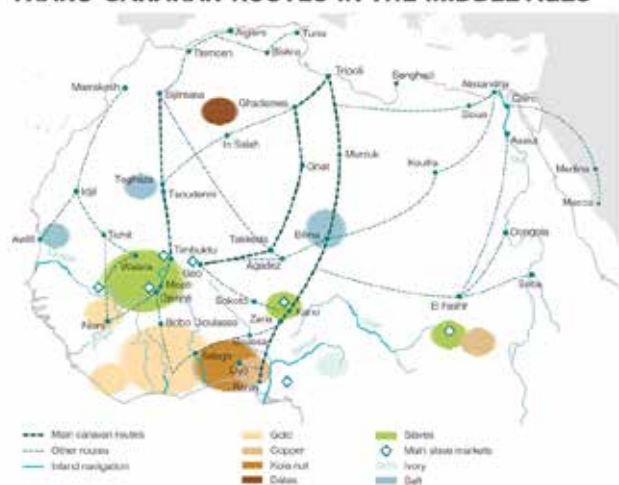


TRANS-SAHARAN ROUTES IN THE MIDDLE AGES



Extract: OECD (2014), An Atlas of the Sahara-Sahel: Geography, Economics, and Security, OECD Publishing, Paris
Source: In cartographie.net
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FEATURE ARTICLE

What is Genuine Morocco?

by Steven M. Siegel

AN INTERVIEW

The American Bookbinders Museum: A Second Look *by Pamela Wood*



AN INTERVIEW Jeff Peachey *by Brea Black*



Photo by Yungjin Shin

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

- Letters from GBW President & Newsletter Editor
- Chapter News, Chapter Reports & Calendar Events
- 'Reproducing Early Marbled Papers' by Iris Nevins
 - 'Advice to a Young Calligrapher' by Beth Lee
 - 'The Canon and the Art' by Jodee Fenton

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The Guild of BookWorkers 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.

www.guildofbookworkers.org

Please visit the website to become a member. Membership is open to all interested persons and includes a print copy of this Newsletter, among many other benefits.

The Guild of BookWorkers Newsletter is published six times annually by the Guild of BookWorkers, Inc. (521 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10175).

GUILD OF BOOK WORKERS • BOARD OF DIRECTORS •

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ROCKY MOUNTAIN	Karen Jones (rockymountain@guildofbookworkers.org) Emiline Twitchell (rockymountain@guildofbookworkers.org)
SOUTHEAST	Sarah Bryant (southeast@guildofbookworkers.org)

Members:

Magic. Need I say more? Books are *magic* to me, and I am so glad I have found this corner of the world!

There has been some changing of the guard, please see Bexx's letter to the membership and the chapter reports. The board needs volunteers, please consider joining—I can attest to what a great group it is, the current board carries the magic.

The feature article was submitted by Steven Siegel. It's a discussion on how the term "Genuine Morocco" has changed over the decades, even the centuries. We also have several submissions from the correspondents. Pam Wood interviewed Anita Engles of the American Bookbinders Museum in San Francisco, noting the increased accessibility and growth of the museum. Brea Black interviewed Jeff Peachey, laying out his work in conservation and how his natural curiosity and work history led him to making better binding tools. Iris Nevins returns to a discussion on paper, but this focus is on getting that "historical" look. And Beth Lee offers 'Advice to a Young Calligrapher', many points of which resonate with this binder.

Lastly, Jodee Fenton submitted a piece on finding your design as a binder through excellence in mechanics (the "canon") and sensitivity to content.

The Photo Essay continues in this issue, see below. The theme of the next Photo Essay is: PHOTO FROM A PRIOR 'STANDARDS'

I clicked the above picture on a door somewhere in Manhattan. I continue the pursuit, on many levels. So here's to *magic* in binding, books, summer. - Lang Ingalls, Editor



PHOTO ESSAY :: ESSENTIAL EQUIPMENT

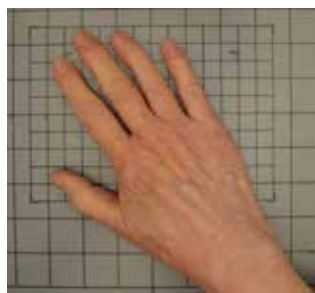
Karen Hanmer



Sophia Bogle



Barbara Adams Hebard



Pamela Wood



theme for next issue :: PHOTO FROM A PRIOR 'STANDARDS' :: submissions to the editor

write from the heart

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on the theme of courage**

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<https://sunsetlodgeworkshops.com>

or 510-427-0297

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Members,

Thank you to everyone who voted in the 2019 elections! We have one new Board member and several returning officers.

Brien Beidler will continue as **Vice President**

Rebecca Smyrl will continue as **Secretary**

Laura Bedford will continue as **Treasurer**

Cheryl Ball will continue as **Membership Standing Committee Chairman**

Jay Tanner will succeed Ann Frellsen as **Library Standing Committee Chairman**

The **Journal Committee Standing Chair** will remain vacant until a volunteer can be found. Until that time, publication of the *Journal* will be put on hold. I am deeply saddened by this development. As a member-run organization, we rely on volunteers to get things done. I have been soliciting volunteers and talking to several people who might be interested in the position, and I hope that by the time you read this, a candidate will have been found. A special election will be held to fill the position, so please keep an eye out for an email on this topic.

I would like to thank our returning officers for their continued service, and I would like to extend a warm welcome to our new **Library Committee Standing Chairman, Jay Tanner**. I would also like to thank our departing officers **Ann Frellsen** (Library), **Cara Schlesinger** (Journal), and **Chris Ameduri** (Journal) for their past service.

The next election will take place in July 2020. *We are currently seeking volunteers for the 2020 nominating and awards committees.* If you are interested in volunteering for either committee (or anything else), please let me know! Committee membership will be approved at the November Board meeting.

Registration for the upcoming 'Standards of Excellence' Seminar in Philadelphia is filling fast! If you haven't already done so, please make sure you register and book your accommodations soon. Early bird registration has ended, but you can still register at the regular rate until September 15. We do expect this year's conference to sell out, so don't delay!

There are several sponsorship opportunities available at this year's Standards Seminar. Hotel conference costs are rising, but the Guild is committed to keep the conference as affordable as possible. Your support will help us to cover our expenses without raising registration or vendor fees. Visit <https://bit.ly/2w6I6B6> or contact MP Bogan (standards@guildofbookworkers.org) for more information.

Please continue to send feedback and ideas my way.

Many thanks, Bexx Caswell-Olson, President, Guild of Book Workers (president@guildofbookworkers.org)

GBW NOTIFICATIONS

NOTICE from Rebecca Smyrl, Secretary:

The Guild of Book Workers **Annual Business Meeting** will take place on Friday, October 25, 2019, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, during the 'Standards of Excellence' Seminar, from 5:15pm-6:15pm in the Regency A room on the 2nd Floor Mezzanine of the Loews Hotel.

NOTICE from Christine Ameduri & Cara Schlesinger, Journal Co-editors:

The 2019 GBW *Journal* is slowly coming together from a group of promising submissions, a number of which are currently under revision. We are hopeful that by the end of the summer, we will have a solid group of articles to be able to publish before the end of the year, though unfortunately not in time for Standards, as we have been able to do in past years.

In the meantime, we are open to queries and submissions for the 2020 issue, and are already in correspondence with several authors who are interested in submitting their work for next year.

We would once again like to thank our inaugural Honorary Publishers' Circle donors:

- Quarto level (\$1000-\$499) : **Bromer Booksellers**
- Octavo level (\$500-999) : **Sussanah Horrom & Fran Durako, The Kelmscott Bookshop, Lux Mentis, Bookseller**
- Duodecimo level (\$100-499) : **Marvin Getman, Impact Events**

To join these groundbreaking donors in supporting the Guild of Book Workers *Journal*, contact Cara Schlesinger at journal@guildofbookworkers.org

~ check the current events websites for updates on happenings in your area ~

CALIFORNIA

CO-CHAIRS	Marlyn Bonaventure & Rebecca Chamlee	CURRENT EVENTS	www.gbwcalforniachapter.wordpress.com
EXHIBITION - San Francisco Center for the Book	<i>through August 31</i>	'Calligraphies in Conversation: an Exhibition of Multicultural Calligraphy'	
EXHIBITION - San Francisco Center for the Book	<i>September 6 - October 6</i>	'Drop Dead Gorgeous: Fine bindings of <i>La Prose</i> '	
CHAPTER EXHIBITION - Long Beach Museum of Art	<i>October 4 - January 5</i>	'The Artful Book'	
WORKSHOPS - BookArtsLA, Los Angeles	<i>ongoing</i>	www.bookartsla.org	

DELAWARE VALLEY

CHAIR	Jennifer Rosner	CURRENT EVENTS	www.dvc-gbw.org
EXHIBITION - UPenn Kislak Center	<i>August 26 - December 7</i>	'The Bibliophile as Bookbinder: the Angling Bindings of S.A. Neff, Jr.'	
EXHIBITION OPENING - UPenn Kislak Center	<i>September 14</i>	'The Bibliophile as Bookbinder: the Angling Bindings of S.A. Neff, Jr.'	
EXHIBITION - University of the Arts	<i>through October 30</i>	'FORMATION' (see exhibitions on page 7)	

LONE STAR

CHAIR	Tish Brewer	CURRENT EVENTS	www.gbwlonestarchapter.wordpress.com
ONLINE GALLERY	<i>currently</i>	Visit chapter website to view the Valentines Print Exchange!	

MIDWEST

CHAIR	Ellen Wrede	CURRENT EVENTS	www.midwestgbw.wordpress.com
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NEW ENGLAND

CHAIR	Erin Fletcher	CURRENT EVENTS	www.negbw.wordpress.com
ONLINE GALLERY	<i>currently</i>	Visit chapter website to view the Print & Paper Exchange!	
CHAPTER MEETING	<i>August 10</i>	1 Cottage Street, Easthampton — for the annual meeting.	
EXHIBITION - Bromer Gallery, Boston	<i>through August 16</i>	'Barry Moser: The Storied Artist' (see exhibitions on page 7)	

NEW YORK

CHAIR	Celine Lombardi	CURRENT EVENTS	www.gbwny.wordpress.com
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NORTHWEST

CHAIR	Sarah Mottaghinejad	CURRENT EVENTS	www.gbwnw.blogspot.com
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POTOMAC

CHAIR	Beth Curren	CURRENT EVENTS	www.gbwpotomacchapter.wordpress.com
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ROCKY MOUNTAIN

CO-CHAIRS	Karen Jones & Emiline Twitchell	CURRENT EVENTS	www.rmcbgw.blogspot.com
EXHIBITION - Denver, Regis University	<i>through August 20</i>	'The Art of the Fold' (see exhibitions on page 7)	
WORKSHOPS - American Academy of Bookbinding, Telluride	<i>ongoing</i>	www.bookbindingacademy.org	
WORKSHOPS - Book Arts Program, Salt Lake City	<i>ongoing</i>	www.bookartsprogram.org	
WORKSHOPS - Book Arts League, Boulder	<i>ongoing</i>	www.bookartsleague.org	
WORKSHOPS - with Alicia Bailey, Denver	<i>ongoing</i>	http://bit.ly/aliciabaileyworkshops	
WORKSHOPS - Colorado Calligraphers, Denver	<i>ongoing</i>	www.coloradocalligraphers.com	

SOUTHEAST

CHAIR	Sarah Bryant	CURRENT EVENTS	www.SEGBWnews.blogspot.com
ONLINE MEMBERS SHOWCASE	<i>currently</i>	Visit chapter website!	
EXHIBITION - Frost Art Museum, Miami	<i>through August 25</i>	'Spheres of Meaning' (see exhibitions on page 7)	

CHAPTER REPORTS

NORTHWEST :: Chair Elsi Vassdal Ellis reports

The Northwest Chapter sponsored the Focus on Book Arts welcome bag for the 5-day conference promoting both the Guild of Bookworkers and the Northwest Chapter.

Elsi Vassdal Ellis will be exhibiting her most recent book, *A Selection of Saints for those Seeking Guidance & Comfort during this Chaotic Time in the United States & the White House* in the upcoming international juried book arts exhibition "All Stitched Up", September 3 to December 11, held at the Collins Memorial Library University of Puget Sound, in Tacoma.

Member **Sophia Bogle** has been busy launching her book that was reviewed in the last newsletter! She was one of four speakers at Powell's City of Books in Portland, speaking on 'Building a Book Collection' and specifically on archival preservation treatments. Powell's is now carrying my book, *Book Restoration Unveiled*, in their Rare Book Room and already ordered more copies! She was also featured on Rare Book Cafe last Saturday.



This is a Facebook Live "tv" show. And she was featured on a blog called Literary Ashland: (literaryashland.org/). Sophia also hosted Bookbinder Barbie, who is touring the states this summer, meeting all sorts of book workers. Here, Barbie is teaching my own small bookbinding assistant, Violet, how to sew a book!

NEW ENGLAND :: Chair Erin Fletcher reports

The NEGBW Annual Meeting will be hosted by the lovely folks at One Cottage Street in Easthampton, on Saturday, August 10. Join us Saturday afternoon for the annual meeting, studio tours, demonstrations, and a tag sale with Peter Geraty, Sarah Pringle, Sarah Creighton, Carol Blinn, and more. Light refreshments will be served during the meeting.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN :: Outgoing Co-chair Karen Jones reports

Welcome to the new chapter co-chair for Colorado! **Nicole Cotton** is a relatively new member from Denver with an interest in fore-edge painting. **Emiline Twitchell** is staying on as the co-chair for Utah. **Karen Jones** is moving into the Treasurer role. **Martha Rome** continues as Workshop Coordinator for Colorado. There are two positions open: Communications Director and Workshop Coordinator for Utah; please let the board know if you can help!

About twenty Denver chapter members and fans of the book arts met at Regis University for a close-up view of the exhibit 'The Art of the Fold'. Curated by Abecedarian Artists' Books director Alicia Bailey, we enjoyed an open case reception.



From left: David Ashley, Pam Leutz, Nicole Cotton, Alicia Bailey, Christine Bigelow



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2019 WORKSHOPS

Glenview, IL

SEPT 14-15 Variations on the Sewn Boards and Drum Leaf Bindings

SEPT 18-22 Introduction to Finishing with Gold Leaf with guest instructor Samuel Feinstein

OCT 5-6 Basic Leather Working for Bookbinding Paring, sharpening, covering including corners and head caps

Los Angeles, CA (at BookArtsLA)

NOV 2 Limp Vellum: Kelmscott Press

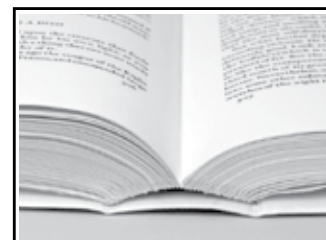
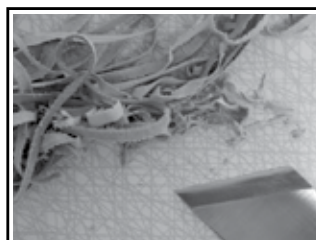
NOV 3 Sewn Boards and Drum Leaf Bindings

NOV 9-10 The Split Board Binding

The 2020 schedule will be set in late 2019.

Please contact me with input on topics and dates.

FULL DESCRIPTIONS & REGISTRATION INFORMATION AT
WWW.KARENHANMER.COM



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CALL FOR ENTRY

(retro)(intro)spectionSUBMISSION DEADLINE: *September 1, 2019*EXHIBITION DATES: *February 7 - April 19, 2020*

The San Francisco Center for the Book invites artists to interpret the past, consider the future, and reflect upon where we are going. Details on: sfcb.org/retrointrospection

EXHIBITIONS

'FORMATION'

PHILADELPHIA, PA

August 1 - October 30

The final stop in GBW's traveling exhibition, featuring works by guild members. Opening reception to coincide with the 'Standards' Seminar, Thursday, October 24, from 6:00 to 8:00. At the Hamilton/Aaronson Gallery at the University of the Arts. guildofbookworkers.org

'Barry Moser: The Storied Artist'

BOSTON, MA

through August 16

Barry Moser's first solo show in several decades will transform Bromer Gallery into a reverie of the literary past made present, a captivating atmosphere of original artwork and profound illustrations for familiar tales. bromer.com

'The Art of the Fold'

DENVER, CO

through August 20

This exhibition is curated by Abecedarian Artists' Books director Alicia Bailey. The exhibit features works by book artists throughout the States, and celebrates the publication of Hedi Kyle and Ulla Warchol's book *The Art of the Fold*. On view at the Dayton Library, Regis University, Denver. libguides.regis.edu/exhibits

'Spheres of Meaning'

MIAMI, FL

through August 25

A group exhibition at the Frost Art Museum featuring the work of artists who have lived in Miami, and focusing on the book as a work of art, including GBW member Claire Jeanine Satin. One

of her bookworks has been acquired by the museum into their permanent collection! satinartworks.com

'Calligraphies in Conversation: An Exhibition of Multicultural Calligraphy'

SAN FRANCISCO, CA

through August 31

This exhibition continues, bringing diverse communities of the Bay Area together to share their culture and stories through the art of writing and calligraphy. Held at the San Francisco Center for the Book. sfcb.org

'The Bibliophile as Bookbinder: the Angling Bindings of S.A. Neff, Jr.'

PHILADELPHIA, PA

August 26 - December 20

This exhibition is about one man's passion for the natural world and the world of books. *Special Note:* This exhibition can be seen on Tour #2 at the 'Standards' Seminar in Philadelphia! library.upenn.edu

'Drop Dead Gorgeous:**Fine Bindings of *La Prose du Transsibérien* Re-creation'**

SAN FRANCISCO, CA

September 6 - October 6*

*Opening Reception: September 6, 6:00-8:00PM

This exhibition features many fine bindings of Kitty Maryatt's (Two Hands Press) years-long recreation of the famous Delaunay effort of 1913, faithfully incorporating techniques and methods that were used in the original. Her version is included in the show. Upcoming at the San Francisco Center for the Book. sfcb.org

SPECIAL CLASS & EVENT

'In Miniature: The Flowing Spine & Magnetic Pocket Portfolio'

CINCINNATI, OH

August 5, 6 & 7

Join renowned instructor Gabrielle Fox for a 3-day workshop before the Miniature Book Society conclave in Bloomington, Indiana. Contact Gabrielle to reserve a place, as class size is limited (fox4book@gmail.com or 513 304-5758).

Miniature Book Society - Conclave XXXVII

BLOOMINGTON, IN

August 9 - 12

The theme of the Conclave is 'Tiny Matters: Creative Exploration of the Miniature Arts & Book History'. The Lilly Library (Indiana University) is a world-class rare book library and now contains over 16,000 miniature books. It is the home of the Elizabeth Ball Collection, as well as the collection of MBS past member Ruth Adomeit. The Adomeit Collection is considered to be one of the largest collections of miniature books in the world. mbs.org

STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE SEMINAR

GBW Annual**'Standards of Excellence' Seminar**

PHILADELPHIA, PA

October 24 - 26

Join us in October!

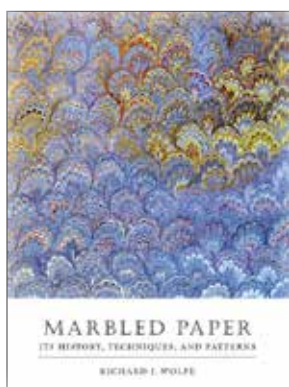
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What is Genuine Morocco?



INTRODUCTION

Over the years, the term *Genuine Morocco* has been both confused and confusing! But there has been no broad review nor in-depth study of the term in modern times, until now.

Research shows that some of the bookbinding leathers used by our 18th century ancestors were vegetable tanned goatskins with archival properties, tanned and dispatched from Morocco. Archival *Genuine Morocco* was favored by book conservators and restoration experts for its quality, longevity and archival properties. Produced from the 12th century through the 18th century, the term *Genuine Morocco* in the 19th century somehow changed in meaning to a leather that lasted only a few decades. It was no longer archival, as its longevity decreased to less than 50 years. This article elaborates on *Genuine Morocco* and how the term has transitioned over time.

HISTORICALLY, *GENUINE MOROCCO* GOAT USED FOR BOOKBINDING WAS ARCHIVAL

From medieval times until the 19th century, predominantly cowhides, sheepskins and goatskins were traded by native merchants. The skins were transported from what is now Nigeria, east to the Sudan and north to the Mediterranean via the trans-Saharan caravan routes, through places such as Timbuktu. Raw skins were brought to tanneries in places like the city of Fez in Morocco. Tanneries in Morocco produced the finest bookbinding goatskins, which have lasted for hundreds of years and are still exquisitely beautiful.

Genuine Morocco had a heavy natural grain pattern that was not mechanically assisted. In particular, the leather was not embossed. The grain pattern could “loosely” be said to have circular rather than linear accentuation of the

natural goat grain produced in the tanning process. No other grain modifications were made post tanning. The naturally produced grain was not only attractive and popular in Europe, but *Genuine Morocco* was one of the most reliably archival of all vegetable tanned leathers.

ORIGINALLY, *GENUINE MOROCCO* WAS DISCHARGED FROM A PORT IN MOROCCO

One of the common naming conventions of leather is to use the port of discharge as opposed to the point of origin. Some of the goatskins used were those from the Sokoto region in Hausa tribe land near the city of Kano, the hub of the trans-Saharan trade routes. Before the 19th century, *Genuine Morocco* was leather exported from Morocco to places in Europe like Spain and Italy. Europeans coined the term *Genuine Morocco* to mean all leather that came from Morocco. (See chart on newsletter cover, in color.)

The city of Fez in Morocco becomes a central location in the research as to the meaning of archival *Genuine Morocco*. Present day Fez has one of the oldest tanneries in Morocco. Morocco was known in the 19th century and before, for its high-quality leather products.

Given the intellectual prominence of the great Moroccan city of Fez, it is only natural that it would have had regular exchanges, since at least the sixteenth century, with Timbuktu, western Africa's most celebrated center of Muslim scholarship. (Ghislane 147)

In the late eighteenth century, merchants occasionally organized caravans from Fez to join the akabars, or large trans-Saharan caravans, that congregated in Tafilalt and in the Wad Nun before heading to Timbuktu. (Hunwick 30)

Prior to the establishment of other trade routes, the only pathway to Europe for the exchange of goods such as skins, tanned leather, sugar, cotton, paper, salt and other merchandise was through Morocco.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, the greater part of the caravan traffic between Barbary and the Western Sudan was still concentrated on the three great trade routes which must be numbered among the oldest highways in the world: the Taghaza-Timbuktu road in the west, the Ghadames-Air road to Hausa in the center, and in the east the Fezzan-Kawar road to Bornu. (Bovill 233)

Ghislane talks about the trade in paper, the calligraphic art of copying Islamic manuscripts, and the new industry of book binderies.

From an early period, skilled calligraphers and professional transcribers copied manuscripts manually. In Timbuktu there was a veritable manuscript industry by the sixteenth century where copyists, proofreaders, and editors were well known for their skills. Western African tanned leather was exchanged in Europe by the 1100s and possibly since earlier times when Cordova reputedly produced the finest book binding skins...by at least the sixteenth century, the cities of Sokoto and Kano specialized in crafting the best quality tanned leather, namely goatskin, but also sheepskin. (Ghislane 101)

OVER TIME, THE TERM *GENUINE MOROCCO* SIGNIFICANTLY CHANGED IN MEANING

Over the years, the meaning of the term *Genuine Morocco* has morphed. By 1808, the term *Genuine Morocco* no longer indicated the port of export, and today it is used to refer to any leather—be it goat, cow, split calf, wool sheep, hair sheep, or a finished pig split—if it has a certain heavy grain which is artificially embossed on its surface.

In trying to understand the conundrum around the term *Genuine Morocco*, the trans-Saharan trade through Morocco in the late 19th century must be considered. During that period, there was a renewed desire in Europe for tanned leather and for Western African cloth. Meanwhile, beginning in the 1870s, there was a Western African demand for horses, firearms, manuscripts and printed books, and for an influx of other new merchandise imported into northern Africa by Europeans.

ARCHIVAL *GENUINE MOROCCO* WAS NOT BOARDED BUT HAD A NATURALLY PRODUCED GRAIN

In the book *Merchant's and Tradesman's Pocket Dictionary, by a London Merchant, Assisted by Several Experienced Tradesmen*, a description of the tanning process for archival *Genuine Morocco* is recounted.

The process involves dehairing with the 'old' methods prior to 1850, but the grain is natural, not 'assisted' by boarding or any other means. (Crosby 339)

A typical natural process for dehairing a skin is called “sweating.” Wet goat skins are held in a warm room with high humidity; when the hair is loose, it is removed mechanically by immersing the skins in a weak solution of lime for an extended period.

According to the *Dictionary of Terms Used in the Hides, Skins and Leather Trade*, boarded leather is:

Leather that has been tanned, finished with a firm surface, then creased or wrinkled by being rolled under a curved cork-covered board. Creases generally run at right angles to each other, giving a pleasing appearance and forming little squares sometimes called 'boxes'. Variations of the design creased in this manner are Scotch Grain, Box Calf, etc. Leather was originally 'boarded' to hide imperfections in a coarse grain but, in recent years, styles have changed, and a great deal of perfect leather is boarded. The boarded effect is often imitated by embossing. (U.S. Department of Agriculture 7)

THE GROWING MARKET FOR *GENUINE MOROCCO* LEATHER RESULTED IN CHEAP IMITATIONS

It is generally agreed that true archival *Genuine*

Morocco leather has a unique grain pattern which was its primary desirability. But when demand for leather grew substantially in the early 1800s, tanners moved away from the naturally produced grain to a leather with new tanning “science” that could be produced far more economically.

According to Reed, by the early 19th century *Genuine Morocco* could be made from either goat or hair sheep.

Genuine “Morocco” leather, long used as a strong and flexible bookbinding material, is made from goatskin, although some is undoubtedly made from hair sheep. (43)

This is a definition not unlike that which appears in *Dictionary of Arts, Manufactures, and Mines*, the only difference being that Reed's book does not speak of the artificial graining described by Ure.

The dyed skins are grained by being strongly rubbed with a ball of box wood, finely grooved on its surface. (Ure 62)

The grain patterns of hair sheep, wool sheep, and goatskin were so different that the only method of obtaining leather with the same grain pattern from the different animals, was to “assist” the grain.

In the early 19th century, to supply the demand for *Genuine Morocco* leather at a lower price, European tanners adopted the technique described above by Ure. Animal skins could be from any source and the unique grain pattern was artificially produced.

By the mid-19th century, because of production method changes, the non-archival version of *Genuine Morocco* was very similar to the distinct heavy grain pattern of true Archival *Genuine Morocco* leather. What is known today as the grain pattern of *Genuine Morocco* leather may be very similar to archival *Genuine Morocco* leather that was produced before the 19th century, but the leather is tanned with non-archival production techniques.

Why did *Genuine Morocco* change and why is archival *Genuine Morocco* leather produced before the 1800s no longer available? History suggests a possible answer.

Prior to the presence of the British in places like the Sahara region (which includes present day Niger, Chad and Northern Nigeria), the main routes for trade north of the Sahara to Morocco were known as the trans-Saharan trade routes. Virtually every book or article researched, such as Bovill's, Ghislane's and Adebayo's regarding trans-Saharan trade, confirms the routes, the activities of traders, and the commodities traded. In the latter half of the 19th century, the British invaded the trade networks.

The main channel of exchange throughout the nineteenth century was the trans-Saharan trade, but it came under attack in the second half of the century as part of the general British anti-slavery and imperialistic designs in the Sahara. (Adebayo 277)

As far as the northern Nigerian component of the caravan trade was concerned, the most severe blow came from the commercial and

continued on page 10



quasi-imperial activities of the United African Company which was chartered in 1886 as the Royal Niger Company. (Boahen 123)

Activities outlined in the 1886 charter of the Royal Niger Company altered the leather trade routes. A direct route from Nigeria to the United Kingdom supplanted the routes through Morocco. With this change came the introduction of a new grain pattern for bookbinders. No longer were goatskins tanned and exported from Morocco. The skins were now tanned in present day Sokoto, Nigeria, in Hausa tribe land. Sokoto leather, too, has a heavy grain pattern produced during the tanning process without any grain assistance. The tanning process accented the linear characteristics of the grain from the Red Sokoto goat. Prior to the Royal Niger Company charter, untanned Red Sokoto goatskins made their way to the tanners in Morocco and to other countries abroad.



Typical heavy grain pattern of leather tanned in Sokoto and exported to UK after approximately 1880

The 1886 Royal Niger Company charter granted the right to purchase, or otherwise, acquire, open, and work mines, forests, quarries, fisheries, and factories.

Armed with this powerful document, the Company extended its monopolistic commerce into the hinterland, signed treaties with the traditional rulers and emirs of Northern Nigeria, and sought to change the direction of trade in Hausa land from the north to the south. (Cook 89)

The evolution of the new company and change in direction of trade from Hausa tribe land in Nigeria in the south to Tripoli in the north, brought a complete end to the distinct grain pattern of true archival *Genuine Morocco* known prior to the 1800s.

TRUE *GENUINE MOROCCO* WAS ARCHIVAL BECAUSE ITS PRODUCTION DID NOT INVOLVE HARSH CHEMICALS

We know from the observations at many significant libraries in Europe as early as the turn of the 20th century, that books bound in true archival *Genuine Morocco* leather prior to the 19th century were in the best condition. Leathers with artificially grained or smooth plated skins were generally in very poor condition.

A book-binding leather should not be artificially grained...on old leathers that had lasted best no attempt had been made to remove the tan-pit marks, and modern leathers with embossed or plated grain were generally in a very bad condition...the bookbinder must share, in no small measure, with the leather manufacturer and librarian, the blame for the premature decay of leather bindings. (Cobham 25)

When sulfuric acid is introduced in the pickling stage

of tanning, it is never fully removed. It is strongly suggested not to use sulfuric acid in any of the tanning processes.

Haines notes, in *Deterioration in Leather Bookbindings-Our Present State of Knowledge*, the introduction of sodium sulfide and the inorganic acids used in the processes of dehairing and tanning leather are detrimental to the longevity of the leather. These were not evident until after circa 1850.

By 1935, the evidence obtained from the examination of the breakdown products extracted from rotted leathers indicated that the mechanism of leather rot was an oxidative process accelerated by acidity. (Haines 60)

After 1850 sodium sulphide became available and its rapid destructive effect on hair has allowed the liming process today to be shortened to a few hours. (Haines 64)

From these observations, it is assumed that the difference in archival quality must be in the treatment and/or source of the skins. By the 1850s leather was made from a variety of animals including sheep. The skins were tanned in sumac, but the grain was artificially produced. Bookbindings produced using these artificially grained leathers universally did not withstand the test of time.

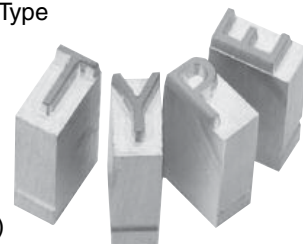
ARCHIVAL *GENUINE MOROCCO* WAS TANNED IN A CENTURIES-OLD PROCESS

Sokoto red goatskins, with the occasional adulteration of inferior white Kano goatskins, have been tanned for

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centuries in pits, not unlike the process used in making the archival *Genuine Morocco*. The tanning agent is Bagaruwa, *Acacia Arabica*, which comes from a native tree peculiar to the Sokoto area. Use of Bagaruwa as the tanning agent, not sumac, naturally produces the desirable heavy leather grain of *Genuine Sokoto* goat, with no need for embossing.

Dr. Furlong has given the following description of the native tanning industry in Northern Nigeria. All tanneries are small and within the village compound. The vessels used are pits or large jars in the courtyard of the house. Usually goat and sheepskins are the raw material, together with some reptile skins, all of which are collected in the immediate neighborhood. Wet-work consists of dipping the skins into a solution made by leaching the ash of the Mariko Tree (Anogeissus Leivcarpa). This ash contains a high percentage of lime. The skins are left in this solution for three days and are then dehaired over a beam. They are then bated with pigeon manure, fleshed, washed and put into tan. The tan liquor is prepared from the crushed pods of the Bagaruwa (Acacia arabica), including the seed. Bagaruwa is an excellent tanning material for the purpose. The native tanners move the hides in tan regularly and have a good knowledge of the principles of tanning, in spite of the rudimentary methods of weighing and measuring. After tanning, the leather is washed, oiled with groundnut oil and dried over a line. It is then softened by pulling it between the feet and a flat stone. Further softening of the leather is achieved by beating bundles of skins on flat stones. (Freudenberger 58)

Research demonstrates that the archival *Genuine Morocco* leather from the 18th century was goat or sheep

skin tanned with vegetable tanning techniques, produced in and exported from Morocco. Changes in production techniques led to leather with a shelf life of decades rather than centuries, and that spelled the demise of true Archival *Genuine Morocco* Leather.

Hopefully this article helps in further shaping the narrative, understanding, and definition of *Genuine Morocco* leather. This author believes that the term in current use, "Genuine Morocco," only bears a slight resemblance to the name of the gorgeous archival bookbinding leather from another time.

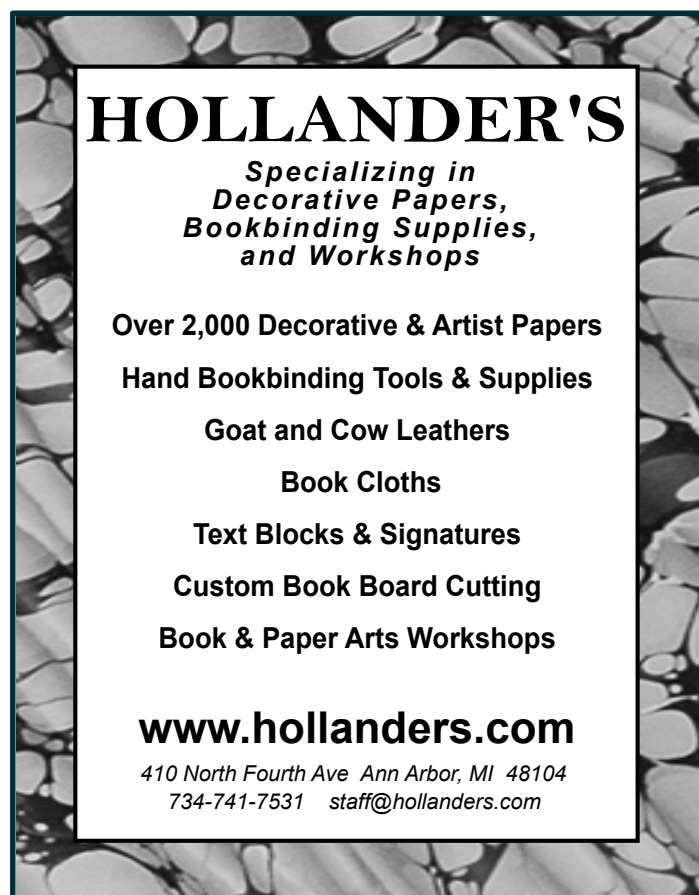
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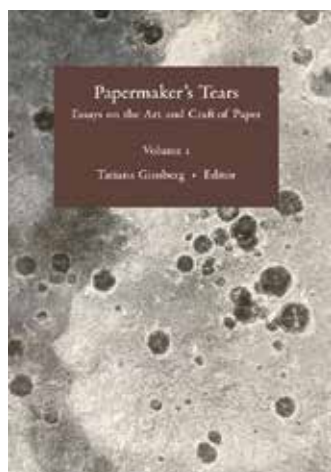
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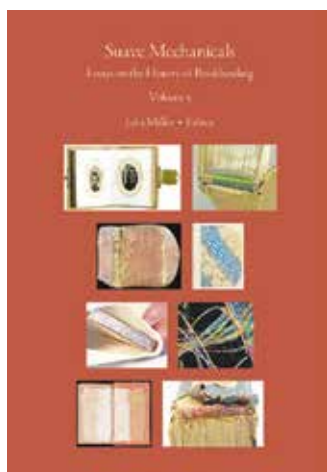
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The American Bookbinders Museum : A Second Look

Last October I took a trip to San Francisco with the intention of returning to the American Bookbinders Museum (ABM). The last time I had seen the museum was in 2010, part of a tour during Standards. For me, museums can't be visited once. Even with years and distance separating visits, returning to a museum makes every time a first time. Anita Engles is the current ABM Executive Director. I interviewed her, and below she expands on what can now be experienced at the museum. I think I will visit again soon! Enjoy, the interview.



What brought you to the American Bookbinding Museum?

I was involved with the museum in a non-professional capacity. When their search for a new Executive Director failed to find a good match, I offered to step in—the rest is history.

Did you know of the museum prior to directorship?

I did. I was introduced to ABM in 2015, took the tour and met all the people that worked here.

Have you always been involved with Bay area non-profits?

No, I started my career in technology. I have a lot of business experience. I have run my own businesses and have an MBA, so the business side was an easy fit. I had to learn a lot about bookbinding, but it seems like second nature now.

What is special about ABM?

Well, being the only bookbinders museum in North America makes us unique. We are small but nimble. We try to host at least four exhibits each year to highlight books and bookbinding. We reserve at least one exhibit for hand crafted books, like 'Long Live the Book!' Later this year we will host a sort of "master and apprentice" exhibit titled 'Book Smart—Learning to Break the Rules'. In 2020, we will host the West Coast exhibit of the Open Set Competition. At any given time, you can visit the museum to learn the history of bookbinding and concurrently see some sort of contemporary bookbinding.

The walking tour is wonderful—how did it happen, any back story?

When the museum first opened, the only way to see the collection was by docent-led tour. To accommodate visitors that did not come at tour time we developed a self-guided tour, called the "Signature Tour"—a play on words that any bookbinder gets immediately, and our visitors understand by the time they leave. It has been a big hit and we no longer have visitors leave without seeing the collection and learning the fascinating history of bookbinding.

Will there still be docent tours? What does it take to be a docent?

Yes, we still offer two docent-led tours every day, at 11am and 2pm; the tour takes about an hour and a half. We just recently reset the floor to tell a more focused and linear story, and that has been working well. If you visited a long time ago it might be time to come back to take the new tour! Right now only ABM staff are docents. It takes a fair amount of time to learn the tour. As of right now we have not had volunteers that have the time or desire to invest the time it takes to lead a tour, but we would be very open to anyone that is interested, as long as they make some sort of commitment to give tours for an agreed upon period of time.

What is the best part of your job?

The best part has been all the wonderful, interesting, talented people I have met. I love the creative aspect of planning exhibitions and improving tours and the exhibit

experience.

What is special to you about ABM?

It is a unique place with a unique story to tell. The comment we most often hear from our visitors is "I had no idea bookbinding was so interesting!", and it is. I like to say you will never look at a book the same way again. I like that we keep the history of it alive while also offering a venue for today's book artists to show the public that current bookbinding is vibrant and engaging. I love the space and layout. After the previous space, it is approaching world class.

Any story on the move that you would like to share with the readers?

I wasn't actually involved with the museum when that happened. There are old blog posts on our website if anyone is interested.

What is something that gives you the greatest joy about ABM?

My staff. I have two very talented, hard-working, smart individuals that work with me, and we have been really fortunate to attract really dedicated volunteers and interns.

What makes the new set up better than the old arrangement of equipment?

It makes it easier for us to tell the story in a cohesive narrative. It also lets us focus on specific historical aspects of bookbinding history. It is a work in progress that is far from finished. We are always trying to improve the way that we display our permanent collection, tell our story and put more of our collection out for the public to see.

Is there anything else you would like to share?

The American Bookbinders Museum tells the story of the book—specifically its physical construction. We focus on bookbinding from the 16th through the 19th centuries. Our tour is divided into two parts: Hand Bookbinding (1600-1900) and The Impact of the Industrial Revolution (1800 - early 1900), including integrated Publishers and Stationers (Trade Binders).



continued on page 15

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Hand bookbinding reached a high-level of development by the 1600s. It remained virtually unchanged until the 19th century, as automation replaced all steps in the process over time. Our tour walks a visitor through hand bookbinding (circa 1600) from folding to finishing; we talk about bookbinding in the early American colonies and how its practice differed from its European origins. Visitors are then transported into the 19th century world of publishers and the automation they used to bind books for the mass market. Publishers changed how books were bound with the creation of the case binding and by splitting the process into two work streams, one to create the text block and the other to make the case; the two parts are glued together and you have a book. We talk about the machines on display that were invented to replace hand-binding processes one by one, until the entire process became automated by the end of the 19th century.

We have just recently added a photographic exhibit to the main exhibit hall that is now part of any tour 'De Natura Libris'. This collection was donated by the artist Álvaro Alejandro López de la Peña. It will be on display for the next year.

In addition to the permanent exhibit hall, ABM has a small gallery where we host rotating exhibitions. Last year we had 'The Joy of Cookbooks', a retrospectives of cookbooks and 'Of Wonders Wild and New | Picture Books, the Gateway to the Imagination', featuring children's books,

two hand bookbinding shows (MUSBU and the HBC 46th Annual Members Show), the fantastic show 'Long Live the Book!' that featured the state of bookbinding today from publishers to book artists and everything in between. The current exhibition is 'Queer Voices: Pamphlets and Periodicals Forging Communities', featuring LGBTQ+ literature of the 20th century. Admission to these small exhibits is always free, and all past exhibits can be found on our website's Exhibits page.

A lesser known aspect of the museum is our special collection of books, periodicals and ephemera about bookbinding. All of the collection that has been cataloged can be found and searched on our website. Visitors can request access to these resources for use onsite. We continue to add titles as they are cataloged, and add more descriptive information about the collection to aid in searches. The jewel in the crown is the Roberts collection of approximately 500 volumes of decorated publishers' bindings spanning the century 1830 to 1930. A small sample of these beautiful bindings are on display in the museum on a rotating basis.

The museum has a small shop that carries branded ABM souvenirs like t-shirts, journals and a DIY bookbinding kit. We also carry a small collection of books about bookbinding and bookish fiction. We like to support local book artists and bookbinders by carrying their work in the shop; we represent two binders, a marbler, graphic artists who produce cards and postcards with book themes, and bookish jewelry.

The museum is open Tuesday through Saturday from 10am to 4pm. Our full-time staff of three are there to help, with the assistance of a handful of dedicated volunteers and interns. If you have not been to ABM in the last couple of years, it is time to give us another look. Check out our website (www.bookbindersmuseum.org) and join our mailing list to get the latest news on what's happening at ABM, or better yet, become a guild member to support ABM.



"The most technologically efficient machine that man has ever invented is the book." –Northrop Frye

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Jeff Peachey : An Interview

*Brea Black recently interviewed Jeff Peachey,
Book Conservator & Tool Maker.*

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How did you get started in book conservation and what made you decide to pursue it as a career?

Way back in the 1980s at Goshen College in Northern Indiana, my senior project was writing, laying out, typesetting, and making half-tone illustrations for a book of my own poetry. It got me thinking about the idea of a book as a method of distributing content. At the same time, I was working in a bicycle repair shop, and I loved the hands-on, mechanical thinking. My first job in New York City was working in a bicycle shop, though I rapidly got tired of the binary nature of only twisting wrenches. I got a job working as a clerk at Gotham Book Mart. Then these two aspects came together, and the poetry seemed to gradually vanish.

At Gotham, I really became interested in antiquarian books, and some minor repairs we did to the books in the store. I found a cheap copy of Edith Diehl's *Bookbinding: Its Background and Technique*, bought a few bookbinding tools, made a standing press out of a scaffold jack and some 2x4s, and began trying to teach myself bookbinding. This is often the way I approach learning anything: get the tools and try to learn what they can teach me.

I quickly became obsessed with bookbinding, and would practice by making blank books for several hours each morning before I went into work, and sold them on the streets in SoHo to be able to purchase more materials. Since they were books, I could sell them without a license, which pissed off the people selling jewelry that needed one! Then I started taking a few classes at the Center for Book Arts, notably with Tim Ely and a leather covering class with James Brockman.

After some part-time jobs working as a technician, primarily at Teachers College, I landed a full-time job at Columbia University, initially working as a general collections technician. My job was to do five re-cases a day. It was great training for my hand skills, and I quickly realized how little I actually knew about bookbinding.

I was very lucky to land at Columbia at that time. Nicholas Pickwoad was teaching the book conservation section for the MLIS Conservation Certificate, and Rare Book School was there. There were interesting public lectures all the time, and lots of big names coming through

the lab, like Christopher Clarkson. I had no idea it was one of the best places to be at that time; I thought all institutions were like this.

In the early 1990s, the RBS and the Library School were sold off, and Fred Bearman arrived as the Head of Conservation in the lab. I was soon promoted to the position of a special collections technician, working closely with and learning a great deal from Fred. It was kind of an apprenticeship in the broad sense—that craft gets transmitted by close contact with skilled practitioners. In the four years I spent with Fred, I became confident in my skills, especially treatment decision making, which takes a long time to learn. Essentially, I was trained at the bench, which I feel is a great way to learn, since you become exposed to the most common problems and treatments in a large research institution. Now when I look back, I did a version of a traditional apprenticeship, spending seven years learning, before setting up my own business in 1996.

You invented a Board Slotting Machine that is used in conservation labs across the world. How did you develop that from initial concept to finished machine?



I'd read Christopher Clarkson's article about board slotting in the 1990s, and thought it was crazy, too complex, and difficult to use. Gradually, however, the idea kept recurring, but I was too impecunious to purchase the \$30,000 German machine available at the time. I started thinking about a simpler way to make a machine.

What put me over the edge was the purchase of a

laboratory grade, variable speed and reversible motor at a church sale for \$10. (At the time they were selling for well over \$700 new.) My first plan was to make a spit rotisserie for my grill—which fortunately never happened—and at one point it dawned on me it would be the perfect motor to drive a carriage on a board slotting machine.

I originally made one for myself, basically through trial and error, although my background in building bicycles greatly helped me with the mechanical thinking and the basics of working metal: measuring, sawing, drilling, tapping, finishing. I still do all my metalwork with some very basic tools: a metal cutting bandsaw, 2x72" belt grinder, drill press, a small milling machine, and hand tools. It took three frustrating months to get the first one right. After I used it for a while, I thought I might as well make another one to sell, in order to recoup some of the time investment I had in the first one. So it started.

In order to produce an affordable machine, I had to make it from parts from other machines. The downside of this is that several key parts became unavailable; I was forced to redesign it again in 2012. The new version is smaller, less expensive, lightweight, more intuitive, and easy to move out of the way when you are not using it. Many larger labs are using it, but it is still too expensive for most conservators who have their own studio.

You make a variety of hand tools as well. Why did you start making your own tools?

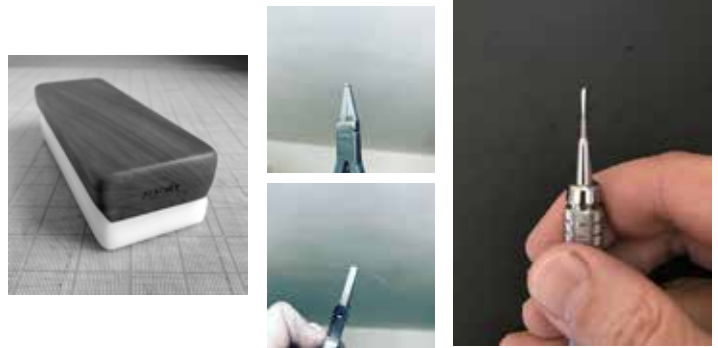
I started making knives almost as soon as I began bookbinding. I (wrongly!) thought cloth binding was too easy, so I started out with leather binding. I quickly grew frustrated with how quickly my knife dulled; it just didn't make sense to me that I had to spend more time resharpening the knife than using it.

So I started reading and experimenting with different steels and knife types, and for a number of years just made knives for myself and colleagues.

It was really the attack on the World Trade Center in 2001 when I became much more serious about promoting and selling my knives as a business. My conservation work completely died for about six months. Nobody in New York was thinking about bookbinding, or even picking up books I had ready. At the time I was living in the disaster zone downtown, so one positive result was that FEMA paid for a HEPA vacuum, which I still use. The other was that I got more serious about putting together a catalogue to sell tools nationally, which Peter Verheyen graciously put on his website. I realized I needed to have a source of cash flow outside of New York.

Sales slowly built up for about fifteen years. In 2017, I decided to establish a "real" online store, peacheytools.com. Doing this boosted sales quite a bit, since it is convenient and

easy to order, and people didn't have to deal with me! The newest tools I have come up with are a large Rectangular Burnisher with a Delrin sole, useful for smoothing large work, a Bookbinders' Pliers, which is great for sewing and board reattachment, and a .9mm micro-knife for extremely precise work. I think it would be great for paper cutting. The blade fits into a standard mechanical pencil.



You always have interesting content on your website and on Instagram. When did you first put your work online and has your approach changed from when you started?

Thanks! I started my blog in 2008 and got on Instagram just this year. I have over 500 blog posts and well over a million views. My all time number one post is my instructional "How to Strop".

Originally I started my blog as an easy way to make an online portfolio for conservation work, and sell some tools. But it has become a good way for prospective clients to get a sense of my approach to conservation and tools. It also helps keep some people away, since they realize by reading a bit that I don't really do that much more new or design bookbinding, and instead concentrate on repair and conservation. It also gives me a chance to try out some ideas relating to my current research interests. The danger always is that writing a blog is pretty quick and easy, so it can take away from the sustained energy necessary for more formal publication. Currently, I'm working on a big project about early nineteenth century English and American bookbinding.

I'm still trying to figure out how Instagram will work for me. I find it a little frustrating, since it is a self-contained ecosystem, and limited in the links you can add. But I've mostly been putting up images of interesting tools I have seen or made. I like how international it is, since it is largely visual rather than verbal.

I notice you teach a lot of workshops around the country. How does this integrate with your conservation work and toolmaking?

Great question! I often spend around six weeks each year teaching on the road, both nationally and internationally. I really enjoy it for a number of reasons. The most selfish one is that I work alone most of the time, so teaching gives me a great chance to talk a lot about all the things I am passionate

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THE ARTISTS' BOOK NOOK by Brea Black (con't.)

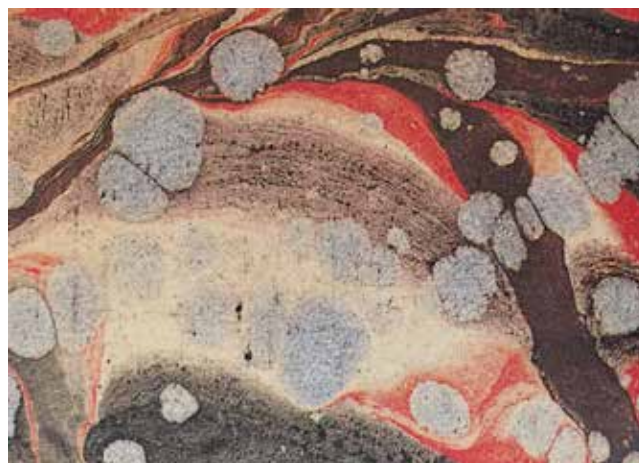
about: book, tools, and craft. And it gets me out of the studio a bit and enables me to travel! A less selfish reason is that I want to give back to the craft of bookbinding, and in a way, attempt to pay back all the people who have taught me formally and informally. I want to contribute positively to the vitality, skill level, and sustainability of bookbinding as a craft. For me, bookbinding is a great way to approach all kinds of interesting practical and historical craft questions, as well as a way to explore various materials.

This past summer, I taught my all time favorite class, which is now called "Historical Book Structures Practicum", for graduate Book Conservation students from Buffalo State, New York University, and Winterthur - University of Delaware. For the entire month of June, we immerse ourselves in a variety of historical book structures ranging from the early 16th century to the mid-19th. This year we made six models. The month is so intense and involved it goes by in an instant. Part of the workshop involves going to a lot of flea markets and antique malls to conduct primary research on tools. We also dip our toes into tool making and restoration.

I've always been the kind of person who generally likes to work alone, though, so the combination of teaching, conservation work, and toolmaking is working out so far. I feel lucky!

THE MARBLING TRAY by Iris Nevins

Reproducing Early Marbled Papers



Sometimes an early, crude looking paper from the 1600-1700s can be the hardest to reproduce, in spite of looking very simple.

Oddly, when I first started marbling, my papers often looked like this sample of an early paper. I was learning on my own, experimenting and was not very controlled in patterning. That comes with time and practice.

My first sale of papers, was by accident. Browsing in an old bookstore, I met a bookbinder who just happened to be laying marbled paper into a book as endsheets. I had no idea people were still using marbled papers. I mentioned I had a large stack in the corner of my bedroom, and was asked to bring it in the next day. I said... yes, but, it's AWFUL! I was asked bring some in anyway, which I did.

The bookbinder loved them, saying they looked so much like very early papers, and he bound a lot of books from the 1600s and 1700s, and could not find an appropriate paper for the period. I was shocked when the bookbinder bought over one hundred sheets! I began doing a lot of marbling—much going to this bookbinder—and I got better at it, more controlled as time went on. My marbling career began!

One day he told me, all of the original papers were used up, and asked if I could make more of those early looking ones. I agreed, and said would bring them in a week or two.

I got to work, thinking: these are easy, just simple stone patterns, no problem. However...they looked all wrong. They looked like they were not rough or crude enough. I had gotten too controlled. Then I discovered the secret, after many papers were trashed in frustration. I took a break, and didn't clean up the size bath. Some color from the sides of the tank had oozed in and the surface tension, which you can't see until you drop the paints down, sort of formed irregular patches of skin here and there.

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Advice to a Young Calligrapher

I was writing out a 162-line poem at an x-height of 2.3 mm, when it occurred to me that I am starting to get the hang of at least some subset of calligraphy's best practices. I appreciate all that I have learned from my teachers. I have also learned from my mistakes, although it has frequently taken more than once before the lesson has sunk in. Below is a formalized version of some advice I recently gave to a young calligrapher who had taken on a long commission and was panicking at the prospect. I can still benefit from reminding myself of these best practices.

Do finished work. Practice is great, but you're never so engaged or committed as when it really counts.

Don't skimp on preparation. Design development and preparation will always take more time – often much more time – than execution of the final piece. That's just the way it is.

Make a model. This is common advice in the bookbinding world, and it applies here too. Use the same paper, writing tool, writing fluid, and writing setup that you'll be using for the finished piece. Test erasure and corrections. If you're using guidelines, pencil them in. Light tables are great, but when it counts, pencil your guidelines. You want to be looking at the paper, not beyond the paper.

Rule all your guidelines before you begin the final piece. If I use my lettering liner for some other piece during the project, I don't have to worry about exactly duplicating the setting. For extra peace of mind, rule twice the number of sheets you'll need. If you are lucky enough / careful enough not to need them for this project, the extras make great practice sheets.

Mix more than enough writing fluid for the job. Enough said.

Have a minimalist work setup. Have at your writing station only the materials needed to do the work. I like to put blank pages and unused text on a rolling cart next to my writing desk. The fewer things around you, the fewer opportunities for mishaps.

Protect your writing surface. I probably don't have to explain here about skin oils, smudges, and spills.

Do some trial lettering just before you begin work on your finished piece. If you've had to step away from the work, do some more trial lettering to warm up and establish your pen angle, letter width, and so on. I know a calligrapher who pencils in the lettering as well as the guidelines. This helps to maintain consistency in letter width and space width, and also makes it difficult to skip a word or phrase by mistake.

Give yourself anchors within a long text. If you are writing out a long poem, number the lines, and number your penciled guidelines. Of the 162 lines in the poem I mention at the beginning of this article, 23 started with "Of". It was so perilously easy to look at the wrong line.

Be present. If you start to lose focus, walk away. The work will still be waiting for you at a better, later time.

Enjoy yourself! Calligraphy is a record of a performance. Your delight in the flow of the ink, the turn of the line, will also be transmitted to the page in a perceivable way.



One time-consuming part of planning can be settling on a lettering style. We calligraphers have a near-infinite number of choices regarding size, shape, slant, pen-angle, weight, spacing, serif, and so on.

THE MARBLING TRAY by Iris Nevins (con't.)

Without thinking, I dropped my colors down, but had forgotten to skim the size...and lo and behold... there it was! It worked! The paint droplets expanded properly in some parts, and in other parts, not so well. There was "sludge" here and there in the veins...which were oversized in many parts. That is just how the very early papers looked. So the rest of the day, I just made sure I didn't skim the size very well. When I was a novice marbler, I must have just been very bad at skimming, and that one little thing made all the difference in the papers!

Why didn't the early marblers skim well? Maybe they were rushed, or marbled by candle light... who knows.

There were really no dedicated marblers, but rather it was part of a bookbinder's training, and maybe they just churned out papers when their stack ran low, and rushed through, in order to get back to binding, or didn't really care that much and thought it was good enough.

The whole art of marbling did progress and improve though, and by the early 1800s overall, marbled papers looked more like what we see today. There were many more patterns developed, binders started polishing their papers, and the old look was lost to the past. It is a charming look though, and really fun to try to reproduce...but just remember to not skim your size too well between sheets!



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The Canon and the Art

Why has the binder chosen red leather? Why not blue? How does the binding structure help the reader understand the concept of the book—what this book is all about? How does the text relate to the design? How does the textblock resolve its physical role as a three-dimensional object sandwiched between the boards and its intellectual role of containing, protecting, and revealing the ideas and thoughts of the author or the artist? The sequence of the codex cannot be known until the pages are turned. Can the binding set the stage for this sequence? Is the canon of design binding or the aesthetics of the project taking the lead?

As we work on our books and bindings, sometimes the “canon”—or method of execution—comes to the fore, for example, turning a corner well, or paring that last stubborn bit from the leather. Other times we are engaged with the content—searching in the book to uncover and understand the message and then to visually express what we want to communicate or capture. The movement from the canon to the art and back again is not a prescribed path; it is discovered and built as the design comes into focus and is matched to the techniques selected by the binder. How these matches are made and why will play an important role in the final aesthetics of the fine binding. This book on our bench exists for a reason: to express its concept. The design binder has an opportunity to create a binding that reflects that, as an invitation into the content itself.

When a musician plays a piece of music, they are bringing to life the work of the composer. The performance is required for the music to have its aural existence. The composer has left the score with important information for the performer. The “canon” of the composition is followed by the performing artist and within that canon the artist will bring method, process, years of practice, interpretation, context, and personal aesthetics into play. The music is played; the audience experiences it. It is significant that every time we hear Antonio Vivaldi’s *The Four Seasons* (Le Quattro Stagioni) we recognize it as such regardless of the performing artist. This relationship between the performer and the composer is on the spectrum of relationship between the canon of the music and the composer, musician, and artist.

Design binding is an interesting iteration of the relationship of the artist to the canon and the art. There are methods, standards of performance, technique, and experimentation. The canon of fine binding includes specific techniques which are characterized by words such as “tidy”, “neat”, “facile”, “clean”, these implying judgement on the execution of the craft. Herein lies one aspect of the art of

design binding: the craft must be executed perfectly. Edith Diehl’s two volume treatise on binding¹ sets out a prescribed method—not withstanding her editorial commentary—which is largely didactic, and describes in detail how binding ought to be done. Variations are permitted in the canon, to a point. Some bookbinding manuals leave room for artistic maneuvering by describing the technique and indicating where creative license can take over.² In exhibitions where all the entries are bindings of the same text, we can see how binders use the canon in conjunction with their aesthetics to produce unique expressions.

Paste and PVA can work well together if certain rules are followed but are antagonistic if there are any transgressions. Departing from the canon may be dangerous, but in the hands of consummate artists, new techniques are invented and unusual materials are used which might become part of the more traditional work. This complicated collage of work brings found objects, new materials, unique combinations and fresh visual stimulus to a fine binding. The various techniques used in design binding have evolved over centuries from innovative tooling in 18th century bindings to the 20th century invention of painterly ways to bring abstract form and colors into the design. Today we may see eggshells, wire mesh, monofilament fishline, exotic leathers, metal and wood used in onlays or inlays—and much more. Perhaps the rule here is if the new idea works well to communicate the content of the book, then it will have the potential to move from innovation to convention. It may also be the case that such a move will dull the innovation.

The fine binder seeks an aesthetic relationship between the content of the book and the binding. This is a long game—the binder must think ahead in both design and method. This process is visual and mechanical (the binder thinks, for example, “what do I want this to look like and how will I make that happen?”). The content of the book, its topic, will be the touchstone for the design work. This concept drives ideas and will likely change and grow as the design develops. Choosing specific techniques that best present the concept is part of the aesthetic selection process of the artist. Allowing influence from both the canon and the art to inform the aesthetic decisions can result in a “conversation” between the book itself and the binder.

FOOTNOTES

¹ Edith Diehl. *Bookbinding: Its Background and Technique*. (Rinehart, 1946)

² John Mitchell. *The Craftsman’s Guide to Edge Decoration*. (The Standing Press, 1993) This book is an example of this, where the technique is clearly outlined and suggestions for creative actions are made.

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September 6 for October 2019 issue No. 246
November 1 for December 2019 issue No. 247
January 10 (due to holiday) for February 2020 issue No. 248
March 6 for April 2020 issue No. 249
May 1 for June 2020 issue No. 250
July 6 (due to holiday) for August 2020 issue No. 251

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