

# BOOK+ *Art*

Handcrafting Artists' Books

Dorothy Simpson Krause



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DOROTHY SIMPSON KRAUSE



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## Handcrafting Artists' Books

Dorothy Simpson Krause



**NORTH LIGHT BOOKS**

Cincinnati, Ohio  
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## FOREWORD

Artists have an enviable reaction to paper, ink, stone, thread and images, making works of art that I still would like to label “bookworks.” At the outset, I always say that every artist has an innate desire to make a book. It involves sequencing, craftsmanship, finesse, but most of all it reflects content and context. No book should just be “beautiful.” It should say something. It should mean something. And it should cast a wide circle.

I envision that future libraries will contain the very essence of artist books, where a streak of nostalgia will bring viewers and readers into the “rare book library” to see what artists have been doing for centuries, making bookworks that genuinely move the spirit, capture the imagination, and impart visual and verbal information that changes one’s mind about many things and concepts.

In *Book + Art*, artists are challenged to focus on meaningful content and to extend the definition of book from the physical to the virtual—to create those unique objects we will treasure for posterity.

Judith A. Hoffberg  
1934-2009  
Editor and Publisher of *Umbrella*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Although formally trained as a painter, I gained my knowledge of the book arts through workshops, sharing information and techniques with colleagues, research, reading, and trial and error. Through the years, I have worked with a number of book artists whose contributions I greatly appreciate. They include: Tim Ely, Shanna Leino, Bob Ebendorf, Laura Wait, Wendy Hale Davis, Keith Smith, Scott McCarney, Julia Miller, Peter Madden, James Reid-Cunningham, Marcia Ciro, Stephanie Stigliano, Sharon McCartney, Karen Gorst, Maureen Cummins, Suzanne Moore, Don Glaister, Janine Wong, Theresa Airey, Danny Conant, Sing Hanson, Catherine Steinman, Esther Maschio, Ana Cordiero, Katherine McCanless Ruffin and Mary Taylor.

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Dorothy Simpson Krause, 2009



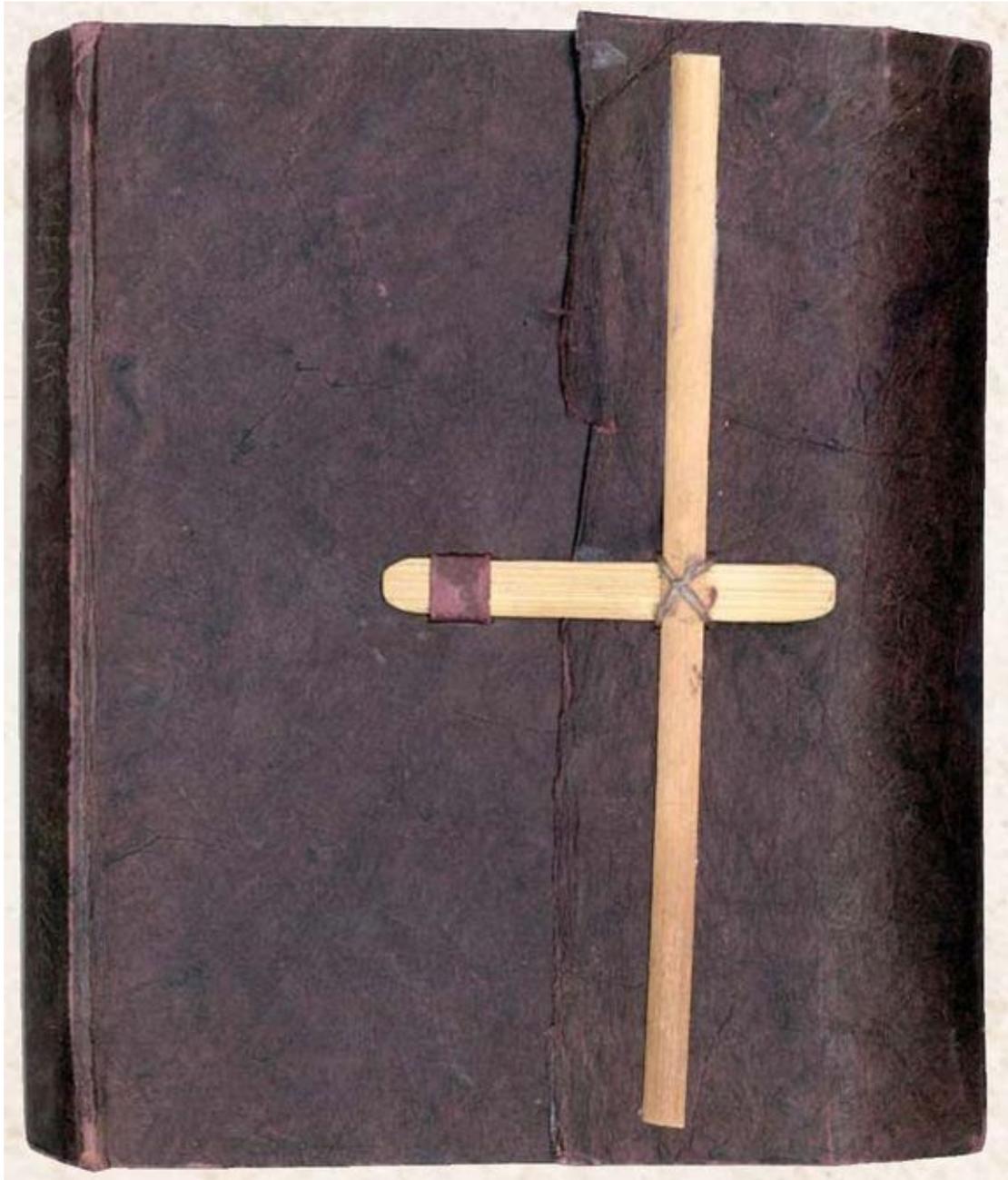
**Sicily, 2008, 56 pages, Images collaged in Sicily into a pre-made blank book (see pages 114-115)**



**A FORMAT FOR ARTISTIC EXPRESSION**

Some of our museums' greatest treasures are early books—hieroglyphics on papyrus, illuminated manuscripts on vellum and oriental scrolls on silk—presenting content with images and words. Beginning in the late 1800s, presses brought together artists and writers and published their collaborations in elegant editions. In the 1960s and 1970s, that tradition expanded to define books by artists as unique works of art. Today, hundreds of colleges, universities and art centers offer book-arts programs. Interest in book arts continues to grow largely due to the fact that it can encompass virtually any other art form, providing the opportunity to create added meaning in an intimate structure.

While some books may have an artist, writer, editor, designer, papermaker, typographer, printer and binder involved in the production, in artist books, the artist often does it all. And that's what you will be doing in this book. You will explore a variety of books and book-like forms, and learn processes and techniques that will allow you to make books as an expression of your art. For the most part, these unique books will be one-of-a-kind.



**Vietnam Journal, 1998, 54 pages,  
6<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub>" × 6<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>" (16cm × 17cm) collaged journal**

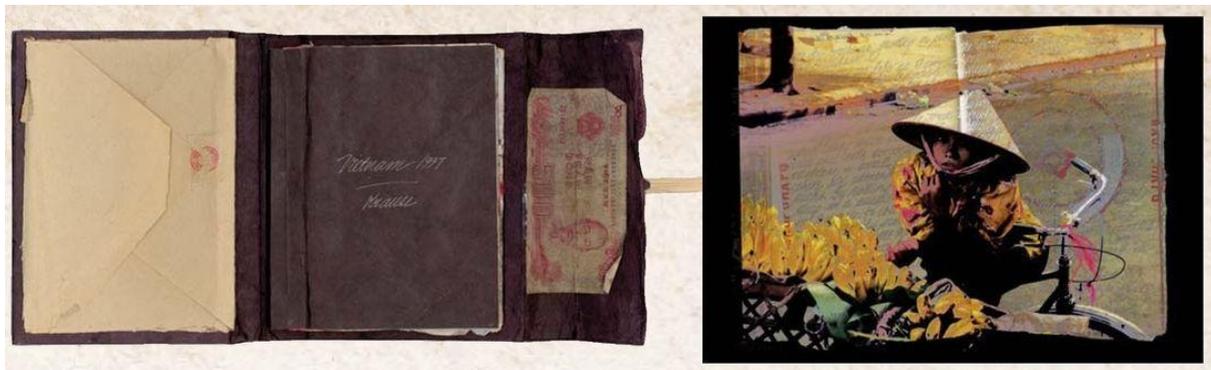
My involvement with making books began in 1998 on a trip to Vietnam. The blank journal I purchased had pages that were glued into a deep spine and a paper cover that wrapped around and closed with a strip of bamboo. Before I left home, I glued an irregularly shaped envelope inside the front cover. The structure allowed extra pages to be slipped within the deep spine and the envelope held scraps of cloth, gold-washed joss paper, medals and other found ephemera, until I incorporated them into the book.

When I returned, I scanned the pages of the journal into the computer, combined them with photographs, printed them on film and transferred them to handmade paper. The journal served both as a work of art in its own right and as a source of imagery for

this series of unique digital monoprints.

A painter by training and collage-maker by nature, my primary focus has been large-scale work combining traditional and digital media. My early books allowed me to explore repetition and variation in a small format, and they provided a welcome escape from trouble-shooting computer problems. As books have become an increasingly important part of my work, I have focused on learning traditional book-making processes and adapting them to meet my needs as an artist. I have also begun to incorporate digital processes where appropriate and useful.

This book is designed to share what I have learned and to give you relatively simple and elegant ways of presenting your concepts and ideas. Demonstrations will present the processes, and Tips will give you additional information. Creative Explorations will challenge you to consider other options and will provide alternative insights. If you encounter a term that's new to you, look for its definition in the Glossary, and use the Resources section to locate the people, places and things I may mention.



**Vietnam Journal inside cover and Bananas for Breakfast, 1998, 22" × 30" (56cm × 76cm) digital transfer**

## What Is an Artist Book?

We generally think of books as those things that sit on bookshelves with pages, covers, words and images. But books may vary considerably from that description. A book can be loosely defined as an original work of art that provides links and meeting points between art disciplines in a book-like format. Although a book can be enormous or tiny and made from almost any material imaginable, most are made to be held, opened and closed, and, perhaps, viewed in a sequential manner. Most are intimate, requiring a degree of attention and contemplation to experience the condensed emotion or observation they contain.

What makes a book interesting is the relationship between the content and form, and how it functions to entice and engage. Although I began my involvement with making books by purchasing plain blank books that could be personalized, I now prefer to make my own. It allows me to choose the size, paper (or other surface), binding style and cover material that will work together to enhance the concepts presented by the images and words—concepts chosen from subject matter ranging from the personal to the political, the sacred to the mundane.

In *Book + Art*, we'll be referring to the individual parts of a book—covers, endpapers, book block and so on. We'll look at the basics—surfaces, images and words. Then we'll look at altering pre-made books and a variety of ways to make simple and elegant book structures to house your images and words.

Because this book is, of necessity and by design, limited in scope, you may want to explore particular threads in depth. One of the best sources of information on educational opportunities, professional organizations, tutorials, reference materials and galleries is The Book Arts Web [www.philobiblon.com](http://www.philobiblon.com). Maintained since 1994 by Peter Verheyen, it is also the home of Book\_Arts-L, an active electronic meeting place, and The Bonefolder, an e-journal for the bookbinder and artist. Look in the Resources section at the back of this book for other suggestions.

## **Inspiration and Perspiration**

Thomas Edison's quote, "Success is ten percent inspiration and ninety percent perspiration," is significant in that he lists inspiration first. It is the impetus to create that drives the creative process, and while inspiration can come from many sources, if we always waited for a brilliant idea to emerge, we would probably do little work. It is usually in the process of working—the perspiration—that we find the inspiration.

As you search for inspiration, consider taking a workshop, going to a place you think would be of interest, applying to be an artist-in-residence or putting together a group of artists with similar interests who can be a productive support group. Many artists find they need an exhibition deadline to spur their productivity. All of these options put you in situations where you can explore ideas while working.

Do whatever you can to give yourself the time to work. Don't wait for inspiration to strike. Start looking for visual or narrative components that relate to an issue of importance to you. Think about the message you want your work to communicate and how you can communicate it simply and effectively.

## TOOLS AND MATERIALS

While being able to work uninterruptedly is ideal, for most people, it is an unrealistic expectation. If you can find a space where your work can be left in process, it will be much easier to return to it whenever you can, even if only for a brief period. If you have to put your things away at the end of each session, set up a system that will allow you to start, stop and clean up as quickly as possible to give you maximum working time. Clear plastic bags and boxes make organization easier and allow you to see through them to find what you need.

Tools and materials are integral to every step of the process, and there is considerable overlap in those used for making art and making books. Although the following list is long, few of the items are absolutely necessary and will vary according to the way you choose to work. If you are a fiber artist, you may choose to work with fabrics and trims, and use machine or hand sewing. If you are a printmaker, your etchings, etching plates and inks may become your materials of choice. Whatever your media, you certainly won't include *all* of the materials and tools listed.

While most of these supplies are found in art stores, my favorite shopping places are yard sales, flea markets, recycle centers, dumps and secondhand stores. In used bookshops, you can find wonderful old books to alter, as well as book covers, illustrations, text pages, letters, maps, documents, photos, postcards and stamps. In hardware stores, there is nonwoven fabric, wire, screening, aluminum, lead, copper and wood. Craft and fabric stores have fabric, interfacing, lace, thread, twine, wire, raffia, yarn, string, ribbon, buttons, beads, wood and tin shapes, and wooden and papier mâché boxes.

In the following lists, feel free to substitute wherever possible. General information is given here, and specifics are discussed in the various chapters. Items or brands are occasionally suggested by name. Usually there are acceptable substitutes, but if there is no alternative for an item, it is noted.

## **Artmaking**

Since the books you make may incorporate your art as well as being art objects in their own right, you should begin with the art materials and tools you normally use and add other media as they seem to expand what you are trying to accomplish.

## Basic

Apron

Chopping mat, thin and lightweight hard surface

Craft sticks

Gloves

Mixing bowls, measuring cups, spoons

Pans

Paper and other substrates for making art and books

Paper or polypropylene bags or sheeting to cover work surface

Paper towels

Paper, scrap for gluing—newsprint, old phone book or catalog

Pushpins

Sponge, large household

Spoon, spatula

Staple gun, heavy-duty staples

## **Dry Media**

Pastels, oil pastels

Pencils, graphite, colored, water-soluble

Pigments

Wax crayons, water-soluble crayons

## **Wet Media**

Acrylic paints

Alcohol

Blender

Brushes, a variety of sizes 1/2" (13mm) to 4" (10cm) for paint, paste and glue, bristle, foam, toothbrush, roller, cotton swabs

Faux finishes, crackle glaze, rust

Ink, acrylic, pearlescent, metallic, black, walnut Oil paints

Pens, metal nibs, markers, gel, metallic

Turpentine or substitute

Watercolor, gouache