

Boston, MA

The Simplified Binding by Sün Evrard

Notes for the Guild of Book Workers Standards Seminar, Boston 1993

In spite of its name the Simplified Binding which I currently use for some of my design bindings in its full version, is not at all simple. It is best used for relatively thin and lightweight books.

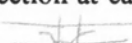
The book should be **prepared** as for a fine binding. Add a **white endpaper** section front and back, reinforced by a 30g Japanese paper strip, 2.5cm wide (see fig.1). Use a 50-50% mixture of PVA and methylcellulose, leave the endpaper sections to dry 20 minutes then press between smooth boards.

When cutting the bookblock to size add 2mm to the width for these white endpaper sections.

Cut two **working boards**: 1cm bigger than the bookblock, square and identical.

The **sewing** can be done on frayed out cords or tapes. The fiber tape I use has the advantage of being flat, strong, easy to fray out and to allow sewing without a sewing frame.

Make the sewing holes by using the ones which exist already and calculate the others in a way that the tapes are not farther than 6-7 cm from each other. If you saw in the holes use the working boards.

Choose an appropriate sewing thread according to the paper of the book, in order to obtain a backswell of about 30%. When you sew pick up the thread of the previous section at each tape. Release the tension on the kettlestitches before gluing up. *Round shape* 

Use the neat side of the working boards to **glue up the spine** (PVA), leave the book to dry in a perfectly symmetrical position (see fig. 2).

Round the book.

Cut off 2mm of the spine side of the working boards, bevel and sand.

Cut the tapes to 1.5 cm, fray them out on a piece of mylar, and glue them on the Japanese paper. After 20 minutes of drying put the book in between working boards, (bevel towards the book) and leave it to dry under 10-15 kg of weight (fig. 3).

Make the edge treatment if desired and the **headbands**. If you make leather headbands oversee them with fine silk.

Spine linings: a first muslin in between the tapes, a second covering the spine less 5 mm head and tail (PVA). Sand when dry. Finish with a leather lining pared to zero on four sides (fig. 4). Sand.

Cut off 3mm head and tail from the first endpaper front and back, bevel the cut to zero.

Cut the **hollow back** 1mm longer than the spine. Cut out the leather for the spine with turn-ins of 1.5 cm on both sides and 0.5 cm head and tail. Allow for the stretching of the leather. If you have leather splitting facilities, have it split to 0.4 - 0.3 according to the size of the spine, if not pare to

have it zero on four sides and thick as said under the area of the hollow back.

Put the leather on the hollow back (paste) turn in head and tail only (fig. 5). Leave it to dry on a stick of appropriate diameter, wrapped in blotting paper.

Affix the **spine assembly** on the book (mixture) and leave the book to dry between the working boards under 5 kg. of weight.

Make thin **headcaps** with a polishing iron.

*boards in diff Q; tape blotter
along 1 edge & roll spine pc. in 2
allow to dry*

Choose the board thickness according to backswell, size and weight; cut to size allowing for the thickness of the turn-ins. Bevel the spine side on the inside of the boards and all around the outside of it.

Cut the **covering leather** with 1.5 cm turn-ins on head, tail and fore-edge, 0.5cm on spine side. Allow for stretch.

Cover the boards and leave them to dry in a flannel, under light weight.

Bevel and sand the part of the spine leather which will be covered by the boards.

Bevel to zero the turn-ins of the boards, sand spine-side turn in.

Cut off the first endpaper front and back at the Japanese paper, trim and sand the cut, open the flap to mark the fold.

Glue on the boards (mixture). Use the foam-boards for pressing, leaving the spine of the book outside the pressing boards. Do one board, press 10 sec. with the other board on, glue the second and leave the book to dry between the foam boards under heavy weight.

Compensate the thickness of the turn-ins and the spine flaps by gluing a 0.3 - 0.4 mm paper on the inside of the boards (PVA). Leave the book to dry, closed on humidity-barrier cards. Sand to obtain a perfectly flat surface.

Cut out the leather for the **doublures and flyleaves**: 1cm wider and slightly higher than the book for the doublures, 1cm wider and 2cm higher for the flyleaves.

Have them split t 0.3 - 0.5mm according to the size and type of the leather.

The inner joint part of the doublures stops 5mm after the relief of the sewing thread. Measure the width, mark the joint and pare to zero at the edge with a smooth bevel up to the fold.

Cut the other three sides to size allowing for the stretch and trim them to zero with the scalpel as for leather onlays.

Open the book on a pile of boards and place the leather starting by the joint fold and smoothing away the three other sides to stop exactly at the upper edges of the board. Leave it to dry 1 hour before closing it on a thin humidity-barrier card, and a few hours before doing the other side.

Make a folder line right after the relief of the thread, slip a stiff card under the endpaper and bevel to zero the edge of the joint. Sand up to the line.

Line the flyleaves twice with a 30g Japanese paper (mixture). Put the adhesive on the Japanese paper each time and leave them to dry between the two layers. Trim to zero with a scalpel on joint area.

Paste in the flyleaves, use foam boards and humidity-barrier cards for the pressing. Change the cards before leaving the book to dry. After 1 hour cut off the excess roughly, and later on very precisely.

Check the good adherence of the boards on the spine leather, if necessary use a thin card to slip some adhesive in between and press again.

Make a protective chemise/slipcase or a box.

For the rest you have to watch me and ask me plenty of questions at the end of my presentation!

A few useful addresses:

Fiber tapes: Batrice Meuter-Peller, Passagio San Pietro 7, 6612 Ascona, Switzerland.

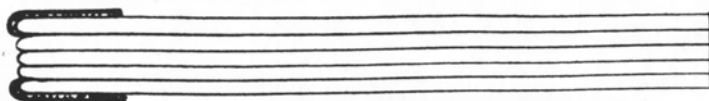
Leather splitting: Emmanuel Bonnani, 4 rue des Arquebusiers, 75003 Paris.

Bookbinding supplies: RELMA, 3, rue des Poitevins, 75006 Paris (ask for Oliver, he speaks English).

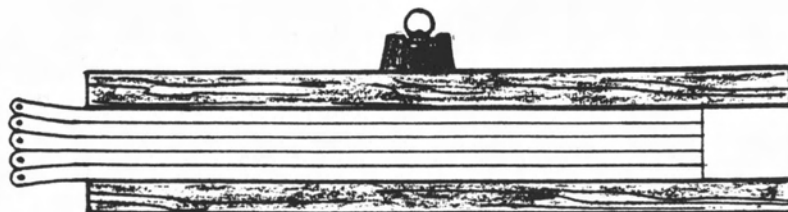
Paris, November 11, 1993

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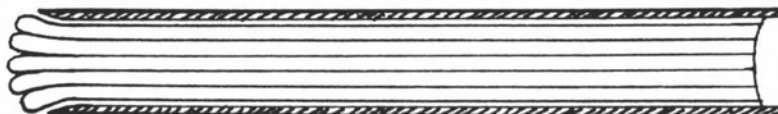
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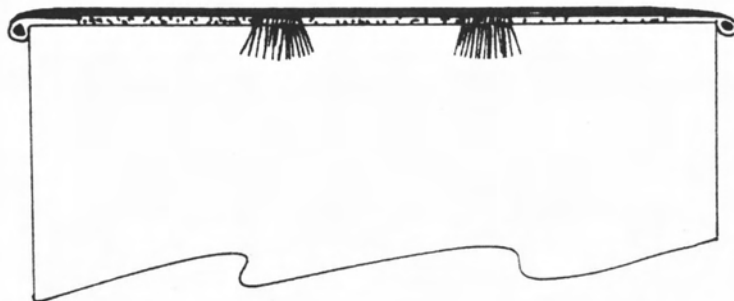
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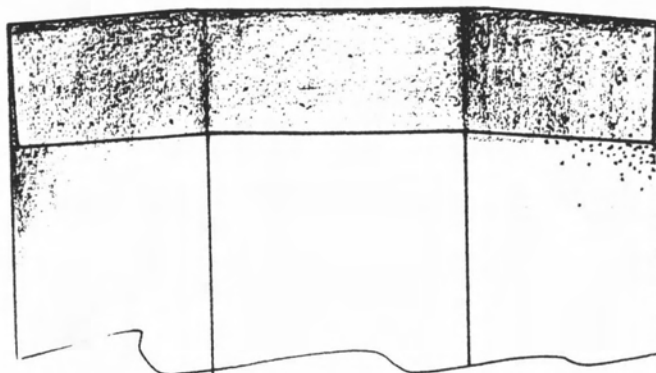
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FEATURED BOOKBINDING

To Each Its Own

SÜN EVRARD

THE DESIGN of a contemporary binding must be unique to the book and reflect its spirit—that is obvious. However, what is not so obvious is that like the artwork, the book's structure also needs to be specially selected, and often specially developed, for the particular book. Each book has its own characteristics (text, illustrations, paper size, weight, age, etc.) to which the peculiar features of a certain binding should be matched. There are many different structures, so the "complete" binder must include a wide variety in his or her repertoire to do justice to the variety of books encountered. For me there are no good or bad structures determined by divine decree; each has its own advantages and disadvantages. My own repertoire ranges from specially adapted medieval structures, very suitable for thick books of many signatures, through modified traditional French bindings, to specialized structures (for single signatures, etc.) based on conservation binding.

ALTERNATIVES TO TRADITIONAL STRUCTURES

Traditional French bindings, with stiff spines glued and lined with paper, have been praised as beautiful, but criticized for not opening well. But *traditional* means only that a particular style suited the needs of many people during a given period. Most contemporary bindings no longer need a stiff spine, mainly because complicated gold-tooled patterns are no longer in fashion; thus, I have developed a flexible version of the traditional binding. Although it has the appearance of a traditional binding, it does not suffer from the same disadvantages—mine opens well.

THE BASIC SIMPLIFIED BINDING

In 1984, moving yet farther from the traditional stiff French binding, I developed the simplified binding. It blends best with my style of decoration and suits many of the fine illustrated books I am asked to bind.

When I first developed the technique, the name simplified binding was more or less accurate, because I created it for lightweight bindings covered with decorative paper, but now the name is somewhat misleading because the technique is even used for full leather design bindings with leather doublures. The main features that distinguish the simplified binding from other structures are that the spine of the book block is not

backed (thus permitting more flexibility to the spine) and the ends of the sewing supports issuing from the spine are not laced into holes in the boards. Rather, the ends of the cords or tapes are cut short, frayed out, and adhered to the first white endpaper. The simplified binding is flexible, opens well, is pleasant to handle, and offers a variety of possibilities for decoration.

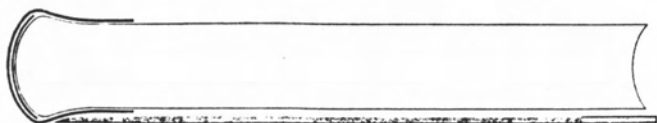
Two white endpaper signatures are added to the text block, each made up of two folded double sheets, that is, four leaves. These endpaper signatures are reinforced by a strip of strong Japanese paper. The book is then sewn on tapes. I use a Swiss synthetic-fibre tape that is thin and strong and that frays out like a cord. Linen tapes can be used, but they fray out less easily. The spine of the book is not backed, only rounded, which requires a natural backswell between 25 percent and 30 percent so that the spine will round easily and stay round. The spine assembly (a card and the spine-covering leather) is made and affixed only to the text block; that is, it is adhered to the white endpapers but not to the spine of the book. The boards are prepared off the book, with the covering material turned in on four sides. After affixing the boards at the spine edge, I finish the inside of the binding in very much a routine way, depending on what should be placed inside—leather hinges, leather doublures, or simple colored endpapers.

For books of great value I sew the signatures of the book through the concertina folds of a piece of Japanese paper. It takes longer to sew, but what is an hour of work more or less for a design binding? The PVA is applied to the Japanese paper and does not touch the paper of the book itself. Not having a backing operation in which the signatures are severely folded at the spine, making small sewing holes, and protecting the paper of the signatures from the adhesive are all part of an overall plan to make bindings which do not damage the text block.

In addition to permitting conventional titling, either by tooling directly onto the spine or by pasting on a leather label, the structure of the simplified binding permits a new method of titling. The title piece is prepared on a separate piece of leather, the top and bottom edges being folded over a piece of card. The ends of the leather, which are then adhered to the sides of the text block only, will later be hidden by the covers. This "floating" title piece not only gives a smoother, more finished look than a pasted label but also offers additional design possibilities.

SIMPLIFIED BINDING WITH CLEAN-CUT EDGE

The "clean-cut-edge" technique¹ proved to be very useful in many of my design bindings. On *Improvisations Sur Henri Michaux*² I used the middle layer of a pigskin inlaid with box calf pieces, because the texture of the pigskin was very much in the spirit of some of Michaux's drawings. One continuous piece of leather was used for the board-covering leather, doublure, and leather flyleaf; this dictated a clean-cut technique at the head and tail edges of the boards. The covering leather starts with a turn-in fold running along the spine edge of the board, continues over the outside of the board, turns over the fore-edges of the board, then covers the inside of the board (doublure) and is pasted down onto the white endpaper (flyleaf).



I used the same type of pigskin suede (painted, assembled, and recessed by back-paring³) for a binding of *Laus Veneris*.⁴ Little gold sticks made by a jeweler embellished the composition.

For *The Vanity of Human Wishes*,⁵ I again used the pigskin in a natural color and the gold pieces more extensively, this time in the form of rings. Through the rings can be seen different colors painted on the board. The clean-cut-edge technique made possible the use of very thinly pared leather for the doublures. The leather is almost a lace, which lets the colors painted on the inside of the boards show through. Usually doublures (the leather linings of the insides of the covers) stop either at the edges of the boards or a few millimeters below, on a straight line. This is impossible with "lace," as the leather is too thin for the binder to control its stretch. Cutting it at the edges eliminated the problem.

DECORATION VARIATIONS

Compared to traditional bindings, simplified binding opens up many more possibilities for decoration. For example, one can have either a plain, full-leather binding covered in three different colors or a spine of a different color from the boards. The simplified binding, with a leather spine and decorated paper on the boards, has the same advantages as the "millimeter binding," a Bradel structure that is very much appreciated by the bookbinders of northern Europe. In this style of binding, as in the simplified binding, the leather does not overpower

the decorated paper, which may be the only decorative element of the binding.

When presented with a book to bind, the binder must work on a product that has been finished to a certain stage. It has been conceived, written, illustrated, and printed by others who have usually collaborated in the process. Bookbinders, however, are independent and free. Should they express their own style in the design of the binding or be constrained by the book and totally respect it? My answer is, do both. I feel free to create, but I try to avoid overplaying the book with my designs.

*Lumière Noire*⁶ is a book I like very much, and for which I have done two different bindings. Personally knowing the author and the young artist made the work of binding more complex and yet more satisfying, because I could ensure that the binding would be in harmony with their conception.

The first binding⁷ is made with clean-cut, painted, and hot-tooled edges. The covering leather is white morocco, with onlays made of tiny strips of multicolored calf that were recessed by back-paring. The multicolor onlays of the binding reflect the multicolor pencil lines highlighting the black-and-white illustrations. The leather doublures are in black box-calf, hot-tooled with multicolor metallic film. The vertical title on the black morocco spine is blind-tooled. On the second version of the same book,⁸ the spine is unchanged, but the boards are white box-calf, tooled with multicolor metallic film; the edges of the boards are also tooled.

The tooling on these books, as on many others of my bindings, is the work of Lucette and Camille Berthaux, who are professional toolers working for several design binders. They can, as highly skilled specialists, produce a much higher quality of work than I ever could. I do a drawing, either a precise ink drawing on thin paper through which they can tool or—if I want to discuss several possibilities—simply a pencil sketch. In this case the tooler will make the precise template after my drawing. There are about ten good toolers in Paris, each of them specializing in a certain field: traditional fine gold tooling, contemporary decoration, series titles for library binding, etc. I, personally, work currently with three toolers.

POSTSCRIPT

As a bookbinder, I like to think that just as a nice book deserves a nice binding, so also a fine binding should cover a fine book. Normally, as I described, I choose, apply, and perhaps develop structures to suit existing books. I am currently working on something, however, that is in fact the very reverse, the exception that proves the rule. I found an old wooden beam with extraordinary natural designs made by wood worms and had it cut into 5-mm slabs, the idea of wooden pages having inspired me to design a sculptural work based on the book form. Before it was finished, however, a poet became interested in the project and wrote a poem inspired by the wood. The poem was integrated into the "book sculpture" as the text, and the sculpture became a book. In this case one could say: to each structure its own book.

6. Lucien Scheler; edited by Claude Blaizot; illustrated by Julius Baltazar; Paris, 1986.

7. Collection of Claude Blaizot.

8. Collection of the Royal Library, the Netherlands.

1. The covering material is not turned over the boards but is cut flush with the board edges and then painted so that the "clean-cut" edges look finished, not raw.

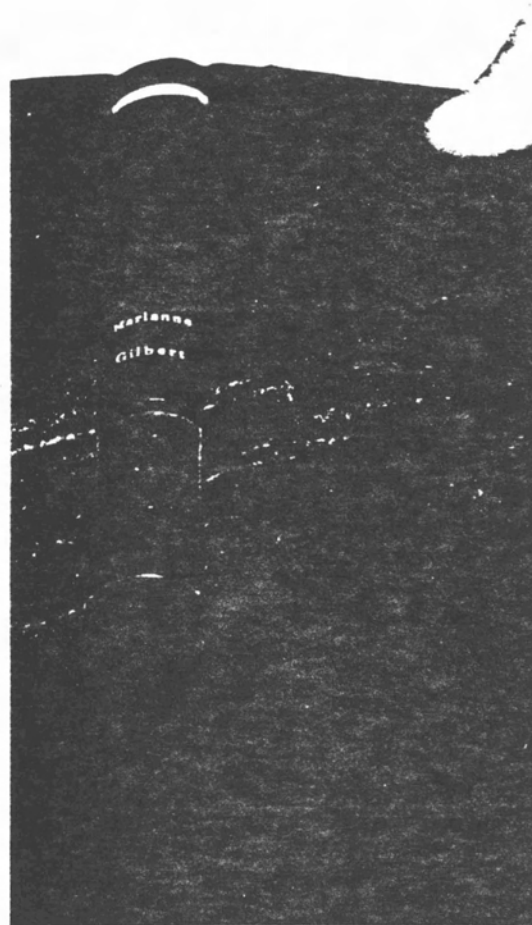
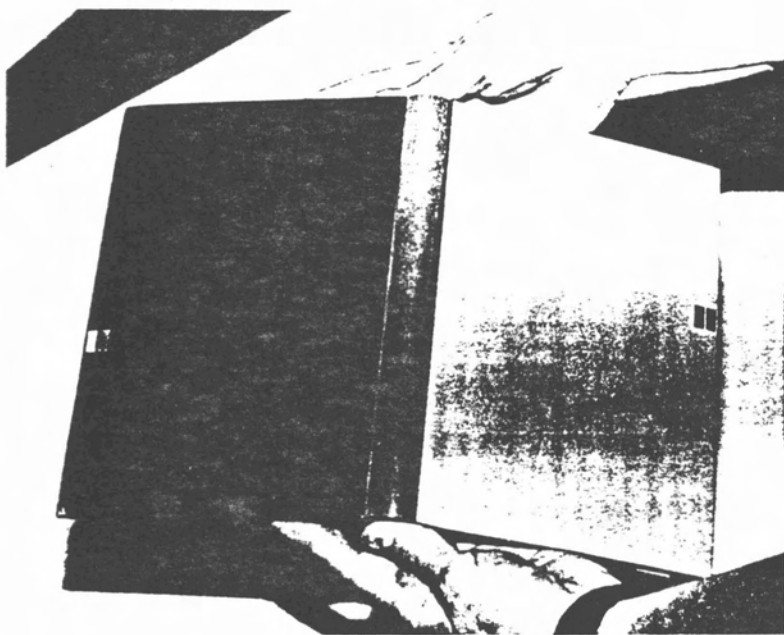
2. Michel Butor and Fata Morgana, 1985. No. 25, collection of the Bibliotheca Wittockiana.

3. Onlays are adhered to the covering leather before covering, and the extra thickness caused by this action is taken off on the flesh side of the leather.

4. Algernon Swinburne, illustrated by Jacques Villon (private collection).

5. *Satire of Juvenal*, imitated by Samuel Johnson; illustrated by Denis Tegetmeier (London: Rampant Lions Press, 1984). No. 7, collection of the National Library of Queensland, Australia.

The Simplified Binding in smooth box calf, not titled.
 The spine of the book is not backed, only rounded.
 The spine assembly (card and covering leather) is affixed only to the text block, not to the spine of the book. The covers are prepared off the book and adhered later.



Le Tiroir. The Simplified Binding with separate "floating" title piece. The leather is folded over a piece of card and the ends are adhered to the text block only; the ends are hidden by the covers.

The Vanity of Human Wishes.
 Simplified Binding
 with clean-cut edge.
 Natural color pigskin
 with gold rings.

