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Artist's Book Yearbook  
2024-2025

*Artist's Book Yearbook 2024-2025*  
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The views expressed within the *Artist's Book Yearbook 2024-2025* are not necessarily those of the editor or publisher.

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**Contents**

Artist's Page - <i>hiromi suzuki</i>	4
Introduction <i>Sarah Bodman</i>	5
ESSAYS	
<i>On the making of The Jack Ginsberg Centre for Book Arts Collection</i>	
David Paton	7
<i>Ossessione</i>	
Tanya Peixoto	21
<i>Thirty years of the Book Art Museum in Henryk Grohman's villa in Łódź, Poland</i>	
Jadwiga Tryzno	29
<i>On a Clear Day - Julie Johnstone &amp; Maria White in conversation</i>	33
<i>The (Unrepeatable) Wayzgoose Press: 1985–2020</i>	
Caren Florance	45
<i>Liver and Lights. Forty plus years...</i>	
John Bently	55
<i>100% Are Books - A Digital Analysis of The Street Road Summer Library Catalogue</i>	
Robert Good	59
<i>Sign the world Field Study</i>	
Susan Hartigan	67
Helen Morley interviews <i>Graham Moss of Incline Press, UK</i>	77
<i>Semblance of Authority: Handheld Rubber Stamps as a Tool of Protest and Activism</i>	
Jennie Hinchcliff	85
<i>Sienkiewicz Street in Kielce 20 Years After - or in search of the other side</i>	
Radosław Nowakowski	97
THE POEM THAT BUILT A CITY	
Alastair R. Noble	103
<i>Redefining the Artist's Book: Ed Ruscha's Twentysix Gasoline Stations and its Enduring Influence</i>	
ChatPGT et al., requested by Tom Sowden	113

**LISTINGS**

Artist's Page - <i>Kena Kitchengs</i>	116
Artist's Book Publishers & Presses	117
Bookshops for artists' books	124
Artist's Book Dealers	128
Artist's Book Galleries & Centres	129
Artist's Page - <i>Fernanda Fedrizzi</i>	139
Collections, Libraries & Archives	140
Artist's Book Fairs and Events	156
Artist's Page - <i>Danni Storm</i>	165
Book Arts Courses and Workshops	166
Design, Print & Bind	173
Artist's Page - <i>Richard Nash</i>	180
Print and Papermaking Studios	181
Journals and Magazines	188
New Reference Publications	190
Organisations, Projects, Societies	196
Artist's Page - <i>Raquel Meyers</i>	204
Artist's Page Contributors	205
Artist's Page - <i>Julie Graves Krishnaswami</i>	207
Artist's Page - <i>Volodymyr Bilyk</i>	208
Artists' Books Listings	209
Artist's Page - <i>Paul Laidler</i>	293

## Welcome to the 2024-2025 issue of the *Artist's Book Yearbook*...

Many thanks to our writers for their articles and essays for this edition of the *Artist's Book Yearbook*, some of whom are celebrating significant milestones and achievements. They are, in order of appearance:

David Paton considers the 50+ years of collecting the 14,000+ items now housed in the Jack Ginsberg Centre for Book Arts (JGCBA) at the Wits Art Museum, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa. In *Ossessione*, Tanya Peixoto shares her experiences of finding a fitting tribute to her husband, Alastair Brotchie (20/07/1952 - 27/01/2023) writer and artist who co-founded and ran Atlas Press, the London Institute of 'Pataphysics (LIP) and was also the owner of the building that bookartbookshop resides in. Tanya explains the thoughts and practical steps that led to the new bookartbookshop signage, and the role played by a recently opened nail bar. On the occasion of an international exhibition, Jadwiga Tryzno looks back at *Thirty years of the Book Art Museum in Henryk Grohman's villa in Łódź, Poland*.

*On a Clear Day - Julie Johnstone & Maria White in conversation* has been written up from a public event that took place during Julie Johnstone's 2023 exhibition at Bower Ashton Library, UWE, Bristol, of new works responding to the painter Agnes Martin. In *The (Unrepeatable) Wayzgoose Press: 1985-2020*, Caren Florance explores the artistic lifetimes of Michael (Mike) Hudson and Jadwiga Jarvis. John Bently reflects on *Liver and Lights. Forty plus years...* UK artist Robert Good examines titles, form and colour as the first virtual Summer Librarian at Street Road's gallery and Little Free Library in Cochranville, USA.

*Sign the world Field Study* - Formed in London in 1993 by three artists, David Dellaflora, Benedict Phillips and Eamonn Kirwin, Field Study is an international network of mail artists that creates publications and documents, and sometimes installations and performances. Susan Hartigan looks at people and publications featuring in its 30-year history. Helen Morley interviews Graham Moss - typographer, book design, book binder and proprietor of Incline Press in Oldham, UK, as he celebrates 30 years of independent publishing. Jennie Hinchcliff - Director of Exhibitions and Artist Programs at the San Francisco Center for the Book - explores the *Semblance of Authority: Handheld Rubber Stamps as a Tool of Protest and Activism*.

*Sienkiewicz Street in Kielce 20 Years After - or in search of the other side* - Radosław Nowakowski celebrates the anniversary of his book *Sienkiewicz*

*Street in Kielce* with a new edition. "Is it really a new Street? Am I new myself? Is the world new after two decades? I am different, no doubt. But not new. So is the world. So is the street. And so is the book."

In *THE POEM THAT BUILT A CITY*, Alastair R. Noble reflects on a month living at Ciudad Abierta, Cooperativa Amereida, Ritoque, Chile in 2006 and the subsequent work created. In *Redefining the Artist's Book: Ed Ruscha's "Twentysix Gasoline Stations" and its Enduring Influence*, ChatPGT et al. respond to a writing prompt by Tom Sowden. Thanks also to Tom Sowden also for the cover of this edition, produced in collaboration with DALL-E.

Many thanks to the artists who have produced a thought-provoking selection of image or text-based interventions: Volodymyr Bilyk (Ukraine) Fernanda Fedrizzi (Brazil) Julie Graves Krishnaswami (USA) Kena Kitchengs (Mexico) Paul Laidler (UK) Raquel Meyers (Spain) Richard Nash (UK) Danni Storm (Denmark) hiromi suzuki (Japan).

Thank you to our Peer Reviewers (listed on page 2) for reading and giving feedback on the essays and articles, and to our Proofreader Marian Kilpatrick.

As evidenced in the listings sections, there is a hive of activity, education, production and critical discussion taking place internationally through organisations, galleries, centres, bookshops, colleges, libraries, artist-led projects and print studios. Regular fairs, events and festivals are thriving and introducing artists' books to new audiences and participants. For inspiration, research and study there is a treasure trove of archives and collections to discover and learn more about artists' books.

In the *Artists' Books Listings* section, you will find 450 new works created (or in the process of soon being made), by artists in: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Iceland, Israel, Republic of Korea, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Russia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, the UK and USA.

The listings sections in the *Artist's Book Yearbook* are compiled from the information I find or receive. If you are reading this and would like to list your own artists' books, services or organisation in the next issue, please get in touch so I can send you the free listing forms for the 2026-2027 edition which will be published in January 2026. I hope you enjoy reading the *ABYB* as much as I enjoy compiling it and discovering all the wonderful activity taking place around the world.

Sarah Bodman



Jack Ginsberg Centre for Book Arts Team (left-right): Jack Ginsberg, Rosalind Cleaver, David Paton, Ciara Struwig.  
Photo: Fiona Rankin-Smith.



View of the Jack Ginsberg Centre for Book Arts exhibition area. Photo: David Paton.

## *On the making of The Jack Ginsberg Centre for Book Arts Collection*

David Paton

*So I have erected one of his dwellings, with books as the building stones, before you, and now he is going to disappear inside, as is only fitting* (Walter Benjamin, *Unpacking my Library*, 2007:67 – originally published as *Literarische Welt* 1931).

### Introduction

During the last fifty years, Johannesburg resident Jack Ginsberg has created an internationally recognised collection of artists' books and books on artists' books. His collection, unique on the African continent, is visited by artists, scholars and bibliophiles from all over the world. He is also a founding patron of The Ampersand Foundation (TAF) which supports South African artists and those working in the visual and performing arts to spend time on residency in New York. Ginsberg is the recipient of the Business Day BASA Art Champion Award 2013 and the 2014 Inyathelo Award for Philanthropy in the Arts. He is also a major donor of African and local artworks to the Wits Art Museum (WAM) collection.

In considering the many years it has taken to collect the 14000+ items that are now housed in the Jack Ginsberg Centre for Book Arts (JGCB)¹ at the Wits Art Museum, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa, I consulted Walter Benjamin's (2007:61) brief text on "how ... books cross the threshold of a collection and become the property of a collector?"

But before I attempt to unpack the synergy between Benjamin and Ginsberg's modes of collecting, Benjamin provides some useful pointers towards considering both collections and their collectors. His musings provide "some insight into the relationship of a book collector to his possessions, into collecting rather than a collection" (2007:59-60), concluding that a collection of books does not "come alive" in the collector, but rather, it is the collector "who lives in them" (2007:67). In Benjamin's experience "for... a real collector ... ownership is the most intimate relationship that one can have to objects" (2007:67). My colleague Kim Berman (2017:103) has previously explored this relationship, stating that Benjamin (2007:61) could be describing Ginsberg when he says: "One only has to watch a collector handle the objects in his glass case. As he holds them in his hands, he seems to be seeing through them into their distant past as though inspired." Berman continues

to describe this relationship by quoting Benjamin (2007:61): "I am not exaggerating when I say that to a true collector the acquisition of an old book is its rebirth", concluding that "to a book collector, you see, the true freedom of all books is somewhere on his shelves" (1968:64). Berman (2017:104) reminds us that in *The System of Collecting*, Jean Baudrillard (1994:8) has a similar experience of collecting books or art objects as a sublime experience stating:

The collection offers us a paradigm of perfection, for this is where the passionate enterprise of possession can achieve its ambitions, within a space where the everyday prose of the object world modulates into poetry, to institute an unconscious and triumphant discourse.

Baudrillard (1994:23) continues: "What makes a collection transcend mere accumulation is not only the fact of it being culturally complex, but the fact of its incompleteness, the fact that it lacks something ... one needs such and such absent object...".

Jack Ginsberg (2023) thinks back and wonders "how did I amass so many books? ... bibliomania not bibliophilia is the experience." He (2017:106) began collecting artists' books in the 1970s "when it was already too late." In this respect, Ginsberg means that some of Ed Ruscha's books had been available ten years earlier and that when he finally got to them, he was ten years too late to acquire the first editions (Berman 2017:119fn3), and acknowledges Baudrillard's notion of incompleteness by exclaiming "one regrets the books that one can't get; sometimes it's impossible" (Ginsberg in Berman 2017:104).

But such talk of 'incompleteness' and 'regret' can only turn us towards what actually exists in this extraordinary and diverse collection. From Benjamin's text, I extract four modes of acquisition which not only answer his own question on how books cross the threshold of a collection but help me reflect of how this has happened for Ginsberg.

### Inheritance

*... two albums with stick-in pictures which my mother pasted in as a child and which I inherited. They are the seeds of a collection of children's books which is growing steadily even today* (Benjamin 2007:66).

Ginsberg (in Berman 2017:106) states:

I don't remember a time in my life I wasn't surrounded by books. My parents' home was full



View of the Jack Ginsberg Centre for Book Arts exhibition area. Photo: David Paton.



General view of a section of the Jack Ginsberg Centre for Book Arts storeroom. Photo: David Paton.



of books [including albums compiled after each visit overseas]. My father was really very unusual in that he really liked reading aloud...

He used to read at the dinner table or after dinner as there was no TV in South Africa when I was young. ...By the time I left my parental home, I had assembled several so-called collections which included limerick books, children's books, pop-up books.

These 'so-called collections' have grown into substantial sub-sets of the larger collection with pop-up books taking up an allocated section on the storeroom shelves. Ginsberg (in Berman 2017:108) tells us that "one of my favourite children's illustrators was Tomi Ungerer, and he did dozens of children's books - and some adult ones - all of which I collected. I continued to buy children's books simply because of the illustrations; long beyond reading children's books." Some 297 books are returned in a database search for the term 'pop-up'. In Ginsberg's experience, the concept of 'inheritance' does not only index the assembled books he took with him when he left his family's home, but also an embodied love of reading, the knowledge contained within books, values inherent in book-culture, including its materialities, and an insatiable desire to know more through their acquisition. On a recent exhibition at the JGCBA,<sup>2</sup> which was devoted to books containing only texts and typographic content, is a small book titled *Form of Daily Prayers - According to the custom of the German and Polish Jews*. Dated 1857, and published by Jos. Schlesinger Library, Vienna, this minute-font letterpress prayer book - bound in now non-P.C ivory - belonged to Henry Ginsberg, the father of Jack Ginsberg, and is signed by him.

Benjamin (2007:66) tells us that

[t]here is no living library that does not harbour a number of book-like creations from fringe areas. They need not be stick-in albums or family albums, autograph books or portfolios containing pamphlets or religious tracts ... and certainly periodicals can form the prismatic fringes of a library. But to get back to those albums: Actually, inheritance is the soundest way of acquiring a collection.

Being heir to his father's prayer book as well as his love for books and performative reading, Jack Ginsberg has certainly explored 'the prismatic fringes' of his collection, also dedicating a section to 'book-like creations' of many types: book-shaped objects, book-sculpted objects, altered books, democratic multiples, tracts, zines and ephemera.

His Duchampian collecting mantra has always been that if the book-artist says it is a book, then it is a book.

### Writing your own library

*Of all the ways of acquiring books, writing them oneself is regarded as the most praiseworthy method. ... Writers are really people who write books not because they are poor, but because they are dissatisfied with the books which they could buy but do not like* (Benjamin 2007:61).

Of course, Ginsberg is not a writer in the traditional sense, but if I am allowed to expand the idea of writing to include bibliographic and cataloguing documentation, then Ginsberg has indeed written his library into South Africa's tangible culture. In *On Collecting Artists' Books* (theartistsbook.org.za) Ginsberg states that the Oxford English Dictionary (O.E.D) entry for *book* "is surprisingly wide ... running to over seven pages" and that "[t]he most interesting aspect of the O.E.D definition is the fact that the concept of a book has always been ambiguous." What this observation has allowed Ginsberg, is to conceptualise spaces for each artist's book's bibliographic entry as rich, thick explorations of the book's physicality - its material objecthood and often sculptural nature - alongside its content, artistic intention and techniques. Elsewhere (Paton 2020:536) I have described how "the cataloguing of these objects accounts for their affective nature, preventing the 'art' from slipping its moorings against the perfunctory entry for 'book'" and how, along with software developer Peter Dennis, Ginsberg helped develop bespoke software whose fields facilitate the writing of such richness into the searchable online database. Benjamin (2007:60) writes that "there is in the life of a collector a dialectical tension between the poles of disorder and order" and that "if there is a counterpart to the confusion of a library, it is the order of its catalogue." Rosalind Cleaver (Senior Librarian at the JGCBA), however, might smile at the notion of 'the order of the catalogue', having had to tame the beast that is our complex online database during the pandemic lockdown. For just as the O.E.D definition of *book* is 'surprisingly wide' and 'ambiguous' so is the complexity of accurately and adequately describing and cataloguing such a diverse collection. The field categories of 'book type', 'book structure', 'binding', 'material', 'technique' for example, reveal devilish overlaps between information that might be entered into more than one of these fields. Ambiguity is the very undoing of the 'order of the catalogue' when the catalogue itself proves to be a slippery and equivocal thing.



Fortunato Depero, *Depero Futurista 1913-1927* ["The Bolted Book"] (1927) top, with facsimile copy (2017) bottom right and *Reader's Guide* to the facsimile, bottom left. Photo: David Paton.



Ronald King & Roy Fisher, Circle Press, *Anansi Company*, 1992. Photo: David Paton.

In a recent article devoted to this complex area of bibliography I (2020:525) state:

Bibliophiles and librarians will require data to adhere to at least the basic rules and requirements of current cataloging codes such as Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules, Second Edition (AACR2), the Library of Congress' MARC 21 Format for Bibliographic Data, and LCSH Approved Lists. Dennis's bespoke software ... modified existing bibliographic conventions in order for us to ... not merely attempt to document what the artist's book "is about" in affective terms, but more importantly, seek to conduct the very task of archiving, cataloging, and preparing the metadata of the accessible database as an affective act in and of itself.

One of the major innovations is that the database can also deal with subsections of a book, such as essays, and the diverse contributions of multiple producers. On the affective nature of bibliography, Benjamin (2007:63) notes that

[d]ates, place names, formats, previous owners, bindings, and the like: all these details must tell him something – not as dry, isolated facts, but as a harmonious whole; from the quality and intensity of this harmony he must be able to recognize whether a book is for him or not.

Ginsberg (2023) can "look at a book for sale and within a minute say, 'that's a yes' ... and much less than a minute for the noes." If Ginsberg's role, since he began his early card cataloguing system in the 1970s, has been to catalogue every one of the 14,000+ items in the collection, an activity supported by reading extensively on the topic of bibliography (Ginsberg 2023) then, in many ways, he has indeed written his own library!

### **Borrowing, Buying and Book Dealers**

*Of the customary modes of acquisition, the most appropriate to a collector would be the borrowing of a book with its attendant non-returning. The book-borrower of real stature whom we envisage here proves himself to be an inveterate collector of books not so much by the fervor with which he guards his borrowed treasures and by the deaf ear which he turns to all reminders from the everyday world of legality as by his failure to read these books (Benjamin 2007:62).*

Benjamin's tongue-in-cheek account of the 'book-borrower of real stature' might not describe Ginsberg's commitment to his 50-year passion,

not to mention its financial outlay, and Ginsberg (2023) does state that "I so seldom borrow books as I have too many, why would I borrow a book?". But, harking back to the idea of inheritance, he also notes (2023) that

my father had a book which I only this week gave to Ros [to shelve] called *Glossary of the Book* [Geoffrey Glaister, 1960] – my father was much more interested in Drama and other things and it was unlike anything that we had in the house. *Glossary of the Book* is all about book-making and was in his collection and I took it long before he died, so you could say I borrowed that and never gave it back.

Ginsberg (2023) relates an inverse of this borrowing narrative when he recently took some boxes of Ungerer's illustrated books to William Kentridge and his wife Anne Stanwix, who both admire his work, stating "...these are not to keep, but keep them as long as you like." This anecdote speaks to the extraordinary generosity that defines the man. The great number and diversity of the books in the Collection, however, speak to the deep and lasting relationships Ginsberg has developed with artists, dealers, booksellers and other collectors across the globe.

Ginsberg (2017:106-7) recounts having to pay \$100 for Ed Ruscha's *Every Building on the Sunset Strip* (1966) in the late 1970s from Tony Zwicker, an exceptional artist's book dealer in New York. He was horrified and said, "Tony, how on earth can you sell this for \$100?" and she said "that's my price." Zwicker specialised in European and non-American books and she had a collection of books of her own which were not for sale. Ginsberg (2017:113) recalls saying to her

Tony, are you a dealer, are you collecting or are you selling? You can't have it both ways. She had some fabulous books. When she died [in 2000], her assistant Michael von Uchtrup phoned me and said: "You know those books that you always admired of Tony's?" ... I was going to New York in October and I managed to get probably ten books, unobtainable, including *The String Book* of Keith Smith which he priced depending on the number sold.

One of the first books that Ginsberg ever acquired was during a trip to London in the late 1970s where he discovered Bertram Rota Booksellers (who celebrated their centenary in 2023) and the Basilisk Press and Book Shop which was run by Charlene Garry and who included shaped books, especially



Felicia Rice et al, Moving Parts Press, *Doc/Undoc*, 2014. Photo: David Paton.



lia Zdanevich (Iliazd) & Naum Granovskii, *Lidantiu Faram*, 1923. Photo: David Paton.

triangular ones. Ginsberg (2017:107) remembers the occasion vividly:

It was a most extraordinary experience in my life because I'd previously collected art monographs. The book at Basilisk Press was by Claire Van Vliet and it was called *From a Housewife's Diary* (1978) and it was bound in a dish cloth ... and it came in multiple colours so it was utterly fascinating and I looked at it and thought, what is this exactly? And then I looked around the shop and saw that many of the books were strange. They were mostly artists' books and I had only recently been introduced to that genre. It wasn't the first artist's book I bought, but it was the first kind of auratic book .... I remember coming out of that shop with a huge parcel of books, thinking "What the hell am I going to do with these and how am I going to get them back to South Africa?!"

Ginsberg's close early relationship with Zwicker and the artists Claire von Vliet (Janus Press), Walter Hamady (The Perishable Press) amongst many others, has resulted in the collection of almost every book they have produced. This nurturing of close relationships continues today with dealer and gallerist Susanne Padberg (Galerie DRUCK & BUCH, Vienna) and the artists Robbin Ami Silverberg, Julie Chen and Veronika Schäpers whose works have extensive cupboard shelves and draws devoted to them. Ginsberg (2017:114) states: "I was introduced to Schäpers by Booklyn in Brooklyn but I've been to visit her in Germany; we've become good friends and I've managed to get a few unique books from her directly. But I might never have known about her had it not been for that bookseller."

On the prerequisite failure to read the books in a collection, as Benjamin proposes, Ginsberg can plead both guilty – there are many books of which he has not read every page, and equally innocent – as, in order to adequately catalogue an artist's book, every page of every book must be inspected, analysed, scrutinised and haptically appreciated. Ginsberg (2023) states that it can take well over a captivating hour to adequately catalogue an artist's book. This is not an intuitive undertaking and requires care and consistency in description and the allocation of appropriate terms in the data fields.

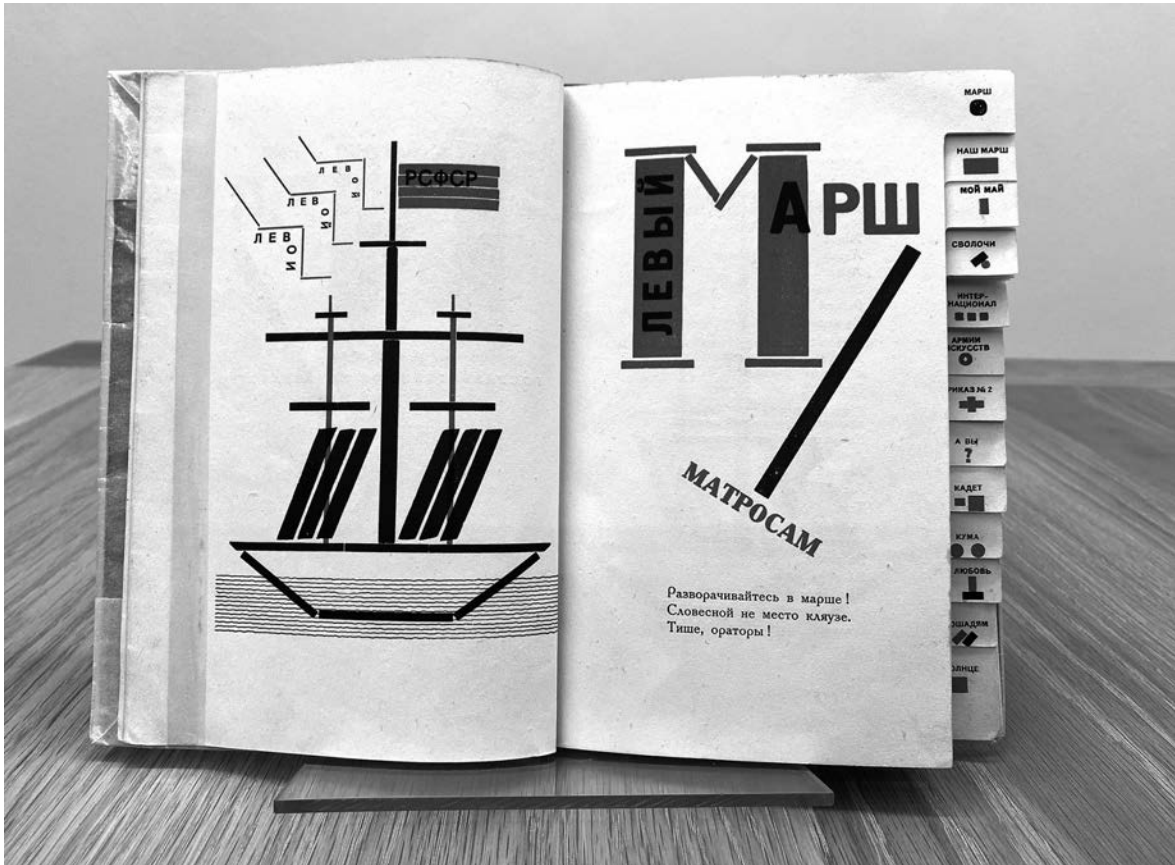
Benjamin (2007:60) eloquently describes the process of cataloguing as "[t]he most profound enchantment ... . The period, the region, the craftsmanship, the former ownership – for a true collector the whole background of an item adds up to a magic encyclopedia whose quintessence is the fate of his object."

## Purchasing through Catalogues

*By no means all of the most important purchases are made on the premises of a dealer. Catalogues play a far greater part. And even though the purchaser may be thoroughly acquainted with the book ordered from a catalogue, the individual copy always remains a surprise and the order always a bit of a gamble. ... Anyone who buys from a catalogue must have flair...* (Benjamin 2007:63).

In today's online world, the digital catalogue has made access to and purchasing of key works for the collection much easier. But the physical, printed catalogue is also of great interest and importance. Ginsberg (2023) states that "once you bought a book from anyone, you remained on their mailing list forever, and I don't mean e-mail; these were wonderful colour catalogues that used to arrive by the dozen!" Our database lists 639 items under the category: 'Bookseller's Catalogue' of which Ursus Books Ltd., Sims Reed Ltd., Printed Matter Inc. and Priscilla Juvelis Rare Books feature often and are to be found on the shelves along with the items purchased from them.<sup>3</sup> Bernard Quaritch in London, for example, sells rare books, manuscripts and incunabula<sup>4</sup> while the South African, Joshua Heller, who emigrated to Washington DC, established Joshua Heller Rare Books, Inc., and was one of the major dealers in artists' books in the US if not the world. Ginsberg (2023) believes that their (Joshua and his wife Phyllis Heller's) "catalogues are a resource beyond anything you can imagine. I've got them all and I don't think anyone else in the world can say that. Phyllis and I were of the same mindset; she knew what I would like ... and virtually everything that she had kept for me, between annual visits, I bought".

The miscellany of books found in these catalogues indexes the diversity of the Ginsberg Collection. By way of an example, in one extended vitrine on the recent exhibition *Beyond Words* (May – August 2023) and sitting alongside the little *Form of Daily Prayers*, mentioned earlier, were the following books: the *Incunabula Opera Philosophica. Epistolae*, printed in Naples, Italy in 1475; Fortunato Depero's *Depero Futurista 1913-1927* [known as 'The Bolted Book'], printed in 1927; Walter Feldman's *The Alphabet Book. WWII*, printed in 1996; John Ross's *Typopolis: A Journey to the City of Type*, printed in 2002 and Russell Maret's *Roma Abstract. An Alphabet*, printed in 2017.<sup>5</sup> Accessing these catalogues has made the vast majority of the works in the Ginsberg Collection possible.



Vladimir Mayakovsky & El Lissitzky, *Dlya Golosa* [For the Voice], 1923. Photo: David Paton.



William Kentridge & Gerhard Marx, Fourthwall Books, *Firewalker*, 2011. Photo: David Paton.

Perhaps the most noteworthy example was the acquisition of Sonia Delaunay and Blaise Cendrars's *Prose du Transsibérien et de la Petite Jehanne de France*, printed by Editions des Hommes Nouveaux; Paris, France in 1913. This book was the centrepiece of our exhibition *Booknesses: Artists' Books from the Jack Ginsberg Collection* held at the University of Johannesburg Art Gallery in 2017. What makes this purchase so rare is that it presents in a portfolio as four unbound and unfolded sheets with pochoir illumination by Delaunay, each measuring 572 x 384 mm. The parchment binding, hand-painted in oil by Delaunay, remains unfolded. The portfolio also contains the original and exceedingly rare prospectus announcement, coloured in pochoir, with three original watercolours on vellum by Delaunay and the corrected proofs of the text on two sheets by Cendrars. This work is described in the bookseller's catalogue as follows:

Unique and spectacular copy of this landmark in the history of twentieth century art and poetry. This particular set was never cut and pasted together; it remains in its original, large, loose printed sheet format. It was never folded and bound in the Delaunay binding. The Delaunay colours are preserved in the brightest tones. It has none of the cracks and folds through the imagery and text which mars nearly all copies of the work. The Delaunay binding is an original oil painting in its own right and is preserved in perfect condition in its rare, unfolded format. The prospectus is a sublime work of Delaunay's pochoir art by itself.

It is documented that only 62 copies were assembled, and the Ginsberg copy is number nine of the copies on japon paper. Antoine Coron, Keeper of Rare Books at the Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris, who has been compiling a census of copies of *La Prose du Transsibérien*, knows of no other unfolded and uncut copies on japon.

That this rare work now resides on the African continent is, in no small measure, due to the role of the catalogue, and the gamble undertaken by Ginsberg's flair!

#### Purchasing at Auction

*He called out the price, and with my heart pounding and with the full realization that I was unable to compete with any of those big collectors I bid a somewhat higher amount.* (Benjamin 2007:65).

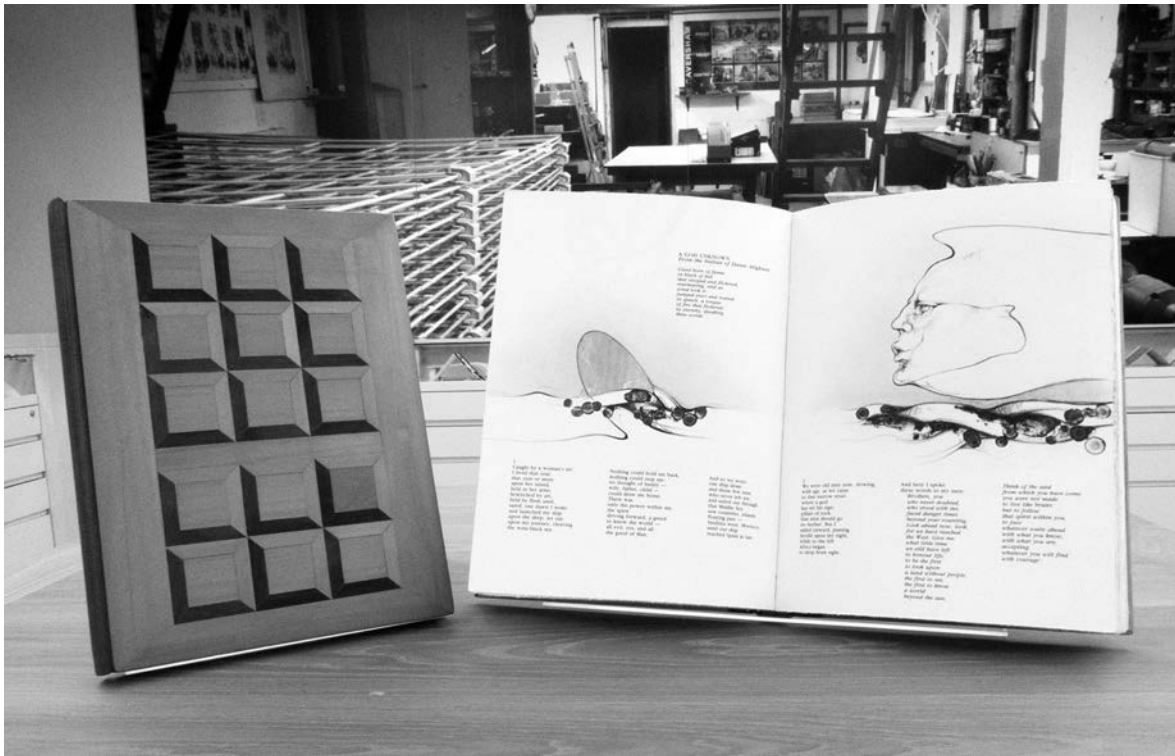
Ginsberg is a master of the auction. Over the years he has purchased a number of important artworks for his own collection and for the Wits Art Museum Collection. With University budgets under severe strain in South Africa, Ginsberg's experience and generosity has ensured that important artworks continue to find their way into the University's collection of African art and artefacts, prints, sculptures and paintings. Auction catalogues from Bonhams, Swann Auction Galleries, Stephan Welz & Co., Strauss & Co., Sothey & Co., Sotheby's and Christie's, amongst others, feature large in the art monograph section of the database, with over 100 matches for the term.

Because of their relative youth and problematic classification and description, however, artists' books on auction are almost unheard of in South Africa; Africana, Fine Press books, rare books and fine bindings come up more often. Ginsberg has commissioned book sellers to bid on his behalf at auctions in New York and London. So-called precursors of artists' books such as Joan Miró and Ilia Zdanevich (Iliazd) *Courtisan Grottesque de Cramail dit Comte* (1974) and some of the Russian books in the Collection having come from Swanns Auctions, New York without Ginsberg having to be there to bid. In South Africa, Ginsberg often bids on local art and has bought rare art monographs on auction. Perhaps the only, and thus most memorable, South African artist's book bought on auction is an annotated and un-numbered proof edition of Walter Battiss's *Nesos* (1968). I smile when I think of those in the auction venues who consider Ginsberg's stature to be commensurate with one of Benjamin's 'big collectors'.

#### Transmissibility

*Thus it is, in the highest sense, the attitude of an heir, and the most distinguished trait of a collection will always be its transmissibility.* (Benjamin 2007:66).

Benjamin (2007:67) ends his short piece with a somewhat bleak and pessimistic view that "the phenomenon of collecting loses its meaning as it loses its personal owner. Even though public collections may be less objectionable socially and more useful academically than private collections, the objects get their due only in the latter". It is no secret that the Ginsberg Collection has been universally viewed as one of the world's greatest private collections<sup>6</sup> – only becoming a public collection in April 2019. But, of his collection, Ginsberg is often heard saying: "Well, you can't take it with you." He (2017:106) continues by stating



Patrick Cullinan (poet) Judith Mason (artist) Steven Watson (editor and Introduction) Mark Attwood (printing) Johann Maree (binding), *Selected Poems 1961-1991*, 1992. Photo: David Paton.



Lindi Sales, *Curiosity*, 2001. Photo: David Paton.



that “[a]ltruism is weird because families don’t like altruistic parents, and most children aren’t interested in their parents’ collections. It’s much easier to be altruistic if you have no children.” By establishing the Jack Ginsberg Centre for Book Arts, along with endowments for staffing and continued purchases beyond his death, Ginsberg’s legacy keeps the collection together, preventing it from being split up if it went on auction. This ‘socially less objectionable and more academically useful’ iteration of the collection asserts its transmissibility as a donation to the people of South Africa, whilst both illuminating and keeping at bay, Benjamin’s (2007:67) dark assertion that “[o]nly on extinction is the collector comprehended.” If “the true freedom of all books is somewhere on the shelves” as Benjamin (2007:64) claims, then the new shelves of the JGCBA have provided a truly new kind of freedom for his remarkable collection.

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David is a trustee of The Ampersand Foundation (TAF), Johannesburg and New York, and is an International Advisor for the CODEX Foundation, Berkeley, CA. He co-hosts the website ‘Artists’ Books in South Africa’ that received the 2018 National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences (NIHSS) award for Digital Humanities in South Africa. He was awarded the University of Johannesburg Vice Chancellor’s Distinguished Award for Teaching Excellence in 2022 and is a National Research Foundation (NRF) C1-Rated Scholar.

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## Notes

1. In 2018, Ginsberg donated his book collection to The Wits Art Museum, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg and facilitated the planning and building of the Jack Ginsberg Centre for Book Arts (JGCBA). The Collection contains some 500 South African artists’ books; 6,000 international artists’ books, 3,700 books on or about artists’ books; 2,300 South African art monographs and 300 international art monographs on artists whose artists’ books are held in the Collection; 200 reference books, many more books in the categories of popular culture and general books and items in four Special Collections: The Walter Battiss Archive; The David Goldblatt Collection of Photobooks; The Johannes Meintjies / Michael Tonkin Letters and the Cecil & Thelma Skotness / Stephen Gray Letters. The Jack Ginsberg Centre for Book Arts was officially opened in April 2019.

2. *Beyond Words*. 20th June – 11th August 2023, JGCBA, Wits Art Museum, Johannesburg.

3. Others in the catalogues category on our database include: Kaldeway Press Catalogue Raisonné, John Howell Books, The Arion Press, Art Metropolis, Redfoxpress, Ivory Press Ltd., Ars Libri Ltd., Visual Books, L’Arenario Studio, Bibliografico, Women’s Studio Workshop, Enitharmon Press, Visual Studies Workshop Press, Granary Books, Basilisk Press & Bookshop, Ex Libris, Boekie Woekie, Booklyn Artists Alliance, Book Works, The Whittington Press, Brommer Booksellers, Galerie Druck & Buch, Coracle, Flühmann, Petersburg Press, Oak Knoll Books, Turkey Press, and Something Else Press, Inc. and the complete collection of Joshua Heller Rare Books previously mentioned.

4. Early printed books, especially ones printed before 1501.

5. Also included in this single extended cabinet were the following books: Vladimir Mayakovsky and El Lissitzky. *Dlya Golosa* [For the Voice] (1923); Naum Granovskii and Ilia Zdanevich (Illiazd). *Lidatiu Faram* (1923); Alicja Werbachowska’s *Abecedarium* (2010); James Trissel’s *Letter Presswork Book* (1997); Arne Wolf’s *Nine Love Poems* (1995) and Franticham’s *Paris Metro Affiches* (2011). This 2023 exhibition displayed a total of 115 items.



Mxolisi Nyezwa (poet) Vusi Zwane & Simphiwe Cebekhulu (artists) and Malcolm Christian (designer and binding), *Songs From the Earth*, 2009-16. Photo: David Paton.



Douglas Goode (hand-coloured illustration) & Malcolm Christian (printer), *The Cycad Collection, Volume 1 - Natal Province*, 1996-98. Photo: David Paton.

6. The symposium and exhibition *Behind the Personal Library: Collectors Creating the Canon* was organised by Alexander Campos, executive director and curator, The Center for Book Arts, New York, from 11th October –20th December 2014 and considered the influence of the world's foremost private collectors on the critical dialogue in the field of book arts. The featured collections were: Philip E. Aarons and Shelley Fox Aarons (NY), Mary Austin (CA), Duke Collier (MA), Jack Ginsberg (South Africa), Arthur Jaffe (FL), Monica Oppen (Australia), Barbara Pascal (CA), Robert Ruben (NY), Marvin and Ruth Sackner (FL), Julia Vermes (Switzerland), Francis H. William (MA/NY), Martha Wilson (NY), and the estate of Tony Zwicker (CT). Note that only three of the thirteen collectors were from outside the USA.

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