



A visual journey through the Artists' Books

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Winchester School of Art Library is a specialist art and design resource within the University of Southampton Library, supporting learning, teaching and research.

The Artist's Book collection began in the 1960s and now numbers over 1000 items. It focuses on books made either by hand or in limited editions that illustrate contemporary practice.

Rather than enforcing a rigid collections policy the emphasis has been on engaging with students and researchers across disciplines, encouraging both the tradition of book making and the creative possibilities of challenging the book form.

Works have been acquired from both established names and new talent, (including staff and students at the School) from book fairs, exhibitions, specialist book shops and through a network of contacts. ➤➤➤

This exhibition highlights a small selection of the collection grouped around four themes: beginnings, narratives, interventions and constructions. It demonstrates the diversity of approaches and the relationship of content, form and physical material.

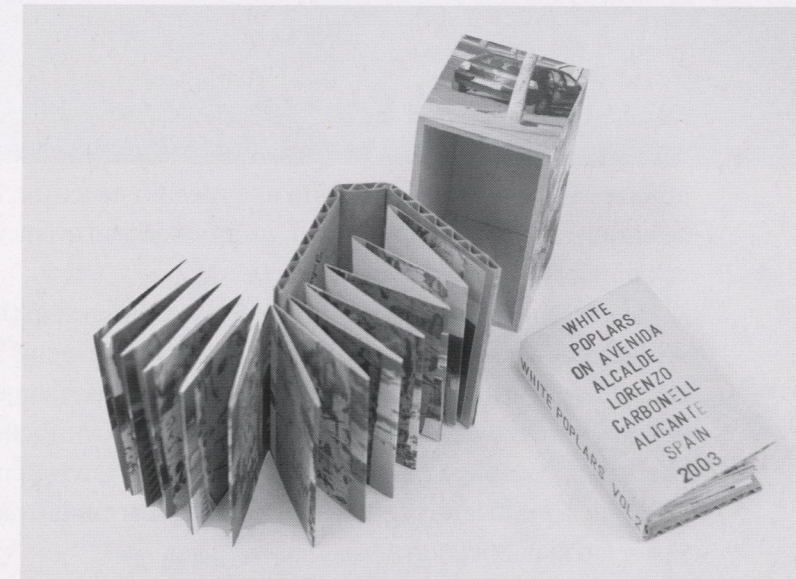
Beginnings

Contemporary artists' books have many antecedents, however this visual journey commences with books that developed out of the conceptual art movement of the 1960s. A single definition of the artists' book remains elusive as the field comprises many types and approaches, all of which are a part of this continuously developing art practice.

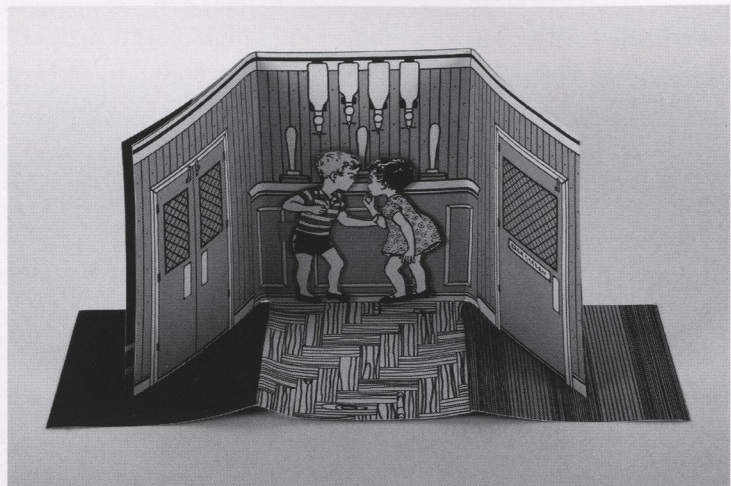
The exhibition includes a number of classics from these years by amongst others Ed Ruscha, Ian Hamilton-Finlay, Sol LeWitt and Steve Wheatley. These books illustrate the experimental nature of the early artists' books with their varied use of such forms as concrete poetry, photography, texts, visual images and typefaces. Image and text is used to convey ideas using the accessible and democratic form of the book. Some artists choose to produce their books relatively cheaply to ensure as wide a circulation as possible to a diverse audience. The book is a means of representing their work outside the art institution.

Edward Ruscha, an American artist, is considered by many a seminal figure in developing the artists' book. The book has been a continuing and sustained format which he has used as a means to convey his art beyond the confines of the gallery. His subject matter is often everyday objects, places, and texts that are taken for granted and the documentary approach is an essential part of their character. The work of contemporary artists such as Tom Sowden is intentionally referential to Ruscha.

Steve Wheatley was a former member of staff at Winchester School of Art. He began White Lies Publications in the mid 1970s first publishing the work of other artists and writers. In his own work he uses deceptively simple textual and conceptual devices which / to convey his playful sense of humour.



John Dilnot
 White poplars



Celia Warnants
Samuel loses control

Opposite
Sarah Bodman
How do I love thee?

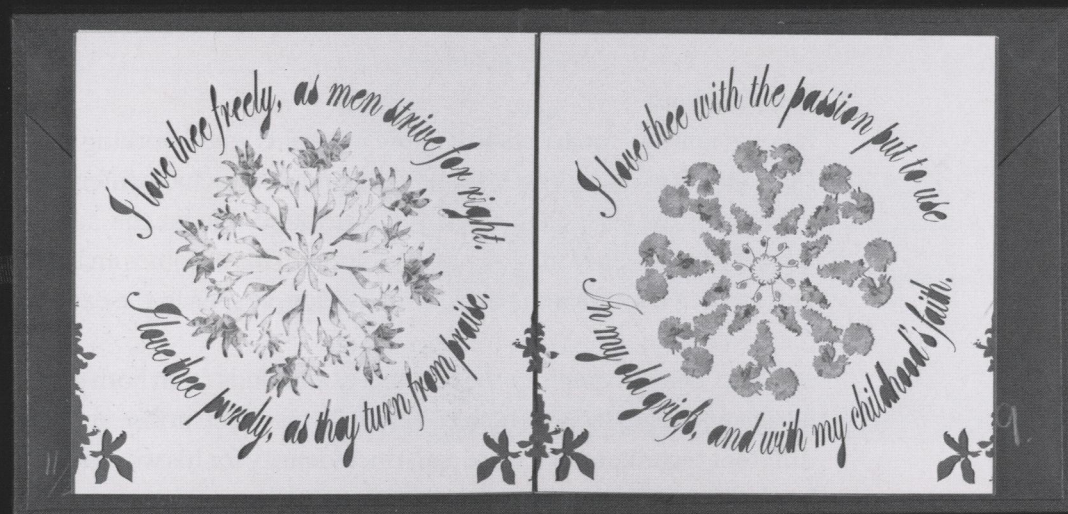
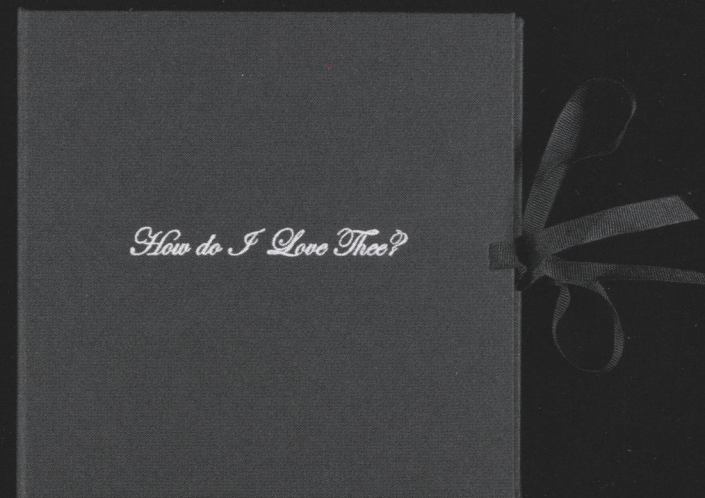
For the walking artists Richard Long and Hamish Fulton publishing is an essential record of their practice. Showing their work in book form renders it accessible to a wider public.

Narratives

An artists' book may present abstract, personal or political ideas through the use of stories. Artists use diaries, journals, and historical archives as both starting points or as a specific structure. Their intention may be to evoke a mood, a time of day, an event, a place, or a memory, through image and text.

Helen Douglas is an artist with a declared interest in the use of narrative as a potential for visual reading. To achieve this she often constructs continuous sequences of images that may sometimes embody text. A distinctive feature of her books is the focus on particular places and the character of particular environments. The delicacy and layering of her technique is particularly apparent in her latest publication *A Venetian brocade*.

Lucy May Schofield's journal *42* is a poetic and personal record of time spent deep in the Scottish countryside with a focus on the daily details of her winter hibernation, leading to this bare, minimally realised confession.



Sarah Bodman often uses archival sources and literature as starting points for her books; reading appears to be an essential part of her practice. She has developed a fictionalised account of the first public trial of James Marsh's test for the presence of arsenic in the human body as the story for her work *The Marsh test*.

Simon Morley has been making books since 1998 under the imprint Utopia Press. His books are an intrinsic part of his broader practice as an artist, such as paintings based on book covers and title pages. Morley explores the interaction between word and image, memory and cultural identity.

Interventions

Many artists take an existing book and transform the contents through intervention and innovation. One of the best known, which has become a canonical work, is *The Humument* by the artist Tom Phillips.

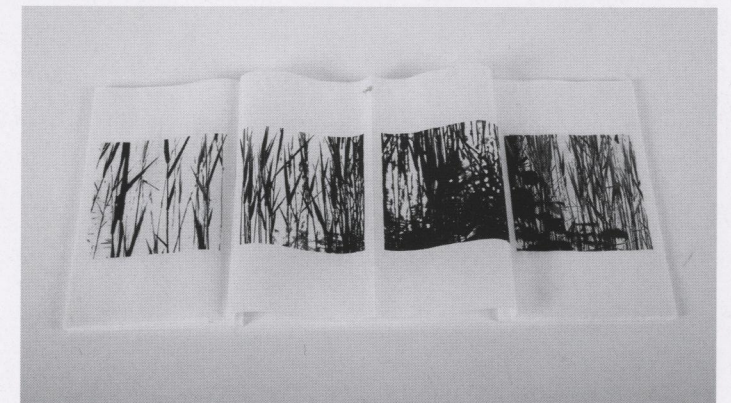
In contrast Celia Warnants took the classic children's books by Enid Blyton as a starting point for her innovation under the pseudonym Edith Fryton. She creates three dimensional pieces, subverting through her new imagery the activity of the children in these stories.

Constructions

It is not unusual for artists to explore materials when working with the book form. This practice can be expanded to include different formats and qualities of materials, or use found objects; the production methods may be high or low tec. This becomes an integral part of both concept and physical realisation, as seen in the examples displayed here.

John Dilnot combines the sensibility and skills from both graphic design and fine art. He produces varied forms which utilise and merge different techniques to create a distinct identity for his work, whether books, boxes, cards, maps, paintings or prints.

The classic novel *Sense and Sensibility* by Jane Austen and published by Penguin has been re-covered by Cally Barker in such a way that a domestic inference changes the formally modernist



Helen Douglas
Swan songs with damselflies

Treena Markland
Popcorn

Opposite
Judith Hammond
Transitions



character of the design. In Judith Hammond's *Transition* photographic images have been printed onto a dressmaker's patterns, folded and hand-stitched. It is collapsible, delicate and rustling, clearly showing the dress making instructions. It has been manipulated into a concertina construction retaining the qualities of pattern cutting and sewing.

Visionaire is a multi-format album of fashion and art produced as a series of works in numbered editions. It has been published three times each year since 1991 and includes both traditional books and works that are clearly three dimensional forms. *Artists toys* comes as a group of ten toys by ten artists, each toy consists of three nesting figures by a range of artists working across the disciplines of art and design.

