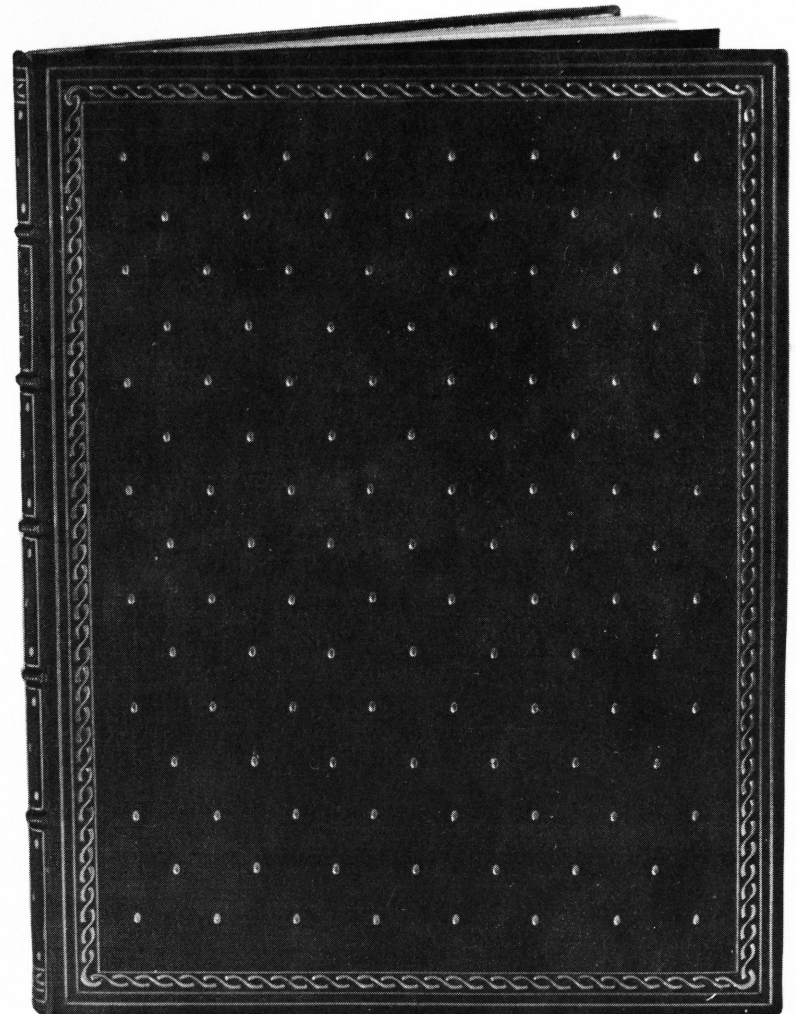


GUILD OF BOOK WORKERS JOURNAL

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JOURNAL OF THE GUILD OF BOOK WORKERS

Volume XII Number 2

Winter 1973-74

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(Editor of this issue: Gale Herrick assisted by Jerilyn G. Davis)

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The Cover: Binding by Belle McMurtry. Cobden-Sanderson, T. J. *The Ideal Book*. San Francisco, 1916. Printed by John Henry Nash; Decorations by Ray F. Coyle. 8" x 10"; Hammer and Anvil handmade paper. Full leather: red morocco; gold tooled border of lines and forms on both covers; diaper design of gold tooled tear drops within the borders; five raised bands; edges full gilt.

METEMPHYCHOSIS?

The Hand Bookbinders of California, originally the Bookbinders' Guild of California, has a long and illustrious history.

The earliest record that survives is a beautiful little booklet printed by John Henry Nash in September, 1902, which lists twenty-nine charter members who announce their resolve to organize a society, because

It seems desirable to encourage and disseminate the knowledge of Bookbinding as an art thereby educating the public taste to a better appreciation of its many excellencies and beauties.

Among the charter members were Paul Elder, the well-known San Francisco book dealer; Mrs. Phoebe A. Hearst, mother of William Randolph Hearst, and Miss Octavia Holden, known today because she was the first teacher of Belle McMurtry who is the subject of an article in this issue.

The booklet, the only surviving copy of which we know is in the library of a famous contemporary San Francisco book dealer, Warren Howell, also lists the officers and by-laws of the society. Section II of the by-laws reads, "An annual exhibition shall be held at which contributions for exhibit and sale shall be made by members and others." I would love to see a catalogue of any of their early exhibits.

It is not surprising that an organization should have been formed in San Francisco over 70 years ago. The City has long been a center of fine book printers and collectors. This undoubtedly encouraged a local interest in binding.

John Henry Nash was printing for Paul Elder as early as 1901. The world famous Grabhorn Press existed here from 1920 through 1965. Lawton Kennedy recently celebrated 50 years of fine printing in this area. Lewis and Dorothy Allen are about to publish their 40th hand-printed book. Among the fine younger printers are Adrian Wilson, Jack Stauffacher, Andrew Hoyem and

Clifford Burke. San Francisco is also home of one of the finest typographers and type founders in the world, Mackenzie and Harris.

Unfortunately, other than the booklet from which I have quoted, we know nothing of the history of the Bookbinders' Guild of California. How long they survived, how large they grew, how many exhibits they sponsored, what important contributions to the art of binding they made—these are mysteries, shrouded in time, upon which we can only speculate.

Books have always been an important part of my life, but the obligations of family and career kept me from developing that interest until middle years. But, when I retired at 52, I suddenly had not only the opportunity, but more fortunately, the inspiration to expand my interest and activities in the world of books.

Two domino playing friends at my club, Will French and Anson Herrick (no relative), were both devoted hand bookbinders. The two men were my senior by a number of years and they seemed to enjoy educating a “young whippersnapper” who asked naive questions about their shared hobby. I'm not sure that he hadn't planned it from the start, but it wasn't too long before French, who was over 90 and suffering from rapidly failing eyesight, had sold me his complete binding studio. Of course, although I now owned a well equipped studio, I'd never made any attempt to bind a book.

I had become an ardent book collector and now began to visit the studios of hand bookbinders, in the Bay Area and in New York and Chicago. My fascination with bookbindings, and particularly with the materials and tools of binding themselves, was growing. My friend Will French did me another great favor—he introduced me to Peter Fahey who was to be my teacher.

Mrs. Herbert Fahey—Peter, the author of the article on Belle McMurtry who was her teacher, also studied binding in Germany, France and England and was a student of Gerhard Gerlach in New York. She headed the committee responsible for the exhibit of bookbinding at San Francisco's 1939 Exposition.

When I first met Peter, she was clearly skeptical about accepting a middle-aged businessman as a student, and doubted that I would make an apt pupil. But I was able to win acceptance as a student, and now, six years later, I think I'm beginning to

overcome her doubts. One thing I have learned in those years is that one never finishes learning binding. Had I known that I would never "graduate," I might have hesitated. Fortunately, it took me some time to learn this.

As a student I met other binders and students, and the formation of a local association of binders was a regular topic of conversation. They seemed convinced that my business experience would provide the key to making that possible. But, when the first steps were taken I was in London. Imagine my surprise upon my return to discover that I had invited a hundred people to a meeting!

To our astonishment, 85 interested people appeared, and all expressed enthusiasm for organization of an association. Thirteen of us became "founding" members and within a few weeks the name of the group was selected and officers were elected. Dues were set at \$10 a year to cover the costs of programs and mailings. We chose the English rather than the American approach; we have no written constitution or by-laws. Our goal is to promote hand bookbinding and related arts, to exchange information, and to encourage new binders. We hold an annual meeting to elect officers, we hold other meetings for programs or speakers of interest to binders, we organize visits to binding studios or libraries, and organize and promote exhibits of bookbinding.

Our organizational meeting was in March 1972. Within a year we had 57 dues-paying members and today we have grown to 78. Our members include teachers, students and collectors of binding, restoration and calligraphy.

We hold about four or five programs a year. The Guild of Book Workers has been extremely helpful to us in making arrangements for such outstanding speakers as George Cunha, Paul Banks and Charles Long. Attendance at our meetings is always around 55 to 60.

Our first exhibit was held in November 1973, in the windows of the John Howell Bookstore near Union Square in San Francisco. Over 50 articles done by our members were shown, including: fine hand bindings, restored bindings, innovative bindings, calligraphy and restored graphics. A few were offered for sale, and four or five sales resulted.

Our second exhibit, featuring the work of Florence Walter,

was held in the Palace of the Legion of Honor Museum in January of this year.

We are grateful to the editors of the *Journal* for this opportunity to further publicize our organization and its members. Peter Fahey, whom I have mentioned above, has contributed an article on Belle McMurtry, and Leah Wollenberg, who was a student of Belle McMurtry's and is a fine hand binder in her own right, has done an article on Florence Walter.

There seems to be no end of ideas for future meetings, exhibits and activities for our group. I suspect that we won't disappear quite so completely as our predecessor for some time to come.

FLORENCE S. WALTER / Leah Wollenberg

1884-1972

In 1973 and early 1974, two exhibits of bookbindings by the late Florence Walter have brought a new realization of the importance and beauty of her work to the people of Northern California.

The first of these exhibits was a retrospective of her work shown in the Bender Room of Mills College in late 1973. The second exhibit, in January 1974, was at the Palace of the Legion of Honor Museum in San Francisco. In each of these shows approximately eighty of her bindings were exhibited, and the viewer gained a broad spectrum of the work of a meticulous craftsman and a fine artist.

The overall impression gained in viewing these exhibits is the great influence of the French School. This is indicated in her imaginative use of color and gold in modern original designs. Mrs. Walter expressed a strong feeling that the decoration must always have a definite relationship to the contents of the book, but should never be more important. As one studies her books, one can see that this principle is carried through in her work.

In 1963 Mrs. Walter wrote, "You may say that the primary

function of a book is to be read. I agree with this. On the other hand, it is a great source of pleasure to possess a beautifully printed book on fine paper, illustrated by a great artist, and wearing a harmonious, well-designed dress. It appeals to the aesthetic taste Bookbinding, aside from being a craft, is, or should be, a creative art, in the same category as painting, weaving or sculpture. Just as in these arts, a binding should have unity; subject matter, illustration and cover should blend to make an artistic creation."

Florence Walter had a lifetime love of books and fine arts. She was an early member of the Book Club of California, serving as the only woman president of that organization. Early in her life she began a collection of fine books and bindings with emphasis on the twentieth century. These interests led her to the study of bookbinding. In the thirties, she began her studies with Peter and Herbert Fahey and later with Belle McMurtry Young. In 1953, she spent two months in Paris with Charles Collet. He was recommended to her by Paul Bonet. Here she perfected her technique in gold tooling. Charles Collet was the main doreur for Paul Bonet.

During her stay in Paris she became well acquainted and exchanged ideas with many of the well-known French designers and binders. Her diary is filled with references to delightful contacts with Rose Adler, Paul Bonet, Henri Creuzevault, Georges Cretté, Antoine Legrain, and Therese Moncey. Through these contacts she had access to their ateliers.

Although she had no formal training in design, she had a natural sense of form and beauty. Her manual dexterity was such that no physical task was impossible. A visit to home and bindery gave one an immediate sense of these attributes. The rooms of her home displayed such diverse items as contemporary painting (some done by her daughter, Nell Sinton, a well-known painter), sculpture and pottery, Chinese porcelains and pre-Columbian figures. Each was selected and displayed with impeccable taste.

Her well-equipped bindery reflected the discipline of a highly skilled craftsman. A visit to this atelier gave one a strong impression of the orderly progression from the conception of the idea to the finished binding, under the strong hands of the confident worker.

As a living memorial to Florence Walter, her daughters have contributed her studio equipment to Mills College in Oakland, California. They have endowed a course in hand bookbinding at that institution.

Her work has been exhibited in many museums throughout the United States. She has been awarded many medals. She was one of three American bookbinders chosen to exhibit at the Brussels Exposition in 1958. Her work is represented in numerous important collections.

"I have found bookbinding a satisfying and rewarding profession. It gives me great pleasure to handle fine paper and to work with the best morocco leather . . . I only wish others might find the same pleasure." —Florence Walter

NOTE: The two Grabhorn Bibliographies shown are the same edition with variant bindings. They are of interest to show Mrs. Walter's scope in a variation of design for the same book. It is also of interest to note that this book is dedicated to Florence Walter by the authors. Mrs. Walter had one of the most complete collections of Grabhorn printing extant.

Bindings by Mrs. Walter

Artaud, Antonin. *Galapagos*. Paris: Broder, 1955. Plate I

Full leather: yellow morocco; figures done in light grey suede, yellow and orange leathers; gold tooling; doublures and fly leaves in light grey suede; gilt top.

The Eclogues of Vergil. Cranach Press. Woodcut by Aristede Maillol. Plate II

Full leather: green morocco; centers of gold tooled designs shades of purple and rose leathers; gilt top.

Paul Gauguin. San Francisco: Grabhorn Press, 1943. Plate III

Full leather: orange morocco; leaves of green, yellow and tan leathers; gold tooled border; gilt top.

Magee, Dorothy and David. *Bibliography of the Grabhorn Press*.

San Francisco: Grabhorn Press, 1957. Plate IV

Full leather: red morocco; front cover title in blue morocco, purple and red Oasis; gold tooling; figures on back cover in

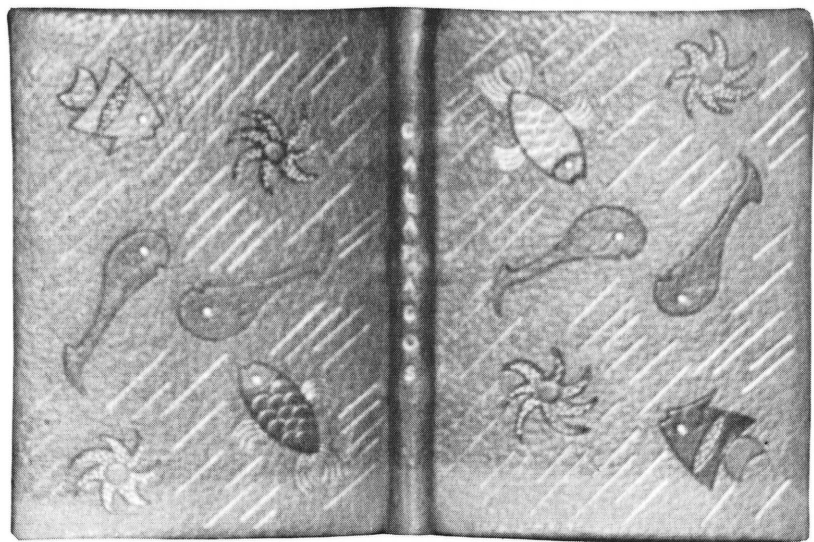


PLATE I

FLORENCE WALTER

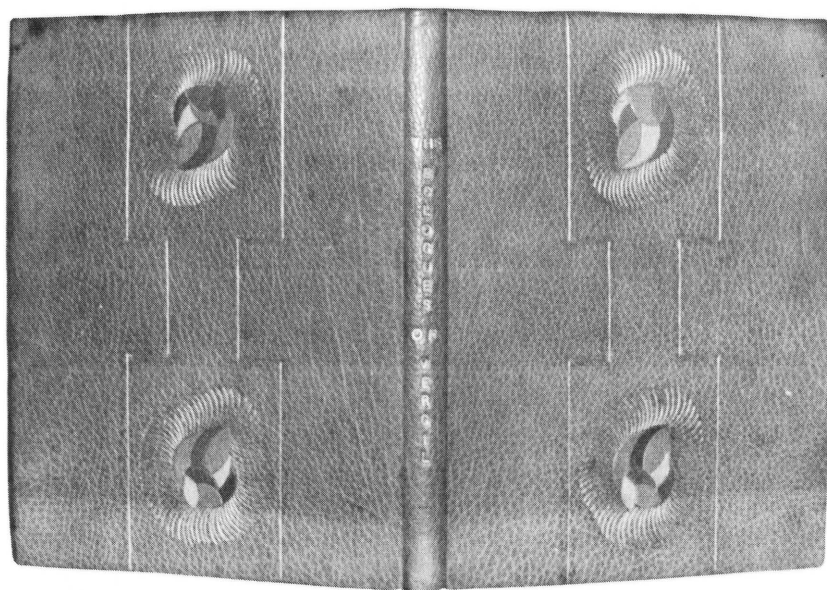


PLATE II

FLORENCE WALTER

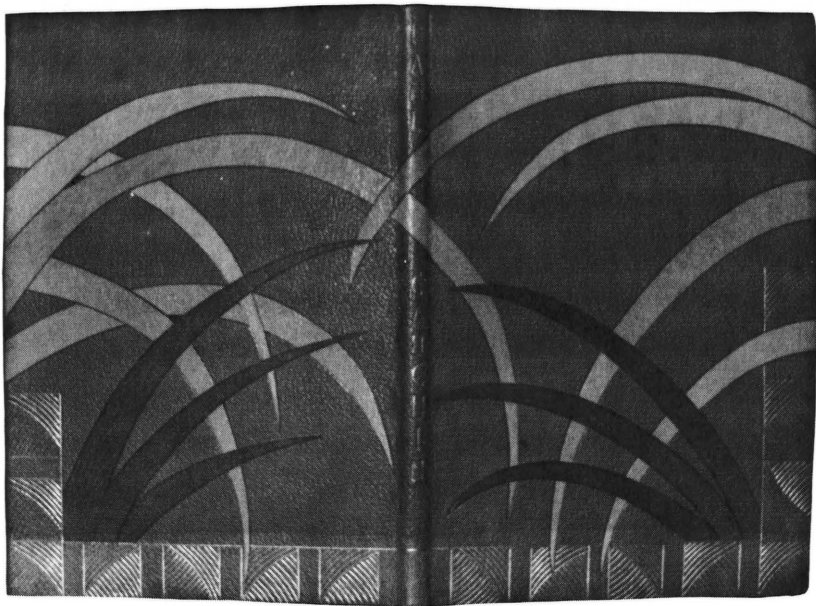


PLATE III

FLORENCE WALTER

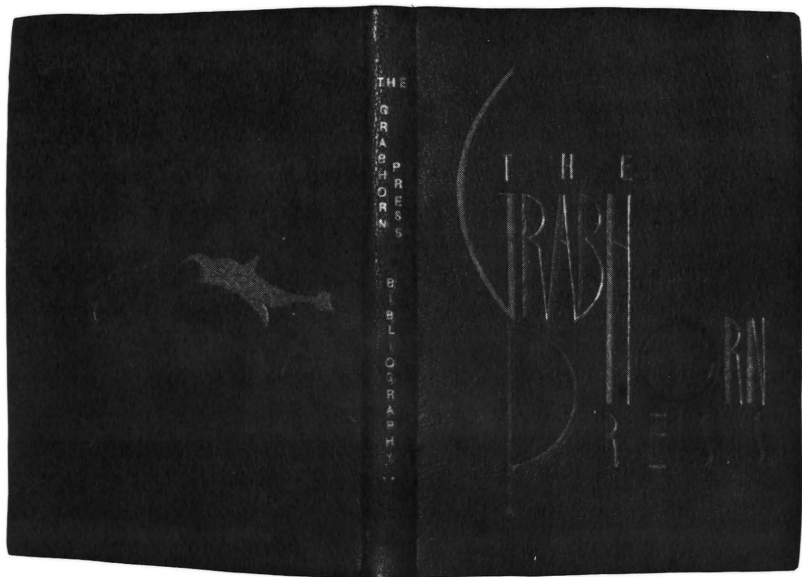


PLATE IV

FLORENCE WALTER

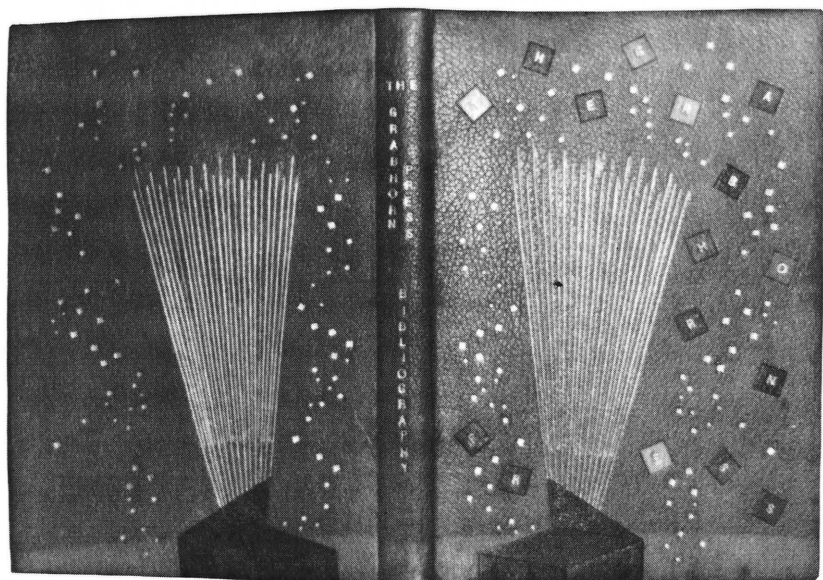


PLATE V

FLORENCE WALTER

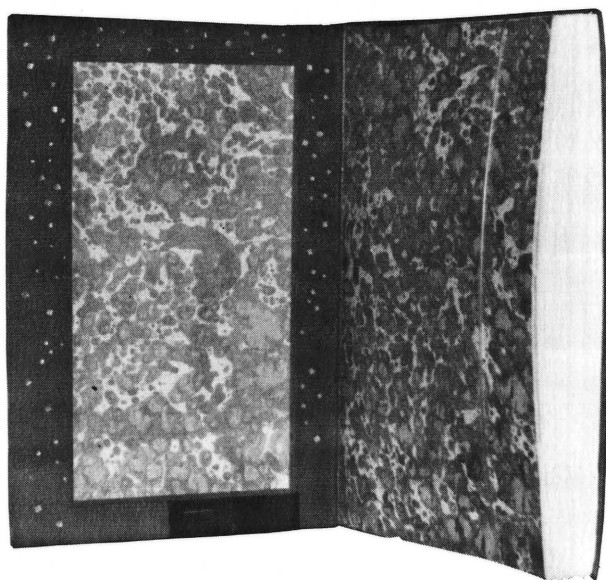


PLATE VI

FLORENCE WALTER

same colors; gilt top.

Magee, Dorthy and David. *Bibliography of the Grabhorn Press*.

San Francisco: Grabhorn Press, 1957.

Plate V

Full leather: red morocco; front cover with several colored squares; gold tooling; black morocco at the bottom carried over to inside covers; doublures and fly leaves gold marble paper; wide leather margin with gold tooling; gilt top.

Magee, Dorthy and David. *Bibliography of the Grabhorn Press*.

San Francisco: Grabhorn Press, 1957.

Plate VI

Inside view of book shown in Plate V.

BELLE McMURTRY / Peter Fahey

Belle McMurtry, a native of Los Gatos, California, came from a family devoted to books and art. She was a charter member of the Book Club of California, founded in 1912. Two other charter members proved of importance in her life—she married W. R. K. Young in the late 1920's, and Florence Walter, wife of J. I. Walter, was her student and became a distinguished hand bookbinder.

Belle McMurtry began binding lessons under Miss Octavia Holden, who had studied in England. In 1919, Belle McMurtry went to Paris where she became associated with Rose Adler, who had established l'École d'Art Décoratifs for beginning students in binding. Both of them took private lessons under M. Henri Noulhac, the impeccable doreur. With equipment and tools, Belle McMurtry returned to San Francisco. After an interval, she realized that more lessons in Paris were necessary. She continued her friendship with Rose Adler, and took further lessons under M. Henri Noulhac. Also, she had lessons in forwarding under Adolphe Cuzin and E. Maylander. Belle McMurtry made exact notes after lessons which became a source record of the methods of French binding. It is an invaluable reference for students interested in the French techniques. These she passed on to her students, and I have in turn given them to my students.

Her first commissions were for Albert Bender, who had a keen interest in artists of the west coast. He became her patron

saint, commissioning many bindings. These were presented to the Albert Bender Room, Stanford University Library, and the Albert Bender Room at Mills College Library, Oakland, California, and to the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

In addition to commissions, Belle McMurtry began teaching in the European tradition of strict discipline, order and ideals of perfection. Among her students, who were loyal and loved her, were Mrs. Robert Grabhorn, Mrs. A. B. C. Dohrmann, Mrs. John G. Levison, Miss Ernestine Moeller, Mrs. J. I. Walter, Mrs. Douglas Watson, Mrs. Harold Wollenberg, and Mrs. Herbert Fahey. Several of her students became exceptional binders, and their work was exhibited at the Golden Gate International Exposition, San Francisco 1939. Belle McMurtry was the star of the exhibit with fourteen exquisite bindings. Of her students, only the last two on the list remain to carry on her teaching.

“Relating the design of the binding to the contents of the book requires more than literacy on the part of the binder—it calls for some spiritual affinity.” Before beginning a binding, Belle McMurtry studied all the features of the book: its form, size, paper, printing, illustrations and content.

All of the materials for binding were selected: French blue board for the covers, cords or tapes for sewing, silk thread and batonnets for the head bands, French Cape Levant morocco for covering, and calf for mosaics, all pared by hand with French paring knives. The treatment inside the covers varied—French morocco or calf doublures and flies; silk doublures and flies; French marble and papers with guards. Decisions were made regarding gilding of the edges—rough gilt or solid gilt—and the method of sewing.

Bookbinding is closely related to architecture—the book is a three dimensional form subject to the same principles as a building, and an intangible called design. Many drawings were made before a design developed. It was made in full scale upon Whatman hand-made paper. While forwarding, Belle McMurtry would have a different feeling about the book and a more stimulating design would evolve. With superb craftsmanship and meticulous care the book was forwarded. Her finishing fulfilled the ideals of perfection. The geometrical accuracy, and the unfailing sharpness of each part of the design, as well as the absolute solidity of the

gold in every impression, involved an extraordinary expense of skill and patient labor. But Belle McMurtry was single-minded and worked with joy. She bound many books for the pleasure of creating a beautiful binding. Her inspired teaching emphasized the art of hand bookbinding as a living art, capable of new motives and new forms of expression.

Exhibits

Lone Mountain College, San Francisco.

Grolier Club, New York.

Golden Gate International Exposition, San Francisco.

Book Club of California.

The Guild of Book Workers, New York.

Homage to Belle McMurtry

During my first years of association with Belle McMurtry, first as a co-worker, then as a student, a friendship developed. It was an honor and a privilege to have known her. She had a delightful sense of humor, and we had most pleasant experiences together. I am grateful for her teaching. She was generous in the gifts of books, tools and equipment to the studio of Herbert and Peter Fahey.

Binding by Miss McMurtry

Boccaccio, Giovanni. *Life of Dante*. Translated Plate VII
by Philip Henry Wicksteed, M. A.; printed by John Henry
Nash; 9" x 10-3/4"; Van Gelder handmade paper.

Full leather: dark blue morocco; symmetrical design on front
and back covers; two light blue calf rectangles with black
morocco mosaics and two bands of black morocco at head
and tail; all blind tooled lines; top edge gilt.

Lecomte des Lisle. *Les Erinnys*. Printed by Kadar Plate VIII
for the Society of the Friends of the Modern Book; presented
to Mr. W. R. K. Young. 8" x 10-1/2"; Japan vellum.
Full leather: burgundy red morocco; a central rectangular
panel edged with two black mosaic borders with gold tooled

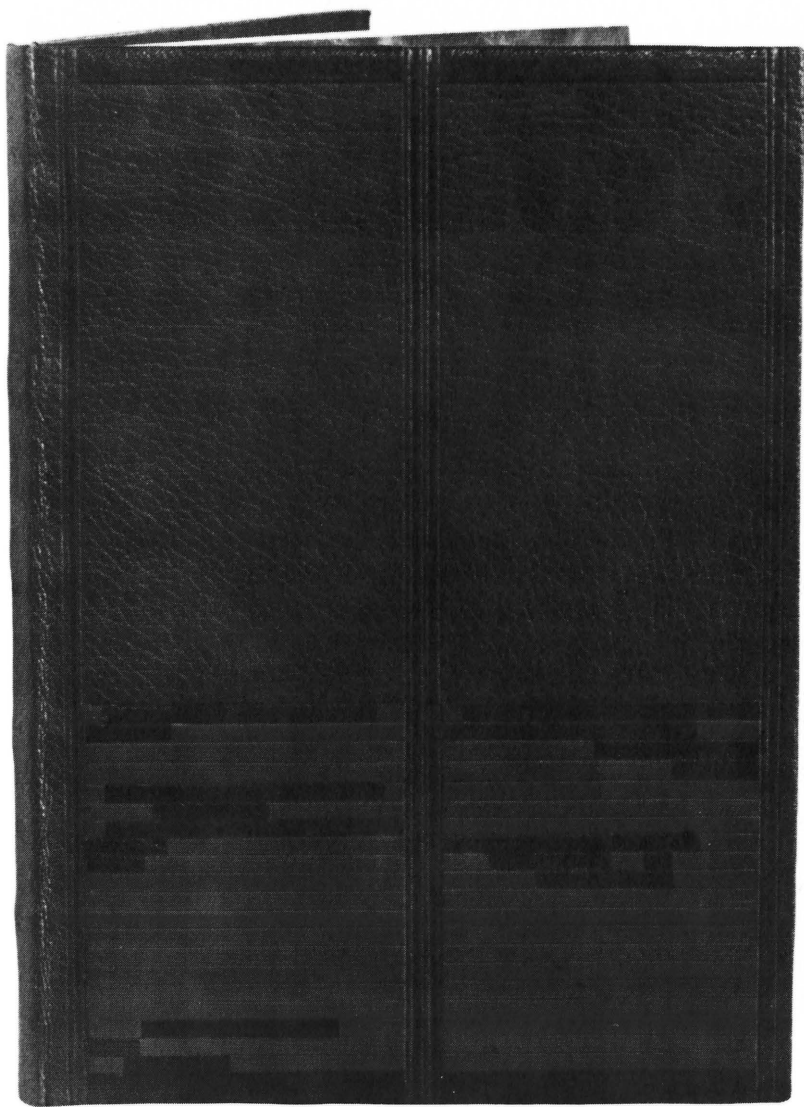


PLATE VII

BELLE McMURTRY

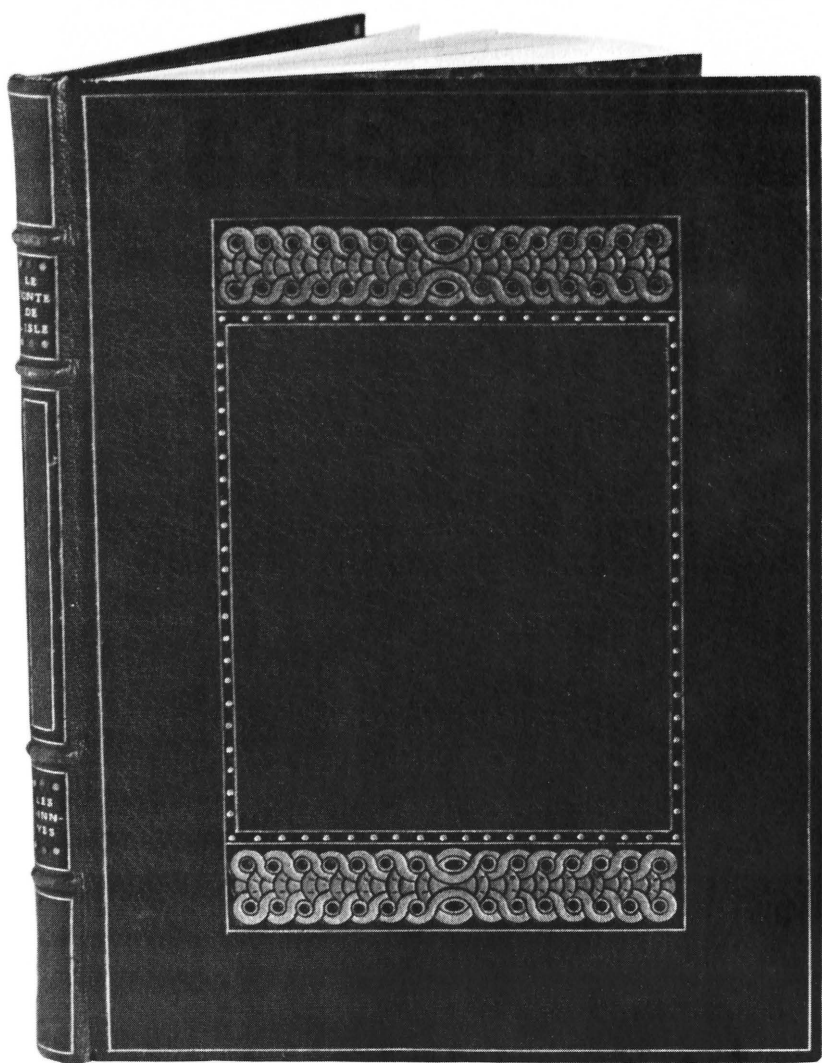


PLATE VIII BELLE McMURTRY

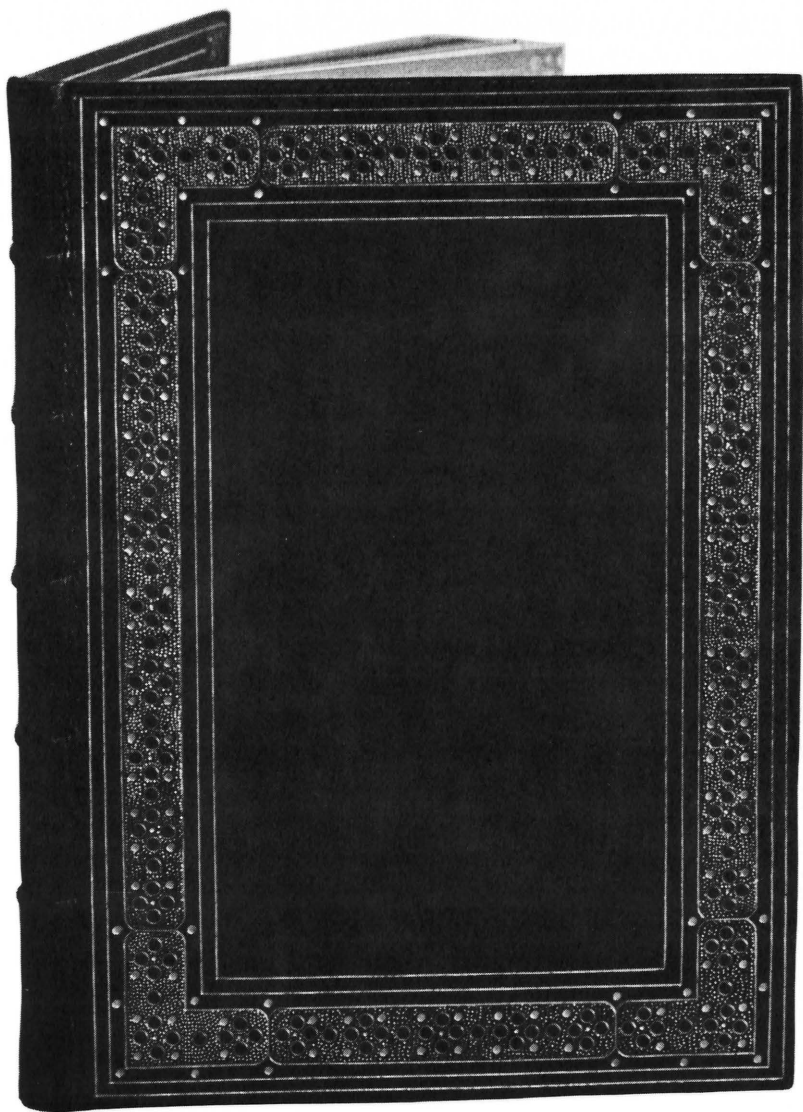


PLATE IX

BELLE McMURTRY

dots; mosaic border of tan and orange leather with black dots, blind tooled, at top and bottom of the rectangle; four raised bands; gold tooled lines outline the covers; edges full gilt.

Shakespeare's Sonnets. Doves Press; signed by T. J. Plate IX
Cobden-Sanderson April 1910. 7" x 9-1/2"; handmade paper.

Full leather; dark blue morocco; five raised bands; gold tooled lines and dots framing a border decorated with mosaic dots of red and blue leather; border background gold tooled with dots and pointelle; five raised bands; gilt top.

EDITORIAL / Laura S. Young

With this issue, the Guild's *Journal* is virtually up-to-date for the first time in a number of years. This is due in part to the promptness with which Mr. Stephens of Dallas and Mr. Herrick of San Francisco sent on their material for our Texas and California issues; and to the tireless efforts of Miss Davis in collecting and assembling the other items in these two issues. They all have our sincere thanks.

It is good to have the article by Mrs. Fahey on Mrs. Belle McMurtry (Young), and that by Mrs. Wollenberg on Mrs. Florence Walter. Mrs. Young was a member of the Guild from 1907 to 1949; and Mrs. Walter from 1939 to 1950. We are grateful to Mrs. Fahey and Mrs. Wollenberg; and hope that their fine work will inspire some of you to write similar "pieces" about former members you have known.

In the course of time this activity could prove to be an invaluable record in the history of the hand book crafts in this country.

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE / Jerilyn G. Davis

May 20, 1974

In the interest of keeping the membership list as up-to-date as possible, my reports are current when the *Journal* goes to press, rather than the period covered by the *Journal*.

New Members:

Mr. Thomas F. Coleman
120 S. Bryan St.
Bloomington, Ind. 47401

Mrs. Silvia B. Sella
343 E. 30th St.
New York, N.Y. 10016

Address Changes:

Mrs. Betsy Eldridge
92 Park Rd.
Toronto, Ont., Canada

Mrs. Mary Lou Lamont
21 Craven Lane
Lawrenceville, N.J. 08648

Mr. Edward C. Garvin
45 Oaklawn Rd.
Wood Haven Farms
Brooksville, Fla. 33512

Mrs. Kathleen Wick
35 W. Cedar St.
Boston, Mass. 02114

Mrs. Lygia da Rocha Lima
Rua Pires do Rio, 502
Barra da Tijuca
Jardim da Barra
Rio de Janeiro, *Brasil*

Resignations: Mr. Elliott Offner, and Mrs. Denyse Pierre-Pierre

Total Membership: 238 1 Institutional Member

GBW member Richard F. Young reports that, as of January 1, 1974, he assumed the position of Bookbinder-in-Charge to the United States Senate Library in the Capitol Building, Washington. The bindery operations are under the Office of the Secretary of the Senate and Mr. Young's work includes all facets of binding as well as repair and restoration work.

The March 13, 1974 edition of the Wilton (Connecticut) *Bulletin* included an illustrated article about GBW member Marianne von Dobeneck. Before her retirement several years ago Miss von Dobeneck was in charge of the Columbia University Library bindery.

The YWCA of White Plains, N. Y. offered two ten-week courses in Calligraphy, running from March 26 to May 29. The instructor was Emily Shields.

A current, popular non-fiction book is *Working: People Talk About What They Do All Day and How They Feel About What They Do*, by Studs Terkel (Pantheon Books, New York, 1974). The entire content of *Working* consists of some 133 taped and edited interviews with people from all walks of life. One of the interviews was with "Donna Murray," a bookbinder. "Donna Murray" is actually Mrs. Peggy McNee, who lives in Chicago and who has been a hand binder for some 25 years. She has done work for the University of Chicago, the Chicago Art Institute, and private collectors. She worked with GBW member Carolyn Horton on several University projects, and was a member of the Guild for several years. Carolyn Horton is mentioned by name in the interview and Mrs. McNee kindly agreed to let us reveal her true identity in this issue of the *Journal*.

These News Notes are, unfortunately, "thin." GBW members have not been sending along information about their binding, calligraphy and related activities as well as we would like. This column can include only what you tell us about!

AIGA SMALL GALLERY EXHIBITION

FRANCES MANOLA / Betsy Palmer Eldridge

December 1973 – February 1974

The winter exhibition showed the versatile talents of Frances Manola of New York. Miss Manola first became interested in calligraphy after Art School, and studied both the Italic and the Roman hand with Paul Standard. While a secretary at the Whitney Museum during the 50's she continued to develop her hand, and took courses in printing and silk screen as well. In 1964 she became a free lance calligrapher and started to study bookbinding, first at the Craft Students League for three years and then with Laura S. Young. On her own she studied illuminating and in the summer of 1973 attended the course given at Tendley Manor in England by the Society of Scribes and Illuminators. Miss Manola currently does free lance work in calligraphy and bookbinding and teaches courses in both at the Craft Students League.

Her exhibit in the AIGA case reflected all of these interests and had wonderful variety. There were numerous pieces of calligraphy done in several hands, two full leather bindings and one restoration, two cleverly designed boxes, one example of her printing and three samples of silk screen work. I particularly enjoyed the decorative end papers with a silk screen design of italic capitals which seemed to combine all of her interests. All in all, it was a very impressive and inspiring collection of work.

Calligraphy:

Frost, Robert. *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening.*

Italic hand; blue and shell gold decoration.

Santayana, George. *O World.*

Plate X

Italic hand; brown and shell gold decorated capitals.

Thoreau, Henry David. Two "Excerpts from Walden."

"A different drummer."

Italic hand: blue and green decorative capitals.

“Why should we be in such desperate haste . . . ”

Roman hand; colored decoration.

Four Christmas Cards:

“Noel.”

“Peace on Earth, Good Will toward all men.”

“Love. Peace. Joy.”

“Merry Christmas.”

Three photo-offset examples of invitations in italic:

A Christmas Party.

An Open House

A Wedding.

Illumination:

Spontaneous

Printing:

A Collection of Ten Poems.

Handset and printed at the AIGA Printing Workshop, 1954.

Silk Screening:

Two selections from the *Bible*, cut in italic:

“But they that wait upon the Lord . . . ”

“Peace I leave with you . . . ”

Two samples of decorative papers with “Italic Capitals” design.

Bindings:

Racinet, M. A. *Le Costume Historique*. Paris, 1888.

Full leather: purple Oasis Niger; handsewn headbands; gold and blind tooled.

Tory, Geofroy. *Champ Fleury*. New York, 1967.

Full leather: green Oasis Niger; tooled in blind; purple and brown onlays; titled in gold on spine.

Restoration:

Historie de France. Paris 1752.

Rebacked with original spine replaced; new corners.

O WORLD

O WORLD, thou choosest not the better part!
It is not wisdom to be only wise.
And on the inward vision close the eyes,
But it is wisdom to believe the heart.
Columbus found a world, and had no chart,
Save one that faith deciphered in the skies;
To trust the soul's invincible surmise
Was all his science and his only art.
Our knowledge is a torch of smoky pine
That lights the pathway but one step ahead
Across a void of mystery and dread.
Bid, then, the tender light of faith to shine
By which alone the mortal heart is led
Unto the thinking of the thought divine.

George Santayana

F. Manola, scribe

Protective Cases:

Cloth slip case with flap for small booklets.

Cloth folding box for two books of different size.

Shown courtesy of the New York Society Library.

BOOKBINDING IN HOLLAND / Elizabeth Menalda*

As I used to love all kinds of handicraft, I longed for a profession in this direction after I had finished school. Our family was living in a northern provincial town—I was born there in 1895—where I did not find many possibilities to this end. So in 1913 after a year of training in a school of domestic housecraft, I began training for a grade in slojd after the Swedish pattern, aiming to teach handwork with clay, paper, board and wood. However my purpose was not only to teach, but to make fine work myself, and what I had learned was dilettantish and limited. To improve this somewhat I worked a year in the cabinetmakers-class of a technical school, which was very useful as I learned technical constructions and the use of more implements and materials than before. In the meantime I taught slojd to a small class of boys in our home.

After that I went to Amsterdam in 1916 to a small school of Arts and Crafts, the Quellinusschool, where I entered the home-decorating class. In this institute, a new director, the architect J. L. M. Lauweriks had been working for a year. He had been a teacher in the Art school in Hagen (Germany) and that school was revolutionary modern, whereas the Quellinusschool used to be strictly in the trend of the Berlage-influence. Berlage was an architect of great influence in Holland and abroad. He brushed away the want of taste in the offshoot of romanticism and the imitation of former styles. His designs were organic, honest, logical, severe and sober. His Amsterdam Stock-Exchange of about 1900 meant

*Miss Elizabeth Menalda, Jacob Obrechtstraat 38^{hs}, Amsterdam 1007, Holland, has been one of Holland's outstanding bookbinders for many years. The Guild is grateful to Miss Menalda for contributing this very interesting article. Photographs by Maarten d'Oliveira, Bovenover 233, Amsterdam.

a revolution in architecture, and brought also a change in every art in Holland.

And there came Lauweriks to the Quellinusschool, turning the whole teaching upside down. Phantasy in design was quite free, no idea was too wild. His old friends in Holland said: Lauweriks has gone mad in Germany. The Berlage-influence had had a very stiffening effect in the applied arts, but now the pupils of Lauweriks were encouraged to use as much playful phantasy as possible. Besides this in architectural designs the whole should be based on a system by which the paper not only was divided in a scale of meters and centimeters as was usual before, but every square meter or bigger unit had an ornamental division and the lines of these could be used in designing. In this way a unity in the whole was maintained. Nevertheless, my two years in the Quellinusschool were a wonderful time and it proved to be very important for my further development. Moreover Amsterdam was so immensely interesting after the somewhat dull life in my native town. Still I wanted a change, as home-decorating means designing and letting other people do the executing handwork, but I wanted to work with my hands myself. So I looked for a different training and at first hesitated between weaving and bookbinding, but I never regretted my choice for the latter, in 1918.

Now I had to attend the School of Arts and Crafts for girls, this being the only opportunity for a training as a bookbinder on an artistic standard. The first year and a half was not inspiring. I missed the exciting sphere of the Quellinusschool badly. But in my second year a new director, Johan B. Smits was called in from Zurich. This new man learned the trade in his father's bookbinding workshop in Leyden. He began in his 14th year and soon had a workshop of his own. At the time of Berlage many artists were imbued with the same idealistic principles of democracy, socialism and sound handicraft. They wanted to give the people simple beautiful buildings and objects for daily use instead of senseless gaudy imitations of former styles. In every trade this tendency came to the front. For the bookbinding craft, Smits was the renewer. He reconsidered the constructions and made them solid and honest. Formerly they often were too weak for the purpose of showing a quite different spectacular sham con-

struction. He used them as a prominent element in the design, the same as he did with the inherent charm of the material and handiwork-technics. He was a very intelligent, exceptionally skillful and artistic man. Later he was the director of the graphic department of the School of Arts & Crafts in Zurich, Switzerland, where he also taught typography and decorative writing.

The president of the Board of my new school was K. P. C. de Bazel—next to Berlage the greatest architect in Holland of that time. Originally he had been a very fine craftsman, a cabinetmaker. He knew Smits' merits and also that he was wanted badly to promote our arts and crafts education. But . . . Smits had no certificates, he had never passed an examination and in Holland one cannot attain anything without a certificate. So the government said: we cannot appoint this man. De Bazel, who was a great authority, fought for Smits and after persisting for months he won and Smits was appointed director. In our class he taught the designing and cutting of tools for blind and gold tooling and making designs with them. It soon became evident that he could meet all my difficulties—what had seemed intricate became logical and simple. He was sensitive to every material and technical possibility and was always willing to help in experiments. Then I worked more happily than ever before. In our class decorative writing was taught too but at first I did not make much progress in this branch. As Smits was an advanced artist on this subject too, he soon helped me on with a slight indication and so I was able to execute many addresses in my later practice. Smits was a modest unpretentious man. Almost nobody knows for instance that he was the first to make a binding on cords (we say: on high ribs) not with the leather pasted directly on the back of the sections but with a hollow back. He evolved this method in Zurich and German pupils took it to Germany. It did not interest him much that German bookbinders claimed the invention of this method. When I started my own workshop he always was willing to advise me in difficult cases in his kind efficient way. However his greatest interest gradually was fixed on another intricate hobby, as bookbinding held no longer any problems for him. In his leisure hours he built violins. He modernized the classic model somewhat and his instruments were very beautiful—they were exhibited at a great arts & crafts exposition. The sound was good

and satisfying. On occasion of his leave as a director he was presented with a fine woodworking machine, but alas he could never use it. He wanted first to visit his daughter in our former Netherlands Indies. During his stay in Java the Japanese conquered the land and Smits—like all white people—was put in a prison camp where he could not stand the hardships and died.

In my last year in the bookbinding class I began teaching handiwork during one afternoon weekly in the school for social work to earn some money at last. Before 1914 parents of the intellectual class were accustomed to send their daughters abroad for about a year after they finished school, but in 1921 this was not yet recommendable and so some young ladies were sent to the school for social work for further education. Most of them thought Dante and philosophy quite interesting but they esteemed handiwork somewhat beneath their notice and they regarded my lesson as a welcome opportunity for a nice chat. I tried to teach them to handle a saw, tacks and a hammer, a fret-saw, etc. and it was rather a stiff proposition to keep them working. But I remember, when I made a merry-go-round for their model, that they spent some of their spare time to finish it.

It was rather exhausting work and after six years I made over the job to a friend who enjoyed it more than I did.

When I settled in my own workshop (1922) I soon got orders. Later on I often said: in the beginning the main point is not what you *can do* but *whom you know*. As my family and I had many relations, orders came, but seldom for the execution of well-bound books. I must say here: in Holland there is little interest for book-art though we have had brilliant printers and letter-designers. Very few people bought the products of our private presses and a still lesser number had them bound by an artist-bookbinder. The Dutch are of a saving turn. What people wanted mostly were albums with an address and signatures for occasions of honoring or leave-taking, etc. The advantage was that the committee arranging such an event had a nice sum of money at its disposal as many contributors were involved. So I could make fine leather bindings with an elaborate design of ornaments done by selfmade tools. To this end I started with one or more tools combining them in many different ways till I got a pleasing result. I never knew beforehand what would be the outcome. Sometimes

I made a design with pencil for gouges or pallets or line-fillets. Still those albums bothered me as not being entirely satisfactory. The commissioners namely never had the notion to confer with the bookbinder before starting summons to the partakers who were to give their contribution and signature. They always began at the wrong end, adding to their summons a card for the signature, far too big and too thick. After receiving the wanted signatures they went to the bookbinder, who was now forced to make a voluminous album of heavy paper and a big size to enable the mounting of usually a great number of those heavy cards. Another drawback was that the order always came very late so that I had to work day and night to get it ready in time. Later on I found a less laborious working method for my albums. I made a loose leather cover of which the back was made wide enough to hold the measure of the sheets with the cards on top. I then attached the sections with end-papers, the address and the cards to the back with a cord I made of real silk so that a nice ornament was formed by the cord outside and the back was not weakened. For this I made holes in the back. But I am getting ahead of my story.

Besides the albums leather bindings were seldom ordered. I had to make many linen and half-leather bindings and people would order caskets, things in use on a writing desk etc. For the linen bindings and cardboard things I often used—next to leather—plain or many-colored textile material, lined with thin paper. I was working enthusiastically but still I felt I lacked a practical routine. I needed too much time for various parts of the work. There is an old Dutch saying: “A handicraft should be stolen from the hands.” I never had seen an old hand working in my trade. In that time the best bookbinders in Holland were downright hostile to the training in the Arts & Crafts school. They only knew the training in the old-fashioned workshops and thought it nonsense to get it in a school where the working-methods were quite different from theirs, and many of these were even strictly disapproved of.

Every year the school held an exhibition of its results and then several bookbinders would come to quarrel with the teacher and to tell him how absurd the training and its methods were. In one aspect I agreed with them: one could not get the necessary routine in school. Though I knew their disposition I still went to

some of them and asked to be allowed to work some time in their workshop. They were not unkind but did not want me in their shop. By the way—the attitude of the master bookbinders changed entirely after some time and later on I had a very friendly relation with them and entered their organization. After 1945 for example they helped me in getting material which was then very scarce. After obtaining my certificate in 1923 (the last year I worked mainly at home) I became a member of the V.A.N.K. (Vereniging voor Ambachts- en Nijverheidskunst), the Society for Crafts and Industrial Arts. Its president was Dr. J. F. van Royen, a jurist and Secretary-General of our Postal Organisation, a remarkable artist himself. With two prominent authors he was the founder of a private press “De Zilverdistel” (The Silverthistle), later Kunera Press, which was installed in his home where he did the composing and printing all by himself. His products were of a high quality and were very much appreciated by the English master-printers with whom he had a keen contact. He was a fine and kind man and a brilliant president of our Society, working hard for its members. He was engaged continuously and assiduously for the acceptance and involvement of artists in Government orders. As the Germans invaded our country in May 1940 they wanted to incorporate all artists in their system. Van Royen tried diplomatically to resist them, and to safeguard the independence of the artists. In 1942 he was arrested and put into a concentration camp where the enemy quickly succeeded in getting rid of him. Physically he was not strong and he soon died of hunger and illness, without any help. As to the artists, in spite of all German attempts at intimidation, by far the minority entered their Nazi organization.

But let me go back to the happy time of 1924.

Van Royen was of course strongly interested in the work of every member of the V.A.N.K. and when I discussed with him the impossibility of my working here with experienced bookbinders he advised me to try entering a workshop in England and gave me an introduction to Mr. Hornby the owner of the Ashdene private press in London. Mr. Hornby sent me on with recommendations to the most prominent bookbinders who were very kind, but though they would place me in their workshops with great pleasure it was forbidden to take on foreigners, volunteers and

women. Then I went to the Central School of Arts and Crafts, where Douglas Cockerell the author of the wonderful "Book-binding and Care of Books" was a teacher. I entered the book-binding class after Easter 1924. Besides Mr. Cockerell, Peter McLeish was a teacher in that class and writing was taught by Graily Hewitt. This last teacher was a stately old gentleman, speaking very slowly and solemnly, but witty. He did not seem accustomed to pupils who had studied the skeleton of the letters already. So when I had started to write out a text he came and said: "That . . . is . . . about . . . a bit . . . quite . . . allright." Very English, indeed.

It was interesting to work with the English methods which I knew in theory from "Bookbinding and the Care of Books." Some implements were different from ours and the handling of the book itself too varied considerably.

In Holland our bookbinding methods are about the same as in Germany. We cut the book before it is rounded, or after the backing, but before the boards are attached, while the English after backing attach the boards and cut the book afterwards. They cut the boards beforehand to measure as it should be after completion. After attaching the boards carefully the book is pressed and cut the next day. For this the bands on the outside of the boards must be loosened in the end to drop the boards, in order to enable the portion of the leaves which must be cut to protrude. Cutting the fore-edge is still more complicated. The curve of the back and consequent curve of the fore-edge must first be got rid of with the help of trindles. The back is knocked quite flat and if necessary the leaves are tied up with tape before cutting. I was not converted to this intricate way of cutting but returned to our own method and used the cutting machine in contrast to the method of Mr. Cockerell's class where the cutting was done exclusively by the plough. I don't know if this method has been altered since 1924.

Another difference in the English and Dutch way of binding then was that we preferred an opening back and the English pasted the leather or the parchment directly on the back of the sections. We fix on the back a flat sheath of strong paper which we call a "drierug" ("three-back"). It is made of a piece of paper which has three times the width of the back and of greater length.

It is folded in three and the outer parts are pasted one upon the other. When it is quite dry the single part of the sheath is pasted on the back. Several pieces of single paper can be pasted over it and to get quite a smooth form it can be modelled with sandpaper and file. I mentioned this procedure already when I told that Johan B. Smits was the first to use it, with bindings on high cords. Mr. Cockerell was a very kind and gay old gentleman. He lived in the country and used to enter class with arms full of flowers for his pupils. My stay in London was a very nice time, first because of the bookbinding class, second because of the renewed acquaintance with fascinating London and third because of my home in the Mary Ward settlement where I met many interesting and sympathetic women. Their posters for the performances in the Settlement were very poor and I was glad to be able to execute them in decent handwriting, and to help the lady in question to do this somewhat in the same way. When returning home my routine however had not improved and I took up my work in the same way as before.

My wish to work with others in a workshop was fulfilled at last. Through a Viennese friend I could enter a very old-fashioned shop in Vienna in 1926. The only machines in use were a gilding press, a treadle sewing machine and a huge board cutter. The master's wife did all the sewing and everything else was done by hand. That was just what I wanted, though I could not achieve as much as the workmen. I remember being forced to stop halfway, after the foreman had charged me to cut some 300 boards on the enormous and quite blunt boardcutter. I never was very strong physically but the master did not blame me too much for this.

Apart from the routine work I was lucky enough to find, in Vienna, a very clever toolcutter who did not charge too much. In my schooldays in Amsterdam director Smits brought a set of alphabetical tools of 5 mm which he had cut during an Easter holiday after his own design. I had already used them with great enthusiasm as they were extremely beautiful. Now I asked Smits' permission to have them copied in the sizes 3½, 5, 7 and 10 mm. After I got his consent the 4 sizes were cut and they were of enormous benefit in my whole further career. Amsterdam—London—Vienna—three totally different worlds. I had enjoyed and undergone them with great satisfaction and now I returned

home quite content.

In 1927 a "Jahrbuch der Einbandkunst" was edited in Leipzig, Germany by Hans Loubier and Erhard Klette. The second file was to contain a general view of the trade now in several countries next to articles on ancient bindings. Smits asked me to write an article on the modern bookbinding in Holland, and this appeared in the file of 1928.

First I started my workshop at home, then I hired a much bigger studio where there was room for an assistant and three or four pupils. A lady editor of an excellent women's monthly had written an article about my work, but after that she wanted me to compose a manual on bookbinding in a series of editions on all kinds of women's handicrafts. I did this with great pleasure and my "Zelf Boekbinden" ("Bookbinding Yourself") appeared in 1934. It was treating only bindings in linen, textiles and paper and was not meant for future craftsmen but for spare-time workers. So I did not recommend expensive machines, gilding tools and letters and proposed pen writing for titles. Joh. B. Smits was so kind as to write two model alphabets for reproduction in the book and also wrote a preface to it. The editor employed a girl, an art-student, to make the illustrations I wanted. The result, I am sorry to say, was not very nice, as compared to the splendored drawings in Cockerell's "Bookbinding." The text was followed by many illustrations of simple bookbindings. One might think the book was rather a success—I heard from an assistant in the municipal public library that it was stolen regularly, every now and then they had to buy a new copy!

At first I trained my assistants myself insofar as they had no training in the Arts & Crafts school and later on I got them from the workshop of Elisabeth Michahellis in Hamburg. These girls were very experienced in producing cardboard objects and, as beautiful cotton curtain textiles were being produced in Holland we used them a great deal and these objects were much appreciated by the public. My attention was needed constantly to teach, to keep everybody working and to do my own work, my designs, administration, etc., so whenever I had to write an address I began on Saturday at 1 p.m. and continued working during that day and night and the whole of the Sunday, which did not please me at all. So I was very glad when Piet van Trigt, a

young man of my acquaintance after leaving the school of A. & C. specialized in decorative writing so that I could leave my addresses to him—which he did most beautifully. He soon became an authority in his branch and we cooperated many times. Whenever he or I got an order for an album or an address he wrote the latter while I made the case, the casket, the album—whatever was required.

Meanwhile I began inviting several artists to give lectures at my place and this was the start of a local section of the V.A.N.K. in Amsterdam, where interested non-artists also could be members. Lectures, discussions and excursions were held, resulting in a useful and pleasant contact between the workers in the applied arts among themselves and with the public.

In addition, to stimulate interest for our work with the public I united a group of some 8 or 10 colleagues and we organized a small society "De Trekvogels" (The Migrants) intending to show our work in several places in the country. There were weavers, silversmiths, ceramists, a designer of ex-libris, a sculptor of small objects, another bookbinder, myself and varying participants and we organized nice small exhibitions. Outside Amsterdam we had an assistant for selling and administration but the greater part of the organization was left to me. After some years I stopped, for it took too much of my time, with unsatisfactory results.

In the years round 1930 I got dissatisfied with my designs done by tooling—a greater need for sobriety and stylish control was felt. Then I left tooling alone and tried to let the leather and the construction of the binding pronounce their beauty more emphatically, supported by a few blind or gold lines. A quest for a new kind of charm—the trend of the time. "The new succinctness" was the slogan. Some of my designs were a success but not all. Gradually I reverted to using a tool or two and began using—more so than before—several colours of leather in a design, abandoning the principle of the days of Smits' lessons: A designer of bookbinding should not draw, he should tool exclusively.

More and more I used the once forbidden drawing and then I felt more free to use my phantasy in designing.

In 1938 there was an interruption in my bookbinding career. At that time my assistant left and I had no pupils. My Viennese

friend being an enamel painter of half Jewish origin, after Hitler's invasion of Austria, was no longer allowed to work as an artist and I asked her to come to Holland. So in that year we settled in my studio and I took the post of assistant at the Institute (for the collection and leasing) of Lantern-slides, with series on art, geography, history and many other categories. Several times there were calls for bookbinding orders, which I could not accept in the present situation. In May 1940 came the German occupation of Holland and the directors of the Institute, feeling that the future of their business was in jeopardy, began to dismiss the staff—me in the first place being the last appointed.

The personnel manager of one of the greatest bookbinding firms in Amsterdam was an acquaintance of mine and a co-member of the V.A.N.K. We had collaborated starting a subsection of the V.A.N.K. for bookbinding, organizing lectures and exhibitions relative to our craft. When he heard of my dismissal he asked his director to appoint me in the section for hand-bindings and I got the job.

So in the end I found myself all the same in an Amsterdam workshop with experienced bookbinders, which I enjoyed very much, though the salary was small. Now whenever people wanted to give me an order the boss said: Accept—you can do the work here. That was all right but for designing I wanted more tranquillity than was found in the factory, so I took the work home. The same difficulty arose when I had to tool in gold. The end was that I was working more at home than in the shop and at last I decided to reopen my studio. The directors continued to be very kind and obliging—when I got an order to bind a collection of magnificent large-sized handcoloured engravings dating from 1702 by the famous biologist Maria Sibylla Merian they allowed me to execute the assignment in their shop. Each picture had to be restored because since 1702 the collection had been kept in a far too small portfolio, causing three margins of every sheet to be badly damaged.

In the beginning my working at home was rather embarrassing as I was living with my Viennese friend in my former studio and my implements were no longer complete. But after some time I built a nice little studio in the attic and was able to lay hands on the necessary tools. I was lucky in that I always kept my excellent

boardcutter, and my finishing tools of course.

The last move of my studio was in 1963, when I got fed up with the endless stairs (typical for Amsterdam) and the discomfort of our rooms and took a roomy lower halfhouse where I am still living and was working till I stopped it in 1971. My last assistant was a young man who has been working independently for many years, but who came regularly every time I wanted him. Whenever I have a small job to do I go to him and do it in his shop.

When I closed my studio I sold my instruments to a young graphic artist, a teacher at the Rotterdam Art Academy. This man is living far from Rotterdam in a rural north-eastern province in a small picturesque village consisting of lovely old Saxon farmhouses. Their exterior has been carefully restored and the interior rebuilt into something quite modern and comfortable. In the stable an experimental graphic studio has been set up with all kinds of presses old and new. In the barn there is a part for etching and one for bookbinding. In both rooms all kinds of holiday courses are held, the bookbinding lessons being taught by my younger colleague.

I did not sell my gilding tools and asked myself what to do with them and my designs—throw them away?

A very happy solution has been found—I gave them all, including photographs of many bindings by my hand, to the book-museum in The Hague, the National Museum Meermanno-Westreenianum. This museum has a rich collection but as yet nothing in the bookbinding section and I am glad that my gift was a welcome one and appreciated as the start of a new division. It remains for me to tell something about my orders.

I am very much indebted to Mr. van Royen, the late president of our V.A.N.K. and—after the war—to Mr. W. F. Gouwe, onetime director of the Institute for Applied and Industrial Art and later on the adviser for aesthetical matters of the Postal Service and the Government. Through these gentlemen I often got interesting orders.

The first one was rather surprising. During a postal congress in Cairo (Egypt) the then King Foead told our Postmaster-General that he wanted one hundred copies of each special series of Dutch stamps. I was asked to visit Mr. van Royen in The Hague and he gave me an order for a casket to contain the sheets of stamps—

not 100 copies of each series but 20, as Mr. van Royen humorously observed that the King's demand was far too immodest. The time to finish the casket was very short and it seemed impossible to get the necessary leather either in Amsterdam or The Hague as well as the material for a big tool in which to cut the obligatory post-horn, but Mr. van Royen was so much convinced that all would come off well that I was formally forced to accept the order. When I started the preparation and also during the work I had such incredibly good luck that King Foead really could get his stamps on time.

After the war a similar case occurred. This time King Foead's son Faroek wanted the series of special Dutch stamps and Emperor Hailé Selassié of Ethiopia, the same. So I had to make two caskets. A high official went to the Near East to offer the presents. He was instructed emphatically to deliver them into the hands of King Faroek himself and to nobody else. Our Government had been informed at the time that the casket for King Foead never reached him because the Prime Minister who was to hand it to the king had kept it for himself.

When our Queen Juliana was still Crown Princess she became engaged to Prince Bernhard von Lippe-Biesterfeld. Mr. van Royen organized a collective congratulation from the postal personnel and he wanted me to make the casket for the leaves. Now I had made several things for the Royal Family before—here is one instance.

When Queen Wilhelmina, Juliana's mother, once visited my native town a great historical pageant was held. The municipal archivist wrote a program, an essay on the principal historical personalities of the pageant, followed by a plan of all the pedestrians, horsemen and carriages in the procession. A copy of this program was to be presented to the Queen. It was printed on specially fine paper and I had to write the short address and then to bind the whole in leather. But the design of the printing was so poor that I decided to copy it in handwriting. I invented pretty symbols for the pedestrians, horsemen and carriages and it looked quite fine and festive. I had not asked for permission to treat the text this way because I could not assess the cost beforehand and preferred missing my salary to being compelled to bind an inferior product for the Queen. I remember that the principals

were delighted by my writing out the text but I do not remember whether they were willing to foot the bill—which certainly was moderate. For I was always a bad businesswoman—the writing of a bill used to be something of a nightmare to me.

Another time when Queen Wilhelmina visited our native province of Friesland where my father was the Provincial Clerk, I was staying with my parents because of the summer holidays. The Governor asked my father to compose an address of loyalty and I had to write it on parchment. As usual time was too short, there being only a week left. In the provincial capital—our home—no calf-parchment was available—only sheeps' parchment which has a porous surface. I had to give it a bath of white of egg and afterwards dried it in about an hour near a gas heater. Fortunately this experiment went off very well: the parchment was now nicely grained. As I used always to have my writing gear about me I could start on the job without delay. I went to the office of the provincial Head-Engineer where I could use a drawing-board, a set of square rulers, etc., and I began to write the text which was very elaborate, trying several sizes of letters before arranging the total form of the columns of text. The Head-Engineer came to have a look at my work and grunted with disdain—he could not believe that anything decent would be the result. At that time I had had sufficient experience in these matters not to be daunted by his doubts. When the address was ready everybody thought it was satisfactory, though it was very simple. After World War II a new period began and Peace brought me and Piet van Trigt and several other calligraphers some very interesting orders. We were—and still are—deeply grateful to our Allies for bringing about our liberation from the Nazis. The highest military honour was awarded to the King of England—we had to make the charter and its casket. Mr. Churchill came over to visit us—another casket and charter. The same for General Eisenhower when he was presented a splendid sword of honour.

1948 brought the abdication of Queen Wilhelmina and again Piet van Trigt wrote the charter. An enormous seal was attached to it with parchment ribbons and I had to make a case for the document. A flat board was fixed with a hinge to the back of the case and on this board I fitted a case to receive the seal. The manuscript was magnificent!

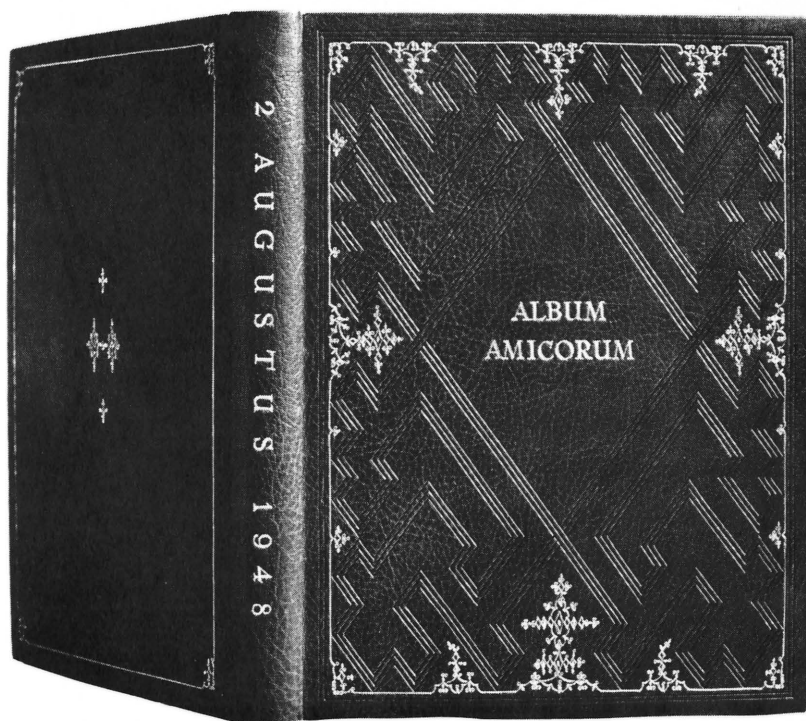


PLATE XI

ELIZABETH MENALDA

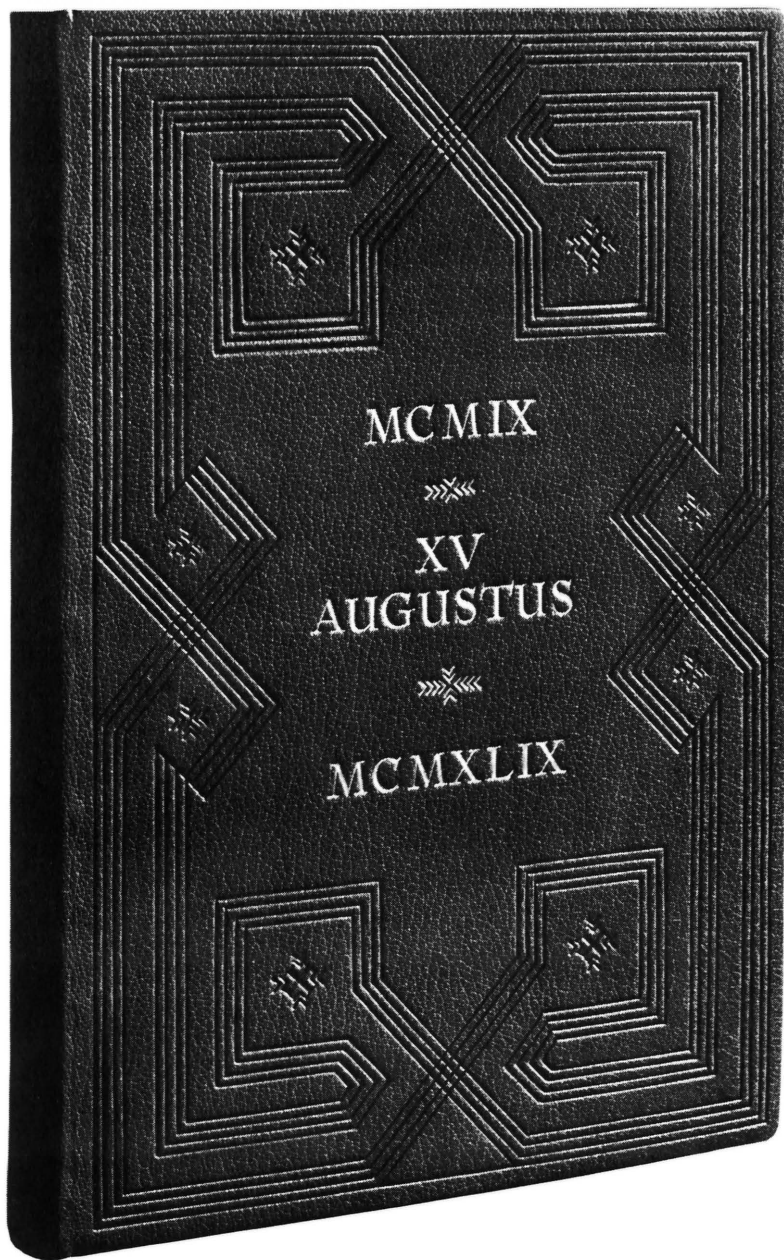


PLATE XII

ELIZABETH MENALDA

In the whole of my career I loved my work. There were things however that I always regretted: so few colleagues to talk to and eventually to work with and finding so little public understanding and appreciation of the work. Therefore I am very grateful to the editors of the *Journal* of the Guild of Book Workers for enabling me to tell something about my work and experiences.

It was just like talking to understanding colleagues, sharing my love for our craft.

Amsterdam, September 21, 1973.

NOTE RE "MYLAR ENVELOPES" PUBLISHED IN VOL. XI,
NO. 3

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