moving away from absolute abstraction (Morgan 2017: 35).

Cottington (2005: 61) states that from 1914 on, artists investigated the interplay between painting and printed material because of the reclamation of waste materials for creative experimentation. According to Hopkins (2000: 47), one of the few Americans to have creatively engaged with surrealism before to the war was Cornell. Cornell had systematically built miniature habitats in boxes throughout the years, beginning in the

³ To better understand the process, Parks (2014: 36) explains that collage is the process of creating images from different pieces, most typically printed matter, or photographs. As mentioned in the next statement by Morgan, Parks (2014: 36) discusses the process of assemblage in sculptural objects, where three-dimensional pieces are collected and incorporated: artists choose their source material to achieve the desired scale, colour, texture, and substance and those collaged things can be blended with traditional art-making media as well. According to Parks (2014: 36), collage was employed in ancient Chinese art in some forms, and probably to some extent in mediaeval art and Victorian interior design as well. However, collage did not become popular until the onset of modernism at the turn of the twentieth century (Parks 2014: 36). Cran (2014: 11) agrees, stating that collage was a central principle of modernist art, although while its original development is commonly attributed to Picasso and Braque in 1912, primordial collage processes first appeared in China around 200 BC, contemporaneous with the invention of paper.

1930s (Figure 8 and Figure 9) (Hopkins 2000: 47). These miniature spaces were rife with analogies from French Symbolist poetry to Hollywood film (Hopkins 2000: 47). With his career spanning from the 1930s until the 1970s, his work was a part of many art movements, from Surrealism to Pop Art⁴. Collage and assemblage thus became a tool for destroying or moving away from the limitations of the picture frame (Cottingham 2005: 62). Hopkins (2000: 47) states that Cornell's work inspired other artists with his "poetics of confinement". Indeed, one can see similarities of his aesthetic within contemporary artists' books which include various boxed components, which is confirmed by Drucker later in the chapter.

- **The influence of collage in the trajectory of artists' books**

Collage was welcomed, expanded upon, and altered by a variety of artists, writers, and musicians, whose work assisted in tearing down the boundaries between their respective professions, as evidenced by the multitude of collage works⁵ (Cran 2014: 1). Cran (2014: 2) states that the act of gluing or pasting is almost always mentioned in dictionary definitions of collage, but little else is generally hinted at. However, Cran (2014: 2-3) explains that as Marjorie Perloff points out, "pasting is just the beginning of collage." Cran (2014: 2-3) goes on to say that the Surrealist author Louis Aragon noted that "glue is only one of the characteristics" of collage in *La peinture au défi*, the preface to a catalogue for an exhibition of collages at the Galerie Goemans in Paris, March 1930 (quoted above), and in fact, as the brilliant collage artist Max Ernst was also at pains to assert, glue alone does not make a collage.

⁴ Pop artist Eduardo Paolozzi first made use of collage in the early 1950s with a series of collages entitled *Bunk*. Paolozzi did not consider these to be artworks at first, merely using them as inspiration for screen prints. Later, the well-known collage titled *What Is It That Makes Today's Homes So Different, So Appealing?* (1956) by pop artist Richard Hamilton was created (Hopkins 2000: 96 – 100).

⁵ As mentioned previously, Cran (2014: 1) agrees that although Picasso and Braque are credited with inventing collage, the poet Guillaume Apollinaire is accountable for its name, which stems from the French verb *coller*, which means "to paste." Cran (2014: 1) goes on to explain that collage has therefore developed since its inception in the twentieth century as a transformational technique with powerful poetic affinities, a broad partnership that by itself emphasises its non-exclusiveness.



Figure 8: Joseph Cornell, *Untitled (Fortune-Telling Parrot for Carmen Miranda)*, 1939. Glass-paned wooden box with brass handles, taxidermy parrot, music box parts, dried and varnished leaves, mirror, cardboard, colored and printed papers, wooden branch, metallic stickers, wood, paint, and string, 40.8 x 22.2 x 17 cm.



Figure 9: Joseph Cornell, *Untitled (Hotel Beau-Séjour)*, 1954. Wood box with glass and drawer containing branch driftwood, mirror, metal ring, rod, cork ball, and printed papers, 45.1 x 31.1 x 11.4 cm.

For instance, the critic Daniel Belgrad's full, sweeping description of collage as "the combined intellectual, emotional, and physical engagement of the body-mind with its environment" or the Futurist artist Carlo Carrà's concept of the practice as an "intuitive self-definition of the artist among objects" are markedly different from the correct but crude cut-and-paste definition that the dictionaries offer (Cran 2014: 3). Cran (2014: 3) states that it is essential to tackle this area and thoroughly discuss the history, theory, and practice to comprehend the significance of collage in the twentieth century on both sides of the Atlantic and across disciplines as well as its connection to the work of Joseph Cornell and other mixed media artworks such as artists' books. Cornell's work is that of a three-dimensional nature, which is why the connection to artists' books, especially the sculptural variety of the genre, is made. According to Cran (2014: 3), collage is about putting string and detritus fragments to paper, but it also involves developing a mental and emotional engagement with a specific visual context. The primary distinction between these two meanings is that the first is focused with technique and the practical process of constructing a collage, whereas the other is more explicitly engaged with the less clearly delineated concept of collage (Cran 2014: 3). Moreover, Cran (2014: 4) states that collage is about engagement and integrating concepts in dialogue with each other. Its emergence in the twentieth century resulted in the dismantling of previous boundaries between language and art (Cran 2014: 3). This connection with language and narrative is another aspect that connects collage with the book. Cran (2014: 4) agrees, stating that collage evolved as a form of multicultural communication, allowing a variety of possible linkages between images and words by integrating symbols that more closely represents tangible things into art and literature. Given how easily it crosses disciplines, the derivation of its term is deceptively easy, if not debatable (Cran 2014: 4). But how did the types of collage used by Cornell, and later in artists' books by other artists, come to be?

Exploring the role that collage takes in the evolution of artists' books, Cran (2014: 11) states that collage was utilised in the twelfth-century Japanese calligraphic poems, in which poets began writing on ripped and pasted coloured paper, as well as in the work of the thirteenth-century Persian bookbinders, whose intricate leatherwork included cut motifs and beautifully stitched expanses of goatskin. Cran (2014: 11) gives more

fascinating examples, explaining that it can also be seen in sixteenth-century paper-cutting and heraldic coats of arms, in Mexican clothing embellished with feathers brought from the New World by explorers, in straw and corn kernel mosaics created by European captives in the seventeenth century, in religious butterfly-wing collages created by European nuns in the eighteenth century, in early Valentine's cards created at around the same time, and in religious folk art from central Europe and Russia where icons of saints were decorated with gemstones and embroidered motifs. The transformation of handmade elements to those of commercial mediums came about with the rise of the mass-produced printing methods. Cran (2014: 11) denotes the introduction of mass mechanical production and print as well as the result of progressively commercialised newspapers, photographs, advertisements, and postage stamps during the nineteenth century as allowing scrapbooking to emerge as a popular trend while concurrently producing this early stage of collage practice obsolete. Collage-making was primarily a common, if ordinary, leisure pastime for women in upper-middle class households in Europe and America during the nineteenth century, but it started to have more and more relevance in other contexts (Cran 2014: 12). As such, Cran (2014: 14) observes that collage was primarily a useful method of making something attractive, intriguing, or beneficial to view or engage with for Japanese calligraphers, Persian bookbinders, and nineteenth-century educators, but for Picasso and Braque, and the artists and writers who later evolved and transformed it, it was a method of thwarting existing methods for creating art.

As mentioned previously, and now in the specific context of collage, Cran (2014: 14) states that collage evolved from the use of ticket stubs and scraps of rope in the paintings of renowned artists to include such varied works as the snipped texts of William Burroughs, and the three-dimensional assemblages of Rauschenberg. Collage's twentieth-century iteration was about meaningful intersections and juxtapositions, dislodging, interrupting, and dismantling, but also suggesting the potential for conversation and integration between disparate parts (Cran 2014: 14). According to Cran (2014: 14), the method entered the realm of professional art as a reaction to several

representational crises, with the early Cubist collages presenting a counter to the collapsing illusionism of perspective in traditional art.

Surrealism was the art movement with which collage was, and has remained, most intimately associated by the time collage, in its twentieth-century expression, entered America, if only because the Surrealists utilised it more flamboyantly and divisively than other movements (Cran 2014: 20-21). The Surrealists, according to Cran (2014: 21) took great pleasure in putting seemingly unconnected things together in a way that was compatible with Freudian ideas about free association, dreams, visions, and the unconscious, and the emergence of psychoanalysis⁶. Cran (2014: 22) goes on to describe how Max Ernst first dabbled with picture poetry and frottage, in which he covered items with thin paper and lightly brushed over them. Hybrid genres were quickly created, profited from, or extended by the movement (Cran 2014: 22). According to Cran (2014: 22), these included the visual poetry, the manifesto, the artist's book, and the act of collaboration. For example, Cran (2014: 22) relates that the fluidity of Ernst's collage novels converted technical manuals and Victorian and Edwardian penny dreadfuls into eerie and unsettling collections of his own inner demons.

The backdrop of these extended collage experiments, New York City, served as a unifying element (Cran 2014: 29). According to Cran (2014: 29), collage's foundational elements, which have their roots in the discarded, debris, fragments of ripped paper, found objects, and subversive advertising, were widely prevalent in New York's metropolitan mass culture at the time. Cran (2014: 42) goes on to say that by the time Cornell discovered collage in a Madison Avenue art gallery's back room in 1931, it had already established itself as a dominant artistic style and was actively propagating the concept that an artist should not only be a painter but also a storyteller, architect, and thinker. Collage also promoted the experiential practises of art creation above and beyond conventional assessments of painterly expertise and completed works (Cran 2014: 42). Cran (2014: 43) explains that collage fostered exploration and the notion of limitless

⁶ Cran (2014: 22) describes the works of André Masson, who saw the forms of animals and birds appear in his line-drawn abstractions, that established the Surrealists' technique of spontaneous writing and automatic drawing. Cran (2014: 22) goes on to say that he also started using materials directly gathered from the natural world, such as feathers, into his work.

potential, from the angular vocabulary of Cubist painting to the frantic vortexes of the Futurists and the alluring, fetishist imaginary worlds of Surrealism.

Cran (2014: 52) describes the rise of collage and its visibility as an artform among the Surrealists in New York through the introduction of Julien Levy, who was a supporter and friend of Duchamp and Ray. Cran (2014: 52) explains that Levy established an art gallery at 602 Madison Avenue in November 1931, thus introducing French Surrealism to New York by Levy's gallery. For the following seventeen years, the Julien Levy Gallery served as a rotating exhibit space for European and Surrealist art, featuring contributions from and frequently personal appearances by Max Ernst, Man Ray, Salvador Dali, Marcel Duchamp, Arshile Gorky, Yves Tanguy, and, of course, Joseph Cornell (Cran 2014: 52). However, Cran (2014: 53) goes on to state that it wasn't until Cornell entered Levy's gallery and discovered Ernst's collage novel *La femme 100 têtes* (1929) that he was able to experience the remarkable quality of Surrealist collage directly in all its frightening hermeticism.

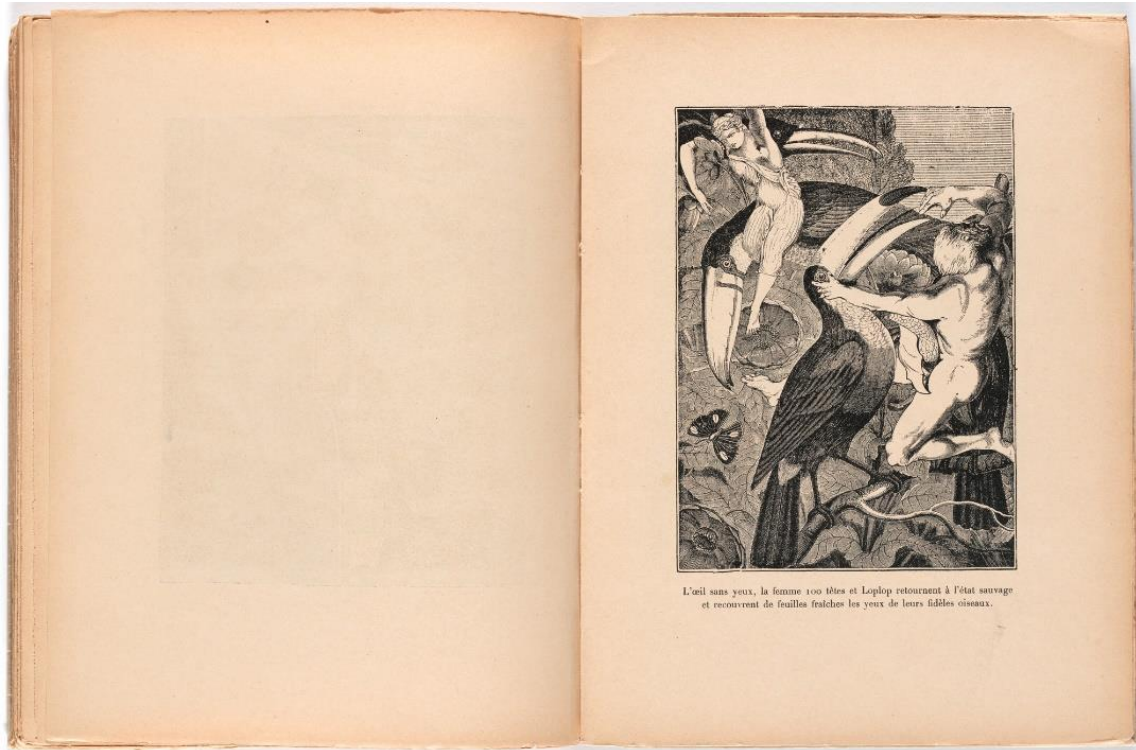
Although Ernst's collages featured vulgar and frequently violent content, Cornell, by his own admission, was surprised by their form and instantly inspired not only by the recycled Victorian source material but also by the epiphany of the possibilities offered by the practice of collage for an individual who is a creative thinker but not artistically trained (Cran 2014: 53). According to Cran (2014: 54), even though he did not see himself as belonging to any one movement, Cornell subsequently acknowledged that *La femme 100 têtes* was the key inspiration for his entrance into the world of art. According to MoMA's website (2018), where the artwork is housed in their collection, the first collage book by Ernst is *The Hundred Headless Woman (La Femme 100 têtes)* (1929) (Figure 10 and Figure 11). MoMA (2018) describes the book, stating that it includes an eerie Surrealist collage series constructed by dissecting and reconstructing nineteenth-century imagery, together with Ernst's similarly bizarre text. When spoken aloud, the French title might be read both as "the hundred-headed woman" or "the headless woman" (MoMA 2018). In addition to collage novels and numerous etchings and lithographs to accompany the poems and stories of Surrealist authors with whom he was closely linked, MoMA (2018) states that Ernst was deeply involved with illustrated books during the 1930s.

After seeing *La femme 100 têtes*, Cran (2014: 55) states that Cornell went home and began a survey of the books, sheet music, cut-out articles, and bits of Victorian ephemera that he had habitually collected throughout his life, venturing cautiously in the path of the Surrealist subterfuge he had confronted at Levy's gallery. This was the beginning of the collages that would eventually shape and motivate a distinctive and successful career (Figure 12 and Figure 13) (Cran 2014: 55). As such, Cran (2014: 55) states that Cornell used collage throughout his career, even though most of his work eventually took the shape of the boxed assemblages for which he is most known. Cran (2014: 55) goes on to explain this evolution, stating that after finding success with paper collage, Cornell realised that he wanted to enhance and represent on a bigger scale, the complexity, depth, and expressive qualities of collage. In the end, this is what his box compositions are: meticulously constructed in accordance with the principles of the practice, they are three-dimensional collages rather than simple assemblages and their three-dimensionality easily connect with the artists' books that use them as inspiration (Cran 2014: 55).

Cottingham (2005: 63) describes the exhilaration of this freedom from limitations that was experienced by Cornell and other collage artists by contemplating the work created by Rauschenberg. In the outset of his work, Rauschenberg used collaged elements that accentuated the mundanity of art objects. Rauschenberg's later work began combining the strangest of elements, far removed in connotation⁷ (Cottingham 2005: 63). Cottingham (2005: 63) mentions that the most famous of these, *Monogram* (Figure 14), created in 1959, incorporates a stuffed goat inside a car tyre. It was in this instance, with pop cultural elements, collage, assemblages, and photography that the work of artist Ed Ruscha came to be and the book format began. According to Hopkins (2000: 118) the first of a series of self-published artists' books titled *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* (1963) (Figure 15), Ruscha challenged the revered *livre d'artiste* heritage by creating a banal photographic

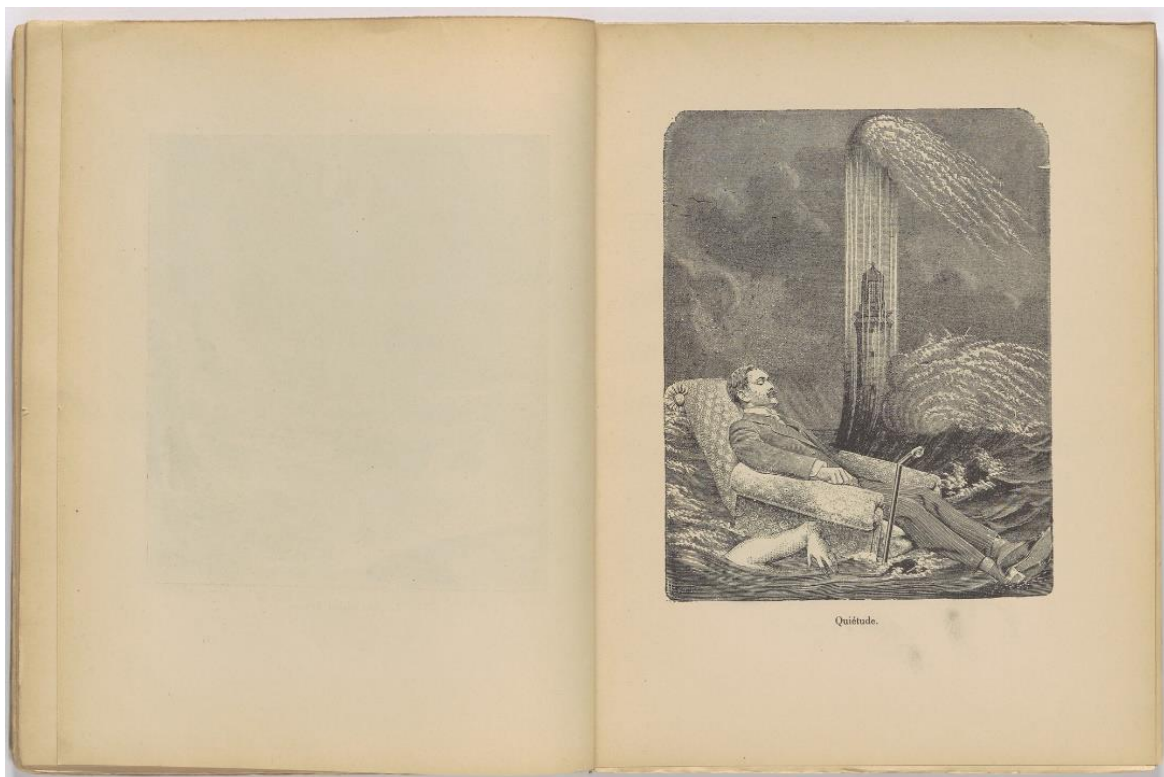
⁷ Cottingham (2005:64) states that the surrealists believed that if an object or combination of materials lacked a representational intent, it can nonetheless serve a psychological purpose. The fur-covered teacup and saucer created by Meret Oppenheim as well as Salvador Dali's lobster telephone are among the most well-known surrealist sculptures. According to Cottingham (2005: 64) "they sought what they called a 'convulsive beauty' – that psychic shiver we experience when an image taps into the unconscious, and the hairs stand up on the back of one's neck – through the juxtaposition of disparate things."

roadmap of the gas stations along Route 66 between Los Angeles and Oklahoma. Allan (2010: 231) explains that Ruscha showed the first of his renowned series of photographic books, *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*, in a way that united the various parts of his practice in a 1963 drawing based on spotlights and a dramatic perspective motif.



L'œil sans yeux, la femme 100 têtes et Loloop retournent à l'état sauvage et recouvrent de feuilles fraîches les yeux de leurs fidèles oiseaux.

Figure 11: Max Ernst, *The Hundred Headless Woman (La Femme 100 têtes)*, 1929. Illustrated book with 147 reproductions after collages, 25.1 x 19.2 cm.



Quintode.

Figure 10: Max Ernst, *The Hundred Headless Woman (La Femme 100 têtes)*, 1929. Illustrated book with 147 reproductions after collages, 25.1 x 19.2 cm.



Figure 12: Joseph Cornell, *Allegory of Innocence*, 1956. Cut-and-pasted printed paper on paper on board in wood frame with colored glass, 38.5 x 31 x 5.8 cm.



Figure 13: Joseph Cornell, *Portrait of the Artist's Daughter by Vigée-Lebrun*, 1960. Cut-and-pasted printed paper in wood frame with glass, 37.1 x 44.5 x 5.1 cm.



Figure 14: Robert Rauschenberg, *Monogram*, 1955-59. Oil, paper, fabric, printed reproductions, metal, wood, rubber shoe-heel, and tennis ball on two conjoined canvases with oil on taxidermised Angora goat with brass plaque and rubber tire on wood platform mounted on four casters, 106,5 x 160,6 x 163,5 cm.

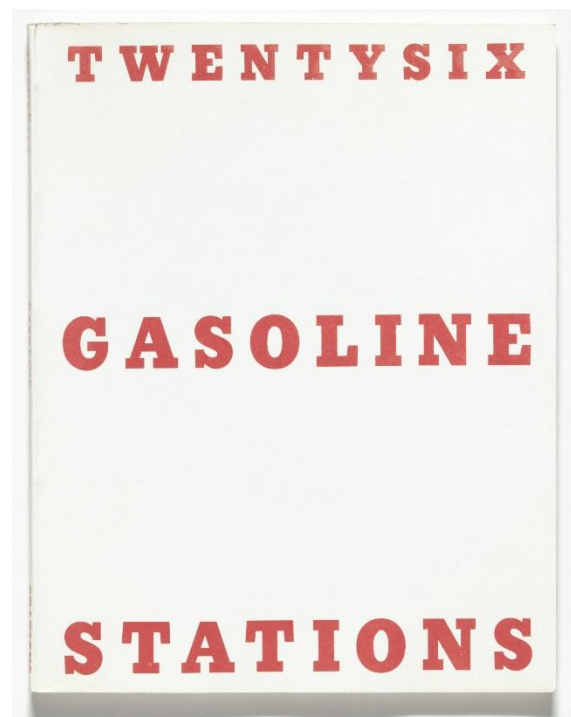


Figure 15: Edward Ruscha, *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*, 1963 (printed 1969). Artist's book, offset printed, 17.9 x 14.1 x 0.5 cm. Edition: 3000.

- **The beginning of artists' books as an art medium**

When questioned about his books, Ruscha stated in a 1965 interview that he was not attempting to create a costly limited-edition book, but a mass-produced product of the greatest kind (Allan 2010: 231). According to Allan (2010: 231), Ruscha's criticism of the precedent of the skillfully made artist's book is evident in his comment regarding the objectives of his book project. In the meantime, Allan (2010: 231) states that he created a significant transition as mass manufacturing turned his tiny, virtually pocket-sized volumes into a distinctly new kind of item that, when encountered in large quantities, requires physical negotiation. In a 1990 interview, Allan (2010: 231) notes that Ruscha discussed how his works straddled these lines by saying that he thinks of his books as purely visual objects. He goes on to say that in a strange sense, he even thought of them as pieces of sculpture, since they were robust and three-dimensional (Allan 2010: 231).

According to Allan (2010: 242), Ruscha's photography books *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* were first shown at the Ferus Gallery in 1963 and 1964, with copies available for purchase. Allan (2010: 242) goes on to say that Ruscha's books, later viewed as forerunners of Conceptual art in the late 1960s, defy easy categorisation. However odd the books may seem from their sardonic title, Allan (2010: 242) explains that Ruscha defined the purpose of displaying his images in the form of a book as providing the viewer/reader with a particular freeing aesthetic experience. Ruscha states:

“The total picture is of photographs in a book form with the idea that you can flip through the pages. That act is like a happening, in a way, or a piece of performance art. You can turn to page sixteen first, if you want, or you can turn to page one. The book, itself, has a diverse ability to give you photographs, and also give you the act of editing them in your own mind as you move through the pages.” (Allan 2010: 242)

Allan (2010: 247) states that the wide readership who also used the kinds of locations depicted in the images was the initial target audience for Ruscha's small-format, mass-produced books. Ruscha's paintings and books could be seen as occupying a space between later discussions about the viewer as the primary consideration in the

experience of art that have since centered discourse of the 1960s and these preliminary challenges to the nature of the art object and the concept of medium specificity introduced by assemblage art or Neo-Dada practices (Allan 2010: 247). This is the beginning of artists' books as a defined art medium. In many ways, Drucker (2004: 1) states that the artist's book could be considered the pinnacle 20th-century artform. Drucker (2004: 1) goes on to say that artists' books can be found throughout every significant art and literature movement, and they have presented a special way of realising artworks in all the various avant-garde, alternative, and autonomous groups whose accomplishments have determined the nature of twentieth-century artistic practice.

Artists' books have evolved as a distinct field with a background that is only tangentially tied to contemporary art (Drucker 2004: 1). Drucker (2004: 1) states that this progression is most noticeable after 1945, when the artist's book gained its own practitioners, theorists, critics, innovators, and visionaries. According to Drucker (2004: 1), artists' books are unique in that they mostly did not exist in their existing iteration until the twentieth century. Drucker (2004: 3) begins by saying that Ambroise Vollard, a Parisian art dealer, developed the *livre d'artiste* in the mid-1890s, and Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler followed suit a decade later. According to Drucker (2004: 3), other editors took notice of this trend and recognised an opportunity to offer deluxe editions of works by well-known poets, writers, and artists of the day. The *livre d'artiste* capitalised on the 19th century's expanding market for visual art as well as the increase of luxury items that were coveted by a newly developing educated upper middle class (Drucker 2004: 3).

Drucker (2004: 3) states that Henri Matisse, Joan Miro, Ernst, and Picasso are among the greatest 20th-century artists whose work was represented in early *livres d'artiste*. Drucker (2004: 3) attests that these books are well-made pieces of art, but they fall just short of qualifying as artists' books since they don't operate within the same conceptual framework. Drucker (2004: 4) further explains that the key distinction between *livres d'artiste* and artists' books is that the latter are constantly aware of the significance and framework of the book format, which is frequently exploited or undermined. However, Drucker (2004: 5-6) does clarify that while some artists' books take on the characteristics of *livres d'artiste* in their use of fine printing (that includes letterpress, leather or hand

binding, archival paper, and printmaking techniques), many artists' books are not always created using fine printing techniques. Many early artists' books are made of cheap materials, with the conceptual aspect of the book taking precedence over the materials used (Drucker 2004: 5-6). To emphasise this point, Drucker (2004: 6) explains that artists' books are frequently (but not always) created on a limited budget by the artists themselves and that letterpress techniques are now usually too exorbitant due to labour intensity.

In the quest for a definition and possible categorisation, Drucker (2004: 8) states that it is challenging to identify a 20th-century art movement that did not incorporate some aspect of the artists' book, however in certain situations this term would need to be expanded to include journals, ephemera, or other independent publications. The modern and contemporary art movements that were discussed previously and included artists' books in some format was Cubism, Russian and Italian Futurism, Surrealism, Dada, Pop Art, Fluxus, Conceptualism, Minimalism, and Postmodernism (Drucker 2004: 8). Despite this, Drucker (2004: 9) states that artists' books have not been adequately incorporated or surveyed within the history of 20th century art due to the fact that most of the artists who used the book as a vehicle to make art did so inconsistently. Drucker (2004: 9) goes on to say that the fact that this involvement was a key component of 20th-century art serves as evidence that artists' books are a distinct phenomenon of the time.

Consequently, Drucker (2004: 9) emphasises that extraordinary amounts of mainstream art have been expressed through books that couldn't have been achieved by wall installations, performances, or sculpture. Drucker (2004: 9) mentions an article by Dick and Hannah Higgins aptly titled *Intermedia* (1965), stating that the book is an example of "intermedia," which integrates all the forms of art. However, Drucker (2004: 9) takes care to note that not every book produced by an artist qualifies as an artist's book. In terms of their marketability, Drucker (2004: 9) states that books are frequently generated on the strength of an artist's ability to generate sales, which is still true in the latter half of the 20th century as it was in the earlier decades. Even though the criteria on which the differentiation may be upheld are frequently ambiguous, Drucker (2004: 9) states that an artist's book is not usually a simple compilation of pages, a portfolio of prints, or an

inadvertent collection of original or appropriated images. The final criterion for definition rests with the knowledgeable observer, who must assess the degree to which a book work integrally utilises the distinctive characteristics of this form (Drucker 2004: 9).

According to Drucker (2004: 12), books were a popular artistic medium in the United States and Europe in the 1960s. No matter if they were created independently by artists or by galleries as a follow-up to an exhibition, they suited the sensibility of the 1960s alternative scene and gave rise to the composite genre of the catalogue as artist's book (Drucker 2004: 12). Subsequently, Drucker (2004: 12) notes that major centres for the creation of artists' books were founded in the 1970s. According to Drucker (2004: 12-13), the artist's book had matured by the 1970s and found its niche within art schools, university art programmes, museum and library collections, and private collections, with additional institutional sites also emerging. Parallel to this, Drucker (2004: 13) describes how the 1970s also saw another book-related practice starting to take on a more prominent profile: book sculptures and book-like objects. Drucker (2004: 13) goes on to say that their expansion was noticeable in both Europe and the United States. Compared to the artist's book, this trend has less precedent in the history of 20th-century art and one can cite several Duchamp pieces as well as Cornell's boxes as influences (Drucker 2004: 13). The arts steadily move away from conventional types of media and classifications in the post-war era, making the amalgamation of books as objects and the synthetic potential found in the field of artists' books seem quite appropriate with its developments (Drucker 2004: 13). Following this surge of sculptural art, Drucker (2004: 13) describes that installation pieces of ambitious scope and structural intricacy, ranging in size from a closet to a room, with film, computers, and soon, a virtual reality system, start to appear in the 1980s. According to Drucker (2004: 13), many of these are produced by artists who have previously worked on artists' books or who include books into their installations in some way. More about these installations and their relation to assemblage will be discussed towards the end of the chapter.

How exactly did the *livre d'artiste* create the framework for artists' books as we know them today? Drucker (2004: 21) poses that the works of William Blake in the 18th century and William Morris in the 19th century provides real foundation for the theoretical practice of

artists' books. Blake and Morris created original precedents for using the book as a creative artwork and both were extremely distinctive artists with well-developed, unique conceptions of the book as a form that could act as a catalyst for both spiritual and social change (Drucker 2004: 22).

Drucker (2004: 23) states that Blake was a professional engraver who published many books with his own writing and artwork. In 1788, Drucker (2004: 23) explains, is when he published the first instance of what he called illuminated printing. Drucker (2004: 23) describes his innovative printing techniques, explaining that his discovery that the metal engraving plates might be sufficiently etched to print in relief was a key component of his breakthrough. Drucker (2004: 23) goes on to say that Blake used a transfer procedure to work around a significant challenge—writing the full text in reverse on the plate's surface with a resistant ground. Drucker (2004: 23) explains that he first wrote with the ground on paper, then transferred it by turning the paper onto the plate. When complete, the engraved plate allowed him to make prints as requested or commissioned, giving him access to an infinite edition that was made on demand (Drucker 2004: 23). In terms of colour, Drucker (2004: 23) describes that Blake personally ground the water-based paint to keep the colours bright and straightforward as he illuminated the printed pages. According to Drucker (2004: 23), the editions are quite diverse, not adhering to a particular style of painting for the duration of the run but varying over time in accordance with his mood and disposition. Blake was willing to change publishing rules to suit his unique aesthetic vision because of the way he views the edition form, which is flexible and inconsistent (Drucker 2004: 23) (Figure 16).

In the case of Morris, Drucker (2004: 27-29) states that the inspiration for Morris's first major ideas for textiles, furniture, and glass came from a desire to decorate his own home and that his initial efforts were created within the paradigm of fine art. The smallest and most recent component of Morris's output was books, but Drucker (2004: 27-29) still feels that they are worthy of mention in the overall context of artists' books. Drucker (2004: 27-29) states that Morris created his own illuminated texts in the 1870s,

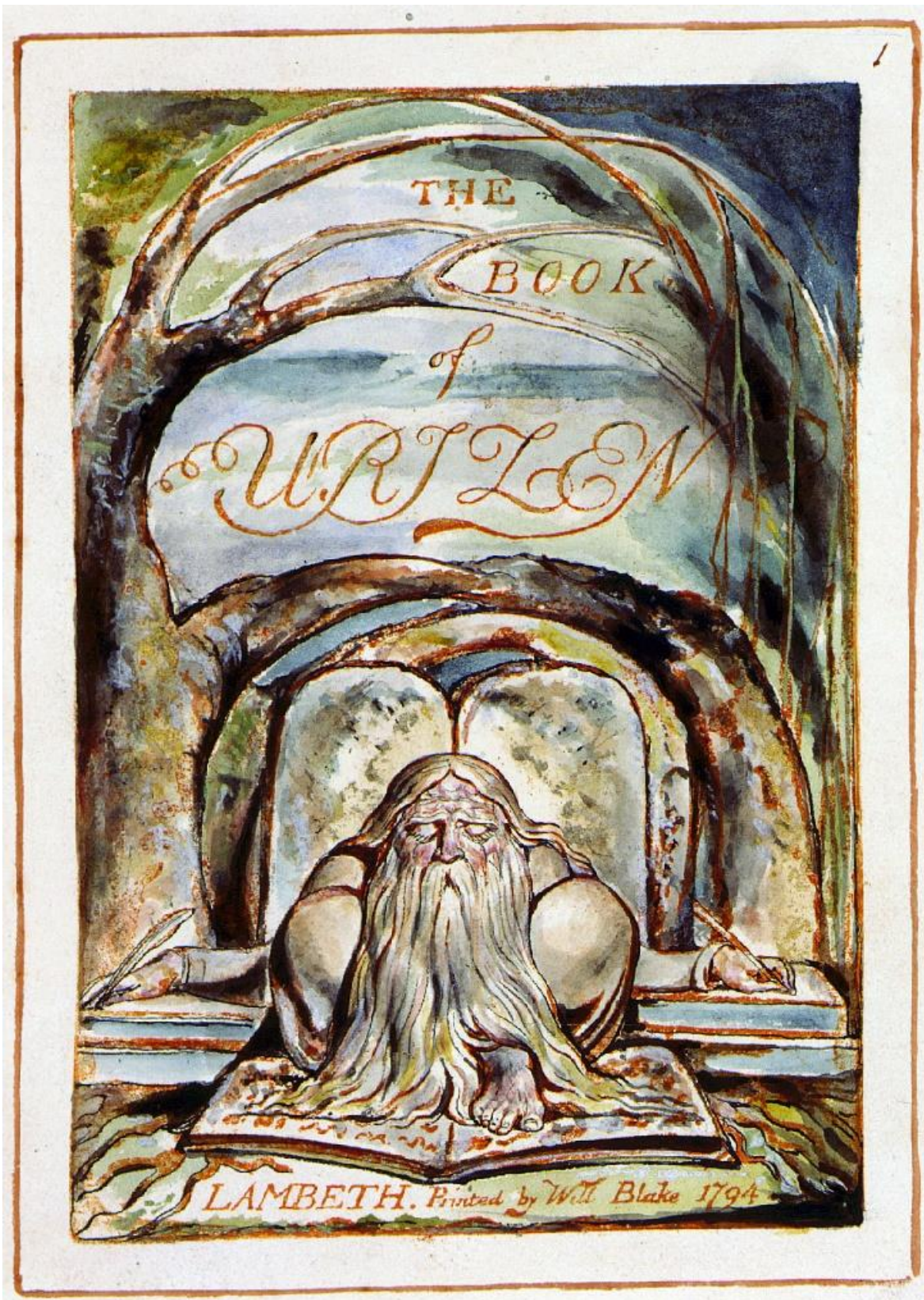


Figure 16: William Blake, *The Book of Urizen*, 1794. Relief etching with hand colouring, ranging between 16.8 x 11.7 and 14.2 x 9.1 cm.

including the binding decorations and page borders. Drucker (2004: 27-29) ascribes Morris's main influence as the mediaeval manuscripts he acquired, for which he developed a deep interest. Being a poet and designer, Morris's seasoned sense of design was inspired by this, and his work belongs more appropriately in the fine printing and independent press movements, both of which it greatly influenced (Drucker 2004: 27–29).

Thereafter, Drucker (2004: 45) states that books only started to play a significant role in experimental creative vision—and a singular means of realising it—in the early 20th century. The Russian avant-garde is the first area of activity where this happens with a lot of visibility (Drucker 2004: 45). However, according to Drucker (2004: 45), Symbolism and other late 19th century movements' aesthetics were criticised. Drucker (2004: 45) states that similarly, the ornate pages of the Arts and Crafts movement, as epitomised by Morris, came to represent the outmoded, backward aesthetic that the early 20th-century artists vehemently revolted against with their wiry leafy borders, interlaced floral designs, and sensual extravagance. The movement of Russian Futurism provided a setting for the development of the book's 20th-century visual aesthetic (Drucker 2004: 46-47). According to Drucker (2004: 46-47), the Russian Futurists combined cubist analysis and fragmentation with a traditional folk aesthetic, although being fixated on the European tradition of fine arts for its identity. Facets of the way books are made and used in the Russian Futurist regard, starting around 1912, are very comparable to the ethos that led to the creation of artists' books in the 1960s and 1970s, most notably the motivation to develop affordable works with available resources in a template in which the artist or writer had entire authority (Drucker 2004: 47). In this sense, Drucker (2004: 47) contends that the works created by the Russian avant-garde represent the start of the artists' book movement in the 20th century, a form whose intellectual underpinnings diverge from those of conventional book manufacturing. Drucker (2004: 47) states that with the help of these artists, the book transforms from a convention-bound method of reproduction into an artistic medium. Drucker (2004: 47) states that the initial Russian Futurist works were created on a very limited scale; the majority were simple booklets with modest proportions made of a few sheets of inexpensive paper stapled or

haphazardly sewed together. According to Drucker (2004: 47), numerous futurist books used cloth and paper from sources other than fine arts, such as burlap coverings and wallpaper pages. The work's transience was a regrettable side effect of this varied approach to materials and many of these books now disintegrate or rip when handled and are too fragile to handle (Drucker 2004: 47). Drucker (2004: 47) concedes that the pieces were created with ephemerality in mind; they were meant to be shared among friends and read casually, without consideration for value or durability.

Drucker (2004: 58) states that thereafter other advancements in the art world and in trade or commercial publishing continued and expanded earlier efforts in novel forms. These included the publications that sprang out of surrealist literature and art as well as those that carried early attempts into a more mainstream setting (Drucker 2004: 58). According to Drucker (2004: 59), collaboration was common in the creation of surrealist books, and early examples of dream-like artwork and psychedelic poetry show how easily imagery could be created at the nexus of multiple media. Drucker (2004: 59) states that in her book *Surrealism and the Book* (1988), Renee Riese Hubert's critical analyses of surrealist literature makes some key arguments about how these works differ from their predecessors. According to Drucker (2004: 59), Hubert notes that illustrated books from the 19th century had a mimicry or imitative relationship between word and image, with the illustrations fulfilling the reader's assumptions by providing concrete example to an abstract idea. Contrarily, Hubert states that in surrealist art, each component builds on the others' ideas so that the final product is not a logical combination of the parts but rather a fresh creation (Drucker 2004: 59). According to Drucker (2004: 59), these unique pieces incorporated Victorian engravings from books, scientific materials, and other texts to create a macabre tale that was synthesised using the collage technique. As mentioned in the context of Cornell, Drucker (2004: 59) describes the works created by Ernst in the late 1920s and early 1930s, many of which were shown on their own or as a result of collaborations. However, Ernst also created several book-length works that represent the apex of narrative and visual form for the collage technique (Drucker 2004: 59).

According to Drucker (2004: 70), numerous avant-garde movements came into existence during the post-World War II era. Drucker (2004: 70) states that even though these groups

were distinct, they shared with earlier avant-garde movements a conviction in the liberating and transformational potential of art as well as a desire to express this philosophy through unconventional means. They were increasingly engrossed with the notion of art as a creative endeavour that was not restricted to any one medium or traditional form, like oil painting or carved or cast sculpture (Drucker 2004: 70). Instead, Drucker (2004: 70) declares that the notion that art was essentially about ideas placed an emphasis on the conceptual practice of art, which eventually led to the dominance of conceptual art starting in the early 1960s. In such a setting, mixed media or composite forms became the rule as opposed to the exception (Drucker 2004: 70). According to Drucker (2004: 70), the ability of books to contain images, texts, marks, and materials in a format that was adaptable, transitory, and variable in its possibility to extend from the magnificent to the preposterous, the obscure to the peculiar, the discretely impartial to the outlandish - and to express personal, political, or abstract ideas - made them the ultimate form of mixed media. Drucker (2004: 70) goes on to say that some might contend that the fundamental idea of the artist's book as a distinctive artistic medium, one that could operate apart from entities like galleries or museums, had already been conceived in the early 20th century. However, around the mid-century mark, artists' books develop into a self-sustaining, if not self-defining, field of practice (Drucker 2004: 70).

Drucker (2004: 71) states that after the mid-century, artists started to make books a fundamental or significant part of their work without connecting the book's subject matter or physical form to a pre-existing objective. This mindset, according to Drucker (2004: 71), elevates the importance of two post-war avant-garde artists, Dieter Roth and Ruscha, and defines their books as significant milestones in the evolution of the artist's book as a medium. As mentioned previously, the initial edition of Ruscha's *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* was inexpensive to make, consisting of 400 copies of 24 sheets sewed across the spine in pamphlet stitch (Drucker 2004: 72).

Drucker (2004: 75) explains that the creation of Roth's books was the result of experimental graphic design and concrete poetry writing. In initiatives that he started in 1954, Drucker (2004: 75) states that Roth expanded his visual research into book formats and his book art quickly attracted attention on a global scale. Roth is the first artist to use

books as the primary medium for his work and to deal with the book as an artwork – not as a publication or a means of literary or visual expression, but rather as a form in and of itself (Drucker 2004: 75) (Figure 17).

In this context, Drucker (2004: 93) states that not all artists' books are published in editions and likewise, not all artists' books are published in photo-offset reproduction on neutral paper with conventional, apparently affordable forms. A work that is a direct representation of aesthetic concepts in the form of a book can be an artist's book regardless of its rarity, degree of limitation, or consistency of edition (Drucker 2004: 93). Drucker (2004: 93) states that several of these books are singular items, original creations with a fascinating aspect. According to Drucker (2004: 93), a reason for this is due to the expense or difficulty of producing more than one copy and some are published in limited editions. Others are fetish items that employ the book in an erotic/conceptual manner or to express and/or illustrate certain behaviour/emotions. Meanwhile, Drucker (2004: 93) mentions that altered books start with an existing work as its base and create a superimposed effect which combines linguistic, visual, and material alterations of the original. As an example, Drucker (2004: 94) mentions the 1985 Paris exhibition, *Livres d'Artistes - Livres Objects*, which featured works bound in wire, embellished with chicken feet, feathers, buttons, jewels, intricate materials, wax, and framed images. According to Drucker (2004: 94), these can be anything from commemorative items to works with a significant amount of personal significance hidden in a rich presentation of materials that nonetheless serve as books with pages that can be opened to either text or image in some combination. Drucker (2004: 102) admits that in the case of journals and diaries, they are considered as a cliché in the realm of artists' books, along with the altered notepad, altered sketchbook, and aged ledger or book of accounts. Despite this, Drucker (2004: 102) states that in their best forms, they are nearly always fascinating - for the same reasons that notebooks are - because they give a window into someone's continuous thought processes, doodles, and ongoing endeavours. Through tangible or conceptual methods, a book can be altered from an adapted or acquired original; alternatively, pieces of a book can be removed and used to create a new piece (Drucker 2004: 108).



Figure 17: Dieter Roth, *Collected Works, Volume 11: Snow (Gesammelte Werke, Band 11: Snow)*, deluxe edition, 1970. Multiple of two crushed light bulbs on corrugated cardstock, and artist's book, 23.4 x 18 x 4.5 cm. Edition: 100.

Drucker (2004: 108) states that the idea of the book as a sculptural form has already been widely accepted and is rich in cultural and historical resonances. However, it is a format that encourages creativity and innovation.

A book is a very sophisticated arrangement of information and ideas. Drucker (2004: 121-122) states that while books can exist in different forms, the codex structure is the most prevalent, adaptable, and constantly modified. Drucker (2004: 121-122) continues, stating that books can be manufactured from a diverse range of materials in addition to the paper used for the pages. In the construction of a codex form, artists' books have utilised every material conceivable, from fabric and metal to wooden boards and glass sheets (Drucker 2004: 121-122). Similarly, Drucker (2004: 121-122) describes that writing media, which have historically comprised inks derived from various pigments and binders, paints, and graphite, among others, have extended to encompass anything from thread to spray paint, glitter to milk, blood, and bodily fluids, and organic matter hues. Although the codex is the most common book form, and for valid reason given its effectiveness and functionality, Drucker (2004: 123) describes that other book shapes, such as polygons and fold-up works, boxes and accordion folds, scrolls, pop-up structures, and tunnel books, have faithfully made their way into the world of artists' books. To be considered artists' books instead of book-like objects or sculptural works with a book resonance, these works must preserve a relationship to the concept of the book - to its basic structure and purpose as the presentation of material in connection to a regular pattern that enables access to its contents (or ideas) via some stable arrangement (Drucker 2004: 123). As mentioned previously, these books have come to enter the realm of assemblage and installation, which also encompass a variety of contemporary media. Cottington (2005: 65) explains that there are now numerous different ways to use and express the liberty of assemblage. The assemblages, some of which contained numerous components, started off as separate sculptural pieces but have since evolved into "installations" (Cottington 2005: 65). Stallabrass (2006: 16) explains that the resurgence of installation art corresponded with the recession of 1989, yet it quickly established itself at the centre of the art world, in museums.

- **Contemporary artists' books and mixed media collections**

According to Cottingham (2005: 65) installations are currently considered a standard part of artistic practise, with the audience surrounded by an entire room or gallery that becomes a constructed environment within it. Cottingham (2005: 65) goes on to state that the effects of this on the viewer's engagement to the work are profound. This aspect is fundamental when viewers experience artists' books, even though it may be dissimilar in scope. Parks (2014: 90) goes on to state that installation art intersects with architecture, interior design, and theatre due to its emphasis in changing the appearance and feel of interior spaces. As mentioned previously by Parks (2014: 90), even though the term "installation art" did not become popular until the late 1960s, the genre can be traced back to Dadaism and the early work of Duchamp and Schwitters.

What impact is caused by mixed media collections within a museum environment? In a general sense, Morgan (2017: 8) states that the recent surge in collector interest in contemporary art has put unexpected strain on museum practices. Morgan (2017: 8) explains that because many notable collectors today are focused on contemporary art, museums have increasingly highlighted contemporary work in both their permanent collections and special exhibitions to court their allegiance, contributions, and donations or bequests of the art itself. This indicates that museums and galleries are obviously very interested in collecting contemporary art. For the next section of my literature review, I look at the relationship between mixed media contemporary collections and the museums that house them. This will then begin the discussion related to artists' books and how they are collected, focusing on those that are made up of composite media.

Chapter Two: Challenges in the storage, conservation, and display of modern/contemporary mixed media artist's book collections.

▪ Introduction – mixed media collections

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the challenges in the collection management and preventative conservation of mixed media/composite artworks in international museum collections, focusing on artists' books. This chapter presents a combination of literature and interview responses. I begin the chapter with the literature review, which is multi-faceted, covering the various storage, display, and conservation aspects of artists' books. To first understand the unique aspects of the collection management of artists' books, I begin the literature review with a broad perspective that focuses on the collection strategies taken by museums with regards to modern/contemporary mixed media art, which is then applied to the collection strategies taken with artists' books specifically. As mentioned at the end of the previous chapter, artists' books are housed in various ways, depending on the specific centre's/institution's collection policies. This is also evident in the interview responses. The interviews conducted with various museum professionals seek to ascertain the preventative conservation and collection management strategies used by specific international museums/art centres that house mixed media artists' books in their collection. Discussions of various mixed media artists' books and the specific strategies used for their storage and conservation are included as case studies.

Bruce Altshuler compiled and edited a book titled *Collecting the New: The Challenges of Conserving Contemporary Art* (2007). Altshuler presents texts written by various authors that consider the complex issues facing museums that collect contemporary art. When collecting contemporary/modern art, Altshuler (2007: 1) concludes that museums take a risk, since these objects do not yet have defined characteristics when it comes to aging and historical value. Glen Wharton wrote a chapter in the book titled *The Challenges of Conserving Contemporary Art*. Wharton (2007: 173) states: "Conservators must rethink their standard methodology in the face of new materials, new technologies, and conceptually driven art". There is also a chapter written by Howard N. Fox (Curator of

Contemporary Art at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art) titled *The Right to Be Wrong*. He states that, by definition, contemporary art has not stood the test of time and that from now on, current art will be considered for inclusion in museum collections. So, how do museums acquire new and unfamiliar objects and formalise their care (Fox: 2007: 15)?

New artistic materials, as well as the use of the term contemporary to define a specific type of artwork, are calling into question institutional frameworks constructed in the past to satisfy distinct demands (Altshuler 2007: 8). According to Altshuler (2007: 8), alternative conceptions of art and new technologies have posed unique preservation and conservation challenges. Altshuler (2007: 8) goes on to state that dealing with these, and other collection difficulties is part of the present museum's challenge, and it necessitates practical judgments at both the institutional and object level.

In terms of conserving contemporary art, Wharton (2007: 8) states that contemporary art questions conservation's core beliefs. He goes on to say that conservators are particularly troubled by conceptual and other artworks that question notions of permanence and uses ephemeral mediums, as they are committed to extending the physical life of items in the face of unavoidable change (Wharton 2007: 163). With controlled museum conditions and technical interventions such as consolidation and repair, Wharton (2007: 163) says that conservators hope to prevent chemical and physical degeneration. Wharton (2007: 163) clarifies that the conservator's goal is to preserve not only the object, but also its cultural relevance for future generations. The artist's conceptual goal is usually what gives fine arts its cultural importance and as a result, one goal of fine arts conservation is to prevent physical change from altering the artist's intent (Wharton 2007: 163). Wharton (2007: 163) describes that when an artist's objective conflicts with preservation principles, a conflict arises. Moreover, Wharton (2007: 164) states that conservation research is concerned with artistic aims as well as the materials and procedures utilised to achieve them.

Wharton (2007: 166) goes on to say that because of poor media selection or material incompatibility, some contemporary art is destined to deteriorate. This is known as "inherent vice" among conservationists, where poor artisanship or material contact can trigger self-destruction (Wharton 2007: 166). As mentioned in chapter 1, the twentieth

century saw the expanding spectrum of art mediums that led to material experiments, which occasionally failed (Wharton 2007: 166). According to Wharton (2007: 166), museum collections changed from the predictable to the unexpected by acquiring works containing unstable "found" objects, synthesised contemporary polymers, and other new technologies. Wharton (2007: 167) laments that it is unfortunate that some contemporary artists unwittingly endanger the longevity of their work with their medium choices, while others make conscious sacrifices to enhance the conceptual element of their work. For the latter, Wharton (2007: 167) goes on to state that ephemeral materials and precarious juxtapositions may offer symbolic significance that conveys the artist's goal, yet they also lead to self-destruction.

Wharton (2007: 174) concludes by stating that one of the most important questions is whether conservation intervention aids in connecting the object to its intended context. 15 years later, these questions are still a concern for museums professionals.

Stephanie E. Hornbeck wrote an article in 2013 titled *Intersecting conservation approaches to ethnographic and contemporary art: Ephemeral art at the National Museum of African Art*. What makes Hornbeck's article interesting, is that the statements made in the aforementioned literature in relation to the complexities of mixed media or alternate media in contemporary art also rings true within an African art context. Hornbeck's article also provides a more specific point of view that is particularly related to the conservation aspects, and not just an overall museum collection experience. According to Hornbeck (2013: 207), it has become clear that contemporary African art objects share many traits with African tradition-based objects in addition to sharing significant aspects with international contemporary art trends, materials, and media.

Hornbeck (2013: 208) goes on to explain that materials that act as agents of deterioration can be found in composite objects, and their opposing effects can speed up the deterioration of other materials. According to Hornbeck (2013: 208), environmental controls like refrigeration, dark storage, and anoxic microenvironments, which are difficult to apply to entire categories of artefacts, especially those made of composite materials, are preventative measures to slow down the deterioration process.

- **Mixed media artists' book collections**

This gives a general view of what museums face with art created using unconventional or mixed media materials. How does this relate to the way in which museums collect artists' books? As mentioned in the previous chapter, artists' books are often made using unconventional materials as well, and often fit within the contexts described by Altshuler, Wharton, and Miller. This is evidenced by Audrey Niffenegger's book titled *The Book as Art: Artists' Books from the National Museum of Women in the Arts* (2007). The book displays 100 examples of artists' books created by female fine artists (Meret Oppenheim, May Stevens, Kara Walker, Renee Stout, Susan King, Ruth Laxson, Claire Van Vliet, and Julie Chen) taken from unique or limited-edition volumes held by the National Museum of Women in the Arts. The book includes essays by leading scholars accompanied by photographs of each book, to display the sculptural aspects of the artists' books. Krystyna Wasserman (2007: 18) wrote a chapter in the book titled *The Brightest Heaven of Invention*, which she believes "is the creative space in which books and art intersect". Wasserman (2007: 18,19) describes her experience in collecting artists' books on behalf of the National Museum of Women in the Arts and states that the collection includes artists' books from all over the world created between 1970 to the present. Wasserman (2007: 1819) goes on to say that the collection includes books in every genre, structure, and format of the medium. Wasserman (2007: 19) states: "The use of uncommon materials is one of the distinctive characteristics of artists' books." To emphasise this and confirm the previous statements, Wasserman (2007:19) explains that unconventional mixed media materials such as fabric, glass, wood, leather, metal, and stone can be found. Not only are mixed media artists' books complex to house, their place in museums, art centres, or libraries also add to the complexity of their storage and preventative conservation. The uncertainties of artists' books and where they belong in the art/museum world has created unique challenges for curators. These challenges are discussed in the next section of the literature review, as we move away from general information regarding mixed media art and onto the specifics of how these issues specifically relate to artists' books.

- **Artists' books in the library**

Before delving specifically into the unique challenges faced by museums in relation to artists' books, I will first consider the challenges of a specific museum environment that house artists' books: the museum library. Since library collections in art museums are both distinctive in nature and extremely valuable as a core asset of the institution, extensive preservation and conservation efforts are warranted. In *Aspiring to Greatness with Hindsight and Foresight: Assessing Current Preservation and Conservation Practices of Art Museum Library Collections* (2019), Beth Morris conducts a survey and literature review to investigate and analyse the current state of conservation and preservation efforts for art museum library collections, including their implementation, the necessary organisational structures, the historical contexts of preservation, and the impact of preservation decisions on the value of collections. She elucidates the need for increased funding and cooperation to achieve higher standards of integrated preservation for art museum library collections of all formats.

Morris (2019: 95) begins by stating that the library and its holdings form the core of the art museum and should be regarded as one of the organization's main assets. Morris goes on to explain that art museum librarians oversee making decisions on the selection, acquisition, processing, access, and usage of each item. They are also in charge of any necessary binding, repair, treatment, or reformatting, as well as storage, housing, shelving, handling, maintenance, and upkeep (Morris 2019: 95). Consequently, Morris (2019: 95) emphasises that every aspect of librarianship is impacted by preservation. However, Morris (2019: 96) clarifies that even when collections are housed in museums, preservation is not always guaranteed, particularly when competing alongside works of art. According to Morris (2019: 95), the task at hand is to challenge out-of-date beliefs previously held and taught in librarianship to consider future scholarship and various levels of value. It emphasises the range and particular quality of materials that encompass art museum library collections, along with changing perspectives for defining "rare" materials and "special collections" in the twenty-first century (Morris 2019: 96).

Morris (2019: 96) explains that the preservation and conservation of art museum library collections involves a variety of tasks that are carried out in methods that are unique to

the institution and its holdings. This will be emphasised in the next chapter when analysing the responses from various museums/art centres in relation to their policies. Morris (2019: 96) describes how employees from various departments who have different backgrounds, job responsibilities, skill levels, and areas of interest can be combined to do this work. Morris (2019: 96) suggests further that they can also provide a variety of ideas for defining and completing the massive task of preservation.

According to Morris (2019: 96), no published work can be found that specifically references collections care through preservation and conservation for art museum library collections, leaving this obscured intersection of work completely unsolved in the scholarly literature of libraries, archives, museums, preservation, and conservation. In 2012, Morris (2019: 96) implemented a preservation programme with in-house repairs for the first time at her institution. Since then, Morris (2019: 96) has continued to conduct research and develop well-informed collection-level preservation strategies while also building up and honing the bench skills and procedures necessary for item-level treatments. Morris (2019: 96) realised the lack of supporting literature and critical discourse required to legitimise these operations by the depth of the collection's value after carrying out these tasks over several years. Morris (2019: 96) states that this makes it challenging for professionals to advocate for crucial preservation and conservation tasks necessary for the ongoing maintenance of substantial, evidentially significant art museum library collections. To address this information gap, Morris (2019: 96) created and disseminated a survey in the fall of 2017 to collect preliminary information on the state of preservation and conservation practices for art museum library collections.

Morris (2019: 99) states that conservation, which is frequently defined as an item-level approach to treatment rather than collection-level treatments and concerns, is a crucial component of the overall preservation strategy. Morris (2019: 99) goes on to say that through the development of education, training, and competent staff, conservation plays a significant role within preservation programmes and is essential to contribute to the overall advancement of collections care. Within this context, the need to comprehend the dynamic and changing character of libraries, collections, and users led to the necessity for library conservation, which differs from traditional art-based conservation in that it is

intrinsically related to preservation (Morris 2019: 100). In an attempt to provide an overview of the historical development of library-based conservation, Morris (2019: 100) discusses that the first preservation course was taught at the Columbia University School of Library Service in 1978 by Paul Noble Banks, who is also credited with creating several preservation procedures such as controlled storage facilities. Morris (2019: 100) goes on to state that, in 1981, Banks served as the founding director of Columbia University's first official degree-granting programme for administrators and conservators of libraries and archives, which was inspired by his conviction that book and archive conservators need to work in libraries. According to Morris (2019: 100), the Preservation and Conservation Studies Program eventually relocated to the University of Texas in Austin, where it is now located. Unfortunately, Morris (2019: 100) explains that the programme at Columbia University stopped in 1992, while the Texas University programme, the final degree programme of its sort in the country, concluded in 2008. A few years into the "crisis" of brittle books, Morris (2019: 100) states that Banks wrote *A Library Is Not a Museum*, which addresses the immense challenge libraries have in trying to preserve their holdings. According to Morris (2019: 100), Banks draws comparisons between rare book libraries, special collections departments, and museums, noting that many of these organisations do not have dedicated conservators on staff. How to handle the enormous general collections in research libraries, particularly in the humanities, that contain unrecognised, potential, or partial artefactual significance, is one of the biggest preservation difficulties (Morris 2019: 100). Morris (2019: 100) goes on to say that the approach Banks suggested considering this called for a new hybrid job title of collections conservator. Morris (2019: 100) states that Banks' concept included widespread collection-level treatment, housing, storage, and environmental monitoring. To regard library items as having possible artefactual value, en masse, through non-destructive procedures analogous to item-level conservation, it specifically adopted an "engineering approach" to conservation (Morris 2019: 100). According to Morris (2019: 100), Banks noted a greater need for cooperation between library preservation and conservation programmes and museum conservation programmes for shared teaching and training possibilities while looking for future solutions.

Overall, Morris (2019: 107) emphasises that collections in art museum libraries are noteworthy for a variety of reasons. They function as important collections that are essential to advancing the goals of the museum and vary in time, format, medium, and scope (Morris 2019: 107). Depending on the institution and staffing levels, Morris (2019: 109) explains that different preservation programmes or policies are developed and managed. Morris (2019: 109) states that the most typical setup was discovered to be one that was jointly developed and administered by a librarian and a conservator, whose departments work together to ensure consistent collection maintenance. How did these aspects reflect in the interviews Morris undertook with the staff in museum libraries? In this framework, Morris (2019: 112) states that tasks may encompass, but were not limited to, simple repairs, building or outsourcing specialised enclosures, managing bindery contracts, normal maintenance and cleaning of stacks and library, reformatting, digital preservation, and security. Delving deeper into the answers, Morris (2019: 112) states that custom enclosures were the most prevalent activity found among recorded answers with those she interviewed, with many of them appearing to be built in-house. Morris (2019: 112) goes on to say that repairs were the second most prevalent activity, ranging from basic to more extensive repairs including tip-ins, light cleaning, page mends, mould remediation, and basic to elaborate restoration. However, Morris (2019: 112) notes that the free-text replies revealed that the word "basic repair" is interpreted broadly for art museum library collections and warrants additional investigation. Morris (2019: 112) also notes that stacks upkeep and cleaning were the third most often mentioned task, followed by digitisation, scanning, and digital reformatting. Finally, library binding was discussed, which either indicated managing bindery contracts or just "binding" or "bindery," conducted in-house or outsourced (Morris 2019: 112).

Morris (2019: 114) takes an opportunity to state that it is vital to emphasise a prevalent viewpoint in museum culture, which was reinforced by multiple responders. According to Morris (2019: 114), library collections are frequently viewed as "less than" other museum collections and seen as less important than pieces of art. Morris (2019: 114) explains that this is frequently demonstrated by budget and money distribution, restrictions and limitations for space or growth, and lower staffing despite growing responsibilities. Morris (2019: 114) goes on to say that it can also be seen unknowingly through public-facing

events, activities, overall promotion, and community engagement. The most visible casualty has been the significant loss of numerous art museum libraries, as well as their collections and employees, which were judged redundant to the institution during difficult financial circumstances (Morris 2019: 114). Combatively, Morris (2019: 115) states that art museum library collections are unparalleled in terms of composition, value, service, and stated mission. Morris (2019: 115) further argues that art museum librarians should not have to justify the authenticity or intrinsic and cultural significance of their collections to win ethical preservation and conservation efforts.

In closing, Morris (2019: 115) states that for the near future of art museum libraries, the book as an artefact has a lot to offer. Morris (2019: 115) elucidates that an opportunity to gather and preserve these works that merit a place in art museum library collections is presented by the rise of material culture as a field, the increased interest in and production of artists' books, zines, and photobooks, and the advent of book design through bindings, typography, and content by eminent artists, as well as those missing from the traditional canon. It is here that the chapter will open the research for artists' books collections in libraries, as well as other hybrid spaces, and the complexities that various stakeholders face in their conservation, storage, and display.

Nola Farman begins this section of literature with an article titled *Artists' books: managing the unmanageable* (2007). Farman's article states that as a form which combines elements from other art forms, the artists' book can't be neatly filed away in one specific category and its audience is also difficult to characterise or account for. The research presented in this article was informed by a survey of relevant literature, a review of artists' book collections in libraries across Europe, the United Kingdom, North America, and Australia, and discussions with librarians about the process they employ when acquiring additional works. Farman seeks to illustrate that as an interdisciplinary practise and a subgenre of both art and literature, the artists' book presents unique challenges to the organisation and shelving systems of traditional libraries and a strategy for its incorporation into specialised library collections is proposed.

According to Farman (2007: 319), artists' books are usually housed in museum libraries with the book collection and the librarians that work in the museum libraries Farman

(2007: 319) goes on to state that artists' books have emerged as a major contemporary site for artistic innovation and experimentation, but their engagement and readership are predominantly limited to the art world. Farman (2007: 319) explains that the reason for this is since artists' books push the boundaries of publication and distribution with their unusual intersection of material, form, and content, limiting their readership to conceptual aficionados. Despite this, Farman (2007: 319) relates that the librarians have consistently collected these books since the 1960s even though there are difficulties of categorising and presenting them to a readership. Farman (2007: 319) explains that those working in the museum library environment have become major patrons and advocates of the genre in the establishment of special collections.

Farman (2007: 322) introduces the fact that the artists' book has become an art object (even when it is a multiple in small print runs) complicates any insight of the difficulty in its management and collection. Farman (2007: 322) goes on to explain that the artists' book's varied appearance, structure, or form suggests that it will not fit into all collections. According to Farman (2007: 322), libraries and art galleries are now increasingly collecting artists' books and have done for many years. Various collections have broadened their conceptual framework to include books that go beyond the traditional codex structure to include books that are sculptural and/or fragile despite their aesthetic (Farman 2007: 322). Farman (2007: 323) also mentions the financial aspects as a possible obstacle, stating that books by well-known artists, which are deemed to be highly collectible, may be far too costly for a library budget. Another problem to be considered is even if a book by an unknown artist has greater conceptual value as an artist's book, it may be overlooked due to the artist not being well-known (Farman 2007: 323). At first glance, Farman (2007: 323) admits that an artist's book may appear trivial due to the book format, and it may only unveil its symbolism after time and handling, depending on how acquainted the collector is with the genre as well as the various specialisations of the sub-genres. Aside from the collector's enthusiasm for the genre, Farman (2007: 323) concludes that the inconsistent form and appearance of artists' books can make categorisation difficult.

According to Farman (2007: 324), the fact that artists' books are frequently kept in special collections reduces their readership exposure. Farman (2007: 324) goes on to state that large collections do not allow the chance to randomly browse. Farman (2007: 324) explains that to view specific books by specific artists, special arrangements must be made, and smaller collections allow for a much more hands-on engagement that can sometimes accommodate some wear and tear without the need for white gloves⁸. As part of the conceptual nature of the book, some artists welcome the effects of handling on the pages, while others believe that their books should be protected under glass in a display cabinet or treated as priceless objects that must be handled with white gloves, in which case the conceptual significance of the book is lost. In most cases, handling an artist's book is necessary to comprehend the artist's intentions (Farman 2007: 324).

Farman (2007: 324) concludes by stating that to increase public awareness, each library employs its own strategies and that there are no uniformities between libraries. According to Farman (2007: 324), to highlight features of a special collection, there may be internal exhibits, art workshops, or special interest groups, where specific access is arranged. In the case of exhibitions, specific considerations need to be made in the display and handling of artists' books. These unique problems in relation to access are explored in the next article.

⁸ In an article written by Cathleen A. Baker and Randy Silverman titled *Misperceptions about White Gloves* (2005: 4), their analysis turned up no scientific evidence to back up the widely held opinion that routine handling of paper with bare hands chemically deteriorates it. Baker and Silverman concluded (2005: 8) that policies that require customers and curators to always wear gloves when handling library and archive materials should be reevaluated. According to Baker and Silverman (2005: 8), many well-loved books provide witness to the fact that normal use does not degrade paper chemically. Baker and Silverman (2005: 8) state that only in extreme circumstances do conservators wear gloves when handling books and paper artefacts. Baker and Silverman (2005: 8) go on to explain that white cotton gloves enhance the risk of people physically damaging collected material but offer no protection against perspiration and grime. As an alternative to using gloves, instituting a policy that requires all employees to wash their hands before handling sensitive documents is a prudent and effective measure that is in line with the routine used by book and paper conservators (Baker and Silverman 2005: 8). However, paper-based historical collections are the exclusive topic of this article. Baker and Silverman (2005: 4) explain that they understand that there are unique considerations for various media types, such as photographs, negatives, and slides, and three-dimensional objects (particularly those made from tarnishing metals), and that these concerns are best addressed by experts in those fields. Due to their nature, these factors would need to be considered in relation to mixed media artists' books in a case-by-case basis.

- **Exhibiting artists' books**

Judith Hoffberg wrote an article titled *Exhibiting Artists' Books: Problems and Solutions* (2007), which focuses on the display of artists' books and the challenges involved in exhibiting them. This article was originally part of a discussion held at the Action/Interaction: Book/Arts Conference, which was held at the Columbia College Chicago Center for Book and Paper Arts in June 2007. Hoffberg (2007: 13-14) explains that she started out as a collector in 1963 and then joined the Library of Congress in 1965. It is there that she discovered a drawer full of artists' books that the art librarians were having trouble with since they didn't know how to handle them (Hoffberg 2007: 13-14). Hoffberg states that the issue was mentioned of having a private, one-on-one interaction yet being required to share that "experience" with others during exhibitions of artists' books. Hoffberg (2007: 13) goes on to state that it is a contradiction, but one that is required not only to attract new audiences but also to expose artists' books that, in the absence of exhibitions, would never have the chance to be seen or touched.

When she encountered the artists' books that were posing a conundrum for the librarians, Hoffberg (2007: 13-14) explains that she noticed that the books didn't have their own subject headings. For example, Hoffberg (2007: 13-14) explains that she was disappointed to see Ed Ruscha's *Real Estate Opportunities* (1970) included with other books in the same genre as the title, rather than being acknowledged as a piece of art and that the book had a label on it that also damaged it as an artistic creation. Hoffman (2007: 13-14) goes on to say that she then started a project to create headings for such materials, which was continued by a subject cataloguer.

According to Hoffman (2007: 14), colleges and universities were much more accommodating when she conducted exhibitions since books could be touched, generally while wearing gloves, and could be displayed on pedestals rather than behind glass. Hoffman (2007: 14) brings up a crucial concern, which will be discussed in the other literature in more depth: "Do we touch or not touch?" Hoffman (2007: 14) states that many aspects were discussed in relation to this particular exhibit of 460 artists' books in the gallery, which included books from the US, Canada, and the UK. Hoffberg (2007: 14) explains that they incorporated innovative fixes like magnets and specialised screws, and

that the installation was completed in one week with remarkable expertise, allowing the book to remain open while being undisturbed.

Hoffberg (2007: 14) discusses other ideas and innovations, such as having a video created to go along with the exhibition to demonstrate how to setup the book show if the curator is unable to travel with the display. Hoffman (2007: 14) argued that to engage and compel people to experience the books in three dimensions, presentation is the most crucial element of the show. Additionally, Hoffman (2007: 14) recommended that one should always have a "reading table" or table and chairs where people may unwind, handle editioned books, and allow them to "read" those multiples. Hoffman (2007: 14) states that they discussed the issues with bigger books, some of which sometimes would end up on the floor and some of which have installation issues. Overall, Hoffman (2007: 14) suggests that it is advised to ensure that the loan agreement includes an area for artists to sketch or describe how to install the book, and whether they wanted them to be handled.

To lessen the incidence of unnecessary handling, Hoffman (2007: 14) describes how during the Vollard show at MoMA in 1977, a back projector allowed the viewer to see the books being opened and the pages turned until the last page, letting one enjoy the book indirectly but cautiously, even though the original book couldn't be touched. Another instance were the books of Anselm Kiefer, whose very sizable books were attended by page turners who turned the pages on behalf of the viewer (Hoffman 2007: 14). Hoffberg (2007: 15) expands on this, stating that people would be able to read the untouchable books by having someone responsible and officially associated with the exhibition or gallery to turn the pages and engage in conversation about the book in small groups. Hoffberg (2007: 15) also mentions that labels and signage should be placed around the exhibits that would allow the viewer to know when they would be allowed to interact with the books and when they should not touch certain books. Hoffberg (2007: 15) also suggests that in addition to having information on the walls, it helps to have a handout that everyone can read before entering the exhibition space. As the curator, Hoffberg (2007: 15) explains that she usually stayed for a week to teach staff members or students

about the artists' books and showed groups around the show during the first week so that they can continue with these processes when she wasn't in attendance.

Another aspect to the handling of artists' books is how they are made. According to Hoffman (2007: 14-15), some artists don't know much about conservation and preservation, so their books are often very fragile, which makes them trickier to handle. To combat this, Hoffman (2007: 14-15) describes that Steve Woodall from the San Francisco Center for the Book discussed that a conservator would teach a course at the centre, training artists to construct all the proper components for a display and how to build supports as well. Hoffman (2007: 14-15) goes on to state that perhaps this training could be a workshop that could be taught all over the country.

- **The storage, handling, conservation, and collection strategies of artists' books**

The next section of literature deals with the storage, handling, conservation, and collection strategies of artists' books in library collections. I begin with the oldest literature and end with the most recent to show the changes of perception and the development of strategies in relation to the collection policies of these artist's book collections. The first article is titled *How Libraries Collect and Handle Artists' Books* (2000), written by Andrea Chemero, Caroline Seigel, and Terrie Wilson. This article provides information on the process of collecting artists' books by this library. Chemero, Seigel, and Wilson (2000: 22) state that artists' books form a small, though not insignificant part of many art libraries' collections and their average collection size was 1,096 items. The article addresses the fact that artists' books are most often thought of and treated as unique art objects requiring special strategies for their care and handling and discusses how a library's circulation policies for special collection materials are restricted to promote preservation and conservation. According to Chemero, Seigel, and Wilson (2000: 22), these artforms challenge traditional reading while preserving the close connection that a book fosters between object and reader. Chemero, Seigel, and Wilson (2000: 22) go on to say that these unconventional books may take up residence in the collections of fine arts libraries, challenging typical organisational and care methodologies.

In February 1999, Chemero, Seigel, and Wilson (2000: 22) discuss that as part of an Indiana University fine arts librarianship course, a survey on the collection, cataloguing, and preservation of artists' books was submitted to ARLIS-L that is organised by the Art Libraries Society of North America⁹. Dealers and publishers were questioned to determine the state of the artists' books. Despite the issues related to storage, handling and preservation, supporters emphasise the intimacy and sensory value of the artists' book in all its forms (Chemero, Seigel, and Wilson 2000: 22). In the case of this collection, Chemero, Seigel, and Wilson (2000: 22) state that most titles were obtained from specialised book distributors as well as from individual artists. Chemero, Seigel, and Wilson (2000: 22) go on to explain that a smaller proportion was obtained from general art book distributors, through donations and trading duplicates, and from faculty and students.

Chemero, Seigel, and Wilson (2000: 22) state that there seems to be little literature on the treatment of these collections, and it appears that libraries lack standards that directly address the treatment of artists' books. The ARLIS-L survey was designed to discover how libraries manage these collections, as well as to identify best practises and areas for improvement (Chemero, Seigel, and Wilson 2000: 22). Chemero, Seigel, and Wilson (2000: 22) found that the survey results show that librarians are using methods developed for special collections materials for storage, preservation, promotion, and circulation. Due to the increased need for preservation and conservation, Chemero, Seigel, and Wilson (2000: 22) explain that rare and fragile items (books and artists' books) are frequently stored as special collections. According to Chemero, Seigel, and Wilson (2000: 22), Roderick Cave suggests in his book *Rare Book Librarianship* (1976) that the following factors be considered when housing special collections: environmental control; security; shelving and storage; and exhibition equipment. Considering this, survey respondents' preservation measures for their rare or special collections would include archival

⁹ According to the ARLIS website (2022), ARLIS-L is an online community for art librarians and information specialists to share resources and discuss topics of common interest. Topics that are regularly discussed and posted about on this forum include: copyright and information policy issues; job openings; information about upcoming conferences, workshops, and meetings; notices of awards, honours, and prizes; updates from various groups and individuals within the Society; and much more.

envelopes or boxes for each individual book or special temperature and humidity control (Chemero, Seigel, and Wilson 2000: 22). Chemero, Seigel, and Wilson (2000: 22) also state that other precautions may be taken: some report that gloves are used during handling, while others report that items are shelved by size to reduce the risk of crowding. Others have reported using enclosed storage cabinets, and some have consulted with museum conservation staff about specific items that require special attention (Chemero, Seigel, and Wilson 2000: 22). On the other hand, Chemero, Seigel, and Wilson (2000: 23) explain that despite claiming special collections status for their collections of artists' books, three of the survey respondents (11%) stated that no special measures were taken to preserve them. According to Chemero, Seigel, and Wilson (2000: 23), fine arts libraries with artist book collections have unique opportunities to boost their institution through these collections. Active methods of promotion can be used to capitalise on the unique resources found in many libraries (Chemero, Seigel, and Wilson 2000: 23). As mentioned in the previous article, Chemero, Seigel, and Wilson agree that the most common method of promotion used by respondents is exhibitions and is 33% more utilised than the next most popular method, lectures. However, their stance on the use of exhibitions is vastly different.

Despite their ability to enhance visibility and awareness of the collection, Chemero, Seigel, and Wilson (2000: 23) state that exhibitions provide numerous opportunities for material damage to occur. Constant exposure to more extreme lighting than in storage areas, faulty handling practises, extreme temperature, and humidity fluctuations due to travel, and/or poorly designed exhibition cases are all issues (Chemero, Seigel, and Wilson 2000: 23). Chemero, Seigel, and Wilson (2000: 23) state that traditional exhibitions are therefore not the strategy to promote a collection made up of fragile materials like artists' books and that strict preservation policies must be implemented while alternative methods of promotion must be investigated. Chemero, Seigel, and Wilson (2000: 23) go on to suggest that making the collections more accessible through illustrated catalogues and organising public lectures with guest speakers or book artists as two possible approaches as an alternative to exhibitions that would boost the fine arts library's overall visibility as a research centre and supporter of book arts.

In terms of other types of access, Chemero, Seigel, and Wilson (2000: 23) state that the circulation policies of a library for special collection materials are restricted to promote preservation and conservation. While circulation figures are frequently used to justify a collection's existence to administration, preserving a collection and allowing unrestricted access to it are mutually exclusive policies (Chemero, Seigel, and Wilson 2000: 23). Chemero, Seigel, and Wilson (2000: 23) explain that according to *A Library Manager's Guide to the Physical Processing of Non-print Materials* (1995) by Karen C. Driessen and Sheila A. Smyth, three criteria must be considered when incorporating rules for the circulation of special collections:

1. Circulation can be restricted to specific clients or used only within the building.
2. Closed stacks can be used to store the collection.
3. Users may be barred from using the original.

Chemero, Seigel, and Wilson (2000: 23) state that the first two of these options are common in libraries; they allow only in-house circulation and store materials in locked locations 100 percent of the time. Unfortunately, restricting access to these books through exhibitions or in-house circulation frequently goes against the artists' wishes as some are produced as multiples that are meant to be distributed to a wide audience and are often cheaply reproduced (Chemero, Seigel, and Wilson 2000: 23). Chemero, Seigel, and Wilson (2000: 23) mention that access to artist's books could be improved with the help of new technology and state that an alternative to restricted access could take the form of an automated Web exhibition or visual catalogue that could take the place of the original. A digital alternative can increase access without jeopardising preservation concerns by promoting rare and special items in the library collection via a Web page (Chemero, Seigel, and Wilson 2000: 23). Chemero, Seigel, and Wilson gone on to state that the fact that artists' books are art objects as well as books, befitting more than just a catalogue entry, supports the argument for image-based access. The ability to browse or search for specific artists' books would be greatly enhanced by an automated image catalogue (Chemero, Seigel, and Wilson 2000: 23). Since some of the libraries surveyed use visual aids, Chemero, Seigel, and Wilson (2000: 23) argue that the benefits of being able to search for artworks using visual means are inherently regarded by some as better

than relying solely on phrases and creating catalogues based on images of artists' books would be a great way to increase access to and promote use of these collections while also helping to preserve them.

Chemero, Seigel, and Wilson (2000: 23) state that artists' books, which fall somewhere between an artwork and a standard book, present special challenges for cataloguing librarians. Chemero, Seigel, and Wilson (2000: 23) go on to describe how, in many ways, standard cataloguing procedures for monographs are adequate, but certain aspects, such as the physical description of an artist's book, are troublesome. The use of prose notes within a cataloguing record to describe the distinctive characteristics of artists' books is highly valued by most cataloguers (Chemero, Seigel, and Wilson 2000: 23). According to Chemero, Seigel, and Wilson (2000: 23), not many guidelines have been specifically developed for artists' books, so standardisation is an issue in cataloguing them.

Chemero, Seigel, and Wilson (2000: 24) conclude by stating that despite cataloguing difficulties, digitalisation has become more efficient and cost effective. Chemero, Seigel, and Wilson (2000: 24) explain that the merging of cataloguing records with images will become a more realistic option for libraries and as a result, artists' book collections will no longer be art libraries' "hidden treasures."

Similar dilemmas are discussed in the next article by Christianne Fellowes, titled *Artists' Books In Libraries: Current Practices & the Issue of Standards and Guidelines* (2003). Written only three years after the previous article, this study focuses on interviews conducted with specific people responsible for the selection and collection of artists' books in academic libraries. The study includes a literature review along with the interviews to provide analysis on "current practices and procedures for handling artists' books, as well as professional opinion regarding standards and guidelines for collecting, processing, preserving, and managing collections of artists' books" (Fellowes 2003). According to the Fellowes (2003), topics that are discussed in the study include "defining the term artists' books, reasons for collecting artists' books in libraries, information-seeking behaviors related to artists' books, how they are treated differently from other material in the collection, the debate over national or local standards and guidelines, and future needs of such collections."

Fellowes (2003: 2) begins by stating that artists' books are a comparatively recent genre that has ventured into library collections to expand holdings; however, problems pertaining to management and care, preservation, cataloguing, access, promotion, and display have continued to pose dilemmas to such collecting. Since there are so many variations among artists' books and because they blur the lines between a book and an art object, librarians and other library staff have frequently decided on artists' books on a case-by-case basis at the local level (Fellowes 2003: 2). According to Fellowes (2003: 2), librarians must consider a myriad of challenges related to artists' books, ranging from different sizes, unconventional formats, and materials (which frequently include organic or other materials that could harm other items in the collection) to access and security issues. Fellowes (2003: 4) goes on to say that since artists' books started to appear in libraries nearly 30 years ago, librarians, art historians, artists, and academics have been debating a definition. The next article touches on this aspect, considering the implications of attempting to place artists' books within a certain model in the galleries, libraries, archives, and museum set-up, while providing an alternate view from the perspective of the reader.

Belonging: Artists' Books and Readers in the Library (2007) by Eva Athanasiu considers the challenges that emerge through the institutionalising of artists' books in rare books or special collections models. While these systems encourage preservation, they disrupt access to collections and complicate processes of belonging.

Athanasiu (2007: 330) states that when the relationship between artists' books and readers is organised in the care of galleries, libraries, archives, and museums, certain challenges emerge. Athanasiu (2007: 330) goes on to state that it is problematic to institutionalise artists' books in the same way that rare books or special collections are, as it affects how readers and artists' books connect with one another. Prior to delving into the critique, it is necessary to acknowledge the difficulties of contemporary librarianship and the care of artists' book collections (Athanasiu 2007: 330).

According to Athanasiu (2007: 331), while there are models that provide increased access to collections—placing accessibility as a primary goal within the scope of mandates in galleries, libraries, archives, and museums—this work is difficult. Alluding to the previous

articles, Athanasiau (2007: 331) goes on to state that galleries, libraries, archives, and museums must constantly strike a delicate balance between preservation and engagement, a particularly difficult task in the face of diminishing resources. According to Athanasiau (2007: 331), artists' books require extra care and concern from librarians in the rare books or special collections model; their safekeeping is addressed as an essential and integral practise to guarantee the long-term health of collections. Athanasiau (2007: 333) emphasises this, explaining that art librarianship communities of practise, as well as rare books and special librarianship, gradually naturalised the category of artist's book. This happened as library staff normalised and legitimised the purchase of artists' books, invited the category into their discourse, and worked on cataloguing and storage schemes, among other things. (Athanasiau 2007: 333).

Athanasiau (2007: 334) references Sarah Mottalini (currently a curatorial assistant of Art Collections and Exhibitions at Union College), stating that she has alluded to a historical background in which artists' books have crossed institutional boundaries in a way that other art objects have never quite managed. This history allowed for the distribution of art works through alternative models such as library systems (Athanasiau 2007: 334). Athanasiau (2007: 335) goes on to state that artists' books remain isolated art objects subject to rarity and fetishism within the current context of rare books and special collections models. This complicated reality, according to Athanasiau (2007: 335), is reflected in the way artists' books are stored: the vast majority are kept in "non-browsing, non-circulating advance-request collections". Artists' books are typically limited to their immediate surroundings, known only to a specific minority of people (Athanasiau 2007: 335).

In terms of conservation, Athanasiau (2007: 335) is of the opinion that the predominant view of the need for preservation, as well as their coveted existence in the context of a gallery, library, archive, and museum collection, often dampens the potential usefulness of artists' books. Despite this, Athanasiau (2007: 336) observes that library staff are developing projects to help readers gain access to artists' books, such as public exhibitions, tours, class visits, one-on-one consultations, and incorporating collections into course programming, all of which can help promote and provide access to collections.

Artists' books, on the other hand, are frequently housed together in a restricted system when they are stored in a rare books or special collections model (AthanasIU 2007: 336). According to AthanasIU (2007: 337), the reach of analogue collections is extended beyond their library homes thanks to online resources such as digitisation projects and online exhibitions. These projects are fantastic resources, but they require the coordination of several key processes: detailed metadata, user-friendly interfaces, high-quality images, and intuitive browsing functions (AthanasIU 2007: 337). Furthermore, AthanasIU (2007: 337) explains that online resources are only as effective as the reader's digital and information literacy capabilities, and access to the Internet remains a significant barrier for many communities. AthanasIU (2007: 337) goes on to state that trying to navigate online catalogues to browse a collection can also be difficult, as cataloguing schemas vary greatly between institutions. The notion of digitisation and these various facets will be explored in more depth towards the end of the chapter.

AthanasIU's (2007: 337) final statement is that in both the library's online and offline spaces, outreach initiatives can support reader belonging, demonstrating that collections are ultimately for readers' use and learning, not just for institutional preservation. AthanasIU (2007: 337) rightly states that there are no perfect models for dealing with issues of access, and institutions must constantly negotiate the process. One must also consider the specific aspects related not only in where artists' books collections are kept, but also how they are kept and stored to facilitate the proper preservation controls. These specific topics will be discussed in the following article.

As mentioned previously, artists' books have a dichotomous existence in that they are valuable art objects, but unlike most traditional forms such as painting or sculpture they need to be handled by the viewer to be experienced fully. As such, artists' books straddle the space between the world of art museums or galleries and that of library special collections. Artists' books come in all shapes and sizes and often utilise non-conventional, precious, and/or oddly shaped materials, thus making appropriate storage and efficient usage difficult. This article titled *Shelving Methods and Questions of Storage and Access in Artists' Book Collections* (2012) by Annie Herlocker explores the varied methods

currently employed to solve the issues of storage and usage in libraries and discusses common problems and possible solutions.

Herlocker (2012: 67) states that artists' books are known for evading precise definition and attempts at categorisation frequently wind up being subjective and/or ambiguous. For instance, Herlocker (2012: 67) explains that the artist may have intended the book to be an artist's book, or the meaning of the book may derive equally from the book's physical form and content. This field's crucial and stimulating quality is its open-endedness, however, it also poses significant difficulties for classification, storage, and usage from the perspective of a library (Herlocker 2012: 67).

One of the most obviously and frequently mentioned aspects, according to Herlocker (2012: 68), is that artists' books are available in a variety of large, undersized, and irregularly sized formats, which might seriously jeopardise their security and safety (as well as the safety of nearby volumes) if the structures are not considered when housing them. The concept of an assortment of objects that are so dissimilar in shape and content, made from often valuable and fragile materials, but produced with the purpose of being handled multiple times, and stored within an institution capable of organised retrieval and preservation, appears to be a complex equation (Herlocker 2012: 68). Herlocker (2012: 68) states that some may argue that such a collection would appear more fitting for an art museum or gallery if not for the particularly intrinsic handling component. According to Herlocker (2012: 68), the difficulty is exacerbated by the fact that artists' books are sometimes stored alongside fine press editions, zines, and other related items. Herlocker (2012: 68) goes on to state that many libraries with artist's book collections have responded by utilising a rare books strategy for storage and access. As a result, artists' books are frequently kept in areas that only a librarian can access, so public access must be enabled and controlled by library employees (Herlocker 2012: 68). By neglecting the concept of patron browsing, Herlocker (2012: 68) explains that this approach eliminates the chance encounter with such a collection. Storage, access, and preservation are all intertwined challenges and there is no universal solution to the shelving and storage concerns that will inevitably develop in any collection of artists' books (Herlocker 2012:

68). However, Herlocker (2012: 68) states that there is no shortage of inventive solutions that are now being used in libraries that are coping with some of these challenges.

To avoid overly broad implications, Herlocker (2012: 69) explains that she exclusively chose university libraries and responses were received from a total of twenty participants. According to Herlocker (2012: 69), most of the librarians polled classified their collections as teaching collections that were used moderately to heavily, primarily through librarian or teacher-led discussions. Herlocker (2012: 69) goes on to say that only two of the twenty participating libraries have instances of both teacher-led and autonomous student use of the collection occurring at the same time. Herlocker (2012: 69) states that although students do seek out artists' book collections, it is far more frequent for lecturers to plan a day with the librarian to introduce them to certain books from the collection. Herlocker (2012: 69) explains that this guided tour of the collection, which is required for displaying proper handling of the objects and explaining the essence of such books to newcomers, frequently leads to subsequent solo student trips to the collection. Given that educational collections make up most of the collections assessed, Herlocker (2012: 70) states that most respondents noted instances of student requests for books with particular bindings, themes, or materials. In other words, the types of materials and structures used to create an artists' book collection are just as significant as the intellectual or topical content (Herlocker 2012: 70). Herlocker (2012: 70) goes on to explain that this multi-layered requirement for accessibility makes it difficult to utilise the collection and many of the libraries that participated in the survey stated that the artists' book collection is not open for browsing. Herlocker (2012: 70) then emphasises that the librarian or other staff member who serves as the collection's intermediary must be knowledgeable about the specifics of that collection to respond to patron inquiries effectively.

In terms of the actual storage, Herlocker (2012: 72) states that although other processing steps like indexing and labelling are crucial for the correct housing of artists' books, it is the physical storage approach that jeopardises their integrity as works of art. Additionally, Herlocker (2012: 72) explains that the requirement to conveniently access these items must continually be balanced against the necessity to retain them safely. Consequently, Herlocker (2012: 72) goes on to say that when working with a specific collection of artists'

books, librarians and library staff will undoubtedly gain a thorough understanding of the collection through hours spent shelving, curating exhibitions and classroom presentations, hand-picking acquisitions, and pulling books as requested by readers. However, Herlocker (2012: 72) states that there are numerous ways in which the more unusually shaped items in a collection could end up being isolated from the more approachable part of the collection. Depending on the way these items are housed, they may become lost or incur damage through contact with other mixed media/sculptural items in storage (Herlocker 2012: 72).

When it comes to allowing access to them, Herlocker (2012: 72) states that by their very nature, artists' books demand that the reader really see, hold, and explore them. In contrast to the previous articles, Herlocker (2012: 72) believes that to browse such a distinctive and varied collection solely using the online library catalogue eliminates the possibility of accidental discovery, thus perhaps not allowing some worthwhile books to be seen and experienced in an organic way. This also extends to the problems of storage. It seems impossible to simultaneously house artists' books in a way that ensures the greatest safety and permit patrons to peruse them, no matter how carefully regulated that browsing is (Herlocker 2012: 72). Herlocker (2012: 73) goes on to say that every artist's book collection will undoubtedly have peculiarities and requirements that are particular to its own library, which in turn has special areas and built-in shelves to meet those requirements. Although it is evident that barriers will always exist, Herlocker (2012: 73) explains that one strategy to maximise the use of a collection is to use the space that is already available, even when digital repositories or other finding aids are being developed. According to Herlocker (2012: 74), only a handful of the libraries studied had the resources or staff to create custom archival cloth-covered boxes, even though this is the perfect solution for some of the more unusually shaped books. Herlocker (2012: 74) explains that many of the libraries surveyed employ some archival storage (box or envelope) and that most of the time, archival-quality boxes will suffice, but occasionally, extra moulding inside the box may be necessary to hold the book firmly in place inside the boundaries of the straight-edged box. Miniature books also fall into this category because not all sizes and forms can be accommodated by standard-sized portfolio cases (Herlocker 2012: 74). Additionally, Herlocker (2012: 74) describes that the use of archival

boards or acid-free envelopes, although intended to shield books from damage and light, also block visibility of the contents.

Ultimately, Herlocker (2012: 75) states that the challenging problem of maintaining artists' books both accessible and secure has numerous potential solutions, many of which appear best suited to the specific library where the books are kept. There are, however, some recurring themes, such as the utilisation of closed-stack shelving and acid-free identifying tags (Herlocker 2012: 75). Herlocker (2012: 75) also explains that separating books by size in different closets or rooms solves the issues brought on by stacking bigger books next to smaller volumes. A finding aid could increase the connection between shelves and online catalogues, even though in most cases the librarian serves as the finding aid (Herlocker 2012: 75).

In closing, Herlocker (2012: 75) states that artists' books are distinctive in that they come to life not just through reading the text but also through comprehension of the setting and interaction with the physical artwork. While it is crucial to conserve these priceless, frequently expensive books in nearly immaculate condition, Herlocker (2012: 75) explains that it is also necessary that people have access to them. Ultimately, Herlocker (2012: 75) believes that the protection of the books as well as the integrity and usability of the collection can all be made a reality with a well-designed storage solution. Of course, proper storage plays a crucial role in the protection and conservation of artist's book collections, no matter which environment they find themselves (whether it be a gallery, library, archive, or museum). One solution that can be used in conjunction with proper storage facilities is digitisation of artists' books. This will be discussed in more depth in the following article.

- **Digitisation of artists' books**

Artists' Books and the Problem of Digital Preservation (2017) by Tyne Lowe considers the pros and cons presented by the act of digitising artists' books. The article states that many museums and libraries now actively seek out artists' books as part of their permanent collections. In relation to this, Lowe discusses that while it is important to keep artists'

books in print for future generations, there's often tension between that goal and the desire to increase public access to these unique and engaging works. The article goes on to describe how many institutions have established an online presence for their artists' book collections thanks to partial digitisation, expanding access to these works without jeopardising their physical condition. The crux of Lowe's article is that artists' books are often copied digitally, but this can compromise both the original work's integrity and the audience's ability to engage with its ideas. Overall, Lowe attempts to define the difficulty of digitally preserving artists' books and how it exemplifies the limitations of digital reformatting for works that may be conceptual and artistic in nature.

Lowe (2017: 132) begins by stating that, according to Judith Hoffberg's article titled *Distribution and its Discontents: The Perennial Problem of Artists' Books* (1990), MoMA, the Smithsonian Libraries at the University of California (Los Angeles), and the Joan Flasch Artists' Book Collection at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago all have notable collections of artists' books. Lowe (2017: 132) continues, stating that artists' books continue to be a challenge for institutions trying to balance access to and preservation of their investments, despite their popularity. As mentioned in the previous articles, many of the delicate, rare, and fragile items found in an artist's book collection are also of irregular size and shape (Lowe 2017: 132). According to Lowe (2017: 132), artists' books are subject to physical deterioration and wear from repeated use and due to being made from a variety of materials, including paper with varying degrees of acidity. Agreeing with the previous literature, Lowe (2017: 132) explains that these items are frequently kept in closed stacks in special collections and may need specialised handling, shelving, and environmental controls.

Lowe (2017: 132) states that the preservation measures available in controlled storage, as with any special collection, help to ensure the security and durability of these materials. However, due to the constrained operating hours that many libraries have, Lowe (2017: 132) expresses that storing these artists' books in closed stacks restricts their use and accessibility to researchers, visitors, and students. Contrarily, collecting institutions work to protect these interactive art pieces by expelling them from interactive contexts and many artists' books were designed to be handled to provide the user full access to the

object (Lowe 2017: 132). Lowe (2017: 133) echoes what was mentioned in the previous article by Athanasiu, stating that despite this, many libraries and museums offer opportunities for visitors to view, interact with, and gain knowledge about artists' books (public exhibitions, tours, class visits, one-on-one consultations, and integrating collections into course programming). According to Lowe (2017: 133), by creating finding aids and virtual exhibitions for their artists' books, many institutions have adopted further attempts to address the preservation/access issue. Lowe (2017: 133) goes on to state that researchers can learn more about the artwork in artist's book collections using these online resources either in place of or in addition to visiting the institution. However, when a work's physical attributes dictate its intellectual content, the distinction between physical form and contextual relevance becomes problematic (Lowe 2017: 133). Lowe (2017: 133) explains that many artists' books fall under this category. According to Lowe (2017: 133), if its digital substitute loses the original structural qualities, a piece of art that depends on the format of the book in its structural composition is drastically altered. Consequently, Lowe (2017: 133-134) describes that a digital substitute may never be able to fully encapsulate the intellectual content of the artwork. Therefore, the experience with a digital substitute may be very dissimilar from the experience with a real artists' book (Lowe 2017: 133-134). Lowe (2017: 134) states that a digital representation of an artist's book cannot be physically interacted with in the same way that the actual book can. Lowe (2017: 134) suggests that it might be simpler to convert some of these books to digital form than others, such as books in the traditional codex form as opposed to a folded map or a scroll. However, Lowe (2017: 134) explains that even software that simulates turning pages in a codex book by letting viewers "flip" from one digital image to the next does not accurately capture the sensory experience of doing so or the versatility of browsing the book in a nonlinear manner. Lowe (2017: 134) agrees that each user will have a unique experience with this tactile interaction with the material book.

Another facet that has not been mentioned before is that many institutions devoted to the stewardship of art objects are probably concerned with the pursuit of authenticity in preserving the intellectual content of an art object (Lowe 2017: 134). Consequently, Lowe (2017: 134) states that an artists' book's intellectual content might not be adequately preserved digitally, so digitising may not always be cost-effective.

To conclude, Lowe (2017: 135) states that librarians and curators of artists' book collections should assess the individual elements of artists' books that must be preserved and use the preservation methods that are most likely to protect these components, which may be digital, analogue, or a combination of the two.

I present the above problems, their solutions, and some new innovations mentioned from the perspectives of international museums, libraries, and galleries in the following chapter, all of which took place in online interviews. Following this, the current conservation climate in South Africa and the specific solutions implemented at the Jack Ginsberg Centre for Book Arts are discussed in light of these considerations.

Chapter Three: The conservation of South African mixed media artists' books in relation to artist's book collections in international museums.

▪ Introduction

The literature presented in the previous chapter provides a thorough overview of the challenges that museum professionals face in relation to mixed media artist's book collections. Apart from one article, most of the aforementioned literature presented aspects and challenges from Europe or the United States of America. Currently, there are no specific sources that present the conservation challenges of South African artists' books specifically, even though South Africa has the most extensive collection of artists' books in Southern Africa. The reasons for this are largely because the Jack Ginsberg Centre for Book Arts only opened recently, in 2019, and the training for proper conservation of art professionals in South Africa is relatively new. Isabelle McGinn (2017: 35) states in her article titled *Conservation Conversations: Moving Towards Training for Tangible Heritage Conservation at the University of Pretoria* that a shortage of properly qualified conservators in this sector and a lack of university qualifications in the subject of conservation have contributed to a dilemma in the status of conservation in South African museums and other heritage repositories, including those at higher education institutions. McGinn (2017: 35) goes on to say that the University of Pretoria's Masters in Tangible Heritage Conservation (for which this study is a part of) was recently awarded a multidisciplinary curriculum development grant, and her article analyses that grant's implications for the curriculum. McGinn (2017: 36) emphasises that working in silo is no longer preferred as the conservation method evolves. According to McGinn (2017: 36), a network of active conservators and related professionals in South Africa, Africa, and across the world is essential to the success of any conservation programme, as is interdepartmental cooperation and cooperation with other museums, libraries, and academic institutions. McGinn (2017: 36) goes on to state that the previously indicated expanding network may initially be used to bring in expert international help for such a programme. It is nevertheless imperative for South African institutions to strengthen their own educational capabilities, using what can be learnt from international stakeholders

(McGinn 2017: 36). In the case of the conservation, handling, and storage of artists' books, international strategies must be sought and likewise adapted for a South African context. This is the primary theme for this chapter, which I begin with an examination of the online interviews with international museums and art centres that house mixed media artists' books in their collection, discussing the overall preventative conservation and collection management strategies that are used by each of them. Each section includes analyses of some examples, showcasing discussions of various mixed media artists' books and the specific strategies used for their storage.

The next section of the chapter introduces the Jack Ginsberg Centre for Book Arts in South Africa in the context of the overall analysis of the tangible heritage conservation climate in South Africa and how it relates to mixed media artworks/artists' books. I then discuss the overall collection management/preventative conservation system at the Jack Ginsberg Centre for Book Arts, focusing on their specific storage areas and storage systems. This section concludes with the positive interventions already undertaken at the Jack Ginsberg Centre and includes an analysis of examples in the collection that are considered mixed media artists' books and the current specific strategies used for their storage.

The conclusion of the chapter compares the data from the international museums/art centres in relation to the current systems in place at the Jack Ginsberg Centre for Book Arts to define what international strategies can realistically be considered and implemented for a South African context.

▪ **Interviews**

Six online interviews were conducted with institutions of varying size and scope. What they all have in common is an extensive and intriguing collection of artists' books. When it comes to storing, exhibiting, and conserving its collections, each institution has a unique collection management system and strategy. This section begins with the three larger institutions, followed by the three institutions that can be classified as medium to small. The interviewees were provided with a list of questions before the interview, which

served as a guideline for our conversation. However, these were informal in structure and conversational, with each section giving an overview of what was discussed.

Museum of Modern Art (New York)

David Booth Conservation Department

Interview with Laura Neufeld (Associate Paper Conservator)

29 July 2022

The team of three paper conservators in Laura Neufeld's department rarely handles items from the library's collection due to the library's usage and collection policies. The Museum of Modern Art is a hybrid in that its various departments adhere to varying collection policies. Priorities in their workflow and conservation treatment are determined by whether the book is going on display or on loan. When dealing with objects made up of multiple parts, it sometimes helps to do some light stabilisation or re-housing.

Researchers have easier access to artists' books in a library setting, as opposed to the drawings and prints department, where staff is smaller, and the volume of requests is higher. To view artists' books, patrons must make an appointment through the library's reading room, while visitors to the drawings and prints section must be affiliated with a museum, gallery, or university. The number of artists' books likely numbers in the thousands, although that figure fluctuates widely across departments.

You can find many examples of artists' books crafted from difficult or delicate materials in the print and drawing section. Hans Bellmer's works are well represented (1902 - 1975) (Figure 18). There are many intricate details in these books, from the hand-coloured silver gelatine prints to the three-dimensional leather bindings with inlaid objects. An example is a collaboration between many artists that includes art by Bellmer and has a cover made by Duchamp titled *Le Surréalisme en 1947* (1947) (Figure 19). Some of these can be found in the photography department as well. This is an instance in which two distinct departments collect the same type of object for different reasons. When acquiring works

for the museum/library, MoMA is less concerned with the material qualities of mixed-media books and more interested in the conceptual aspects of the work. As such, they



Figure 18: Hans Bellmer, Plate from *La Poupée*, 1936. Gelatine silver print, 11.7 x 7.6 cm.

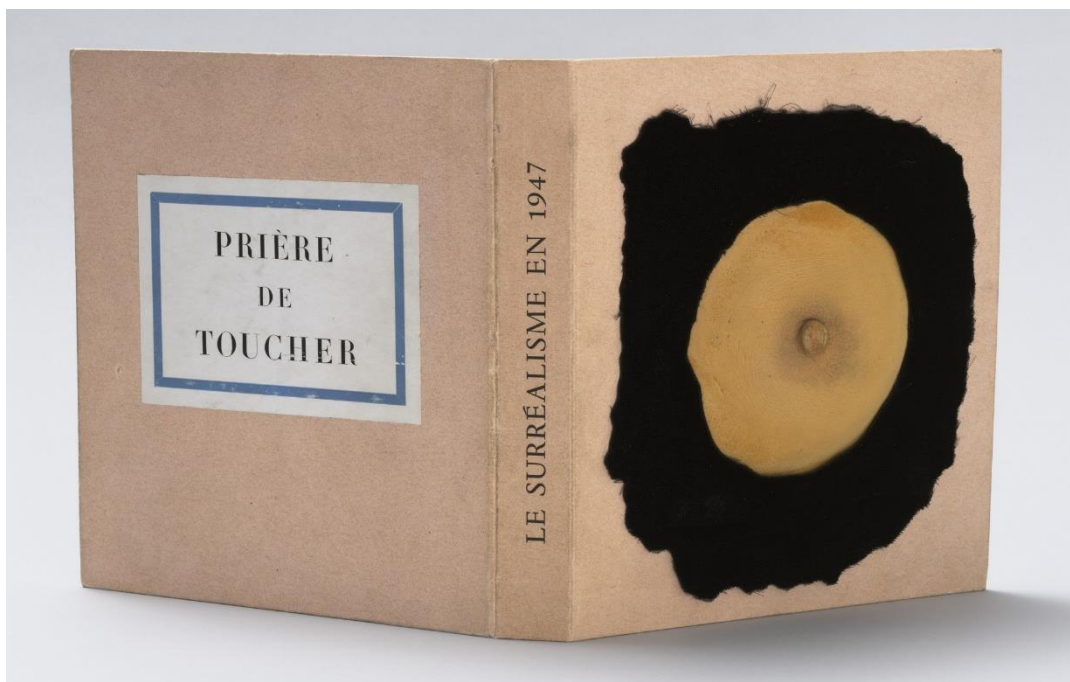


Figure 19: André Breton (Ed.), texts by Various Authors, *Le Surréalisme en 1947*, 1947. Multiple of foam rubber breast, velvet, and printed label mounted on cover from an illustrated book with eighteen lithographs, four etchings (two with aquatint), two woodcuts, one photogravure, and one ready-made object, 24 x 45 x 5.1 cm.

readily collect books that involve media that would seem complex to store/conservate and make every effort in its preservation and storage.

All their storage facilities have temperature control and are equipped with a fire suppression system to put out fires. They store all artists' books in gasketed, watertight cabinets. The temperature and humidity of the room where the books are kept can be monitored with the help of a data logger built into the climate control system. For less money, smaller facilities can opt for wireless digital data loggers that can be downloaded via USB. The cases are gasketed to prevent the creation of a microclimate, and data loggers are placed inside to monitor the environment. The best way to protect the books is to use a Bristol Board phase folder and keep them standing like they do in a library. It also means that the artwork and its box are not handled directly, adding an extra layer of protection afforded by the wrapping. Indeed, this holds true for any work of art. Some artists' books, especially those with more sculptural elements, may benefit from a blue board enclosure designed specifically for them, complete with custom-made boxes for any loose components. Books made of fragile paper or those bound with stab stitch or staples (like early Russian artists' books) (Figure 20) are stored completely flat within mylar sleeves and are placed in boxes by size or category. In this case, they cannot withstand the vertical storage format and may warp/bend.

Large institutions like the MoMA have the resources to devote time, money, and human and physical capital to addressing these optimal storage concerns. MoMA has off-site storage facilities as well. The library section uses a unique shelving system and storage strategy. Packaging and storing materials are all archival. Artwork that is more three-dimensional and may have cavities that need to be filled during storage and packing can be protected with materials like corrugated blue board, ethafoam, and velour. In addition, they employ phase folders, some of which are stock and others that are made to order. Vivak™ is another popular material; it's a lightweight acrylic that can be moulded easily (used to make cradles without specialised equipment). To create their unique storage solutions, they contract with a specialised manufacturer and staff of workers. When they can't afford to buy them, smaller institutions, in contrast, often make them in-house with the help of a variety of staff members that sometimes includes conservators.

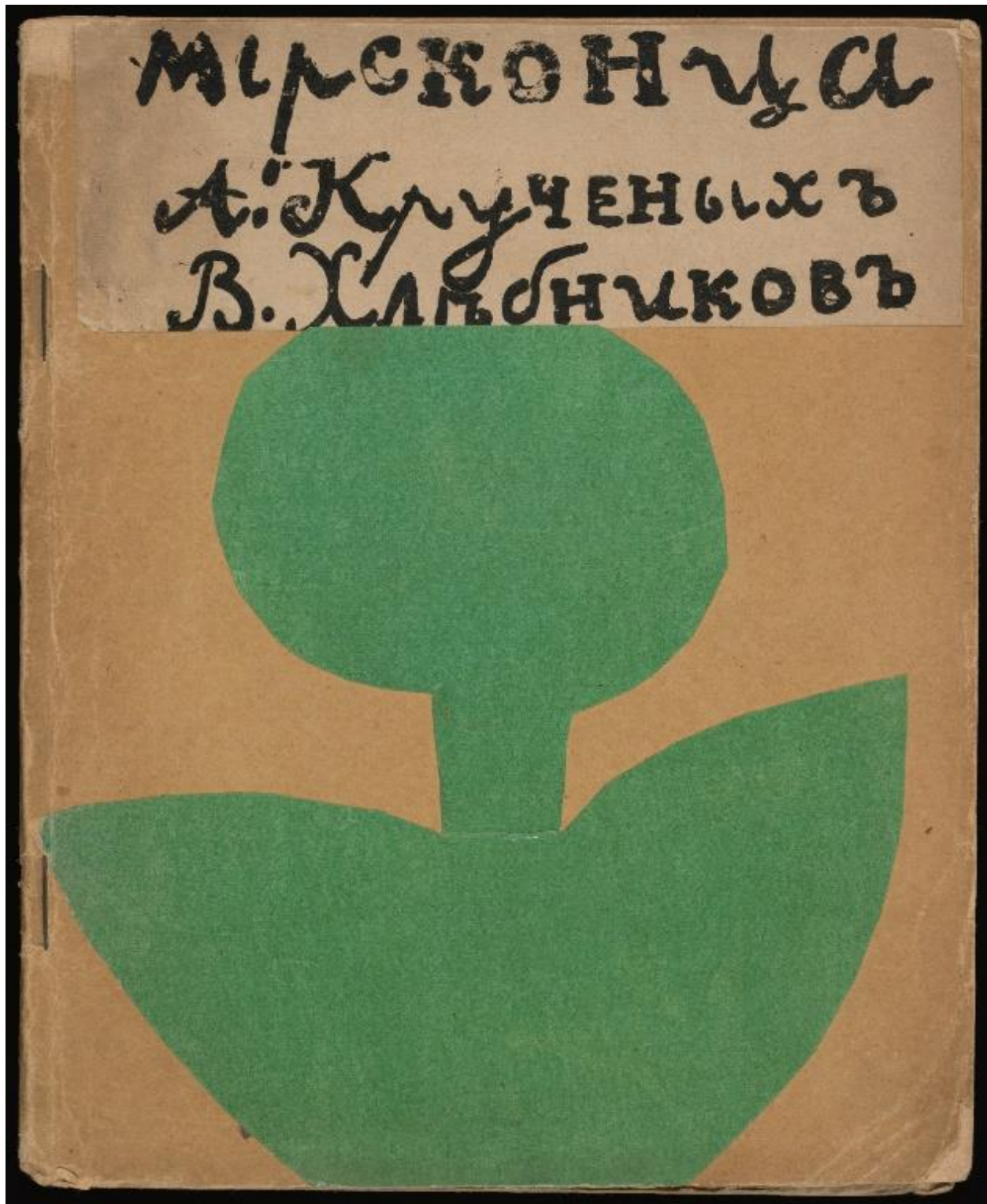


Figure 20: Various Artists with Natalia Goncharova, Mikhail Larionov, Nikolai Rogovin, Vladimir Tatlin, *Mirskontsa* (*Worldbackwards*), 1912. Illustrated book with twenty-seven lithographs, lithographed manuscript text, rubber-stamped text, and collaged cover, 19 x 13.2 cm.

Exhibiting artists' books, along with ephemera and archival materials, has become increasingly popular, with books being treated more like sculpture. In recent years, it has become standard practice for museums to display objects in a way that highlights their materiality. Books are displayed using specialised mounts that allow viewers to see the narrative without touching the object themselves and prevent physical damage to the books' bindings. Typical types of such mounts include v-shaped acrylic Perspex and vertical wall openings (floating open mounted books on the wall). Displaying them in this way protects them from the effects of pressure, gravity, and other factors that could compromise the integrity of the book over the course of the few months it will be on display.

Digitising books reduces wear and tear by letting readers "page" through an electronic version of the book, and it makes books available to readers in more locations. Could this, however, ever replace flipping through the pages and holding the book in your hands? What the reader or viewer learns is contingent on the book itself and their goals in reading or viewing the work. Damage and handling are inherent to the digitisation process, but they are much lower than the risk posed by repeated human handling. For some books, it may be the best option.

Paper conservators may seek the advice of conservators who specialise in other media types when dealing with mixed-media books. Corrosion problems could arise, for instance, in a book made of metal sheets. This promotes cooperation among the museum's various departments and encourages a more collaborative approach to the care of the museum's objects.

Environmental responsibility at MoMA needs to be improved. Due to storage constraints, custom mounts are typically discarded after use. Mounts created for the more frequently displayed items should be kept so that they can be used again in the future. It would be wise for them to keep track of the mounts and materials they already possess to maximise their use. It is possible for libraries with smaller collections to keep mounts for books that are frequently displayed. This would save money, materials, labour, and is more sustainable overall, but it cannot be done across the entire museum due to the sheer scale of the collections. This aspect will be discussed in greater depth in the interview

with the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, who have successfully implemented this system.

Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York)

Thomas J. Watson Library

Anonymous Interview

7 September 2022

The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Thomas J. Watson Library was established in 1870. The research and scholarly study collection of artists' publications is invaluable. Books, zines, bookworks, magazines, pamphlets, artists' files, reference books, dealer catalogues, pricelists, journals, and any other form of artists' publishing are all included in this international collection. In addition to receiving them as gifts and making financial investments, books can also be acquired in other ways. Around 10,000 books can be found in their extensive artists' book collection. Each new acquisition of an artist's book is deliberated upon and selected by a specific team. Chief librarians who include artists' books in the scope of special collections make up this group.

Artists' books are acquired with specific guidelines, and they are unphased by complex or difficult materials (except, perhaps, those that could be harmful to those handling them). For instance, a mixed media book object that includes a brown paper bag containing a variety of items, from bottles, shoes, and lead. This brings us to our next area of concern: a small number of books are off-limits for handling due to fragile or otherwise problematic content. As was previously mentioned, this can be addressed through measures like digitising books and installing signage in libraries detailing proper book handling. This is especially true for a book in the collection that is made of fragile saffron pasta (*The Onion as it is Cooked*, 1990, by Steven J. Bernstein) (Figure 21, Figure 22, and Figure 23) that recently went through the digitisation process in 2019. This book is also part of other well-known artists' book collections, including those I conducted interviews with (Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco and the Victoria and Albert

Museum). Even less common, but no less intriguing, is the practice of purchasing two copies of a book so that one can be used for handling purposes while the other is kept in secure storage. They both agree wholeheartedly that artists' books are best appreciated by physically handling them.

During his time as an intern at the Thomas J. Watson Library, Kyle Olmon created custom enclosures for each of the many miniature books (Figure 24, Figure 25, Figure 26, and Figure 27). The miniature books acquired by the library presented a challenge for Book Conservation because no suitable solution existed. The books could be pushed back and lost in the crowded shelves if they were only protected by Mylar. They would knock around and sustain dinged corners in the open interior of an archival storage box or four-flap enclosure. To address this issue, the Book Conservation team painstakingly created a beautiful small book insert template. The total time to cut, fold, and assemble the insert was around an hour. To save time and costs, Olmon was asked to investigate replacement materials and methods for their miniature book inserts by Book Conservation's Jenny Davis and the Preservation Librarian Mindell Dubansky. Olmon's background in paper engineering, gained over many years of working on projects like pop-up books and movable playing cards, seemed like it would be advantageous for this endeavour. Olmon describes this process in detail in an article titled *Enclosed Within: A Big Innovation for Small Books* (2016).

It is important to fill in any gaps in the artists' book collection when making purchases. Their collection is quite extensive, and it covers a wide range of topics and is stocked with works by renowned artists and writers (social and political). The primary criterion for collecting artists' books is that they relate to the MET's other art collections and make use of the book format in some way. The collection features numerous artists' books that utilise non-traditional or interdisciplinary media. Materials like rubber, polyethylene, and textiles can be found in certain volumes. Books that have edible components are an intriguing example that will be discussed further in other interviews.

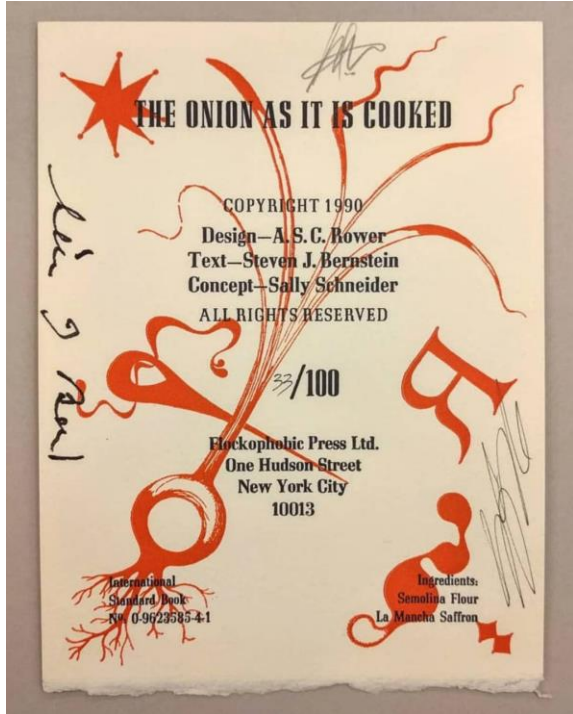


Figure 21 and 22: Steven J. Bernstein, *The Onion as it is Cooked*, 1990. Paper and envelope, baked semolina and saffron, ink, 32 cm.



Figure 23: *The Onion as it is Cooked* going through the digitisation process.

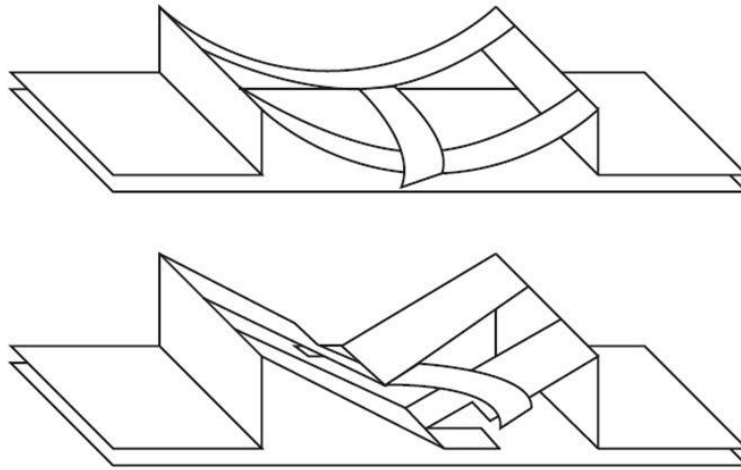


Figure 24: Kyle Olman, side view diagrams of the Kyle Inserts, 2016.

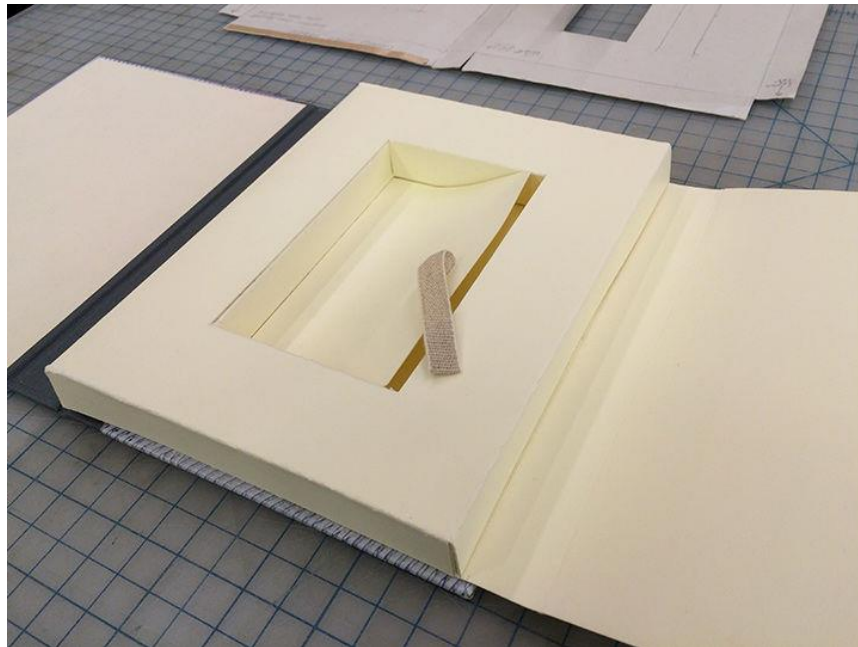


Figure 25: Thomas J. Watson Library, the library's original design for a small book insert, 2016.



Figure 26: Kyle Olman, an early prototype of the Kyle Insert version 1, 2016.



Figure 27: Kyle Olman, The Kyle Insert version 2 supporting a set of artists' books, 2016.

This is depicted in *The Candy Button Book* (1996) (Figure 28, Figure 29, Figure 30, and Figure 31) by Dubansky. They have well-regulated pest management in place, which is essential given the constant need to inspect food components for signs of infestation. A TALAS box with a Mylar sleeve protecting the book is used for long-term storage. All these mixed-media items require individualised conservation strategies due to the wide variety of materials that make up their parts. The most common methods of storage are archival boxes and Mylar sleeves. If there are many components, they are all kept together, but otherwise, each item is wrapped and stored in its own section. In terms of the overall space, they have the proper overall environmental controls and climate-controlled stacks. The library recognises the difficulty of housing mixed-media objects, so it plans to provide the best enclosures possible and to solicit help from other departments to collaborate on preservation efforts, much like the approach discussed with MoMA.

To view specific artists' books, visitors must schedule a viewing time in advance. Although appointments are scheduled digitally, patrons can make requests to view specific books during in-person library visits. A member of the staff will page the book and give some context about it during the scheduled appointment time. The viewer is shown a tutorial on proper book handling techniques to prevent any damage. Rare and fragile books are only available for viewing by appointment. At times, the library will host mini exhibitions to display some of the highlights of the collection. Books are displayed in vitrines for easier viewing (Figure 32, Figure 33, Figure 34, and Figure 35). It is up to the curator to decide what goes in each of the six vitrines, so the displays can take on a wide variety of forms. However, exhibitions are not the primary means of displaying the collection. The library has been holding more classes, exhibitions, and tours to raise the profile of its collection.



Figure 28: Mindell Dubansky, *The Candy Button Book*, 1996. Printed mylar pages, candy dots, and mousetrap, 6 x 31 cm. Edition: 20.



Figure 29: Mindell Dubansky, *The Candy Button Book*, 1996. Printed mylar pages, candy dots, and mousetrap, 6 x 31 cm. Edition: 20.

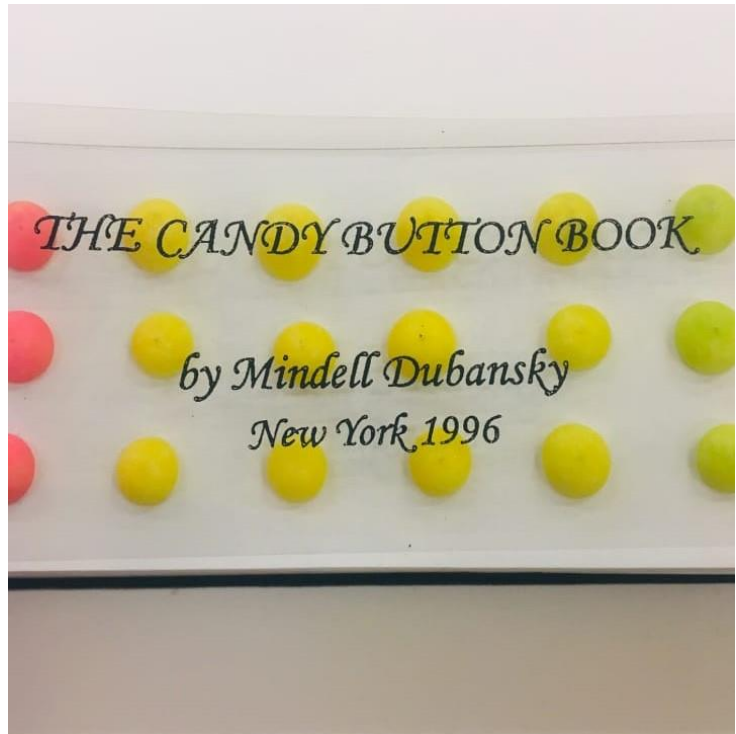


Figure 30: Mindell Dubansky, *The Candy Button Book*, 1996. Printed mylar pages, candy dots, and mousetrap, 6 x 31 cm.



Figure 31: Mindell Dubansky, *The Candy Button Book*, 1996. Printed mylar pages, candy dots, and mousetrap, 6 x 31 cm. Edition: 20.



Figure 32: Vitrine display at the Thomas J. Watson Library. Phillips, H. 2022.



Figure 33: Vitrine display at the Thomas J. Watson Library. Phillips, H. 2022.



Figure 34: Vitrine display at the Thomas J. Watson Library. Phillips, H. 2022.



Figure 35: Vitrine display at the Thomas J. Watson Library. Phillips, H. 2021.

During our conversation, I mentioned how much I enjoyed looking at the library's Instagram page, which featured magnificent pictures of different artists' books along with interesting information about them. It dawned on me that this was a fantastic method of reaching many people from various parts of the world and allowing them to enjoy these books digitally. Considering the pervasiveness of social media in modern life, this seems especially important from a preservation standpoint. Even if a potential viewer is not actively seeking out a digital version of a work of art, they may stumble across it in their social media feed, which provides an entirely new viewing context. In addition to still photographs, you can also watch videos of people flipping through and handling these books. The following interview will go into greater detail on this topic.

Victoria & Albert Museum (London)

National Art Library

Interview with Bindy Wilson (Operations Coordinator) and Catriona Gourlay (Assistant Curator)

16 September 2022

The entire collection, including artists' books, falls under Bindy Wilson's purview as she oversees the library's conservation and storage efforts. In addition to these duties, she chooses which works to add to the collection, manages the exhibition, and contributes blog posts on the topic of artists' involvement in the acquisition and collection of artists' books. Two librarians and two curatorial staff have been appointed to assist with the acquisition and collection of artists' books. Gourlay collects all the recommendations, and then they hold meetings on a regular basis to discuss the recommendations and examine examples of artwork to decide whether the book should be added to the collection. When necessary, they get input from other departments like the drawings and photography departments.

The National Art Library collection is the repository for the largest bulk of the artists' books. The museum's curatorial staff and conservators are welcome to utilise the library

for research. Since the library is open to the public, anyone can come peruse the reading rooms and look at the artists' books that are on display. They serve as the museum's curatorial division for the book's art, craft, and design in addition to being a library. For that reason, they serve a dual function. As a library housed within a museum, they are afforded some autonomy in terms of collection development but are nonetheless bound by the museum's policies and procedures. Artists' books, for instance, must comply with standard museum protocols before being loaned out for exhibitions. They are currently situated between the museum and library frameworks. Visitors can drop by the library to view the collection of artists' books without making an appointment in advance, albeit it may take up to 90 minutes to track for a specific volume. Setting up a viewing appointment in advance to request a certain book is the most efficient method. Books that are more complicated, more difficult to retrieve, more hazardous, or more valuable than average will require special handling. The reason for this is that some of these books need to be evaluated in advance by curators before they can be shown to the public. This evaluation will determine whether the entire book can be displayed, if only a portion can be shown, or if the person interested in viewing it needs to come on a specific day. Visitors will be directed to the special collections area when they arrive. A staff member will present the viewer with the book and depending on the complexity or fragility of the book, the staff member will either stay with the viewer to provide additional advice or will step aside to let the viewer to page through the book alone.

In terms of digitisation, one thing they have been experimenting with recently is making videos of them being handled. Two years ago, as Gourlay was putting together an exhibit, this topic naturally arose. If you want to showcase an artist's book, you'll have to pick only one spread to put on display in the case, which won't provide visitors the same immersive experience as handling the book in person in the reading room. For instance, Gourlay cites a book with an excavation motif. A piece of jewellery and the book were packaged together in a box. In the exhibition, the reader's experience of unpacking the object was an excavation in and of itself, and the object itself could not be appreciated in its entirety by simply looking at it in a case. To broaden the audience's understanding of the object, Gourlay filmed her hands as she removed the book from its packaging and began to examine it as the viewer might in person. While Gourlay has tried to keep up with this

promising project, making videos about all the artists' books in the collection is just not possible due to a lack of labour and funding. The museum's "ASMR" videos that they have shared online, which include artists' books, have employed this strategy as well. Videos like these just offer one possible interpretation, which isn't perfect but is better than gazing at still images or seeing only a small portion from a book. This sparked a conversation on the potential of online and social media platforms to broaden the reach of artist's book collections while reducing the amount of wear and tear on the books themselves, which is important from a preservation standpoint. Viewers can experience these books in a more natural way through these videos than they would through static photos alone from the digitization process. However, as was previously indicated, a single person handling these works could only offer a single viewpoint, which could omit the original artists' intentions.

Paper and book conservators examine every artist's book that will be on display to determine if any repairs are necessary and whether the books will need special mounting or stands. Commonly, they use purpose-built book stands for books in the standard codex format, although a custom mount can be constructed for rare or unusual items. Both in-house specialists and outside vendors work together to meet the conservator's exacting standards for each mount. While books are on exhibit for an extended amount of time, they are kept in secure cabinets; when they are being utilised in conjunction with a presentation or tour, they are presented on display tables with the aid of book cushions or wedges.

Each artist's book is given careful consideration when it comes to being shelved. When deciding what kind of storage to employ for their mixed-media artworks, they take a close look at the components at play. For instance, metals that react poorly should be placed against buffered paper, and plastics should not be stored alongside other plastics. This is the sort of thing that gets considered. It would be part of a bigger conversation with other conservators if there were elements of the book that were intrinsically going to damage each other. The artwork would be left intact and not dismantled. There would be close observation of the object until the deterioration became too great and had to be mitigated. Also, if they can get in touch with the artist, they might be able to get new

components if they become damaged (if the artist is still living). They refer to a handmade artist book bound with an elastic band material and constructed from painted photographic negatives (*Filmboekje* by Beppe Kessler, 1987) (Figure 36). The elastic bands in this 1980s-era book had long since crumbled, and the pages within were deteriorating. As a result, the book was no longer bound. After consulting with the conservation department, the elastic bands were removed, stored with the book in a Melinex sleeve, and replaced with a thread that gave the same impression but would not degrade. During that time, they attempted to reach out to the artist for direction but were unable to make contact. On another occasion, an artist approached the museum about an issue with deteriorating staples in previous editions of their book. The artist has offered to provide a new edition, free of staples, in exchange for the old one. Since the staples were not in their original copy, they did not feel the need to replace it. Since deaccessioning can be tricky, they might have contemplated maintaining both the original and the new copy.

Overall, the powder-coated steel shelving and drawers provide adequate storage space for the artists' books. The library has a system for tracking environmental conditions, however not all the rooms are climate controlled. Although they do not always have complete control over each storage location, they do routinely check on the objects they have. They make every effort to keep the artists' books in a more environmentally stable location. Materials for archival storage include Melinex sleeves, polypropylene sleeves, and archival boxes/board. Books manufactured out of unusual materials are not excluded from being included to the library's collection. It would be decided on a case-by-case basis after discussing the potential risks and benefits with competent conservators regarding longevity and storage. Discussions like this would help them decide whether to add the book to their library. Hazardous substances would be given more significant attention. There is also the issue of the collection including a book printed in 1946 on very low-quality paper, which is highly brittle and easily damaged. While its historical significance in the artists' book genre is undeniable, the book's durability was a cause for concern. They eventually did buy the book, and as soon as they did, they proceeded to take photographs of it. The book is usually kept in storage and is not frequently taken out and handled. So, in most cases, they do attempt to manage challenging items.



Figure 36: Beppe Kessler, *Filmboekje*, 1987. 35mm film cut, painted, and bound with elastic bands, 5 x 4 cm. Edition: 30

Regarding improvements, they would like to acquire more objects but lack the funding and room to do so. As the National Art Library does not have a separate budget for artists' books, money for such purchases must be taken from the general library fund. Although they are a larger institution, they are nevertheless required to exercise discretion when purchasing artists' books.

Center for Book Arts (New York)

Interview with Corina Reynolds (Executive Director) and Gillian Lee (Librarian)

16 August 2022

There are around five thousand objects in the fine arts collection. This includes everything from broadsides and prints to artists' books and book sculptures. Gillian Lee (librarian) oversees artists' books and reports to Corina Reynolds, the company's executive director.

With a less than \$1 million annual spending budget, The Center for Book Arts is regarded as a modest non-profit. It is a 5,000-square-foot facility in real terms (approx. 465 square meters) and they have a designated space for their library collection, but no dedicated reading room. An entire corridor has been dedicated to their reference library. A special room designated as the Fine Arts Study houses the extensive art archive and collection. There are 150 square feet in this space (approx. fourteen square meters). This is also the space where the librarian (Lee) has their desk. There are eight sections of huge flat files and compact shelving for storing the artist books. They are definitely concerned about space. Since their collection normally expands through donations, and some things that are presented are too large for them to house. So, if they had additional space or facilities to house or store artists' books, that would be more ideal. For instance, one of their pieces is a sizable sculptural artist's book that is stored in a large wooden crate that frequently changes locations because they are unsure about where it should be kept.

When it comes to collecting artists' books, there are no fixed rules or standards based on the content of the books themselves. When considering whether to add something to their collection, they discuss any potential difficulties. A book by Ben Denzer (Figure 37),

whose books are a part of many other collections of artists' books, serves as an illustration of this. Denzer is no stranger to making books out of edible materials. This book is created entirely of Heinz ketchup packets, with the packets serving as the pages. This book has been in their possession for four years, and they have two copies of it.



Figure 37: Ben Denzer, *5 Ketchups*, 2019. Book comprised of five Heinz ketchup packets, bound in hardcover, 9 x 4 x 4cm.

In one copy, they punctured the ketchup packets and extracted as much ketchup as they could. To prevent any harm to other books, the other copy is retained intact and kept in a plastic Tupperware-style container. They also have a book made of lead that needs to be stored in a very specific way due to its hazardous contents. Most of the collection can be seen in photo form in their online catalogue. Nearly half of their artists' book collection is made up of multi-media pieces. They have wooden books, altered book sculptures, and glass books with lightbulbs within them. Some of these mixed-media objects would be best preserved in cold storage, which requires the resources of a large museum. Several of the things in the collection are edible, as was previously indicated. Another example is a sealed jar of sauce with a label on it. Due to the lack of knowledge about the object's potential fate in five to ten years, cold storage is the best option for preserving such items. Their first line of defence is to enclose everything in boxes; separating the artwork from its surroundings is crucial. Custom enclosures help a lot, as does maintaining close environmental monitoring and stability. Due to a lack of resources and an influx of new objects, the cataloguing process is currently moving at a slow pace. The protocol is to prioritise fragile or delicate objects right away by adding them to the inventory first so they can be safely stored, by stabilising it and making a large enough enclosure for them. The specifics of this procedure are item and problem dependent. Due to space and resource constraints, fragile things, especially those that are oversized, should be temporarily housed elsewhere. This is done so that extra-large artworks do not have to go without suitable housing for any longer than is necessary. For example, they were given a book with sandpaper covers as a donation. This required urgent placement in a pamphlet binder to prevent damage to other books. A second example is a book whose pages are constructed of thin carbon copy paper. For this book, a pamphlet binder and an envelope are essential. The books are stored vertically so that they retain their original form. Smaller books are kept upright on a shelf in boxes or wrapped in envelopes. Books that are too big for standard bookcases or have an odd shape are laid out flat. Lee and their conservation intern, who comes in once a week, create all their mounts and boxes. Archival folder stock and blue board, as well as archival envelopes, are used for all packing. Boxes are made with PVA adhesive, and books with unusual shapes have boxes with foam inside. The only thing they cannot be sure about is whether the foam is archival

quality. They strive to strike a balance between using the resources they have on hand and creating perfect enclosures. Since they do not have a huge budget, they make use of donated materials and attempt to reuse items. To reduce waste, they make use of leftover materials in inventive ways, such as cushioning with scraps or using smaller pieces as book flags (Figure 38).

The exhibition of the artists' books and book art takes place in dedicated gallery spaces. Due to their extensive concentration on book art, certain items may be displayed in frames, on the floor (for more sculptural works), and on shelves. Books are displayed in a select few glass cases with bonnets, but most of the items behind the plexiglass are either on loan from other institutions or are so fragile that they cannot be handled or presented in any other way (Figure 39 and Figure 40). They urge viewers to physically handle the books in their collection. Given that they are a small institution, they do not have to be concerned about the wear and tear that may arise from handling owing to the small number of individuals wishing to view the books. Their primary goal is to educate the public about the significance of this medium. They try to display the artists' books in a way that invites audience participation through handling. Each exhibition has a unique layout according to its theme or the objects on view, but easy public access to the artists' books is always a priority. To prevent damage from occurring because of the stress of being on display, the books are held open and kept supported with Mylar bands and cradles. Books with stab binding or fragile spines are displayed closed.

Their funds are extremely limited, and up until recently, they did not even have a librarian on staff. Volunteers performed most of the work in the past. They accept donations from the public because they are a non-profit organisation. Reynolds typically tries to start a dialogue about the potential donation of items that would be valuable for the centre's collection when she encounters someone that she knows has a sizable collection of artists' books or book art. People do occasionally get in touch asking if the centre can accept donations of items they no longer want. In most cases, there are folks who are making their final preparations and who want to ensure that their possessions will be put to good use. While artists' books do occasionally appear, reference books predominate.



Figure 38: Artists' book storage at the Center for Book arts. Lee, G. 2022.



Figure 39: Vitrine display at the Center for Book arts. Lee, G. 2022.

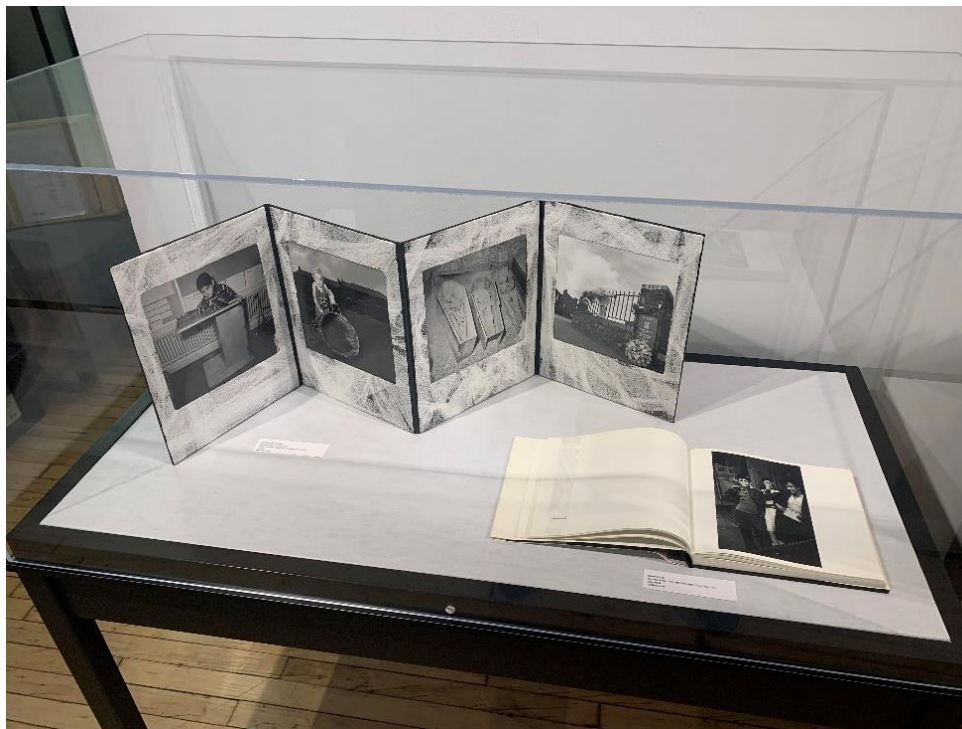


Figure 40: Vitrine display at the Center for Book Arts. Lee, G. 2022.

It is possible to schedule a viewing of a book in advance, although walk-ins are welcome on select days as well. To get the most out of the centre's resources when searching for a certain book, it is recommended to schedule a formal appointment in advance. As a result, they require a 24-hour notice period, but they are not as stringent as larger organisations. The viewing area is always monitored, but the viewer is allowed to handle the book on their own after being instructed on proper handling and reminded to only place books on top of newsprint. The tables and space are shared for art projects and workshops; thus, the newsprint serves as a barrier.

They have an extensive list of enhancements they want to implement, but neither the workforce nor the budget to make them all a reality. For starters, they would want to have far more space than they do now; Reynolds says this would be used to create a reading room, separating their viewing and production of books. Since Lee could arrange everything a day ahead of time, this would also simplify viewing the books at planned sessions. The library's ability to make acquisitions, rather than relying solely on book donations, would also benefit from an increase in financing. They would then be able to prioritise what they acquire in this way. Increased staffing would be another significant benefit. Currently, they rely on volunteers and internships. A larger workforce would allow them to speed up the process of building enclosures and cataloguing the books. In addition to solving current problems, they would like the chance to offer paid internships and to have the ability to create search aids that would let users access the collection in a more sophisticated and targeted manner. They have a large number of masters graduates who are willing to conduct unpaid internships, but they believe it is crucial to be able to offer paid internships, if possible, in order to support individuals who are passionate about the profession with their living expenses.

School of the Art Institute of Chicago

John M. Flaxman Library

Interview with April Sheridan (Special Collections Manager)

31 August 2022

Their artists' book collection consists of around 12,200 catalogued books, with an additional 300 books to be catalogued. Their website is very appealing, and their catalogue is simple to peruse. As a part of the art school, the library houses a specialised selection of artists' books. April Sheridan is the only full-time employee in charge of the collection. Her responsibilities include supervising student workers and training them to work in the reading room, as well as conservation.

Prior to the pandemic, they normally saw around 6,000 visitors annually. This figure incorporates undergraduates enrolling at the School of the Art Institute Chicago. The collection of artists' books is obligatory viewing as part of their curriculum. At the time of our interview, they had scheduled roughly 100 out of a possible 200 appointments for the semester. When Sheridan requests a book loan for an exhibition or requests additional library funds, she must go via the library's dean.

In the days before the pandemic, they were the sole public area on campus. Since no appointment was necessary to view the collection, access to viewing artists' books was thus fairly straightforward. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, they were only accepting appointments at the time of our interview. To schedule an appointment to view the books, one can send an email requesting a viewing time. They operate somewhat differently from other organisations in terms of their collection of artists' books. Due to initial funding constraints, the collection is heavily weighted toward democratic multiples. The high price tag of unique items discourages them from making too many purchases in this area. So, most of their artists' books are editioned. Books will always be purchased with storage space in mind; therefore, considerations of construction and material are considered prior to purchase. There are a few titles that explore non-traditional forms and media like bread and chocolate, but these are the exception rather than the rule. They are unlikely to buy any more books like these. They are fascinating to look at and display to demonstrate the variety and breadth of formats that artists' books can take. After our discussion, I looked at their web catalogue and a search for mixed media objects returned nearly 300 hits. Not as out-of-the-ordinary as bread or chocolate, but nevertheless fascinating in terms of the potential storage and conservation needs they present, these books cover a wide range of media. Glass, 3D-printed books, metal books, cement, slate, bindings made from pig

intestine, thread, fabrics, and dirt are among the materials found in their collection of artists' books. For example, the book with the pig intestine binding is a very large book (91.44 cm x 121.92 cm). Therefore, they purchased a custom-made box and placed it in a spacious storage area. The 3D printed books are too fragile to remove from standard boxes, so special boxes were also created for them so that the artwork could be removed without lifting them (and carefully slide them out).

The lack of available room for additional storage is a major problem. The alternative and mixed-media book collections require special shelving and storage. For example, their rooms have climate control, and their books are kept in/on metal cabinets. The chocolate books, like one titled *Bisous* (date unknown) by Magnus Irvin, is surprisingly stable, yet it is degrading, with a thin film covering the chocolate components (Figure 41).

When necessary, Sheridan performs modest repairs on some of the books. The books they collect are used as a resource for education, thus the topics they cover are significant. Their goal is to amass a library full of works that give a platform to marginalised peoples' voices. Almost every department at the art school instructs artists in some sort of publication, including bookbinding programmes. In general, they evaluate how well something is made and if it can hold up to thousands of people handling it every day. Therefore, both the quality of the work and the subject matter are crucial. Many of their books are also kept in the reading room, in the same steel cabinets. The cabinets are left open so that readers can see the books inside. Access to the books is crucial, but students still need supervision and permission to handle them. Despite artists' books being somewhat of a hybrid and lesser-known medium to the public, this collection sees the most interest and curiosity. They offer one or two exhibitions per semester as well as one or two in the summer. These are restricted access art pieces, so Sheridan must be present in the room to facilitate the handling of such objects. However, as previously mentioned, they really do want viewers to have easy access to the books. When handling the restricted access books, it provides an additional opportunity to teach the students how to handle the artworks, especially if they are fragile.

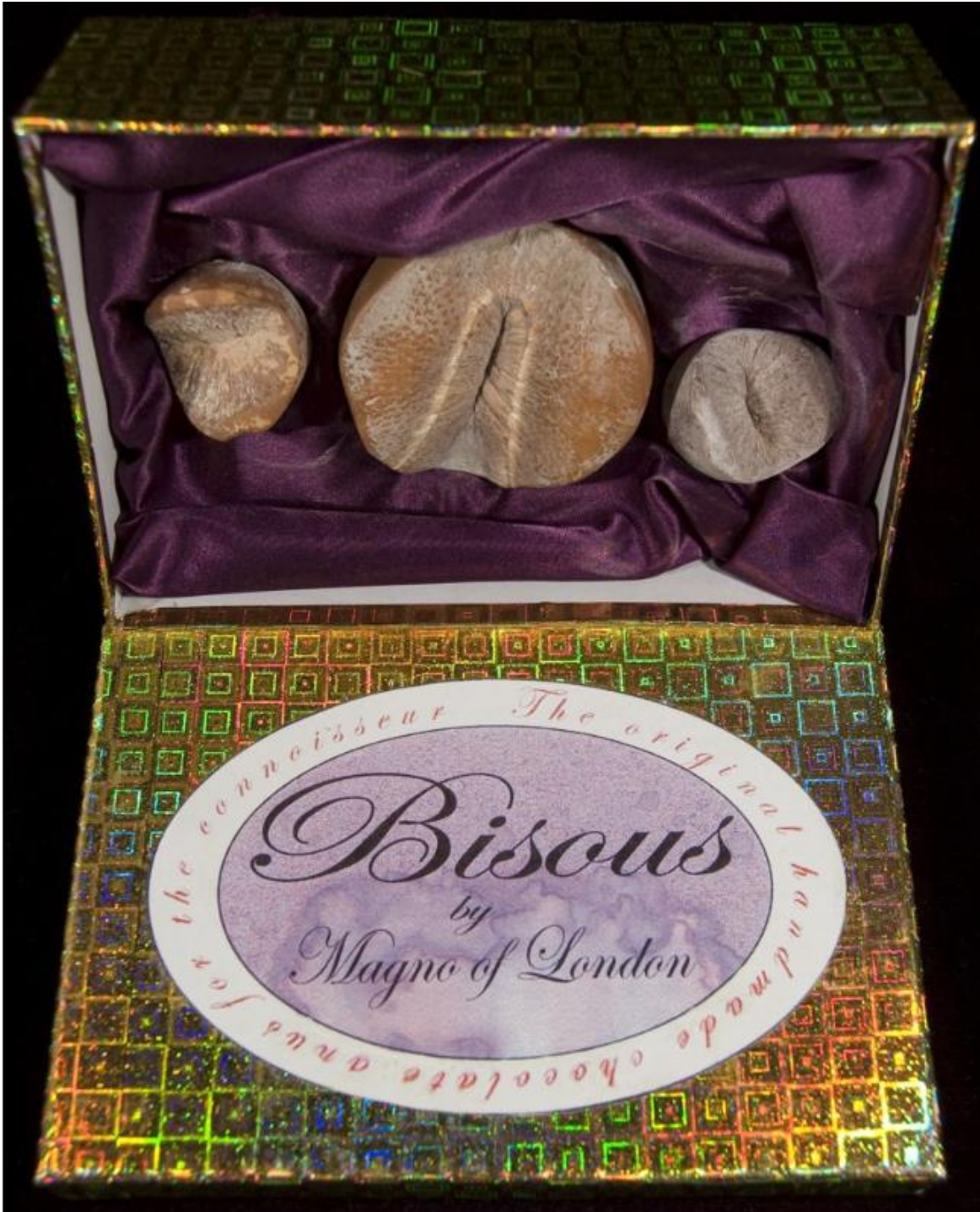


Figure 41: Magnus Irvin, *Bisous*, date unknown. Box of three different casts in milk-chocolate with cloth, 11 x 16 x 6 cm.

Due to a lack of resources, there are likely at least one thousand books that require improved storage and/or housing. They wish they had more personnel and an unlimited money to purchase these items. They try to utilise current archival materials. Using these materials, Sheridan creates the enclosures herself and trains students in workshops on how to do so. The museum of the Art Institute provides them with guidance and materials in this regard.

The museum has provided them with a large quantity of matt-board cradles of various sizes for use in exhibitions. These are also utilised in the reading room. Some of the display cases are not optimal due to their very limited dimensions and sliding glass doors. They are not suitable for displaying books or using cradles because they lack sufficient depth. They are acceptable for usage with smaller works and zines. Some exhibition cases contain Plexi shelves, and some books are displayed on shelves.

With support from the institute, humidity and environmental controls are in place. They have a book in their collection made of vellum that is easily impacted by humidity; this is the first indicator that allows them to detect environmental changes.

As stated in prior interviews, they too desire more space to properly store their collection. If one intends to expand or grow, it is recommended to have 10 to 20 percent additional space. When space is insufficient, collection problems develop. Even if additional room is created, it will eventually be utilised. It appears that every institution interviewed faces a space shortage.

Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco

Legion of Honor Museum

Interview with Victoria Binder (Head of Paper Conservation) and Allison Brewer (Assistant Paper Conservator)

15 August 2022

Their collection consists of more than 400 artists' books, with a curator in charge of the works on paper collection and a book curator working under contract for the museum.

These two curators collaborate to determine which books to acquire for their collection. Beginning with a donation from Chicago residents Reva and David Logan in the years between 1998 and 2001, the Museums received a significant donation of about 300 luxury artists' books. I would like to take a moment to comment on the excellent section of their website that addresses artists' books in general and exhibits a few examples from their collection. It is engaging visually and interactively and serves as a wonderful introduction to their collection for those who wish to know more or see it in person.

To acquire new books for the collection, a comprehensive acquisitions procedure is in place. If an artwork is being considered for the collection, the curators will first consult with Victoria Binder. Most of their collection is extremely varied and encyclopaedic, and they avoid placing constraints on it. They enjoy having an intriguing variety of artists' books with varied materials as a result. For example, if a book is made of a material that will fade over time, they accept that this object will not last, but this is not a restriction for bringing something into the collection. They are flexible and will collect complex works to have an exciting collection. At their institution, it is essential to emphasise that they consider these books to be works of art and that every component should be treated as such. Therefore, their collection of artists' books is distinct from library collections. All their artists' books are kept in a dedicated compact storage facility and are stored in a specific manner. The book curator will seek for specific gaps in the collection that they would like to fill when determining what to collect. Since they also collect from a particular publishing business, occasionally intriguing items are discovered. Poems written on a measuring tape and a timer that can be reset each time the book is opened are just two examples of the mixed-media books they have in their collection. When it comes to storage, each book is evaluated upon arrival, and custom boxes are made for each one. Most of the boxes are housed horizontally, not vertically like other books in library collections (Figure 42). This reintroduces the notion that these books are considered works of art, and that they are stored in the best possible manner. Each book is measured with a measurement device to determine its highest and longest length. Then, depending on these dimensions, they custom order boxes. These boxes are manufactured from archival blue board. In addition, they offer custom-made clam-shell packaging composed of book board and bookbinding cloth. Some of the boxes are manufactured in-house and adapted to fit

particular books (e.g., a few miniature Picasso books stored in a large, retrofitted box). It is obviously a case-by-case basis.



Figure 42: Storage boxes for the artists' books in the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco collection, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco.

There are a variety of environmental controls in place. The entire curatorial department, where everything is stored in stacks, has a temperature and relative humidity of 50RH and 60 degrees Fahrenheit. These systems are administered by the institution's engineers. In addition, monitoring devices are installed within the stacks, and these devices monitor the environment to ensure that no extreme fluctuations are occurring.

When viewing the books, they adhere to specific procedures. They have a presentation detailing the proper handling of the books. This consists of custom-upholstered book pads and weights used to support books of various sizes. Each member of the team has received instruction on how to specifically handle the books. Prior to the pandemic, appointments were required to view the collection. During a viewing, both Binder and Brewer, along with curators from other departments, are present.

The primary difficulty is a space problem, which many institutions are currently experiencing. As stated in every other interview, they are currently acquiring more books than they can manage. In their situation, they have an entire stack of books that still require proper storage, and they are running out of space. Except for a few institutions, money is tight for the vast majority. Consequently, this is also a concern, although they can make do for the most part, always having the finances to construct housing for new collection items and to mount books properly. To extend their storage facility, they would need a substantial amount of additional funds if they desired further capacity.

They employ extremely unique display systems, with a vast assortment of book mounts organised in a list according to precise dimensions. When they received the Logan collection, bespoke mounts were created for each book. These acrylic mounts have a particular height, width, and angle. These are applicable to a variety of books, not simply the Logan collection. If a mount is required, one might review the list to determine if it is a feasible match for the book they wish to exhibit. In addition, they have an assortment of Benchmark¹⁰ butterfly mounts that they order from a catalogue. This is so that they may tailor it to the individual needs of each book. These butterfly mounts are also constructed

¹⁰ Benchmark has worked since 1980 to enhance the display possibilities of museums, galleries, historical societies, corporate and individual collections through bespoke mount making and on-site artefact installation. In 1990, Benchmark published its first catalogue of over 200 equipment and materials tailored to the unique installation requirements of exhibitions.

of acrylic and feature adjustable hardware, allowing them to be adapted for each book. In addition, they offer pamphlet mounts for items that require support. Bendable Vivak PETG sheets of varying thicknesses can be used to create unique mounts, if necessary. They are extremely eco-friendly and maintain/reuse all these mounts.

There is a gallery dedicated to the artists' books, and the venue hosts several exhibitions. They normally present three to four shows every year (Figure 43). When preparing an exhibition, they use a printed floor plan of the gallery. The team then removes all the books that the curator wishes to exhibit and discusses inventive ways to display them. This includes determining the best pages/openings to display for each book, as well as the order in which things are displayed.



Figure 43: The Logan Gallery at the Legion of Honor, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco.

Depending on how the book is created or bound, they then discuss whether they wish to display the books in a conventional manner or in an inventive manner. Viewers can observe the artists' book collection because of how the books are shown during their numerous exhibitions. Although there is no alternative for viewing these books in person, they have digitised some of them to augment their exhibitions. Their website contains photographic documentation of their collection to increase accessibility. Due to a severe lack of personnel, they are unable to digitise the remainder (or all) of their collection. Some exhibits used an iPad to display a full book alongside the display of the actual book, allowing visitors to flip through the entire book while examining the actual object.

Despite their international nature, the artist's book collections discussed in the interviews allow one to see the complexities involved when housing mixed media collections, especially in relation to the hybrid nature that is artists' books. How do these complexities translate within the South African conservation and collections management framework? To answer this question, let us consider the overall climate in which South Africa's conservation and collection management systems exist.

- **The tangible heritage conservation climate in South Africa**

According to McGinn (2017: 37), collections' deterioration and loss can also be attributed to a variety of variables, which can be divided into two broad classes. McGinn (2017: 37) refers to an article compiled by H.G. Schuit, D. Bull, and M. Holtrop titled *Shared heritage in museums in South Africa: Opportunities for collaboration* (2017) that specifies the details of a collaborative effort by Dutch and South African museum professionals to establish the state of shared heritage in South African museums. The purpose of their study tour was to facilitate communication between museum professionals working in South Africa and the Netherlands regarding the collections over which they have jurisdiction in a range of settings, from large, well-known national museums to more intimate public house museums (Schuit, Bull, and Holtrop 2017: 4). It was also hoped that by visiting South African institutions, they could get a sense of the breadth of collections

and historical interiors that can be regarded as common cultural heritage, as well as their tangible condition and the desires of their South African colleagues for mutual exchanges of information on conservation and collections management of works both on display and in storage (Schuit, Bull, and Holtrop 2017: 4). Thus, the intended audience comprised the curators, restorers, and conservators working in public museums around South Africa (Schuit, Bull, and Holtrop 2017: 4). First, according to Schuit, Bull, and Holtrop (2017: 4) insufficient funding causes poor circumstances for storing, displaying, and conserving cultural materials. Schuit, Bull, and Holtrop (2017: 10-12) state that this might take the form of decreased subsidies and mishandling of finances, infrastructure and buildings that are getting on in years due to budget restrictions, deferred upkeep and repair, and a lack of specialised budgets for conservation. Caused by the same lack of funds, management buy-in for preventative conservation is low, and competing users of scarce resources cause tension (Schuit, Bull & Holtrop 2017:10-12).

McGinn (2017: 37-38) explains that the term "conservation" encompasses a wide range of practices, including "restoration," "intervention," and "preventive" conservation. McGinn (2017: 37-38) goes on to state that the term "restoration" is used to describe the process of bringing anything back to its original form, whether that be in terms of functionality or aesthetics and the term "remedial conservation" describes procedures used to stabilise items and stop or slow the degradation or decay that has already begun. McGinn (2017: 37-38) explains that the first line of defence in preventive conservation is the building's structural integrity, but the procedure continues all the way down to the object level to make sure nothing is damaged. According to McGinn (2017: 37-38), preventive conservation, when done properly, ensures the long-term health of collections and extends their lifespan, neither of which are immediately apparent. Successful preventive conservation is often disregarded as unnecessary, and without adequate support, it receives little encouragement from management, especially at smaller institutions, because its results are not immediately apparent (McGinn 2017: 37-38). Human resource issues, such as a lack of experience, conservation experts nearing retirement, a lack of succession planning, and a lack of local training opportunities for the growth of younger personnel, are a second category of contributors to the poor condition of preservation of collections (Schuit, Bull & Holtrop 2017:25).

McGinn (2017: 38) explains that according to Schuit, Bull & Holtrop (2017: 5-6), limitations in both financial and human resources mean that many museums and libraries must rely on a small number of employees to do a wide variety of tasks, including curating and researching collections, managing storage space, and performing both preventative and corrective conservation measures. McGinn (2017: 38) explains that these hardworking people frequently have few tools at their disposal, scant conservation training, and less guidance from seasoned professionals. Since this is the case, Schuit, Bull & Holtrop (2017: 5-6) state that most conservation is reactive, with more elaborate restorative treatments performed by private practice conservators if funds permit or an insurance pay-out is accessible (McGinn 2017: 38).

Thus, McGinn (2017: 38) states that the current condition of conservation in South Africa can be attributed to a combination of limited skills and competence in conservation and a general misconception at management level that collections form the foundation of a museum's rationale, McGinn (2017: 38) further states that conserving the collections assures the longevity of the museum and lessens the need for future costly repairs. According to McGinn (2017: 38), the dearth of professional conservators in the sector, the absence of academic degrees in the subject of conservation (until recently), and the inadequate exposure to preventative conservation as part of standard museological training all contribute to these difficulties. In all cases, then, there is a demand for highly educated specialists who can act as advocates for heritage conservation and preservation, including interventive conservators, conservation managers, and collection managers (McGinn 2017: 38). McGinn (2017: 38) goes on to state that the South African heritage conservation sector is not, however, bereft of conservation education. McGinn (2017: 38) explains that multiple educational possibilities have emerged over the years, as reported by the European Network for Conservation Restoration Education (ENCORE) (2014). The catch, according to McGinn (2017: 38), is that these are niche channels. McGinn (2017: 38) states that according to the ENCORE report (2014: 6) these programmes require many staff members due to the specialised nature of each aspect of conservation, the prohibitive cost of the necessary equipment and materials, and the small class sizes (5–12 students) required to guarantee sufficient personalised attention and supervision during conservation projects.

McGinn (2017: 38-39) concludes that dwindling human and financial resources are just one example of the many present concerns that contribute to the deterioration of collections in South Africa. McGinn (2017: 38-39) goes on to state that due to budgetary constraints, existing local training options have also been unable to make a meaningful influence on a national scale. The rationale behind a new preservation initiative is on the value of preserving historical artefacts (McGinn 2017: 38-39). Now, how do all these factors relate to mixed media art collections in South Africa, and in particular, mixed media artists' books?

- **Mixed media artists' books in (South) Africa**

On an international scale, artists' books from Africa have been showcased at the National Museum of African Art at the Smithsonian (Washington) in the form of an exhibition of books in their collection. Janet Stanley (Librarian in the National Museum of African Art at the Smithsonian) wrote an introduction titled *Artists' Books and Africa: Unique Visions*. Stanley (2015) states that the exhibition intended to introduce the genre of artists' books by surveying "African" manifestations of the art form, as artists' books are not typically associated with African art. According to Stanley (2015), books from the National Museum of African Art's Warren M. Robbins Library and the Smithsonian Libraries' collection were highlighted. The range of these books is extensive, beginning with illustrated atlas folios from the nineteenth century and ending with contemporary artists' books (Stanley 2015).

Stanley (2015) explains that while contemporary artists' books have become popular in South Africa, this trend has not yet caught on in the rest of Africa. One possible reason for this, according to Stanley (2015), is that college courses in Africa typically do not cover book arts. Stanley (2015) goes on to say that only those African artists who have studied or worked abroad and been exposed to artists' books have taken up the medium outside of South Africa. Some names that suggest themselves include Toufik Berramdane (Morocco), Atta Kwami (Ghana), Rachid Korachi (Algeria), Hassan Musa (Sudan), Abdoulaye Ndoeye (Senegal), and Otobong Edet Nkanga (Nigeria) (Stanley 2015). According to Stanley (2015), most of the African artists that were featured in this exhibition

are book artists who are pushing the medium in new directions, and they do not primarily use this medium. Stanley (2015) ends by stating that book arts thrive in South Africa and makes specific reference to the Jack Ginsberg collection. At the time of this exhibition, the Jack Ginsberg Centre for Book Arts had not yet opened, and the only way to see the collection was to make an appointment to view it privately at Ginsberg's home.

After the Centre opened in 2019, housed in the Wits Art Museum's (WAM) newest wing, Pamela Allara authored an article a few months later for *Art Africa* magazine titled *Samplings: South African Artists' Books*. The magazine focuses on contemporary art from Africa and the diaspora, and this article reviews an exhibition held at the Centre showcasing a snippet of the collection to introduce it to the public. According to Allara (2019), the Jack Ginsberg Centre for Book Arts (JGCBA) debuted in March 2019 to widespread praise. At the time, Allara (2019) states that The Ginsberg Collection has nearly three thousand artists' books as well as vast research publications and archival resources on the subject, making the JGCBA the preeminent designated location for the exhibition of artists' books on the African continent, if not the world (2019). Now, in 2022, that number has likely increased.

In the 1970s, Allara (2019) states that when interest in fine bookmaking was growing in both Europe and the United States, Ginsberg began his collection of artists' books. The JGCBA has become an essential resource for scholars and art lovers interested in the development of artists' books due to its breadth of coverage and the exceptional quality of its original works (Allara 2019). Allara (2019) focuses on some exciting examples of mixed/alternate media that was showcased at this exhibition include *Bookmatch Book* (2018), with 'pages' constructed from many different types of wood that serve to constitute its narrative by Allan Laing and Pippa Skotnes' *Book of the Divine Consolation*, from her *Book of Iterations* series (2004-18) (Figure 44). Skotnes' book comprises text that is written in black on the skeleton of an actual horse, with the addition of gold leaf (Allara 2019). Allara (2019) goes on to state that the exhibition featured books made from a wide variety of unconventional sources, from student-created zines to Maya Marx's t-shirt books. Three glass books by Berco Wilsenach titled *The Archive of Memory* (1995) sit atop a desk against the left wall (Figure 45). The volumes contain mug shots, but the

pages are too fragile to turn (Allara 2019). A book made from rusted metal saw blades and gold leaf titled *Very Brief Chaucer Reader: Prologue to the Canterbury Tales c. 500* (1993) by Judith Mason was also featured (Figure 45). David Paton, (Associate Professor in the Department of Visual Art, University of Johannesburg with a keen scholarly interest in artists' books in South Africa) and Rosalind Cleaver (Ginsberg's assistant and now the Special Collections Librarian at the JGCBA) teamed up to curate the exhibition. They are both part of the team that assisted to bring the collection to the public and began the task, along with Ginsberg, of creating an online catalogue of South African artists' books.

Paton wrote an article titled *The Bookness of a Book: Cataloging Affect in South African Artists' Books* (2020) to chronicle his journey with Ginsberg, Cleaver, and software developer Peter Dennis as they set out to compile a database of all South African artists' books in 2005. Paton (2020: 521) states that they started building a bibliographic project by connecting the artists' books in the Ginsberg Collection with others that Paton had found during his research and that this would be an all-inclusive, publicly available online database of a country's output. However, Paton (2020: 521) explains that this national output of artists' books represents only a tiny fraction of South Africa's total artistic output, and that the majority of the country's citizens are unfamiliar with the genre and unclear on how to define it. One of the most well-known challenges in artists' book cataloguing is figuring out how to classify works that blur genres and make competing claims within the book arts (Paton 2020: 521). Despite the difficulties, Paton (2020: 521) states that considerable progress can be made in this setting. In light of the 2019 donation of the collection to WITS University, Paton (2020: 521) discusses some of their efforts to bring greater public attention to these local objects and to ensure that the cataloguing of these books accounts for their emotive nature as art objects.



Figure 44: Allen Laing, *Bookmatch Book*, 2018 (front); Pippa Skotnes, *Book of the Divine Consolation*, 2004-18 (back). Installation view. Allara, P. 2019



Figure 45: Berco Wilsenach, *The Archive of Memory*, 1995 (top); Judith Mason, *Very Brief Chaucer Reader: Prologue to the Canterbury Tales c. 500*, 1993 (bottom). Installation view. Allara, P. 2019.

Paton (2020: 522) begins by saying that South Africa's book-arts scene is extremely divided. One downside, according to Paton (2020: 522), is the relative rarity of those involved; only about twenty-five artists can claim to have used the book as a significant medium in their overall body of work. This echoes what Stanley had stated in terms of book art not being many contemporary South African artists' sole medium. Unfortunately, many book artists do their work alone, without the guidance of book arts dealers or access to commercial outlets (Paton 2020: 522). Paton (2020: 522) goes on to explain that the availability of exhibition spaces is extremely low, and there is widespread lack of familiarity with the concept of an artist's book in the public.

Every facet of this effort to catalogue artists' books by South African artists is underpinned by their vulnerability and emotional significance (Paton 2020: 522-523). According to Paton (2020: 522-523), this effort appears to be entangled in a high-stakes game of saving the artist's book from oblivion. Paton (2020: 522-523) states that this is the case in a nation where the arts, both visual and performing, face severe funding constraints and where calls for attention are frequently overshadowed by the louder and more divisive voices of the economy and politics. South African book artists, despite these challenges, are strong and independent thinkers who address the politics of national, cultural, and individual identity (Paton 2020: 523). Paton (2020: 523) states that this sets the local scene apart from a well-resourced international scene where technical and professional expertise and literary concepts take priority.

As mentioned in the article written by Allara, it was not until 2019 that Ginsberg made the collection public, after keeping it private for his own enjoyment (Paton 2020: 524). Paton (2020: 524) explains that when Ginsberg's private collection was made public, however, it revealed the oddities, eccentricities, and unique qualities that compiled not only the character of the collector but also the breadth of the collection, the emotional weight of a life's work. According to Paton (2020: 524), keeping track of his personal collection in a way that suited Ginsberg was one thing; making that information available to the public was another (2020: 524). In the notes section of the article, Paton (2020: 545) describes that Ginsberg's collection includes South African art, books on South African and international art, first editions, rare books, fine press books and bindings, international

artists' books, South African artists' books, books on artists' books, tracts, exhibition and sales catalogues and ephemera, and dissertations, theses, and journal articles on the book arts.

Paton (2020: 544) concludes by saying that it is crucial that the Ginsberg Collection not be hidden away in the library's "special collections," but integrated into the University's art museum. Their goal, according to Paton (2020: 544), is to increase the visibility of South African artists' books, and their new home at the Centre will allow them to host several themed exhibitions each year. It will also serve as the repository for the improved and enlarged database of South African artists' books, ensuring the database will remain accessible to the public online (Paton 2020: 544). In the future, Paton (2020: 544) states that they hope to see artists' books included in the results of a library catalogue search for book-related materials at the University. However, this increased exposure compels them to finish the mammoth task of describing and cataloguing the many thousands of artists' books from around the world that are part of the collection in terms as emotionally resonant as those used to describe the South African books (Paton 2020: 544).

The essay by Paton provided a quick summary of the context in which artists' books are housed. The Centre is part of a university art gallery and not a library. As such, the Centre is part of a gallery/museum structure, and its approach to housing and displaying their collection reflects this. Besides holding frequent thematic exhibitions and workshops, the database mentioned in Paton's article helps to promote the library's holdings by making them more accessible to the public (thanks to the inclusion of photographs of the books). Ginsberg also arranges walkabouts, which feature either exhibiting artists displaying and discussing their work or Ginsberg himself presenting various books.

- **Storage concerns and access to the Jack Ginsberg Centre for Book Arts collection**

There are distinct sections for storing and displaying the books. However, several of the cabinets in the exhibition room feature a display part above and yellow book storage drawers below (Figure 46). These drawers are secured and only unlocked when an

individual arrives to view the collection. In the centre of the exhibition space are tables and chairs used for displaying books to guests or for workshops. The display cabinets are large and deep, with some installed on top of drawer-equipped cabinets and others on the wall. Some are longer, allowing for the display of long accordion-folded volumes or many books. Each display case contains lighting that is individually adjustable (Figure 47 and Figure 48). Overall, these are quite effective at exhibiting many types of artists' books, as they allow the spectator to view numerous aspects of the books. For sculptural books, the tables can be moved out of the way to offer floor space for display, or larger exhibitions can be presented in a different portion of the museum. If you are interested in seeing certain books from the collection, you will need to schedule a time to meet with Cleaver outside of the exhibition hours.

Unless you have an appointment to view the collection, only the librarian and staff have access to the storage section, which is inaccessible to the public. There are distinct sections for artists' books, reference books, and rare/interesting books that are not artists' books. Where books are housed is mostly determined by their material or size. For example, books that require their own boxes are stored together, while books with spiral binding are shelved together to prevent damage to other books that may be placed next to them (Figure 49). Smaller and irregularly shaped books are stored in specific drawers to prevent them from being misplaced or damaged (Figure 50, Figure 51, and Figure 52). Artist books that feature non-traditional media or larger shapes that are not in a traditional codex format are typically stored in boxes (Figure 53, Figure 54, and Figure 55) or cloth sleeves in cabinet drawers (Figure 56 and Figure 57). Traditional codex shaped artists' books are stored upright on their metal shelves (Figure 58), while some of the previously mentioned boxes for the unconventional items are stored either on the upper shelves or inside drawers (Figure 59 and Figure 60). Cleaver creates the boxes and most of the storage solutions. Their workforce is small, but they have recently hired an assistant to assist with any necessary tasks in this area. The museum has implemented the necessary climate controls within the storage room, which is the same throughout the building.



Figure 46: Display cabinets and drawers at the JGCBA. Photograph taken by the author. 2022.



Figure 47: Display cabinets and drawers at the JGCBA. Photograph taken by the author. 2022.



Figure 48: Display cabinets and drawers at the JGCBA. Photograph taken by the author. 2022



Figure 49: Storage for spiral bound artists' books at the JGCBA. Photograph taken by the author. 2022.

The two major concerns noted in the international interviews, namely storage and funding, appear to be related issues. Ginsberg has been privately funding the Centre's new acquisitions and storage materials, so money was not a problem in the setup phase. However, they have noted that archival storage materials can be quite expensive, so they try to strike a balance by using as many archival quality materials as possible without going over budget. Storage is undoubtedly a problem at WAM because there is not much room for expansion (unless extra space can be allocated within the museum). This is especially clear with respect to larger objects, such as the previously mentioned book object by Skotnes. Since it is a large horse skeleton, it is difficult to store and would demand a considerable amount of storage space if stored properly. It has been wrapped in a cloth and is currently being stored along a wall (Figure 61). Since Ginsberg has been to several different museums and art centres around the world that house artist's book collections, he has a good idea of how they should be kept, displayed, and preserved. Due to her background in the fine arts, Cleaver is also familiar with the archival standards for various media types. Yet, due to a general lack of expertise in this field among South African museum professionals, there are some preservation concerns that have yet to be addressed. Among these are worries about the long-term effects of composite media and the various types of materials that can and should be utilised to create the enclosures for their books. Since there is no skilled workforce to make necessary repairs or stabilise the collection, conservation is also a challenge. Issues with pest control have been identified and are being addressed; nonetheless, it would be prudent to strengthen current practises by adding measures like cold storage for specific objects and other solutions that consider the book's composition. Staff education in fundamental book repair and stabilisation techniques, as well as communication with the specialists already trained in these areas, may help alleviate this problem. Not as many people visit as may cause concern about wear and tear on the books, like the experience at smaller international institutions that were surveyed. This would allow individuals to experience the books in person, which is the best option. Consequently, I do not think it is necessary to digitise the collection currently due to the lack of personnel and equipment necessary to do so. In the future, I do believe that this is something to consider. The international institutions that have been successful in sharing their collections with a wider audience are the ones that have used

various online channels, such as social media and online videos, in addition to the online catalogue and multiple exhibitions and workshops. To increase the public's familiarity with the Centre's collection, I suggest creating a specific social media platform for it to share content about the collection and videos of staff members interacting with the books. These methods can be used in exhibitions as well, where films of books being handled can be presented alongside the physical books themselves. Since artists' books are vulnerable under excessive handling, increasing interest in the collection through various mediums is ultimately a conservation concern, but it also allows for exposure to a larger audience, which could result in more funding opportunities. The funds raised might then be used to upgrade the storage facilities, hire more qualified personnel, and provide them with conservation training.



Figure 50: Storage for small and irregularly shaped artists' books at the JGCBA. Photograph taken by the author. 2022.



Figure 51: Storage for small and irregularly shaped artists' books at the JGCBA. Photograph taken by the author. 2022.



Figure 52: Storage for small and irregularly shaped artists' books at the JGCBA. Photograph taken by the author. 2022.



Figure 53: Some artists' books at the JGCBA that feature non-traditional media or larger shapes are stored in boxes. Photograph taken by author. 2022.



Figure 54: Some artists' books at the JGCBA that feature non-traditional media or larger shapes are stored in boxes. Photograph taken by author. 2022.



Figure 55: Some artists' books at the JGCBA that feature non-traditional media or larger shapes are stored in boxes. Photograph taken by author. 2022.



Figure 56: Some artists' books at the JGCBA that feature non-traditional media or larger shapes are stored in cloth sleeves inside cabinet drawers. Photograph taken by author. 2022.



Figure 57: Some artists' books at the JGCBA that feature non-traditional media or larger shapes are stored in cloth sleeves inside cabinet drawers. Photograph taken by author. 2022.



Figure 58: Traditional codex shaped artists' books are stored upright on their metal shelves. Photograph taken by author. 2022.



Figure 59: Some of the previously mentioned boxes for the unconventional items are stored either on the upper shelves or inside drawers. Photograph taken by author. 2022.



Figure 60: Some of the previously mentioned boxes for the unconventional items are stored either on the upper shelves or inside drawers. Photograph taken by author. 2022.



Figure 61: Book object by Skotnes wrapped in a cloth and currently being stored along a wall. Photograph taken by author. 2022.

- **Case studies of specific mixed media artists' books in the collection at JGCBA**

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, the collection comprises of many mixed media artists' books. When visiting the Centre, I viewed the storage solutions undertaken for these books. Overall, archival materials have been used where possible for the storage elements. The main concern for these books would be their storage needs in the long term, due to their mixed media materials. This section serves to highlight three examples of the collection that would need to be carefully considered in terms of their preservation aspects.

1. *Bism - The Body at the Centre of All* (2012) curated by Belinda Blignaut (various artists) (Figure 62 – Figure 67).

This artists' book features many different materials. The book is housed in a custom wooden box featuring the title in red painted stencil and is bound with three silver bolts. Inside the box is a sealed plastic Ziploc bag with various objects. There is another Ziploc bag on the inside of the book with other elements on featured pages. The book is stored flat in its original box inside one of the yellow cabinet drawers. The wooden box protects the book itself as well as other books that are stored alongside it. Consideration of the plastic elements and the contents will need to be considered in terms of future conservation.

2. *Troyeville Diary* (2011) by Judith Mason (Figure 68 – 78).

On the cover is a graphic depicting a corrugated wall with bullet holes of varying sizes shot through it, enclosed by corrugated boards. Three leather strings hold the pages together inside the corrugated iron covers. There is a twisted piece of rusty wire connecting the two covers. Included comes a pair of cotton gloves, one with yellow trim and one with black, both of which have the name "Troyville" stiched on them. Rawhide, corrugated iron, corroded wire, oiled paper, packing tape, and fluted cardboard are just some of the components that went into making this book. The book is housed in a box created by Cleaver and is wrapped in a type of linen cloth. The box is stored on one of

the metal shelves. The box serves some protection for the book and its various elements, as well as its surroundings. Special attention needs to be paid to the plastic elements as well as the rusted metal. It is important to note that the rust present on the metal has been chosen specifically for the aesthetic qualities of the book and has not rusted due to environmental issues. In this case, one would need to carefully monitor the rusted elements, while attempting to maintain the metal as well as the other elements (which also may present their own issues) in the book that may be affected by it without attempting to alter its aesthetic.

3. *WunderCabinet - The Curious Worlds of Barbara Hodgson & Claudia Cohen* (2011) by Claudia Cohen and Barbara Hodgson (Figure 79 – 83).

This book is one of the international artists' books housed at the Centre designed by Barbara Hodgson. The book is printed on damp paper and includes a copperplate etching. Authors have embellished their works by hand using colouring and other techniques and was bound by Claudia Cohen. The book's binding is made of full leather in black, grey, green, and beige with gold tooling and green marbled endpapers. The book and its 44 companion items are held in a bespoke box with compartments underneath, on top, at the side of the book, and in two drawers on the second level. The lid of the box is adorned with green leather and the title is engraved in green, grey, and beige marquetry. The entire box is trimmed in gold. The book and its accompanying cabinet style box is stored wrapped in cloth and placed inside a box made by Cleaver. The box has been placed on a metal cabinet with other special collections items. Overall, due to the high-quality materials used to make this artwork, it is in a very stable condition. However, care must be taken with regards to the various elements that accompany the book, due to the organic nature of the materials. The organic elements in this book would be especially sensitive to pests.



Figure 62: Curated by Belinda Blignaut (various artists), *Bism - The Body at the Centre of All*, 2012. Bound with three silver bolts and housed in a wooden box with the title on the front. The box also contains sealed plastic bag with various objects, 365 x 250 x 85mm. Edition: 10. Wooden box detail. Photograph taken by the author. 2022.



Figure 63: Curated by Belinda Blignaut (various artists), *Bism - The Body at the Centre of All*, 2012. Bound with three silver bolts and housed in a wooden box with the title on the front. The box also contains sealed plastic bag with various objects, 365 x 250 x 85mm. Edition: 10. Binding detail. Photograph taken by the author. 2022.



Figure 64: Curated by Belinda Blignaut (various artists), *Bism - The Body at the Centre of All*, 2012. Bound with three silver bolts and housed in a wooden box with the title on the front. The box also contains sealed plastic bag with various objects, 365 x 250 x 85mm. Edition: 10. Sealed plastic bag detail. Photograph taken by the author. 2022.

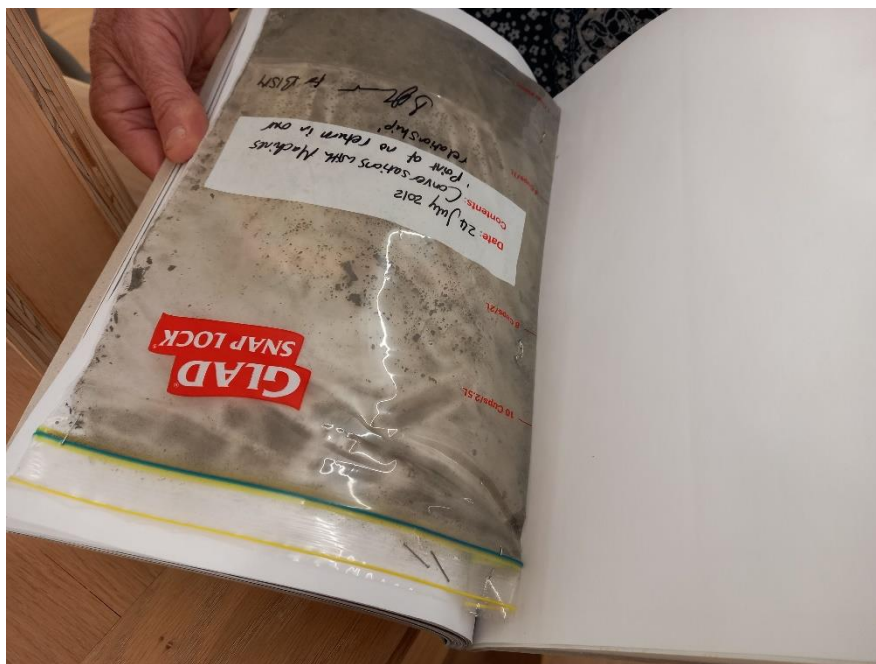


Figure 65: Curated by Belinda Blignaut (various artists), *Bism - The Body at the Centre of All*, 2012. Bound with three silver bolts and housed in a wooden box with the title on the front. The box also contains sealed plastic bag with various objects, 365 x 250 x 85mm. Edition: 10. Interior detail. Photograph taken by the author. 2022.



Figure 66: Curated by Belinda Blignaut (various artists), *Bism - The Body at the Centre of All*, 2012. Bound with three silver bolts and housed in a wooden box with the title on the front. The box also contains sealed plastic bag with various objects, 365 x 250 x 85mm. Edition: 10. Interior detail. Photograph taken by the author. 2022.

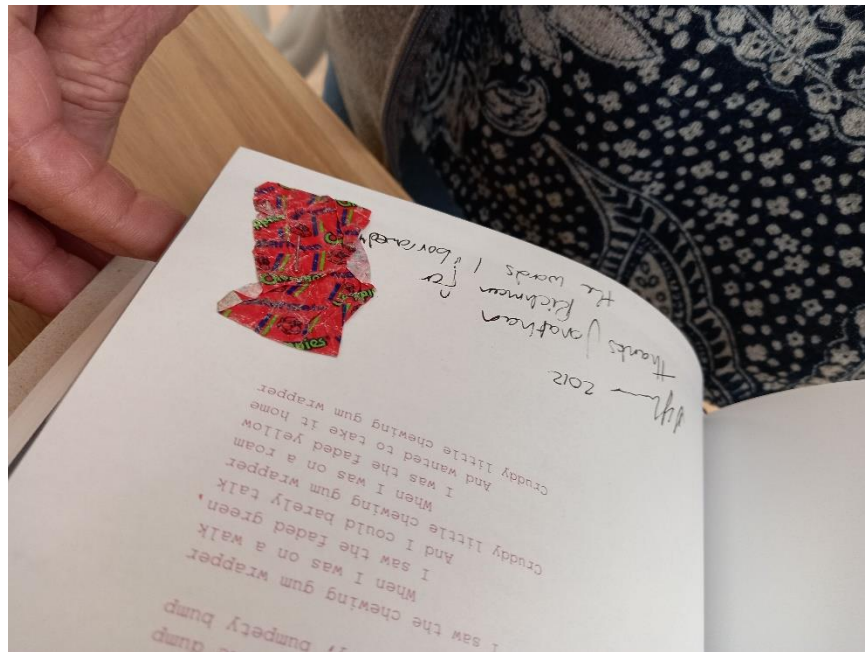


Figure 67: Curated by Belinda Blignaut (various artists), *Bism - The Body at the Centre of All*, 2012. Bound with three silver bolts and housed in a wooden box with the title on the front. The box also contains sealed plastic bag with various objects, 36.5 x 25 x 8.5 cm. Edition: 10. Interior detail. Photograph taken by the author. 2022.

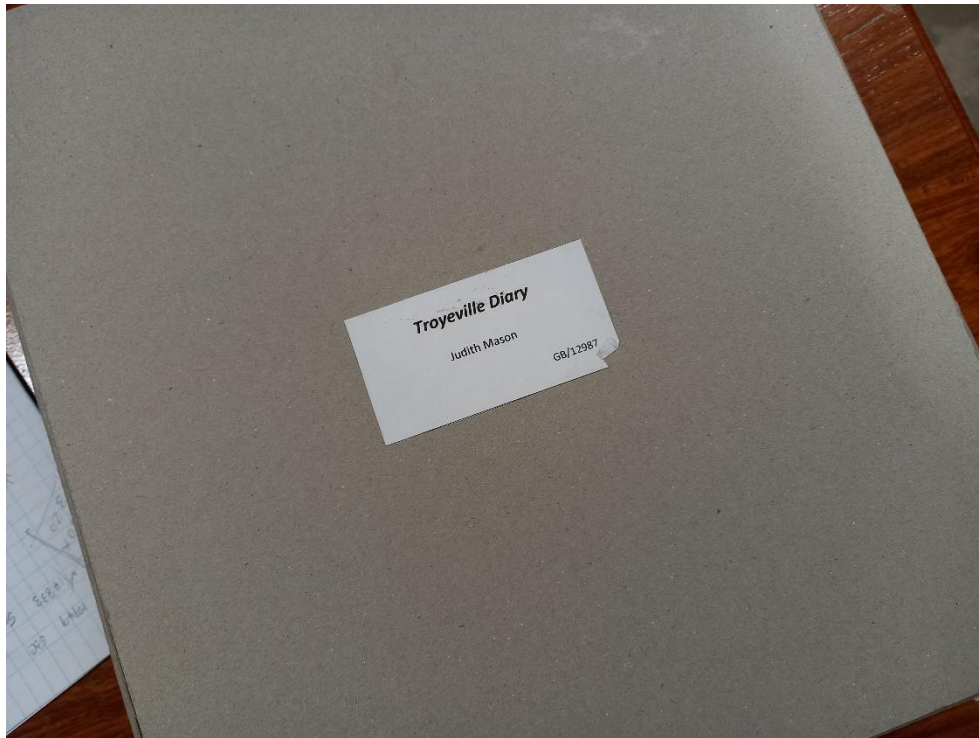


Figure 68: Judith Mason, *Troyeville Diary*, 2011. Rawhide, corrugated iron, corroded wire, oiled paper, packing tape, and fluted cardboard, 25.5 cm. Box detail. Photograph taken by the author. 2022.



Figure 69: Judith Mason, *Troyeville Diary*, 2011. Rawhide, corrugated iron, corroded wire, oiled paper, packing tape, and fluted cardboard, 25.5 cm. Interior of box with gloves detail. Photograph taken by the author. 2022.



Figure 70: Judith Mason, *Troyeville Diary*, 2011. Rawhide, corrugated iron, corroded wire, oiled paper, packing tape, and fluted cardboard, 25.5 cm. Interior of box with unwrapped cloth detail. Photograph taken by the author. 2022.



Figure 71: Judith Mason, *Troyeville Diary*, 2011. Rawhide, corrugated iron, corroded wire, oiled paper, packing tape, and fluted cardboard, 25.5 cm. Gloves detail. Photograph taken by the author. 2022.



Figure 72: Judith Mason, *Troyeville Diary*, 2011. Rawhide, corrugated iron, corroded wire, oiled paper, packing tape, and fluted cardboard, 25.5 cm. Interior detail. Photograph taken by the author. 2022.



Figure 73: Judith Mason, *Troyeville Diary*, 2011. Rawhide, corrugated iron, corroded wire, oiled paper, packing tape, and fluted cardboard, 25.5 cm. Interior detail. Photograph taken by the author. 2022.

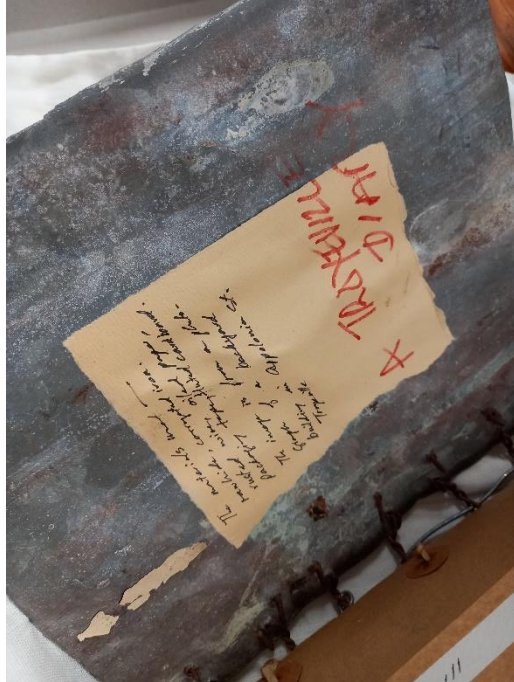


Figure 74: Judith Mason, *Troyeville Diary*, 2011. Rawhide, corrugated iron, corroded wire, oiled paper, packing tape, and fluted cardboard, 25.5 cm. Interior detail. Photograph taken by the author. 2022.



Figure 75: Judith Mason, *Troyeville Diary*, 2011. Rawhide, corrugated iron, corroded wire, oiled paper, packing tape, and fluted cardboard, 25.5 cm. Interior detail. Photograph taken by the author. 2022.



Figure 76: Judith Mason, *Troyeville Diary*, 2011. Rawhide, corrugated iron, corroded wire, oiled paper, packing tape, and fluted cardboard, 25.5 cm. Interior binding detail. Photograph taken by the author. 2022.



Figure 77: Judith Mason, *Troyeville Diary*, 2011. Rawhide, corrugated iron, corroded wire, oiled paper, packing tape, and fluted cardboard, 25.5 cm. Binding detail. Photograph taken by the author. 2022.



Figure 78: Judith Mason, *Troyeville Diary*, 2011. Rawhide, corrugated iron, corroded wire, oiled paper, packing tape, and fluted cardboard, 25.5 cm. Binding detail. Photograph taken by the author. 2022.



Figure 79: Claudia Cohen and Barbara Hodgson, *WunderCabinet - The Curious Worlds of Barbara Hodgson & Claudia Cohen*, 2011. Paper, copperplate etching, hand-coloured embellishments, leather, various organic and inorganic accompaniments, 28.5 x 30 x 10.5 cm. Edition: 36. Outer box detail. Photograph taken by the author. 2022.



Figure 80: Claudia Cohen and Barbara Hodgson, *WunderCabinet - The Curious Worlds of Barbara Hodgson & Claudia Cohen*, 2011. Paper, copperplate etching, hand-coloured embellishments, leather, various organic and inorganic accompaniments, 28.5 x 30 x 10.5 cm. Edition: 36. Box detail. Photograph taken by the author. 2022.



Figure 83: Claudia Cohen and Barbara Hodgson, WunderCabinet - The Curious Worlds of Barbara Hodgson & Claudia Cohen, 2011. Paper, copperplate etching, hand-coloured embellishments, leather, various organic and inorganic accompaniments, 28.5 x 30 x 10.5 cm. Edition: 36. Storage detail. Photograph taken by the author. 2022.

Conclusion

This dissertation explores and analyses the numerous problems associated with the collection management and preventative conservation of mixed media/composites in museum collections. This analysis centred on particular mixed media artworks known as artists' books. Using data gathered from a variety of international institutions, this study compiled a proposed management and conservation strategy for the artists' books held by the Jack Ginsberg Centre for Book Arts. The current practises of the Jack Ginsberg Centre for Book Arts were compared to worldwide best practises, and proposals for improvement were made, all with an eye toward determining whether the international museum approach would be appropriate in a South African setting. So that the collection can be appreciated for many years to come, a proposed customised solution aims to enhance the storage management of the collection regarding preservation and preventative conservation measures. This is the first research to examine the preventive conservation and storage of this South African artists' book collection. This goal was accomplished by analysing and contrasting the approaches taken by international mixed media artists' book collections in terms of collection management and preventative conservation.

In the first chapter, mixed media art and artist's books, as well as their history, are introduced. This chapter provided a historical and social context for mixed media artworks by tracing their link and evolution to artists' books. This was conducted to comprehend the complexity of their storage, exhibition, and care by museums that collect them. Artists' books and other mixed media artworks were used as examples to show this development.

To conclude Chapter One and introduce Chapter Two, I offered a summary of the difficulties associated with the collection management and preventative conservation of mixed media/composite artworks in international museum collections. The paradigm presented here is useful for understanding these nuances.

In Chapter Two, I focused on the management and preventative conservation of artists' books as an example of a mixed media/composite artwork in international museum

collections and highlighted some of the issues that arise in this context. This chapter is comprised of multiple texts authored by various museum professionals exploring a variety of complicated concerns pertaining to the storage, conservation, and accessibility of mixed media art and notably artists' books.

In Chapter Three, a summary of interviews with museum professionals was provided, with the goal of learning about the preventative conservation and collection management practises utilised by certain international museums that house mixed media artists' books. Included are case studies that discuss the storage and conservation methods used for a variety of artists' books that incorporate mixed media.

The conservation context for tangible heritage in South Africa is discussed in the second part of Chapter Three, along with its relevance to mixed media artworks/artists' books. This is used to examine the storage facilities and systems of the Jack Ginsberg Centre for Book Arts as part of a larger examination of the facility-wide collection management/preventative conservation strategy. In this chapter, I build on the foundation laid in the preceding section by analysing the constructive interventions previously performed at the Jack Ginsberg Centre and providing comments on several mixed media artists' books in their collection, focusing on the unique tactics employed for their current storage. As a result, this chapter evaluates the content of the two preceding chapters to provide comparisons of the data from international museums and art centres to the existing systems at the Jack Ginsberg Centre for Book Arts. This chapter addresses the topic of which international strategies can be explored and executed realistically within a South African setting.

Based on my findings, I can say that there are both commonalities and distinctions amongst the various international institutions. Depending on their size and scope, a variety of distinct strategies are employed. The characteristics of the institution and the conditions under which their artists' book collections are housed also play a significant effect in the formulation of collection policies. The lack of available space was cited as the primary challenge by every participating institution. Since growth prospects are not always available, resolving this issue is also very complex. A second similarity I've noticed is that most museums are eager to acquire mixed media artists' books, despite the

potential conservation and collection management challenges these works provide. The proportion of qualified workforce available to undertake conservation and collection management plans and the availability of necessary funds are two major differences and potential obstacles. Since additional funding could help with staffing needs, there is a direct connection between these two concerns. Predictably, larger, more well-known organisations tend not to face these challenges. As may be expected, opinions vary on the appropriate way to make artists' books available to the public. The direct handling of artists' books seems to be a divisive subject depending on the sort of institution. Although many people think that seeing and touching an artists' book in person is the best way to experience it, the desire to keep them in pristine condition often conflicts with this view.

With this research, I would want to encourage more individuals in South Africa to enter the art conservation field and assist to preserve our irreplaceable modern and contemporary art collections by understanding the nuances involved in caring for mixed media artists' books. Acknowledging what can be learned from international museums is crucial to ensuring that similar, practical strategies can be implemented within our collections so that these objects can be appreciated for many years to come, given the need for conservation professionals in South Africa, especially within contemporary art. A secondary goal of this research is to initiate a discussion on the topic of contemporary art conservation in South Africa, allowing the country to join the international dialogue on this intricate topic. At its core, this research outlined two measures that can be reasonably put into place to protect our contemporary mixed media collections, and in particular the artists' books at the Jack Ginsberg Centre for Book Arts. The first initiative, which is already taking shape, is to train museum experts to implement correct preservation practises for our collections. International partnerships with organisations that can provide strategic guidance will help us accomplish this goal. The second approach, particularly relevant to artists' books, is to investigate digitisation and the use of online platforms for collection management and conservation, which has proven to be successful in an international context.

According to Owen Hopkins (2021: 290), the digital revolution has not only changed how and what museums gather, but it has also changed the way we experience museums.

Screens have opened new avenues for digital creation as well as consumption (Hopkins 2021: 290). Some had speculated that having museum catalogues available online would lead to fewer people going to the museums, however this has been proven false as digitisation of these resources has increased (Hopkins 2021: 291). Quite the opposite, Hopkins (2021: 291) states that the more online content museums provide, the more people are compelled to attend in person. Hopkins (2021: 291) goes on to say that many museums have launched innovative digital programmes in reaction to this trend, some on their own and others in collaboration with organisations like Google Arts & Culture (an online platform for high-resolution digital images of objects from museums across the world).

Embracing society's natural predisposition towards technology and leveraging it within the museum context and supporting the burgeoning field of art conservators through global collaboration, are two essential steps for the future of contemporary South African art collections, including the artists' book collection at the Jack Ginsberg Centre for Book Arts.

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Appendices

Interview questions:

1. What is the size of the artist's book collection?
2. Where does the duty for the artists' book collection fall in your organization's administrative hierarchy?
3. Is there anything unique to artists' books in your organization's collection development rules or guidelines?
4. Are there any subject areas, binding styles, or other criteria that the institution considers while making purchases in this area?
5. Is there a preferred approach for constructing the collection?
6. How many items in the collection are made of composite/mixed media materials?
Can you name a few examples?
7. Are there any particular housing or preservation issues that have needed to be addressed in relation to these composite/mixed media items?

8. Are there any preservation, storage, or housing techniques that apply to the majority, if not all, of the collection's items?
9. What materials are used in the packing and storage of the mixed media items?
10. How are the items displayed when part of an exhibit?
11. What environmental factors are considered when displaying/storing the collection, especially in the case of the mixed media/composite items?
12. Do you believe that there is any aspect of the storage or collection management of your collection that could be improved? If so, does your organization have the funds, space, and resources to implement those changes?
13. Many artists' book collections are housed within museum libraries. Is this true of your collection and do you believe this is the best place to house the collection, especially in relation to mixed media/composite works and works that are more sculptural?

13 May 2022

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT THE JACK GINSBERG CENTRE FOR BOOK ARTS

Dear Ms Loreal Vos

The Jack Ginsberg Centre for Book Arts (JGCBA) hereby gives consent for Loreal Vos (I.D. 8806140200082) to collect data that is pertinent to her research and for Vos to conduct interviews with those involved in the management of artists books in the JGCBA collection.

In accordance with Wits guidelines, this permission is subject to Vos obtaining and submitting to Wits University an ethics clearance from the University of Pretoria. All creative and literary works from the collection that are used in the research study is subject to the Wits University's Intellectual Property policy, the codes of conduct provided by SAMA and SAHRA and South African law.

Yours sincerely

Rosalind Cleaver

Librarian: Special Collections Artists Books

Jack Ginsberg Centre for Book Arts

Wits Art Museum

Private Bag 3

2050

Tel: 011 717-1448

rosalind.cleaver@wits.ac.za

Website: theartistsbook.org.za



Interview Consent Form

We are requesting your permission to audio-record our interview as part of this study. If you agree to be recorded, we will use the recording to take notes, transcribe the full text, and possibly select quotes to be used during the final presentation and publication of research findings as part of the completion of a master's mini dissertation.

In addition, we would like your permission to store the digital copy of your audio recording for use by other researchers affiliated with Tangible Heritage Conservation at the University of Pretoria's School of the Arts, should we need to review past data collected for future relevant studies.

This recording is optional. You may choose to give permission for one or both uses of the recording, or you may decide not to participate in the recording at all. Your decision will not affect your ability to contribute to the research as you may select to be interviewed and the interview not recorded.

If you agree to participate and be recorded, we will keep the recordings on a password protected cloud drive that is only accessible when permission is granted by the administrator. To protect your confidentiality, we will code all recordings in line with what the participant has given permission to use as an identifier — **real name, self-selected pseudonym, or a randomly assigned number** for those who wish to remain **anonymous** to the researchers of the study.

I wish to (circle applicable):

- a. Use my real name:
- b. Use the following pseudonym:
- c. Remain anonymous

I agree that my audio recording may be taken as part of the research for the mini-dissertation research entitled: *Challenges in Contemporary Mixed Media Collections: Storage and Preventative Conservation of South African Artists' Books at the Jack Ginsberg Centre for Book Arts.*

Quotes from my audio recording may (circle applicable):

- a. be used in a public conference presentation
- b. be used in a final research report where my real name may be used
- c. be used in a final research report where a pseudonym is used to ensure confidentiality
- d. not be used in a public conference presentation
- e. not be used in the final research report

You have the choice of how long we may keep your tapes (circle applicable)

- a. My audio recording may be kept permanently for research, educational or training purposes.
- b. My audio recording must be destroyed after completion of study.


I understand that my consent for this part of the study is optional, and I am free to refuse this request and still participate in the study. I understand that I may request at any time during the

Research Consent Form

Statement of voluntary consent:

When signing this form, I am agreeing to voluntarily participate in the research entitled *Challenges in Contemporary Mixed Media Collections: Storage and Preventative Conservation of South African Artists' Books at the Jack Ginsberg Centre for Book Arts*. I have had a chance to read this consent form, and it was explained to me in a language which I understand. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have received satisfactory answers. I understand that participation is voluntary, unremunerated and that I can choose to opt out, or withdraw at a later stage even if I initially opted in. By signing this form, I also agree that data generated during the research process will be kept at the School of the Arts, at the University of Pretoria for 15 years and can be accessed by requesting permission from the researcher or the dissertation supervisor.

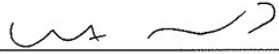
Opting in (Circle which is appropriate): YES NO

Signature of participant: 
Print name: LAURA NEUFELD
Capacity: ASSOCIATE PAPER CONSERVATOR
Date: 08/02/2022
Place: MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, NEW YORK USA

By signing below, I indicate that the participant has read and, to the best of my knowledge, understands the details contained in this document and has been given a copy.

Signature of researcher:
Print name:
Date:
Place:

research that my audio recording be destroyed, and the research staff will honour my request promptly. My signature below indicates my consent for the use of these recordings.


Signature of Participant

08/02/2022
Date

By signing below, I indicate that the participant has read and, to the best of my knowledge, understands the details contained in this document and has been given a copy.

Signature of researcher:
Print name:
Date:
Place:



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Statement of voluntary consent:

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Opting in (Circle which is appropriate): YES/NO

Signature of participant: **The Metropolitan Museum of Art (anonymous)**

Print name: **Anonymous**

Capacity: **professional**

Date: **17/11/2022**

Place:

By signing below, I indicate that the participant has read and, to the best of my knowledge, understands the details contained in this document and has been given a copy.

Signature of researcher: **The Metropolitan Museum of Art (anonymous)**

Print name: **Anonymous**

Date: **17/11/2022**

Place:

Interview Consent Form

We are requesting your permission to audio-record our interview as part of this study. If you agree to be recorded, we will use the recording to take notes, transcribe the full text, and possibly select quotes to be used during the final presentation and publication of research findings as part of the completion of a master's mini dissertation.

In addition, we would like your permission to store the digital copy of your audio recording for use by other researchers affiliated with Tangible Heritage Conservation at the University of Pretoria's School of the Arts, should we need to review past data collected for future relevant studies.

This recording is optional. You may choose to give permission for one or both uses of the recording, or you may decide not to participate in the recording at all. Your decision will not affect your ability to contribute to the research as you may select to be interviewed and the interview not recorded.

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I wish to (circle applicable):

- a. Use my real name:
- b. Use the following pseudonym:
- c. Remain anonymous

I agree that my audio recording may be taken as part of the research for the mini-dissertation research entitled: *Challenges in Contemporary Mixed Media Collections: Storage and Preventative Conservation of South African Artists' Books at the Jack Ginsberg Centre for Book Arts*.

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- b. be used in a final research report where my real name may be used
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- d. not be used in a public conference presentation
- e. not be used in the final research report

You have the choice of how long we may keep your tapes (circle applicable)

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- b. My audio recording must be destroyed after completion of study.

I understand that my consent for this part of the study is optional, and I am free to refuse this request and still participate in the study. I understand that I may request at any time during the

research that my audio recording be destroyed, and the research staff will honour my request promptly. My signature below indicates my consent for the use of these recordings.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art
Signature of Participant

17/11/2022
Date

By signing below, I indicate that the participant has read and, to the best of my knowledge, understands the details contained in this document and has been given a copy.

Signature of researcher:
Print name:
Date:
Place:

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I wish to (circle applicable):

- a. Use my real name: CATRIONA GOURLAY
- b. Use the following pseudonym:
- c. Remain anonymous

I agree that my audio recording may be taken as part of the research for the mini-dissertation research entitled: *Challenges in Contemporary Mixed Media Collections: Storage and Preventative Conservation of South African Artists' Books at the Jack Ginsberg Centre for Book Arts*.

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Opting in (Circle which is appropriate): YES/NO
Signature of participant: Catriona Gourlay
Print name: CATRIONA GOURLAY
Capacity: Assistant Curator, V&A Museum, London
Date: 16/9/22
Place: London (Online interview)

By signing below, I indicate that the participant has read and, to the best of my knowledge, understands the details contained in this document and has been given a copy.

Signature of researcher:
Print name:
Date:
Place:

research that my audio recording be destroyed, and the research staff will honour my request promptly. My signature below indicates my consent for the use of these recordings.

Catrina Gornley
Signature of Participant

27/09/22
Date

By signing below, I indicate that the participant has read and, to the best of my knowledge, understands the details contained in this document and has been given a copy.

Signature of researcher:
Print name:
Date:
Place:

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- b. My audio recording must be destroyed after completion of study.

I understand that my consent for this part of the study is optional, and I am free to refuse this request and still participate in the study. I understand that I may request at any time during the

Research Consent Form

Statement of voluntary consent:

When signing this form, I am agreeing to voluntarily participate in the research entitled *Challenges in Contemporary Mixed Media Collections: Storage and Preventative Conservation of South African Artists' Books at the Jack Ginsberg Centre for Book Arts*. I have had a chance to read this consent form, and it was explained to me in a language which I understand. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have received satisfactory answers. I understand that participation is voluntary, unremunerated and that I can choose to opt out, or withdraw at a later stage even if I initially opted in. By signing this form, I also agree that data generated during the research process will be kept at the School of the Arts, at the University of Pretoria for 15 years and can be accessed by requesting permission from the researcher or the dissertation supervisor.

Opting in (Circle which is appropriate): YES/NO

Signature of participant: *Bindy Wilson*.....

Print name: *Bindy Wilson*.....

Capacity: *Operations Coordinator V&A*.....

Date: *27 Sept 2022*.....

Place: *V&A London*.....

By signing below, I indicate that the participant has read and, to the best of my knowledge, understands the details contained in this document and has been given a copy.

Signature of researcher:

Print name:

Date:

Place:

research that my audio recording be destroyed, and the research staff will honour my request promptly. My signature below indicates my consent for the use of these recordings.

Bindy Wikar
Signature of Participant

27 Sept
Date

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Signature of researcher:
Print name:
Date:
Place:

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I wish to (circle applicable):

- a. Use my real name:
- b. Use the following pseudonym:
- c. Remain anonymous

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- b. be used in a final research report where my real name may be used
- c. be used in a final research report where a pseudonym is used to ensure confidentiality
- d. not be used in a public conference presentation
- e. not be used in the final research report

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Opting in (Circle which is appropriate): **YES**/NO

Signature of participant: 
Print name: Corina Reynolds
Capacity: Executive Director, Center for Book Arts
Date: August 31, 2022
Place: New York, NY

By signing below, I indicate that the participant has read and, to the best of my knowledge, understands the details contained in this document and has been given a copy.

Signature of researcher:
Print name:
Date:
Place:



research that my audio recording be destroyed, and the research staff will honour my request promptly. My signature below indicates my consent for the use of these recordings.



Signature of Participant

August 31, 2022
Date

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Signature of researcher:
Print name:
Date:
Place:

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I wish to (circle applicable):

- a. Use my real name: Gillian Lee
- b. Use the following pseudonym:
- c. Remain anonymous

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Opting in (Circle which is appropriate) YES NO

Signature of participant: *Gillian Lee*

Print name: Gillian Lee

Capacity: interview

Date: 8/1/22

Place: online

By signing below, I indicate that the participant has read and, to the best of my knowledge, understands the details contained in this document and has been given a copy.

Signature of researcher:

Print name:

Date:

Place:



research that my audio recording be destroyed, and the research staff will honour my request promptly. My signature below indicates my consent for the use of these recordings.



Signature of Participant

8/26/2022

Date

By signing below, I indicate that the participant has read and, to the best of my knowledge, understands the details contained in this document and has been given a copy.

Signature of researcher:
Print name:
Date:
Place:

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Opting in (Circle which is appropriate): YES/NO
Signature of participant: April Sheridan
Print name: April Sheridan
Capacity: Interviewee
Date: 8/31/2022
Place:

By signing below, I indicate that the participant has read and, to the best of my knowledge, understands the details contained in this document and has been given a copy.

Signature of researcher:
Print name:
Date:
Place:

research that my audio recording be destroyed, and the research staff will honour my request promptly. My signature below indicates my consent for the use of these recordings.

Ant Shier
Signature of Participant

8/31/2022
Date

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Signature of researcher:
Print name:
Date:
Place:

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Opting in (Circle which is appropriate) YES/NO

Signature of participant: *Victoria Bieder* / *William Bieder*

Print name: *Victoria Bieder*

Capacity: *Head of Paper Conservation / Assistant Paper Conservator*

Date: *August 26, 2012*

Place: *Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco*

By signing below, I indicate that the participant has read and, to the best of my knowledge, understands the details contained in this document and has been given a copy.

Signature of researcher:

Print name:

Date:

Place:



research that my audio recording be destroyed, and the research staff will honour my request promptly. My signature below indicates my consent for the use of these recordings.

Victoria B. Allison Bauer
Signature of Participant

8/26/2022
Date

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Signature of researcher:
Print name:
Date:
Place: