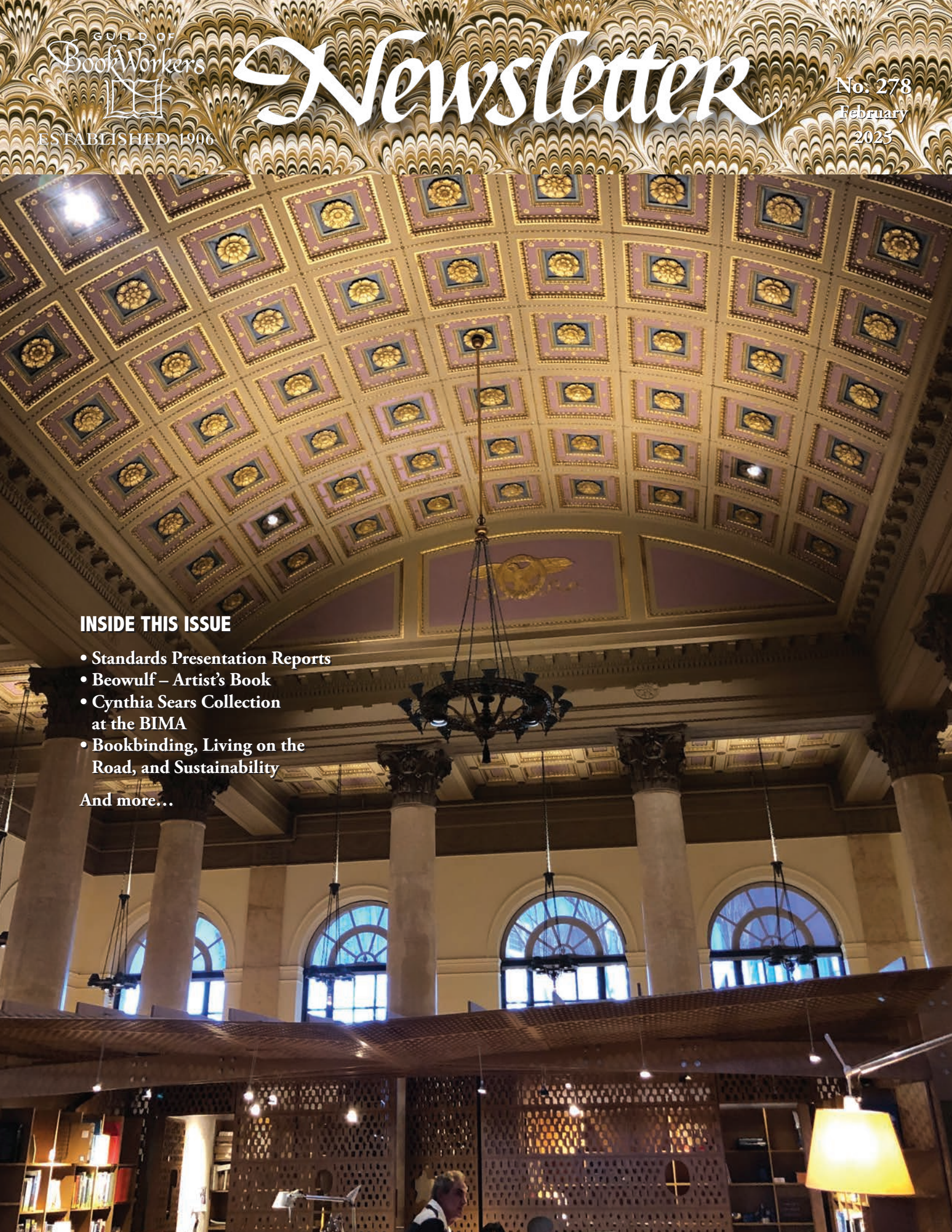


## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Standards Presentation Reports
- Beowulf – Artist's Book
- Cynthia Sears Collection at the BIMA
- Bookbinding, Living on the Road, and Sustainability

And more...





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**The Guild of Book Workers (GBW)** is a national organization representing the hand book crafts. There are regional chapters in *New England, New York, the Delaware Valley, Washington DC, the Midwest, California, the Rocky Mountains, Texas, the Northwest and the Southeast.*

**Membership** is open to all interested persons and includes a print copy of this Newsletter, among many other benefits. To become a member, please visit the **GBW Website:**

[guildofbookworkers.org](http://guildofbookworkers.org) The **GBW Newsletter** is published six times a year by the Guild of Book Workers, Inc., 521 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10175.

## Contents

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- 2 • **LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT**
- 2 • **LETTER FROM THE EDITORS**
- 3 • **NEWS AND NOTICES**
- 3 • **CHAPTER REPORTS**
- 5 • **STANDARDS – Presentation Reports**
- 13 • **PRESENTATION – Regarding *Beowulf*– The Making of an Artist’s Book**  
by Barry McCallion
- 17 • **BOOK ARTS – Artists’ Books in the Cynthia Sears Collection at the BIMA**  
by Lisa Scarpello
- 19 • **FINE BINDING – “Interaction of Color”: My endless adventure**  
by Pamela Wood
- 20 • **MARBLING – Is A Marbler An Artist or An Artisan?e**  
by Iris Nevins
- 21 • **A CONVERSATION WITH – Carrie Snyder – Bookbinding, Living on the Road,  
and Sustainability**  
by Liz McHugh
- 24 • **BOOK REVIEW – *Islamic Bookbinding Revealed Through the Lens  
of the Montefiascone Conservation Project***  
reviewed by Barbara Adams Hebard



CREDIT: BARRY MCCALLION

Presentation – Regarding Beowulf (page 13)

# Letter from the President

## DEAR MEMBERS

We will be well into 2025 by the time you read this, but Happy New Year! The board and committees are working hard to keep things running, make things better for our members, and put some new programs in place.

At the November meeting of the Board of Directors, the following committees were approved:

- Nominating (Elections) Committee: Noah Smutz, Nora Lockshin, and Mary Uthupuru
- Award Committee: Amanda Degener, Shannon Kerner, and Mary Sullivan

You can submit nominations to the Nominating Committee February 1 – April 1. The election will take place in July, with officers beginning their terms in the Fall of 2025. Nominations for the Laura Young Award and the Lifetime Achievement Award close in April, and will be awarded at Standards in Iowa City in 2025.

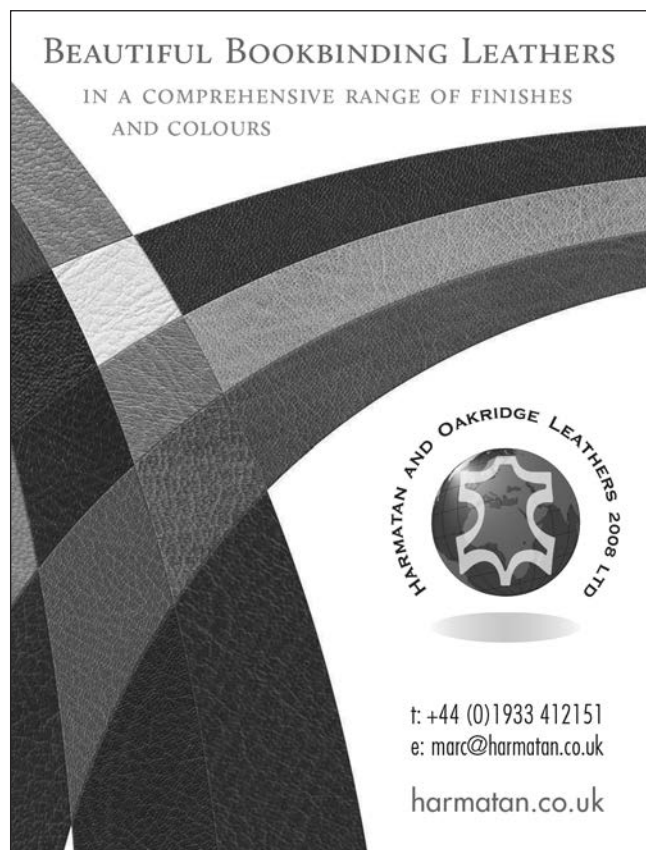
Both the Nominating and Awards Committees will be sending out official notices. Please direct any nominations or questions to the appropriate committee.

As always, please send any questions or comments to me at [president@guildofbookworkers.org](mailto:president@guildofbookworkers.org).

*Cheers*

**Kate Levy**

President, Guild of Book Workers  
[president@guildofbookworkers.org](mailto:president@guildofbookworkers.org)



# Letter from the Editors

## THE LOVE ISSUE

### DEAR READERS

What February issue would be complete without a paean to love? The issue you now hold in your hands is fairly bursting with affectionate thoughts. From our regular correspondents praising a beautiful book on Islamic bindings (champion reviewer Barbara Hebard) or musing on the distinction between an artist and an artisan (Marbling Correspondent Iris Nevins), to a book artist sharing his methodology for a work inspired by an ancient text (returning presenter Barry McCallion), to the annual outpouring of appreciation that the Standards presentation writeups represent, the abundance of articles speaks to the loving generosity of us all—we the people of the book.

Our Standards writeups would not have been possible without the diligent efforts of the GBW Scholars: Domonique Alesi, Nancy Kazanjian, Ash Nunez, and Syd Robinson. Give them a round of applause and spread the generosity around!

So much to love in this issue! Our new Book Arts Correspondent, Lisa Scarpello, brings to light a beautiful effort to make artists's books accessible to a broad audience. Check out her review of a series of online videos sponsored by the Bainbridge Island Museum of Art. Fine Print correspondent Pamela Wood describes how a special book has influenced her life and art over many years, and her joy at being able to see a rare copy of *Interaction of Color*. Liz McHugh interviews Carrie Snyder about her combined bookbinding-studio-and-living-space in a van, appreciating the impetus to live—and bind!—sustainably and in harmony with the environment.

As a thriving community of book people who must share in the shock and sadness about the fires that (as we write) continue to devastate the Los Angeles region, consider donating to the American Red Cross or to a private fundraising platform like GoFundMe. One of your intrepid co-editors lived in South Pasadena as a student, and has fond memories of many irreplaceable treasures there, book-related and otherwise. Sharing a few dollars can bring love to life, and hopefully help to rebuild the thriving art scene for which the Valley is known.

Wishing you a warm season of love and affection! Hugs from your co-editor team.

# News and Notices

## OPEN SET 2025

First stop: San Francisco! The San Francisco Center for the Book (SFCB) and the American Bookbinders Museum (ABM), will each host a portion of OPEN SET. The show, sponsored by the American Academy of Bookbinding, celebrates the art of finely crafted design bookbindings.

SFCB's gallery will host the "Open" portion of the exhibition and the ABM will host the "Set" books. As SFCB's Press Release says, "The exhibition features an impressive range of works from emerging bookbinders and seasoned professionals. Visitors to the gallery will encounter traditional techniques such as inlay, gold tooling, onlay, titling, and edge treatment, alongside innovative contemporary interpretations of bookbinding methods

and structures. These 30+ exhibited works highlight the enduring artistry and evolving creativity of fine design binding today."

For more information about the exhibition and its travels to Denver, visit the American Academy of Bookbinding's website: [bookbindingacademy.org/openset-2025](http://bookbindingacademy.org/openset-2025).



## Chapter Reports

### CALIFORNIA

The California chapter has planned a tour of the William Andrew Clark Memorial Library in Los Angeles, CA for chapter members to view selections from their collection. This event is will be held on January 29, 2025. Sign up and further information and will be posted on our chapter's website [gbwcaliforniachapter.wordpress.com](http://gbwcaliforniachapter.wordpress.com)

Co-Chairs: Marlyn Bonaventure  
and Rebecca Chamlee

### MIDWEST

All's quiet on the Midwestern front. As we move into the new year, look for communication and updates about our planned monthly online gatherings, as well as the Midwest Chapter's Annual Gathering in Minneapolis. If you are interested in helping with the Annual Gathering—in a small way or in a large way—please do not hesitate to reach out.

### ROCKY MOUNTAIN

The Rocky Mountain chapter held their annual digital exhibit at the end of last year. We had seven people enter, with a total of nine items exhibited on our website. This year we had prizes that were

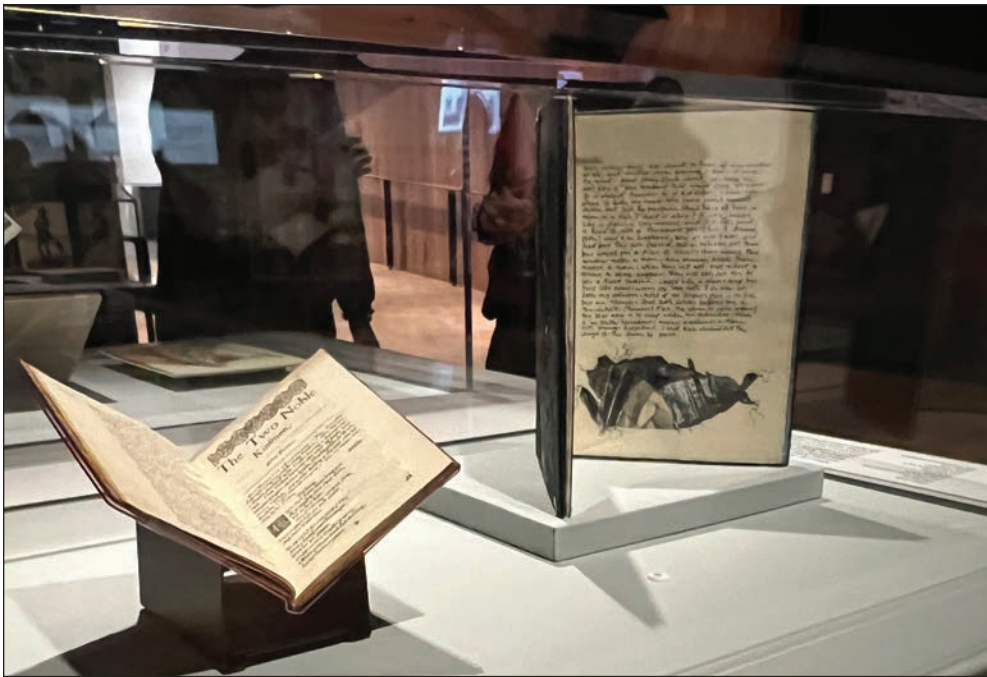
generously donated by Harmatan and Oakridge Leathers and Talas. Holly D'Oench took first place with her entry of Dune, Brenda Gallagher took second place with her entry of Peep Show, and Mel Antuna Hewitt took third with her book Rhapsody in Yellow. The chapter hosted a digital opening where some of the artists spoke about their work and showed pictures.

Congratulations to the winners! The chapter will be holding another digital exhibit in the fall of 2025. Pictures and artist statements are currently on view on our chapter website!



Some Potomac Chapter members at the renovated Folger Shakespeare Library.





Beautiful works at the Folger Shakespeare Library.

Our new Colorado Event Coordinator set up a marbling workshop that was held in December of last year. Marc Horowitz taught the sold-out workshop called “Introduction to Traditional European-style Paper Marbling.”

We look forward to holding more workshops for our members in 2025!


is in the midst of a show featuring collectors’ extraordinary assembly of firsts, signed, or otherwise notable editions. It is not to be missed when you are in the area. Take advantage of their late nights Thursdays through Saturdays which align with show nights for the Theatre. Their new restaurant Quill and Crumb is open, as is one of the best gift shops in DC.

## POTOMAC

The Potomac Chapter had a delightful pre-holiday meet up at the renovated Folger Shakespeare Library. Newly accessible in several ways, the permanent collection gallery on the lower floor displays Folger’s entire collection of First Folios in an elegant new open storage case—with the history of each one interpreted in various ways—opposite interactive and occasionally activated demonstrations of facsimile and reproduction printing technology. We were delighted to see Sue Doggett’s (Standards 2024 presenter) artist’s book *The Tempest* beautifully displayed among the permanent collection. A splendid new gallery for special exhibitions

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## CHRISTOPHER SOKOLOWSKI Delicate Damage Control – Precoated Asian Tissue

by Nancy Kazanjian

Christopher Sokolowski presented *Mending Paper Using Precoated Asian Tissue: Quick and Subtle Techniques*, a description of the methods and materials used at the Weissman Preservation Center, Harvard Library. The talk and demonstration included the information needed to make and use precoated tissue, including how to obtain supplies at a reasonable cost.

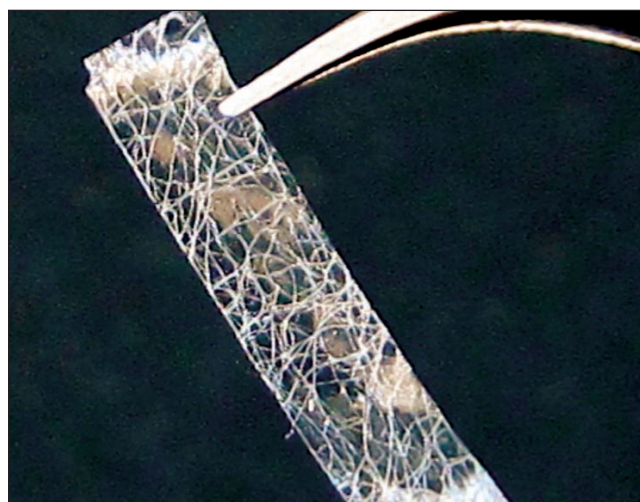
What is precoated tissue, and why should we bother making it? There is some effort required, but the Weissman Preservation Center has determined that its practicality and flexibility are worth the trouble. Christopher estimated that one full work week of producing precoated tissue can keep the lab supplied for the rest of the calendar year. Once dried, this thin composite of tissue and adhesive can be easily cut, readily reactivated and applied to the paper item needing repair. The resulting repair is both strong and integrates with the item remarkably well.

The Weissman Preservation Center donated five packs of their precoated tissue for the Guild of Book Workers' live auction. Each package contained the six most commonly used repair tissues at the WPC. Three tissues are designed to be activated with water, while the other three are activated with alcohol.

Christopher organized his presentation as a tasting menu, beginning with an appetizer demonstration of mending, filling and lining. He then demonstrated the making of precoated tissue, followed by information about where to purchase tools and materials.



The super thin tissue comes from several different suppliers.



Tiny fibers make very strong paper

PowerPoint images along with the demos supported the discussion. He offered tips such as pre-cleaning tears with a white vinyl eraser, using a light table for repairs and fills, using a nylon screen and awl to dry tear Asian tissue, and even the usefulness of a gentle human breath—all of which can contribute to the success of a repair.

Christopher displayed tissue from several different suppliers, from Gangolf Ulbricht in Berlin to Hiromi Papers in California.

He discussed the rationale behind adhesive selection for precoated tissue, explaining that wheat starch adds strength, while methyl cellulose promotes gelling. For repairs to objects that can't tolerate moisture, Klucel G has enough strength and gelling property. Useful tissue weights tend to be 1.6 through to 7.3 g/m<sup>2</sup> and can be purchased from Hiromi Papers. Self-adhesive tengucho is a new product that can also be purchased at Hiromi. The WPC's filing system for precoated Asian tissue labels includes gram weight and adhesive percentages, making it easy to select the correct tissue for the type of mend required.

Christopher then discussed the common problems of iron gall ink corrosion and mold damage, and described more mending tips and tricks. The case studies he presented highlighted situations where precoated tissue is especially useful.

Christopher's "dessert" for the audience was the world of modern first edition dust jackets. Strict standards of authenticity seem to be valued most by the top of the book market. However, precoated Asian tis-



sue can be a better choice for repairing these rare jackets than previous methods.

With his final slide, Christopher acknowledged the following individuals and libraries for their support and contributions: Erin Black, Bookseller, Bauman Rare Books; Kyle Courtney, Esq., Director of Copyright and Information Policy, Harvard Library; Leslie Morris, Curator, Houghton Library; Todd Patison, Conservator, American Ancestors; and the Weissman Preservation Center, Harvard Library.

**CHRISTOPHER SOKOLOWSKI** earned an M.A. in Art History from the University of Massachusetts in 1996 and an M.S. in Art Conservation from the Winterthur-University of Delaware Program in Art Conservation in 2000. He developed his professional expertise in the paper conservation studios of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, the Musée du Louvre, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Studio TKM, and the Northeast Document Conservation Center. Since 2009 he has served the Harvard Library as a Paper Conservator for Special Collections in the Weissman Preservation Center.

## SUE DOGETT – Over and Over Again: Marking Artist’s Books and Bindings

by Ash Nunez

*“Enchantment can take many forms, and the one I choose to create is a book.”*

In many ways Sue Doggett’s presentation was a call to examine how and why we create books, and an invitation to think outside the constraints of the object itself. Starting with her initial question, “Why am I doing this the way that I am?,” she walked us through her own history and how it influences her work. From early days in her father’s cabinet workshop to the quiet, meditative embroidery various women taught her, Sue has long had an appreciation for tools. Elements of her background, such as her degrees in art history and design, also influence her approach to bookbinding. Early on, she found it difficult to afford

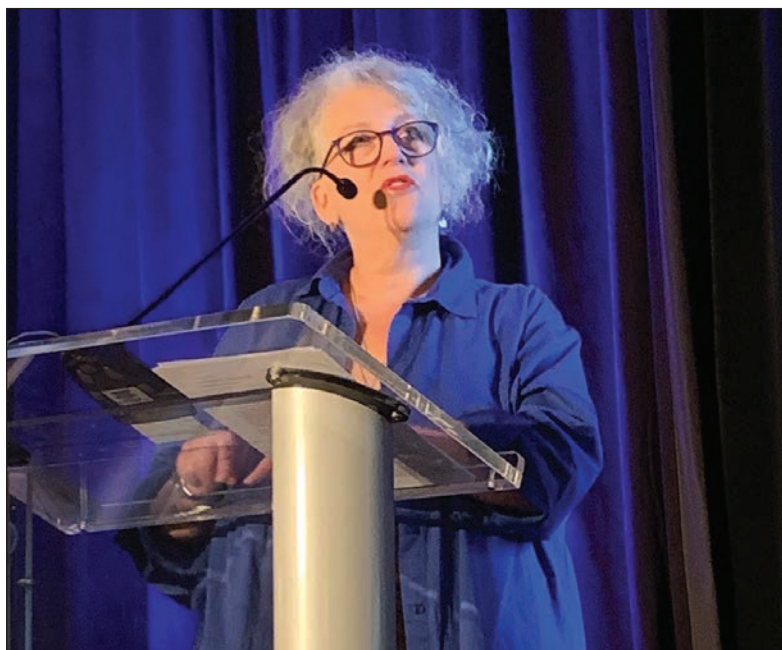
books to bind, so she hit on the creative solution of writing out her own texts. Tethers to the past—personal, social, and professional—contribute to her technique and choice of materials.

Since 1996, Sue has bound approximately 14 Booker Prize bindings. She showed us many examples, exploring her techniques and interpretations of the bindings based on the text. The binder has five weeks from the announcement of the Booker prize title to create the design. Sue’s goal is to capture something essential to the meaning of the narrative itself. Since the early 2000’s, many of Sue’s bindings have incorporated sewing, sometimes pieces of clothing, to create partially autobiographical interpretations. One example is her binding of *The Clothes on their Backs*, which she shared during the presentation.

Other bindings have incorporated linocuts, found objects, threadwork, embroidery onlays, dyed leather, and more. When designing a binding with these elements, Sue is careful to consider such consequences as how the endpapers may capture imprints of thread or other inclusions in the cover.

There is an intrinsic sensuality to the book as an object that is meant for touch, meant for reading. And yet, fine bindings are so often used only for display. Sue endeavors to evoke a tactile quality to bindings that people are unable to physically handle, to provide to just the eyes some of the delight of experiencing the physical object. Our boundaries of how we experience the world do not end with skin and touch, and we must consider how the eyes can play an important role in offering up a sensual experience. Sue noted that she hopes even when the books she binds are looked at rather than held, there is still something evocative there for the viewer.

Each binding highlighted in the presentation showcased Sue’s endeavor to recreate a sense of wonder and curiosity, and to relish in the pleasure



Sue gave all an invitation to think outside the constraints of the object itself.



of the making itself. Her playfulness and wonder do not stop at the design of the cover. With each binding, Sue brings up questions about the text itself, how it affects us as readers and viewers, and what these themes bring up for her as a binder. There are moments offered for introspection, reflection, and curiosity, which echo through the choice of materials and construction. But what keeps her coming back is the joy of creation, how the complexities of each fine binding reflect hours of meditative work to bring a vision to life.

Sue keeps notebooks with details of her experimentation, play, and exploration during the design process of each binding. For the second half of the presentation, Sue shared with the audience the idea conception, design, and maquette creation process of a work she made specifically for Standards: *Ghostcards*. Noting that research is one of the tools most important to her, Sue shared her notes for this work on spiritualism, ghost stories, grief, and the history of place. In the overview of her technical and conceptual research for this work, Sue described how she explored haunted architecture and how haunting is a part of the human condition. She also examined how ghost thinking appears every day in the form of memory and nostalgia.

After emphasizing influences from M.R. James, Matthew Shore, Susan Stuart's *On Longing*, Michael Herndon's *Whistle and I'll Come to You*, and more, she then dove into her own collections from the past. In keeping with the autobiographical nature of much of her work, Sue shared a glimpse into a lifetime of collected postcards she scanned and digitally altered to create the pages of *Ghostcards*. She researched the ghosts that haunted each location. Finally, she narrowed them down to the unique or most notable ones, writing about them in script along the pages. These pages included some of her embroidery work, as well as tooling, although tooled details are not usually a part of her bindings. Much of Sue's work comes from moving away from many of the common techniques for creating "a proper book," echoing her comments early on in the presentation about how she found it much more fun to experiment.

For the maquette design for *Ghostcards*, we see a story unfolding through the design of the book itself, including the cover, chemise, and exterior. The outside of the chemise is stone veneer, which opens to polished and aged wood veneer. It also includes a carved stamp detail from the ottoman where the postcards were found in her home. The design of the chemise is in-



Sue's inspiring work..

spired by moving from the outside of a building to the indoors, to a long gallery where light reflects along the walls. What you have when you examine this work is a story of the echoes of humanity on a physical place and the residual traces of memory: sometimes comforting, sometimes haunting.

Sue's approach to bookbinding was refreshing and inspirational, with decades worth of examples to bubble up excitement for those in attendance to bring into their own practice. While describing her work and why she does what she does, over and over again, Sue reflected, "I love the work that I do. I've tried other things and can't think of another way of living."

**Ash Nunez** is a current student at North Bennet Street School (BB '25), proprietor of Old Growth Alchemy, and multimedia artist. You can follow their bookbinding at Ashen Briar Bindery or keep up with all of their creations and get in touch at [oldgrowthalchemy.com](http://oldgrowthalchemy.com).

# SARAH PIKE — Laser-Cut Metamorphosis: Transforming a Single Image

by Syd Robinson

Sarah Pike began her Standards presentation with the words, “I am not a bookbinder.” She went on to explain that she had worked as a painter, printmaker, and printmaking technician at Bennington College before starting her laser cutting service, FreeFall Laser.

While Sarah does not consider herself to be a bookbinder, she has successfully collaborated on many projects with bookbinders, which has given her a unique understanding into how laser cutting can be integrated into hand bookbinding. She addressed each potential problem, conflict, and intricacy of laser cutting with insight that could only come from her years of experience; I was amazed by her description of the complex balancing act of laser cutting and her role as, in her own words, the bridge between an artist’s hand and technology.

Sarah made sure that everyone in the room could understand the technology and applications of laser cutting. This came as no surprise, as, in addition to operating FreeFall Laser, Sarah also teaches online and in-person laser cutting courses for creatives through LearnLaserCutting.com.

Sarah uses a CO<sub>2</sub> laser, which directs a laser beam from the source to the head of the machine by mirrors and a focusing lens. Laser cutters can be used to cut all manner of materials (save for metals and chlorinated plastics). Beginning her presentation with an overview of the technology, Sarah explained how a laser cutter turns a digital file into a laser cut, scored, or engraved piece. First, the laser must be focused onto the material, so the top surface is

positioned at the point where the laser is most intense, and therefore the hottest, for a clean and thin cut.

For cutting, a laser cutter traces along a vector-generated path at a relatively low speed. The more complex the curves in a vector file, the longer it takes the head to travel along the path. A color-coded hierarchy can be applied to the paths such that inner pieces are cut first (limiting movement of the material and ensuring the cuts are accurate), and the precision of the cuts will be increased when necessary through registration. To engrave, the laser moves faster and at lower power to simply mark the top surface of a material line by line from a raster image, much like an inkjet printer.

Sarah described materials and techniques that would be of particular interest to bookbinders—showing her extensive knowledge from years of experimentation—and she provided detailed information about considerations necessary to begin designing for laser cutting and integrating the tool into bookbinding. Those of us already familiar with laser cutting believed that burn marks are an inevitability, particularly on paper and wood. Sarah reassured us that this is not the case! Since burning is caused by vapor residue on the laser, it is difficult to avoid in the cut itself but discoloration on the surface of the material can be prevented by carefully calibrating the laser speed and power.

Sarah’s material-specific tips open up a whole new world of laser cutting for bookbinders: some papers are “bleached” by the laser, creating a light spot when engraved; fabrics where the dye has not fully saturated, including some bookcloth, can also



Sarah made sure that everyone in the room could understand the technology and applications of laser cutting.





Sarah passed around samples of her work as she spoke.

be laser engraved; applying Japanese paper to leather protects the surface, and the fine paper and paste allows the paper to follow the leather grain; certain paper binding agents char more easily than others. In one of the examples she discussed, Sarah showed that it was even possible (albeit risky) to laser cut the cover of a book after it had been bound, through layers of leather and board!

After a short break attendees received laser cut an English robin in different designs and materials. We each made our own laser cut tunnel book (with layers of greenery and a bird), a delightful and welcome opportunity to make something with our hands during a day of presentations.

After this creative interlude, Sarah dove into the details of designing for laser cutting, starting with an image of an English robin and explaining how best to edit and process the picture for a clear laser engraving by adjusting the clarity, crispness, and number of distinct values in the image using Adobe tools. The parade of laser cut robins began with cut and engraved paper samples, before moving to leather and engraved bookcloth, and finally wood. Through the metamorphosis of this bird, we were shown the versatility of laser cutting as a technology applied to bookbinding.

Of course, there are limitations to laser cutting that Sarah also discussed in detail. Materials must be perfectly flat and uniform for the laser beam to be in focus for the best cut. We were shown unpredictable results when working with materials such as stone paper or wood. Also, as the material gets thicker, it becomes harder to create a detailed laser cut, as fine details tend to burn away.

Sarah Pike's presentation was thoughtful and detailed, and, most importantly, accessible. Hearing her describe past projects as well as being able to handle samples as she discussed each technique was inspiring, and I certainly felt a spark of excitement to explore laser cutting further.



Everyone received their own laser cut tunnel book kit.



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# SAMUEL FEINSTEIN – Titling with Gold Leaf

by Domonique Alesi

In Samuel Feinstein's philosophy, titling a book is a crucial binding element. As he puts it, "It is an acknowledgement of the many hands, minds, eyes, workshops, manufacturers, and others that went into the creation of the book. For me, this is important to bear in mind while designing and binding a book." Consequently, the fine binder and gold finisher from Chicago focused his gold finishing presentation on titling, even though the techniques covered apply to other components of finishing.

Feinstein's demonstration used titling tools (both type holders and handle letters) shellac glaire, and gold leaf. There are four material factors involved in the tooling process—heat, moisture, pressure, and dwell time—and four physical and psychological factors—practice, confidence, calmness, and focus. A member of the audience inquired about the temperature of the stove. Feinstein's response did not include a specific temperature, emphasizing that stoves can vary. It is important to test your materials and instruments and become acquainted with individual tools and equipment, rather than relying on someone else's guidelines.

The tool should be heated, then cooled to a working temperature that avoids burning the leather. The temperature can be determined by the sound of the sizzle as the heat of the tool is adjusted with a wet sponge and/or cotton pad. Building an impression involves several steps, some including the introduc-

tion of moisture. First, use a cool tool on dry leather, then a cool tool on dampened leather. Next, use a warmer tool on dry leather, and finally a warm tool on dampened leather. The resulting blind impression should be sharp, crisp, clear and shallow. A shallow impression allows the gold to shine more brilliantly, since it is less shadowed by the walls of the impression.

A successful impression requires controlled pressure. Feinstein uses the "English sighting" technique, standing positioned over the tool. Using one's body weight for pressure alleviates strain on the arms and wrists. By contrast, "French sighting" is done seated. With either technique, your line of sight is over the top of the tool. Decorative and handle letter tools generally have a nick in the shank of the tool that indicates the top of the tool, ensuring that the tool is pointing the same direction in subsequent impressions. Feinstein advises, "Let the tool do the work." Maintain a loose grip and pay attention to how the leather responds to the tool, to identify where the impression needs refinement. Apply lighter pressure when working on dampened leather than on dry leather, to avoid making too deep an impression.

Dwell time is significantly influenced by both practice and confidence. Pressure and dwell time are an indicator of the binder's assurance in their technique. Feinstein prefers the English style of tooling, which emphasizes stance and posture.



PHOTO CREDIT: ANNE McLAIN

Sam in his glory!



Aligning your hips with the bench and arranging your workstation with perpendicular lines builds a visual grid to keep your tooling straight. Focus while tooling is paramount, so Feinstein suggests selecting music or other auditory stimuli that will minimize potential distractions.

Feinstein uses a shellac resin glare that he draws in with a refillable rapidograph pen, rather than a brush. With respect to selecting gold leaf, he noted that leaf with a gold composition of less than 22k is likely to tarnish, but anything exceeding 24k is too malleable to work with. While handling gold leaf with swift movements, Feinstein flattened the leaf on the cushion with a breath making a “puh” sound. Addressing binders’ reputed trepidation about working with gold, he suggested that they, “don’t show it fear!”

Feinstein uses a suede-covered board for preparing a tool to pick up gold. One section is dusted with pumice powder, one is plain suede, and a third section is smeared with Vaseline. In the demonstration, he used the board to apply a small amount of Vaseline to a heated tool. He then used the prepared tool to pick up the gold leaf and place it in the impression. Between each placement, he cleaned the tool using the pumice-powdered section of the board followed by the plain suede.

Use your non-dominant thumb to guide the tool into the impression, rocking the tool up and down, then side to side, before removing the tool without lingering. The rocking motion ensures that the entire surface of the tool contacts the leather. Cheesecloth and orange sticks (commonly used for manicures) can safely be used to clean excess gold from the leather.

In the final segment of the presentation, Feinstein briefly addressed fixing errors. Remaining calm during the tooling process is important for sustaining focus and confidence. When faced with a mistake, stop and step away from the bench to regain composure. Feinstein explained making a correction by picking out an impression. Insert a pin at a horizontal angle, beneath the impression to be removed, and lift to pull out the depression. Pull up, then gently back down, and slide the needle out. A picking noise while pulling the needle up is a sign that you are damaging the leather. While this method allows for the correction of tooling errors, practice should hopefully minimize these errors.

Many bookbinders find the prospect of working with genuine gold leaf daunting. Some opt for gold foil, or even forgo titling and tooling altogether. Samuel Feinstein’s thorough and accessible presentation offered valuable information and encouragement to any bookbinder aspiring to add gold finishing with leaf to their skillset. Additionally, the handout accompanying the presentation provided a detailed breakdown of steps, enabling binders to practice and refine their technique.



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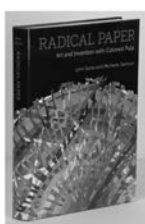
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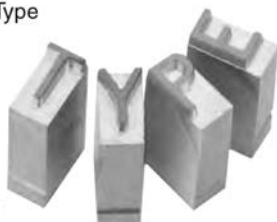
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## Regarding Beowulf

PHOTO CREDITS: BARRY MCCALLION

A few years ago, I created books for *The Seafarer* and for *The Wanderer*, two Anglo-Saxon poems found in *The Exeter Book*. Both poems tell of social disruption and personal isolation. When I finished those books, I thought about creating a book for *Beowulf*, but did not get further than initial thoughts at the time. The idea came back after the dragon Covid shook itself awake and the parallels between the epic and our own time became sharper.

*Beowulf* is an epic poem written in England between 650 and 950 C.E. Its subject is a Scandinavian hero from a time already passed, a great warrior whose rise to kingship and whose death in defense of his land represent the flourish and fall of an Age. It was an anxious time: towns were besieged by Norsemen, vestiges of animism still clung to newly-adopted Christianity, the new priestly caste vied with traditional nobility for temporal power, and the approaching millennium fueled superstition and popular fears of Armageddon.

In his youth, Beowulf battles two monsters—Grendel and Grendel's mother—and his warrior's prowess earns him the kingship of the Geats. After his triumphs a long period of peace ensues. By the time the Dragon wakes, Beowulf has ruled the Geats for fifty years. He is old. His powers are diminished. The time has come for the aging king to transfer power to a younger, more vital leader. But there is no time for a measured succession; the danger posed by the awakened dragon must be met immediately. Beowulf's decision to confront the monster himself reveals both a leader's commitment to his people and his willingness to sacrifice himself for their welfare. To add broader meaning to the encounter, the Beowulf poet raises the stakes: we come to see the hero's last battle as a reenactment of the cosmic battle of Order against Chaos, echoing the end-days of pagan beliefs for the poet's recently Christianized audience.

When the dragon wakes and sweeps the kingdom with fire and destruction, Beowulf gathers a band of warriors and determines to confront the creature. It is his duty as king, but it is also his passport to the world of myth and legend. Beowulf's descent into dragon darkness connects him to Aeneas, Gilgamesh, Orpheus, Odysseus, and other figures from classical literature whose quests take them into the underworld. The poet's original audience would also have recognized a Christian echo

in Beowulf's journey. Jesus, in the interim between his death and resurrection, descends into the underworld to free the souls of those held in transit since Adam's fall. And when Beowulf selects eleven nobles to accompany him, then picks up the thief who woke the dragon as the twelfth of his band, the audience would identify the twelve apostles.

Tales of myth and legend, bravery and sacrifice resonate in



the deepest recesses of our being. The task of translating that mythic resonance from the Beowulf poem onto my pages became the central problem of the book.

Having decided to focus on Beowulf's battle with the dragon, for the purposes of my project I divided the episode into three parts:

The Dragon Stirs (lines 2200–2344)

The Fight with the Dragon (lines 2510–2711)

The Hero-King Interred (lines 3007–3182)

More than a mere platform for type or imagery, the paper an artist chooses for a book is crucial to its composition. Paper is expressive—its color, weight, and texture are all part of the artist's palette. For the body of the book I chose successive shades (cream, beige, tan, and gray) of Rives BFK, a firm, smooth paper favored by etchers and engravers. The paper holds a good India ink line and doesn't warp when brushed with water-based inks or acrylic paints. The second paper, the one to



be used for the Anglo-Saxon text, was a more difficult choice. I wanted the paper to appear old without being distressed.

While I considered the paper best suited to the text, I re-typed the Anglo-Saxon lines and determined the subject of each painting. I made various mock-ups, composing the text together with half- or full-page images to ensure the book's "flow."

The paper I finally chose for the Anglo-Saxon text was unbleached abaca, a fine, semi-transparent paper made by Katie MacGregor in Whiting, Maine. Abaca paper is crisp to the touch and faintly mottled, with the slightly glossy look of parchment and the off-yellow look of age. I printed the text and loosely attached the abaca sheets to the Rives foundation pages using small colored squares. The result is a series of fragments that have the look of antiquity and appear to float on the page.

My paintings needed to convey the story and the larger-than-life nature of the epic, as well as the centuries Time had placed between me and the Beowulf poet. Images that were drawn distinctly would have seemed out of place. I needed a veil, something to keep the viewer at a distance, the way Vermeer arranged rugs and tables to secure a subject's privacy. I remembered a time, years before, when I soaked black construction paper in water, placed it on white paper and weighted it down. After a while, some of the black dye transferred to the white paper, creating an irregular pattern of stains. I looked at

—and into—the pattern of stains and outlined the things I saw, delighted by the novelty of accidental, unanticipated images.

I tried to repeat the process for Beowulf, but the resulting grays were soft and billowy. Thinking that they needed to be stronger, I soaked a sheet of coarse paper in a shallow tray of India ink. After briefly letting the paper drain, I pressed it onto a sample of Rives BFK paper. This produced a dramatic (and perfectly imperfect) pattern of rough, randomly distributed dots. I soon stained all my image pages, pleased that the effect varied with each impression. Unlike a printmaker or engraver who uses mezzotint and stippling to supply the illusion of an object's depth and shadow, I was about to peer into the pool of their randomness in search of suggestions.

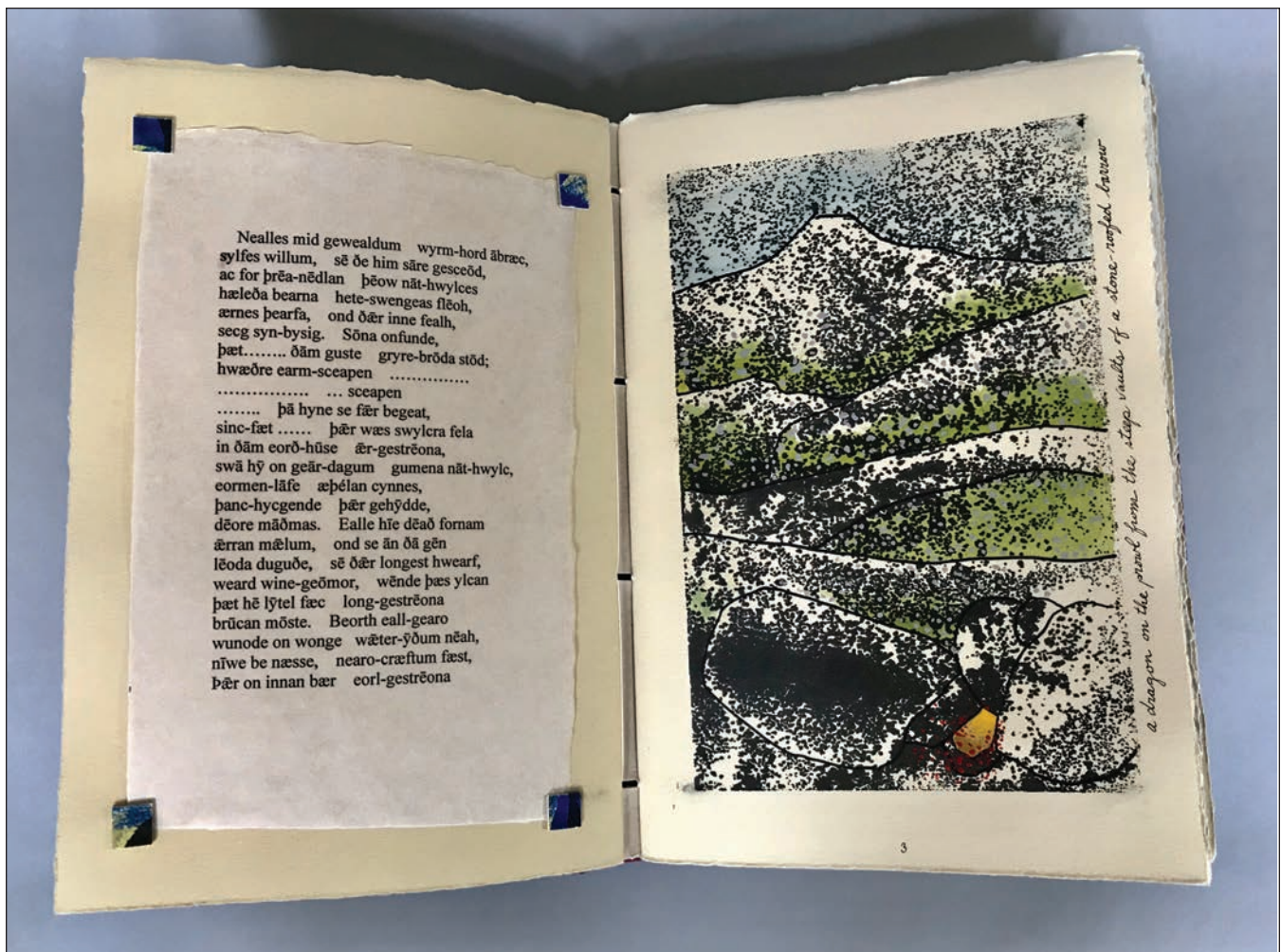
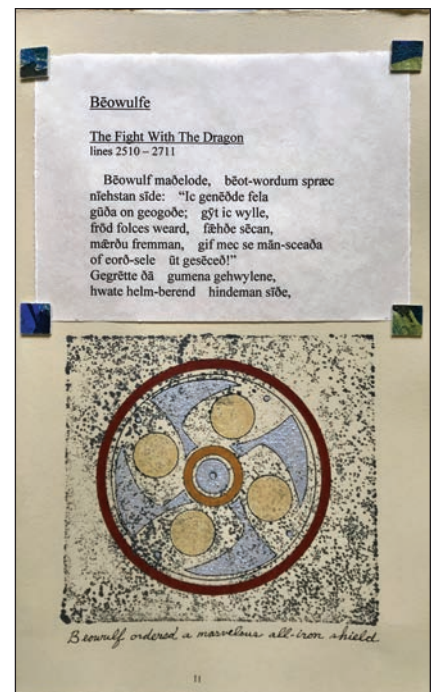
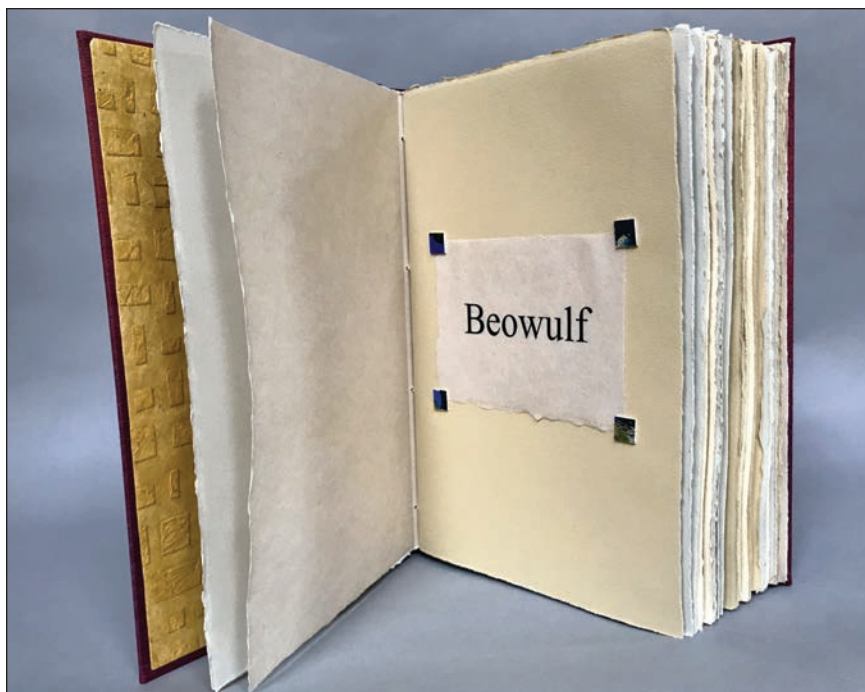
To each new page with its pattern of swirls and dots, I brought the sort of vague mental picture that a title trails behind it. The India ink impressions possessed a grainy, miasmal effect that I associate with myth and antiquity. I allowed the swimming, indistinct shapes thus produced to guide my pen. Concentrating my thoughts on the picture-to-be, whether it was Beowulf's broken sword or his funeral pyre, the swirling images began to sort themselves, rapidly arranging and rearranging forms until a picture fixed itself. As I watched, the random pattern cohered, supplying details, indicating, for instance, whether Beowulf stood or sat, configuring the stones at the mouth of the cave, or defining a receding line of coastal cliffs. Images danced in the dots and I followed the outlines suggested.

Did this method work to the last detail? No, but I glimpsed enough of the picture composition while gazing into the pool to give me a good idea of how to proceed. I suspect that this method is a simple variant on watching the wind sculpt cloud-rabbits into cloud-elephants into endless next-things.

If my imagination lacked the capital to set the dots and swirls in motion, I consulted the internet and copied the attitude and dress of an Anglo-Saxon warrior. Likewise, I based Beowulf's fearsome adversary on a Komodo dragon fitted out with leathery wings and scales. By placing the creature upon a gold hoard, dribbling goblets of fire, I made it mine.









I tend to draw directly and indelibly with India ink. It adds a little danger to the process since it makes revision harder—if not impossible—but it adds a gambler's excitement to each line. For me, there is something instinctive and fresh in this approach—a freshness that, I hope, communicates itself to the viewer.

Colors came last. I applied them cautiously, not wanting to upset the balance that existed between the background and the drawings. I diluted black India ink and applied it as a gray wash. India ink also exists in primary colors, which can be diluted or mixed full strength to create new colors. Metallic gold and silver acrylic paints highlighted the dragon's hoard and accented Beowulf's sword, his chain mail, and helmet. Red and yellow acrylics added intensity to the creature's fiery breath, and graphite gray gave the cave an opaque, oppressive darkness.

A book is a journey for its creator and for its reader. It is a shared journey with shared pleasures to be had from the heft of the volume and the feel of the paper. It exists, as well, in the tempest of its mottled backgrounds and in the step-by-step narrative of its painted pages. "The essential components of a book," as Riva Castelman wrote in *A Century of Artist's Books*, are "integrity of idea and sequential presentation."

Perfectly straightforward.

An opportunity here to express my thanks to Priscilla Juvelis of Priscilla Juvelis Rare Books for years of advice and encouragement. Also to Joelle Webber of Mermaid Bindery for her care and craft.





# Artists' Books in the Cynthia Sears Collection at the Bainbridge Island Museum of Art

PHOTO CREDITS: BIMA WEBSITE

Around the world, many artists' books are held in collections that require in-person visits to read, examine and experience them. Often, there are unintentional, practical barriers to see these collections. This is the biggest challenge for appreciating and sharing artists' books: having an opportunity to hold and read them. Recognizing this, many artists' book curators are reaching out to the public with in-depth, online videos. Individual artists' books are featured and discussed, often with excellent close-up, detailed images of the books.

Yuka Petz is the writer and host of *Artists' Books Unshelved*, a video series produced by the Cynthia Sears Artists' Books Collection at the Bainbridge Island Museum of Art (BIMA), Washington. Originally developed during Covid-19, *Artists' Books Unshelved* is an effort to break down the barriers to accessibility. Now in Season 4, Petz has completed 45 Episodes, featuring just under 100 artists' books, on BIMA's YouTube channel. She explores selected books thoroughly and carefully, shedding light

on the artist's vision and process, and investigating materials, structure, language and imagery.

The Cynthia Sears collection is big, over 2000 artists' books and growing. The focus of the collection is social justice and environmental concerns. Petz joins Cynthia Sears and Catherine Alice Michaelis, Associate Director, when they visit studios and travel to book fairs to further grow their collection. Petz's involvement in the acquisition of new materials often allows her a unique opportunity to engage with the artists.

During her preparation for a video, Petz contacts the artists, looking for detailed information about their concepts and process. These research days are her happiest days. Petz loves to find the connections between books and to see a broader perspective. She pairs two artists' books in each video, linking them with ideas, themes or concepts. As a book artist herself, Petz brings a critical eye to her presentations. She has often said that she approaches books from multiple directions. Having a range of



Cynthia Sears Collection at the Bainbridge Island Museum of Art

interests is ideal for reviewing other's works. It also helps to understand the many layers of meaning that an artists' book can have. From Petz's artist statement: "My core creative actions deconstruct the component parts of a whole and then engage those parts in different environments or modes of behavior to gain unique perspectives and new understanding."

The most recent video, aired on December 7, 2024, is *Body Talk*, featuring Gloribel Delgado Esquilin's work, *Perdóname barriga / Forgive Me Belly*, and Lisa Kokin's book, *Teeth*. "We look at two endearing and humorous examples of artists' books that explore perceptions about, and our relationships with, specific parts of our bodies. These books elevate tactile and unexpected materials to emphasize the messages within."

Petz emphasizes that these video productions are a group effort, between the artist, the collector, the curator and the videographer. The entire team is moving forward together to facilitate the awareness and accessibility of book arts. New episodes are released on the first and third Saturday of each month from September through June, and the entire series can be found on BIMA's YouTube channel.

- Link to BIMA's artists book collection and videos: [biartmuseum.org/artists-book-collection/](http://biartmuseum.org/artists-book-collection/)
- Link to Cynthia Sears' interview about BIMA and artists books: [westernartandarchitecture.com/articles/collectors-eye9](http://westernartandarchitecture.com/articles/collectors-eye9)



Yuka Petz – writer and host of *Artists' Books Unshelved*

- Link to You Tube's Artists Books Unshelved: [youtube.com/results?search\\_query=artists+books+unshelved](https://youtube.com/results?search_query=artists+books+unshelved)
- Link to Body Talk, Petz's most recent video, aired Dec 7, 2024: [youtube.com/watch?v=4Z9MDtjC70o&list=PLHwzS6Uhxef6LYVrKCrZ9FYriOI8fixYU&index=2](https://youtube.com/watch?v=4Z9MDtjC70o&list=PLHwzS6Uhxef6LYVrKCrZ9FYriOI8fixYU&index=2)

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## Fine Binding

### “Interaction of Color”: My endless adventure

After reading an ad for a local talk at the Phoenix Art Museum Library, the pull was too great. I had to see if I could view this rare copy of *Interaction of Color* for myself.

Let me step back a bit to describe how this amazing book keeps returning to me at significant times in my life.

In 1963 Josef Albers was teaching at Yale University, where his landmark book, *Interaction of Color*, was published. It is the product of 30 years of exercises, courses, and portfolios created by his students. The course awakened the students to the quirks and variables of color behavior.

I was first acquainted with *Interaction of Color* standing at a book rack at the Museum of Modern Art NYC in the 1970's. I was due to complete my BFA final project the coming year. The book was instantly fascinating. The more I read, the more the inspiration grew. I used the copy I purchased that day to help with my four-color intaglio prints. My respect for and views on color changed forever.

Since then, my trusty 1971 paper-bound copy goes in and out of the custom box I made for it. The cover of the box is *Homage to the Square* (a famous painting series by Josef Albers), rendered in various red book cloths inlaid in the cover, to keep me inspired.



*Homage to the Square* by Josef Albers, rendered in various red book cloths on the cover of the box housing *Interaction of Color*.

Many years later, I was asked to have a show of my three-dimensional work and artist's books in NYC. For the show, I used the same study models that Josef Albers described in *Interaction of Color*. I was once more transformed. One of my artist's books was purchased at the show, and is in The Faber Birren Color Collection at Yale University. Yes, right along with Josef himself and Rene Descartes. The journey has been amazing.

Now, upon seeing the rare copy of *Interaction of Color*, I am overwhelmed with joy.

In this edition, the text and essays are bound separately. The rare part is that all the color plates are separate folios, screen-process printed, titled, and labeled. All three parts are stowed in a large cloth-covered wood case box.

After working on a long project, I wanted to rekindle my connection. It worked. I opened it up, and instantly I felt at home with my friend. The image of it sitting on the table in front of me is pure Bauhaus: exceptional craftsmanship, no flash, no flourish, and very functional.

My spirit changed, opening all 80 folios one after another. I found myself playfully enjoying each surprise I unfolded. For me, an artistic reality of dealing with color is that it is personal, emotional, complicated and tricky. *Interaction of Color* continues to validate my color journey.

Reconnecting with the rare version of *Interaction of Color* once again opened me up to the glorious wonder that color provides for us. It was special to go deeper than ever before into my exploration of color, on such a beautiful, grand scale.

When we delve deeply into subjects we tend to stop too soon. When we don't stop and go even deeper, I have learned, is when the real work gets interesting.

*Interaction of Color* for me is a timeless artistic companion.

**PAMELA WOOD** is a full-time fine bookbinder keeping the magic and muse alive in her Tempe, Arizona studio. [rare-hare.com](http://rare-hare.com).

#### Notes:

- [albersfoundation.org/alberses/teaching/interaction-of-color](http://albersfoundation.org/alberses/teaching/interaction-of-color)
- I refer to two of the four major printmaking divisions. Planographic process, relief process, intaglio, and screen process.
- The photo is of my collection, since the Phoenix Art Museum Library did not give me permission to use one of the photos I took the day I was viewing the rare copy.

## Is A Marbler An Artist or An Artisan?

This is a really good question! I often, as a marbler, have felt that the term “Artist” didn’t quite fit what I was. Though marblers use paints, inks, and other art materials, does that make one an artist? Or are we artisans? Or, at times, maybe both.

In looking up definitions online I found some very good ones that explain the difference. Here are a few:

1. An artist primarily focuses on expressing imaginative or conceptual ideas, often in mediums like painting, sculpture, or performance. Artisans, by contrast, apply their skills to produce functional items, such as pottery, carpentry, or metalwork.
2. The work of an artist is often subjective and open to interpretation, aiming to evoke emotion or convey a message. Artisans emphasize the practical application of their skills, producing items that are both aesthetic and utilitarian.
3. Artists may work in abstract or conceptual realms, using their medium to explore and comment on social, political, or personal themes. Artisans, however, often follow traditional methods, focusing on the technical precision and durability of their creations.
4. Artists are often seen as innovators and creators of unique pieces, while artisans are regarded as masters of their trade, upholding and advancing traditional crafts.

There are many marblers who are artists only, creating landscapes, fantasy flowers, or making collages incorporating papers they have marbled. Then there are marblers who are solely artisans, creating papers for use on everyday objects. Particularly for books, but also for boxes, portfolios, lampshades and more. Some marble leather for craft use, and some marble even metal or glass objects to decorate them.

I have to say I am about 90% artisan, and just 10% artist. Frankly... I think there COULD BE a third category... I feel sometimes like a “Human Marbling Machine”! I think any mar-

bler who is reading this and has done edition work, or had to repeat a pattern hundreds of times for an order, will be nodding their heads “yes” right now.

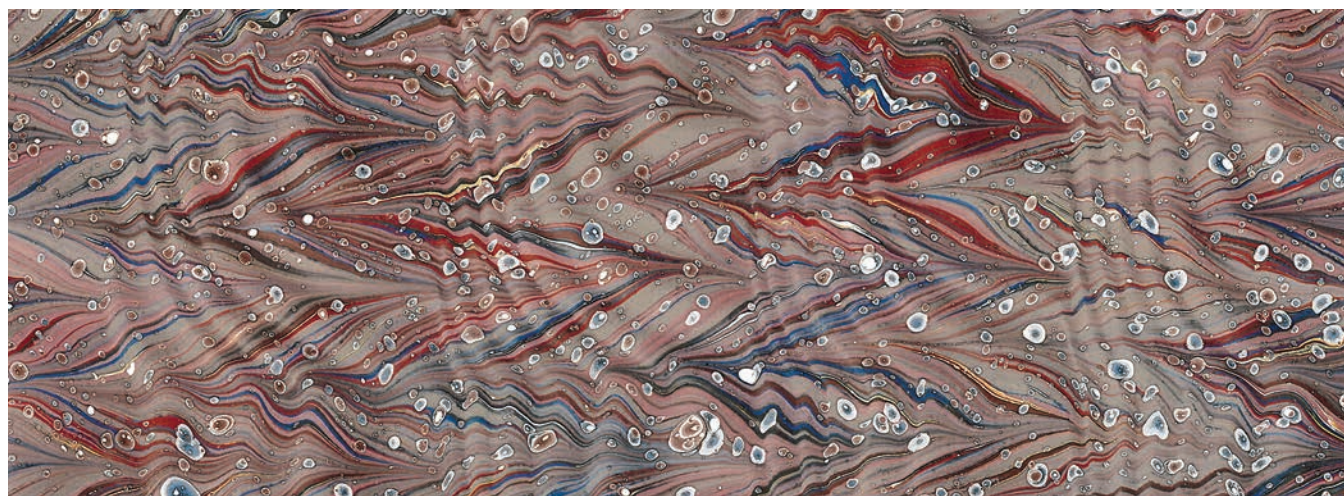
Those of us who are marbling artisans might choose to shift gears at times. It’s always fun after doing a large run of the same paper (and we know no two are identical!) to chill out a bit and do some fun artwork. So that makes us a little bit of an artist as well.

I like to relax by making some fantasy flower paintings from time to time. I love the element of a little randomness, each can be different, if you just let the paints on the bath do what they want a little. I wonder though... does that fall into the true artist category? I’d think an artist ideally has full control of the outcome. Still... an art piece is the result, rather than something an artisan would make, that becomes a useful everyday object.

Usually, while the scales may be tipped in each individual towards either artist or artisan, the two may very well overlap at times in a person. There have been times where someone was looking through my paper pile and came upon a paper they liked so much, they asked me to sign it, so they could frame it. So an artisan can unintentionally become an artist too.

For some artisans, marbling is our job, so we are commissioned to do the papers the customers request. We may sometimes not like what they request, but we do it anyway. And honestly, there is in a way a greater sense of satisfaction, oddly, to be able to do something that goes against our grain and have it turn out well. That could be the ultimate definition of an artisan, perhaps!

Though I can look a little bit odd sometimes when someone calls me an artist, I’d not worry about what we are labeled very much. I really like being called artisan more somehow, though. It seems never to be all artist or all artisan all the time. It’s all worthy and all good! Just do what you like best and keep marbling alive, whether artist or artisan!





# Carrie Snyder – Bookbinding, Living on the Road, and Sustainability

At the Standards of Excellence Conference 2024, Carrie Snyder showed up with her bookbinding van. The mini-RV includes a fully functional bathroom/shower, sleeping/eating area, and bindery studio, all in one. I was fortunate enough to get a tour of the space, and was impressed by its design efficiency and coziness. I asked Carrie if she'd be game to let me interview her for the newsletter, and she gracefully obliged. What follows is a conversation about sustainability, making that good life by hand, and, of course, bookbinding.

**Liz McHugh:** How do bookbinding and sustainability intertwine?

**Carrie Snyder:** I've always been fond of North Bennet Street School's tagline "A good life, built by hand." It evokes the deep satisfaction that comes from crafting things with one's own hands, as well as a better quality of life that comes from being surrounded by objects that have what I'll call "soulfulness" to them. That usually doesn't come from things that are factory-made.

When trying to combine sustainability and bookbinding, there are two approaches. From the scientific sustainability perspective, you calculate impact. Most environmental sustainability professionals take into account the entire life cycle of a product, from the initial harvesting or mining of raw materials, all the way through manufacturing and production, transpor-

tation, and finally the disposal after use. Included are things like carbon emissions, energy use, toxicity to human and other life, land-use changes, impacts on biodiversity (if applicable), etc.

In bookbinding, we can agree that virtually no book made, conserved, or repaired, would be or can be 100% environmentally sustainable. Jim Croft is the closest anyone has gotten, and even his life, with students traveling to come to him, for example, still has some impact. One hundred percent sustainability in conservation, where toxic dyes and solvents are used daily, is not an achievable goal either. If we're working just from the logical, scientifically-calculated perspective—and we all know how bookbinders loathe math—if we truly want to be sustainable, we shouldn't make anything at all.

So this brings me back to the North Bennet Street quote, and the idea of a "good life." For me, a good life involves qualities of soulfulness, meaning, depth, beauty, and service to all life. With the idea of a "good life" as a goal, maybe we can instead seek a better balance between what we create and what we consume—not creating the equivalent of a private jet in our binderies and labs by being wasteful, or making material choices that have severe environmental impacts, etc. For me, I'd like to think that repairing, sharing, selling unused materials and tools are indeed a part of my good bookbinding life, connecting me





Carrie in her bookbinding studio.

to others in the community, and counteracting my tendency towards hoarding. And I would also like to point out the value of book conservation itself: the good life that comes from us sharing, preserving, and repairing things we care about and that are a part of our cultural legacy, instead of just throwing things away or producing something new.

**LM:** How has traveling, a smaller space, and the consulting jobs you do now affected the shape and content of the books you make?

**CS:** I am just getting started on my new life, and my cabinetry was only completed right before [Standards] Providence, so I don't have much to say yet about how it's going to affect my bookbinding. Besides the fact that I can't easily get access to ALL my paper or ALL my leather to make on-the-fly design choices, I am just planning to stop by other people's studios if I need access to a tool I don't have with me (like a plough).

(If you're interested in hosting Carrie or having her stop into your studio on her travels, let her know by emailing her at [carrie@morethansustainability.com](mailto:carrie@morethansustainability.com).)

**LM:** You have an incredibly impressive resume. And a lot of your website, [morethansustainability.com/](http://morethansustainability.com/), talks about getting away from controlled systems and moving beyond sustainability into a balanced relationship with nature. How do you think that has shown up in your book work?

**CS:** There is one book, *Elements of Control*, which was a deliberate attempt to capture some of my feelings about nature

and control, where I tried to let the grain of the leather dictate the lines of my embroidery. In the future, I'd like to explore more organic work. Can we still have a functional book structure and high-quality design/execution without all the "making it look like a machine" stuff we learn in fine binding classes? I realize that isn't necessarily what appeals to the collectors market, but I'm fascinated by the fact that we look at a tree (which has no straight lines whatsoever) and find it beautiful. While as humans we keep making rigid things with straight lines and perfect circles, and as bookbinders we get annoyed with flaws in our leather, I wonder what would it be like if we followed how nature behaves more in our bookbinding creations.

**LM:** Are there things about van life that are a relief or easier? What's the most challenging?

**CS:** I would say at first I wondered why I decided to make the choice I did. And then I obsessed over all the details like where I am going to sleep tonight, how much electricity and propane do I have, what's that weird rattling sound I hear in the back as I'm going down the road? And then slowly, over time, I gained experience and lost some anxiety. One mindset shift I did have to make was not acting like I was on vacation even though I was traveling (e.g. buying souvenirs for other people, eating out every meal). Now living in the van feels really cozy and like home. I can have all my window shades down, some music on, a tea light burning, and be cooking dinner, and not even notice I'm in the Walmart parking lot in Dodge City,

## 2025 WORKSHOPS

### School for Bookbinding Arts

at Cat Tail Run Hand Bookbinding

[www.SchoolforBookbindingArts.com](http://www.SchoolforBookbindingArts.com)

The Retchōsō: Japanese Tassel Binding from the Heian Period

On the Edge: Gilding, Fore-Edge Painting & Edge Marbling

Marble and Make: Marbled-Cover Album Construction

Marble and Make: Fashioning Marbled Book Cloth

Japanese Bookbinding: Six Essential Structures

Marble and Make: The Perfect Cloth Pouch

Leather-Paring Techniques for Bookbinders

Chabako: Japanese Tea Box Making

Leather Rounded-Spine Clamshell

Springback Binding Construction

Half-Leather Split-Board Binding

Leather-Spined Bradel Binding

Paper Marbling classes galore

Gold Tooling & Edge Gilding

Fabric Marbling

Book Sewing

Papermaking

540-662-2683 [workshops@cattailrun.com](mailto:workshops@cattailrun.com)





A working, travelling bookbinder's bench.

KS when it's 100 degrees outside. Because sometimes you're camping at the Grand Canyon, and sometimes you're just in the middle of nowhere trying to get to your next spot. So I'm learning to enjoy the entire process/journey, and not just the destination, and realize that every day, every minute of the day, is still part of my life. Why not live it like it's a precious thing of undetermined length (which it is)?

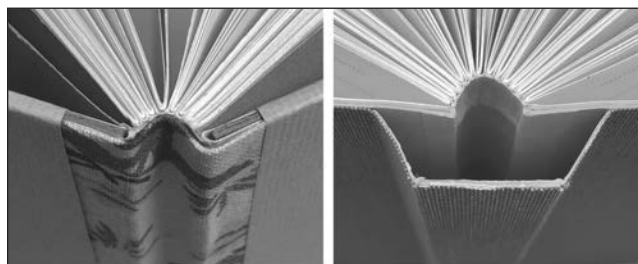
**LM:** What advice would you give to anyone thinking about making a similar life change, or what steps should people take to start living a more balanced life beyond just sustainability?

**CS:** I used to be at a place in my life and my career where I was just swimming in stress every day. And really, my mind was so wrapped up in all of that I couldn't imagine other ways of being. For me, it wasn't until I started doing a style of yoga that involved deep breathing to reduce anxiety and depression that I was able to start to even consider doing new things (like starting my own business and this van life thing), beyond just fantasizing about them. I wonder if we all need something physical like that in our lives to connect more to our bodies, to help us get out of our mind and its cycle of fear. If not yoga, maybe meditation, or just taking walks without a phone. I suspect that the more connected to nature it is, the faster we begin to change. In any case, I get a lot of "wow, I couldn't do that" from people. While this certainly isn't the lifestyle for everyone, I suspect there are lot of things open to us if we can work beyond our stories of fear of change.

I'm not pushing for people to make huge changes in their lives if they don't wish, and frankly, guilt is a poor motivator to make lasting changes anyway. It can start with just looking at your own studio and deciding what tools, materials, etc. are necessary for your business or are aligned to the quality of soulfulness I was talking about earlier. Then letting the rest move back into circulation.

With regards to thinking about bookbinding and sustainability overall, it's useful to contemplate: are there tiny ways or products or habits that you can start looking into to mitigate our daily impact on the environment? Consider where materials and tools came from, what went into making them. Are there just-as-good substitutes that might not have traveled all over the world, or been made in a polluting factory? As bookbinders we know intimately that the little things make a big difference in the work. So can we also take steps to make a bigger impact on the world around us while still building that good life?

**CARRIE SNYDER** is the founder of *More Than Sustainability*, a sustainability consultancy that has served businesses in various industries, and the public sector, around the world. She designed and then taught the highly-rated "Circular Economy" class—about increasing the circular flow of materials—at Harvard. Once she discovered bookbinding through a class at the San Francisco Center for the Book, she realized it was the hobby she would have for the rest of her life.



## SPRING 2025 WORKSHOPS

**MAR 16-APR 13** **Variations on the Sewn Boards Binding**  
Online, Sundays, 5 Sessions

**APR 26-27** **Variations on the Sewn Boards Binding**  
In person in the Chicago-area studio,  
Two all-day sessions

**MAR 18-MAY 20** **Leather Binding Techniques:  
Sunken doublures and suede flyleaves**  
Online, Tuesdays, 10 sessions

**ONGOING** Private instruction online and in person

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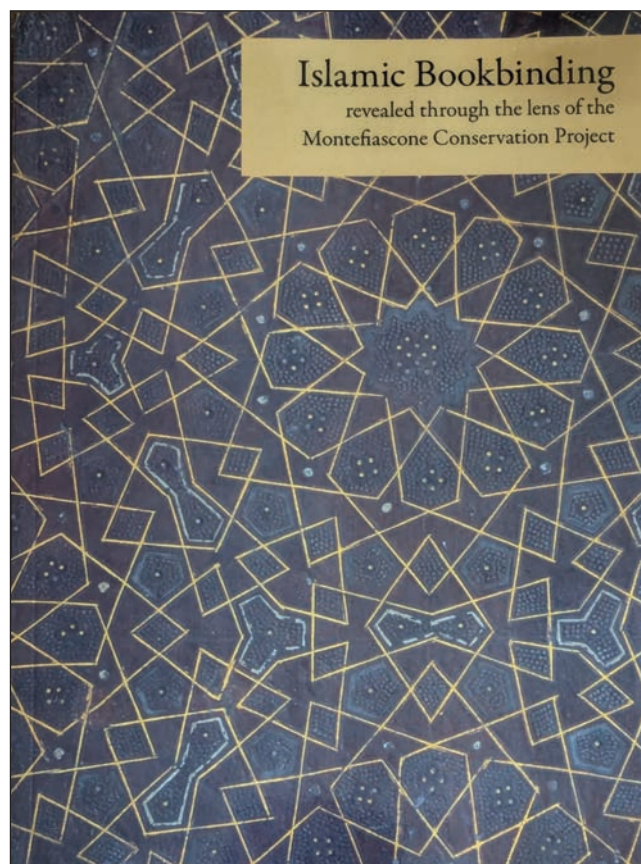
## “Islamic Bookbinding Revealed Through the Lens of the Montefiascone Conservation Project”

At first glance, this book might be deemed relevant only to those who have participated in the well-known workshops held in Montefiascone, Italy. Indeed, the introductory chapter by the founder, Cheryl Porter, thoroughly covers the background of the in-depth conservation project from its initial undertaking to the ensuing workshops. It was important for this work to be documented by Porter and others familiar with its beginnings. All too often such programs receive attention only after they have become distant history, and the practitioners are no longer available to affirm the facts. However, it would be a mistake to assume that the project's history is all *Islamic Bookbinding Revealed Through the Lens of the Montefiascone Conservation Project* has to offer.

The title correctly describes the content of this volume: the 14 essays within were written by scholars and instructors of *Islamic bookbinding who have taught at the Montefiascone Conservation Project*. The authors include Sheila Blair, Jonathan Bloom, Jim Bloxam, Marco Di Bella, Alison Ohta, Cheryl Porter, Kristine Rose-Beers, and Shaun Thompson. All are reliable sources, noted for their expertise on the topic of each essay. Good color illustrations and helpful sketches accompany the text. Whether the readers' interest is in the history of this binding type, or they desire more insight into the structure of this style, this is a go-to volume for the subject. The essays provide ample information, and they are complemented with extensive bibliographies to give further insight.

While the term Islamic bookbinding is a broad descriptive phrase, these pages offer some clarification. The chapters consist of pairs of essays on given styles, with Alison Ohta describing the history of a particular subset of a style, while a second author shows specific examples of that style. For example, Ohta's *The Book in Mamluk Cairo*, is followed by Kristine Rose-Beers' essay *Mamluk Bindings*. The range of the essays serves as a reminder that Islamic bookbinding as a structure spans a long period of time and a widespread area of geography; the appearance of the volumes studied here reflect those factors.

GBW members will find that *Islamic Bookbinding Revealed Through the Lens of the Montefiascone Conservation Project* may be a useful guidebook for those who wish to create their own Islamic binding, or to incorporate some of the structural elements into other styles of bookbinding. The plentiful illustrations and well-executed sketches can easily function as a “how-to” manual for skilled bookbinders.



*Islamic Bookbinding Revealed Through the Lens of the Montefiascone Conservation Project*, edited by Julia Miller, 220 full-color illustrations. Includes bibliographies and index. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Legacy Press, 2024

**BARBARA ADAMS HEBARD** was trained in bookbinding by Mark Esser at the North Bennet Street School. After a long career as Conservator at the Boston Athenaeum and Boston College, she now is the Preservation Coordinator at Brandeis University. She is a Fellow of The International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works, a Professional Associate of The American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works and was a long-time member of GBW.



# Newsletter and Advertising Information

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PRECEEDING THE ISSUE**

Submission Date	Issue Month
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March 1	April 2025
May 1	June 2025
July 1	August 2025
September 1	October 2025
November 1	December 2025

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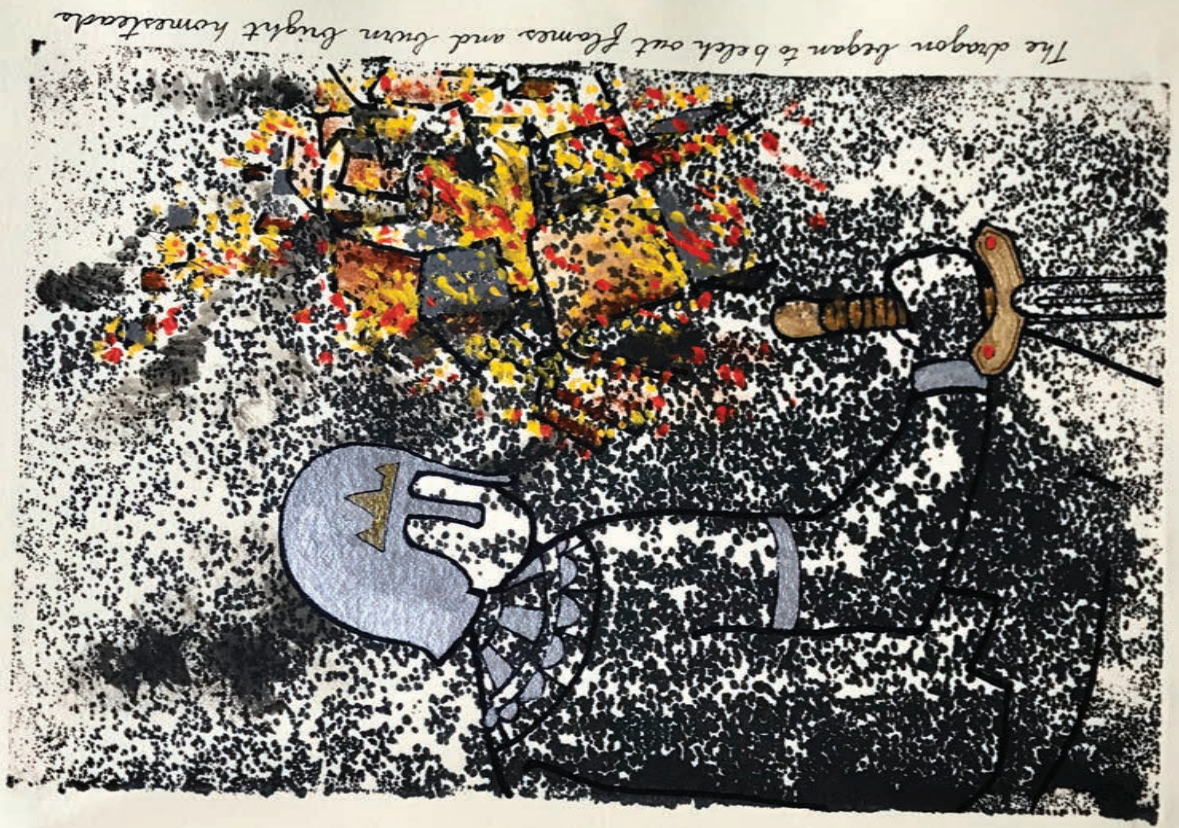


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