

Exhibition Overview

Making History:

Contemporary Handmade Books on New Mexico's Past

This juried exhibition features thirty-one handmade books created by twenty-seven members of the Santa Fe Arts Group and inspired by New Mexico history. In these books, New Mexico's dynamic history comes to life through individual artistic expression and skill. Many of the artists created works based on personal connections to local people and places. Other make reference to historical events.

The book form was widely interpreted by the artists. Some books are more sculptural than literary- a New Mexico trivia board game, a petroglyph puzzle, a pop-up book commemorating the first atomic bomb test, and flag, tunnel and miniature books. Media range from traditional calligraphy to computer generated text and imagery. A variety of binding techniques are represented, including accordion, album, codex and Coptic, some dating back centuries. The books cover a wide range of subjects, from *santos* and *descansos* to entertainment in 19th Century New Mexico.

The Santa Fe Book Arts Group describes itself as an “irreverent group of individualistic, experimental, resourceful and eccentric artists from every background” and “an organization devoted to the inventive spirit of the book form as a container for creative expression.”

Circulation of this exhibition is part of a statewide outreach programming partnership with the New Mexico State Library, Museum of Indian Arts & Culture, the Palace of the Governors and others, in conjunction with the exhibition *Lasting Impressions: The Private Presses of New Mexico*. Funding has been provided by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), a federal grant-making agency dedicated to creating and sustaining a nation of learners by helping libraries and museums serve their communities.

Visit www.privatepress.org to see *Lasting Impressions: The Private Presses of New Mexico*.

Suggestions for Docent Training
Making History: Contemporary Handmade Books on New Mexico's Past

Exhibition Themes

We hope that visitors to the exhibition will come away with an understanding and appreciation of:

1. The book as a work of art or expressive medium, not just something to read
2. The creative skills that go into making a book by hand
3. The diversity of book arts

Introduction to the Exhibition

This juried show features thirty-one handmade books on topics related to the history of New Mexico by members of the Santa Fe Book Arts Group. Subjects include people, places, events, ideas, issues, cultures, customs, celebrations, languages, locations, architecture, technologies, and occupations. A variety of contemporary book styles and techniques are represented. The jurors for this exhibition were Frances Levine, Director of the Palace of the Governors, Tomas Jaehn, Chief Librarian for the Fra Angelico Chavez History Library, and Tom Leech, Director of the Palace Press.

“In these books, New Mexico’s past is made accessible through individual expression and skill. Many of the artists have presented works based on personal connections to places or events. Some of the books are more sculptural than scholarly. But whether the subject is of local or even international significance, all of the pieces reflect the state’s dynamic and vital history.

The form of the books was widely interpreted by the artists. A variety of binding techniques are represented, including accordion, album, codex and Coptic bindings. Many of these binding styles predate today’s familiar “hardcover and paperback” by many centuries. Also to be found here are a board game, a puzzle, pop-up books, flag books, tunnel books and miniature books.

Media used in creating these books ranges from traditional calligraphy to computer generated text and imagery. The exhibit also includes video interviews with five artists represented in the show.” – Tom Leech, Curator and director of the Palace Press.

Who are the featured artists?

The featured artists are part of the Santa Fe Book Arts Group that describes itself as “an organization devoted to the inventive spirit of the book form as a container for creative expression.” They are “an irreverent group of individualistic, experimental, resourceful and eccentric artists from every background, working together in a sharing community.” The membership as of 12/04 lists 275 artists.

What are the “book arts”?

The book arts can be simply described as the use of the book form as an expressive artistic medium. A book artist changes the form and materials of the book to suit his or her personal vision. In the book arts, the materials and structure of the book often related to the content the book explores. Sometimes the materials actually replace text, and the book is purely visual; the image, structure and materials are the content. As you explore the objects in *Making History*, pay attention to the structure of the book. The specific structure may communicate something about the content of the book. Artists may have determined the structure of the book in response to what they were trying to communicate.

People who work in the book arts are, in many ways, dedicated to preserving the traditional craft of book-making as well as exploring an interpretation of the book as an art object. Book making is an ancient craft that preserves and presents the knowledge and ideas, and remains a vital part of our culture.

Questions to pose to groups

Look closely at one book. How does the structure relate to the theme of content of the book?

How long have there been books?

The history of books is extensive and rich; the development of books is closely linked to the development of language, culture and technology. Ever since people started writing or leaving their mark, books have existed. Before paper, people used to write on natural materials like papyrus, tree bark, leaves and leather. Parchment was commonly used as a writing surface in Europe until the Twelfth Century.

Paper was invented in China in 105 AD and took many years to get to the West. Paper didn’t arrive in Spain until the Eleventh Century (via the silk route through Persia). The invention of moveable type is credited to Johannes Gutenberg in the 1400 years later This invention in combination with the availability of paper made books cheaper, more portable and more available to more people.

What is a book?

When we think about books, many of us picture library shelves or bookstores. But the range in what a book can be is great: books can vary in size, style and shape. While the books at the library are bound single sheets of paper, there are other books that have cut pages of unusual shapes. Sometimes fine prints are left unbound and housed in a box.

Some might argue that books are only a reading machine – a way to get information. It is true that books have always been valued as a communication and education tool but they have also been an expression of beauty and art, the reflection of the skills of printers, artists, binders, and illustrators.

Questions to pose to groups

Why are the books in this exhibit considered books?

Different kinds of books and bindings featured in the exhibition

(see vocabulary for more definitions of books and bindings)

Faces of New Mexico by Joan Kavanau is an example of a tunnel book. A tunnel book has no spine. There are holes cut into the pages so that you can view through one page to see the next. It's almost like a telescope or a theatrical stage.

Taos Elders – An Honoring by Cynthia West is an example of a Codex book. A Codex is the type of book we think about when we imagine a regular book. The pages are sewn together at the spine and protected by a hard cover in front and back.

Descansos by Raphael Benjamin is an example of an accordion book. An accordion book is a kind of folded book. The pages are folded together as opposed to sewn at the spine. Sometimes they have a front and back cover. Accordion books can come in many different shapes and sizes. If the paper is thick enough, they can stand vertically.

July 16, 1945 New Mexico by Sally Blakemore and Elaine Banashek is an example of a pop-up book. The pages of pop-up books become three-dimensional when a page is opened or move when tabs or wheels are turned. Pop-up books are also called novelty books; one part of the page is novel or interactive.

The Palace Press by Laurie Archer and Tom Leech is an example of a book printed with letterpress that is bound with screw and post bindings and has paste paper covers. Paste paper is a kind of decorative paper made by creating patterns on wet paper covered with a combination of paste and paint. Screw and post bindings are still used in, for example paint sample books. To bind a book with screws and posts, the artists need to drill a hole wherever the posts will be. Then the posts are held in place by the screws. Letterpress is a kind of printing where **set type** is inked, then impressed directly onto the printing surface.

Georgia O'Keeffe, a Body of Work: Jimson Weed by Freya Diamond is an example of a flag book. A flag book has longer pieces of paper (or flags) pasted to either side of a fold. The base can be an accordion fold and then the book takes on a new architectural dimension with the addition of pieces of paper.

Questions to pose to groups

*Now that we have explored some types of books, who can find another example of an accordion book, a flag book or a book that is post and screw bound?
What other kinds of books can you locate?*

One opinion on Books

“We generally credit Gutenberg with the original mass-produced book. If Gutenberg were to come back today, there is little that he would recognize. He would not be familiar with computers, airplanes, skyscrapers, current fashions, or most of the food we eat. But he would recognize a conventional book. It's one of the few things in over 500 years that's remained relatively unchanged.

As book artists strike out in new directions to explore, expand and redefine what a book is, the challenge is to create a definition that encompasses the wide range and interests of the book arts. The easy definition is this: "A book is what a bookmaker makes." But that doesn't tell us much.

When I defined books for myself, I chose not to look at what a book is, what it is made out of, or what it looks like. Instead, I chose to consider how a book is used and what purpose it serves. For me, a book is "a structure for storing and sharing information." I recognize that for a majority of people it is too broad and does not meet their needs.

Several years ago I told this definition to an audience and someone exclaimed, "But that describes a refrigerator." I replied, "Wow! What a great idea for a book."

Many people have tried to arrive at a definition on which everyone can agree. Sigh, it's not going to happen. But it is possible to find common ground on which to discuss books. Philip Smith gives a framework by suggesting that we should look at what gives an object "bookness".

In other words, instead of saying, "a "book" IS this AND this AND this AND this," maybe we should be saying, "bookness" CONSISTS of this OR this OR this OR this."

Some things that may constitute bookness are: pages, covers, binding, sequence, narration, illustration, table of contents, durability, portability, shape, purpose, meaning, use, acceptance, ISBN number, book-shelve-ability, etc. The more of these characteristics a book has, the more we can say it has bookness.

This framework helps define and explain why some objects like a dodecahedron and a pack of cards can have bookness sometimes and not all the time.

Is a web site a book? Well it certainly has a lot of bookness to it. It has text, illustrations, pages, it stores and shares information, and it certainly reaches a lot of people. However, for me, it's the structure of the electronic container that leaves me cold. I want something

visually interesting and stimulating that I can touch and handle.

The Electronic Age opens new doors. But it's the loss of the tactile feel of a tangible object that I miss. While computer whizzes and forward-thinking visionaries are soaring into flights of virtual reality, I'm happy to remain behind wallowing in the pleasure of cradling a physical object in my hand and savoring the anticipation of turning the next page.

Adapted from postings by Edward Hutchins to the Book Arts List, April 8, 1995 and October 5, 1996. Edward H. Hutchins is a book artists, graphic designer and teacher. Since 1989 Edward H. Hutchins has been the proprietor of EDITIONS, a workshop for producing book art multiples. He frequently gives lectures, classes and demonstrations in the book arts at public schools, libraries and art institutions.

Vocabulary

Accordion fold: Bindery term, two or more parallel folds that open like an accordion.

Bind: To fasten sheets together with wire, thread, glue, or by other means.

Block print: an image carved in wood or linoleum that is covered with ink and then pressed on a surface to make an impression.

Bone Folder: Traditional creasing tool with multiple uses. This is one of the oldest tools of the bookbinding trade.

Dust Jacket or Book Cover: a covering to protect pages of a book and identify the author and title of the book. Sometimes the book cover gives a hint about what the book is about.

End papers: the first papers in the beginning and end of a book. One half of the paper is glued to the inside of the cover board. These papers are sometimes decorated beautifully.

Grain: The direction in which the paper fiber lie.

Head: The top edge of a book

Jacket Flap: the folded part of the book cover, these inside jacket flaps have information about the author including a photograph and a summary of the book.

Saddle stitch: Binding a booklet or magazine with staples in the seam where it folds.

Spine: The binding edge of a book or publication.

Tail: the bottom edge of a book.

Felt-block Printing

Estimated Time

45 minutes

Materials

Paper
Pencils
Scissors
Felt scraps
Small hand-sized blocks of wood
Liquid glue
Newsprint
Tempera paint
Paint brush

Vocabulary

Relief printing
Wood cut

Standards Met

National Standards for Arts Education, Visual Arts Content Standards, 1 - 5

Extensions

Students experiment with other ways to make relief printing (using, for example, a cut potato, or liquid glue dripped onto cardboard)

Adapted from *Historic Book Arts Projects*, ©1984, Press of the Palace of the Governors

Goal

To explore the process of relief printing

Student Learning

Students will create their own shapes in felt and print designs.

Procedure

1. **Discuss** how the most common form of illustrations in historic books (from 500 years ago) were woodcut printing. Artists in the *Making History* exhibition used woodcut printing in their book making process. Do students remember any examples? If you have examples from books in the classroom, share these.
2. Woodcut printing is also called relief printing, where impressions are made from raised, inked surfaces. **Explain** that students will be making relief prints of their own. Students might consider a symbol or shape that has significance to them or an important event, if you are studying something in class you may ask them to think about shapes related to a theme.
3. Students **draw** a shape on paper (keep it simple), cut it out and glue it firmly to a piece of felt. Then, they cut this out, trace the shape on the center of a wood block.
4. Students firmly **glue** the felt to the wood block.
5. Students use a brush to **apply paint** to the felt surface. Placing the newsprint on a newspaper pad, and holding it in place with one hand, students **stamp the inked felt block** onto it with the other hand.
6. Students may choose to create other shapes and more prints. Once the finished work has dried, **review the work as a class** and discuss the process. What was hard? Did the project inspire them to create other kinds of prints?

Suggested Forms of Assessment

- Discussion of relief printing
- Observe students work
- Prints produced
- Final discussion of process

Making Paste Paper

Estimated Time

1.5 hours (not including teacher prep time)

Materials

See attached sheet for teacher preparation and detailed list of materials.

Vocabulary

End papers

Decorative

Standards Met

National Standards for Arts Education, Visual Arts Content Standards, 1 – 5

New Mexico State Art Content Standards 4 & 5

Extensions

Students create books and use their paste paper as decorative covers or end pages.

Students take directions home and do craft with their families.

Special Notes

When paste paper dries, the edges can be razor sharp and need to be trimmed. Paste paper can be messy so aprons or messy clothes are recommended!

Goal

To explore the process of creating decorative paper making as paper/book makers have been doing since the 1500s.

Student Learning

Students will create their own unique past paper selecting color and design.

Procedure

1. **Discuss** the visit to the *Making History* exhibition. What were students' favorite books? Why? **Show example of books** with beautiful end-papers and books that feature photographs of paper arts. Students may also look at the endpapers of their own books in the classroom or at the library.
2. **Explain** that students will be making their own paste papers. **Post or write directions** (see attached) in a place where students can see them and introduce the materials that students will use to make their paste paper. (If your class is small enough, you may want to make the paste together)
3. **Model** how to make the paste paper, following the posted directions. **Discuss** the different kinds of methods they can use to create patterns, textures and designs. If these paste papers are going to be associated with a book the students are writing or creating, ask them to consider what sorts of designs might communicate the messages or themes of their book?
4. Students **create their own past paper** using colors and techniques of their own choosing. You may want to assign one group of students to a particular color pallet.
5. After clean-up, **look at all students' papers** together. Students **share their process**, describing the choices they made, techniques they used or what they were trying to communicate (if anything). Students may also guess what techniques others used.
6. Once the paste paper has dried, students **iron** the backside of the paper and **trim** the edges. Use as book covers, end pages or mount in classroom as art.

Suggested Forms of Assessment

- Observe students' work
- Artwork produced

Paste Paper Materials

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Materials

- ❑ Paste (see recipe below)
- ❑ Double polished clear vinyl or oil cloth (can be found at stores like Walmart)
- ❑ High quality paper (any paper that is not too thin will work)
- ❑ Tools for making patterns in the paste-paint (examples include: rubber or foam stamps, plastic forks, felt, torn paper, combs, pencil eraser, balled up newspaper, your hand, anything that makes a mark in the paint)
- ❑ Brushes (3 inch are best)
- ❑ Several colors of Tempura paint
- ❑ Plastic cups for paint
- ❑ Measuring cups and tools
- ❑ Ladle
- ❑ Packing tape (or heavy duty tape)
- ❑ Tub (for getting paper wet)
- ❑ Water
- ❑ Plastic sheets or spread out bags for drying
- ❑ Sponges
- ❑ Hot plate (to prepare paste)

Teacher Preparation (30 – 45 minutes)

1. Cut and tape pieces of vinyl onto students' working spaces (a little water underneath the vinyl will fix the vinyl to surface)
2. Put brushes and damp sponges at each work space
3. Prepare paste (see recipe on attached page)
4. Fill tub with water (this is for dampening paper so place in central location with paper towels handy)
5. Set up drying area (the floor will work) to accommodate all students
6. Prepare paints (two ladles and one healthy "squirt" of paint)

Paste recipe for Paste Paper

This recipe will make about 24 - 36 sheets of 8x11 paper

3 cups of water

4 tablespoons of All Purpose Flour

3 tablespoons of White Rice Flour

1 teaspoon of liquid soap

1/2 teaspoon of glycerin (available at most drug stores)

Mix the two flours together with one cup of water until smooth. Remove all lumps. Add this mixture – in a steady stream – to boiling water while **STIRRING CONSTANTLY**. Paste will thicken very fast. As soon as paste thickens, remove from heat. Add soap and glycerin. If you do not use paste immediately, lay a piece of plastic wrap or wet paper towel over the paste. This will prevent a "skin" from forming.

Directions for Making Paste Paper

Post or write these directions on the board or in a place where all students can see them.

1. Get paper completely wet
2. Lay wet paper on your workspace
3. Get rid of any wrinkles in your paper by spreading out paper with damp sponge
4. Paint paste-paint on paper. Cover the entire sheet with paint.
5. Make design on paper
6. Peel paper off your workspace and lay it out to dry on plastic sheets

Book Making

Estimated Time

Two 45-minute sessions

Materials (for each student)

2 pieces of cardboard, 6 inches by 9 inches
Paper for book covers (wall paper, decorative paper, colored paper)
Copier paper (10 sheets)
Scissors
Glue
Use of an Awl
Use of a hole puncher
2 notebook rings (1 inch) or a piece of yarn (2 feet long)
Materials for decorating journals (paper for collage, colored pencils, etc.)

Vocabulary

Journal
End-papers

Standards Met

National Standards for English Language Arts (for K – 12) Standard 7

National Standards for Arts Education, Visual Arts Content Standards, 1 - 5

Goal

To explore the process of book-making including binding and decorating.

Student Learning

Students will create their own journals and decorate them in ways that reflect themselves or something important to them.

Procedure

7. **Discuss** how artists and printers in the exhibition *Making History* created books that reflected personal styles, choices and expressions. What materials did they use? What kinds of books did they produce?
8. **Review** the anatomy of a book. What are the different parts of a book (end-papers, cover, spine and binding, body)? Students **identify** the parts of a book.
9. **What is a Journal?** Students **create a definition for journals** based on conversation and personal experiences. If possible share different examples of journals with the class. (historical, contemporary, on-line). *Journals have been used for recording observations of nature or when traveling, personal reflection and musings, recording dreams and creative writing. Some people record in journals daily. Many people keep an on-line journal.*
10. Following the detailed instructions in this packet, students **make their own journals**.
11. Students **decorate** the cover of their journals to reflect their personal preferences, hobbies and interests. (Students may also decorate their journals in keeping with other curriculum strands i.e. with the flavor of the era they are studying in Social Sciences, or with objects from nature if this will be a scientific journal).
12. As a whole class, students **share** journals with each other discussing their choices of paper, design and decoration.

Suggested Forms of Assessment

- Discussion of Lasting Impressions
- Observe students work
- Journals produced
- Final discussion of process

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Santa Fe Book Arts Group
An organization devoted to the spirit of the book form as a container for creative expression and made up of artists and educators. Some workshops free to the public.

May be a resource for book artists who can lead workshops or provide public demonstrations of book-making techniques.

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