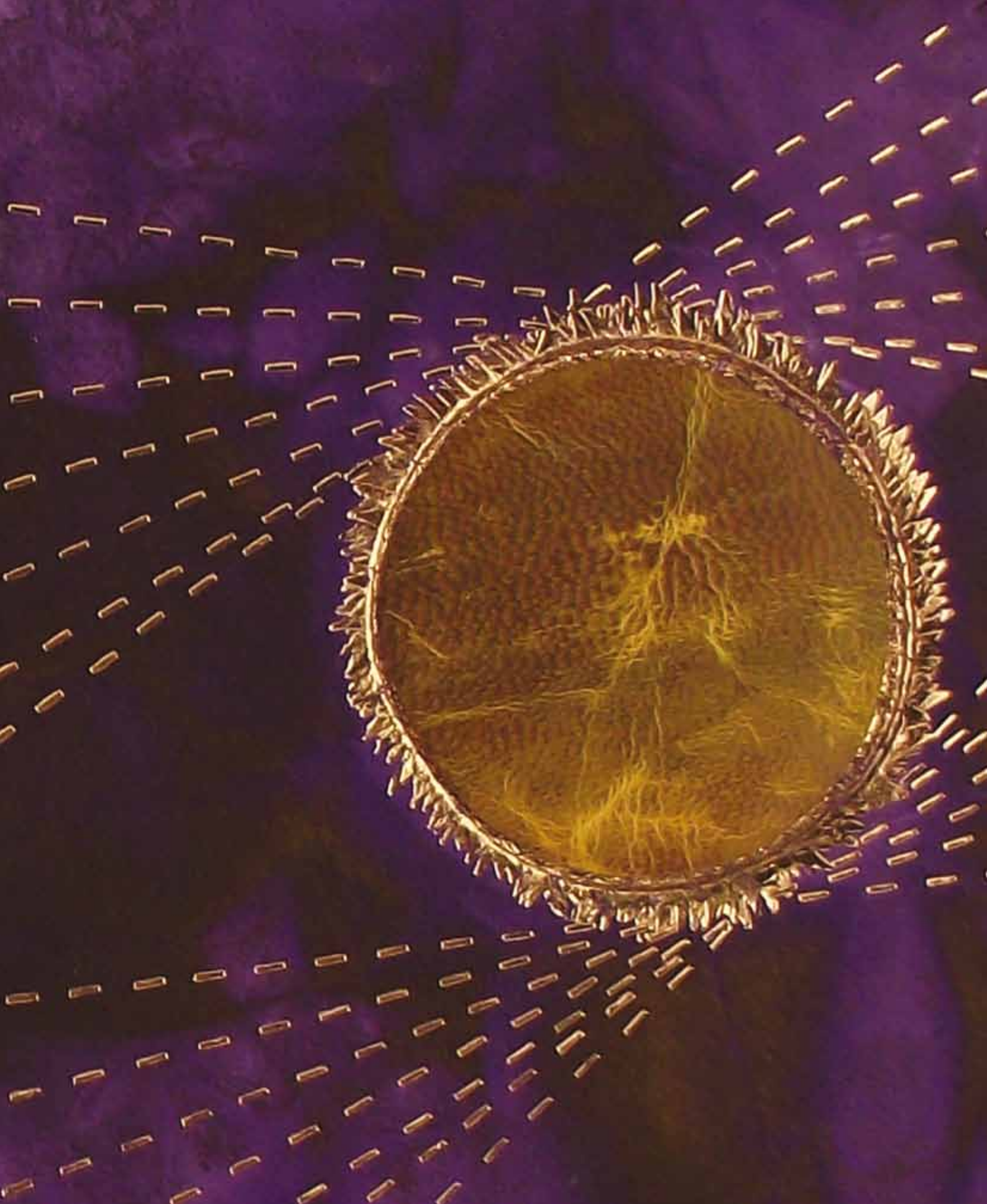


designer bookbinders

contemporary book arts

NEWSLETTER OF DESIGNER BOOKBINDERS NO 169 SPRING 2015



2 db introduction

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NEWSLETTER OF DESIGNER BOOKBINDERS NO 169 SPRING 2015

Editorial



With the passing of one of our own, for many of us the past couple of months has been a very sad time. We will all miss David Sellars and his contribution to Designer Bookbinders. My heart goes out to his family and friends.

Spring, however is a time for looking forwards, a time for optimism. Usually for me it's a time of year in which a growing sense of panic finally gives way to furtive and aggressive activity. In May it's Covered, shortly followed by Simons Eccles' latest baby, the Inside Arion show. So now is the time to expose the shabby ideas that have been floating around the grey matter, discard, edit or come up with new ones that will actually work - I hope.

One of the aspects of editing this newsletter I have come to enjoy is the feedback. I have to thank Jenni Grey for the most enthusiastic and interesting of the responses I received in reply to the previous newsletter, and indeed for suggesting that I publish it in a Letters to The Editor page, a feature of this newsletter that I am very much looking forward to.

There are few actual rights or wrongs in bookbinding, design, or even one's motives for creating and exhibiting one's offerings. There are merely differences of opinion and mutual interest or otherwise. It's these differences of opinion that really fascinate me. We all stand at different points in our careers and have differing expectations and experiences, and I'd personally like to hear them all.

So please, I urge every one of you, read what's contained in these pages and send me a letter endorsing, opposing, expanding, complaining, enthusing or even if you just have something you feel the need to get off of your chest. It's all valid as far as I am concerned. Dialogue is at the heart of philosophy and civilisation. So please let me and your peers hear what you have to say.

If you have managed to fight your head above the swelling spring panic: ride that wave for as long as it will carry you. If you are gasping for air, don't forget you are not alone. There are others like you out there. If that doesn't help, get it out, write me a letter telling me all about it. We all want to hear about your problems and frustrations. At the very least you'd be doing us a service, if only just making us feel better about ourselves.

Daniel Wray

2015 MEETING DATES

18 April 2015

DBPL, Executive Committee, AGM/Spring meeting

20 June 2015

Executive Committee
Fellows and Licentiates

26 September 2015

DBPL
Executive Committee, Fellows and Licentiates

NEWSLETTER DEADLINES

Summer Issue
01.05.2015

Autumn Issue
01.08.2015

Winter Issue
01.11.2015

ON THE FRONT COVER

David Sellars

Genesis

View from the President's Chair



Hello and welcome to our Spring newsletter. As you may or may not have realised, this will be my last 'View from the President's Chair' having served as President for two terms of office. In April this year I will hand over the reins to Lori Sauer, who I know has many new and exciting projects to take the Society forward. May I take this opportunity

to wish her every success in her role as President of Designer Bookbinders.

These last six months have been a little difficult for me health-wise and I have not been able to develop new projects as I had wished. However, I have had a superb Executive Committee to work with and they have taken on most of my workload during this period. I would particularly like to thank Wendy Hood, Peter Jones, Angela James, Jeanette Koch, and Jack London for all their help.

International Exhibition. The International Exhibition is now in Shiga, Japan. As I was not able to travel to Japan, I am deeply indebted to Mark Cockram and Midori Kunikata - Cockram for taking on this responsibility on my behalf. This was a huge ask of them at such a late hour and it was very much appreciated. Once the books have arrived back in the UK, they will be repacked ready to be sent back to the binders, we hope by the end of April.

Trevor Jones. An exhibition of Trevor Jones bindings will open at St. Bride on 18th March and run until 10th April. This will be a unique opportunity to see some 36 bindings commissioned by Duval and Hamilton, which have not been seen before South of the Border. The show will also include bindings lent by other collectors and the book on Trevor's work, *THE BINDINGS OF TREVOR JONES*, will be on sale at the exhibition. It will be the first time that so many of Trevor's bindings have been shown together.

Covered. The selling exhibition, *COVERED*, will open at St. Bride on 26th May and run until the 6th June. This will feature new work from Fellows, Licentiates and a few invited binders. Not to be missed.

Bookbinding Competition. I would like to thank everyone who entered this year's Competition and helped make it a success. Congratulations to Hannah Brown, this year's winner of the Mansfield Medal.

I write this article immediately after our applications meeting and I am delighted to report that the Society now has one new Fellow. I would like to congratulate Kate Holland on achieving Fellowship.

My manifesto on election stated that education would be a priority. No sooner had I taken up the post than, St. Bride appeared out of nowhere and formed the basis for what is now DBs' future programme of education. It appeared as though my manifesto pledge was, within the first month, fulfilled! The credit for this venture in the first instance must go to Simon Eccles and Jeanette Koch, working closely with the CEO at St. Bride, Glyn Farrow and the DB Executive at the time. The foundations are now in place for DB to play an active and vital role in the development of bookbinding education here in the UK.

Alongside our activities at St. Bride, we have concentrated our efforts on exhibiting, with shows running concurrently in Europe, Japan and North America. These have taken a huge amount of planning, but I would particularly like to thank Mark Cockram and Midori Kunikata-Cockram for their efforts in Japan, Jeanette Koch and Lester Capon for their work on the International Exhibition and last, but not least, Simon Eccles for making the North American Tour a reality, despite the many obstacles and inordinate amount of red tape he had to negotiate with great regret.

My last 'View from the Presidents Chair' is tinged with sadness. My very good friend and colleague David Sellars passed away earlier this year after a short illness. His family and friends were at his bedside and he passed away peacefully in his sleep. David was one of the most creative Art Bookbinders of his generation and devoted his life to the medium. His contribution to bookbinding was immeasurable. He leaves a body of work for future generations of bookbinders to enjoy. There are words of remembrance within the newsletter.

During my period of office, the Society has, sadly, lost several leading exponents of our craft. They have left legacies, which form the foundations upon which we can build a stronger society, one in which they would be justly proud to have been a part of. There is a generation of young binders already making their mark. I am in no doubt that the Society has a healthy future.

On a personal note, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have helped during my Presidency, particularly Jeanette Koch, Peter Jones, Angela James and Jack London.

Lori, good luck for the future. I hope I have left the Society in reasonably good shape for you!

S.P. CONWAY
President of Designer Bookbinders

4 letters to the editor

Find out more at: www.designerbookbinders.org.uk

NEWSLETTER OF DESIGNER BOOKBINDERS NO 169 SPRING 2015

Letter to the Editor from Jenni Grey

In response to 'Where did all the wild things go?' and 'Making it Pay' in the Winter Newsletter.

Reading Eri Funazaki's contribution to the last newsletter put me in mind of the sort of work that was around when I first started bookbinding. Philip Smith was making mountain-like sculptures to encase his bindings and had invented Maril, Jim Brockman had made a Perspex book that lit up and was working on his single rod bindings; Trevor Jones was working with found objects and leather dyes; and David Sellars was producing cut out containers that encased his bindings in a three dimensional 'scaffold' and had invented emulsified leather dust. I could go on, but suffice it to say that back in the 1980s I thought anything was possible; Fellows of DB were leading the way in innovation and creativity, and were an inspiration to aspiring students.

Obviously, like Eri, I pondered what might be the causes of this recent more 'conservative' trend, and felt that recent DB exhibitions might be in some way responsible. None of the exhibitions are a problem individually, but the cumulative effect of them over the last 10 years or so could be the issue. Whilst it is perfectly valid for DB to promote selling shows, they do have their limitations. It can be very tempting for binders to repeat a formula that has sold before; binders can't borrow work from clients, therefore a lot of good work does not get seen and some binders may not be represented. Equally the trend for having themed exhibitions may be perceived to be interesting to the public, but specifying texts can be limiting for binders, and a number of bindings may end up being quite similar. Long touring shows can also create a problem: work is going to be handled by lots of different people so there can be a tendency to submit work that is less likely to be damaged.

This doesn't mean that the situation is negative, really interesting work is out there, such as Eri's creative collaborations with Danny Flynn; the intriguing structures Lori Sauer and Benjamin Elbel are making; the different forms and ways that Mark Cockram has used to house his bindings and his 'out of the rectangle' pieces. Others like Angela James and Nicky Oliver have continued to employ leather dyeing techniques, but are moving the process on in different ways creating unique visual outcomes.

Perhaps DB needs to consider the types and sequence of exhibitions they put on. Binders could simply be invited to submit their favourite pieces, which may or may not be for sale. This could encourage people to do that particular binding they've always meant to do but haven't got round to yet. Or, if DB wants to provide a hook or theme for an exhibition, it could be something that encourages a

particular direction such as containers for books, or working in three dimensions, or mixed media etc., and it is hoped the sort of work that was around when I was a student could be encouraged again.

Finally, to add another idea to Benjamin Elbel's 'Making it Pay'. In terms of attracting new clients, instead of looking to traditionally produced private press books for source material perhaps DB needs to embrace the digital age. With the ease of downloading books, clients could be encouraged to take their disc copy to their binder and liaise with them about the paper, size, format and structure of their book. That could create an exciting new market led by Designer Bookbinders.

Letter to the Editor from Adam Watson

In response To Eri Funazaki's Article in the Winter Newsletter.

Nice little article!

I think (certainly in my case) that now there are fewer courses, there are fewer rebels. I was certainly kicking against the Roehampton traces and, with The Lord of The Rings [Image published in the Winter Newsletter] and some of my other books, against the rather stuffy, 'standard issue' bindings that proliferated at that time (in my perception at least!). Rules are to be broken, boundaries pushed!

I'm not particularly into conceptual art, but if I ever entered the DB Competition again, it might be with a large glass jar, filled with cinders and melted metal, and a label saying "This was The Lord Of The Rings"!!



Binding by Derek Hood

Gifts of the trade

by Derek Hood

Having worked in the past in traditional fine binderies, I have been asked to write a few words on how some of the practices used in them may have influenced the way I work. So I will try to touch on a few methods that I have used, or still use, in my studio whilst working today. Undoubtedly my experience working in traditional fine binderies has influenced the way I work in many different ways. Some are a result of learning new methods or enhancing traditional techniques and others I have developed as a reaction, and sometimes solution, to solving problematic production methods.

Similar to the way work is produced in the trade, I am very much drawn to making classic leather bound books with the design element being added later. This approach may be inherent in me as a designer, rather than traditionally inherited, as my leanings to most aspects of art and design have always tended to be on the pure and minimal side. When approaching a fine binding my working practices are generally the same as they are for most. Once a method of sewing and board attachment has been decided on which suits the text block, I begin the process of making. Taking care with every process is key as damaging a paper book-block is easier than some would imagine. I'm sure we have all seen someone attempting to round and back a book with the same effort required to bang a nail into a piece of oak.... a technique taken straight from the Jeremy Clarkson Guide To Bookbinding.

I do like, and still use, some elements of traditional board attachment like lacing-in, as I feel it produces a robust and strong binding. I don't mind, like some, seeing the little lumps of the cords at the hinges underneath the leather. This shows me how the binding has been sewn and constructed. It's also very easy to hide these cords, almost completely, by changing the angle of the entry point into the boards. Sanding the board edges, with a soft chamfer, before covering is another staple of my bindings and again harks back to traditional binding methods.

When covering a decorated binding in leather, I tend to use the best part of the skin I can, as if I were producing a plain bookbinding with minimal finishing. This way, I am happy that I've made a strong, beautiful and functional book to begin with. I understand that it may make sense to cover a book that has inlay decoration using leather that may have blemishes or marks that will later be cut out and discarded. Whilst perhaps saving ten pounds might make financial sense to a trade bindery, when producing numerous books, I am lucky not to have such large financial constraints and overheads, and can make my choice freely. The threat of any problems due to impurities, or weak points in the skin, is then minimised.

Artistically, it gives me the perfect base to start marking, cutting and sculpting. I suppose sculpture is a good analogy here; I couldn't imagine Moore, Hepworth or Gill starting the process of carving into a marble monolith without carefully making sure it was the perfect piece for the work. Properly assessing and choosing the correct materials from the outset are paramount to the success and feel of the finished piece.

As many of you may know I tend to gild my book edges in a variety of pure metals. This not only enhances my chosen design aesthetic but also prevents direct and excessive light intrusion into the text block and can help to keep paper discolouration at bay. I have adapted the traditional skills I first learnt by adjusting my methods as I encountered problems. This process of honing my skill eventually led to a simple and reasonably foolproof method, which I now use. It also led me to cut out two of the traditional processes that I saw no real benefit or need for. Namely, adding a layer of bole underneath the starch and eliminating the use of French chalk pre-preparation. In relation to gilding, I am not a fan of small board squares, and prefer to use (instead) slightly larger ones than are sometimes used. For me, this is a simple matter of taste and is purely subjective; although I could argue that a slightly larger square will protect my newly gilded edge from fidgeting fingers and thumbs... Working for two of the most famous binderies in the UK, I have also been lucky enough to handle and closely examine books made by many of my favourite iconic binders- namely Pierre Legrain, Paul Bonet and Henri Creuzevault. Most of these beautiful books also have reasonable squares, which I feel simultaneously protects the edges and balances the weight and size of the book aesthetically.

Another method that I use regularly and have adapted from traditional fine binding experience is covering books reasonably quickly using a mix of paste and reversible PVA. Whilst working in a fine bindery in London, it was normal to cover a dozen or so fine bindings in full leather per day. Using a mix of PVA and paste gives a shorter working time but slightly better adhesion, making this possible. This method is especially useful when I have inlays crossing workable joints, as the grab of the adhesive is paramount to their success. I have also used the same mix of adhesives to apply inlays as it gives a versatile combination of movement and adhesion. I definitely owe my covering skill to the hours spent in binderies making full leather books as part of a team... Malcom Gladwell's 10,000 hours rule would be applicable.

Bookbinding is clearly a craft that is traditional by default, and whilst for some it has been easy to criticise fine trade binderies for their occasional and mostly unconscious poor practices, most of these are now behind us. And without these establishments existing, bookbinding would not be where it is today and some of our finest craftsmen and women would surely have not have existed. Without them, as without books, we have no past and no future.

6 exhibitions

Find out more at: www.designerbookbinders.org.uk

NEWSLETTER OF DESIGNER BOOKBINDERS NO 169 SPRING 2015

Inside/OUT at Minnesota Center for Book Arts

by Simon Eccles



It was cold but not inside 1011 Washington Avenue South, or "Open Book" the home of the Minnesota Center for Book Arts [MCBA] which it shares with The Loft Literary Center, the independent press, Milkweed Editions and a coffee shop. It is a large handsome building and on entering you know that you are very much in the MCBA with the cafe on the right. It is spacious throughout, housing departments for paper making, letterpress printing and hand bookbinding. The Center is visually very welcoming echoing the construction of the book, the stunning staircase curves through 180 degrees with the bannisters in the form of parchment pages.

Sayaka Fukuda was our lead curator with invaluable and swift assistance from Jeff Rathermell, director of the Center. Throughout the whole process of installation both staff and volunteers were wonderful in their help. Like so much of the Center the exhibition space has a constant flow of people going to and from the studios. You can't miss the show!!

Inside/OUT was the largest of three exhibitions to celebrate 30 years of operation for the Center. "Plainly Spoken" and "Greg Campbell Fine Binding" were the other two highly complementary exhibitions. "Plainly Spoken" shows the work of some 14 binders from the Midwest Chapter of the Guild of Book Workers [5 of them are also in Inside/OUT !] Each bound "Book will Speak plain" an extensive work of Julia Miller, it is a 500 page handbook created for conservators, collectors, librarians and book lovers, for the identification and description of book structures and styles. The other exhibition "Greg Campbell Fine Bindings" with Greg Campbell present and there to explain we were able to appreciate his fine work along with that of the family owned and run Campbell - Logan Bindery.

The Bindery owns and makes its home in a century old, four story, 54,000 square foot warehouse known as the Inkunabula Arts building. Only two blocks from the Mississippi River in the Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District, Campbell-



Logan Bindery is a full service bindery offering a full range of bookbinding services under the direction of a talented innovator and dedicated guardian of tradition.

Jeff Rathermell welcomed us all to such an important landmark in the Center's life. Highlighting the fact that there were so many present, including Founders of the Center, and on such a hostile night - weatherwise!! The trio of exhibitions, being first in the reorganised exhibition space, showed that the crafts that go into the making of the book were alive and well. I then did the customary thanking while also congratulating Jeff for his bravery. Lester Capon and I first met Jeff in October 2012 and after just a half day in the Center we told him of this planned show, "would he like to exhibit the end product?", with not a moment's hesitation and a few questions and the answer came "yes". At that stage the Presses were largely known, but little else - binders or texts, let alone venues for the tour. Bravery!! He looked perfectly happy that evening.

Then we heard from Gaylord Schanilec of Midnight Paper Sales and the press for two of the books in the exhibition. Gaylord gave us a highly amusing and informative coverage on his latest publications with considerable concentration on his latest work "Lac des Pleurs", describing and illustrating the bird and fish life on a substantial lake on the Mississippi, just a short way from his home at Stockholm, Wisconsin. This tome and its woodcuts have taken eight years to complete but should it have followed the initial plan and size he calculates that it would have taken 125 years - those fish take time to reel in!! He brought along a copy, one of a hundred. It is superb. He left us in no doubt that while he is a remarkable wood engraver he is also an all-round player in the making of the finest of private press books.

It was a memorable and celebratory evening with all the arrangements being done by staff and volunteers, to them all, a very big "thank you".

Fine Binding and the Rare Book World

by Rob Shepherd

A visitor to the ABA summer fair at Olympia would be forgiven for wondering why there are hardly any examples of modern fine bindings to be found amongst the 180 leading UK and international dealers who gather each year at London's premier book fair.

A few rare book dealers, Sophie Schneideman being one, and those firms who own binderies, Bayntuns, Peter Harrington and Shepherds, show modern bindings. There are also some French and Continental dealers who offer bindings but on the whole fine bindings, and particularly the work of contemporary binders, are notable by their absence. There is clearly very little trade between the current fine binding community and the world of rare books.

Over the last few years I have been researching the history of Sangorski & Sutcliffe and I am struck by the close relationship the bindery had with the book trade in former years. This was particularly true during the early years of the partnership, especially in those heady times before the First World War when it is estimated S&S [Sangorski & Sutcliffe] produced over 150 exquisitely beautiful jewelled bindings. The key to the young partnership's success was a network of booksellers some of whose names can still be seen trading today; Hatchards, Maggs, Sotheran's and the amazing but now sadly defunct book emporium of John & Edward Bumpus.

This close relationship between the bookbinders and the booksellers was of fundamental importance to the economy of both parties. Without this network of bookshops and dealers Sangorski & Sutcliffe would not have been able to grow their business into one of the leading workshops of the day. Most importantly, without the commercial bravery and vision of these important dealers they would never have had the opportunity to create the outstanding examples of their craft for which they are justly famous.

The high priest of modern bookbinding, T.J. Cobden Sanderson, who supposedly viewed commerce as an anathema, did in fact conduct his radical new approach to the art of bookbinding with a finely tuned commercial eye. He cultivated his reputation through lectures and teaching, a very effective form of marketing that brought his work to the attention of collectors at home and abroad. He sold his books through James Bain's bookshop in the Haymarket and like the other commercial bookbinders at that time he took students for extra income at £100 a year; he was a brilliant bookbinder and in spite of his socialist ideals, he was actually quite a shrewd businessman.

The period following the First World War was a rollercoaster for the bookbinding industry. The 1920s, although a relatively prosperous period for the country, saw the demand for fine binding decline in Britain but there remained a healthy market in the United States, notably through large department stores such as Robinson's in California and Marshall Fields in Chicago. After the Wall St crash in 1929 the American market collapsed too and the fine bookbinding industry went into sharp decline.

The S&S archives highlight the damaging effect of the 1930s depression, a period which saw lay-offs and severe shortages of work. Matters got even worse in the Second World War, when at one stage the bindery in Poland St was reduced to making leather straps for tin helmets. After the War their fortunes revived and once again Bumpus was writing to Kenneth Hobson, a manager at S&S, congratulating him on the exceptional work the firm had done for Mr & Mrs Churchill and HRH Princess Elizabeth.

They also had a long established relationship with the Golden Cockerel Press, who for a period after the Second World War rented premises from the firm in the Poland St bindery. Other publishers such as John Murray, William Heinemann and the Folio Society also regularly appear in the ledgers at this time. Their connection to the book trade, in all its various forms, was a necessary factor in their ability to survive in testing times.

S&S was still winning the most prestigious commissions, including the Coronation Bible on which the Queen took her oath of office, but times were changing and the economic problems were exacerbated by an equally radical change in society's approach to the applied arts. The Abbey Exhibition in 1949 was a watershed moment for the trade when out of the many binders' names involved in the exhibition, not one commercial firm was included among them.

The rise of individual artists and craftsmen, known collectively as the non-trade sector, would dominate the bookbinding scene for the next half century. The movement towards individual artistic expression would isolate the commercial

“There is clearly very little trade between the current fine binding community and the world of rare books.”

sector and Sangorski & Sutcliffe, who had exhibited at many important and international exhibitions from their inception in 1901, including the 1925 Paris Exhibition that launched Art Deco, never exhibited again after the Second World War.

Another watershed moment came in 1978 when William Matthews and Edgar Mansfield were both honoured by a joint exhibition at the V&A. The idea of celebrating the work of individuals as both artists and craftsmen altered the whole basis on how bookbinding, and the applied arts generally, would be viewed in the coming decades.

It is now sixty years since the launch of the Guild of Contemporary Bookworkers, yet there are very few commercial hand binderies and fewer still concentrating on the finest work. There are probably only a handful of binders in the world who can say they earn a commercial living from producing their own work, most professional binders relying on restoration or lower grade work to pay their mortgages.

So in an age when the crafts are so widely admired, why is there not a stronger market for fine bookbinding? In former years the book arts shared a platform alongside the other major branches of the applied arts but in modern times the designer bookbinding movement appears to have become isolated and distant from the rare book world that would logically be its natural home and best marketplace.

These days, I spend as much time with booksellers as bookbinders and I have the impression the book trade simply doesn't understand the bookbinding community. There is a feeling of general bemusement among booksellers that anyone would put a very beautiful and expensive binding on an ordinary and inexpensive book. This goes beyond purely monetary considerations. For most booksellers, form is secondary to content and a beautiful binding should be there to compliment a beautiful book. Somehow or other, the modern bookbinding movement in the late twentieth century reversed this arrangement, rendering the content of the book as of secondary importance.

Much earlier in the century, the 1914 publication of a special Studio edition titled *The Art of the Book* demonstrates how fragmented the book arts became in the second half of the twentieth century. By bringing together the work of typographers, illustrators, printers, and bookbinders in one publication, the Studio was making a clear statement that every aspect of a book's production is of equal importance. Published simultaneously in English and French, the list of articles covers the book arts in England, Germany, France, Austria, Hungary, Sweden and America; a remarkable collection of examples of the best work across Europe and America. It is hard to imagine such a publication could be

published today that so comprehensively embraces the book arts as a single entity.

Douglas Cockerell, the most sensible of men, who along with other notable achievements went on to run the W. H. Smith bindery, took a similarly inclusive approach. Writing in 1929, he put forward the view that bookbinding was not 'an isolated craft independent of the other book-producing trades'. He observed that 'to produce a book ready for use, the paper makers, ink-makers, printers, book-binders, and a host of other contributory craftsmen, including the author, must each do their part.' He believed a book requires many skills and talents and can never be the product of just one individual.

Simon Eccles, in his recent exhibition 'Inside Out', made a spirited move to bring the art of bookbinding into a closer relationship with the other elements that go together to make a fine book. By nominating nine private presses as the basis of the exhibition, he was bringing two keys elements together in a way that is rarely seen in the bookbinding sector or the fine press world; in some respects the private press community are equally oblivious to the finer points of bookbinding. Simon is quoted in an interview with the Economist as saying that 'designer bookbindings are objets d'art and the art market has long overlooked them as collectibles'. This may well be true but if this approach is going to succeed then a holistic approach to the book arts is needed from all sides.

BOOK ARTS! - I can hear the sharp intakes of breath and the ping of angry emails at the very mention of the phrase. In April last year, at the Shadow Show that runs parallel with the New York Book Fair there was a whole area in the basement of the Altman building dedicated to mainly American book artists. Book artists have been criticised, often with good reason, for a lack of craftsmanship but this is changing; there is still a lamentable lack, to my old fashioned taste at least, of leather and gold leaf but many of the exhibits were both well-made and well-conceived, albeit in a form that is not traditionally associated with a bound book.

Despite the wacky nature of many book artist projects, it is interesting to note that the rare book world appears to relate to this work in a way that does not extend to traditional bookbinding. The answer lies in the book artists' approach to the book as a whole idea, a complete concept that embraces the disciplines Cockerell listed in his article all those years ago. It was also noticeable that several leading dealers in the main fair at the New York Armoury were also showing the work of contemporary book artists; the indications are that the world of rare books is starting to take this new development in the history of the book seriously.

If the craft of bookbinding in its most traditional form, which includes the principles of fine forwarding and finishing and the values of sound materials and good structure, is to find a place in an ever-changing arts environment, then it is vital to recognise and embrace this holistic approach to the art of fine bookmaking.

In the latter half of the last century the majority of the great trade binderies, who for so long had been the bedrock of the fine binding trade, were unable and sometimes unwilling to keep up with shifts in public taste and their inability to adapt to a changing market meant they ultimately failed; let's hope the modern designer binding movement doesn't make the same mistake.

The above is largely taken from extracts from his forthcoming book 'The Cinderella of the Arts – A Short History of Sangorski & Sutcliffe' – to be published this summer.

Covered

Layton Room, St Bride Foundation
Bride Lane, Fleet Street, London EC4Y 8EQ

This year's COVERED will be open from:
27th May - 6th of June

Opening times:

11am – 6pm Monday to Friday
11am – 4pm Saturday

All bindings will be new and for sale.

Trevor Jones - A Retrospective



Exhibition at St Bride: 18th March to 10th April
Opening hours: 10am - 6pm Monday to Friday
Saturdays 21st and 28th March: 11am - 4pm
The exhibition will be closed on Sundays and from 3rd - 6th April for Easter

The 36 bindings commissioned by Duval and Hamilton will form the core of the exhibition. Although the collection has been exhibited in Scotland, very few people have seen it and this will be a unique opportunity to see these wonderful bindings.

Trevor Jones was a Fellow, Honorary Fellow and founder member of The Guild of Contemporary Bookbinders (which subsequently became DB) and he was arguably one of the most innovative binders of the 20th Century.

For those not familiar with his work (and for those who have long admired it), this is the perfect chance to see these bindings.

A book about Trevor's work – *The Bindings of Trevor Jones* - will be published to coincide with the opening. This will be a very handsome production, copiously illustrated throughout and a wonderful resource for future generations of binders. It will be on sale at the exhibition.

If anyone would like to offer to invigilate for a half or whole day at St Bride during the run of the show, please get in touch with Lester Capon lester@sbf.org.uk or Angela James angelajamesbooks@aol.com. You will be welcomed with open arms.

10 obituary

Find out more at: www.designerbookbinders.org.uk

NEWSLETTER OF DESIGNER BOOKBINDERS NO 169 SPRING 2015

DAVID GEORGE SELLARS (1949 -2015)



Eulogy read at the funeral of David Sellars, 5th February 2015 by Stephen Conway.

David and I were born within half a mile of each other, played on the same streets and were proud to be 'lads from Boothtown'. That we both ended up as Presidents of Designer Bookbinders, with a life in bookbinding, was, we believed, a unique situation. On several occasions, we discussed the possibility of a joint exhibition at Bankfield Museum, Boothtown. We felt that two local working class boys following the same career path ten years apart, exhibiting and teaching on a worldwide stage would have made an 'interesting story'. Alas, this was never to materialise.

David was a straight talking Yorkshireman. He spoke his mind, no matter what the consequences. He fought intensely his whole life for the medium of art bookbinding to be accepted alongside other fine art forms. His views never changed. He didn't succumb to commercialism or pander to mass markets. He possessed two rare qualities in a man; conviction and integrity. He was incredibly knowledgeable on many aspects of the arts and was prepared to share his knowledge and philosophies with those eager to learn. For me personally, David has had a huge, huge influence on my life. He was my best friend. But it is in the field of art bookbinding that David made his most significant contribution.

He was a gifted educator, in the 1970s and 80s, working at the Royal College of Art, Oxford Brookes University and The New York Center for the Book. He was responsible for inspiring and helping shape the career paths of many of today's leading bookbinders.

He was an active member and supporter of both bookbinding societies here in the UK, Designer Bookbinders and The Society of Bookbinders. He served as President of Designer Bookbinders.

David was a remarkable man. He was one of the most creative, influential and innovative bookbinders of his generation and his contribution to the medium immeasurable. His name will go down in the bookbinding history books for centuries to come.

David's very good friend, Jeff Clements recently wrote to me. I quote; "I once likened him to a piece of coal, which he found amusing! That is to say 'hacked from the ground in a rough state'; 'when lit warmed everything and everyone around'; finally leaving behind 'memories of energy and chaos!'"

Thank you for everything David – we shall never forget you.

Wherever David was, something was sure to happen, whether directly or indirectly. Often this something would have happened before, on the way to the exhibition opening perhaps, or maybe a telephone call as when he stayed with us, the message being that his superb collection of records was falling off the wall! There were countless stories from a delightful man, and a very good friend. David visited us several times in Amsterdam and we often met up in a London pub or at some conference or other. I came to know him well and with the knowledge of his complex background and youthful experiences, came to appreciate his special abilities.

The bindings David produced were serious journeys of creative discovery and like himself were taken to the very edge of interpretation. I once said to him that he was like a piece of coal, rough hewn but when lit, warmed and energised all around, at the same time leaving a residue of chaos behind him!

David and I shared a passion for steam locomotives, in his case miniature as well as large and ancient. We shared similar musical interests and via the telephone I was kept up to date with his various adventures, some of them quite bizarre, sometimes hilarious and relatively recently the wonderful news that he had discovered his family! He took his responsibilities seriously, as President of Designer Bookbinders for example. He could be undiplomatic but spoke directly from his heart and with absolute conviction. There were times when we would disagree but could immediately continue our somewhat unorthodox friendship.

Sitting at the bar with a full glass and an appreciative audience are memories to treasure, the last one for me being near St. Bride's in May 2014. This abrupt break is alas permanent and a sad end for a distinguished Designer Bookbinder.

Jeff Clements

I met David in 1979 when he was teaching part-time at what was then Brighton Polytechnic. Even though he was only there briefly, he still influenced my approach to my work. He was passionate about Designer Bookbinders, and saw creativity as the main reason for working, insisting in those early days on being called a book-artist, rather than a bookbinder.

Always encouraging to students, but at times having an ulterior motive i.e. getting someone to do the donkey work, he persuaded me to help him set up a number of DB exhibitions, the first being at the Bertram Rota Bookshop in Covent Garden in the early 1980s. This wasn't just altruism on my part: the best way to learn can be to study actual work, and in those pre 'Flow' exhibition days the opportunity to handle fine bindings was a privilege. It was at this exhibition that I saw a more vulnerable side to David. At the private view someone had stumbled into one of the display plinths sending the whole lot, including the bindings, crashing to the floor. After some time I realised that David was missing and I found him in tears in an upstairs room; he was mortified, believing that the private view had turned into a complete shambles. As the curator he felt responsible, when in fact it was the unevenness of the floor that made the plinths unstable. I didn't tell anyone about this at the time, but it is an example of his commitment to bookbinding, and his desire for the medium to become recognised in the art/craft world, that this incident was such a major and personal setback to him.

In the early nineties I became aware that David was enjoying a drink with more gusto than the rest of us, and I remember telling him I was concerned that if he wasn't careful he would be in danger of drinking himself into an early grave. He replied with typical brio 'I won't die – I've still got books to make!' and he did, of course, continue to make extraordinary bindings. But with hindsight I wish I'd done more at that time to encourage him to get help with a problem that dogged him all his life, and contributed to his early demise.

David could be blunt, calling a spade a spade; a quality I have always envied as there was no artifice to him and he didn't worry about saying the right thing. Whilst that meant you always knew exactly where you stood with him, sometimes he could be too outspoken. My husband's most vivid memory of him was in Paris when, after a private view, we were going out for a meal with David and his wife Jill. We'd got lost looking for a particular restaurant and David, in his broad Yorkshire accent, asked a passer by the way. The man replied in French apologising that he couldn't understand, at which point David announced that 'they all speak English you know - but they just won't' oblivious to how offensive that might sound to anyone else in hearing distance, or that we were just wishing the ground would open up and swallow us! David was an engaging and complex character, and I could

recount many more stories about him, but what I most admired was his creativity which makes it all the more reason to feel so sad that, at a time when DB is becoming more commercial, the Society has lost one of its most creative voices.

Jenni Grey

I first met David in my bindery in my Chester days, about 30 years ago. I remember the first thing he wanted was a drink in Alexander's wine bar, just a few minutes from my bindery, which was in the City Walls of Chester. It was David's first trip to Chester, and he was bowled over.

I always envied him, for he looked at the books he bound differently from any other I have ever met. Of course, he was trained by the greatest woman binder, who happened to be an American, who wore glasses bigger than her eyes. She was Sally Lou Smith. She was David's mentor and discovered him, and I believe, showed him how to feel a design suitable to the book, and not, like me, well known for doing pretty pictures. At least, that is what I have been told.

David's work always had a dark edge to it, and we used to have great fun over his ideas, the famous, the great Sellars using for his bindings emulsified leather dust. Nobody used leather dust quite like him, surprisingly beautiful, and everybody that I spoke to over the years loved his style. You remember his work for it has a brooding appeal, it is not just for looking at, it's for examining, turning over, looking at it again, the edge colouring, the amazing headbands, re-looking at it and seeing different things all the time. Try to see more of his work everybody, and you will understand why I am so envious.

I want to leave as David would want me to leave, we loved talking about music, and it was dawn before he and I put the phone down, humming the tunes that we had talked about. He had a huge record collection, all lovely vinyl, which I envy, and also a fantastic library. David had so many stories, and he even met the great Jan Sobota in his rather cluttered bindery in Halifax; I would love to have been there. Now that David is no longer with us, it is a time for secrets. Do you know his favourite programme on the wireless was the shipping forecast, his favourite forecast was Channel Light Vessel Automatic, and German Bight. I expect David is listening to it up above.

These are just a few words honouring David. I think one of the most original bookbinders of his generation.

Paul C. Delrue, maker of pretty pictures

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Find out more at: www.designerbookbinders.org.uk

NEWSLETTER OF DESIGNER BOOKBINDERS NO 169 SPRING 2015

David Sellars lived and breathed Art. For a boy who grew up in a working class household in Halifax and who had to leave school at fourteen to secure an apprenticeship in the carpet factory where his father worked, his journey was remarkable.

David's mother was an avid reader and through her he could read before going to school. He went on to educate himself by indulging in everything: the classics, poetry, history, art, biography, and music (jazz, opera, everything classical, and obscure folk). Over the years he acquired an enormous number of books and records to feed his passions. When you met him this is what you came away with — that here was a man who derived extreme joy from the love of all the culture he could lay his hands on, and he always impressed upon you the fact that he was lucky to be born at a time when a kid like him could follow a dream, get educated on the State, and become something bigger and better than he was told he could be. After a traditional apprenticeship at a bindery in Halifax, David somehow got himself off to London and studied at Camberwell, where he really began to come alive. I've met many people over the years who were his contemporaries there, and they all have strong memories of a brilliant student — driven, passionate, questioning, and with a rare talent for creativity.

David was a prodigy. He was a very young Fellow of DB, and committed himself to its success. He served as President of course, but so much more besides. He came late to SoB, encouraged by Jill to get involved again in education at a moment of crisis for the craft in the UK. In latter years he travelled with Jill to teach and inspire future generations of bookbinders. David was also a superstar bookbinder. He actively sought out famous writers, artists and musicians because he enjoyed being in the company of talented folk. And he knew, or had met, simply everyone — David Hockney, Ted Hughes, Tracy Emin, A.S Byatt, Beryl Bainbridge, Nick Hornby, Michael Ondaatje, Graham Swift, Ian McEwan, Doris Lessing — the list goes on. Often we teased him with our incredulity, thinking he could not have possibly met or known all these remarkable people. But he did. And not because he was star-struck, but because he lived with the assured knowledge that as an artistic bookbinder, he was no different from these people who had captured the public imagination more than we can ever hope for. And he never stopped hoping.

His life's purpose was akin to that of his great friend and mentor, Phillip Smith, which was to strive to elevate creative bookbinding out of Craft and into Art, where it surely belongs. Thanks to his forty-year long commitment to this dream, this may one day happen. And when it finally does, we can look back and say that David's passion for his art was not in vain. David could take years over a binding, but then could create a Booker or Sports Book when the time was tight. He always said that he surprised himself with his ability to produce to remarkably short deadlines for these bindings — respond to a text, design and bind it and then take it to the ceremony, year after year.

As it is with many artists, so it was with David: nothing was guaranteed, and at every turn there were surprises. When we got to know him properly all the teaching had dried up, and he was living permanently back in Yorkshire. Knowing that he was living on a fairly precarious income, I encouraged him to get into the Yellow Pages (as I had done) and take on all the work that surely would come in an area where there were few skilled bookbinders working. But he made it very clear that in his universe, this was simply not going to happen. He had done all that in the Seventies, had been a skilled book restorer and 'fine binder', but had long moved on to higher things. Whether we think that a bad move for someone who, after all, had to make a living, now seems immaterial. He pursued his dream. Sometimes it paid off, sometimes he had fallow years and without Jill supporting him he may not have been able to be so noble in his Art. But principled he was to the last, and he died with his passion for beautiful bindings undimmed. With the body of work he leaves behind, his star will shine forever.

Dominic Riley

JÁNOS SZIRMAI (1925 - 2014)

János Szirmai is well known to all of us through his publication "The Archaeology of Medieval Bookbinding", which is essential reading for all professionals interested in historical bookbinding techniques. J.A. Szirmai wrote numerous articles for different professional journals including *Magnus*, *Quaerendo*, *Bindereport* and *The New Bookbinder*. He was a dedicated lecturer at conferences, international universities and professional colleges.

He was highly motivated to study how historical bookbindings function because he saw the mechanical failure and breaking joints of the so-called French bindings, which are considered to be the highest professional standard of bookbinding. To him they seemed merely suitable as decoration. Following his first career as a renowned medical scientist at the beginning of the 1970s, he devoted himself auto-didactically to calligraphy, typography and bookbinding. He joined the *Centro del Bel Libro* in Ascona, where he practised fine-art bookbinding with Martin Jaegle. His superb manual skills and artistic designs were rewarded with the *Prix Paul Bonet* in 1975, his fine-art bookbindings were on show at numerous international exhibitions (BDBI, MDE, IBA etc.).

In 1984 he edited a catalogue of his fine-art bookbindings for an exclusive exhibition at the University Library of Amsterdam (*Boek Band Kunst*) and in 1987 he was invited to take the *Tielen Chair* at the University of Amsterdam in order to give a series of lectures to students and colleagues from different fields. Together with his wife Mia, he ran a small but excellent art bookbindery for many years in Oosterbeek in Holland.

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Find out more at: www.designerbookbinders.org.uk

NEWSLETTER OF DESIGNER BOOKBINDERS NO 169 SPRING 2015

DESIGNER BOOKBINDERS SPRING MEETING

Incorporating the Annual General Meeting
Saturday 18 April 2015 at 2.00pm at the Art Workers' Guild
in London.

Designer Bookbinders is pleased to be holding its Spring Meeting on Saturday 18 April 2015. This will be a special day of events and we hope that many members will be able to attend. Please make a note of it in your diary now.

AGM AGENDA

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 5 April 2014
Matters arising
President's report
Secretary's report
Hon. Treasurer's report
Introduction of the President for 2015-2017
Members of the Executive Committee for 2015-2017
Any other business

The hall of the Art Workers Guild will be open from 10.30pm onwards and the meeting will close by 5.00pm.

The Spring Meeting will also include a Bring and Buy sale. If you have any tools, equipment, materials, books, etc. that you wish to sell, please make sure they are marked clearly with a price and your name.

THE BOOKBINDING COMPETITION 2015

Thank you to all who took part in the 2014 Competition: entrants, judges and Fellows who came to give advice on collection day.

Onwards into 2015 with Orwell's masterpiece, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, to celebrate the 25th year of The Folio Society's sponsorship of the annual Bookbinding Competition! The set book is available from Lester Bath; details are on the website: www.designerbookbinders.org.uk

The annual competition is open to anyone resident in the UK at the time of binding the book with the exception of Fellows of Designer Bookbinders.

We look forward to some 'wild bindings' for Shepherd's Prize for Book Arts – please read Eri Funazaki's article in the Winter 2014 newsletter, 'Where did all the wild things go?'

The Competition Committee

VENUES NEEDED!!!!

Could your workshop/bindery cater for 10 students? Do you know of any workshop local to you that could do the same?

The DB/SoB Joint Workshops Team are looking for venues around the country for the coming series of joint workshops over the late 2015/early 2016 period. The venues would need to be able to cater for approximately 10 students, allowing enough space for each student to be able to work freely.

If you have any suggestions or ideas please contact Alan Fitch either by email (alan@farthingpress.plus.com) or telephone on 01938 590733.

BINDING re:DEFINED

Wiltshire

BINDING re:DEFINED aims to inspire a wider appreciation of book structures and how they make an intelligent contribution to the aesthetic of the finished work. The focus of our carefully selected programme remains firmly in the tradition of well-crafted pieces that exhibit the best in contemporary design.

We are based in Wiltshire's beautiful Vale of Pewsey and easily reached by road or rail.

The full 2015 programme is available to view online.

The Pompidou	April 21 - 22	Lori Sauer
Print and Bind	May 20 - 22	Emily Martin
Limp Bindings I	June 30 - July 3	Monica Langwe

Please visit our website for complete details or ring Lori Sauer on 01672 851638
www.bookbindingworkshops.com
bookbindingsworkshops@gmail.com

EXHIBITION: MECHTILD LOBISCH

My symmetrical obsession, 3 April - 17 May 2015

Opening: Thursday 2nd April 2015. 5pm

Introduction: Talk with Wolfgang Thoner, Bauhaus Foundation

Opening times: Tuesday - Sunday 11am - 5pm

Address: Orangerie der Anhaltischen Gemäldegalerie
Puschkinallee 100, Dessau-Rosslau, Germany

A catalogue will be published.

14 courses

Find out more at: www.citylit.ac.uk

NEWSLETTER OF DESIGNER BOOKBINDERS NO 169 SPRING 2015

Bookbinding courses at City Lit

BEGINNERS

Taster Day

The perfect present – a day's introduction to some of the materials, techniques and tools of bookbinding while you make a book to take home.

Tutor: Nesta Davies | £69 | 5 July Sunday 10.30 - 16.30

Ten Projects for Beginners

A medley of projects for complete beginners or anyone with a little experience who'd like to learn a range of fun, foundational structures.

Tutor: tbc | £272/£178 | Course code VD 262

23 April - 25 June (10 weeks) Thursdays 18.00 - 21.00

ALL LEVELS

Book Art: a unique artists' book or small edition

Explore the sequential nature of the book through the themes Cityscape/landscape or timeline/lifeline. Develop your ideas and produce your own unique response.

Tutor: tbc | £328/ £219 | Course code VD292

20 April - 29 June (9 weeks) Mondays 10.30 - 16.30

Intercutting with paper

Inspire and energise your creative side on this stimulating short course. Explore intercutting techniques in a variety of paper media and investigate the juxtapositions of colour, texture and pattern to create final works.

Tutor: Louise Anderson | £96/£63 | Course code VD291

13 April - 27 April (3 weeks) Monday 18.00 - 21.00

INTERMEDIATE/ADVANCED

Paper engineering: Pop-ups and artists' books 2

Come and be creative with paper, developing the 2D into 3D with more project time to realise your ideas. This course expands on Pop-ups 1 but is suitable if you have some experience of paper engineering.

Tutor: Clare Bryan | £153 /1 £104 | Course code VD256

5 June - 3 July (5 weeks) Friday 18.00 - 21.00

Book conservation and repair: vellum-bound books

Learn how to assess and repair vellum bindings including limp, semi-limp and boarded styles. You may also work on your own projects in cloth or leather in this guided conservation class. Not suitable for beginners.

Tutor: Peter Spain | £390 / £254 | Course code VD266

22 April - 24 June (10 weeks) 10.30 - 16.30

Book Conservation and repair: workshop

Ideal if you have some experience in conservation and want to develop your skills further by working on your own projects with advice and guidance. Demonstrations will focus on different aspects of book conservation.

Tutor: Gavin Moorhead | £297/£197 | Course code VD247 |

22 April - 1 July (11 weeks) Wednesdays 18.00 - 21.00

Intermediate/advanced bookbinding

An opportunity for experienced students to work on individual projects such as fine binding, box-making, book conservation and alternative book structures. Complete unfinished pieces or create something new. Not suitable for beginners.

Tutor: Kathy Abbott | £390/£254 | Course code VD197

21 April - 23 June (10 weeks) Tuesdays 10.30 - 16.30

Bookbinding Makers Talk Clare Bryan

City Lit tutor Clare Bryan will present her work involving the manipulation of paper; scalpel drawings that on the surface appear to be blank books but on turning the page start to reveal their narrative or image. Clare is part of FOLD, an artists' group formed in 2002, which works collaboratively, exploring print media and book formats. She has exhibited widely throughout the UK and has work in public and private collections. In 2004 she received the 'Birgit Skiold Memorial Trust Award' for works on paper.
£11/£7 | Course code VD273 | Wednesday April 18.30 - 20.30

For further information and course outlines visit www.citylit.ac.uk or contact visualarts@citylit.ac.uk.
Enrol online, in person or by phone 020 7381 7381

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