A Selection of Artists' Books from Murray Library's Special Collections

Murray Library

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DIRECTIONS TO MURRAY LIBRARY

SOUTHBOUND ON US 15: Travel approximately three miles beyond the Pennsylvania Turnpike interchange to the Lisburn Road exit. Turn left at the end of the exit ramp. Turn right onto Grantham Road. At the entrance to the campus, turn right onto College Avenue and travel to the first stop sign. Turn left and continue past Boyer Hall and Hostetter Chapel to the library parking lot.

NORTHBOUND ON US 15: Travel approximately four miles beyond the PA 74 North intersection near Dillsburg to the Lisburn Road exit. Turn right at the end of the exit ramp. Turn right onto Grantham Road. At the entrance to the campus, turn right onto College Avenue and travel past the first stop sign. Turn left and continue past Boyer Hall and Hostetter Chapel to the library parking lot.

Parking is located in the rear or front entrance of the library.

Cover: What’s Happening with Momma?, Clarissa T. Sligh, 1988. Sligh’s dimensional, house-shaped book literally unfolds to tell a story from the artist’s childhood. In reflecting on her family experiences, Sligh adopts “the eye, the language, the texts and formal ‘naivety’ of childhood.”

FRIENDS OF MURRAY LIBRARY

presents a collection of
ARTISTS’ BOOKS
from MURRAY LIBRARY’S
Special Collection
What Are Artists’ Books?

In many ways it could be argued that the artist’s book is the quintessential 20th-century artform.” —Johanna Drucker, native Pennsylvanian and internationally recognized book artist

Artists’ books in Murray Library’s special collection look nothing like the volumes that fill the library shelves. Some have covers, pages, and bindings, but there is also a deck of cards detailing the lives of female saints, a set of twelve silkscreened handkerchiefs depicting memorable phrases and images of our forty-third president, and a presentation of nine migraine cures with movable parts that allow you to try out the solutions.

Visually exciting and intellectually provocative, artists’ books push to the outermost limits our assumed definition of what a book is, and turn the practice of reading into a novel experience. Artists’ books are, simply, a hybrid art form in which books and art intersect.

From scrolls, concertinas, and flag books, to pop-ups, volvelles, and fans—formats and structures run the gamut. The materials used are equally varied, ranging from natural vellum and handmade paper to such unexpected objects and substances as wood, textiles, beads, metal, feathers, silk, and stone.

Acting as designer, producer, and publisher, the book artist chooses not only the materials from which the book will be constructed, but also determines the layout as well as the interaction of the structure with the content. Women, especially, have taken the lead in the field of artists’ books; although all book artists delight in the egalitarian prospects of multiples and production processes that do not rely on publishing hierarchies.

Book artists draw from personal history, literature, music, theater, wonders of the natural world, even dreams. Their works respond to human misery, to dramatic events which have shaped our era, to the vicissitudes of love. They may also be inspired by controversial political and social issues.

Artists’ books may adopt any or all forms of contemporary art—painting, sculpture, photography, printmaking, design and digital media, installation, performance art (film and video)—as well as all forms of craft, including fiber art, bookbinding, calligraphy, papermaking, typography. Some artists’ books are rare and costly one-of-a-kind objects; others, such as those made by activist artists, are inexpensively produced to communicate their message to a wide audience. The nature of artists’ books is ever-changing—constantly influenced by new media, techniques, and concepts.

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