

An Incomplete Chronology for Artists' Books

- 770 The Book of Kells is created in Ireland. Containing the text of the four Gospels, it is written in a manuscript style called Irish half-uncial and highly decorated. While not an 'artists' book,' in any contemporary definition, it represents one extreme in handmade, decorated books that rises above the apparent original function and intent to continue to provoke appreciation and wonder.
- 1306 The first known pop-up element in a book appeared in an astrological manuscript.
- 1340 *Les Tres Riches Heures*. a notably beautiful manuscript book, is made for Jean, duc de Berry, in France.
- 1435 *Hours of Catherine of Cleves*, an incredible illuminated manuscript book, is made in Utrecht, Holland.
- 1494 *Das Narrenschiff*, or, *Ship of Fools*, by Sebastian Brant, is published in its first edition by Bergmann von Olpe, Basle, illustrated with 114 woodcuts. Within fifteen years the work appeared in one Latin, three French, one Dutch, one Low German and an English version.
- 1538 *A Dance of Death* with Hans Holbein's illustrations is printed in Lyon by Gaspar and Melchior Treschel
- 1757 Horace Walpole establishes his Strawberry Hill Press at his house in Twickenham, England, what many consider to be the first private press. Although criticized for typographical errors, the output of the press was finer than that of current commercial printing and is remembered for the early institution of interest and standards in fine books and for propagating the idea of individual involvement and control in publishing.
- 1765 Robert Sayer of London produces children's metamorphosis, *The Harliquinades*, an early pop-up book.
- 1788 William Blake prints and publishes *There is No Natural Religion*, the first of the books he called "illuminated printing." He had been apprenticed to an engraver at age 14 and learned how to work copper plates to produce images and text, using them to avoid the expense of traditional printing and the censorship of publishers. In his books, he created the images and handwritten text on metal plates himself and printed them himself.
- 1793 William Blake prints and publishes his *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, *The Gates of Paradise*, and *America: A Prophecy*. He followed them with *The Book of Urizen* (1794), *Jerusalem* (1804-20), *Paradise Lost* (1808), and *The Book of Job* (1821).
- 1809 Thomas Frognell Dibdin published THE BIBLIOMANIA; or, Book-Madness; containing some account of the History, Symptoms, and Cure of this Fatal Disease.
- 1841 First paperback books are published by Tauchnitz Verlag Germany
- 1887 Stéphane Mallarmé publishes his poem, *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard*. Many consider it to be the typographic experiment that ushered in the sense of freedom in text and form that created the basis for book art as we know it.
- 1888 A continuing part of the Arts and Crafts Movement, William Morris establishes the Kelmscott Press in England for the production of fine handcrafted books. In the seven years of the press, fifty-three works in sixty-three volumes, totaling 22,380 books, were produced. Morris' efforts were extremely influential in the establishment of other private presses and a renewed interest in the craft and art of fine printing. His *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, (1896-98), including *The Canterbury Tales*, is considered his finest work.
- 1889 Pop-up. Meggendorfer's International Circus is published
- 1894 Ashendene Press (Published until 1938)
- 1894 André Marty publishes *Yvette Guilbert*, a book with text by Gustave Geoffroy and lithographic drawings by Henri Toulouse-Lautrec, consisting of 22 unnumbered folios.

1894 Paris art dealer Ambroise Vollard begins publishing albums of prints by Odilon Redon, Auguste Rodin, Pierre Bonnard, and others.

1900 Doves Press established at Hammersmith, London by Cobden-Sanderson. In 1903-05, they publish the Doves Press Bible in five volumes, considered by many critics to be a masterpiece of printing and design.

1900 Ambroise Vollard publishes his first book, *Parallèlement* by Paul Verlaine with 110 lithographs, 8 woodcuts, and 2 line blocks by Pierre Bonnard. Many writers have long considered this to be “the earliest *livre d’artiste* in the modern sense.” Later book projects included works by Georges Roualt (*Réincarnations de Péré Ubu*, 1932, *Miserere et guerre*, 1922-1948).

1909 Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler publishes his first book, *L’Enchanteur pourissant*, with text by Guillaume Apollinaire (his first book) and 32 woodcuts by André Derain in 42 unnumbered folios. Kahnweiler published many books, always first editions of texts and always joined with images by contemporary artists. In 1911, he published Max Jacob’s *Saint Matorel* with Pablo Picasso’s first Cubist etchings. His publication of Georges Limbour’s *Soleils bas* (1924) and Michel Leiris’s *Simulacre* (1925), both with prints by André Masson, brought the first Surrealist lithographs to books.

1913 Publication of *La Prose du Transsibérien et de la petite Jehanne de France*, (), a collaboration between artist Sonia Delaunay and poet Blaise Cendrars. It is a long, folding book comprised of 4 printed sheets attached to form a vertical format nearly 7 feet long, in letterpress and pochoir, with the abstract color imagery merging with the text, also printed in colors. For some, this is the first example of an artists’ book in the contemporary sense.

1919 Ilia Zdanevitch, a Georgian writer, begins publishing his one-act folk plays written in asyntactical sound language under his The 41st Degree imprint. In 1921 he moves to Paris where he continues his involvement with radical aesthetic and political movements, publishing under the contracted name of “Iliazd.”

1923 Nonesuch Press is founded in England by Frances Meynell. “The historical significance of the Nonesuch performance lies in the combination for the first time of beautifully made books in a major publishing program with original editorial scholarship in larger editions at lower prices for less affluent aficionados.” (The Art of the Printed Book, Joseph Blumenthal.)

1927 Atelier 17 is founded in Paris by Stanley Hayter. It is an intaglio (etching, etc.) studio dedicated to teaching and collaboration, to revive the art of etching and make it more “modern”. In 1940, he moves the studio to New York City and in 1950 it becomes part of the New School for Social Research.

1929 Max Ernst publishes the first of his collage books, *Femme 100 Tetes*, (The Hundred Headed Woman), in Paris. It uses carefully crafted collages of fragments of line engravings to create bizarre but pictorially ‘correct’ visual narratives that convey the Surrealist genre as accurately as any Salvador Dali painting. In 1934 he published another collage book, *Une Semaine de Bonté*, (A Week of Kindness). As purely visual narrative books, they challenged the reader/viewer very much in the way that artists’ books of the end of the century did.

1931 Albert Skira publishes his first *livre de peintre*, Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* with etchings by Pablo Picasso in Lausanne, Switzerland. The next year, he published *Poésies de Stéphane Mallarmé* with etchings by Henri Matisse.

1935 Bookburnings are carried out on a large scale by the German Nazi Party.

1936 Museum of Modern Art exhibit *Modern Painters and Sculptors as Illustrators*, organized by Monroe Wheeler. Works shown included Paul Gauguin’s woodcut book *Noa Noa* and books published by Ambroise Vollard.

1940 Iliazd (Ilia Zdanevitch) publishes his first *livre de luxe*, *Afat*, with illustrations by Picasso accompanying his own classic Russian sonnets.

1942 Leonard Baskin, American relief printmaker later known for his powerful woodcuts ("Man of Peace," 1952, and "Hydrogen Man," 1954) establishes his Gehenna Press while a student at the Yale School of Art. Following the model of his inspiration, English artist, poet, and mystic William Blake, Baskin's first hand-printed book was a slim volume of his own verse, *On a Pyre of Withered Roses*.

1943 Tériade Editions begins 28 years of publishing *livres de peintres* with artists like Marc Chagall, Fernand Léger, Henri Matisse, and Joan Miró. Tériade, a Greek who moved to Paris, had previously worked with Skira.

1945 Antonio Frasconi, a relief printmaker of Italian heritage living in Montevideo, Uruguay, produces his first book, *Los Infrahumanos*, containing 12 linocuts, a poem by Langston Hughes, and a letter to Frasconi from Richard Wright. The next year, Antonio arrived in New York on a scholarship to the Art Students League. He has since spent a life producing powerful books (and prints) that range from children's ABC books to angry political statements against the many wars and injustices of the past 50 years. While remaining largely in the tradition of the "illustrated" visual book, his works have often risen to the level of power and expression associated with artist's books. They are visual feasts that feed the soul as well.

1947 Tériade Editions publishes *Jazz* by Henri Matisse. It is an artist's book screenprinted from colored paper cutouts done by Matisse. In the early 1940s Matisse started on the series of 20 cut-outs which were to be published together under the title *Jazz* (in an edition of 270). The source of the title is unclear, but Matisse perhaps saw a likeness between what he called the 'lively and violent tones' of his images, and jazz music. An early alternative title was *Circus*, and in fact a number of the cut-outs fit this theme: 'The Clown,' 'The Sword Swallower,' 'The Knife Thrower.' Republished in a reduced-size trade edition by George Braziller in 1992.

1949 Iliazd's interest in visual poetry, dating back to his Constructivist and Futurist activities, is evidenced in his publication of *Poésie de mots inconnus*, comprised of poems/word constructions by 21 poets accompanied by images by 23 artists (Picasso, Matisse, Chagall, Léger, etc.). In reaction to the then-current French *lettriste* movement, he wanted to demonstrate that the Russian avant-garde had done such visual poetry first.

~1950 Aimé Maeght becomes one of the most powerful art dealers in Paris after World War II and begins publishing works of writers and artists as Maeght Editeur. His son Adrien supervised the print studios in which were printed *livres de peintre* by Miró, Antoni Tàpies, Eduardo Chillida, and Pierre Alechinsky with texts by Tristan Tzara, Octavio Paz, Jacques Dupin, among others.

1955 Claire Van Vliet establishes her Janus Press. Printing "illustrated books" in limited editions, she produces fine books with quality texts, design, and images. Through 55 years of publishing, the books become more "artist's books" than "illustrated," using letterpress and relief as well as lithography, intaglio, hand papermaking, and innovative book structures. The Press is now in West Burke, VT.

1959? Universal Limited Art Editions is founded by Russian émigrés Tatyana and Maurice Grossman on Long Island, New York. U.L.A.E. was basically a printmaking studio, but Grossman's love of literature caused her to motivate American artists and writers to make books, often in the *livres de peintre* tradition. Her first effort was *Stones* by poet Frank O'Hara and painter Larry Rivers in 1960. The 13 lithographs were drawn on stones by the artist and writer together in the form of a dialogue and enclosed in a folder of dark blue paper made from blue jeans. Later artists would include Robert Motherwell, Jim Dine, Robert Rauschenberg, and other notables.

1960 Tamarind Lithography Workshop is founded in Los Angeles by June Wayne with a \$135,000 grant from the Ford Foundation for the purpose of re-establishing hand lithography as a craft to serve the art world. In 1960 it moved to Albuquerque and became associated with the University of New Mexico. Hundreds of collaborative lithographic printers have been trained there who have gone out to work with artists in the production of prints and books.

1962 Ed Ruscha publishes his first book, *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*, with black and white halftoned, offset litho photos of gas stations printed on a coated commercial paper in accordion book form in a very large edition, selling for about \$3. Many consider this the first of the modern artist's book that used commercial printing processes and challenged ideas about books, art, concept, and vision. His best book, in the opinion of some writers, *Every Building on the Sunset Strip*, was published in 1966.

1962 Crown Point Press is founded in Oakland by Kathan Brown as a collaborative intaglio studio. Over the years, mostly prints but some books have been produced, most notably with John Cage.

1964 Walter Hamady founds his Perishable Press, a fine press publishing poetry printed on handmade paper. In 1966, he moves to the University of Wisconsin – Madison, where he begins teaching papermaking and book printing. This effort lasted 30 years and *many* of his students went on to establish presses or papermills, or to work in the world of book arts in some way. Some of those, like Walter, produce fine printing that crosses the line, if there is one, into the arena of artists' books.

1965 Gemini Editions is founded in Los Angeles by Ken Tyler as a collaborative print studio. In 1966 it became Gemini G.E.L. and in 1974, Tyler reformed the business as Tyler Graphics in Mt. Kisco, NY. While the majority of the output has been prints, some books have been produced, working mostly with art stars.

1969 The Visual Studies Workshop is founded, a media arts center located in two historic buildings in Rochester, New York, one of the oldest alternative arts organizations in the country. It is a center for media studies, including photography, visual books, electronic imaging and film. A Master of Fine Arts degree in visual studies is offered through a joint program with the State University College at Brockport, incorporating studies in history, theory, and criticism with an emphasis on studio practice in photography, visual books, and electronic media. In 1972, Visual Studies Workshop Press was founded, when "artists' book" was not a term in anyone's vocabulary. Over the years artists who make books have evolved a significant multi-disciplinary art form which accommodates the varieties of contemporary art practices. Three hundred and fifty books later, each new project at the Press is a further exploration of the medium.

1973 The Press at the Women's Building in Los Angeles is established by Sheila De Brettville, Susan King, and others.

1973 Nexus Press is founded in Atlanta, GA, by Michael Goodman and others, as a photographic book (like a monograph) press; then after Goodman spent time in Chicago he returned and with others shaped it into an artist's book press. It produced trade and artists' books using offset lithography, usually in large editions.

1974 Richard Minsky, a bookbinder and book artist, founds the Center for Book Arts in New York City. The Center is dedicated to the preservation of the traditional crafts of bookmaking, as well as contemporary interpretations of the book as an art object. It was the first non-profit organization of its kind. The Center has organized over 135 exhibitions related to the art of the book, involving over 2700 artists, and more than 200 artists a year use our fully-equipped printshop and bindery to create new works which reflect centuries of craft tradition. Each year the Center offers over 120 courses, workshops, and seminars, as well as services to artists, including an intern and apprenticeship program, special publications, workspace rentals, an artist slide registry, and emerging artists' exhibitions. With the support of numerous foundations, corporations, individual contributors, and over 700 members worldwide, the Center for Book Arts ensures that the ancient craft of the book — that container which preserves and transmits the knowledge and ideas of a culture -- remains a viable and vital part of our civilization.

1974 Women's Studio Workshop is founded in Rosendale, NY, by Tatanya Kellner. They began serious publishing of artists' books in late-1970s and offer workshops, classes, residencies and instruction in book arts, papermaking, and printmaking.

1975 - 1990 Fine Print, a quarterly journal of fine printing, is begun by Sandra Kirschenbaum in San Francisco. For years, it is nearly the only place where fine printing and, occasionally, artists' books, are criticized and discussed.

1977 Judith Hoffberg of Los Angeles, long-time collector of artists' books, begins publishing 'Umbrella,' a critical journal of artists' books.

1982 Library Fellows of the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City are formed to support the Library. The Fellows annually produce a special limited-edition publication for their Artists and Writers Series, pairing distinguished American artists and authors.

1982 Artists Book Works is founded in Chicago by Barbara Lazarus Metz as a community-based center for book arts instruction and production.

1985 Minnesota Center for Book Arts, a cooperative book arts studio, is opened to the public in Minneapolis. It provides classes, residencies, and access to studio equipment for book artists.

~1985 Pyramid Atlantic, a private studio for printmaking, papermaking, and book arts, is opened to public use in a suburb of Washington, DC, by Helen Frederick. Now located in Riverdale, Maryland, it provides classes, workshops, guest artists, community programs, exhibition exchanges, and studio access in its various media.

1991 – 1995 Bookways, a journal of fine printing, is published by Thomas Taylor in Austin, Texas. For a short time, it fills the critical and publishing void left by Fine Print's demise, although the actual amount of discussion about artists' books is small.

1994 JAB, the Journal of Artists' Books, is founded by Brad Freeman and Johanna Drucker to further discourse and criticism about artists' books. In 2006, it moves with Freeman to Columbia College, Chicago.

1994 Columbia College in Chicago takes in the people and structures of Artists Book Works (Barbara Lazarus Metz) and Paper Press (Marilyn Sward) to form the Columbia College Chicago Center for Book and Paper Arts, which offers MFA degrees in book arts as well as community classes for non-degree students.

1995-1996 "Science and the Artist's Book" is exhibited at the Smithsonian Institution Libraries in Washington, DC. In 1993, the Smithsonian Institution Libraries and the Washington Project for the Arts (WPA) invited a group of nationally recognized book artists to create new works of art based on classic volumes from the Heralds of Science collection of the Dibner Library of the History of Science and Technology, a part of the Smithsonian Institution Libraries' Special Collections. The 27 resulting artist's books, each inspired by the subject, theories or illustrations of the landmark works of science with which they are paired, offer a number of witty, imaginative, and even poignant insights into the creative side of scientific research. This was an important recognition of artist's books as an expressive form as well as a model of institutional commissioning of new work.

2008 The College Book Art Association is formed, professionalizing book art education, supporting academic book artists and students, setting standards, and promoting the field.