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Creative practice

For my own artists' books: Inkjet, Laser printed, Linocut, Letterpress, Screenprint, Etching, Woodcut, Photocopy, Hand-drawn.

Students use: Inkjet, Laser printed, Print-on-demand, Linocut, Letterpress, Screenprint, Etching, Woodcut, Lithography, Altered books, Sculptural books, Photocopy, Hand-drawn/Letraset.

ABTREE

My students are pretty firmly set within the “artists’ books” area, although at the fringes some may dip into the Ephemeral category and some into Artisan. For my work, Artists’ books, sometimes bordering on Livres d’artiste. I think the diagram gives a well-rounded and logical picture of the different areas of practice.

Personally I find it difficult to include certain of the digital outputs under the definition of “artists’ books”. In the diagram Artists’ Publishing as a heading to cover all areas seems to make sense. I would define an artist’s book as a collection of images or texts or a single text presented in sequence as a body of work.

Technology and Tradition



Herbarium Catalogue, Jane Hyslop, 2009, handmade book with hand cut etchings, screenprint and letterpress, 39 x 29 x 8 cm

My methods of production are rooted in traditional printmaking but desktop publishing has allowed me to make larger, more affordable editions, and enabled the use of software to layout books for commercial

production. I have always tended to use a method which is appropriate to the book I am making.

For my students, the main body of work produced has been fairly consistent in its means of production. Because students are drawing and painting students, they tend to enjoy materials and are interested in traditional print methods. This said, digital methods are also explored with some students recently moving into using Publish-on-Demand.



Untitled, Nicola Copeland, 2009
Bound found objects, 23 x 23 x 4 cm

We use mainly traditional methods because of the quality of production, and it is difficult to get large numbers of students to edition work, so pieces are often one-offs. Because book art is only one strand of their course, production time is limited.

The most creative pieces have been made in a direct way, testing alternatives and using materials to work with concept. Students naturally will want to utilise new technologies and I would encourage this when appropriate, both in terms of concept and production.

Teaching History and Theory

Students are from the School of Drawing and Painting, some studying printmaking and range from second year to post graduate. The 2nd Year elective in Artists’ Books allows students to study the subject for one day a week over the year.

Apart from this I am responsible for working with students throughout the school who are interested in the subject. The 2nd Year course focuses on several aspects e.g. the democratic book, livres d’artistes, the altered book etc.

The students look at, and are influenced by a broad range of concepts, materials and artists. These are recommended depending on what is appropriate to an individual student. They are always encouraged to contextualise their work.

Marketing and Distribution

I sell the majority of my artists' books through artist's book fairs, my own website and gallery websites. My target audience is the general public, institutional collections and private collectors. The students sell their work at artist's book fairs and through exhibitions especially arranged for them in Edinburgh.

The Future of the Book

I would assume that certain specialist galleries and bookshops will eventually adapt to distributing books solely produced as digital media. I do not have any concerns about the future of the book. It fulfills a human need for the tangible which technology can never replace. I do however have some concern that traditional skills can be preserved.

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>