



Discovering Artists Books

The art, the artists and the issues

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by
Gwendolyn Jan Miller
B.A. University of Waterloo, 1979

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Abstract

Although the increased activity in the medium of artists books in the last several decades has been well documented, the reasons for this tremendous growth have not been explored or documented. The purpose of this thesis is to discover and present the reasons for this growth.

To uncover these reasons, I first researched artists books and issues using secondary sources such as books, periodicals, exhibit catalogs and the internet; and primary sources by visiting galleries and exhibits. I then developed several hypotheses as to why the medium of artists book is flourishing. During the final research stage I conducted personal interviews with artists and tested my ideas against their experience and also heard new opinions from them of why artists books is a growing field.

Through these personal interviews I found the reasons for the expansion I had previously developed were accurate. The medium of artists books was growing because of the use of digital technology, appreciation for the tactile nature of the book, increased opportunities for study, multiple paths of entry into the medium, familiarity with the form of the book and the feeling of power that is associated with the book, both as a creator and as a reader.

However, in addition to these reasons interviews also revealed two additional causes for the expansion: women's interest in the artists book and the very simple but profound reason that books are fun.

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Introduction

Before one can find reasons why a medium is growing it is important to thoroughly understand what the medium is: how it is defined and what is its history. I have set out to do this in Chapters One and Two.

Chapter Three looks at the state of the art by interviewing book artists, talking with them about current issues and hearing them discuss their art.

With this foundation I began to hypothesize why there has been and continues to be an increasing number of people interested in artists books in Chapter Four. Chapter Five looks to the future to see where the medium may be headed.

During the course of this thesis I often interchange the terms book arts, book medium and artists books because these terms are used interchangeably by critics, authors and artists.