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BOOK ART ZINE

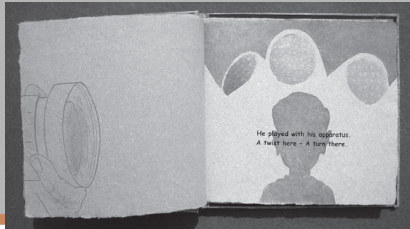
BOOK ART ZINE

July 2025 | Vol. 1

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Book Art

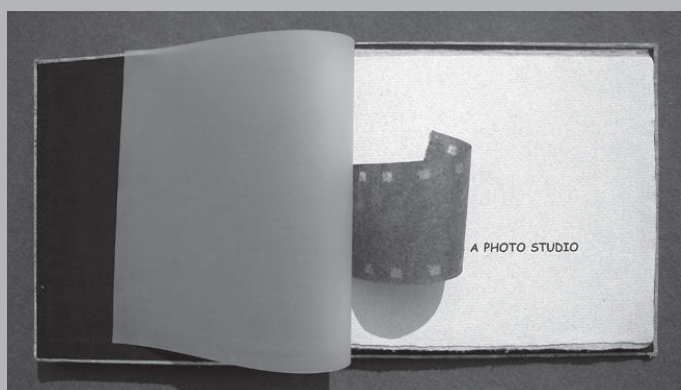
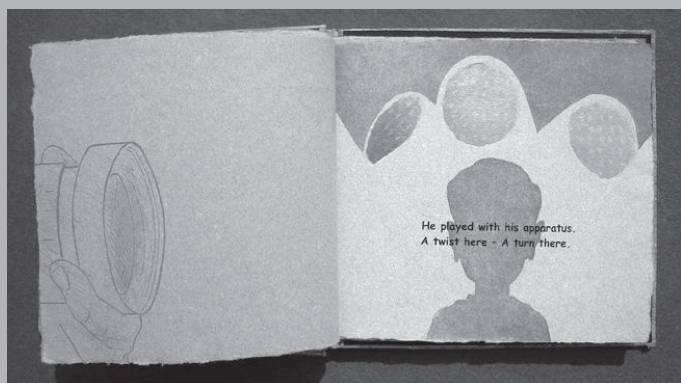
Anupam Chakraborty

Let me begin by noting that the terms "book art" and "artists' book" are synonymous and complementary in nature. Though the origin of book art may be traced back to the eighteenth century it acquired this formal name rather recently, in 1980. I gained first-hand knowledge of this innovative medium in 1999 during my stint at the Glasgow School of Arts. Just like any book, the artist's book too fosters an intimate connection between the author and the reader. It is essentially a book, but at the same time it transcends the traditional form of the book. It is not exactly what we mean by a book- a bunch of uniformly cut printed pages bound between two pieces of board. What makes it special then?

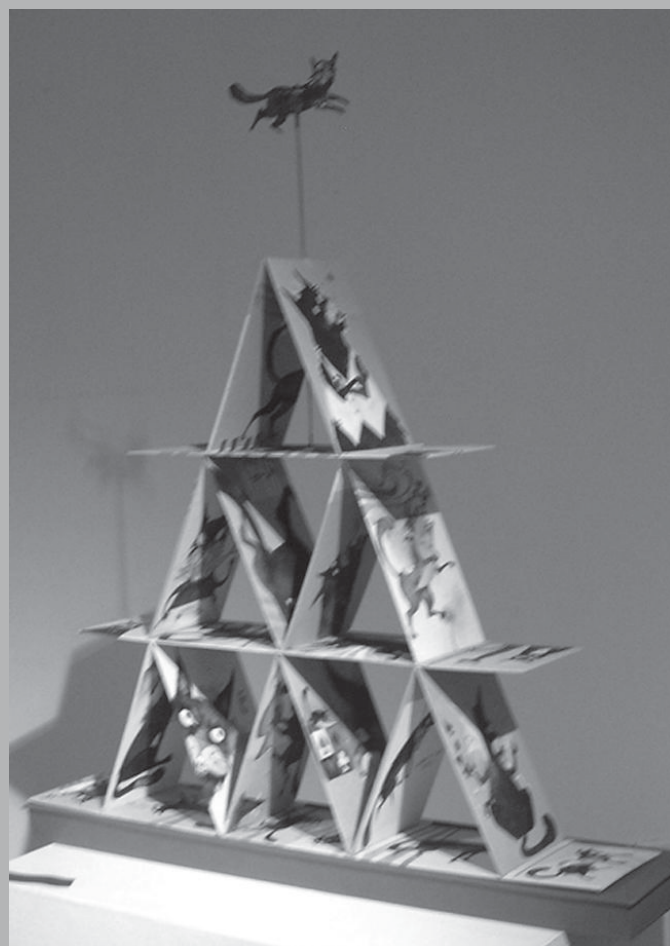
To put it simply, book art is a medium of the visual arts, which expresses itself in the form of a book. In other words, the artists' book is a work of art which finds expression in the form of a book. Though I used the phrase "form of a book," there are plenty of artists' books which do not follow the traditional form of the book. Some open like a scroll, some like the Japanese fan, some take the form of manuscripts while some open and close like a bellow. There are even instances where the pages actually remain loose and unbound-may be just a handful of loose sheets kept in a box. Just as the structure follows no fixed pattern so do the shape and type of paper used and the relative allocation of spaces for writing and drawing. These books are not necessarily meant to be held in hand and read while sitting at a table or lying down. Sometimes one may have to go round a hanging lampshade to read the words printed on its surface and lit by the lamp inside. Perhaps in some other case one



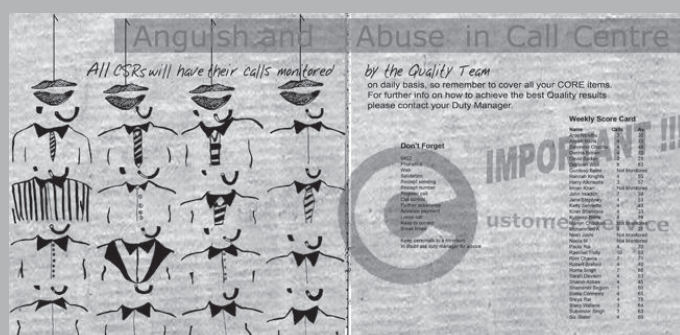
Songs of Innocence and Experience, William Blake



Anupam Chakraborty

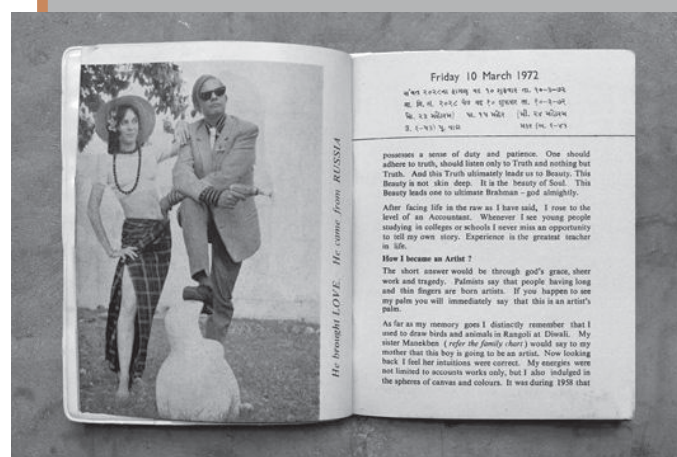
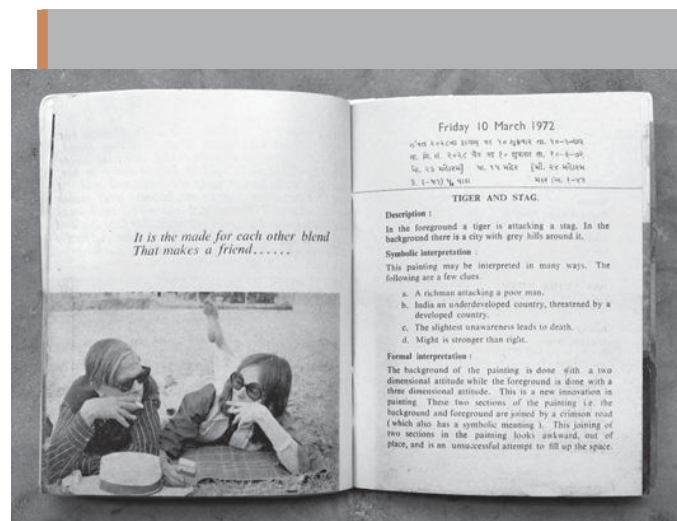


Amritah Sen



The Revue Group

needs to sift through a bunch of loosely swaying pages to grasp the message. Moreover it is not necessary that the pages of these books should be made of paper. Cloth, plastic, metal plates and mesh, leather, wood etc have also been used. The medium which best suits the intended message is chosen. As I make papers myself, my thoughts about the artists' book have, from the very beginning, focused on the nature of the paper. The book based on the cold rainy climate of Glasgow is designed using watermark only. When held against the light the pages of the book reveal various familiar shapes which then speak for themselves. Book art is a form in which the creator can take boundless freedom in giving expression to his unique ideas and his artistic consciousness while evoking lyricism and suggestiveness. As a result some books take forms which are extremely ephemeral. After the exhibition they are either put to flames or floated on the water to meet its destiny. Thus, the artists' book is a hybrid art-object which flouts all norms and conventions. These books are not only meant to be read or seen, but also to be felt by touch. Its unconventional visual form, its attractive three dimensional structures, its sculpture-like presence and the blending of disparate elements demand a tactile response from the reader. It forges a bridge between the visual and tactile senses of the reader. However, as already stated, many artists' books follow the conventional structure of the book. Book art had its origin in the hands of the English poet and artist William Blake (1757-1827). The book *Songs of Innocence and Experience* was crafted entirely by Blake himself. He not only wrote out the poems and painted coloured pictures but also printed and bound it. To manage so many different works single-handedly is no mean task and precisely because of this most of the artists' book makers nowadays delegate various



Bhupen Khakhar

aspects of the work to experts in the respective fields. It is very much like filmmaking in its collaborative nature.

It is not necessary to be a formally trained professional artist or designer in order to create such books. A creative and sensitive mind is all that is required. It is also important to have an overall awareness of the various mediums in literature and the visual arts. Familiarity with all the possible methods of printing and binding as well as the characteristics of paper and other necessary raw materials is also essential. Above all, what is indispensable is the ability to strike a balance among imagination, emotion and reason.



Archana Hande



Radha Pande



Sumitro
Basak



Abesh Bivore Mitra

Another characteristic of book art is the indefinite nature of its print run. While some books of this kind may be printed in large numbers others may have very limited editions.

There are even instances where a single copy of an artists' book has been published. On the other hand there are artists' books of which all the copies are not exactly alike.

Owing to the general superiority of their quality and their recognition as a genre of main stream art these books cost far more than the traditional books. Besides art galleries and other such institutions, only a few individuals having the economic means and more importantly the proper appreciation of their artistic value can afford to buy them. Interest in any medium of art or the eagerness to learn it is roused among the common people only when there is widespread practice of that art form. This art form is widely practised in many public as well as private art institutes of Europe, America and the Far Eastern countries. A number of publishing houses in these countries takes an active part in promoting and disseminating this kind of books. Not only individual collectors, but also the art galleries and art schools of these countries help to preserve and nurture this art form. The Centre for Book Arts in New York provides short term courses on the structural characteristics and other related aspects of the artists' book. There book art is a well-established art form; the artists' book is held in high esteem.

In our country the scenario is completely opposite. Unlike painting, sculpture or other mediums of the visual arts, this form remains almost unfamiliar to our connoisseurs. Only a handful of artists create such books out of their own personal sense of need. It is almost impossible to find anyone who works solely in this medium. Perhaps the only exception is Priya Pereira. Till date Priya has created more than forty artists' books. Her books have been preserved in some of the elite art galleries of the world. The name of Bhupen Khakhar also deserves mention as the pioneer of book art in India. The book, Truth is Beauty and Beauty is God, designed by him and published in 1972 is probably the first artists' book to be published in India.



Ravikumar Kashi

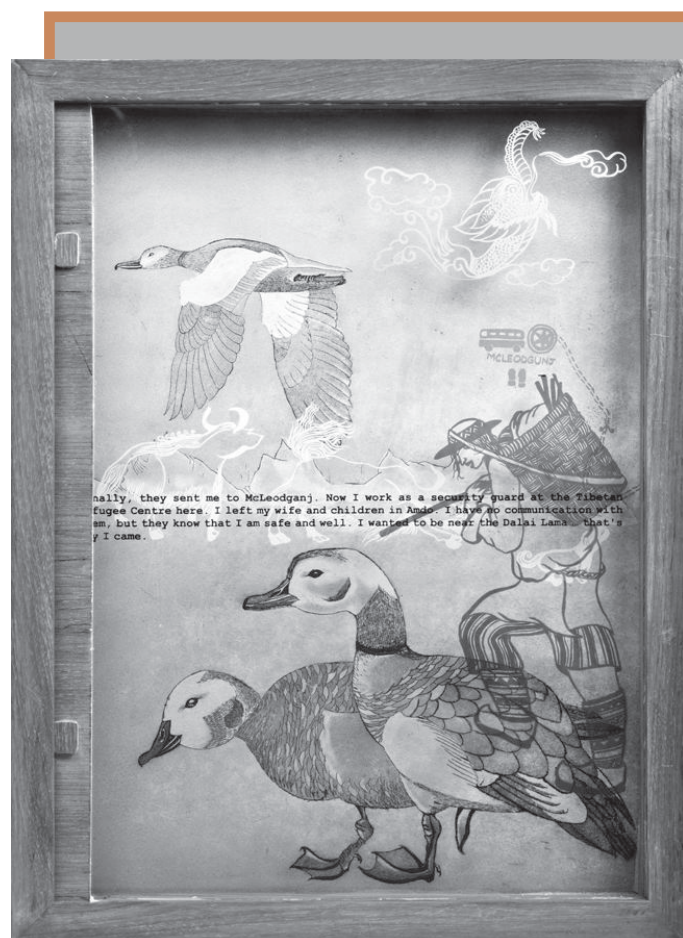


Jenny Pinto



Priya Pereira

Besides Bhupen senior artists like Ghulam Sheikh, Nalini Malani and Rini Dhumal have worked in this medium. A few artists of the present generation are also experimenting with this medium. Among them are Radha Pandey, Archana Hande, Samit Das, Ravikumar Kashi, Paula Sengupta, Jenny Pinto, Aditi Byabal, Sumitro Basak, Tanmay Samanta, The Revue Group, Kaushik Mukhopadhyay, Abhijit Gupta, Abesh Bibhore Mitra, Debnath Basu, Amrita Sen and the author himself. Book art will never truly grow out of this state of infancy until and unless the art schools of our country, both public and private, include this medium in their curricula. Then will the creative minds wake up to its immensely rich and varied aesthetic appeal. We can only hope for such a future awakening.



Paula Sengupta

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Anupam Chakraborty

Anupam Chakraborty is a Kolkata-based artist with a BFA in Painting from Kala Bhavana, Visva-Bharati, and an MFA in Graphic Arts from M.S. University, Vadodara. A recipient of the Charles Wallace India Trust Award, he pursued advanced studies in Papermaking at the Glasgow School of Art, UK. In 2004, he founded the Nirupama Academy of Handmade Paper—an educational and entrepreneurial initiative dedicated to papermaking, bookbinding, and printmaking. His ongoing research explores papermaking from indigenous plant-fiber, artists' books, and weaving.

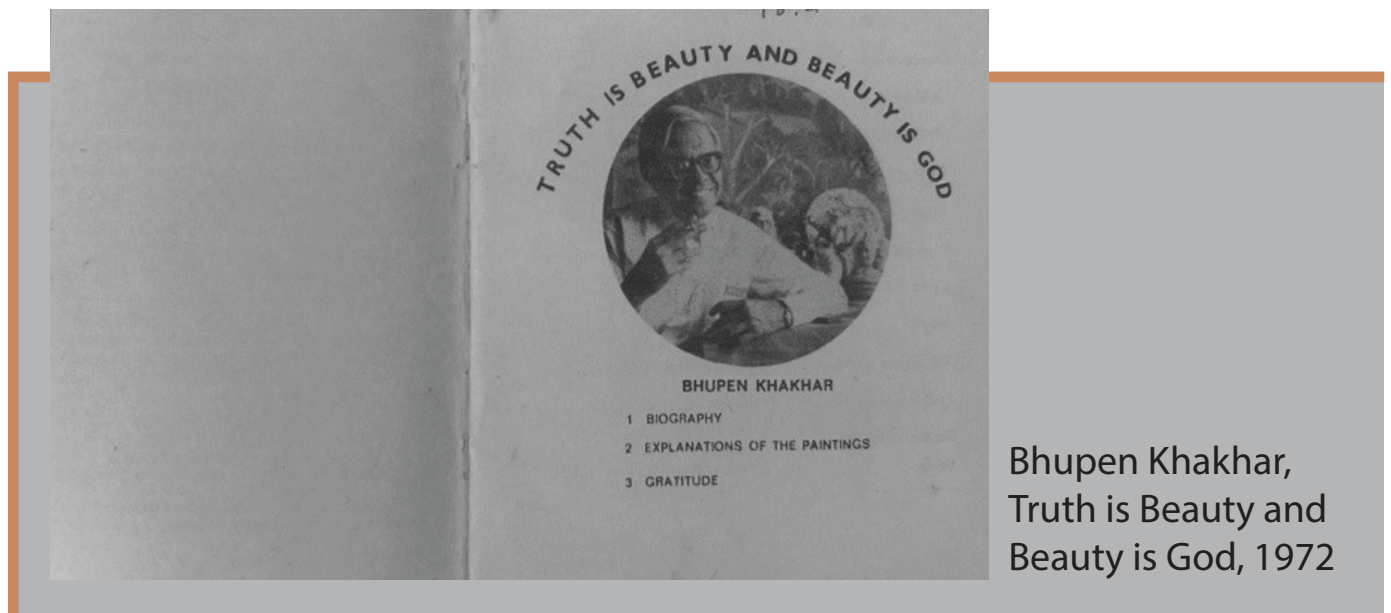
BOOK ART AND ARTIST BOOK: A UNIQUE CONTEMPORARY ARTISTIC MANIFESTATION

Dr. Raj Kumar Mazinder

The term book art and artist book are almost synonymous and complementary. Although book art originated before the 18th Century, it became officially known after 1980s. Book art is essentially a creative idea about a book but at the same time transcends traditional forms, Book art is a medium of visual art that expresses itself in the form of a book. Some evenly cut paper pages are placed in the middle of two relatively thick papers and tied together with glue and thread to form a book, while an artist's book is a work of art that presents itself in a more thoughtful and complex form. Although book art is seen in the form of book shapes, many artistic books do not follow traditional form. For example, in many artist books, the pages are kept in a single form without being tied together. Instead of simply placing these

books on a table or reading them, the words are something printed on the cover of an electric lamp and you have to turn around the lamp to look at the work of art on display.

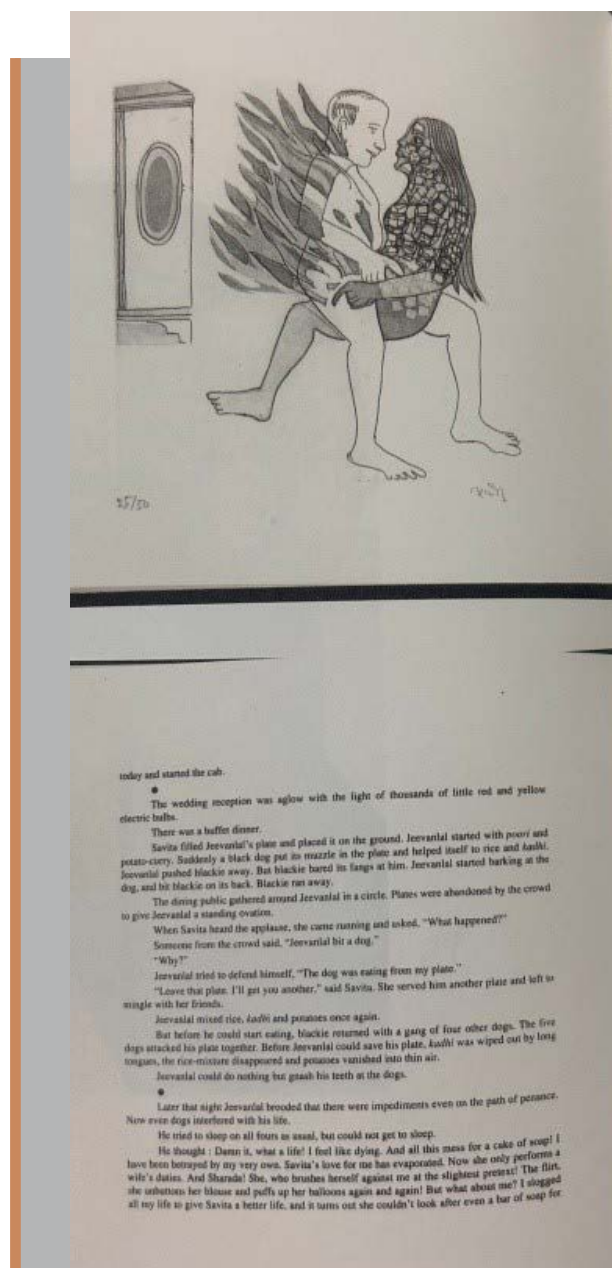
The noted art critic Jehona Droker in her book *The Century of Artists Book* writes that it is impossible to give a single definition of the artists book, which is popular and growing. In addition to its unique aesthetic and media factors, book art has gained popularity due to its flexible and diverse characteristic: the many works of book art are beautiful. Attractive print, independent printing, attractive binding all and traditions of book art, conceptual art, painting, other traditional or experimental performing arts of different tastes, sculpture, experimental



Bhupen Khakhar,
Truth is Beauty and
Beauty is God, 1972

music, computers and works created with electronic technology and latest but important explanatory book, *The livre d'artiste*...¹ The term zines and art zines are commonly used in Europe and the United States. Compared to book art, art science book art and the personal emotions and expressions of the artists seem to have more connecting holes.² The relationship between artists and writers is mentioned repeatedly in the pages of history through explanatory manuscripts of before Christ Era, Persian and Mughal periods. However, artists have continuously tried to share their own creations and these creations with the whole human race.³

In the second decade of 20th Century, artists of German Dadaist group published their poems, essays, drawings and prose in a pioneering Magazine called *Merz*, led by Kurt Schwitters, from the city Hanover. The magazine was published in two issues in 1917 before being forcibly closed down by the Hitler administration. An essay featured against the cancellation of famous Fountain by Marcel Duchamp and also including works of art by Francis Picabia, Alfred Stieglitz and Clara Tyrus.⁴ Some of the most famous artists in the field of book art who have gained strong popularity around the world are Flux artists group's Japanese-American artist Yoko Ono, Idrucha, Louise Borghease, Kara, Walker and Damien Hirst. Before the term Artists book came from Europe, since ancient ages handwritten books were illustrated and produced by artists and writers in India and parts of greater Asia. Bhupen Khakhar, a renowned painter, story writer and art critic, is one of the pioneers of book art in India. His 1972 book *Truth is Beauty and Beauty is God* is probably first artist book. The publication *Truth is Beauty and Beauty is God* delivers a unique early vision of Khakhar's articulation of self, informed by the artist's queer



Bhupen Khakhar, *Phoren Soap*, book bound in cloth, 1998

experience.⁵ Title not known Accordion pleated book (c. 1990), *Phoren Soap* 1998 Book bound in cloth consisting etching and acquaint prints are some significant artist books by Bhupen Khakhar.

Apart from Bhupen Khakhar, senior artists Gulam Mohammed Sheikh, Nalini Malani and Rini Dhumal have worked in the medium. In addition, contemporary book art in India includes Priya Perera, Radha Pandey,

Archana Hande, Samit Das, Mithu Sen, Ravi Kumar Kashi, Paula Sengupta, Jenny Pintu, Debnath Bose, Anupam Chakraborty, Aditya Bable, Soumitra Bask, Tanmoy Samanta, The Review Group, Kaushik Mukhopadhyay, Abhijit Gupta, Amrita Sen, Lokesh Khodke, Shefali Jain and others.⁶

In terms of my early experience in my native homeland began with reading books on traditional practice of manuscript book creation using Sanchi bark and cotton paper in Assam underwent a significant transformation with the advent of mechanical printing during the Nineteenth Century, driven by the efforts of American Baptist missionaries and the Colonial British East India Company. In the early Twentieth Century, Alumni of the School of Art, Calcutta Muktanath Bardoloi, produced the illustrated book *Moina* using lithography, while a series of drawing books titled *Chitralekha* by Birendralal Bowmik were published by D.P.I., Assam. Later periods illustrations featured in various journals

were created by Kala Bhavana Santiniketan alumni as Madan Mohan Lahkar, Benu Misra, and Mukunda Debnath, and in the later part of the century, artists such as Pulak Gogoi, Troilokya Dutta, Chandan Chutia, Aminul Haque, Dhruva Deka, and others made notable contributions that elevated the art of literature to new heights. Furthermore, the modern practice of book art by Parismita Singh, Anga Art Collective, Desire Machine Collective, Munindra Narayan Bhattacharjee, Nikhileswar Baruah, Pranjit Sarmah, and myself has infused similar elements of advanced conceptual thought and experimentation with media found in artists' books globally, making a significant contribution in this area. I believe that incorporating book arts into the visual arts curriculum of more universities and art schools in our nation, along with proper preservation and support for contemporary book arts, will spark greater interest in the subject among students and the younger generation.

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Dr. Raj Kumar Mazinder

Dr. Rajkumar Mazinder is an artist from Assam. He completed B. Fine in Painting at Kala Bhavana, Santiniketan and M. A. (Fine) in Graphic Arts from M. S. University of Baroda and Doctor of Philosophy (Ph. D) in Visual Arts from Assam University, Silchar, 2015 for the thesis titled *Impression Art and Artist: A Study of three Print Makers of Assam*. He has written a book on art "*Shilpokala: Oitihya aru Adhunikota*" (ISBN: 978-93-85230-67-3) in 2017. Dr. Rajkumar Mazinder lives and teaches Department of Visual Arts, Assam University, Silchar.

My journey with artists' books...

Ravikumar Kashi

I have been engaged in making artists' books for more than two decades now. In the initial years when I was creating these books I had no idea I was creating something called as "Artists' books". I was creating them instinctively. Much later, in 2001, when I went to study handmade papermaking in Glasgow School of Art, and during my visits to Europe and North America I started seeing many such art works and connected my practice with the existing genre of artists' books. This realization opened up a new vista for me. And I started my exploration with a lot more understanding and energy. I started getting in touch with artists' book creators, communities and later started showing in many exhibitions of artists' books.

Some of the first books I did were really an extension of my paintings which had two divisions in them to simulate an open book or to suggest two sides of an open magazine. All along, I have not created

artists' books exclusively, but they are located within my larger practice where I do painting, sculpture, installation and photography. Artists' books have become an added dimension to this exploration.

Many of my paintings had text along with visuals in them; texts which would alter the meaning of the visuals. Similar approach has continued in my artists' books as well. Most of them have visual elements as well as text which reiterate, alters or juxtaposes the content. The fact that I read a lot and write essays on art and poetry has kept me close to books. It is no surprise that this attraction has flowed into my book making as well. So, creating artists' books seems like a natural progression.

Books for me are a repository of information, feelings, ideas and knowledge. They also have a material presence; they can be seen as memorials of history and memory keepers. All these qualities are combined in various ways in my books. Each book

Banana And
The Sword



This is the way
the world ends

becomes and an exploration of an idea. When it is completed, the book becomes a tangible carrier of those intangible ideas.

I like the intimate size of the book. Though small in size my books are highly conceptual and packed with ideas. They are rarely descriptive. I like the fact that one can add a sense of time when it is a full book thus developing a narrative unfolding in time. My early books were like journals, with a bit of scribbling, mapping the flow of my thoughts. Sometimes an idea from one book flows into another book and gets transformed. This has happened in 'Random destiny', 'Book of Destiny' series of works. I have done a few photo books as well.

Handmade papermaking and bookmaking have remained my twin interests. Most of my artists' books except photo books, are created using handmade papers made by me. Either they are sheets bound together or cast in the shape of a book. I have used a variety of plant fiber papers like banana, daphne, hanji and cotton for these works. Some of them have watermark images inbuilt in the paper in the paper formation stage.

In my books, images and text are sometimes drawn; many a times a relief image is created in clay and later converted into pulp, casting from a prepared mould and



Random Destiny

occasionally transferred from photocopy. In some of my books like 'Banana and the sword' I have tried to reinterpret the palm leaf manuscripts format from ancient India. In other works like 'This is the way the world ends' I have adopted the accordion format along with a few unconventional approaches to bookmaking, but most of my artists' books retain the form of a book.

The story is just starting and I hope to explore artists' books more in the days to come. One can say I'm 'booked' for life.



Ravikumar Kashi

Ravikumar Kashi - is a multifaceted Bangalore based Artist, an alumnus of Ken School of Art and M S University, Baroda. He learnt handmade paper making from Glasgow School of Art, U.K. He also learnt Hanji, traditional Korean papermaking, from Jang Ji Bang, Korea. His involvement with Artist's Books began in 2000 and ever since, his books have been exhibited across the globe. In 2020, Ravikumar was selected as one of the five Finalists in The MCBA BOOK ART PRIZE awarded by Minnesota Centre for Book Arts, U.S.A. This 2024 too, his book - 'Echoes of Loss: Remnants of a Mother Tongue' was short-listed as Semi Finalist for the MCBA Prize.

On Book Art

Saba Hasan

After several years of making relief paintings, where I added materials like paper pulp, fabric, shells, text and clay to bring nature and an organicity into work, I started making three dimensional works. I find this materiality quite integral to my way of thinking as I am able to hear the voice of my material and its important to me to keep that original voice intact so I hardly ever paint over the material or sculpt it beyond its character.

Coming from a family of academics and litterateurs, books have been in abundance at home and along with text were an obvious choice of art material right from start. My parents were voracious readers in both English and Urdu, they wrote, translated and recited poetry so I grew up with them reciting Urdu sher and ancient epics. I owe my father this knowledge of literature in English, Urdu and Russian later

enhanced by history, economics and anthropology part of my academic studies at university. Naturally this led to an engagement with the actual content of the book even in my art practice.

The book used for my work titled the book in a smashed box is the feminist Urdu writer Ismat Chughtai's book titled "Ziddi" or the stubborn one, I took my mothers' original copy in Urdu and burnt it, locked it in a box and smashed it. Yet we can still see some of the text too stubborn to be suppressed. Of course, at times it is hard to engage deeply with the content of the book and I try different treatments, based on my concepts, for example, the nine book installation also titled Sul-eh- kul (peace for all) where the Books when covered or wrapped with the words hidden acquire a larger meaning, converted to suggest something completely different from the ideas imbued in their words originally. This installation was born during the time I was reading on religion as the divine truth and debating the existence of an absolute versus multiple truths looking also into the politics and ethics behind prevailing ideas of truth, introducing possibilities of structuring truths, modifying truths, multiple truths and absolute truth. The nine book installation also has a spiritual and philosophical dimension founded in Sufi thinking of Islam which draws from mysticism.

Examining these ideas from several perspectives led me into conversations with intellectuals, activists and writers which I recorded for my Haqeeqat/ La Verite /Truth project. These Haqeeqat videos look at the notion of truth through video conversations with experts who talk about how they look



Burnt Book, Saba Hasan

at truth, either as constructed, relative, political even linguistic. This video was in the Raqs curated Sarai Reader 09 exhibition, and later in 2014 it was nominated for the Celeste Prize in Contemporary Art, Milan and screened by the Films Division along with Tyeb Mehta's video "Koodal".

My practice related to book art is both about using books as sculpting material to fashion new forms or installations as well as forms for representing concepts either by engaging with the content at a philosophical level or transforming and reshaping the book form. I think that while books may signify truths, their specific content comes with coded meanings so to me they also reveal the pitfalls in human knowledge, leaving us to separate the necessary elements towards our vision for the future. Books come with a prior coded meaning for the viewer, a perception of knowledge, something even sacred perhaps and so to challenge that became the *raison d'être* for my works especially the ongoing Burnt Book series.

Burning of books was originally in the category of questioning the validity of the text, its divinity and ideas and social prejudices we inherit. I burnt my first text and books in 2008 and using the technique as an act of resistance, a rebellion where all

this knowledge and so called profundities make no sense any more, in the light of brutality, hate, prejudice, lies. Different series of burnt books were displayed in Delhi, Salzburg Austria and Colombo Sri Lanka. People have also responded to it as a protest against the censorship of ideas, recently it was equated with Ambedkar's public burning of the "Manusmriti", by the author Githa Hariharan founder of the Indian Writers Forum as she opened one of my solo shows in Delhi. The multiplicity of meanings is the strength of Burnt Books though for me at the core of all of them lies defiance and the spirit to resist that is the reason I continue to for the last 16 years to use this as an artistic technique, right down to the latest Burnt Book 14, 2024.

As I reshape a chosen book, carve and mould it or hollow it and add signifiers like river stones spices or shells they alter the original meaning and begin to represent my beliefs. The passage of time, cycle of life, significance of natural elements, conflict, preservation, rebellion, survival, the deep interconnectedness of humans with each other and the earth. Here I address the the sculpted or constructed aspect of book art which expands the space in which meanings are extrapolated outside of the format of the book itself with text, illustration or pages.



Nobody ceases to exist
after they die, 2024,
Saba Hasan

The set of works titled Book fossils was sculpted with clay and books to give an impression of creatures, a hidden repository, even cultures that have survived ravages of time and attacks on them. Maybe because they abided by the rules of nature or acquired value enough to be preserved. The books of sand and leaves or the book of stones, point towards the beauty of the natural world and its power over life, a truth which is clearly universal.

To create the Embalmed Books I read about the ancient Egyptian method of embalming and tried to simulate that in some works, bandaging books filled with spices to represent the preservation of something important to us. I hollowed out the pages and filled the book with river stones from the beautiful Beas river and the Lidder in Kashmir infusing it with new possibilities. The Threshold series of sculptural work with small doorways carved out to make a small ghostly community of homes waiting to be occupied by a new family of fresh mores and visions. Zar was inspired by the Japanese Kintsugi tradition in ceramics where cracks in clay are covered with gold as a way of repairing something that is old and weathered but most precious.

The latest artists book nobody ceases to exist after they die is based on my ancestral family records handwritten in Urdu called Bahisht-E- Aziz a book now too fragile to be handled in its original has been montaged with old family portraits from right to left like Urdu books. Some are people in the photographs I know, some only heard of in stories orally handed down through the years similarly the Urdu text selected from the original narrative is according to my limited understanding of the past, memory, time and fresh insights now re-contextualised. Through these pages of family stories one sees feminism, poetry, art and social values not as abstract ideas but as embodied by people as they live their everyday lives leaving a cultural legacy to continue beyond their years.

Book art to me is fragile, organic, connected to life and un-monumental because we artists are really not the centre of the universe producing grand masterpieces but struggling as art is increasingly dominated by large financial markets. Though book art is not work at a large or grand scale for me it is working in a material which I have always loved and understood.



Saba Hasan

Saba Hasan is an artist with a highly distinguished practice of over 30 years and is known for the lyrical strength of her work. She works in a wide variety of media like videos, photography, book sculptures, charcoal drawings and paintings and her oeuvre dwells largely in the realm of abstract art. Saba is a recipient of the Raza Award for Painting 2005, the Pollock-Krasner Award 2023, the Vienna Short Film Award 2024 and the best short film screenplay FICIMAD Spain 2025.

Coming Full Circle

Priya Pereira

When does one start to be a book artist?
When does the awareness of books dawn?

My answer to the first question is clear: 1993. But the answer to the second goes back to childhood, to my 'LP record' letter to my grandfather. Poor 'Goappa', as he was affectionately called, had to turn it around and around over and over again to read. Or probably even before that, to school notebooks that were crisped with firm writing on both sides of the page. I loved that sound and feel of the thin paper, almost rendered brittle. The other thing I clearly remember, in class eight, was looking at long columns of newspaper text with a blurred eye, which turned them into design elements. Maybe it was my collection of chequered silver paper that came from cigarette packs which my uncles smoked, or Airmail onion skin finish paper used for letter writing.

Later, during my short career in advertising, there was an office project for all the art directors. Each of us were given a blank, long booklet with the brief that we had to fill the pages with our ideas on 'time'. While some resented the extra work and did the project perfunctorily, I found my attention rivetted. I took my submission back after the assignment and that could well have been my first artists' book! In hindsight, a lot of my projects were turning into books, from innovative travel journals to letters.

In the Korean tradition called Doljabi or a similar Tibetan one called Erabitori, a baby is presented with a selection of items to see what they pick up. It is believed that this will indicate their future profession. Traditionally,



Book Jackets, Priya Periera

if a child picked up a book, a pencil or a calligraphy set, the child was thought to be either very intelligent or an artist/writer. Would that also indicate a future as a book artist?

That leads to more questions - is there a future for a book artist? Why aren't there more of them in India, a land that historically revered books, as compared to blooming numbers in Europe and America?

While my journey into this field started as an accident, a happy one if I may add, I have kept going simply out of the love for it. Book art here is not really recognized or widely accepted as being of value like other art forms and is hard to monetize. This hinders its popularity. Book artists the world over

also tend to have other sources of income to support their book work. This is the reality, even though the subject is taught in universities and book art is collected by institutions in their countries.

My inspiration has always been Ron King, founder of the Circle Press in London. "The pragmatic approach to his art that King adopted from the first, permitted him to run Circle Press as a profit-making concern." Every two-three years, he travelled to the US and drove around selling enough work to generate perhaps 80% of his income. I have heard stories of these trips from him and have always wanted to do the same.

"Ronald Edward King was born in Brazil on 18 September 1932. The Brazilian Carnival was to be a crucial influence on the boy's burgeoning visual sense, and his own experiments with making, flying, and fighting kites, were his first attempts with threedimensional form. He also made paper hot-air balloons, carnival costumes, soldiers, and masks. (The list of his activities reads like an index of his later development as a book artist.)"



Won+group, Priya Periera

In 1996 I first saw his 'Echo Book' at an artists' book store in San Francisco called Califia and immediately felt a connection. Eventually in 2004, on a Charles Wallace India Trust award, I chose to spend six weeks at his Circle Press which incidentally, Ron started the year I was born. Time spent with Ron and the other books artists connected with the Circle Press - Karen Bleitz, Victoria Bean and Sam Winston, was a big learning.

Ron took the time to look at my books and offered his feedback and suggestions and ended the meeting with the comment, 'You have enthusiasm.' I was disappointed, because I felt, enthusiasm was a given. Only then I understood that it was not always the case with many book artists who often passed off sketchbooks as artists' books. He was talking about the right kind of attitude to bookmaking. Much later I came to know the meaning of the word 'enthusiasm' which comes from the Greek work 'entheos', which means the God within, and I finally made peace with Ron's observation.

My time at Circle Press was divided between helping with press work and my own. Karen generously shared all of Ron's artists' books with me, even his precious notebooks, to see how he worked. Karen also taught me how to assemble Ron's pop-out alphabet posters. A treasured memory is when Ron was at the studio while I prepared one of them and after watching me, he remarked, "We needed her to come from India and show us how to make this." Another time, I was around while Ron printed a part of a book on the letterpress machine in the basement of his studio. He asked me a question on ligatures and I was relieved I knew the answer! I left Circle Press richer in both, perspective, and a small collection of Ron's books.

I have continued to stay in touch with everyone at Circle Press, especially Ron, through mail. And last year his card said that at 92, this would most probably be his final handmade card greeting. And my heart sank...

I have been inspired by his books, from 'Roll Over Darling' to his recycled bookwork's like 'Acrobats' and I hear his voice telling me to move on from what he called 'One-look books' to multifaceted ones with layers of physicality and meaning. He told me that the effort expended to sell both was the same, but the second made you more money.

Like Ron, I started my career as an art director and like him have come full circle - "An artist, a publisher, a printer, a sweeper-up, an accountant, a salesman."



Priya Pereira

Priya Pereira (Pixie) first began making books in 1993 with her husband Tony, under the imprint Pixie Bks. Only in 1999, during a visit to the US they discovered a term for the work - Artists' Books. Today Priya is featured as India's first contemporary Book Artist dedicated to Artists' Books. And the books are in 80 Artists' Book Collections in eleven countries. In July 2020, Priya was selected along with ten other artists, collectors, curators, academics, writers and librarians from all over the world to be a part of the International Council of the Center for Book Arts, New York.

BOOKS TO ARTIST'S BOOKS

Sharmila Aravind

The process of evolution of Books to Artist's Books, interestingly, has been greatly influenced by the efforts of many cultures towards invention of paper, printing techniques, materials, mediums etc. The history of a Book bears witness to the struggles across civilizations to find methods and materials that make it economical and simple to produce. Hence, the book is born out of years of combined knowledge taken from cultures across the globe.

Chinese invented paper in 105 AD, then it travelled into the lands of Arabs around 800 AD and to Egypt in 900 AD, Spain around 1100 AD and then to Italy in the late 1200's (In 1276, Italian company, Fabriano started paper production).

Earlier, the Mesopotamians used Clay tablets as base for writing and much later Egyptians used papyrus plants as writing surface, rolled into scrolls to store.

The Western Codex - the most used format of Book as seen today, was born when Romans drilled holes along one side of the wooden/clay tablets and linked them together with cord or leather.

The Western Codex got a more refined form, when in Turkey, Parchment (goat skin) or Vellum (Calf skin) were folded in the middle and holes punched, sections sewn and hard bound using wooden covers. Chinese are also credited for creating a new form of book, the concertina or fold book.

The Chinese pioneered wood block printing - the act of reproducing images using a single source. Much later, Germans set the foundation for modern day printing - around 1450, when **Johann Gutenberg** invented the movable type made in metal and used with a press which could produce multiple copies easily and economically.

Advent of machines further ringed in a revolution in paper making and printing methods. Constant research and developments have contributed to shape what we see as Book today.

British poet and artist **William Blake**, (1700/1800) wanted to integrate his visual imagery and written work on each page. He developed a new printing method - etching images and mirrored letters on metal plates, that facilitated this integration.



William Blake's
etching and
etching with
text

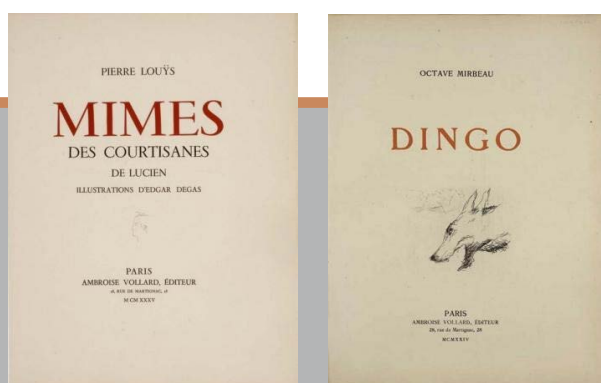
Blake was "seeking a means of bringing the production of illustrated texts under his own control so that he could become his own publisher, independent of commercial publishers and letterpress printers." This independence is one of the important aspects which goes into the creation of an artist's book. Artist's Books, ever since, have been defying the quintessential book forms

and finding new ways to use the book.

Taking from where Blake left off, in his attempts to unify text and images Parisian art dealer **Ambroise Vollard** (around 1890s) used the book format to showcase the work of an artist, the *livre d'artiste* (Artist's Book); he asked artists who were not professional illustrators to produce illustrations for various works.

In 1900, he published his first book, *Parallèlement* (In parallel), a collection of poems of an erotic character by Verlaine and illustrations by **Pierre Bonnard**.

Some of his notable artist's books, are - *Les Mimes et courtisanes* (Mimes and courtesans) written by **Lucien de Pierre Louÿs** and illustrated by **Degas**, *Sagesse* (Wisdom) by **Verlaine**, with illustrations by Denis, *La Tentation de Saint-Antoine* (The temptation of St Anthony) by Flaubert illustrated by **Redon** and *Passion* (Passion) by **André Suarès**, with woodcuts by **Rouault**.



Ambroise Vollard's artist's books - *livre d'artiste*

Mid 20th Century saw enhanced popularity of the artists' books in their contemporary form; reason being the scientific and technological progress.

A new approach to the combination of

images and text, experimentation and exploration without definition or boundary was found in the beginning of 1910 when Russian futurists created art in book format. Italian Futurist (1909-44) and German Bauhaus (1920s) movements saw artists producing many artist's books too. Many photographic books were produced by artists during the New Realism movement in Germany (1920's).

The Dada movement (late 1910's, early 1920's) in Europe used books as a means of expression, which was followed by the American idea behind using books as art during the 1960's.

Some of Dada Artist's Books:

- **Marcel Duchamp's** "The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even" (The Large Glass)
- **Max Ernst's** "The Surrealist Revolution": includes his own text and illustrations, delves into the principles of Surrealism.
- **Hannah Höch's** Photomontage Books: explored themes of feminism and social commentary.
- **Kurt Schwitters' "Merzbild"** Books: characterized by their fragmented and collage-like aesthetic.
- **Hugo Ball's** "Flight Out of Time": diaries and journals offer insights into the movement's origins and development.

There was a surge in the contemporary ideas in artist's books post WW2 In Europe and around 1960's in America, where American artists created art in the form of books using mundane materials and methods.



Marcel Duchamp's
"The Bride Stripped
Bare by Her
Bachelors, Even")

Post-World War II (1945-60) artists' books often explored themes of war's devastation, memory and the impact, often reflecting a rejection of traditional values and focusing on personal experience. Prominent themes include the psychological effects of war, destruction, loss of innocence and quest for meaning in a world bogged down by conflict.

The 1970s showcased Sculpture as a prominent genre of art and the 1980s saw the rise of Installation art. These eventful decades influenced book art and going further, Performance and Conceptual art were also intertwined with the artist's books movement. These times saw a rise in both printed and sculptural artists' books, reflecting the diverse and experimental nature of the art scene.

Colette Fu:

Known for her pop-up books and large-scale paper sculptures, exploring themes of nature and the human form.

Ed Ruscha:

While not exclusively a 1980s artist, Ruscha's work from the 1960s and 70s, influenced the development of artist's books in the 1980s and beyond.

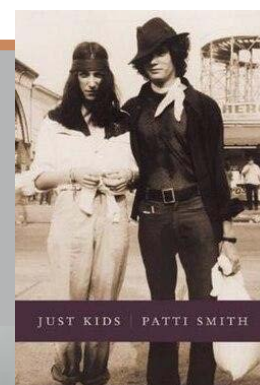
Jean-Michel Basquiat:

Basquiat's work, often seen as a reflection of the 1980s art scene, also influenced the creation of artist's books.

Patti Smith:

Smith's memoir "Just Kids" (published in 2010) also touched upon the art scene of the 1980s.

Patti Smith's
Just Kids



Collette Fu's We Are Tiger
Dragon People, 2008

From here on, artist's books have been a participant in every new wave of ideas owing to their shifting nature and malleability. Artists from across the world have been pushing their boundaries to create book art. The humble book has hence gone on to become an artwork in the hands of an artist.

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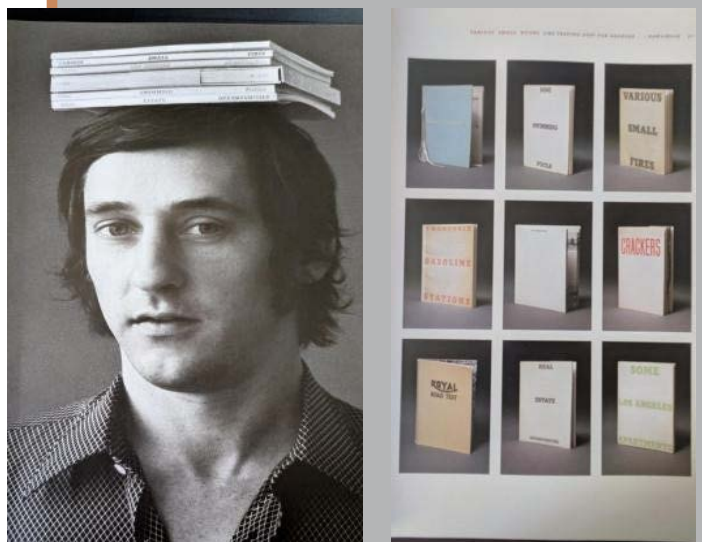
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Ed Ruscha's
Twenty six Gasoline
Stations and other books



Sharmila Aravind

Sharmila Aravind has actively engaged with art in its myriad forms - visual arts, directing documentaries, writing poetry, children's rhymes and singing. It is this multitude of activities she chooses to call as Mindscapes - a vast and varied landscape, wide open, which she has experienced and expressed. To her credit are some very strong thought provoking shows and works of art displayed in exhibitions based on some very pertinent contemporary issues - be it a take on the city life, importance of childhood, mentality and mental illnesses etc. She is co-founder of Fluid Art Collective and ... On The Same Page Artist's Book Collective.

BOOK ART IN ACADEMIA

Pranjit Sarma

Visual Communication is vital to understand the world around and its intricacies. Alphabets, numbers, colour, form, texture and shapes are crucial components of visual communication used to introduce every little part of the content.

In today's times, creative education requires a multi-directional approach towards communicating using visual and sensory content, for which Book Art serves as one of the most effective learning aids.



It's a multidisciplinary field that uses the book as a physical object and a medium for artistic communication, incorporating various techniques like bookbinding, printmaking, installation etc - in short, an amalgamation of pictorial content via photos/ digital/graphics/manual illustrations and descriptive words. This kind of diverse narrative can facilitate effective communication, particularly when it comes to developing a significant visual language.

Illustrations, drawings and photos provide visual cues along with color and shape in the context of book art. This need not be

only in complex conceptual narrative; it could well be as simple as content for children and such other visual representations.

There are other profound reasons to introduce book art as part of creative academia in the fields of fine art, visual art, design and multimedia.

- Production of book art can impact overall human consciousness in innovation and creation by inspiring students to come up with fresh ideas for content and execution. Book art manages to inspire students to develop their visual literacy skills, critical thinking, and creative expression, fostering a deeper appreciation for art and its relationship to knowledge.

- Although students find reading beneficial, Book art enhances their cognitive processing as the experience is actual. Adding tangible sensory learning to the curriculum can help students grasp concepts more deeply assisting in identifying a dimension beyond their aural or visual senses. So, as the process of creating book art is multi-sensory and tactile, the memory is stronger and longer lasting.

- Majority of students in today's interdisciplinary academic environment favour experiential learning that is more outcome-based. Adopting a specific set of skills/ knowledge cannot be unidirectional for students. The ability of students to acquire new skills in specific and allied fields in order to gain knowledge is a necessity in today's academic environment. Owing to their varied composition and

design elements, book art offers plenty of opportunities for students to obtain comprehensive knowledge about a given subject, by way of material exploration, concept execution, binding and design.

- Book art projects offer hands-on learning experiences, allowing students to work with materials, tools and techniques in a creative and engaging way.

- Also, it helps adapt/interpret and re-imagine literary content.

From the point of view of academicians, book art is a powerful and efficient tool to share experiential knowledge with students through a variety of creative and practical experiments.

Today's academic settings find it useful to enhance teaching, research and student engagement across various disciplines.

Exhibits and publications of artist's books can foster a sense of community among students, faculty and the wider academic community, offering a unique platform for artistic expression and scholarly exploration.



Pranjit Sarma

Presently, Asst. Professor at Department of Communication Design- School of Design- JECRC University, Jaipur, (ISDC- International Skill Development Corporation, India) Post his B.V.A (Bachelor of Visual Arts) – Painting, (2012- 2016) Assam University Department of Visual Arts, Silchar, he completed his M. V.A (Masters in Visual Arts)- Graphics Arts (Printmaking) Bangalore University, Department of Visual Arts, Bengaluru in 2018. Currently he is pursuing Ph.D. in Design, at Department of Multimedia and Communication Design, Central Institute of Technology, (Govt. Of India) Kokrajhar, Assam.

RECOLLECTIONS

Reading an Anthology of Collective Cultural Memory(ies): A brief note as a reader-spectator

Dr. Moushumi Kandali

On the evening of 18th November 2023, Guwahati witnessed a significant artistic event titled 'Memories: A show of book arts', in the gallery space of the Gauhati Artist Guild. With nine participating artists, namely, Bikash Chandra Senapati, Leticia Alvares, Munindra Narayan Bhattacharyya, Neerja Chandna Peters, Nikhileswar Baruah, PEEVEE, Pranjit Sarma, Sharmila Aravind, Raj Kumar Mazinder, and Vincent Philip, the show brought out multiple perspectives on 'Memory' as a cognitive experience and its receptions and perceptions in different dimensions such as Nostalgia, Trauma or Reminiscence, woven as powerful narratives of autobiographical transcriptions set in various personal and collective contexts. Although a workshop on Artists' Books was held in 2002 at the same space at the Gauhati Artists' Guild (GAG) for the first time in Assam, it primarily comprised artists from Assam only. This second event, after a gap of almost two decades, saw participants from other parts of India too, to weave a collective compendium of memory! With its pan-Indian artistic presence, the event turned out to be a diverse and wholesome experience for the reader-spectators who had come to read the 'Artist's book's displayed as an exhibition.

Artist-Book, a significant component of the larger 'Book Art' domain, has evolved

extensively since its historical emergence thousands of years ago in multiple manifestations, such as the Egyptian papyrus, as well as scrolls and books from China, Japan, and Korea, and Mesoamerican codices. It is a bridge that connects the visual culture with literary text, offering multiple dimensions. It has played a crucial role in engaging the readers-spectators with greater inclusivity in terms of sensorial involvement, leading to optimum experiential realizations. The thematic concepts and display of Book art attempt to create a unique visual language, where visuality, hand in hand with the literary forms, unfolds diverse multidisciplinary experiences. Here, words and images may manifest either complementary or



contradictory relations with each other, thereby permitting interesting intersections and inter-pollinations, with multiple layered narratives. As a complex contemporary art form that encompasses both creative and craft discourses, the genre of Artist Book has expanded greatly over the decades since the 1960s. It offers immense possibilities in terms of experimental aesthetics and ideational engagement, ranging from fine

press books, sculptural book-works, artist's books, altered books, designer bookbinding to installations, and performances. Readers-spectators embark on a journey to seek meanings and interpretations from such rare books in which visuals precede and predominate, dismantling traditional notions of reading a book linearly with a one-dimensional experience.



These artists who participated in this particular exhibition also provided a vast and varied avenue for the spectators. Going beyond the one-dimensional experience, the exhibited artist's books allowed the spectators to read the displayed 'Memoirs', breaking the regular unidimensionality of conventional expressions. Each of them created their unique artist books with personal perceptions, although the individuality was prompted by collective cultural memory /ies lying underneath.

Maurice Halbwachs, who had pioneered the concept of *mémoire collective* in the theoretical domain of Cultural Memory, underlined that memory is a social construct shaped by collective exchanges and

common frameworks of historical and cultural references. Halbwachs argued that memory is a social phenomenon influenced by group connections among people who share experiences of history, society, and culture, based on identitarian contexts such as ethnicity, gender, or other ethnocultural and sociopolitical perspectives. All the artists hailing from Assam namely, Munindra Narayan Bhattacharyya, Nikhileswar Baruah, Raj Kumar Mazinder, and Pranjit Sarma, were seen weaving narratives of their collective memory of the turbulent days of Assam's socio-political context prevalent in the decades of the 1970s to 90s, when multiple political movements and their aggressive, violent repercussions had shaken the social sphere of the region. However, the processing of memory didn't stop there; it boiled down to the current conditions and socio-cultural conversions in a post-globalised world filled with chaos and cultural shocks. Whether the burnt pages and red stitches of Nikhileswar Baruah, switching historical political tales into a memory book, the kettle with bubbling steam of unspoken pressures as a recurring motif in Pranjit Sarma, the reminiscent image of Munch's scream in a symbolic retelling by Rajkumar Mazinder, or Munindra Narayan Bhattacharya's experimental capturing of the contemporary time, the collective memory of a turbulent time got reconstructed through revisiting the past and reinterpreting them in the present. Nikhileswar Baruah's photographic images, juxtaposed with his stitching technique, had captured some slices of the violent past deeply submerged in the collective subconscious of society. One significant commonality seen among these artists was the interplay of the past with the present as a hidden process of continuity, as the past still lingered and found eerie resonance in the contemporary time which is at times quite dystopian !

If these artists had brought out the hidden undercurrents of social memory laden with violence and human suffering, artists like Neerja Chandna Peters, Vincent Philip, Bikash Chandra Senapati, and Leticia H Alvaresad presented an innerscape expressed through a memory-script ('Memoriscrypt' by Neerja Chandna Peters) to weave the narratives of the intimate self. Memory lives in its more or less provisional, semiotic materializations: texts, monuments, images, music, performances, rituals, and daily interactions and practices. Its condition of existence lies both in its capacity to take a recognizable cultural form within a given context and to break away from that very context, to be transmitted across time, space, and generations. (Daniele Salerno, A semiotic theory of memory: between movement and form, 2020). These artists, with certain semiotic materializations of their lived experiences, have attempted to create their memory book(s) to reach out to the readers-spectators and share their interactions with life and the world around them.

In such renderings of an artist's book by these artists, capturing their collective and personal memories as reminiscence, nostalgia, or cathartic engagements, two artists, namely Sharmila Arvind and PEEVEE (Perumal Venkatesan, who introduces himself as 'a people photographer and creative entrepreneur') draw our attention to certain subject -matters which are both socio-political yet deeply existential and philosophical! PEEVEE opens up two juxtaposed worlds, one, where memories are seen as imagined constructs for the future through architectural structures. Playing up with real and imaginary spaces and times, he perceives memory as a constant presence in the subconscious, shaping the future. In the other world,

remains of the dead are remembered with eerie and evocative symbols of death and diseases. His photographic finesse blends seamlessly with the imagery of death to create a provocative encounter with the human existential predicament. As PEEVEE deals with such existential questions of life, Sharmila Arvind delves deep into existential reality through the prism of a gendered perspective, which can evoke a feminist reading at times. Sharmila takes the readers-spectators to a much-relegated space like the Kitchen, which usually acts as the site for gendered performativity and



gender roles assigned in patriarchy. However, in Sharmila Arvind's perception, the kitchen is also seen as a symbolic space to signify the idea of 'Home-sweet-home', with nostalgic memories of mothers' and grandmothers' cooking. She captures tales of love, desire, and feminine attributes through metaphors such as wine while reinterpreting feminine experiences through poetic references to Keats.

All the artists exhibited their distinctive idioms of artistic language while displaying



different formalistic and mediumistic experimentations. With their eclectic styles ranging from drawing, printmaking, embossing, and painting, as well as incorporating interesting items of daily use, each of them created a memory book featuring their distinct visual perceptions. As one of them stated, 'Memory is the diary that we all carry with us' (PEEVEE), the readers-spectators browsed through those diaries of myriad loaded narratives and took delight in experiencing, understanding and interacting with a space where visibility blends with textuality and shows a new perspective of reading culture, memory and identity. The displayed artworks evoked an underlying sense of an anthology,

narrativizing the collective cultural memory through the realm of the personal and the collective seen through various lenses and prisms.



Dr. Moushumi Kandali

Dr. Moushumi Kandali is an award-winning fiction writer, art historian, translator, and academic. Her book 'The Black Magic Women', published by Penguin Random House, received the South Asian Laddli Media Award for the year 2023. After several years of teaching at Ambedkar University of Delhi's School of Culture and Creative Expression (SCCE), she is currently working at Tezpur (Central) University's Department of Cultural Studies.

MEMORIES – A Show of Artist Books

SriniVASAN.M.R.

“...On The Same Page” is a collective that brings together a select network of artists who share their passion towards creating predominantly Artists’ Books, bringing contemporary art practices into the foray while maintaining connections with the traditional milieu. A group of 11 artists from varied backgrounds had come together to exhibit their works themed around MEMORIES, in a show that was hosted by The Art Route Gallery in Gurugram.

This show was inaugurated on the 2nd of March 2024 by Mr. Johny M L (Art Historian, Curator & Writer), Mr. Ananda Moy Banerji (Artist, Printmaker, Founder Member- IPG & Multiple Encounters) and Mr. Vishal Sehgal (MD of Nishchay Educorp, President of Harvard Club of India) in the presence of Ms. Lubna Sen, Founder and Chief Curator of The Art Route.

A curated gallery walk was followed by a panel discussion, (UN)BOUNDED NARRATIVES, where the guests of honor explored the participating artists’ journey in creating these artworks. The highlight of the discussion was the historical references of art in India and its evolution over the decades in the context of artists’ books; arts’ relevance in the times we live in and its contributions in building a better world were emphasized by the panelists with their interesting and insightful anecdotes. This show put the artists and their memories in focus, encouraging multiple stories and perspectives. Every creation stemmed from deeper exploration of the lives of these artists and their unique experiences, making it a personalized window into their world.

It was fascinating to note that some of the artists’ books on display challenge the conventional book format. The usage of a variety of mediums (drawing, digital prints,





printmaking, photography, painting, embossing, etc.,) and topics (social, socio-political, personal recollections) kept the viewer profoundly engaged. While some works portrayed introspection of the artist's life, some delved deep in the socio-economic and political situations prevalent during current times.

What constitutes a book and the pages within, had been completely rewritten by some of the artworks on display, freeing our minds to explore beyond the confines of archaic definitions. From the childhood memories of a grandmother's kitchen to wine, women & poetry, the artworks spoke volumes about the conviction in the self while finding the divine in nature.

The boxed life of a woman with dementia and memories of dreams some of which were realized had been exquisitely displayed in forms and shapes that defy the definition of a book. Some of the artworks were cathartic in nature as they revealed the

metamorphoses of the artists' personality and their objective outlook towards life as a whole. The visceral emotions that the artworks evoked were palpable.

On 8th of March 2024, celebrating International Women's Day, an Open Day was organized at the gallery where a curated walk of the exhibits was followed by presentations from three of the participating artists, Mr. Bikas, Ms. Sharmila and Dr. Neerja, on their artistic journeys, which was an insightful and indiscernibly explicit portrayal of their life as an artist.

The participating artists were Bikash Chandra Senapati, Leticia H Alvares, Munindra N Bhattacharyya, Dr. Neerja Chandna Peters, Nikhileshwar Baruah, Peevee, Pranjit Sarma, Dr. Raj Kumar Mazinder, Sharmila Aravind, Srinivasan M R and Vincent Philip

The show was on till the 13th March 2024, at The Art Route Gallery, Gurugram.



SriniVASAN.M.R.

Vasan left a career in IT Management to explore the creative world. He has a passion for travel photography and portraiture. His foray into conceptual art began through a show titled FLUID in 2017 to portray the socio-economic dependencies on water. After a show titled MENTALITY in 2021, highlighting mental health issues in today's ever-changing and challenging world, his journey of self-exploration and artistic interpretation continues with this show themed around memories.

UPCOMING EXHIBITIONS!

...On The Same Page collective is working towards putting together two engaging shows this year.

The first one, from July 20th to 27th 2025, at Karnataka Chitrakala Parishad, Bengaluru!

The show titled **LOC - LINES OF CONFLICTS**, will showcase artist's books created by 19 artists, on the singular chosen theme - CONFLICTS. The participating artists are:

Anju Saranya
Bikash Acharjee
Dr. Neerja Chandna Peters
Dr. Rajkumar Mazinder
Ekta Sharma
Manjunath Honnapura
Meenakshi Jha Banerjee
Munindra Narayan Bhattacharyya
Peevee
Pramit Parnapaul
Pranjit Sarma
Ravikumar Kashi
Sanskar Verma
Seema Pandey
Sharmila Aravind
Shijo Jacob
Sindhu R V
Srinivasan M R
Vishakha Hardikar Mall



Karnataka
Chitrakala
Parishath

1

2

The second edition of exhibition of book art on CONFLICTS, will be at the Academy of Fine Arts, Kolkata from 15th to 24th October, 2025, with 15 artists showcasing their creations.



About OTSP

...ON THE SAME PAGE,(OTSP), founded in 2022, is a select network of accomplished artists who share their passion towards creating predominantly Artists' Books and other atypical unique projects. With a democratic structure and self-curation, the sole aim of this artists' collective with varied individual backgrounds, is to bring contemporary art practices into the foray without losing connections with the traditional and cultural milieu.

MIC@OTSP - is a path OTSP has carved out to bring together practitioners of Book Art to share their journeys, experiences, explorations as online presentations, with the sole objective of building a strong fraternity of book artists.

Additionally, LINES - Book Art Zine is an initiative to delve into deeper connections with book artists, extract from their rich experiences and build a narrative which will strengthen the tapestry of artist's books for posterity.

Sharmila Aravind
(Visual Artist,
Founder - OTSP, Bangalore)

Pranjit Sarma
(Artist, Academician,
Founder - OTSP, Jaipur)

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