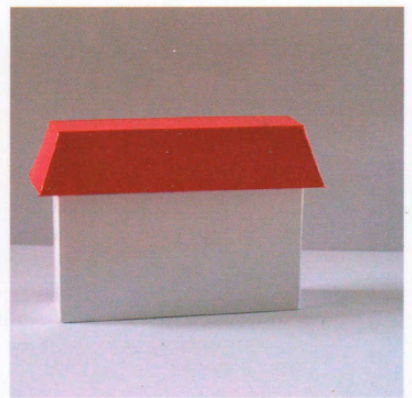
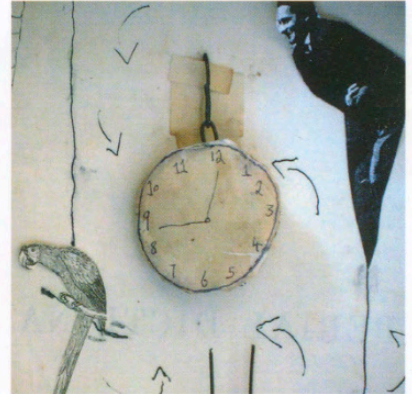
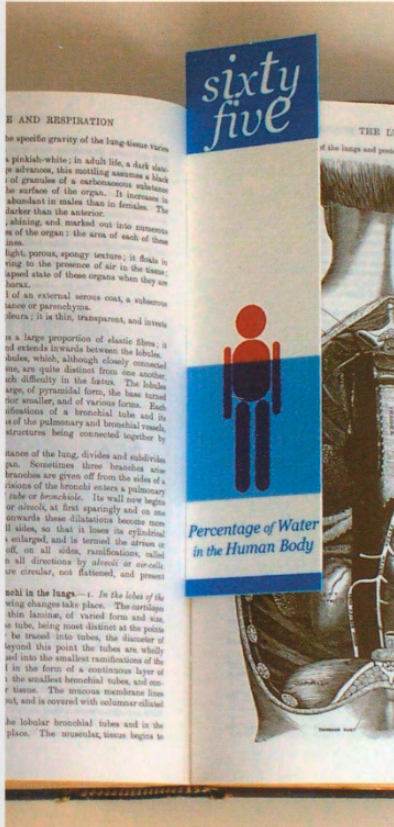


# For the love of making books



# The Secret Author: books by artists

Artists' books are not new, they could – if you think about it – be compared in one guise or another to ancient scrolls, hieroglyphics, or illustrated manuscripts; all forms of communicating with language as a visual narrative. Artists have interpreted language or alluded to words through imagery over the ages; from Roman mosaics to the symbolic skull in a Flemish portrait. Artists' books are another way of visually presenting a message for the viewer (or reader) and have existed in an acknowledged form since the late 19th Century. During that time and well into the 20th Century, artists were experimenting in books with the print techniques of etching, aquatint and lithography, often by commission to make images relating to texts. These were not simply illustrated books; the artists were paired with writers to collaborate on finely produced editions for a bibliophile market. These *livres d'artistes* and *livres de luxe* were expensively produced for an audience that appreciated both fine writing and fine art. Ambroise Vollard (1867–1939), a Parisian publisher was responsible for the rise of this phenomenon, commissioning artists such as Picasso, Rodin and Cézanne to work alongside writers including Balzac, Maupassant and Baudelaire, on beautifully executed volumes. The rise of the *livre d'artiste* continued in Europe and the USA, where artists worked with this tradition until the late 1960s. In the UK, private presses including William Morris' Kelmscott Press, and the Folio Society published books that were ornately illustrated and produced using high quality materials.

In the USA and Europe, new formats for the artist's book emerged over the 60s and 70s, as artists moved away from what they saw as the greed and manipulation of high-end gallery dealers. Artists became more concerned with taking their art onto the streets, away from the elite and into the mainstream, as part of a new era of freedom and experimentation in the art world. Artists began to publish their own images and texts in a book format, produced in runs of 100s or 1000s, and sold cheaply to share their ideas with others. In New York in 1969, a year after he had published Lawrence Weiner's *Statements*, Seth Siegelaub published the catalogue of the exhibition



Jessie Chorley, *The Story of One Forgotten*

*January 5–31 1969*, in which he claimed the ideas expressed by the artists, were more important than showing their physical artworks. The publication itself was the piece of art; this could be seen as the birth of a new era of the artist's book.

Since that time contemporary artists' books have grown in popularity and stature, involving artists as diverse as Andy Warhol, Ed Ruscha, Sophie Calle, Gilbert and George, Tracey Emin and David Shrigley. There are dedicated galleries, publishers, centres, exhibitions and fairs around the world, which celebrate and promote art in the book format to an international audience.

Artists' books are a means of working with ideas, images and texts, they still look like books, they just happen to have been made by artists. These artworks can encompass unique, sculptural pieces around the form of the book, paper engineering to experiment with the appearance and content of a book, altered re-worked books, texts and visual narratives – from photocopied zines to hand crafted *livres de luxe*. These works of art engage with the viewer in a way that many other art forms do not allow. To fully appreciate a book, you need to hold it, open it, turn the pages and discover what the artist wants to show you – and that is waiting for you inside.

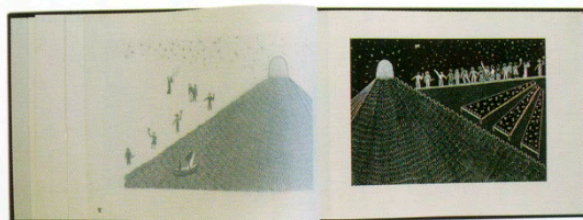
## Sarah Bodman

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University of the West of England, Bristol  
[www.bookarts.uwe.ac.uk](http://www.bookarts.uwe.ac.uk)

Making books is a wonderfully satisfying and compulsive activity. The idea evolves, it filters into consciousness and over time it begins to take shape in the mind. Then comes the lovely moment of playing with bits of paper to see which format suits it best visually and emotionally. For me a book is a distillation of an experience often with an element of recording something that will never exist or happen again. I started making one-off books in 1988, and started Hafod Press in 2003 making limited editions of digitally printed books.

As an artist involved primarily with painting, I make maybe one or two books a year. I realised that strength exists in numbers. I can exhibit books and paintings together in galleries, but to take books to artist's book fairs, and especially the larger more expensive fairs, it makes sense to share the costs and travelling expenses. To get artist's books noticed on the web, a website with a number of artists is more likely to get visited than an individual artist's site.

In 2005 I started artistsbooksonline.com. I particularly want artist's books that retain a sense of the maker. By inviting artists who make one-off or limited editions of books (maximum fifty) the books are less likely to appear mass produced and more likely to reflect the care, thought and love with which the artists created



Jessie Chorley, *As the Clock Struck Nine*  
Dianne Longley, *Night Sea Crossing*



Dianne Longley, *Cats, Cakes, Clothes and Cups*  
Steffan Jones Hughes, *Untitled/Di-deit!*

them. And two years on, with twenty artists on-line, the project has fulfilled my expectations. The website has a diverse range of artists making books with a wide range of materials, structures and approaches.

As the originator of artistsbooksonline.com I do not have definite ideas about how the site should develop, I am open to suggestions from the site artists. It can be anything we wish it to be, but realistically we are all busy people who make time to make art.

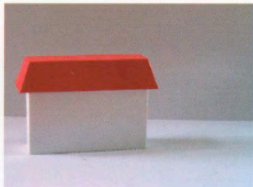
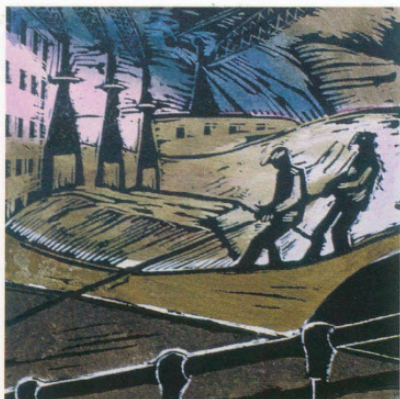
I have very much enjoyed meeting some of the artists and look forward to more artists from Britain and overseas joining the website. In future we will continue to attend book fairs and exhibit together as well as initiating collaborative projects. We also need to make sure that collectors know about us. This is the first time we have exhibited together as a group and I hope this is just the beginning...

Noëlle Griffiths

[www.artistsbooksonline.com](http://www.artistsbooksonline.com)

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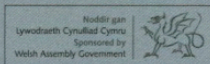
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Catriona Stamp · Nicola Dale · Andrew Morrison · Noëlle Griffiths · Steffan Jones Hughes  
Becky Adams · Heather Hunter · Paolo Carraro · Tansy Troy



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Leisure, Libraries and Culture Department. Wrexham Arts Centre receives financial support from the Arts Council of Wales.  
*Adran Hamdden, Llyfrgelloedd a Diwylliant. Mae Canolfan Gelf Wrecsam yn derbyn cymorth ariannol gan Gyngor Celfyddydau Cymru.*

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