

the Gold Leaf

THE JOURNAL OF THE
HAND BOOKBINDERS OF CALIFORNIA



Making parchment in Tallinn

VOLUME THIRTY-ONE, NUMBER TWO
FALL 2014

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Letter from the Editor

In pulling together the articles for this issue, I came across this quote, and I'd like to share it with you:

To be able to create something in art, artists must have some sort of technique so that they can convey their ideas freely. Without technique, the artist is like someone trying to produce a novel without being able to write.

If the artist lacks originality and temperament, he will only ever be able to copy nature, reproducing something without giving it a soul. –Jaan Koort, *Estonian Home*, no. 3/1911

Part of what makes bookbinding so intriguing and fulfilling for many of us is the opportunity it offers to marry perception, insight, imagination, expression, and technique. A union of hand, heart, and soul. The foundations of creativity and purposeful design.

Hopefully, this issue will expose you to techniques and areas of interest that pique your curiosity and enrich your own personal approach to your craft.

Laine Tammer, Editor

Jane Aaron

Friends of Jane H. Aaron will be saddened by the news of her death Thursday, February 12, 2015. She was 92 and had been in poor health for some time. She died in hospital in Palo Alto, CA.

Jane lived in Swarthmore, PA for many years until she moved to California in 1992 to be near her four children. She studied bookbinding with Trudy Eberhardt in Pennsylvania and with Joanne Sonnichsen after her move. She was a member of the Hand Bookbinders of California, the Guild of Book Workers, the Roxburghe Club, and the Book Club of California.

Jane worked with Margaret Johnson for many years conserving the libraries of the Pennsylvania Hospital in Philadelphia and the Strybing Arboretum in San Francisco. Her fine bindings have been shown several times in the annual HBC Members Exhibitions.

She is survived by her children: Jane, Nancy, Harriotte, and Jack, her two granddaughters, and her sister Nancy Packer, in Palo Alto. The Jane Aaron Scholarship Fund for members of HBC who are taking workshops in bookbinding was formed with the proceeds of the sale of Jane Aaron's bindery, at her request.

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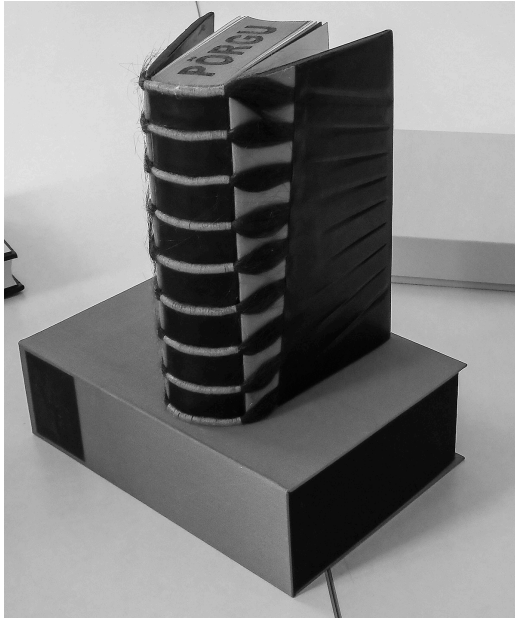


Photo taken May 3, 2010, at Jane's Palo Alto home, where she hosted the May HBC meeting. From left to right: Nigel Gore, Margaret Johnson, Elaine Wismer, Eleanore Ramsey, Coleen Curry, Jane Aaron, Sandy Good, Judy Houghteling. In front are Juliayn Coleman, and Regina and Bob Rosenzweig.

From the Exhibits Chairs

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We are excited to announce that the 43rd Annual Members Exhibition of The Hand Bookbinders of California will be held this summer (June 12 - September 13, 2015) in the newly remodeled facilities of the American Bookbinders Museum, 856 Folsom Street, San Francisco, CA 94107. We will be their first temporary exhibition and look forward to a long and mutually beneficial partnership between our two organizations. Any members who wish to participate must complete an Intent to Enter form by April 1, and submit all materials to be exhibited by May 1, 2015. All necessary forms and additional information are available at the HBC website.



Estonian binding of Dante's Inferno; see article on p. 14

From the Membership Chair

As of December, 2014, HBC membership stands at 147 individuals and 13 groups.

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Since the printing of the Membership Roster, we welcome new members:

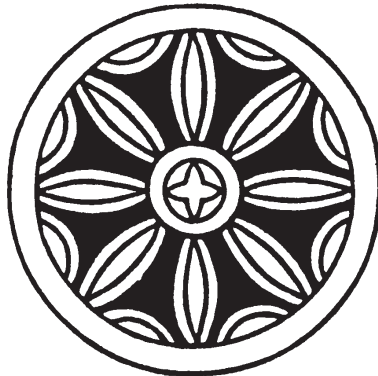
Beth Redmond, Catherine Witherell, Kathryn Ortolano, Annemarie Munn, Abigail Schoolman-Stevens, and Laurent Cruvellier.

Notably there have been 25 new members since January, so a belated welcome as well to:

Claire Siepser, Benita Tsao, Don Hare, Kimberly Char, Tiana Krähn, Nina Eve Zeining, Dorothy A. Yule, Sabina Lanier, Justine Wuebold, Katherine Bower, Frankie Ridolfi, Elizabeth Boyne, Mary Ely & Wayne Salk, Dr. Ludwig Mohr, Jennifer Nicholson, Annabelle Shrieve, Kit Lucas, and Mary Marsh.

Some of our new members completed the SFCB bookbinding certificate program, giving them free membership in HBC for a year. This is a fantastic accomplishment, and we applaud their efforts:

Richard Pollock-Nelson, Benita Tsao, Kimberly Char, Tiana Krähn, Justine Wuebold, and Cheryl Ball.



From the Programs Chair

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This Fall was truly amazing at Hand Bookbinders of California (HBC).

It began in October with a great presentation-demonstration by our amazing and generous Tom Conroy. Tom brought a book ready to be covered in full leather using the “Crumpled Leather” technique. It was a very informative and enlightening evening. It’s possible to track down a little video of the demonstration on Facebook. It should give you a pretty good idea of how to work with it.

Then in November, James Keenan (President of the American Association of Bookplate Designers and Collectors) talked about BOOKPLATES. See the article in this issue of the Gold Leaf.

The Fall ended with our Holiday gathering, which this year was a party offered and hosted by our esteemed member Sally Kaufmann Cowan at her home in San Francisco. She even added valet parking as parking in her neighborhood is never available. The party was delightful, and our host was so gracious. We mingled and got to know other members a lot better. The gift exchange was rather interesting, and we saw a few marvelous exemplars of our members’ work. The food, desserts, wines, tea, and coffee were truly delicious. I was delighted to get a glimpse of Norman McKnight’s next publication (secretly I hope to buy the book in sheets) under his brand Philoxenia Press. Glad to hear that our very own Coleen will start teaching in the Bay Area in the near future, but if you cannot wait, she will be teaching at AAB in Telluride next summer.

We have a busy beginning in 2015. Don’t forget to visit our Events page to find out about <<Bookish Events>> in California and Beyond: <http://www.handbookbinders.org/events/>

From the Workshops Chair

Hand Bookbinders of California will be hosting the following workshop this March in San Francisco:

INSTRUCTOR: Mark Andersson

CLASS DATES: March 23 - 27, 2015, Monday thru Friday, from 9:30 - 5:30 each day

LOCATION: San Francisco Center for the Book, 375 Rhode Island St., San Francisco

CLASS FEE: \$700 + \$50 materials fee for members, \$750 for non-members + \$50 materials fee for members

REGISTER: www.handbookbinders.org/workshops

See the website for more detailed information about the binding.

SCHOLARSHIP: We offer a scholarship for half the tuition. The form can be downloaded from our website's workshops page.

A sprinkled half calf binding is the perfect introduction to the most iconic form of bookbinding — books with raised cords and leather along the spine. In this one week class, students will make the Scandinavian version of a sprinkled half binding from the 1700s. The half calf binding (as opposed to the full calf) was originally used as a means of reducing the cost of bindings, by substituting paper for leather on the front and back covers. This historical style binding covering the spine and corners can serve as a great introduction to leather, or advanced students can choose to do a full calf binding instead. It is a great way to learn how to use the spokeshave to pare leather.

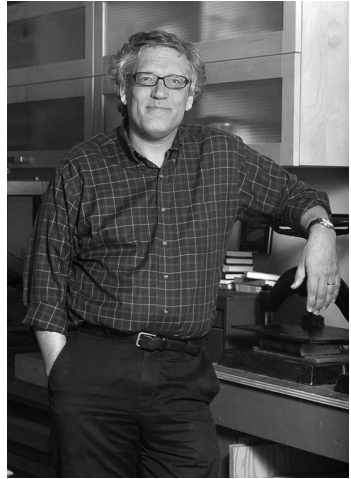
If you would like more information about accommodations or any other questions, please feel free to post to the HBC listserv at the following address: hbc-email_list@yahoogroups.com

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Interview with Mark Andersson

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Mark Andersson is President of the Guild of Book Workers, and was the head (and sole) instructor of the bookbinding department of the North Bennet Street School for nine years. He will be visiting San Francisco in late March to teach a workshop for HBC. He was interviewed by Juliayn Coleman.



GL: Can you tell me about the name ‘Single Flexible’? Single what, and what is flexible about the binding?

MA: I don’t know where the name ‘single flexible’ came from. My assumption is that it comes from the book being sewn on a flexible support—sewing cords. The first method of sewing these books were sewn on two supports, and so were known as double flexible sewing. As books became smaller it wasn’t necessary to use the second support. A bit part of this structure is that the cords are used as the board attachment, so single flexible would have half the board attachment of a double flexible. That was important when books were the size of phone books, but not so necessary when books became much smaller and thinner. Regardless of the sewing supports, they are amazingly flexible structures. You can take a single flexible binding and open it as far as pushing the two boards together and they open beautifully. The spine flexes evenly, and it’s almost poetic.

GL: What can you tell me about the binding’s origins, and/or how did you learn it?

In this class we’re going to do a binding I saw on the shelves of the library I worked at in Sweden for a year. It struck me because of its beautiful endpaper construction—the decorated paper is only on the pastedown and not the first flyleaf. Also, it uses a hooked endpaper, which is pretty unusual for American binders to make or be familiar with. It has its advantages and disadvantages, and is pretty cool to make.

The binding I copied was from the mid-1700s. It also has sprinkled leather and paper for the covers.

GL: Are there variations to this binding? What can it be used for today?

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MA: You could certainly do this as a full leather binding. Its use today would be as a historical example, but my wife has used several of them as journals because they open so well and are so easy to use. It also is a book that will impress your friends.

GL: Will we be using a spokeshave to pare the calfskin? What are the advantages of using a spokeshave over other paring methods?

MA: Since it is a calf binding, we'll be using a spokeshave. I understand one can pare calf with a Schärf-fix or Brockman paring machine but I was taught not to do it so I haven't tried. The spoke shave allows the paring of leather without having to fold or bend it or do anything that has the potential to damage the skin side of the leather. Once the skin side of calf has been marred in some way it can't be undone. Even folks who use a Schärf-fix for goat use a spokeshave for calf paring.

GL: Tell me a bit about your experiences learning bookbinding in Uppsala, Sweden. Why did you go there, and what did you learn? Was language a problem, especially learning Swedish terms for bookbinding tools, materials, and methods?

MA: I went to Sweden because I wanted to learn more than was covered during my time at North Bennet Street School. I had been out of school for three or four years and felt that I had digested my training there and wanted to learn more. I had been to Sweden as an undergraduate, so knew the country mildly well. I spoke Swedish somewhat, because I had taken Swedish in high school and college, and had been there for six months. Still, everyone in Sweden under 50 is fluent in English so language was not an issue at all.

My focus in Sweden was to learn binding styles and techniques unique to that part of the world, or that were uncommon to American trained binders. So I made models of interesting bindings I saw there and ended up with probably 40 books I bound during the year I was there. It was insanely fun, interesting, and useful.

GL: Over the nine years you were head of the Bookbinding department at the North Bennet Street School, what changes have you noticed in general interest in learning the craft of bookbinding? Has it increased?

MA: I think there is increased interest mainly because more folks are finding out it is a viable hobby, craft, trade, or career. I would have gone into this out of high school but didn't even realize it was a field until I was in my late 20s. I don't think that's an unusual experience. But with the web, the Guild, the various centers for the book around the country and book arts programs, I think the field is more accessible than almost any time in history.

GL: What are some things you'd like to accomplish as president of the Guild of Book Workers? We know you have already launched the effort to make sure that all the printed materials from Standards presentations are available online to members. Are there any other projects you'd like the Guild to offer?

MA: There are so many things the Guild can do. Personally my holy grail is to get the Standards videos available as digital downloads but there are a lot of issues to be worked through before that can happen. The people serving on the Guild board do a great job and give a lot of their time to various initiatives which happen either when they have the time to take on new projects, or when members step up with offers to volunteer.

We need to make ourselves known more to younger binders and artists. It is a very valuable organization and will be even more valuable as we move forward and grow.



Eggshell Veneer

A Class with Gavin Dovey

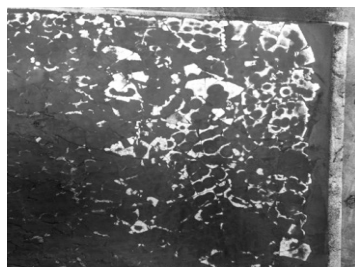
Lisa Heer

Oct 11, 2014 at the San Francisco Center for the Book; taught by Gavin Dovey of Paper Dragon Books

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Gavin was an excellent teacher, very organized, very clear, very personable and a wonderful new addition to the bookbinding community of the San Francisco Bay Area. The process was not overly complicated, but involved a

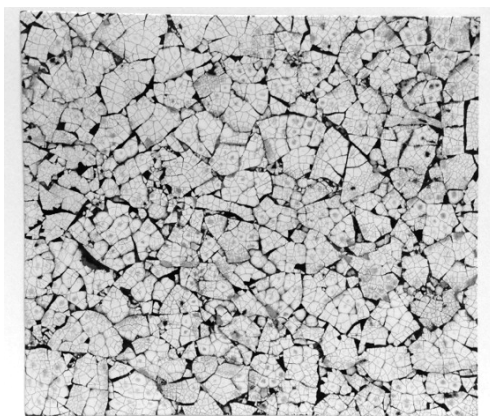


lot of hard work sanding down the several coats of acrylic gesso which “caulked” together the delicate pieces of eggshell. I was so enthralled by the result, I went home and made another two sheets on my own. I’ve been collecting all my eggshells and those of my friends in anticipation of making more panels in the near

future. I only took a few informal pictures on my iPhone as visual notes for the process.

After gluing the eggshells to a heavy paper substrate, we pressed them and did a quick sand of the rough edges.

Next we applied a coat of acrylic gesso, allowed it to dry, and then sanded until the whites of the eggshell shone through again. We repeated this process a couple of times.



My final result (much more pleasing than the sore arms I had the next morning!)

Leather Arts in Estonia

Laine Tammer

*The
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This summer, while taking a trip to Estonia, I had the honor and privilege of being able to visit with two outstanding artists: Sirje Kriisa, chairperson of the Estonian Association of Designer Bookbinders (<http://www.scriptamanent.ee>), and Lennart Mänd, Head of Department of Leather Art, Faculty of Design at the Estonian Academy of Arts.

They graciously gave me a tour of the Academy's facilities. The department is in smaller, temporary quarters while new facilities are being built. I had a chance to pore over bookbinding works by students in the Bachelor and Masters programs, as well as some of Lennart Mänd's experimental gilding works. What a pleasure and inspiration!



Logistically, what I found intriguing was how the Design faculty had organized the curriculum, with a focus on problem solving and collaboration. To better explain, I've extracted from Lennart Mänd's introductory article in the Department's *Nahakunst 95* catalog.

“Nobody would deny that the study program is a process, which needs to be constantly developed, updated, and adapted.

We had ready a stage by 2009 where the changed study program, besides essential alterations, also needed to change its name. Thus, leather art was renamed as ‘Leather Art, Accessory Design and Bookbinding’. Not exactly a snappy name, but it makes quite clear what is involved here.

The approach in the entire specialty has certainly become more design-focused and in our practical work we pay more attention to functionalism; emphasizing sustainable aspects now seems so normal that we often forget to mention it altogether.

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The special subjects of leather art are divided into two large groups, which reach through all three Bachelor program years:



Accessory projects dealing with bags, footwear, gloves, and headgear, and bookbinding projects including historical bookbinding structures, traditional and contemporary bookbinding and design, artist’s book and replicated bookbinding design.

Specialty studies are supported by traditional technologies such as gilding, print technologies, leather decorating techniques, making paper, etc., plus experimenting with materials (making parchment, cuir bouilli technology, etc.)

The joint curriculum enables the students more freedom to decide about the content of their education, and opportunities to participate in projects that support the theme chosen for their MA paper.

All changes serve two aims that at first glance might seem contradictory — provide contemporary quality education and maintain traditional professional know-how.”

While many graduates of the program have gone on to do fine bindings, others have gone on to work at Hermes. What unites them and allows them to articulate their designs is the knowledge of technique.

Lessons Learned in Making Parchment

*The
Gold
Leaf*

Written by Eve Kaaret. Translation reproduced with permission from the Department of Leather Art of the Estonian Academy of Arts catalog, Nahakunst 95

At experimental leather technique courses we have been dealing with unusual techniques, such as wet moulding and boiling, we have tested the characteristics of various types of leather and used raw hides. An idea emerged from the course to try making parchment. Following the examples of historical leather tools, we made a number of knives and scrapers of various sizes, and frames for drying leather. The workshop was carried out in the courtyard of the house at 7 Estonia pst.

Making parchment requires about 2 weeks of sunny weather, plenty of water, about half a bucket of lime, parking space for at least 4 cars, and someone who knew a veterinary surgeon who would give us some rawhides.

In addition to valuable experience we learned that:

- ▶ the hides had to be stirred in limewater every day, also during weekends and national holidays, adding lime until it has permeated the hide and turned it light;
- ▶ the skin must be stretched on the frame with the flesh side up, otherwise the stretching pegs would come out of the holes when you do the scraping;
- ▶ the wet skin stretched on the frame must be rubbed with chalk on the flesh side so that the connective tissue under the skin would not dry and get attached to the skin;
- ▶ a computer hard disc makes an excellent scraper;
- ▶ the skin scraped really thin can be finally smoothed over with a wet hand on both sides, which makes the parchment smooth and pretty;
- ▶ the parchment drying on the frame looks so beautiful that you can hang it on the wall for others to admire.

The Hand Bookbinders of California Annual Members' Exhibition 2015

CALL FOR ENTRIES

The Hand Bookbinders of California's 43rd Annual Members' Exhibition will be held this upcoming summer from **June 12 – September 13, 2015** in the newly remodeled facilities of the **American Bookbinders Museum**, 856 Folsom Street, San Francisco, CA 94107. We will be their first exhibition and look forward to a long and mutually beneficial partnership between our two organizations.

If you would like to participate you must be a member in good standing of the HBC (you may join or renew your membership online at www.handbookbinders.org/membership/) and must submit the following Intent to Enter form with a **\$30 Entry fee** (personal check or money order made out to the Hand Bookbinders of California) to:

S. Houghteling
1661 Pine Street #1136
San Francisco CA 94109

Your Intention to Enter must be received by April 3, 2015. You may enter two books for the single entry fee. A single entry may also consist of several components. Once we have received your entry fee and Intent to Enter form, we will forward further instructions for the submission of your work and catalog entry information forms.

The deadline for all materials to be included in the exhibition is May 1st 2015. Caution: while we may

THE DEADLINE FOR ALL MATERIALS TO BE INCLUDED IN THE EXHIBITION IS MAY 1, 2013. CAUTION: WHILE WE MAY SOMETIMES ACCEPT LATE WORKS FOR EXHIBITION, WE CANNOT GUARANTEE THEIR INCLUSION IN THE EXHIBITION CATALOG. IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, PLEASE CONTACT EITHER LISA HEER AT lpheer@sbcglobal.net OR JUDY HOUGHTLING AT signahoughtling@gmail.com.

INTENT TO ENTER

Name:

Address:

City:

State: **Zip:**

Email:

Entry 1:

Type of Object (*Fine Binding, Box, Historical Structure, Book Arts, etc.*):

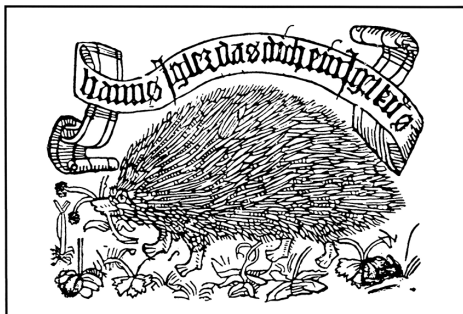
Title:

Dimensions (*rough estimate*):

Bookplates: Contemporary Marks of Book Ownership, or, That's My Book!

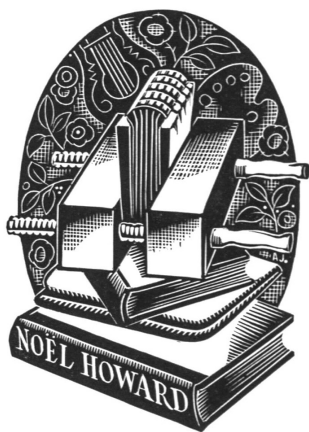
James P. Keenan

For as long as books have been in print, there have been bookplates. The bookplate, or *ex libris*, is a label, or a small graphic art print that is commonly pasted onto the inside front cover of a book. *Ex libris* is Latin for “from the books of” or “from the library of.” These personal marks of book ownership serve as a warning to book borrowers and provide a convenient, individualized way for books owners to identify themselves and show pride in owning a library.



*The first known plate. The Iglers.
Germany 1450*

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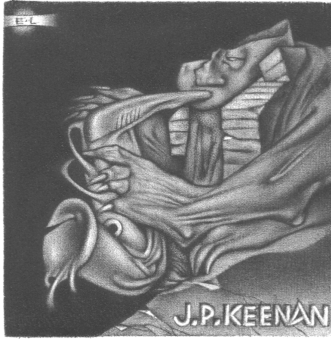


*Allan Jordan (1898-1982).
Australia*

Throughout more than five and half centuries of the art form, many of the most important artists in the world have designed them. Included are Albrecht Durer, Hans Holbein, Paul Revere, Nathaniel Hurd, Marc Chagall, Salvador Dali, Gustav Klimt, Maxfield Parrish, Aubrey Beardsley, and Diego Rivera---among a long list of others.

Most bookplates tell a story. Designs represent the fashion, architecture, politics, and styles of the period, not to mention the tastes and interests of the book's owner.

*The
Gold
Leaf*



*Yuri Borovitsky
(b. 1955). Russia*

A bookplate can be strictly utilitarian, bearing only the owner's name, or it can be an extraordinary work of art. Popular techniques include woodcuts, linocuts, and engravings on wood, plastic, copper, or steel. Methods also encompass etchings, aquatints, mezzotints, lithography, decorative typography, and now, even computer-generated designs.

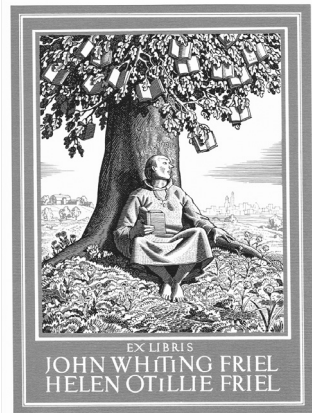
In the 21st century, art connoisseurs and book collectors developed a significant interest in collecting these personal marks. Now and then, a percentage of the printed edition is used in a personal library and the remaining prints are used for exchange purposes. As established in the 1890s, it is through exchanges that collections are built.

BOOKPLATE COLLECTING

As the interests in collecting developed, the first Ex Libris Society was founded in London in 1891. By the end of that year, membership included more than three hundred enthusiasts. Interest in this pastime promptly spread across the Atlantic and throughout Europe. In the United States, the first bookplate society was organized in 1896 as the Washington Ex-Libris Society. Since 1922, the American Society of Bookplate Collectors & Designers (ASBC&D) has been the forerunner in North America.

During the first part of the 20th century, bookplates were produced in original signed, numbered print editions and used primarily for exchange.

In the 21st century, art connoisseurs and book



*Rockwell Kent
(1888-1972). USA*

Unique to this art form, bookplate collections accumulate through the exchange of duplicate prints and collectors will have different designs made specifically for the purposes of trading. Collectors will commission dozens and perhaps hundreds of the best contemporary artists, the goal being to increase the size, scope, and quality of their holdings. They keep checklists and organize the prints by artist, technique, and period. This is our tradition. Some personal collections number in the hundreds of thousands!

Collecting is a companionable occupation allowing one to meet collectors and many of the best artists of the time. Grace B. Sibley was an American collector living in Australia during the late 1930's. Sibley once said, "Like music, bookplates speak all languages and are virtually small ambassadors of friendship and international understanding when exchanged with the bookplates of collectors in other countries."



*David Lance Goines
(b. 1945). USA*

Ex Libris congresses were initiated in Europe as early as 1953, with the first meeting held in Austria. Eventually, European meetings were organized annually and hosted by bookplate associations in their respective countries, providing a forum for contacts and exchanges between artists and collectors.

In 1966, the Fédération Internationale des Sociétés d'Amateurs d'Ex-libris (FISAE) was organized at Hamburg, Germany. In English, this association is known as the International Federation of Bookplate Societies.

With nearly 60 associated nations, the FISAE biennial congress has become the event for serious bookplate collectors, always presenting several fine exhibitions of both historical and contemporary works. Uniting collectors, book artists, engravers, scholars, historians, librarians, educators, art lovers, and researchers, the meetings are hosted by a different member

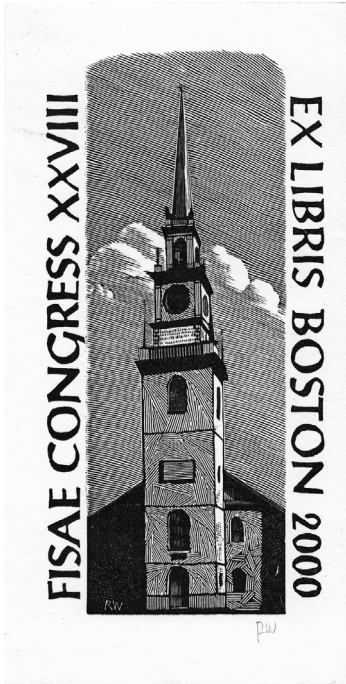
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nation each time.

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At the 2012 FISAE meeting at Naantali, Finland, the ASBC&D proposed that the 2022 meeting be held in the San Francisco Bay Area. The groundwork has been laid, but there is much event planning to do. This meeting is 22 years after the first

USA congress held in Boston in 2000 and will celebrate the Society's 100th anniversary. We can expect to enjoy international participation.



*FISAE: Boston 2000
by Richard Wagener (b.
1944). USA*

AMERICAN ARTISTS OF THE BOOKPLATE

In 1978 Cambridge Bookplate (CB) was established. Starting out with 12 graphic artists from the Boston area, CB's vision was to promote interest in this nearly forgotten graphic art form in the USA. They provided custom bookplates, as well as unsigned, unnumbered "special editions" for libraries and individuals. In Boston, CB also presented many small exhibitions in clubs, libraries, schools, art associations, library expositions.

Since then, Cambridge Bookplate went on to organize much bigger shows of contemporary works that

were presented at Harvard University, Boston Athenaeum, Boston Public Library along with dozens public, private, and university libraries throughout New England.

This bookplate activity in the States has generated many popular articles and books and introduced the graphic art form to a much wider audience, bringing new members into the ASBC&D.

AMERICAN SOCIETY OF BOOKPLATE COLLECTORS & DESIGNERS

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The American Society of Bookplate Collectors & Designers (ASBC&D) is a USA 501(c)(3) non-profit, charitable organization, dedicated to furthering the art and study of bookplates. Now a growing international association with subscribers from more than 50 nations, it continues to enliven interest in bookplate art through publications, exhibitions, conferences, and electronic media.

In 2015, the Society is relocating its headquarters to the San Francisco Bay Area, a region where book arts activity is unsurpassed in the Americas.

The Society has a colorful and informative presentation to take on-the-road. Entitled **BOOKPLATES: The Art of This Century**, it explores the art form from its beginnings through contemporary times. Although primarily focused on American artists and collectors, it also illustrates the extraordinary quality of handmade bookplates being created in the rest of the world. This is a great presentation! For more information, please write.

Over the past 30 years, the ASBC&D has organized over thirty exhibitions of bookplates. One of the contemporary international presentations became a large traveling show that visited more than 25 libraries across the United States from 2000 through 2008.

You can visit ongoing “virtual” exhibitions of contemporary works in the “Art of This Century Gallery” on the ASBC&Ds website at: www.bookplate.org. Beyond having an online presence, the Society’s goal is to establish an ex libris research center in the United States within the next few years. More than twelve bookplate museums exist throughout the world today. These are located in Denmark, Russia, Poland, Italy, Belgium, Greece, Turkey, China, to name a few. At last, the USA is ready!

What's Bound in Vegas...

2014 Standards Diary

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Juliayn Coleman

I was really happy to attend Standards of Excellence Seminar this year. Standards is the annual conference held by the US umbrella organization for bookbinders, the Guild of Book Workers. At the conference, there are presentations and demonstrations by individuals at the top of the field. These conferences have been held since 1982, and although the structure has evolved, the one thing I feel that has not changed is the very high standard of the presenters. This year was no exception. There was a wide range of presentation styles and topics, somewhat loosely arranged on a medieval theme since the hosting hotel was the Excalibur, but each presenter had a lot of expertise to share.

The four presenters were: Emily Martin speaking on and demonstrating her award-winning carousel book; Peter Geraty demonstrating how to make a book in the Parchment Over Boards style with a floating board structure to control warping;



Jana Dambrogio discussing and demonstrating the technique of sealing letters shut by means of interlocking folds; and Renate Mesmer demonstrating the medieval girdle book. Videos of all of their presentations are available to Guild members through the Guild's lending library. Handouts accompanying the presentations are available for free download through links to the Guild's Resources page.

Peter Geraty's sumptuous parchment bindings

Scanning over that page, I discovered the topic of covering in vellum has been demonstrated a surprising number of times, with a presentation from Silvia Rennie on half vellum at the 1985 Standards held in San Francisco. Peter Geraty's version was well organized, with several staged models-in-process. His work is incomparably tidy and well-ordered. I



*Renate Mesmer's
girdle books*

was surprised to learn he uses rice starch for paste most of the time, something I've never tried. More than a few of us in the audience were interested in the tool he uses in place of a disposable-edge craft knife. He has a knife with a thick edge that was once made by Tandy, and can be easily stropped instead of tossing the blades. The floating board concept was very intriguing, somewhat like a drummed-on board.

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Emily Martin was a great presenter, and I felt amazed by the planning that went into her making of the carousel book, a type of pop-up book in the round. The combination of letterpress printing and trace monoprinting was new to me.

I enjoyed Jana Dambrogio's presentation on letterlocking very much. She is an excellent speaker, and had some interesting anecdotes to share from her studies at the Vatican's secret archives of letters penned by kings and queens of old, and from teaching with monkeys (!) at MIT. She had prepared examples of locked letters that everybody in attendance could try out to learn the folds.

Renate Mesmer's presentation was steeped in lots of research into the topic of girdle books. As much as one hears about them, I was surprised to learn there are only 23 girdle books in existence today. Mesmer was able to explain where each one is located, its country of origin, specific information



*Jim Croft's buttons and folders of
bone*

about each, and so on. She also showed us artwork depicting girdle books that show how they were intended to be used, and who owned them. Her presentation was a sensible partnership with Jim Croft, who displayed saws, axes, other tools, and pieces of wood on the dais to set the tone of the presentation.

Standards also includes tours arranged by the conference

organizers, usually of local conservation labs or points of local interest. The tour this time was of the UNLV Special Collections Department, and the Digitization Lab for the flip side of that coin. Highlights brought out by the Librarian reflected some of the fun material one might expect to see in Las Vegas: brightly-colored dinner menus

from some of the casinos' early days; sparse city plans from Las Vegas's beginnings as a waypoint for trains needing a place to stop on their long journeys from Los Angeles to Salt Lake City; collections of early books about gaming and artwork on decks of playing cards; and the glamorous collection of drawings of show girls used as advertisements by the theaters. There were also some unexpected beauties, including the collection of miniature artists' books. We got to visit the well-appointed Conservation and Digitization Labs at the UNLV Library as well.



early editions of Hoyle's games

The hotel that was chosen was, unfortunately, not the best place for a bookbinding conference. Lots of cigarette smoking, alcohol flowing freely, and a casino on the main floor had most of us gasping for air each time we went from our rooms to the



colorful menu collection

conference area. The food in the hotel was mostly available through a food court. Quite the collision of worlds! I guess I must sound like a typical Californian, but the hotel environment sure had me wistful for the clean air of Mount Tam. My friend Cheryl and I found a city bus in order to leave The Strip and find some granola! Which was



more local color

terrific, and an interesting adventure in itself. Another fun thing I did this year was on a suggestion from a fellow bookbinder who was not attending: I updated a live Twitter feed from Standards. Standards can only accept 150 or so attendees, so a large proportion of bookbinders won't be able to see all the models of the presenters, the tours, the vendor tables, or the general mood of the place. Even

though it is silly to think you might be able to encapsulate all that happens at Standards in 140-character messages (most of mine were actually photos), it was fun to try.

One thing that makes Standards really shine for me is the people who are able to make it there. Being a private practitioner, and given the fact that a bookbinder's work is never complete, I hardly ever get to see my colleagues in person and have real-life chats with them. I was looking forward to seeing my colleagues and friends there this year, and it did not disappoint in that regard. AAB presents its graduates with their degrees at Standards each year. There are only a handful of people who have completed the full program there, so receiving a diploma from the AAB is a great honor, and my good friend Karen Hanmer was one of them this year. She brought some of her work that she had done recently, so we got to look over and handle the book she had made! Amazing!

Another person I was delighted to see this year was my bookbinding teacher from NBSS, Mark Andersson. Before traveling to Standards I noticed on his website that he had t-shirts made with the name of his bindery. I have never seen a t-shirt with a bindery name on it before, and of course since he's my teacher (not to mention President of the Guild!), I had to have one. The t-shirt



admiring Karen Hanmer's binding

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Two Workshops with Benjamin Elbel

by Coleen Curry

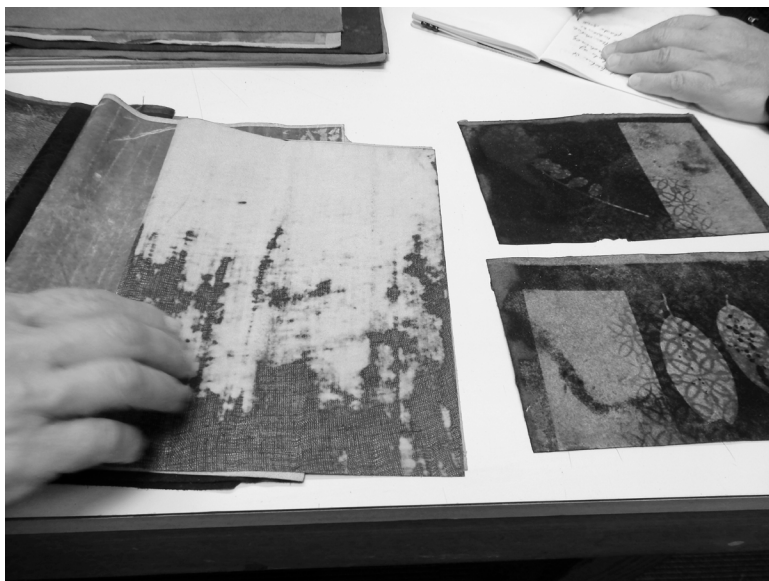
*The
Gold
Leaf*

Benjamin Elbel studied fine arts in France before specializing in bookbinding and book conservation at the Centro del Bel Libro in Ascona, Switzerland. Following that he gained hands-on experience in various binderies in Germany and England, before setting up his own studio in London in 2012. I met Ben at the Society of Bookbinders conference held in Leeds in August 2013. I admired his work, and was particularly intrigued by his modern, clean structures. I asked if he would be interested in teaching in SF as I knew he was planning a trip to the States the following summer. He said he would and we were able to squeeze 2 one-day workshops on September 15 & 16 at the SFCB: Leather Decoration and Dos Rapporté binding.

The leather decoration was fabulous! Although I have already been dying and treating the splits (something I had learned from Sün Evrard), this workshop enhanced my knowledge and opened up a plethora of new methods, materials, and ideas. We used leather split from the suede side of the skin (and sometimes the interior depending on the original skin thickness). One needs to have access to a paring machine or if you send your leather to be split, request for the split to be returned. The split is from 0.4 - 0.6mm thick and often various shades of color and interesting designs from the natural grain and texture of the skin. We stretched the split onto boards and taped the edges down. Ben then instructed us to add various mixtures of thin PVA and methyl-cell mixes directly to the split and then apply torn magazine pages, colored tissues, fabric etc. It was then pressed, sanded, painted, texture pressed into etc. A variety of finishes were experimented with from matte, satin, and gloss, using thin PVA or paste. I believe everyone produced amazing and beautiful pieces.

The second day was a workshop on a structure that Ben designed Dos Rapporté, which roughly translates to “spine made off the book and hooked on”. It is similar to a ledger binding, yet simpler. The binding has a flat back without a round and the spine piece pops back the binding opens flat. It opens beautifully and flows beautifully. Similar to a simplified binding, making the spine piece

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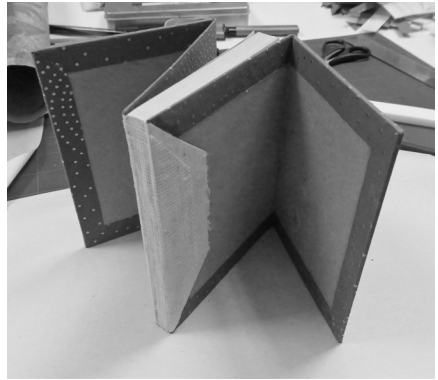
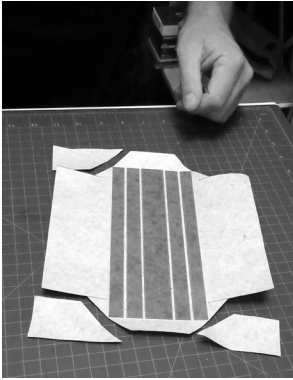


separate from the boards enables the binder to select contrasting materials and colors to incorporate into the design for example a leather spine with vellum boards.

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Gold
Leaf*

We all made one or two bindings and went away with ideas for future designs. I am currently working on a very large and thick binding using this structure, using leather for the spine piece and stone for the boards.

There is a wonderful article in the New Bookbinder: <https://www.behance.net/gallery/5604203/Article-for-The-New-Bookbinder>



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also says KÖR FÖR FAN, the equivalent of “get the lead out,” or “fish or cut bait” in Swedish. So cool!

Renate Mesmer was someone I have known of through ordering conservation materials through her company, Polistini, but finally got to meet at Standards. It was great to see her chiseling boards and hammering away at Jim Croft’s vendor table while the vendor room was going strong. Wearing a t-shirt saying “Meister”, she looked at my name tag and said, “Hey. I know that name. Don’t you order from Polistini?” Ha! When it came time for her presentation later the next day, Jim Croft brought his trombone into the meeting room and played a beautiful fanfare cadenza to introduce her presentation. Charming! Unfortunately I had to leave her presentation before it was finished to get on my plane, and missed her demonstration of the Turk’s head knot to complete the girdle book. To be continued...

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I missed the banquet as I often do, just in order to get back home and prepare for the following work week. In the final analysis, this was a great Standards. Getting to hang out with Mark and my friends was a high point. Seeing someone execute a parchment binding in approximately three hours, explaining as he went, was like witnessing a feat of superhuman accomplishment, even with staged models. I’m sure the hosting hotel will be remembered with quizzical chuckles by most attendees as time goes by. There is only one Vegas, and there will probably be only one Standards there. I can say I was there, and now you know that contrary to marketing catch phrases and movie titles, what was bound there can, in fact, be exported.



WORKSHOPS AND STUDY OPPORTUNITIES

*The
Gold
Leaf*

2015 California Rare Book School

Apply through their website: <http://www.calrbs.org>
The August series will be held mostly in southern California; the November series in the bay area.

San Francisco Center for the Book

375 Rhode Island Street, San Francisco
415-565-0545
www.sfcbook.org/workshops/binding

Summer courses for Michael Burke and Dominic Riley are posted on the Center's website; June 13-July 19 is the period during which they'll be in town, slightly earlier this year.

Ah Haa School for the Arts/American Academy of Bookbinding

Telluride, Colorado

For more information, visit their website: <http://bookbindingacademy.org/> or call 970-728-3886.

GBW California Chapter Sponsored Workshop

For further details such as location, cost, and how to register, visit <http://gbwcaliforniachapter.wordpress.com>. You do not need to be a Guild member to attend.

EXHIBIT OPPORTUNITIES

Marin Museum of Contemporary Art

The 6th Annual Altered Book/Book Arts Exhibition & Fundraiser
April 18 - May 23 Juror: Donna Seager

Reception: April 18th, 5:00 pm – 7:00 pm

The 6th Annual Altered Book/Book Arts Exhibition and Fundraiser will be held at MarinMOCA April 18 through May 23, 2015.

We are asking artists to donate a book art object for the show. All proceeds go to support the exhibitions and programs of the Marin Museum of Contemporary Art. Book arts can involve intricate paper folding, the use of heavy machinery and saws, the conceptual exploration of authorship and reading, or all of the above! The book arts community is a group of innovative, creative, and supportive artists, so this is the perfect time to give book arts a try.

Join us!

Membership in the Hand Bookbinders of California is annual, beginning on May 1 of each year. The Membership Fee is \$30, and a second member in the same household is \$5.

Benefits of membership include regular presentations & workshops, the opportunity to exhibit in the annual members exhibition, copies of the bi-annual Gold Leaf and the annual membership roster, invitations to special events, and dialogue through our monthly meetings and the HBC mail group at Yahoo! Groups.

There are three ways to join:

visit the HBC website: www.handbookbinders.org. You may now join or renew with our convenient Paypal option. If you are a new member or a renewing member with any changes in contact information, please also download and print the membership form. Fill in the necessary information and mail it back to us at the address below.

*write us: The Hand Bookbinders of California
 P.O. Box 193216
 San Francisco, CA 94119*

or, contact our Membership Coordinator, Lang Ingalls:

membership@handbookbinders.org

Appearing on www.handbookbinders.org, the biannual Gold Leaf is being offered in pdf format. Once the newest issue goes to print, the previous issue shall be posted on our website, plain for all to see. Please let Lang Ingalls (membership@hbc.org) know if you would prefer to save paper and receive it solely in this manner. If she does not hear from you, you will continue to receive the printed copy.

Members are encouraged to submit material to the Gold Leaf in the form of articles, reviews, announcements and news. For more info, fill out the contact form on our website, www.handbookbinders.org

COLOPHON

The *Gold Leaf* is produced bi-annually by the Hand Bookbinders of California. This issue was set in Sabon, a font designed by Jan Tschichold. The *Gold Leaf* is printed at Community Printers in Santa Cruz, California, a cooperatively owned, certified Monterey Bay Green Business. For every ton of paper Community Printers uses, an equivalent number of trees are planted through the organization Trees for the Future.



www.handbookbinders.org