

DOUG BEUBE: A Cut-up and a Book Artist

Editor's Note: *On the occasion of an exhibition in Santa Monica of Douglas Beube's latest work, we took the opportunity to interview him about his career. For more information about the Chasanoff Collection, contact Douglas personally at dbeube@mindspring.com*

How did you get started making books?

As a kid, I made my own books, drawing pictures and writing stories. In my teens I kept numerous journals, writing from a stream of consciousness, whatever came into my head. I kept many of these journals, with their recognizable black covers; they looked so austere and serious.

In college, in 1970, at York University in Toronto, I wanted to major in photography but one wasn't offered. Filmmaking was the closest area of study, which I graduated in with a BFA in 1974. With photography though, each semester I took a course with Michael Semak. I began looking at photographers and their books such as, Gary Winogrand, Paul Strand, Cartier Bresson, Diane Arbus, and Karsh, to mention only a few. The books were traditional with commentaries and titles presented with the photographs.

In 1974, while at the Apeiron workshops in photography in Millerton New York, Stuart Ashman, introduced me to Minor White's monograph, the 3-M book entitled, Mirrors, Messages and Manifestations. The black and white photographs with words were disjunctive and the writing was obtuse, not necessarily descriptive, but expressed a feeling or emotion. I didn't understand his writing at the time, but I liked the photographs.

I recall seeing one of my first artist's books in 1976, Vagabond, by Gaylord Oscar Herron. The artist may not have intended it to be an artist book, or call it that, but it is certainly what I would call an "artist's book" today. Vagabond is a montage of paintings, drawings, grainy photographs and text. It is autobiographical with pictures of wrestlers, circus people and seedy motels and much more. To me the cacophony of imagery with text was outside the realm of what I was used to looking at with traditional photography books. That was really the first artist's book I had encountered that influenced my later paginated works and sketchbooks. I think this was the spark that introduced me to the sense of working with books.



Where did you study?

In 1979 I went to the Visual Studies Workshop (VSW) in Rochester, New York, where Nathan Lyons was the director. It was there in his classes and assignments that I began to relate one picture to another. I wanted to put the sequence of photographs on the wall from my previous training, but also I wanted to put images into a book. This is where I began looking, studying book structures, and researching indigenous books from various cultures.

We're trained and conditioned to believe that the Western codex, a book bound on one side, the most conventional of book structures, is one of the only options for retrieving information. This is not the case; there's the scroll, the tablet, the Venetian blind, palm books, to mention a few that I studied and made as a student at VSW.

There, my influences were Keith Smith, the most important individual who introduced me to books arts; Gary Frost's workshops were ground breaking and unfortunately he only offered summer courses. Nathan Lyons, Joan Lyons, John Wood, (who also only offered summer workshops,) were important in introducing me to artist's books, collage, and offset printing. Outside of the workshop, Minor White, David Heath, and Michael Semak were important photography mentors. Each of these different teachers gave me an insight into working with the book.

Keith was the first person to show our class how to make a 'one-of-kind' book or bookwork. I vividly recall the time when he waved a Rochester phonebook in front of us, then said he'd be right back. Minutes later he returned with a portion of the book that he had

severed. The spine from the text block was all that remained and we could actually see the black and white lines from the printed names, although illegible. That was in 1979. To us, it was astounding to actually cut through a book and see all the text, turning the phonebook and its content into an abstract form.

Gary Frost introduced me to the history of the book. He said that book artists rarely studied their own field. I decided to be a 'responsible' book artist and research its history, not from a scholarly aspect but as an artist. I began looking at various world cultures and how each country contributed to the breadth of making books other than the western codex. In 1987 I went to London to the British Museum and saw their magnificent permanent exhibition of the History of the Book and its development over centuries. This was very exciting. I made detailed notes, drawings, photographed the books in their glass cases and studied numerous book structures. In my slide lectures in a class called, Radical Bookworks; From Meaning to Structure, I show students, the flagellation stick, palm leaf books, books in the shape of turtles and others.

In 1980 or '81 Gary talked about how the page of a book didn't have to be the same size or a text block didn't need to be cut using a paper cutter or sharp edge. The second book I ever made, one of my sketchbooks, I remember tearing the pages at different lengths, making a deckled edge that looked as if it was a landscape or mountain range. This sketchbook contained ideas about the book and future books that I would make. It was an oblong book that had a fishing hook as a page reminder.

Gary also taught us to question ourselves as artists and discover our own solutions, rather than come up with quick answers or rely upon the teacher to resolve the problem. Nathan Lyons, was inspirational in teaching us to sequence photographs, how to connect one picture to another using text without being literal or didactic. The subtleties of visually connecting phrases, using pictures meant, for example, we could work with numerous images, creating tonal relationships to link sequences that were not based on subject matter, was also monumental to me.

In 1981/82 with John Wood at VSW, I learned to collage photographs, how to layer imagery, to create spatial relationships that were not possible by just taking what photographers call, 'straight' pictures.

With Joan (Lyons), I made a couple of printed books. I learned how to sequence images and text in print form and get my ideas to move from one page to another. In 1982, I made an offset book, an edition of 500 copies, entitled, Manhattan Street Romance, which described a long distance relationship I was having with a girlfriend at that time who lived in New York City. The pamphlet bound book contained photographs, text and personal letters that were collaged together.

I discovered in the Rochester area, in 1981, that Fred Jordan, a fine bookbinder, agreed to teach a group of us traditional leather bookbinding. Once a week for the next three years, I studied with Fred, until I moved to New York City. I told Keith who also began taking classes with Fred and continued to study with him for many years well into the 1990's.

Thinking back to earlier influences, working with Minor White from October 1975 to June 1976 was where I learned to respect Minor as an artist; all he did was his artwork, his photography. I was Minor's darkroom assistant for nine months while he was on sabbatical from MIT, and was working on his Jupiter Portfolio and creative photography manuals on how to read photographs. This was my goal, to get to a point in my life where I could be doing my work full time, making books and photographs.

Earlier than that, I worked with David Heath. David's influence was his passion for personal expression, for emotion. His book, Dialogue with Solitude, is also an artist's book; again I'm not sure that's what he would call it. The relationship between pictures and words is, the synergy or spark that happens between the images and text, rather than being narrative or didactic.

What's your philosophy of the book?

Well, through these influences, my research into the book, and making one-of-kind books or 'bookworks', I began to transform and question the notion of what the book is; more than just a container for information. However, it's the codex structure in our culture that conditions us to use this retrieval system that's linear, and I'm not interested in linear processes.

I began physically and metaphorically relating the book to the human body, the spine, appendages and head, etc. The book references the human body, obviously it's not identical but there are similar characteristics. I see the book separate from writing

and anything else other than itself. Ulises Carrión talks about book artists making books and writers writing texts. Ulises essentially talked about the book as a unique structure, as a medium within itself, and this is what I began to do; to look at the book, study it independently of photography and writing.

In 1982 or '83, I went to the rare book reading rooms of the Morgan and the New York Public Libraries, asking to see their incunabula, Coptic bindings, and girdle books, and study how they were put together. I began to see the book not only as a container for the written word, a venerated object that essentially was never to be destroyed, 'abused' or cut up, became a text/block, like a block of wood, a blank slate, or an unexposed piece of paper in the darkroom, opened up many possibilities. I could do anything to it, and this was exciting for me. Here I have a technology for perpetuating information, the book, which I am conditioned to think of as precious and at the same time I'm looking at the book as pure potentiality. I'm questioning its structure, how it functions as an object in the hand, what does the book mean to me, and how can I transfer my feelings and ideas by applying both traditional and non-traditional bindings.

Some of the first composite photography books I made in 1980, were quite large, compared to a traditional book that is 9" x 5" x 2", that folded out then back into small packages. The challenge was to keep the photographs, which were individual pages, to function as a book. I discovered how to make my own bindings using one-inch ribbon to hinge the stack of 8" x 10" photographs stitched together using a sewing machine.

I realized that possibilities existed, other than working exclusively with the codex, were viable and more exciting. Absolutely stunning. The potential for bookworks and sequencing was satisfying more than I had ever imagined. And this is how it began, a very long investigation in how to transform the book.

Talk to me about teaching book arts, what approach do you take?

I have students look at the entire field of artist's books, bookworks, printed books, editions, fine press books, etc. We take field trips to Printed Matter, Granary Books, when they were on Broadway Ave. and to my wood shop. I give at least several slide presentations, showing them artist's books, bookworks and student's work from around the world. In class we begin with a

single sheet of paper and build up to sequences using multiple pages and folds, texts and images and how to create work based upon personal experience, skills, and techniques. It's important that students understand that book arts is a broad field that encompasses numerous working philosophies and practices. Teaching book arts is like the spine of numerous art mediums together. If students remain open their ability to be flexible in learning is the main objective, instead of trying to push them to make one type of work, that being paginated artist's books or sculptural bookworks. If a student wants to investigate installation using photography, books and computers, go for it. I try to be a resource and challenge them to think more comprehensively instead of trying to inculcate them with the kind of work I make.

Has teaching influenced the types of artist's books you make either sculptural or paginated?

Although I want students to investigate both types of artist's books, paginated as well as sculptural, I continue to explore unique works because I haven't resolved a number of issues. Although I have many artist's books or paginated works in mind I'd like to make in the future, for now I make notes or conceptualize them in my sketchbooks.

I'm still on this idea that the book is not a sacred object. Hard cover or pocket books are the raw materials I use to transform into a visual medium. The content of the author's published text can either be contradicted or supported, depending on my point of view. I use a variety of power tools to reconstruct a pre-existing book into a bookwork.

In February 1983 in Rochester, I found a set of Compton's Encyclopedias, (circa 1950), bound them together using thick rope, built a pyramidal structure, and hung them in my backyard. The piece is entitled, Books of Knowledge Standing Up Against the Elements that I photographed through seasonal changes and locations wherever I lived.

In 1988 I was an artist in residence and guest teacher at Carleton College in Northfield MN, and brought the encyclopedias with me. At the end of the school year, a drunken student sacrificed my outdoor sculpture in a ceremonial bonfire. Fortunately an attentive art faculty member salvaged the books and returned them to me in Brooklyn. Burned to a crisp, yet quite beautiful, I stored the encyclopedias in my basement for five years. Eventually the charred books

were the first bookworks purchased by Allan Chasanoff for his private collection that I eventually became curator of in 1993. He also purchased a number of my organic books entitled, Seed Sprout Books of Prakriti. The first organic books were done in 1980. I used straw pulp with alfalfa seed to make hand made paper. Viewers, watched the books open and close over a period of days, that is if they came back to see how the books changed over time.

Tell me more about the Sprout Books.

In the mid-1970s, just before attending the workshop, prior to making the Organic Books, germinating my own alfalfa seed inspired me. I was fascinated by how fast alfalfa sprouts grew and I could see the pressure placed upon the maze of sprouts in the jar. In the fall of 1980, I took a course in papermaking with Patty Ambrogio. I interspersed tea leaves, coffee beans, seeds from trees and bits of bark into making paper. The first books I made did not sprout. It was not until I took Joe Brown's papermaking class at RIT the following year, that I began to put other materials inside the books. A couple of days into the class I thought, what would happen if I put alfalfa seeds in the paper? I was still growing my own sprouts and eating them almost every day anyway. I placed an abundant amount of seed in the straw pulp, pulled some thin sheets, and layered the paper on top of one another. Sure enough the next day the sprouts germinated and the thin layers of paper had actually expanded. This was absolutely fantastic. I thought about more possibilities of what I could do with these particular books.

The sprout book is a metaphor for our life cycles, and secondly, how we may read and experience a book. To make the organic books I mulch the straw, intercede the alfalfa into the fabric of the paper/pages then lay them on top of each other. The pressure of the growing sprouts in the book force the pages to open, all due to nature. When I stop watering the books, the sprouts die and the drying sprouts shrivel causing the books to collapse. I have nothing to do with the book's expansion and contraction; I only set the initial condition.

Observing the organic books opening and closing is similar to the opening and closing of any codex for that matter. For example, in the organic books, the pages expand and contract due to the sprouts but they also bind the pages together. They are in a sense like the characters in a well-written novel that participate

in the process of moving the story along. We experience a character's transformation and growth in stories that grip us, rather than being mildly entertained by a novel where the characters reveal little development. In the case of the embedded sprouts in the straw pulp, the seeds go through their cycles of life and death. Even after the paper and sprouts have dried, they're still alive, a kind of afterlife, as an artifact of the past.

While making the organic books, I remember thinking about something I read by Robert Smithson, when he talks about his caveman-spaceman theory. When a viewer looks at a construction site at the bare structure without sheetrock or brick work, it seems like the unfinished building could have been built by someone or some being years ago, or possibly by someone in the future. He talks about the caveman-spaceman effect of being connected to people from the past and to those in the future.

My organic books are raw, unfinished. Say you're walking in the woods and come across them on the ground; you might think they had been created by someone from another time or by an animal. For me, making the organic books, and watching them grow through their natural cycle, from their initial lushness to their dried inert state, connects me to that animal world, and to other beings outside of my contemporary environment and myself.

In the beginning I didn't realize these books had a life of their own. During an exhibition the public would laugh at seeing the books and note that they ate this stuff. "I eat that stuff!" said one viewer enthusiastically pointing to the sprouts of the book. It was humorous to that individual, combining alfalfa sprouts with hand-made paper to make books, instead of whole wheat bread to make a sandwich.

That's the big deal, actually observing the process each day, the sprouts pushing against the pages and seeing the pages separating. As a metaphor for reading books, (books without sprouts in them,) the more we read, the more we see the book expand, getting thicker on the opposite side. When you're at page one, the latter part of the book is thicker; when you're on page 451, the first part of the book is thicker. The organic books reflect this phenomenon of opening and closing a book as the reader partakes in the process of temporal changes.

An unexpected aspect to the sprout books that occurred was, about three weeks into their existence

the organic matter deteriorated and the books eventually rotted creating a terrible aromatic smell that resulted from the dying sprouts. The smell was quite oppressive. In fact, Judy, you were the first to inform me about Dieter Roth's books, his cheese books in the 1960s that had to be removed from the Kunstmuseum in Germany because they stank so badly.

I question the nature of 'pristine' artwork, whether it's photography, painting, sculpture or bookworks in galleries, libraries or museums and how the approved selections, by a curator are decided upon and exhibited in established institutions. For example, why is it that libraries typically don't preserve organic works? Obviously, they deteriorate; attract unwanted creatures that may infest an entire collective. In the beginning, I was unconsciously challenging the narrow attitudes of librarians, the primary care taker of books. Today I've integrated the idea of the longevity and preservation of art into my series of organic books, instead of using alfalfa I use wheat grass.

Tell me more about the wheat grass books?

The wheat grass books I'm working with now, at the Frumkin-Duval Gallery in Santa Monica, uses a different metaphor. Wheat grass is nourishing, as is alfalfa but the wheat grass is a form of nourishment that mirrors the content of a pre-existing book. There are three books in this show; Etymology uses a 'Webster's Dictionary', Lineage uses 'Janson's History of Art' and Toxic uses 'Toxic Executives'. The series is called Inflorescence, which refers to a frond-like plant. My books are manipulated to look like a frond like structure. I cut the books in one-inch strips, from the outside edge towards the spine, ending up with about eight individual rows. One row of the text block is flipped to one side, the next row to the other, alternating the rows of the books. I put earth in-between each of the rows and plant wheat grass seeds. At first you can see the books but in time the wheat grass grows ten inches tall camouflaging the books. Viewers are invited to take their fingers and push the grass aside, exposing the book in order to read the top pages. As the wheat grass dies it droops, and the once hidden book becomes apparent. It's very much the way history may be written: you have an event, time obscures the event, and then you have a revelation or a rewriting of it, or an actual discovery of a particular moment in history.

What other organic materials do you incorporate

with books?

I've been using organic matter in my artwork for over twenty years, working with alfalfa seed, wheat grass, apples, and honey. In 1993 I began a sculpture entitled Feast, a found bible inside an open drawer of a night table, a typical bedside table used at economy hotels from the '40s or '50s. I poured half gallon of honey over the bible in the drawer to see what would happen to the bible and the honey over time. Honey, is a substance that is pure in nature; a bible, to some people, is pure, unblemished in its content.

The inspiration for Feast was, ten years ago; I saw how some religious leaders were interpreting the Bible in a biased and prejudicial manner, excluding individuals whose life style, religious practices or sexual orientation were inconsistent with their beliefs and doctrines. Their shortsighted attitudes were irresponsible and intolerable.

I created a parallel metaphor, a mirror image of the bible to the honey. The honey would attract dirt, hair, flies and other creatures without bias. The bible soaking in honey is drowning in its own sweetness. After a decade, the bible became encrusted, shrouded in the honey's viscosity receding into the amber colored depths of the drawer. For the show at Frumkin/Duval I used the same bible, but scooped out the old honey and put in new honey.

I see a great deal of humor in your work. Right?

Some viewers look at my work and find the books humorous, like the sprout books, the bible in honey, and the books where I deconstruct or re-construct the shape of the pages or cover. It's not that I'm trying to be 'funny', but I'm creating an incongruous situation between the materials and what I've done to the book, which creates a gap. The viewer trying to resolve or bridge the gap, between what's familiar and the improbable, achieves humor.

How did your work progress beyond the book form?

What's satisfying about being both a photographer and a mixed-media artist is one medium informs the other. When I began working with the book, people associated me as a book artist and not as a photographer, and visa-versa. I try to interweave both of them together.

For example, in 1982 in a slide presentation entitled, The Book in the Environment, I wanted to be more explicit with the metaphor of the resemblance

between the spine of the book and the human spine. I went to the Met and other museums and began to photograph, paintings of monks holding Bibles, but only used my reproductions as part of my lectures and not as artwork. Ten years later in 1993, the idea hit me and I began a series of photographs called "Projected Histories." I returned to the Met and re-photographed the medieval paintings of the monks holding bibles from the neck down to their pelvis. I came back to my studio and projected these truncated images onto the torso of my naked body. I was interested in the spatial confusion between the monks holding books and the illusion transferred to me holding the books. This performance for the camera was recorded as a projected slide loop. In addition, I made 20" x 24" cibachromes, which in the end I feel did not work as well as the projected slides.

While making this body of work I questioned, where did the representation of the book as a sacred object originate? Again, from a different point of view, I began looking at the book and studying the history of the book in Judeo-Christian teachings. The Book was sacred, but for whom. I observed that only men held books, the book is associated with the purity of God; women don't get to hold books, as evidenced in these medieval paintings? Why were they excluded? There are a number of conclusions, but one of them is, the root of the problem could be seen in the dominance of the patriarchal world, visually portraying its past history in these paintings. I saw that in the late twentieth century, the implication for maintaining social/political power and manipulating and repressing women in contemporary society was unresolved.

A second aspect evolved; I projected the images onto my altered books, the cylindrical series that looks like a huge Rolodex where I fold the pages in on themselves. (By the way I didn't have to be naked for this.) My costume was a black velvet robe that I wore as if I were a monk. I placed one of the altered books on a five-foot metal pole and, as quickly as I could, twirled it. The book spun around with the image projected onto the surface and the grooves, giving the illusion that the viewer was looking at an antiquated form of cinema. Incidentally, Judy, I remember in 1994, that you were one of the first individuals to see this private performance given in my studio.

Were you only interested in unique pieces, multiples at all, or installation?

Although, I primarily work with individual book forms, I also look at the relationship of books compiled together. In 1981, I invented a fictitious museum called, Etc. Etc. The Iconoclastic Museum, the curator and benefactor was a persona I created called, Art Gossip. Under his auspices I made individual pieces, installations, and archeological sites. I was very interested in fabricating this fiction, because it allowed me to be larger in a sense than who I was. Building these installations allowed me to deconstruct, not only the psychological environment in which I grew up in that conditioned my response to books, media and popular culture, but also I began to deconstruct the book itself.

How did you get started in deconstructing books, and how did technology enter into this? Talk about your progress in deconstructing books.

The traditional binding for Manhattan Street Romance, my sketchbooks and other similar bookworks, were not challenging the structure of the book. In 1983 I began to work with pre-existing books or published works by other authors. I retrieved discarded books from the street and garbage bins and used bookstores.

When I moved to New York City in 1984, I began working as a carpenter and it was here that I bought a number of power tools. I worked extensively with belt sanders, grinders, drills, table saws, etc. on carpentry jobs in the city. Working with these shop tools became the implements that I used on my books. I'd excavate, cut away, drill into and grind them down. Eventually I purchased power tools to use exclusively on the books.

With the early work from 1983 to 1987, I primarily made books by adding stuff to the established form. In my censored book series I stuck razor blades into the covers or used needles, piercing the text block and glued feathers and buttons onto the books or eliminated text by opaquing out the words with white or black ink. By 1988 I was trying to remove as much of the book as I could, say parts of the cover and the text block and still maintain its "book-ness."

In the early '90s I began working with a Dremel, a small high-speed drill capable of carving out tiny fragments of paper. One book I transformed was a Jewish text, one of the five books of Moses, entitled, Exodus, where I removed the black print of each word from the pages of the book. With each word being

released from the page, I had the feeling that I was observing the physical world and the spoken word evaporate before my eyes. The space or gaps between the words were more significant than what was left on the page. The freighted oblong edges of each word created a veil like tapestry or miniature portal that allowed you to see through layers of the book.

Using the Dremel creates a great deal of fine dust in the basement of my brownstone. To collect the dust from the air, I have two noisy dust collectors running, and wear a dust mask, goggles, and ear muffs. It's curious for me to think of myself escaping into this introverted world, eliminating the text of the book by making short, horizontal repetitive strokes, as if I'm in a meditative state in the same way a Buddhist monk would count beads. Only my world is so contradictory because there's nothing peaceful about the studio environment I'm working in.

Another aspect of working with the book is how can I experience the whole book as an entity in itself, which can't be done by reading line by line. The book's not made to do that. Readers experience the totality of the book by building up linear movement, word-by-word, sentence by sentence, etc. and I'm interested in the book as a simultaneous experience.

I think this is why I began working with the book as a sculptural object. It's the structure of the book I'm interested in; it's the mechanical aspects of the book as a technology, and how it functions as a container of information. I'm trying to solve the problem of experiencing the content of the book as a visual phenomenon, layering it and transforming it into a visual object. Please keep in mind that I'm not referring to artist's books when I'm speaking about 'the book.' I'm talking about the traditional form of the book and not the content of that form. Some of my critics say I'm interested in destroying the book. As insightful as they may be in the area of artist's books or paginated works, they lack the understanding and interest of what I'm trying to do.

In 1992 I had an exhibition of some of this work at Harper-Collins Book Publishers in New York City. Around the same time that I was working with the book as a sculptural object, I discovered that Allan Chasanoff was collecting the kind of work I was making.

What is the Chasanoff collection?

In 1987 I was working as an assistant photography

director of Ledel Gallery in SOHO and was introduced to Allan as a photographer and collector of photography and ceramics. However I didn't know he was even interested in bookworks, but learned much later, that Allan had been making his own bookworks in 1970. When he completed the photography collection in 1991/92, there was a bit of an overlap, he began collecting a few artist's books on his own, just before we met again in 1993. He purchased a number of my books and invited me to be the curator of *The Book Under Pressure*.

Allan as the collector understands and has the breadth of the collection in his mind. Whereas for me, a book artist and curator. I have my own ideas about the book arts field and the collection, I try to keep up with his thinking and introduce him to new bookworks.

There are a number of ideas that meets Allan's criteria in acquiring work, of which I'll try to convey a couple. The first is; the problem of the book to perpetuate information is inefficient, it's an obsolete technology due to the advent of the computer. Another premise is; at the latter part of the 20th century the book is being used for purposes other than its utilitarian design. Allan has been working extensively with computers and digital imaging since 1985 and understands that the book is as "an outdated modality", he's fond of saying. He's not interested in the book decaying or in its destruction, nor is he referring to the content of books, artist's books, production costs, mass appeal or where they get exhibited. His interest is in the book as an antiquated technology.

Allan has other criteria as well, which can be directly seen in the work he purchases. At some point he'll donate the bookworks collection to an institution, as he did with his photography collection that went to the Houston Museum of Fine Arts and his ceramics collection he donated to the Mint Museum in North Carolina.

Today we have over 200 pieces in the collection from around the world; primarily they deal with the book as a sculptural or structural element. However, we do have a few published works but mostly they're one-of-a-kind. Some of the artists in the collection are, Maria Porges, Carol Barton, Buzz Spector, Nicole Morello, The Starn Twins, Byron Clercx, Robbin Silverberg, James Elaine, Linda Ekstrom, Yoko Ono, Sjoerd Hofstra and many, many other exceptional

artists.

I feel fortunate to be working with Allan on the collection. We argue and discuss the submitted works by artists that shape Allan's ideas about the book in a digital age. I get to see a lot of work from around the world, that's the best. Working with Allan makes living in New York City more interesting and exciting, in the same way that I feel about the relationship I had with Tony Zwicker until she passed away. Even today, Allan and I continue to look at new bookworks by artists.

How has technology changed your work?

I'm working on a project that began in 1992 as a tribute to Michael Snow, when I saw his retrospective at the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto. Ten years ago, using his published monograph, I wanted to create one of my altered books and record each fold of the page.

The idea here is, imagine looking at a book in your hands and the pages are turning in on themselves and becoming a round form; from a rectangle, the book becomes, right there in front of you, a round form. I had intended to do this with 35mm slides, which would have been arduous and costly. Now with digital photography, I'm working with the technology and can take 1000s of pictures. Using an animation program, I can put these images together and create what I wanted to do ten years ago when the technology was either not available or I wasn't familiar with the animation programs. There are a number of computer pieces like this one that I'm completing now and other paginated works I've been thinking about since the late 1980s.

In your exploration of media, can you be exclusively called a book artist?

As a book artist, I'm working on books; when I'm working on photography, I'm a photographer, and when I'm working on collage, I'm a visual artist, so I call myself a mixed media artist. Working in the field of book arts, I realized early on that any artist needs to know one's medium, but they also need to look at everything. Some book artists are very prejudicial in terms of the type of work they look at, because of their bias and the type of work they make. There are artist's books--paginated works, that you look at once, some times barely that and they do not warrant any investigation except one cursory glance. The same for

bookworks, one quick read and you're done. The opposite may be true, hopefully this is the case more often not, that you'll come back to the book to gain a deeper appreciation of its content. For me, it's essential to look at everything. I feel as an artist in the field that I look at both sculptural and paginated works and appreciate them for what they are. Each one, whether it's an artist's book or unique bookwork, requires a slightly different read.

How has your philosophy of book changed?

The book an object is not sacred, ideas are important. I'm taking an extreme point of view, (an argumentative one at that) and I'm not referring to say artist's books, the Book of Hours, or Gutenberg Bible. But for me, if the book no longer contains relevant information, that book may be tossed out, as many librarians practice today. We end up with thousands, ga-zillions of books in our libraries or bookshelves that are no longer essential in today's world, resulting in billions of books being stored, taking up unnecessary space. Rather than consume new objects that destroy our environment, why not recycle them and give them to (book) artists. My theory is, every time we create a new book, we gain new knowledge simultaneously we're destroying our natural resources and killing the environment with toxic waste. I'm very concerned with this dilemma.

I'd say that 95% of the books I work with have been tossed into the garbage. Many of the books I use were found next door to me where I live in Brooklyn, or I'll go to a thrift shop where I find used books at a huge discount. The idea of taking a book and destroying it to some people seems outrageous, but for me it's a material that I work with. Is it any different than a sculptor who goes to the auto wreckers, finds a car, recycles the metal and reconfigures the car into a work of art?

As a photographer, the materials used to process photographs such as Cibachrome prints, a color or black and white print, employ many chemicals that are destructive to the environment. Does that mean that we should no longer use photography or utilize this wet medium because it does in fact kill the environment in order to create images? Instead, should we only work with computers? We know that computers have pollutants in them as well because of the some of the toxic materials required to build the hardware.

What do you see yourself doing in the future?

I'll continue to work with the book as long as I have new ideas. When I stop having them, I'll find another medium to explore. I may run out of ideas for sculptural bookworks, exploring the book's structure as I've been doing for years, and move towards using the computer and digital imaging process that seems endless. Or maybe I'll just flop down into a comfortable chair to have a good read.

ReVision/reVision, Doug Beube's recent exhibition will open at LIMN Art Gallery, 290 Townsend St., San Francisco, CA 94107 from 10 January - 7 March 2003. Opening will be on 10 January from 6 - 8 p.m.