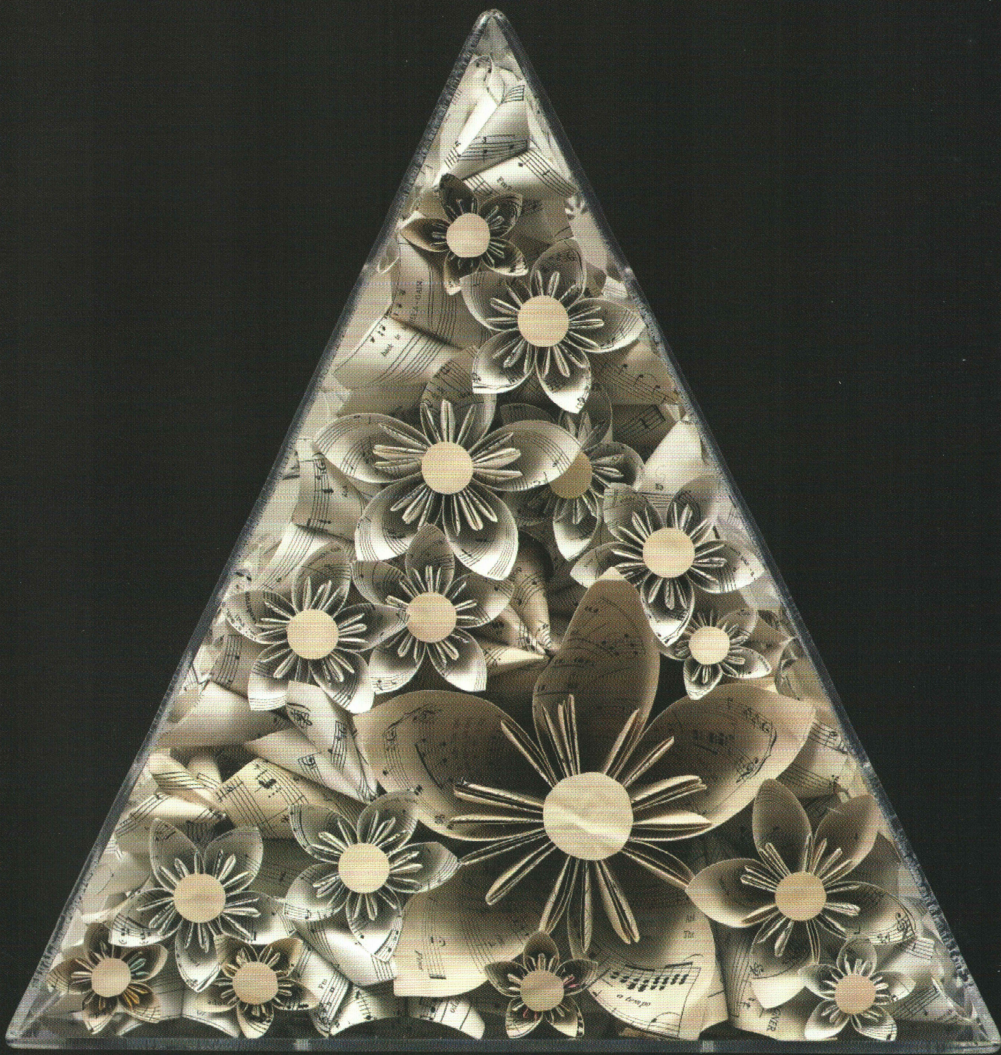


ROSWELL MUSEUM AND ART CENTER

September 9 - December 31, 2016



The Art of the Book



Above:
Susan Moore, *The Dirty Dozen*, 2015, altered paperback books, 30" x 24". Image courtesy of the artist.

Throughout human history, books have been an important source of creative expression, from the illustrated papyrus scrolls of ancient Egypt, to the lavishly illuminated manuscripts of medieval Europe.¹ Yet books, while often beautifully decorated, were designed primarily as functional, textual objects. We may perceive them as works of art today, but when they were created, they were first and foremost the tactile support for written texts.

While precedents to the contemporary art book begin appearing in the nineteenth century, most scholars agree that the book became a self-conscious art form during the

What is a book? While Kindles and other technologies have broadened our understanding of what can be considered a book, chances are we'd imagine an object containing written text, whether it is a novel, memoir, or guide. Yet the book is also a versatile and often personal art form, and many artists have embraced its historical function as a means of communication for creative ends. *The Art of the Book* explores the diverse world of contemporary book arts in New Mexico, with each artist presenting a distinct interpretation of this iconic cultural object.

The book is a paradoxical art form, simultaneously ancient and modern.

Below: Tom Leech and Patricia Musick (calligraphy), *And Yet the Books/The Book Throwing Incident*, 2015, marbled, handmade paper, collaged page fragments from *Plutarch's Lives*, dimensions vary. Image courtesy of the artist.



twentieth century, coinciding with the convergence of industrialization and other social and cultural developments that defined the modern era. No longer strictly bound to its historical role as a textual work, the book offered a rich site for artistic experimentation, donning a variety of aesthetics, philosophies, and forms. For proponents of the Arts and Crafts movement, for example, the book's legacy as a precious, handmade object symbolized the rejection of industrialism's mass-produced, mechanized society. To the Russian Futurists and other avant-garde groups, the book's antiquity and connotations of conventional, civilized



society made it the ideal platform for challenging those same traditional values and sentiments, with artists manipulating structure, production, and content to create provocative new forms. Still other artists perceived the book as a democratic art, with printed editions more readily accessible to a larger public than individual paintings or sculpture.²

These various interpretations of the book underscore its creative potential as an art object, a versatility that is celebrated in the works on view in *The Art of the Book*. Priscilla Spitzer and Sialia Rieke use traditional binding techniques to create covers that engage the writing contained within, melding visual and textual content. Zachariah Rieke's *Canvas Book* employs medieval binding techniques while subverting expectations of written content, its leather-bound covers containing canvas pages covered in abstract, mixed media paintings.³ Joy Campbell and Susan Moore alter existing books into new forms through collage, deconstruction, and assemblage.⁴ Victoria Rabinowe uses decks of cards, accordion books, and geometric shapes such as the octagon to create complex, nonverbal narratives inspired by dreams.⁵ Tom Leech explores the interaction between form and surface through paper marbling, letterpress, and other traditional techniques. Katya Reka creates her own papers using indigenous New Mexico vegetation, soil, and other

Above:
Gail Rieke, *Paris Journal*, 2010
2016, mixed
media, dimensions
vary. Image
courtesy of the
artist.

Bottom, Right:
Katya Reka,
Desert Dirt, 2015,
handmade abaca
paper, wood,
thread, dirt, seeds,
8" x 5" x 2",
closed, 10 pages.
Image courtesy of
the artist.



organic matter, turning the physicality of her raw materials into tactile and visual meditations on ecology, the body, and other themes.⁶ Gail Ricke's travel journals assume the form of suitcases filled with found objects, altered ephemera, and other art pieces, giving her travels and recollections a physical presence that can be rearranged and altered in a manner paralleling the mutability of memory.⁷ Penne Mobley's books appear as handmade dresses, merging narrative, fashion, and identity as she confronts traumatic historical events such as the Holocaust and American slavery.⁸

Like the broader development of the art book during the twentieth century, the works featured in *The Art of the Book* vary significantly in aesthetic, technique, and content, reflecting each artist's highly personal interpretation of the book as form. Yet in their diversity

Above: Priscilla Spitler, *Keeping Time*, 2009, full goatskin binding, leather onlay, cut foil stamping, gold tooling, 8 7/8" x 8 3/4" x 5/8". Image courtesy of the artist.



they share a passion for the book as both object and means of expression. Their variety reflects the multivalent nature of human civilization, their different interpretations underscoring the expansiveness of not only the book, but creativity itself.

Top, Right: Penne Mobley, *Never Forget*, 2016, fabric, ink, paint, 63" x 20". Image courtesy of the artist.

— Sara Woodbury
Curator of Collections
and Exhibitions

¹ Stephen Bury, *Artists' Books: The Book as a Work of Art, 1963-1995* (Brookfield, VT: Scolar Press, 1995), 15.

² Johanna Drucker, *The Century of Artists' Books* (New York: Granary Press, 1995), 22-23, 26-30; 45; 362-363. Some 19th-century forerunners include the work of William Blake (1757-1827) and William Morris (1834-1896).

³ Sialia Rieke, interview with the author, 10 July 2016.

⁴ Joy Campbell, interview with the author, 17 April 2016.

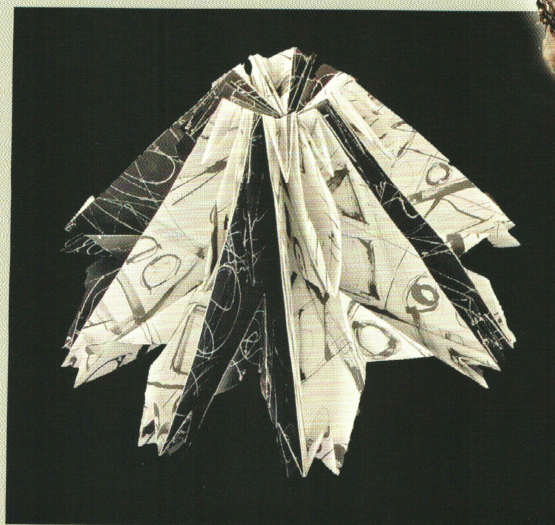
⁵ Victoria Rabinowe, interview with the author, 16 April 2016.

⁶ Katya Reka, interview with the author, 14 May 2016.

⁷ Gail Rieke, interview with the author, 5 March 2016.

⁸ Penne Mobley, interview with the author, 17 April 2016.

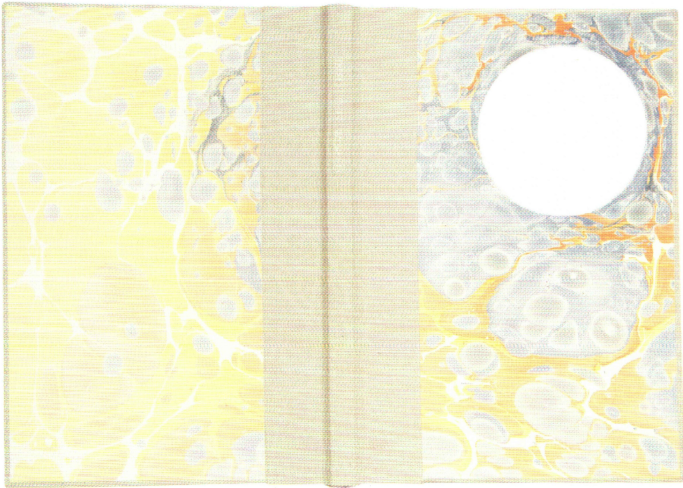
Bottom: Victoria Rabinowe, *Octagon Star*, 2015, Rives BFK paper with sumi ink, dimensions vary. Image courtesy of the artist.



Cover:
Joy Campbell,
Kusudama Flowers,
2015, altered music
book pages, 15"
x 14" x 7". Image
courtesy of the
artist.



Zachariah Rieke, *Canvas Book*, 2004-2010, unrefined earth pigments, ground bone, charcoal, acrylic medium, found Chinese papers, raw canvas; bound in water buffalo leather on hardboard, 16" x 26" x 1.5" (open). Image courtesy of the artist.



Sialia Rieke, *Into This World #13*, 2011, bound 2013 (edition of 50), woodblock prints, hand-marbled paper, grey buffalo leather, 5.5" x 8" (closed). Image courtesy of the artist.

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