Fit to be Bound in New York

Peter D. Verheyen
Bookbinder and Conservator

What is a book?
Bookbinding
vs
Livre d’Artiste
vs
Artist’s Book

Beginnings

- New York has always been a focal point for the book arts.
  - Attracted many skilled immigrant binders from Germany, England, Italy
  - Publishing center
  - Wealthy collectors/benefactors
Guild of Book Workers

- Founded in 1906
- It could be construed as the name of an anonymous trade organization. Instead, in a modest way, The Guild of Book Workers is a cultural institution intent on the advancement of some of our culturally most important activities: the arts and crafts of book work.”
  — Gary Frost in his essay for the Guild of Book Workers 80th Anniversary exhibition catalog, 1986

GBW Early Members

- Were drawn from the upper classes and largely went to study with the arts & crafts masters such as Cobden-Sanderson.
- Also included typographers and designers such as Frederick Goudy and W.A. Dwiggins.
- Distinct from “trade” binders
Evelyn Nordhoff Bindery, NYC, 1902

Doves Bindery staff, 1905. Cobden-Sanderson second from left

Binding by T.J. Cobden-Sanderson (1840-1922)

Peter Franck, *Le Mystère Laïc* by Jean Cocteau, n.d.
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Peter D. Verheyen at the Everson Museum of Art
Syracuse, NY.

Charlotte Ullman, Vers & Prose by Paul Valéry, 1926

Arno Werner, Lettering by Hermann Degering, n.d.
GBW – mid-20th Century

• Based in NYC with membership around 125.
• Following WW II membership drops to 48.
• Affiliates itself with AIGA 1948 – 1978 with membership increasing to 300+
  – Now at 900 throughout the US with regional chapters.
• Shift from primarily traditional bookbinding to encompassing all the book arts.
  – Artist’s book movement...

1960s – 1980s

• Growth of artist’s book and conservation movements
  – 1968 Florence Flood
  – 1974 Center for Book Arts
  – 1981 Conservation studies program at Columbia’s library school
• Movements intertwined and influenced each other greatly.
Florence 1968

Julia Miller, A is for Aurochs, 2007
Florence 1968

- Led to development of modern book conservation field.
  - Large scale
  - Analysis of structures (what survived, what didn’t why)
  - Large numbers of volunteers, influenced field on return to US (and worldwide).
    - Establishment of conservation labs and influenced conservation training. (Paul Banks)

Center for Book Arts in NYC

Richard Minsky (at center)

Richard Minsky’s bindery in Queens, pre-CBA
Center for Book Arts in NYC

- Founded by Richard Minsky in 1974
- Provided education through workshops
- Exhibitions
- With traditional roots challenged assumptions of "what is a book"
  - Served as model for similar centers throughout US
  - Democratization of book arts, greater accessibility

Richard Minsky

• Traditionally trained
• Shock to traditional binding
• Material as Metaphor
• Book as work of art rather than as just container

Hedi Kyle’s April Diary, 1979. First flag book.
Hedi Kyle

- Graphic designer by training
- Conservator and book artist
- Created numerous structures that are adapted by many

Fuzzy Wrap, 2001

Susan Joy Share, Zip-Off Fence, 2005
Susan Share

- Syracuse Native
- At Center for Book Art
- Has worked as conservator
- Books as performance art and sculpture
- Incorporates ceramics

Keith Smiths’ BOOK 91 (A String Book), 1982
Keith Smith

• Series of manuals on non-adhesive binding influenced a whole generation of book artists
• Non-adhesive/sculptural books

Book Arts Today

• Encompass many art forms
  – Papermaking
  – Printmaking
  – Letterpress printing
    • Local treasures include the Press and Letterfoundry of Michael and Winifred Bixler as well as Box Car Press
  – Calligraphy
  – Decorated papers
  – Bookbinding
  – Sculptural, altered, digital only and in many forms
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Peter D. Verheyen at the Everson Museum of Art
Syracuse, NY.
Suzanne Moore, *Routes*, 1990


Destination Moon, 2003
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Syracuse, NY.

Slices of My Life, 1999
Nancy Callahan, Moving Target, 2010

Don Etherington, Twelve Centuries of Bookbindings, 400-1600, 2009
What has changed in 100 years

• Trade binding in great decline
  – VERY few in CNY region
  – Hard to support, but opportunities for the skilled and entrepreneurial exist
  – Traditional training hard to find in region

• Book Arts
  – Increasingly accessible to a very broad spectrum
  – “Easier” to teach to broad spectrum (kids – adults...)

What has changed in 100 years

• Core traditional skills in decline
  – Gold tooling
  – Working in leather
  – Knowledge of and facility of working with broad range of materials.

• New and innovative structures developed
  – More accessible to broader masses
  – Introduction of new materials
  – More than ever involved in all aspects of book arts

Learning Opportunities

• Center for Book Arts, Women’s Studio Workshop, Visual Studies Workshop
• WNY Book Arts Collaborative, Buffalo
• Wells College, Aurora
• Ink Shop, Ithaca
• Academic programs (Syracuse, OCC, Cazenovia, Oneonta...)
• Private instruction scattered about the State...
Local Learning Opportunities

• “Bookmaking” with Anita Welych at:
  – etags, SU Warehouse, 350 W. Fayette St.
  – June 5 & 6, 10-2

• Wells Book Arts Summer Institute
  – In Aurora, NY
  – Various classes in July
Learning Opportunities

- Online
  - Exhibits
  - Tutorials
    - Text
    - Video
  - Workshops...

“Book Arts Web”

What Do You Need?

- Good manual dexterity
- Few basic tools:
  - Bone folder, scissors, box cutter, ...
- Adhesive
- Maybe a press
- Creativity
The Complex of All These
An edition is created at Women’s Studio Workshop!

Thank you for coming this afternoon. Are there any questions?

Special Thanks

• Special thanks to Karen Hanmer and Mindell Dubansky for sharing from their presentations and allowing me to use selected images.

• Pamela McLaughlin and Deborah Ryan at the Everson Museum of Art in Syracuse for inviting me to help in planning the *Fit To Be Bound* exhibition and to speak at the museum.