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Creative practice

Production processes for artists' books include: Inkjet on various handmade bound books, hand-drawn/ Letterset, Rubber stamps, Transfers, the use of found and recycled objects and materials, altered books and sculptural books. I have also ventured into freelance teaching of creative book-making processes to schoolchildren, based around curriculum themes such as recycling and WW11.



Found & Bound books, Leslie Wilson-Rutterford

ABTREE

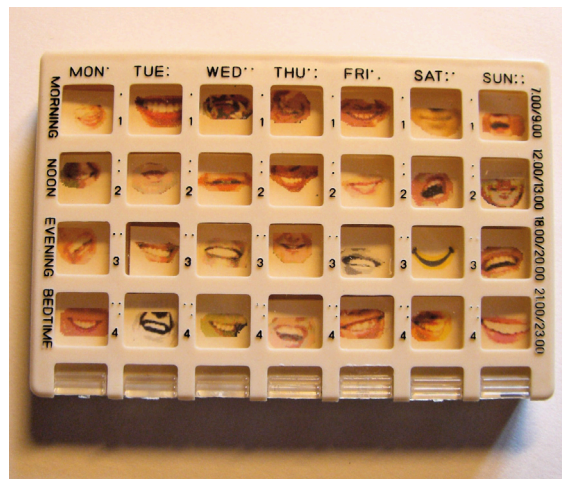
With reference to the ABTREE, my work sits mainly in the artists' books branch, with dabblings in the ephemeral. I have many ideas for work, which could take me in almost any direction.

In the diagram I don't see mail art, box and container books, tableaux, bottle and specimens books, performance and guerrilla books.

Technology and Tradition

Over time, my production methods have gradually moved from altered books, heavily collaged, with multi mediums, to cleaner, more concise pieces. However, I don't think of it as a static change, but more of a learning process. As technology develops, I would hope I could keep up to some degree, but I am adaptable, and can change tack if needs be. I can make do with the resources I have at hand (there are plenty of them - drawers full!)

The computer has helped monumentally in the production of my artists' books. While my home/ studio environment has changed a lot over the last few years, clearing stuff out, storing stuff away, it's made some of my tools harder to get to, like my industrial



Medicine for Daily Life, Leslie Wilson-Rutterford

sewing machine. In a small flat it is hard to work with multi-media and the mess it makes. Everything takes place in one room, mainly, including family meals! I need a studio!

Pieces that have worked include small concertina books, which are wonderful to make. Using nice paper, simple designs and a poignant or quirky message, like the *Found and Bound* books, are working well at the moment. I really enjoy recycling unusual containers to house new concepts or ideas. Like the 28-day pillbox piece called, *Medicine for Daily Life*, which houses a smile for each day. Editions which haven't been so successful are: altered children's letter books, because they take ages, and people don't want to fork out for them, so I've had to put them on hold. Multi-paged, self-hardbound small editions like, *I Am An Art Gallery*, also haven't done well because of the time and expense.

Having so much easy access to the art world online spurs me constantly, and also inspires me, too. Ideas are continuously bouncing around in my head, and it could be all that external stimulation plays a part in the creative process.

It would be nice to acquire some traditional printing skills, as I do feel they can give a special quality to printed work (i.e. offset/litho) And, there is a bias towards those methods: traditional artists still seem to get more recognition.

Alongside making new pieces regularly, I have ventured towards maximizing the value in and exposure of existing pieces, like my *Stars and Stripes: A Tapestry of American Dreams and Realities*, and *100 Projects*. With these, I have been able to carry ideas from one project into others, developing a little cohesion through some of my work. But, I still can't stop myself wanting to do new things all the time, creating new objects, and sourcing new opportunities.

Marketing and Distribution

The majority of my books I sell at specialist fairs, a few online, a few through gallery shops and to friends. I have sold through a gallery website and my own website. I have participated in many group exhibitions, which offer further exposure for my own work, but also a chance to be part of a shared experience. I get very excited by other people's work, and also love collecting book art almost as much as making it.

I think bookshops/galleries/specialist shops will adapt to distribute books produced using just digital media. If it's a case of selling a book on a CD, no problem. They might need more screens/monitors; places to exhibit/show samples of content, maybe project it, to get people's interest. Could have nighttime projection screenings of book art with wine, etc.

I think people who can keep up with the media will collect digital media. But, also people who are immobile and/or can't turn pages, but can push a button and look at a screen. Hospitals, schools and art house cinemas are potential venues for viewing digital books.



Stars and Stripes: A Tapestry of American Dreams and Realities
Leslie Wilson-Rutterford

The Future of the Book

It's hard to find any limit to the definition of an artist's book. I think I can say what they are not, and it's pretty much every book sold in bookshops, except, of course book art bookshops. Quality, sincerity and passion are pretty important qualities to find in artists' books. I also enjoy a sharp eye on life, with a touch of humour or irony thrown in for good measure.

I like artists' books made by people interested in ideas, and not just aesthetics, or cute drawings, although they have their place, too. For me, an artists' book is somehow tactilely read, but also engages the mind.

I would worry about the future of the book, and the loss of artisan skills, but there seem to be plenty of books around, and new ones emerging all the time.

Book art seems to be a burgeoning field of study and practice. Some people might need to adjust the content of their traditionally produced works, as some of the old-school books aren't as relevant to me today, in terms of modern book art. I do believe there is a place for old stories to be recreated, so future generations can experience them. But, perhaps there could be more of a distinction made between more traditional practice and contemporary explorations, new media: a more cutting edge array of artists' books that reflect our modern diverse world.

This case study forms part of the Centre for Fine Print Research's AHRC funded project 2008 - 2010: *What will be the canon for the artist's book in the 21st Century (In an arena that now includes both digital and traditionally produced artists' books, what will constitute the concepts of artists' publishing in the future?)* <http://www.bookarts.uwe.ac.uk/canon.htm>