

CLOSE TO HOME: ARTISTS WHO MAKE BOOKS

South Shore Art Center
119 Ripley Road
Cohasset, Massachusetts

February 17 through March 25

TWO YEARS AGO, DIANNE SMITH DOLAN FOUND MANY OF HER FRIENDS WERE CONFUSED WHEN SHE SAID SHE MADE BOOKS. "SOME OF THEM ASKED ME, 'DO YOU WRITE POETRY?'" SHE SAID. TO HELP CLARIFY THE CONFUSION, SHE ORGANIZED THIS 13-ARTIST SHOW TO PROMOTE THE BOOKMAKING MEDIUM AND THE WIDE VARIETY OF WORK RELATED TO IT.



Sharon McCartney, *If My Memory Serves Me*, mixed media Coptic bound book, 5 3/4" x 4".

Unique Visions of a Universal Subject Through Artist's Books" exhibition that toured the East Coast over a two-year period, and last year she was included in the "Beyond the Books" show at the Allston-Brighton Library.

There's a lot going on in the bookmaking genre, with a small but growing number of shows. "The market for profiting from it as an artist is not great," Dolan said. One of its leading champions is Vamp & Tramp Booksellers, based in Birmingham, Alabama, which is devoted to fine press and artists' books, broadsides (many created on letterpress) and miniature books that do not exceed three inches in both height and width. Regardless of their beauty, uniqueness and special artistic qualities, Dolan noted, "Even the best-known artists represented in the collection are not bought up like a painter or a sculptor."

Regardless, artists like making them. "It's very different than something hung on a wall," Dolan said. "Once you make one you're hooked, even if they're not selling." While this show features some newcomers to the craft, others have been working in the medium for years.

For most artists, bookmaking complements their primary work. This exhibition will feature samples from each artist's main medium along with three of their books. Along with painter Dolan, the show includes printmakers Rebecca Goodale, Elizabeth Rotchford Long, Esther Maschio and Annie Silverman; digital media artists Dorothy Simpson Krause and Mary Taylor; Kathleen Austin (encaustic); Connie Hersey (photography and paper); Barbara Hunter (fiber and paper); Margo Lemieux (acrylic and cut paper), Peter Madden (cyanotype); and Sharon McCartney (fiber construction).

Dolan, who selected the artists and curated the show, has been a SSAC member for nearly two decades. Her work was featured in the Boston Book Arts-sponsored "Shelter:

Annie Silverman has made books for almost 20 years. "I enjoy figuring out how all the elements in a book will work together to make a satisfying piece," she explained. "My books at this point are low tech and

hand printed. Making a successful book is very hard. There are so many elements to consider. There are people who enjoy different aspects of the process. Some are interested and more focused on binding

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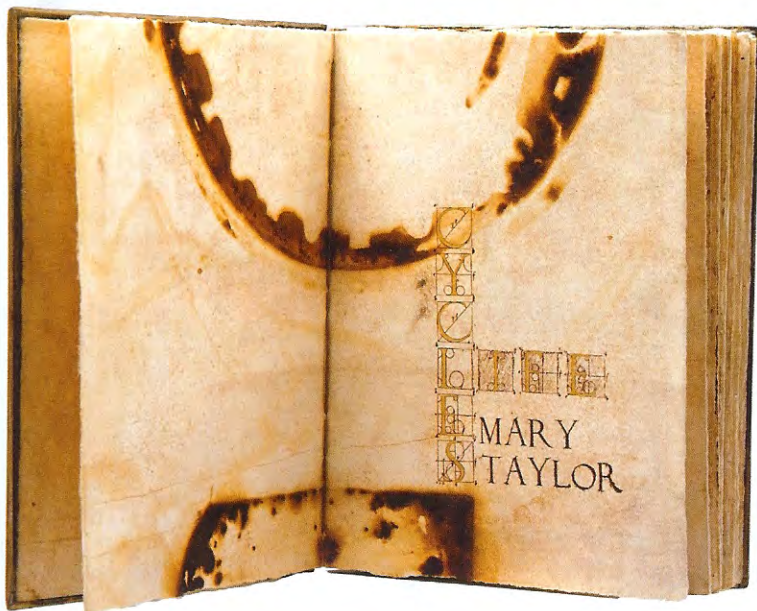
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Mary Taylor, *Life Cycles* (interior).



Barbara Hunter, *Seed Pod Organdy*, book and box.

techniques, others on content and materials. Every time you turn the page there is another surface that has to flow into and enhance what has come before."

Silverman recently began exploring how to convert old accordions into theaters; a sample is featured in this show. "Someone gave me their aunt's old accordion that was broken and I had someone help me to take it apart and cut into it," she said. "The prints (featured in the work) are polyester plate lithos, or pronto plates. I am in the front row, my teacher as a young boy is next to me. Gloria Steinem is in the back from a postcard image that Smith College has in their archive."

Another longtime bookmaker, Peter Madden, who teaches book arts and alternative photography at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (SMFA) and the Massachusetts College of Art and Design, has had his work exhibited

throughout the United States. He recently moved to Portland, Maine, after living for 20-plus years in Boston.

"He's trying to start a Society for the Contemporary Book," Dolan said. Approximately 50 people attended a recent gathering at the SMFA to discuss the possibility. "There's a large community of book-related people in Boston looking to get something going like the Center for the Book Arts in New York City," she added. One of its first projects is compiling a directory of bookmakers in the region.

"I'd be hard pressed to give a number of how many bookmakers there are in Massachusetts and New England, as an accurate answer would have to include folks such as myself as well as those doing letterpress, book and paper conservation, (and) many sculptors fall into this category," Madden said. "I know from personal experience that there are very lively

book arts communities in Maine and Rhode Island."

Madden will host "Art of the Book," a three-day workshop March 23-25 at SSAC. "There are so many relaxing, meditative, Zen aspects to bookmaking, like folding paper and sewing. I make my own paper when I can. I find it very relaxing," he said.

"Bookmaking is also very satisfying. Books are complex little structures, especially if you're including your own text and imagery. You can work and work and work on a piece and it really doesn't look like much until you put in the last couple of hours worth of work on it. Then it just magically comes together," Madden said. "It always reminds me of the scene in *Cinderella* when suddenly her dress transforms."

Silverman, who also teaches at MassArt and at her own studio, Abrazos Press in Somerville, Mass., said since the bookmaking world is very small, people get to know each other and support each other's work. "It is a labor of love and time in this fast-paced world," she said.



Annie Silverman, *Accordion Theater*, pronto plate prints installed in accordion to make a toy theater.

Brian Goslow