

The Business of Art

by Jill Timm

A career as a Book Artist involves two different sets of tasks: making books and selling books. Making the books is the fun, exciting part, but how does one sell enough books to be self-supporting?

I have found the largest single category of artist books buyers to be librarians in college, university, and public libraries. Not all libraries, but those who have an art collection, special collections, rare book collections, or specific topic collections, and/or support art and book arts programs in their curriculum. These are educated artist book buyers who understand what they are looking at, notice the craftsmanship, and have a good sense of what works.

I discovered that I could sell to libraries almost 10 years ago, and now they are the source of 90% of my sales. And I make my living from my books.

Librarians like to meet the artist and hold the books. Every year I pick a section of the country and travel from library to library to sell my books. I have developed a database of these book buyers all over the United States and have a growing list of world-wide buyers. Traveling sales is hard work, not always fun, requires a lot of time, and is costly. Typically I try to visit four libraries a day, five days a week over a two-four week trip. They don't all buy, but some buy a lot.

Most of these librarians belong to a professional organization called ARLIS (which is international). Three years ago I organized a artist book show to occur at the same time and in the same hotel as the ARLIS conference. I created a beautiful four-color newsletter showcasing each of the book show artists. This was inserted in the packet each ARLIS attendee received. The newsletter and book show were a great success. It was suggested I do another newsletter in the fall to remind all the attendees about the books they saw.

And so the Artist Books News was born. Now in its 3rd year it is mailed out free twice a year to a database of almost 500 book buyers of libraries all over the world. It showcases no more than 16 books so each artist has a prime spot in the four pages.

This cost of the newsletter is shared by the featured artists. They get their work into the hands of real artist book appreciators and buyers, they build their name and reputation in association with many recognized names. Starting with the Fall 08 issue each artist will have a web presence with the new Artist Book News web site. Please visit www.mysticalplaces.com/abnews.html for all the details.

While nothing beats visiting each librarian in person, the Artist Book News is the second best way to enter the office of a librarian and get noticed!

Artist Book News

Featuring Work by Professional Book Artists - October 2009
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Visit www.artistbooknews.com for more books!

Magic Man

"Sun heats her back and streams around her like fire water."
In this chronicle of luminous transformations, a ring of mushrooms at the edge of the woods sets a stage for the unexpected. Papers chosen for this book evoke mushrooms, dried leaves and earth: Mexican Yucatan Hunn paper for the cover and Nideggen paper with Chartham translucent vellum interleaving for the text. Signatures are sewn into folds of a layered accordion structure with linen thread. Text by the artist. Photos by R. Renbeck embellished by the artist. Printed by inkjet with archival inks, 5.25" x 4". Edition of 25, \$100.

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Girl Meets Boy

Two In the Bush #5. Two short stories of girl meets boy. The girls leave their places on the covers, excited by the boys' unique jungle jazz to find their loves and add their songs to his. The visual jazz is inspired by New Guinea's tribal art, the island's ostrich-like cassowary birds and the bower birds' elaborate jungle mating display sites.
Doc-a-dos painter's book with slipcase, acrylic on multilayered papers, 5 pages, 9.4" x 6.75", unique, \$850.

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The House that Jack Built

Inspired by the dozens of "Jack's" in the Toronto Public Library, this version of *The House that Jack Built* is bound in carousel or star form, giving an extra dimension to the twelve double-page spreads of hand-colored scenes. Letterpress printed from polymer plates, on Magnani mouldmade paper, hand bound in green goatskin leather with gold blocked title and contained in a house-shaped slipcase, a separate booklet of notes on the origins of the rhyme accompanies the book. Distinguished Book Award (Miniature Book Society 2005). Judge Magda Saina's comment: "Great illustration appropriate to the subject and origin of story." Size 2.75" x 2.125", Edition of 40 (signed), CAD \$475.

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