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- The Versatile, Valuable Pencil
- There's Nothing More Embarrassing Than...
- Over the Hump and In the Mountains

And more...



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newsletter@guildofbookworkers.org

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standards@guildofbookworkers.org

Chapter Chairs

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california@guildofbookworkers.org

DELAWARE VALLEY

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delawarevalley@guildofbookworkers.org

LONE STAR – Kim Neiman – Ray Saenz

lonestar@guildofbookworkers.org

MIDWEST – Lisa Muccigrosso

midwest@guildofbookworkers.org

NEW ENGLAND – Séphora Bergiste

newengland@guildofbookworkers.org

NEW YORK – Jane Mahoney

newyork@guildofbookworkers.org

NORTHWEST – Jodee Fenton

northwest@guildofbookworkers.org

POTOMAC – Charlotte Mauler Hayes

potomac@guildofbookworkers.org

ROCKY MOUNTAIN – Nicole Cotton – Petrina Bryce

rockymountain@guildofbookworkers.org

SOUTHEAST – Jessica Hudgins – Kirsten Wehner

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Cover Photo: Lang Ingalls, OPEN • SET 2025 Exhibition Coordinator, speaking at the awards ceremony at San Francisco Center for the Book. – PHOTO CREDIT: BETH REDMOND



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 The GBW Newsletter is published six times a year by the Guild of Book Workers, Inc., 521 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10175.

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PHOTO CREDIT: BETH REDMOND

Mingling at Open•Set 2025 in San Francisco (page 10).

Letter from the President

DEAR MEMBERS

I am thrilled to announce two new award opportunities for both GBW and non-GBW members, funded by a generous grant from the Maxwell/Hanrahan Foundation.

The first is the Mid-Career Award, given to two Guild of Book Workers members annually. The \$5000 award will allow the recipient to set aside time for study, reflection, opportunities, new projects, experimentation, and exploration. This grant includes attendance to the Guild's annual Standards of Excellence Seminar. Applications for this award will be accepted April 1st–30th, 2025, with all applicants notified by June 15th, 2025.

The second opportunity, the BIPOC Book Arts Award, is for any individuals within the book arts community who identify as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color). Applicants do not need to be GBW members. This scholarship is designed to help expand funding opportunities in the book arts and to support creative projects, education, and research. Up to six individual grants of \$1000 each will be awarded, along with GBW membership for one year.

Visit the Guild's website for more information and links to applications for both awards. Applications must be submitted by April 21st, 2025 for first-round consideration, and May 19th, 2025 for second-round consideration. Please share this opportunity widely with your book arts community—within and outside the Guild.

Please reach out to me with any questions you may have at president@guildofbookworkers.org.

Cheers,
Kate Levy, President



AAB students with their accomplishments (page 26).

Letter from the Editors

DEAR READERS

Like fickle spring weather, this issue is full of highs and lows. First, we mourn the passing of two great Book Arts people—both wonderful teachers—who are no longer with us. Jana Pullman and Pamela Spitzmueller were generous with their knowledge and patient teachers, as well as talented binders. Our community will miss them both greatly. Learn about their lives and book work in the pieces by Madelyn Garrett, Julia Miller, and Shannon Zachary.

Your co-editor team has its own highs and lows, as well. We dropped a proverbial ball in the previous issue and omitted the brief bio of our new Book Arts Correspondent, Lisa Scarpello. We appreciate our regular contributors!

Lisa G. Scarpello is a Board Member of the Guild's Delaware Valley Chapter and a member of the Philadelphia Center for the Book. Scarpello volunteers in the Conservation Lab at The Historical Society of Pennsylvania and the Winter Shelter Program at Trinity Memorial Episcopal Church. She lives in Philadelphia, PA with her husband, Jude, and her cat, Sophie.

We also appreciate having had the help of Laura Kraegel with editing this issue. It's a lot of material to review, and we are grateful to be able to distribute the load onto more shoulders.

In the positive column, this issue is a veritable festival of teaching. Conservation correspondent Nicole Alvarado reviews an American Academy of Bookbinding course on two historical parchment binding structures, taught by Anne Hillam. Calligraphy correspondent Beth Lee muses on how the humble pencil can teach us about the shapes of letters. Barbara Adams Hebard and Amanda Degener each review exhibitions, also an excellent way to learn about binding and the book arts. Barbara reviews an exhibit on imaginary and nonexistent books at the Grolier Club—an interesting, rather tongue-in-cheek twist. Amanda reviews the Boston Athenaeum's exhibition marking the 70th anniversary of Claire Van Vliet's Janus Press. The accompanying catalog details Van Vliet's teaching career, along with her ethereal pulp paintings and sculptural books.

And for another treat, we have Kate Crowe's article celebrating the Open•Set design binding competition. Kate describes the events around the arrival in San Francisco of both groups of work, the "Open" category at the San Francisco Center for the Book and the "Set" category at the American Bookbinders Museum. The panel discussion about the "Set" books was an excellent opportunity to learn from the artists themselves about their artistic processes and inspirations.

Teaching is how the art and science of binding lives on, spreading through the community and into the future. Keep up the teaching and learning!

News and Notices



Save the Date!

STANDARDS 2025

October 9–11, 2025
Graduate Hotel, Iowa City

Been scrolling lately?

GBW needs volunteers to:

- post Guild-related news about awards, elections, exhibitions, Standards, and opportunities
- highlight our members' accomplishments
- keep our social media fresh, respectful, and topical

Please email us if you'd like to help!
communications@guildofbookworkers.org



Chapter Reports

CALIFORNIA

In mid-March, the Guild's California chapter visited the historic William Andrews Clark Memorial Library housed on the grounds of the late William Andrews Clark, Jr. and now owned by UCLA. Nina Schneider, Rare Book Librarian, led the tour and book viewing. It was a treat to have Carolee Campbell in the group as she kindly agreed to discuss her book, *The Real World of Manuel Cordova*, which was pulled for our viewing, among other beautifully printed and bound volumes.

In other chapter news, Karen Hanmer will be teaching two structures ("Exposed Sewing with Decorative Guards with a Self-Locking Wrapper" and "Laced Paper Case with Unsupported Sewing") on Zoom in May. Join us on Saturday, May 17th, and Saturday, May 24th 2025 from 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM PST. Follow the link on our website to register or contact us to enquire about scholarships.

LONE STAR

Perhaps a bit late now, but love is never out of season! The 9th Annual Valentine's Day Print Exchange went beautifully in February. We had some very excellent submissions, all of which may be found on the chapter's website (gbwlonestarchapter.wordpress.com).

The Lone Star Chapter is planning another workshop later this year. Stay tuned for details!

We continue to hold "Colophone" sessions every second Monday of the month, from 7:00–8:00 p.m. via Zoom. All are welcome to join the Lone Star Chapter in collaborative communication about all things book arts. Please see our webpage for specifics.

Co-Chairs: Kim Neiman and Ray Saenz
PHOTOS COURTESY OF ESTHER KIBBY



"F" Fanciful is from *Æthelwold Etc: Twenty-six Letters Inspired by Other Letters and Non-Letters and Little Bits of Poetry*, 2009. Designed, composed, and printed from 163 plates in 105 different colors on a hand-fed proof press by Russell Maret in a standard edition of 44 copies with a deluxe edition of 26 copies.



Karen Hanmer



Syd Webb



Kim Neiman

MIDWEST CHAPTER

Come one, come all, to the Midwest Chapter Annual Gathering! We are blessed to have fantastic talent in the Midwest and some that will be on display at our all-day set of workshops on April 12th at Squirrel Haus in lovely Minneapolis, Minnesota. There are four planned sessions touching on subjects from paste papers to making washi. Please see our chapter website for more information: midwestgbw.wordpress.com/2025/01/27/2025-annual-gathering/.

Or, if you're reading this after the 12th, I hope you had a great time and are already looking forward to next year's gathering!

NORTHWEST

Chapter members visited the Zine Archive & Publishing Project (ZAPP) Collection at the Seattle Public Library. Collection curator Abby Bass hosted the group, shared the history of the collection, and showed examples of unique structures invented by some of its artists/authors. In March, Andrew Huot gave a workshop on two conservation enclosures.

Earth Day will be commemorated by a "Weathergram Exchange Project" among members and guests. In May, Katy Starr-Baum will present a virtual studio visit for the Chapter and talk about her design process. On June 14th, the Chapter will hold its first in-person meeting since the start of the COVID pandemic: the "All Members Meeting" will be held in the new facility opened by Partners In Print in the Belltown

neighborhood in Seattle. After much hard work, Partners In Print has reassembled its extraordinary collection of letterpress equipment and is putting together a robust series of learning opportunities. Sign up for the Chapter monthly email to keep up with all the action! northwest@guildofbookworkers.org.

Jodee Fenton, Chair

POTOMAC CHAPTER

Members of the Potomac Chapter enjoyed Jane Griffith's "Art of Manipulating Leather" (aka "Collaged Suede") workshop on March 1st, 2025. After applying a mixture of PVA and Methyl Cellulose to pieces of suede, we covered the suede with a variety of tissue papers, lace papers, threads, mull, and other items. These were pressed, dried, and sanded. We then added more layers to make impressions into the suede and pressed them again. We finished the pieces with either a glossy or soft finish. The workshop was fun and very informative. Jane explained methods of using these pieces as book covers, and she showed us several examples of books made by herself and others.

We published our Chapter newsletter in January, which contained member news and an article by Jane Griffith about the Open • Set competition. Jane won a Highly Commendable prize for her binding of *The Helen Fragments*, the "set" category book! The newsletter contained several other articles about members' work.



Members of the Potomac Chapter enjoyed Jane Griffith's "Art of Manipulating Leather" (aka "Collaged Suede") workshop on March 1st, 2025.

Awards

Nominations Now Open for 2025 GBW Awards

The Awards Committee of the Guild of Book Workers is seeking written nominations for the 2025 Lifetime Achievement and Laura Young Awards.

THE LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

This award recognizes significant contributions to the goals of the Guild and to the book arts field at large. Contributions may include areas such as education, professional practice, research, or mentorship. We welcome nominations from the larger community of diverse voices and experiences. The award recipient is granted lifetime membership with no obligation to pay dues.

THE LAURA YOUNG AWARD

This award is given to an individual in recognition of sustained commitment to the Guild, that is, demonstrable service above and beyond. Nominees must be current or former members of GBW.

All nominations must include a letter of support. Letters should be no more than 500 words (approximately one single-spaced page). Please include a brief biography of yourself and

explain how you know the nominee. The most effective letters of nomination are specific about the contributions, attributes, and/or achievements that you think qualify the nominee for the award. You may submit nominations via email or use the nomination form at: gbw.formstack.com/forms/nominations.

To submit directly to the committee via email, please include the following in your correspondence: your name, the name of the nominee, the award for which you are submitting a nomination, and a letter of support to one of the following committee members:

Mary Sullivan (chair): crowinghensbindery@gmail.com

Shannon Kerner: shannonkerner@gmail.com

Amanda Degener: HMPeditons@gmail.com

The deadline for receipt of nominations is April 30th, 2025. Please feel free to contact committee members with any questions. More information about past award recipients may be found at guildofbookworkers.org/awards.

In Memoriam

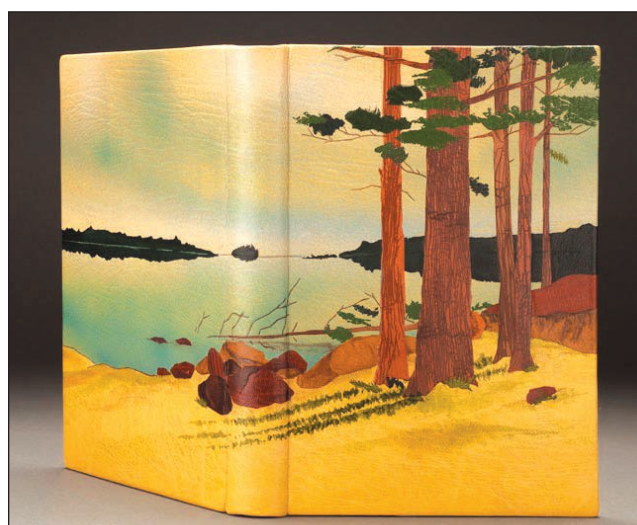
Jana Pullman

by Madelyn Garrett

Jana Pullman, book artist, died February 10, 2025. During her many years working in the field of book arts, Jana was a papermaker, printer, bookbinder, illustrator, conservator, and instructor.

A longtime member of the Guild of Book Workers, the Friends of Dard Hunter, the Ampersand Club, and the Minnesota Center for Book Arts, Jana received her initial training at the University of Wisconsin-Madison with Walter Hamady and Jim Dast, and at the University of Iowa with Kim Merker, Bill Anthony, and Tim Barrett.

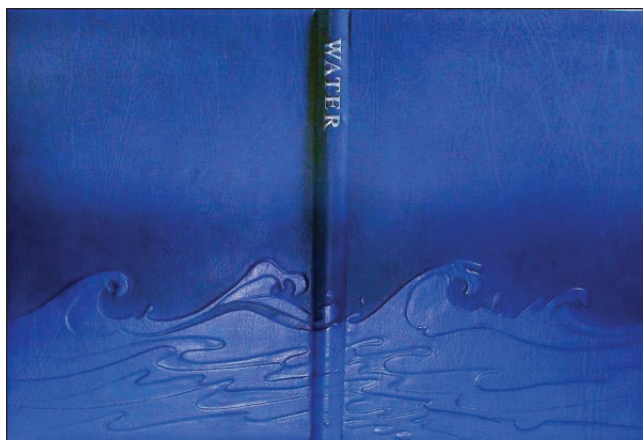
After receiving her M.F.A. in 1988, Jana supervised the repair unit for the general collection at the University of Utah Marriott Library. In 1992, she returned to Iowa to work with Tim Barrett as the apprentice/manager at the University of Iowa Oakdale Paper Facility. There she made handmade papers tailored for book and paper conservation and assisted with ongoing research at the facility. Beginning in 1997, Jana was based



in Minneapolis, where she owned Western Slope Bindery, specializing in custom binding and repair of books. Jana focused her artistic energies on design binding and showed her work in national and international exhibitions.

Jana was an exceptional teacher, and for thirty years shared her deep knowledge of papermaking and bookmaking through classes and workshops. She taught at the University of Iowa, University of Minnesota, MCBA, Carleton College, Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts, University of Utah, Penland School of Craft, Guild of Book Workers Standards conferences, and art centers and conferences across the U.S.

Her awards include two Best Binding Awards in the DeGolyer Competition for American Bookbinding, hosted by Southern Methodist University's Bridwell Library, the DeGolyer winner for Best Design, and the 2013 Minnesota Book Artist of the Year. She was also recognized in the 2006 MCBA Ignited Bookbinding Competition for Overall Excellence. Jana's books are part of many public and private libraries, archives, and collections across the U.S., including the Minnesota Historical Society, Chicago Public Library, and University of Utah Marriott Library.



First and foremost, however, Jana will always be remembered for her gentle spirit and limitless generosity, and for sharing her extensive knowledge of the book arts with students, colleagues, and friends. Jana, we will miss you.

MADELYN GARRETT

Retired University of Utah rare book curator and working book artist Madelyn Garrett creates one-of-a-kind books. Madelyn has lectured extensively on the history of the book, established a nationally-recognized book arts program, led the Marriott Library's own Red Butte Press fine press printing program, and conceived and developed a statewide K–12 history-of-the-book program for Utah's children. She was a professional associate of the American Institute for Conservation and remains a long-time member of the Guild of Book Workers.



Examples of Jana's exquisitely wrought fine bindings.

Pamela Spitzmueller

October 7, 1950 – March 13, 2025

Pamela Spitzmueller grew up in suburban Chicago, “making things” in her father’s wood workshop. After graduating from the University of Illinois with a degree in art education, she went on to study bookbinding with the book conservator Gary Frost of the Newberry Library, where she worked from 1976 to 1983. There, she broke traditional gender barriers by becoming the first woman trained in assignments requiring physical strength and artistic decision-making.

by Julia Miller and Shannon Zachary

After moving to Washington, D.C., Spitzmueller worked in the Library of Congress as a rare book conservator. She was invited in 1989 to direct the University of Iowa’s Conservation Department and serve as an associate professor in the School of Art and Art History. In 1998, Spitzmueller was appointed the first James H. Needham Chief Conservator for Special Collections at Harvard University’s Library Preservation Center.

She received a National Endowment for the Humanities Grant in 1979, an Andrew Mellon Foundation Grant in 1993, and a Kress Foundation Fellowship in 1992.

Spitzmueller frequently dedicated her artists' books to her favorite poets and artists, and in 1998, Spitzmueller was asked to create an artist's book for Hillary Rodham Clinton. For Hillary includes the poem "Fate Conspires to Strengthen Us" by Anne Dutlinger.¹

Concurrent with being an outstanding book conservator and artist, Pamela traveled extensively to research historical book structures, teach (and take) workshops, and see the world. She was an active and influential member of the national and international book conservation and book arts communities, influencing many colleagues and students. In particular, she served as a Paper and Book Intensive (PBI) co-director for over a decade.

Pam retired from Harvard University in 2012 and was able to spend a number of years continuing her travels, her research, her teaching, and her gardening. She moved from Boston to Ann Arbor, Michigan, in March of 2021. Pamela entered hospice care for complications due to dementia/Alzheimers and died on March 13, 2025. Pamela will be buried in Forest Hill cemetery in Ann Arbor. She is survived by her sister, Claudia

¹Biography based on Pam's page on the National Museum of Women in the Arts website, nmwa.org/art/artists/pamela-spitzmueller/

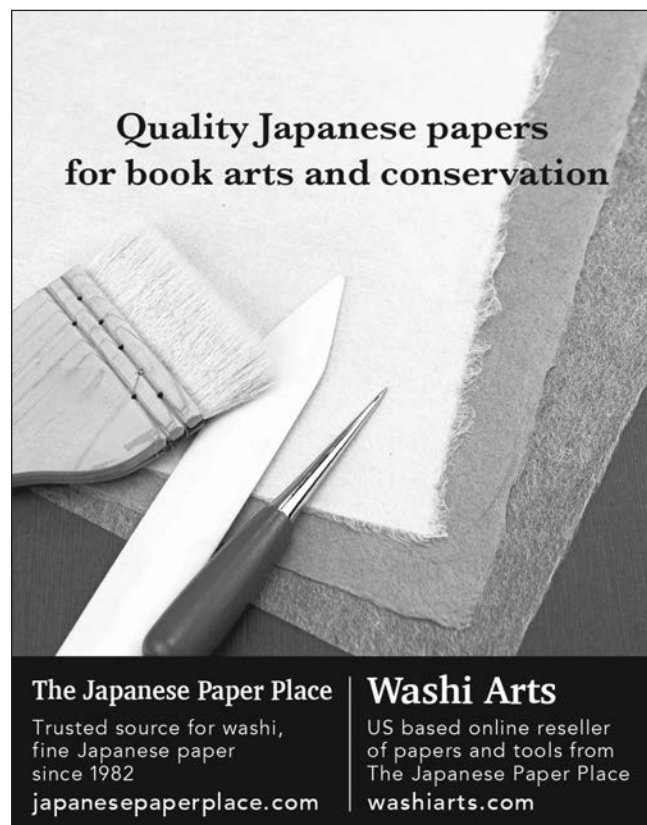
Johnson and her husband Mark, and her sister-in-law Nancy Spitzmueller (Bosque Farms, NM). Please send condolences to Claudia at 54 Patricio Rd., Los Lunas NM, 87031.

In lieu of flowers, please consider donating in Pamela's name to the Guild of Book Workers or to your regional Guild chapter—Pam loved the Guild, and taught for most if not all the chapters. In November 2024, Pam received the prestigious Guild Lifetime Achievement Award—an honor and wonderful recognition for her years of dedication to the Guild and its mission.

There is no possible way to fully express the loss Pamela's illness and death represent to her community of friends and the historical research she was so skilled at—that community includes her own teachers, her colleagues, everyone she worked with, and her many students. The gains she made in research before her death are legendary, and those she inspired and taught will carry her ideas and her example forward in their own work and teaching.

In an artists' book she made in homage to Frank O'Hara, one of the lines she borrowed from O'Hara's poem "In Memory of My Feelings" is this:

"I rise into the cool skies..."



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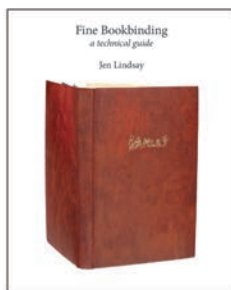
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Recently Published Bookbinding Titles



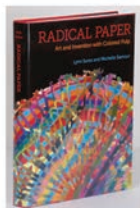
Islamic Bookbinding



Fine Bookbinding

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Volume 9 is the last volume in this acclaimed series, and it will be published in Summer 2025. Visit <https://www.thelegacypress.com/forthcoming-titles> for more information.



Newest title!

Radical Paper: Art and Invention with Colored Pulp

by Lynn Sures and Michelle Samour

This landmark, 440-page book features 245 works by 73 groundbreaking visual artists, illustrated with 342 full-color images. It is the first of its kind to chronicle the use of colored pulp as a radical art medium.

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FEATURED WORKSHOP

Binding Fundamentals + Leather Working for Bookbinding

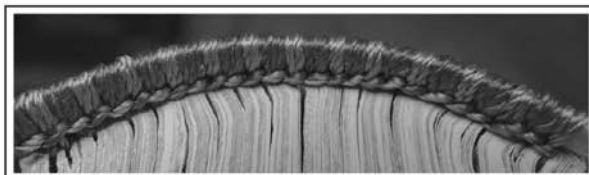
*Sept 10-14, In person in the Chicago-area studio,
Five all-day sessions*

Binding Fundamentals

A handsome, functional book is built on a solid foundation of traditional forwarding skills. In this course students will develop and reinforce these skills by going through all the steps of crafting a leather fine binding prior to covering: folding, marking up and punching a text block; crafting endsheets appropriate for board attachment and full opening; sewing on various supports on a sewing frame; rounding and backing the spine; lacing on boards; sewing endbands; spine lining.

Leather Working for Bookbinding

Students will be introduced to the tools and techniques required for fine leather binding. Tools: English or Swiss paring knife, Scharfix, spoke shave. Techniques: lining boards to accept leather; paring for spines, corners, headcaps, and all-over thinning of the leather; paring and edgework for onlays; sharpening using microfinishing films; stropping; covering of boards and spines to form corners and headcaps; adhesives and drying procedure for leather binding.



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Open•Set 2025: From San Francisco to Denver

The exhibition of books from Open•Set 2025, a prestigious design binding competition sponsored by the American Academy of Bookbinding, will be on display at the University of Denver May 2nd to August 10th, 2025.

The Open•Set design binding competition is a signature event in the design binding world, and we could not be happier that it's on its way to the University of Denver after the exhibit closes in San Francisco. The name "Open•Set 2025" indicates the two components of the competition. The Open Category is what it sounds like—the binder can select any text block of their choosing within the contest parameters, and design accordingly. The Set Category is a "set" text block determined prior to the contest, for which each binder must form their own design interpretation. In 2025, the set book is *The Helen Fragments*, published by Peter Koch of Editions Koch (Berkeley, CA)



PHOTO CREDIT: BETH REDMOND

Ting-Hsuan Lu

in 2003. The translator is Richard Seibert, the illustrator is Winifred McNeill, and the printer is Max Koch. The book features fragments from *The Iliad* that highlight the story of Helen of Troy. Included are over 100 drawings by artist Winifred McNeill, all of which have been reconfigured digitally and letterpress printed from polymer plates.

I was lucky enough to attend both the award ceremony for the Open Category and a design binders process panel about the Set Category. The award ceremony was at the San Francisco Center for the Book, where the Open Category was on exhibit. The Set Category was on display at the American Bookbinders Museum (ABM). The process panel there featured four binders: Sol Rébora (Argentina), Gabby Cooksey (Washington State, United States), Ting-Hsuan Lu (from Japan, residing in Taiwan), and Don Glaister (Washington State, United States).

The panel was a tour de force of the incredible skill, detail, and thoughtfulness that each binder brought to the Set Category. Sol Rébora's design, which she refers to as a Can Can binding, is done in a gorgeous pale pink leather. Per the artist, it "evokes the skin of a young woman," including sensuous swirls



and womanly shapes that speak to the feminine power of Helen in this version of the text. Rébora's hollow back binding, done with no adhesive, creates a solid foundation for the delicate gold tooling for the title. The binding includes doublures and incisions that were noted by the jury as "highly commendable."

Gabby Cooksey's design recalls what she sees and feels when she reads the text, evoking weaving, laughter, sparkle, and gossip. Her process first involved a design using wool. She then realized that this design reminded her of eyes, which made her think of laughter and gossip. So she changed her process, materials, and design to merge her two passions—tattooing as a process, and brass work. The eye designs suggest the way that all the other characters in the text wanted to watch and judge Helen, and the fore-edge piece in brass suggests the containment and opening up of the "sacred gossip" in the text. To create the tattooed eye designs, she needed to first draw them in chalk

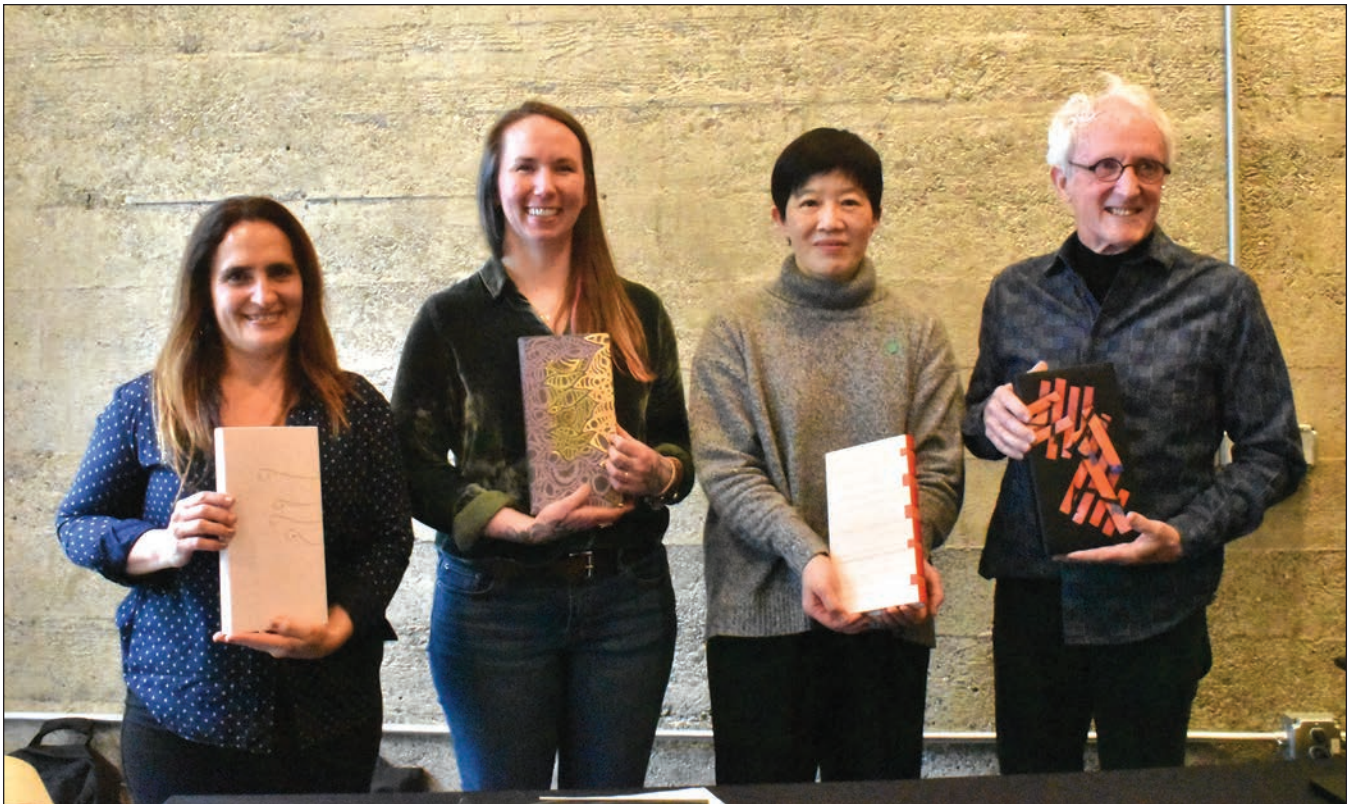


PHOTO CREDIT: BETH REDMOND

Presenters at the American Bookbinder's Museum Process Panel (left to right) and their creations: Sol Rébora, Gabby Cooksey, Ting-Hsuan Lu, and Don Glaister.



PHOTO CREDIT: LAINE TAMMER

Front row (left to right): Sol Rebora, Sofía Mendizabál, and Lili Hall Sharp. Back row (left to right): Coleen Curry and Sam Feinstein.

so that she could remove it as the pink ink was tattooed into the darker purple leather. Cooksey, who is not an experienced metalworker, had to make two versions of the fore-edge piece so that she could find a way to exactly align the two. Each component is designed to evoke the cadence of the text, including how the “eyes” in the fore-edge brass design line up with the eyes in the cover design.

Ting-Hsuan Lu took perhaps the most botanical approach of the panelists to her design. She both dyed and wove Japanese silk thread into the design of the cover. She began by selecting branches from a special type of peach tree that symbolizes love and feminine beauty. The branches were then boiled in a stock pot to extract the dye. As the dye from each batch of branches changes tree to tree, the pink produced by it has a gorgeous, natural variation. The silk thread was spun with a Japanese spinning wheel, and she used a loom to weave the fabric. Just creating the dye required her to wait for the branches to grow and then flower, which meant that the process in its entirety took at least four months.

Don Glaister, rather than speaking to his technical process, spoke more to his aesthetic approach to design binding. His approach to a text block begins with “read, draw, think,” which he then iterates. In his design for “Helen,” the word is fragmented in the binding, spelling out the character’s name in floating bands or bars, rather than distinct letterforms. He also showed some other examples of his abstracted titles. Glaister’s

bindings of several Caliban Press books, including their version of *The Tempest*, use the letters as the primary focus of the design binding. He notes that his abstracted titles are in process until they are legible—sometimes the process takes 20 minutes, sometimes 20 days. In his first attempt on “Helen,” the color was wrong, and it took longer to decide to rip off the wrong painted letters than to actually make new ones once the decision was made.

In each case, the binder’s process is beautifully reflective of the combination of care, expertise, and skill that each brought to the text, pulling out themes through each aesthetic and technical choice. Design binders practice a fabulously interdisciplinary art and craft, utilizing not only many of the arts and humanities, but engineering, botany, chemistry, and many others. Most people, when they use the term “technology,” are referring to 21st-century inventions such as the internet or microchips. I am excited for this exhibition to come to the University of Denver because those who experience it can gain an appreciation that the book form is a technology that has existed for centuries. It is a technology where book artists and design binders continue to innovate, and it’s the kind of innovation that the binder’s process panelists gave us just a glimpse of in San Francisco. Now—on to Denver!

KATE CROWE is the Curator of Special Collections and Archives, University of Denver (host institution).



PHOTO CREDIT: LAINE TAMMER

Zigor Anguiano Calzada and his girlfriend Arantza Moya celebrating his first prize in the Set Category and second prize in the Open Category.



PHOTO CREDIT: BETH REDMOND

Lang Ingalls (Open Set Exhibition Coordinator) is hugging Zigor, with Chip Schilling (AAB Managing Director) and Marty Wollesen (Ah Haa School of the Arts Executive Director) standing just behind them.



PHOTO CREDIT: LAINE TAMMER

Lang Ingalls, Cathy and Megan



PHOTO CREDIT: BETH REDMOND

Book artist extraordinaire, Gabby Cooksey, enjoyed the ceremony.



PHOTO CREDIT: BETH REDMOND

Anticipating the announcement of the winners, the crowd looks on.

Exhibition Reviews

The Art of Paper Reviewed by Amanda Degener

The Art of Paper, an exhibition at the Boston Athenaeum of Claire Van Vliet's work, was a focus on her creations that use handmade paper. Included were editioned artist's books, broadsides, and what she calls "wall art": often one-of-a-kind, large-scale pulp paintings. This exhibition showed her fluency not only with handmade paper, but also with collage, watercolor, artist's books, drawing, and many forms of printmaking. The show ran Sept. 8th – Dec. 30th, 2024, but all exhibited books were donated by the board, so they can still be seen by visiting the Boston Athenaeum's collection. Access to the collection and the beautifully designed catalog extend the show's impact and reach. The catalog is richly illustrated with images of the displayed work, the process of making it, and an informative and thoughtful essay by John Buchtel.¹

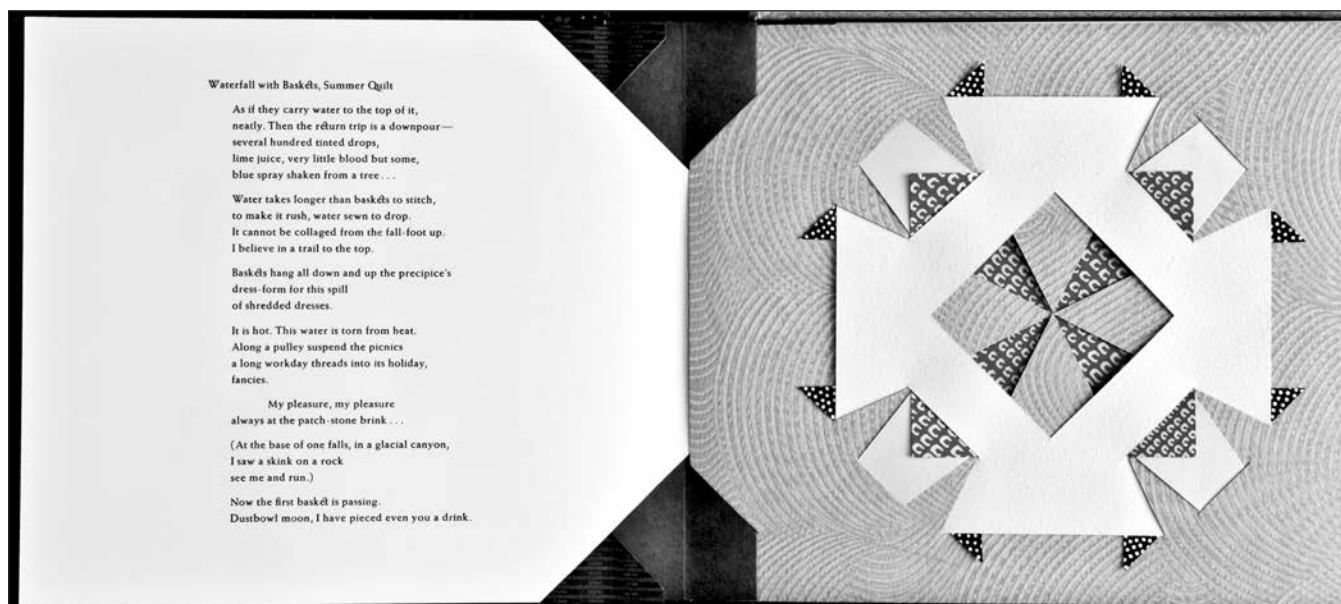
Van Vliet's pulp-painted landscapes remind the viewer how profound the natural world is, and that the planet we stand on is a sphere. Often the curve in the earth combines with soft biomorphic shapes of clouds and fields. Many of these works are about Earth and Air, two apparent opposites, yet some of one always seems to be in the other. A huge variety of weather is depicted, including cloudy skies with and without brooding grey.

¹Buchtel, John. The Art of Paper. catalog available from the Boston Athenaeum, bostonathenaeum.org. ISBN 979-8-218-49303-5.

We see threatening rain, a yellow sunrise, and a red sun—not fully seen—throwing its highlights on contrasting rocks. Many of the works include images of rocks, which powerfully contrast with the soft, pulp-painted sky. Van Vliet has done multiple works using Wheeler Rock, a place that is part of her own landscape in Vermont. Other places depicted are in New Mexico, Utah, and Ireland. Buchtel's essay in the catalog suggests Van Vliet is not literally depicting a place, but depicting a memory of the "sensations of a place" or "powerful drama of a particular place." A young exhibition visitor, Maverick Edwards, said, "I feel like I am transported to a powerful place I have never been before, and I like being there."

In "Turf Bog, County Mayo, Ireland," the cultivated rows in a field fuse with the clouds above into an abstraction. Van Vliet's abstracted reality would not be as convincing in any other media besides handmade paper. In an interview, Helen Hiebert asked Van Vliet why she works with handmade paper. "It always seemed too hard to integrate a sky into (my lithographs), so I started pulp painting just with black," Van Vliet said. "So I have done a lot of that and collaged those into lithographs. I am interested in using handmade paper with traditional printmaking techniques... (in painting,) the mixing of color easily gets muddied, but when you mix yellow and grey in the pulp, it does the same thing it does in the sky, it doesn't turn to mud. It changes

PHOTOS ARE COURTESY OF THE ARTIST



Beauty in Use



into that strange ethereal yellow you often see in the sky... When I encountered papermaking, it felt completely right.”²

It is satisfying to read the comprehensive essay; Buchtel clearly researched and had conversations with Van Vliet along with her collectors, collaborators, and students. Many book artists have benefited from attending Van Vliet’s lectures and work-

shops. She has mentored young artists who have gone on to establish presses, become graphic designers, and teach the book arts. From 1959 to 1965, Van Vliet taught drawing and printmaking at Philadelphia Museum College of Art (later called University of the Arts, and now closed), and then taught for a year at University of Wisconsin in Madison, where she also established a typographic workshop. Both these schools maintained a reputation for hand papermaking and book arts.

²Hiebert, Helen. Paper Talk podcast #122, helenhiebertstudio.com.



Earth Curve Fall 2

Van Vliet's books are driven by both the image and the word, the word often being letterpress printed. A typical edition size is 100–150, except for 2100 copies of a commercially printed how-to book called *Woven and Interlocking Book Structures*.³

³Van Vliet, Claire, and Steiner, Elizabeth. *Woven and Interlocking Book Structures*, out of print but available for free download at archive.org. 2100 trade edition. The 30 special editions include examples of the instructions. 2002.

Van Vliet mentions that meeting Hedi Kyle and wanting to make quilt books motivated her to use bindings that do not require glue.

When you look at Van Vliet's quilt books, what you see are hard edges, lines and angles, shapes such as triangles, squares, diamonds, and rectangles. Crucial to the success of these books is the underlying handmade abaca paper—made by Twinrocker, Katie MacGregor, and Bernie Vinzani—that withstands an

enormous amount of use. In his essay, Buchtel writes about the interwoven book structures, sculptural book works, and quilt books using the metaphor of a body: “the paper also inextricably forms the work’s skeleton and sinews, and often its muscles and skin as well.” Like the design of our bodies, Van Vliet’s books have no unnecessary add-ons; she knows how to leave things out. Van Vliet uses the weaving of paper both structurally and decoratively. But her knowledge of paper engineering goes beyond that, as evidenced in her huge body of editioned books. Van Vliet goes way beyond the boundaries of standard book design, incorporating pop-ups, accordions, and foldout paper pulp landscapes. There is often a variety of paper sizes within each book. These books act like sculptures, yet can be closed up and put away on the shelf with other books.

One of Van Vliet’s longtime collaborators and friends is Ruth Fine, who writes, “the metaphor of dividing a pie into three segments that must add up to a whole is a favorite for Van Vliet when she describes what she views as the three components of her books: text, images, and physical materials.”⁴ The variety of papers and “physical materials” is technically complicated. But

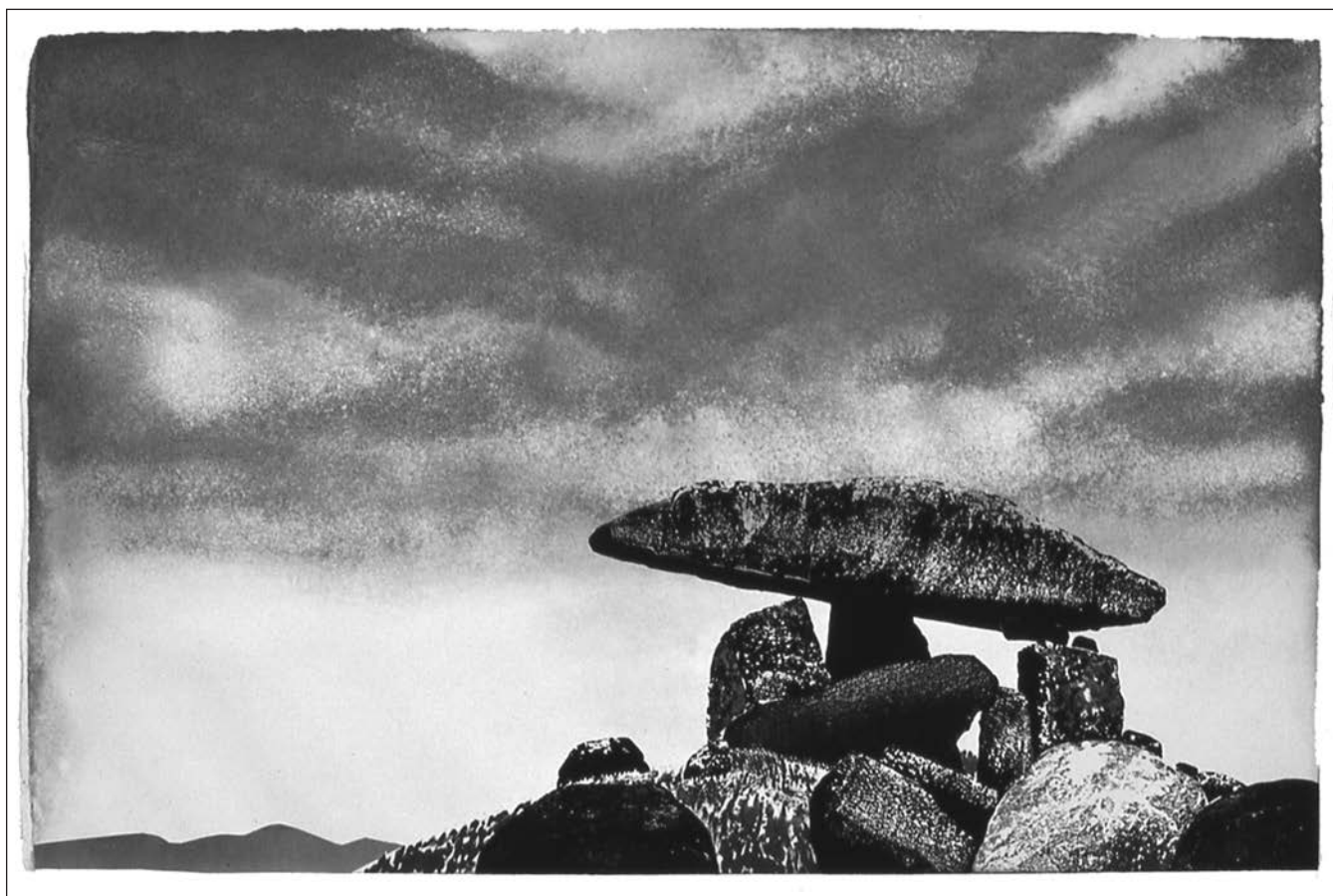
⁴Fine, Ruth. *The Janus Press-Fifty Years*, University of Vermont, Burlington, Libraries, 2006.

in the Boston Athenaeum show, which spanned 70 years of making books and 50 years of making handmade paper, Van Vliet demonstrates visually unified editions in book after book. There is diversity in the subject matter and in the collaborators. The work is sometimes political, often poetic, yet the show hangs together as one person’s vision.

To be honest, this author should mention that she has made two editions of broadsides with Van Vliet. And after making handmade paper for literally hundreds of book artists, the author feels she did not work with anyone equal to Van Vliet’s generosity, smarts, and talent for integrating handmade paper as part of her work.

The Art of Paper exhibition catalog is now available in person from Minnesota Center for Book Arts, or for purchase online from the independent bookstore Beacon Hill Books at: bit.ly/gbw-art020.

AMANDA DEGENER, a leading figure in the field of hand papermaking and paper art, is the past owner of Cave Paper, a worldwide workshop educator, co-founder and co-publisher of *Hand Papermaking* magazine—now in its 38th year. Degener has attended about 20 Guild Standards of Excellence seminars.



Kilclooney More, vitreograph on pulp painting.

Imaginary Books: Lost, Unfinished, and Fictive Works Found Only in Other Books

Reviewed by Barbara Adams Hebard

Curated by Grolier Club member Reid Byers
The Grolier Club, 47 East 60th Street, New York 10022
December 5, 2024 – February 15, 2025

This enjoyable exhibition, billed as “part conceptual art installation and part bibliophilic entertainment,” was a delight to visit on a cold January day. The more than 100 imaginary books were accompanied by humorous descriptive labels. Several gallery visitors could be heard chuckling aloud as they read the introduc-

tory panels that served to set the tone for the exhibition categories: lost, unfinished, and fictive.

The curator, Reid Byers, carefully defined these categories. Lost books once existed, but now there are no known surviving copies. One example is Lord Byron’s memoirs. Unfinished books were started but never completed and/or published. Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s *Kubla Khan* is a famous instance. Fictive books exist only within stories; they never were physical objects. H.P. Lovecraft refers to the imaginary Necronomicon in his horror tales.



More than 100 imaginary books were accompanied by humorous descriptive labels.

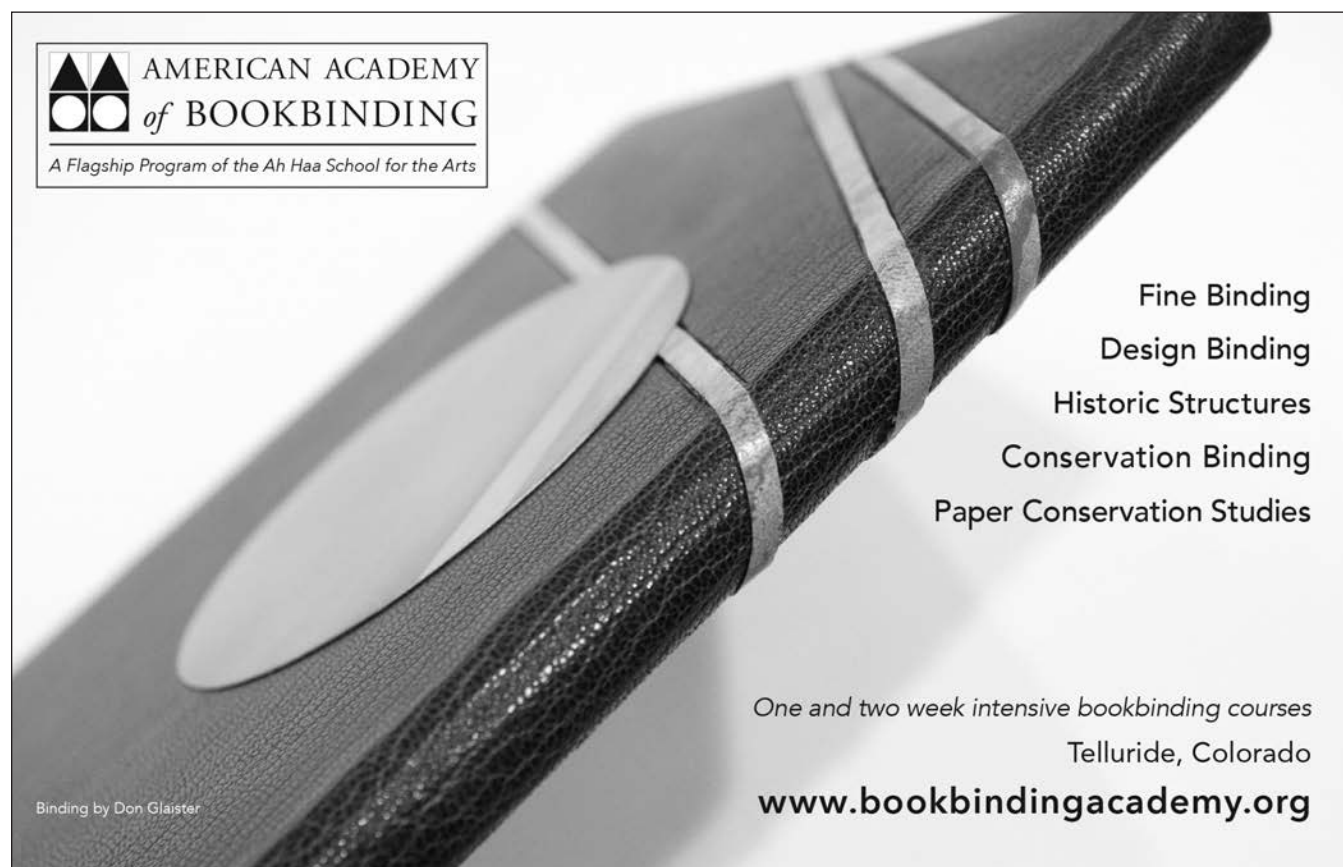
Your reviewer was fortunate to visit the Grolier Club on a day that Byers was on hand to answer questions regarding his unique take on the world of books. "Imaginary books are necessarily the rarest of rare books," he said, "since of course no such objects are to be found in our sublunary world." Despite this statement, the exhibition cases were filled with books and other supporting objects: a strong box, a human skull, and a pair of sailing shoes, to name a few. Byers commissioned book artists to come up with books and other physical objects to transform the imaginary into the real. In the spirit of fun, sometimes the "real" wasn't what one might hope for. The padlocked strong box labelled *Necronomicon* suggests that the book is housed within, but in fact the box is empty.

When asked if the exhibition represented all the known "imaginary" books, Byers quickly admitted there are many others

yet to join the physical world. He keeps a list that he adds to as he learns of potential candidates, whether lost, unfinished or fictive. Maybe some GBW members can help make those real.

An online version of the exhibition can be seen on the Grolier Club website at grolierclub.org. Additionally, an exhibition catalog is available for purchase.

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.



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Binding by Don Glaister

The Versatile, Valuable Pencil

I keep returning to the pencil as a tool for study, exploration, and expression. It is such a versatile tool!

A TOOL FOR STUDY

I first learned the value of the pencil as a study tool. When we learn calligraphy using a broad-edge pen, we rely on the characteristics of that broad edge to make the marks. When studying a hand, I found that if I couldn't replicate the look of a letter with my broad-edge pen, tracing the exemplar shape in pencil could reveal the difference between the exemplar letter and my effort. In the early days, it helped me to identify basic problems like pen angles, shapes, joins, and weights. As I explored more complex letters, it also helped me to identify when a pen-angle change was needed to achieve a stroke shape, interior shape, or serif.

The pencil is also great for studying typefaces. Type is a drawn shape, making it a natural match for the pencil. One way I reignite my interest in letters is to translate a typeface to a

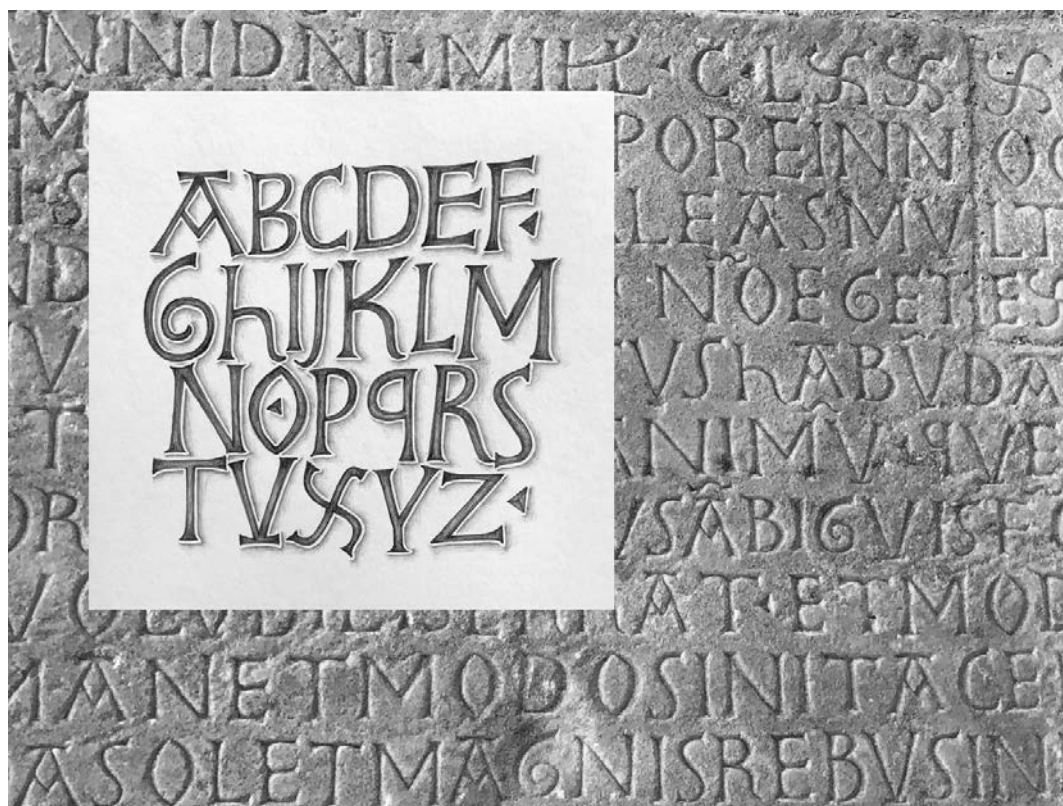
written hand. The pencil acts as a bridge between the typeface and the written imitation.

A TOOL FOR EXPLORATION

The pencil is great for sketching rapid layouts. Imagine trying to write a piece 10 different ways at finished size just to find out which one works best; you might be sick of text by the time you find the right layout. But with a pencil you can get a quick idea of the shape of the text, and of any rivers or awkward letter juxtapositions. It's also a great tool for exploring different serifs, weights, line leadings, and other elements of the composition.

A TOOL FOR EXPRESSION

Watercolor with lightly penciled edges or shading often blends well with penciled calligraphy. Alone, the pencil can provide many shades within a single letter or across an entire lettered piece. Used as a shadow, it can add depth to painted, stamped,



Translating European incised letters by Amity Parks

and penciled letters. Water-soluble pencil + water can produce a dramatic monochromatic watercolor. These are only a few of the ways that pencil lettering can be a tool for expression.

A TOOL FOR TRAVEL

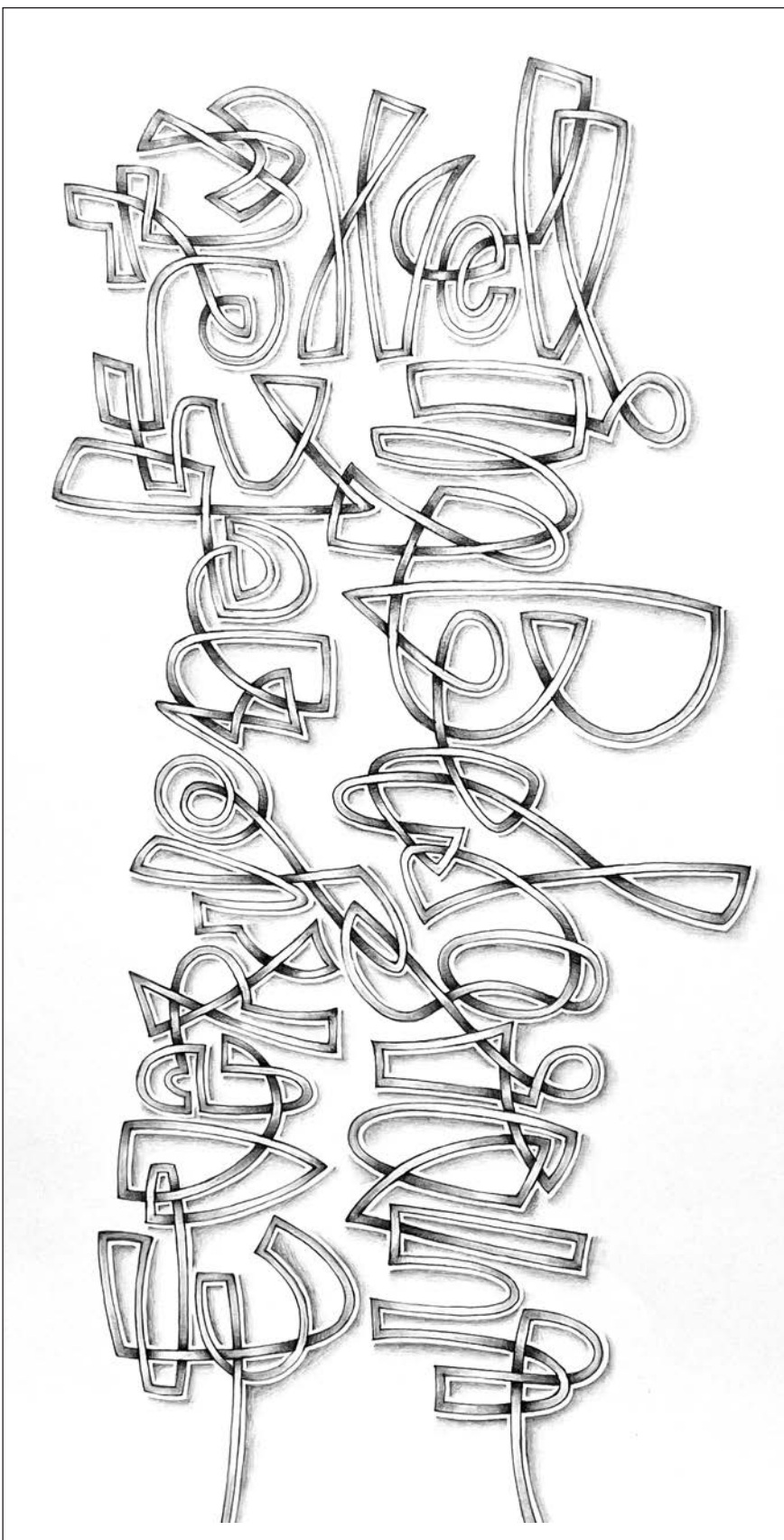
The pencil is just about the most portable writing tool we have. No need to purchase expensive inks or pens or carrying cases for them. It was not until after the invention of the pencil that the definition of literacy changed to include the ability to write. (And, especially in some countries with non-Roman language systems, the invention of digital tools may change the definition of literacy again.)

WHERE TO LEARN PENCIL LETTERING

Jurgen Vercaemst, a Flemish calligrapher, teaches classes online and in person from time to time. Look at his work on Instagram — @jurgen_vercaemst — to see the wide range of letters, marks, and layouts that he has achieved with the pencil. Last summer he taught an online class at Roman Holiday, and his recorded sessions are still available for purchase at learn.txlac.org/colorful-lettering-composition.

Amity Parks, who divides her time between Montana and Umbria, also teaches classes online and in person. A couple of her pencil works are shown in this article. Her workshop schedule is posted on her website at amityparkslettering.com.

BETH LEE is a book artist and freelance calligrapher. She holds a fine arts degree in graphic design, and has taught calligraphy and book arts for more than 30 years. Her work may be found in university and private collections around the US.



Ribbon lettering by Amity Parks

There's Nothing More Embarrassing Than...

This article is for those of you who have taught marbling. Whether you are a very experienced teacher giving a workshop at a high-end institution, a major crafts center, or a university, or you are teaching a small group of people, or even someone one-on-one, all too often something goes wrong! If you have never taught marbling... yet... just wait. While marbling has become more mainstream, it is hard to find someone to teach in many areas. Don't be surprised if you are asked to teach at some point. Even just by a friend. So these tips are really for every marbler possibly, in due time.

So you get a call, from a group, or a school, to teach a workshop or do a demonstration. You agree. You have been marbling long enough to feel sure it will go well. The day comes, you pack your gear and go, often as the sun is coming up, because there will be a lot of preparation before your students arrive. What could go wrong? Plenty!

We all know marbling is finicky even on its best days. Rarely do I have a marbling day where all goes well, and there are no mistakes or bad sheets, and it's all systems go. Maybe marbling was made to humble us, I have to wonder at times. It does a good job.

The main problem, which leads to all sorts of potential problems, is that your workshop environment is not the same as your home work area. It can be more humid, or more dry, or too cold or too hot. The water could very likely be different. And Heaven forbid if they have a water softener you didn't know about.

If you make the size where you will be teaching, I have found using softened water can make the paints (I am referring to water-

colors, which I teach with) fuzzy. I like clear sharp lines, but with softened water, they will be lost in a blur. It's an important question to ask your host before you teach, whether they have a water softener. After a bad experience, where the papers just were not right, I always asked, but later decided it was safer to make up a size concentrate at home and bring it. I also make sure I make up the paints with my own water I am used to. It can be embarrassing if you're caught off-guard. During the softened water episode, I felt all the papers were not up to standard. They were not as good as my sample papers from home. The students were beginners though, thankfully, and happy to get anything at all, and they had a good time.

What if the water is hard well water, perhaps, and you are not used to that? I am used to marbling with hard well water, but boy, was I thrown for a loop the first time I taught in New York City! The water was soft. It was not "softened" with a water softener, but it was naturally soft. So we had sharp lines, but the paints sank and ran off, and I felt pretty embarrassed! I didn't understand the water at first, and made some awful marbled papers. Then I realized, with hard water, you usually need a little more carrageenan to get the right viscosity. I had been using the same measurements I used at home with my hard well water. When I thinned the size down, then it was wonderful water. I felt really embarrassed though!

Another time I taught a workshop, we were aluming as we went, and working damp. But we had been put outdoors, which I will never do again, even just due to gusts of wind blowing papers down. It was a very hot summer day, and it was too



One of the marbled papers in Nicholson's *Manual of The Art of Bookbinding*.

humid for the papers to dry enough to use. Though we did want them damp, there was a fine line between working and not working, and often the paints were sliding off the paper. Again, it was embarrassing, and I looked like a pretty inept teacher, until we sorted things out via trial and error. Lots of error!

To save yourself from such situations, I think it is best to keep your materials as familiar as possible by bringing your own size, unless the host supplies you with a lot of distilled water. You will want some extra water in case you need to thin down the size or paints. If you prefer to alum as you go and work damp, you may want to make up your alum solution at home and bring that too. If you prefer to work with dry papers, you can alum them a few days ahead, and stack and flatten them. They should be kept under 55% humidity though, in order to stay effective, so you may want to make sure you will not be in a damp basement or outdoors on a humid day. I prefer to alum ahead, so we can get more marbling done, but I always have my own water and some alum powder and sponges packed, just in case we need to re-alum.

I always stress to students that when they go home and try to marble, their space, water, and environment will often be very different from the place we had the workshop. They will face these issues we have when we go to teach in a strange place. With marbling, it is all about adapting, all the time. Even in our own environment, the cooler temperatures in the morning make the materials act differently than in the afternoon when the room may be warmer. I have found it pretty futile to try to 100% control the environment, but if you persist and try everything, you will learn to adapt. It is a bit hard, though, if suddenly you are teaching in a strange place, and you are supposed to know everything, and have to start troubleshooting. As I say in the title... there is nothing more embarrassing than... !

Hopefully this will be helpful if you are ever asked to teach somewhere. It is good to teach, it keeps marbling alive, but be prepared to counteract any differences from your home environment. How I wish someone had told me all this when I was first asked to teach. After a few bad experiences, I did learn to control things, and never had such issues again.

IRIS NEVINS is a self-taught marbler, and began marbling in 1978 as a hobby. Much to her surprise, bookbinders started buying her papers, and it became her full time career. She has written four books, plus reprinted a facsimile edition of Nicholson's Manual of The Art of Bookbinding, with 18 marbled samples tipped into the marbling section. Iris is also a Celtic Harper, and Guitarist. She plays professionally, teaches both instruments and builds harps. She also makes Ancient Style and Celtic Jewelry.



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Karen Hanmer (July 14 - 18)

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Springback Binding with Mary Sullivan (Aug 11 - 15)

Sam Feinstein (Nov 10 - 14)

Gold leaf tooling on leather :: Edge gilding with gold leaf

Other workshops for 2025 include marbling, book restoration, new bindings, Japanese structures, and clamshells (regular and rounded spine).

Our 2025 workshops catalog is back from the printers. Contact us to receive a print copy. Call or email for more information.

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Over the Hump and In the Mountains

REVIEW OF THE MOULDED RAISED BANDS AND SLOTTED SPINE PARCHMENT BINDINGS COURSE AT THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF BOOKBINDING

Every year, the American Academy of Bookbinding (AAB) offers courses on fine binding in Telluride, Colorado. What is not widely known is that AAB also offers courses on conservation, such as Renate Mesmer's Paper Conservation class. Other courses are geared towards conservators looking to learn less-common historical structures, such as Anne Hillam's Gothic Binding course, and this course, which focuses on stiff-board parchment bindings. Anne's class explored two tight-back stiff-board parchment binding styles: parchment moulded over large raised bands and the Northern Italian slotted spine binding. The class was designed to equip students to make better conservation decisions by making models of the bindings in order to understand their structure. Conservation strategies were also discussed and demonstrated, including humidification and flattening, loss and tear repairs, appropriate adhesives, toning, and the use of Asian papers for repair.

I signed up for this course because UCLA Library has a significant number of both slotted and moulded-spine stiff board bindings that are in need of some attention. I did get some exposure to these bindings at my graduate program at SUNY Buffalo State, since Anne was the book conservation guest lecturer while I was there, but I wanted more in-depth knowledge of these structures.

This two-week course is a great workshop for conservators looking for a better understanding of stiff board bindings, working with parchment, and making repairs on unbound parchment or parchment bindings. It is so rare that conservators get the opportunity to work with parchment and learn from someone so well-versed in parchment repair as Anne.

We started off reviewing different kinds of parchment binding structures. We then looked at some historical examples of stiff board parchment-bound books. We identified structural features found in the books and compared them with each other. This foundation helped us determine which features we wanted to explore in our own structures.

Because our class had four book conservators and one bookbinder who had a focus in parchment bindings, we were able to jump right into making books. We all had the background to prepare, sew, and round and back our text blocks, and sew primary and secondary endbands. Anne provided quick refresher demos to ensure that we were all on the same page. We had in-depth discussions about how the books should look aesthetically to follow the historical features. Along the way, we

learned how to make cords out of linen thread, laminated book boards out of pasted handmade paper, and paste papers with historic designs and colors using modern acrylic pigments.

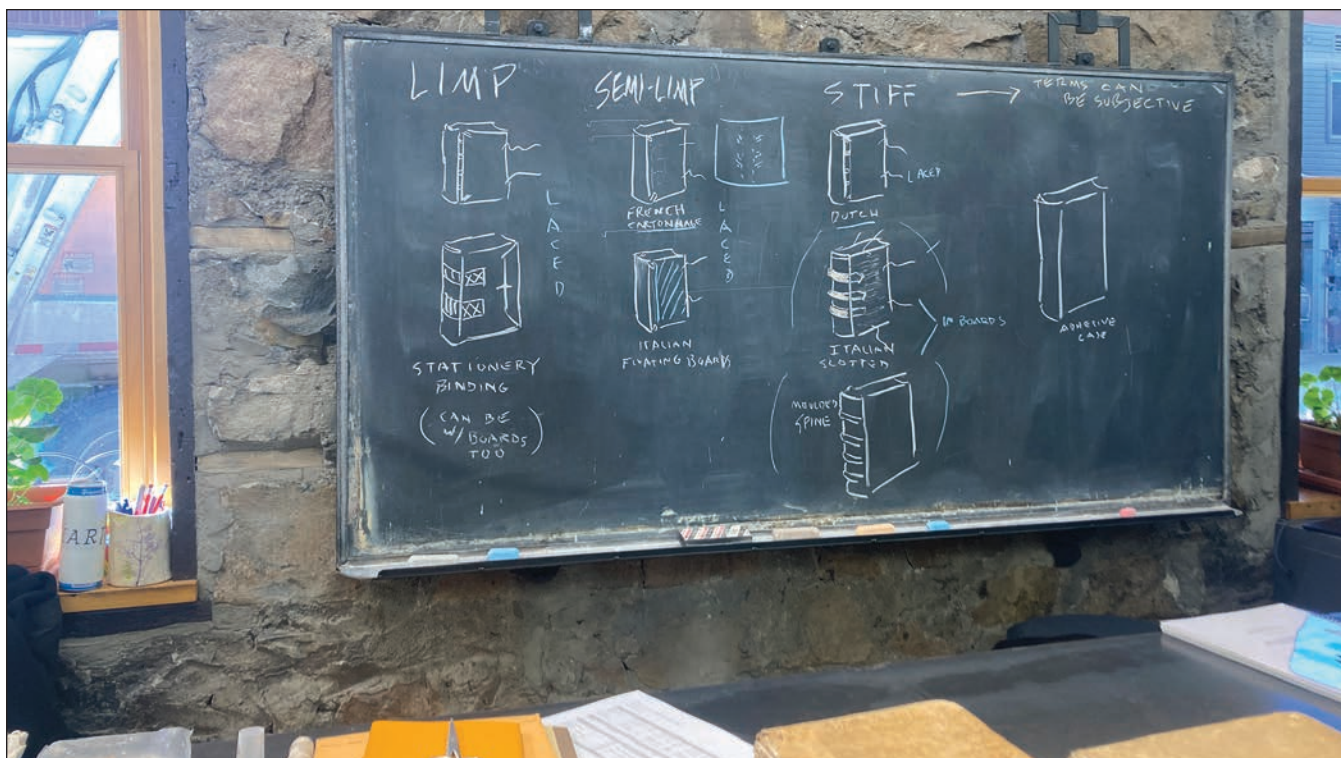
We discussed how thick the covering parchment should be, and how parchment thickness will affect the way the parchment is handled. We considered the impact that packed or abbreviated sewing would have on the look and opening of the book. We had the option to make additional models to explore and



Nicole covering a slotted spine book.



There were many demonstrations and the course was really hands-on.



Some of the different bindings covered in the class.

compare variations we had discussed in our review at the beginning of the workshop.

We even had time to discuss treatment options for repairing both parchment-bound structures and flat parchment using techniques that Anne has successfully used in her own treatments. This included reshaping splayed covers, replicating parchment spine coverings for spine losses, and filling losses in a parchment sheet or on the sides of a book. We practiced making laminates of repair papers using various adhesives to create tone, strength, and flexibility variations in repair materials for losses. We tried different ways to prepare the loss area for infill attachment, and tried various attachment options for these fills.

At the end of the workshop, we discussed our successes and what we would do differently with our structures. Some aspects of parchment bindings can be so specific that repetition is necessary to be successful. We talked about our practice repair outcomes and how aspects of the binding process can be replicated for repairs.

In total, I made five bindings: two variations each of the slotted spine and moulded spine structures, and a cutaway model of the slotted spine. The cutaway model is especially useful as there are so many layers and elements to be recorded. I


also got a refresher on what I learned in graduate school about parchment repair, from both Anne and Abigail Quant, and learned some new techniques and tools to try. It was well worth the trip to Telluride, and even better to reconnect with Anne five years after leaving Buffalo. I connected with other conservators interested in becoming more comfortable with parchment repairs and working with parchment in general. And I got to ride the Telluride ski gondola with its beautiful view of snow-capped mountains.

The American Academy of Bookbinding offers a variety of one- to two-week conservation and repair courses for beginners just getting started in book repair, and for professionals looking to broaden their toolkits. In 2025, Anne Hilliam will teach a course on historical sewing structures and Renate Mesmer will share her “tricks of the trade” for book and paper conservators. For more information about AAB and its courses, or to register for a course, visit their website at bookbindingacademy.org.

NICOLE ALVARADO is the Book & Paper Conservator at the UCLA Library Preservation & Conservation Department.

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May 1	June 2025
July 1	August 2025
September 1	October 2025
November 1	December 2025

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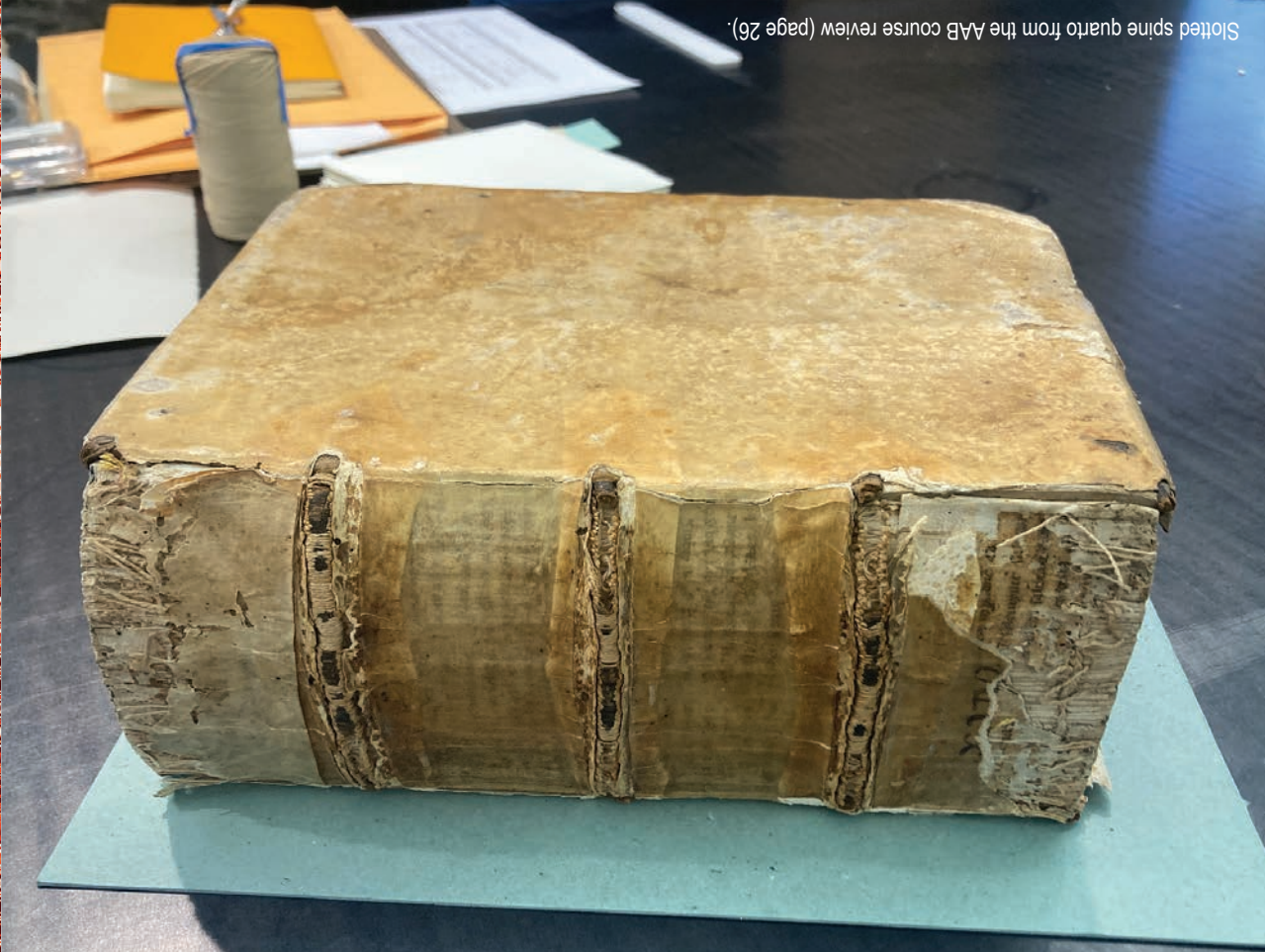
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First Class