

The hand printed page

Many artists produce their own hand printed books, and more recently a new generation of 'digital natives' is appreciating and embracing the handmade qualities of letterpress, etching, lithography and screenprint as creative alternatives to digitally-printed artists' books. The affinity with process and mark-making that printmaking requires has encouraged younger artists to explore the unique and handmade at a time when e-readers have made us appreciate the beauty of a hand printed page.

Some recent examples

After producing books in London since 1996, the artist Otto has recently established his own print studio near Bath, where he screenprints his own editions of artists' books and prints. He also collaborates with other artists and writers including Katherina Manollessou and Benjamin Heathcote, with whom he has produced six editions of books, including *Work*, hand screenprinted in an edition of 100 in 2010. Of his editions Otto states: "I'd like to think that in my books every page is a cover... I am driven by a passion for the printed image on paper, and I take a pride in what I do." (www.ottobooks.co.uk).

The artist Carolyn Trant of Parvenu Press, who studied printmaking under the master lithographer Stanley Jones, is currently hand printing her small edition of *Who Killed Cock Robin* in a large concertina and separate pop-up version that will be completed by the end of 2011. The finished book will comprise 14 full-colour woodcut images with integral woodcut text, at 28 x 23 cm (<http://carolyntrantparvenu.blogspot.com>).

The artist and writer Danny Flynn who is renowned for his typography, letterpress and screenprint editions and the award winning designer bookbinder Eri Funazaki have been collaborating since 2001 on an exquisite hand produced, small edition series of letterpress printed books bound in intricate leather and wood covers. *Life Out of a Box* (edition of 5, 2010) completes this psychological text and image series of a man struggling with his existence, as he finally steps free. The letterpress text and images were hand printed on an Adana Eight-Five, with additional hand tooling in gold and blind emboss. Each book was bound in various leathers with inlays and carbon tooling, and housed in a full leather box and folder that opens to reveal the book.

How to say 'I love you' in Greenlandic: An Arctic Alphabet (Bird Editions, 2011) has been hand-printed by Nancy Campbell in a limited edition of 50 copies, with a design binding by Natasha Herman at the Red Bone Bindery, Ottawa. *How to say 'I love you' in Greenlandic* was inspired by Campbell's residency at Upernavik Museum in Arctic Greenland last winter where she learnt Kalaallisut. The book is a romantic homage not only to a disappearing language famed for its many descriptions of snow, it also illustrates the imperilled intricate and fragile Arctic ecosystem through the hand printed pochoir images of slowly melting icebergs. The letterpress printed text consists of, as Campbell explains "All twelve letters of the Greenlandic alphabet; represented with words ranging from *eqisimarput* 'we walk arm in arm as lovers' to *kinguneqartarpoq* 'he drinks a second brew from old coffee grounds or tea leaves'

(www.nancycampbell.co.uk). A launch event for the book will be held at The Poetry Society's Poetry Cafe, London on 22nd September.

Where to see hand printed artists' books

Emma Hill of Eagle Gallery and EMH Arts Publications in London carries book works by over 150 artists (www.emmahilleagle.com). EMH Arts was established twenty years ago in 1991 as the publishing imprint of the Eagle Gallery which hosts dedicated exhibitions of artists' books by Les Bicknell, Dale Devereux Barker, Ian Tyson, Mandy Bonnell and Tracey Bush. The EMH Arts imprint has also published many limited editions of books by artists including: Basil Beattie, Julia Farrer, Bruce McLean, Mel Gooding and Judith Thurman. Particular favourites include the lavish collaborative books by Dale Devereux Barker and Paul Violi, *Selected Accidents (Pointless Anecdotes)* for example, which is a combination of screenprint, linocut, woodcut and letterpress, and Victoria Ortiz's exquisite *El mar del tiempo perdido* which is handprinted in woodcut, screenprint and monoprint, and handbound by Rob Hadrill at Book Works Studio, London (www.bookworks.org.uk).

The UK-based, artist-run organisation artistsbooksonline.com has 50 national and international artist members all producing handmade, small limited edition or unique books. The organisation offers members exhibitions, stands at artist's book fairs and further collaborations producing books and curating exhibitions. Members include Frans Baake (relief and screenprinted books based on visits to remote islands), Paolo Carraro (constructivist geometric screenprints and cut paper), Diane Longley (see *Contingent Ambiguity*, embossing, polymer-gravure, chine collé and letterpress) and Noëlle Griffiths of Hafod Press, founder of artistsbooksonline.com whose *Bird Song*, 2010, a collaboration with artist Kim Atkinson is a beautiful large-scale (24 x 100 cm closed) relief and mono printed book of bird drawings with names and calls printed in a limited edition of ten. The artistsbooksonline.com website allows visitors to search by artist, country, edition size or price.

Handmade & Bound, as the name implies, is an independent organisation arranging UK fairs featuring only handmade artists' books, comics and zines produced in very limited editions (www.handmadeandbound.com). Bind'n Bitch is a London-based underground society of graphic designers, book artists, book designers and printmakers experimenting around the book arts with letterpress, printmaking and digital print (www.bindnbitch.blogspot.com). Hot Bed Press in Salford, is an open access printmaking studio specialising in screenprint, etching, relief print, letterpress and book making, that has many artist members producing book works. They also organise the annual Manchester Artists' Book Fair at the Holden Gallery, Manchester Saturday 22nd October 2011 (www.hotbedpress.org). RGAP (Research Group for Artists' Publications) in Sheffield organises the annual Small Publishers Fair in London, which celebrates its 10th anniversary this year, and will take place on Friday 11th and Saturday 12th November 2011 at the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London (www.rgap.co.uk/spf.php).

Sarah Bodman, July 2011