

## OPEN • SET 2020

# Design Binding Today

OPEN • SET is a competition and exhibition, a triennial event featuring finely crafted design bindings. The title reflects the two categories in which the bookbinders compete—the Open Category, wherein the binder chooses which textblock to bind, and the Set Category, in which participants bind the same textblock. The Open Category titles are books in French, German, Spanish and English, a variety that echoes the number of foreign entries in the show. The Set Category book was conceived and printed by fine press printer Russell Maret; he selected the text of a letter by William Blake entitled *Happy Abstract*.

There are notable highlights in this show, as there are First, Second and Third Prize awards in each category, as well as twenty Highly Commendable designations. These were awarded by a jury of the well-known American binders Monique Lallier, Mark Esser and Patricia Owen. Each juror has a binding on display.

And there is so much more! Take note of the variety of structures and different materials used. When a binder first sits with a textblock, they spend time reading and absorbing the meaning of the content, examining the typography, the layout and page margins, taking note of the mood and color of the illustrations. Ideas form. A binding requires that the design come from deep within, and is then executed into visual play that exemplifies the interpretation. This is with all respect to the author, illustrator, and publisher. The result is an invitation into the text, the words and their meaning. The result is unique, a work of art in the form of a book. The bindings shown here are a definitive statement on excellence in fine binding today.

\* An asterisk indicates the book has featured interior photos to help in understanding design and concepts presented here. Access is found by typing this website into your phone's browser:

[WWW.OPENSET2020.COM](http://WWW.OPENSET2020.COM)

*The main objective of the bookbinder is to protectively enclose the pages of a textblock.  
The main focus of the cover design is to combine that execution with sensitivity to the content contained within those pages.  
It entails consideration of the structure and materials used,  
as well as the myriad techniques available to execute a two-dimensional design onto  
a three-dimensional object. This exhibition features traditional and experimental techniques,  
as well as traditional and innovative materials. There is engaging evidence showing  
technique, influences, qualities and conceptual drives.*

## STRUCTURES

### TRADITIONAL BINDING

The majority of the books in this exhibition are created in this structural style, alternately described as “laced-on boards binding”, and indicating that the boards are attached via the sewing supports, making the book durable at its weakest point (the hinge area) and encouraging longevity. Examples of Traditional, Two-board Binding and Three-board Binding are shown here.

#### TRADITIONAL



#### TWO BOARD



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#### THREE BOARD



### CASE BINDING

A Case Binding is named such because a “case” is made separately, or “off the book”. The bookblock is sewn, the case is made, and finally the two are glued together. There are different types of case binding styles, such as Millimeter Binding and Bradel Binding.



### PARCHMENT STRUCTURES

Parchment is a traditional material used in binding. Due to its hygroscopic nature, it is often used in the Limp Vellum method, allowing the material to move with the environment the book is in. Other parchment structures on display are the Floating Boards Binding, Parchment Over Boards method, Parchment Cross Structure and the Hinged Parchment Binding.



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## NON-ADHESIVE STRUCTURES

There are many ways to make a book without the use of adhesives; here, examples of the Slot & Tab, and the Sewn Boards Binding developed by Gary Frost.



## TIGHTBACK BINDING

Tightback is a descriptor used to indicate that the cover leather is adhered to the spine itself (without the use of a hollow).



## MINIATURE BINDING

The Bondy definition of a miniature is measuring less than three inches. Here, an example of this diminutive format.



## LINK BINDING

This binding structure has been developed by Sol Rébora. It is a soft-cover style and emphasizes a weaving of material to create the cover.



## CRISCROSS BINDING

Also known as the Secret Belgian Binding, this binding structure was developed by Anne Goy. The binding uses a primary and a secondary sewing, resulting in a distinct thread pattern on the cover and spine of the finished book. This version is modified.



## SCHICKSAL BINDING

This structure has been developed by Luke Hornus and relies on revealing hidden meaning through removable board sleeves. This structure is highly unusual and includes other details—gauffered title and author's name on the head and tail edges, as well as a foreedge painting.



## NEW ORIENTAL BINDING

This structure follows the Asian technique of binding pages together. In the traditional technique, pages were printed knowing the required margin bound together; in a more modern modification, pages are sewn to a stub—similar to the larger margin in the spine area—that stabilizes and becomes integral to the design whole.



## DOS RAPPORTÉ

This structure has been developed by Benjamin Elbel. The book and boards are initially built, with a spine piece fitting over the spine area and adhered along the boards with hinged parts.



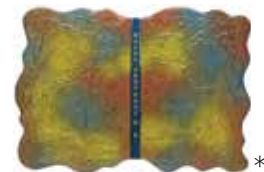
### EXPANDING LATTICE BINDING

This structure was specifically developed for this book by the binder, Graham Patten; it is a type of case binding.



### OPEN JOINT BINDING

Books made in this style show, as a board is opened, a visible gap between the spine area and the edge of the board; sewing supports are in evidence.



### STAPLE BINDING

Recently, the Italians figured out how to cut a larece of stone with a laser and adhere it to a polyester substrate for stability, creating a very thin layer of stone veneer that is usable for book coverings. A conservation technique has been developed by Sün Evrard that utilizes a secondary sewing method and emphasizes protection of the textblock with layers of archival paper.



### PIANEL STRUCTURE

This structure has been developed by Benjamin Elbel and features a piano-hinge type of board attachment.



### SOFT COVER STRUCTURE

A soft cover requires a thin card or suede acting as board. Known in France as *Reliure à Cru*, the cover is pliable with a soft hand.



### DE GONET STRUCTURE

Jean de Gonet is a French binder who developed this style of board attachment. The structure features exposed sewing on visible bands over the spine, often using unusual materials.



*There are several other structures featured in this exhibition such as Brass Rod Binding, and the Exposed Sewing Binding.*

*In fact, each book represents a variety of the concepts covered in this guide. One may be placed in this section as an example of Structure—and that book may also embody the idea of The Journey, or show a Finishing Technique, or be influenced by the author of the book.*

## MATERIALS

*Binders chose myriad materials that enable best execution.  
In this show there is a great variety, including unusual or newer materials.*

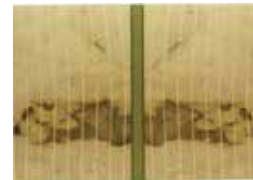
### LEATHER

Leather is one of the most common materials utilized in fine binding and comes in a variety of textures described as “grain”. Notable in this show are leathers that have been treated—paints, dyes, stamping or transfer techniques—or prepared—precut and adhered together colored strips of leather, continuous from each doublure and over the covers—prior to covering.



### WOOD

For centuries wood has been used for the boards and to protect the bookblock. At right, we also see its use as inlay.



### PAPER

There are many examples in this show that utilize paper as the covering material.



### PARCHMENT

As noted in the structures section, parchment is a traditional material used in binding. Here, another example.



### TYVEK

Tyvek is a modern material that displays tremendous strength, and is used here as a covering material.



### COPPER

Copper plates are used as boards in the example at left and as underlay in the example on right.



### EMBELLISHMENTS

The binder uses a variety of materials as décor on the cover. At left, embroidery in a contemporary manner; at right, mother-of-pearl inlays.





## TECHNIQUE

*Binders embrace a variety of techniques that enable content interpretation to shine.*

### THE COMPLETE BOOK

This description indicates that a binder not only bound the book, but has produced all of the text and imagery within it—a comprehensive consideration of the entirety.



### A COLLABORATIVE BOOK

Collaboration is not uncommon in bookbinding, but is more commonly seen by contractual work; in this instance, this book shows true collaboration. A group of four binders traveled together to Paris and together chose the title, then together made all design decisions and executed the binding. Their co-operative is Cinco ±.



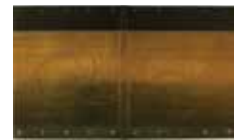
### A FOLD IN THE COVER BOARDS

This entry is notable for its sensitivity to the single-page book contained within: the page is a fold out and the boards mimic this movement.



### TITLING TECHNIQUES

Titling is an essential consideration for binders, and decisions on where to place, how to tool and when not to include the title play into overall design.



### BOARD TREATMENT

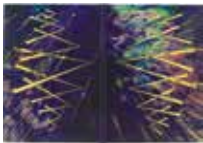
Board treatment occurs prior to covering the book. Board Build Up is a method of raising areas for emphasis. Board Recession provides depth.



### FINISHING TECHNIQUES

There are several techniques that binders utilize to realize their design and that are essential to execution. Examples of these are Tooling, Inlay and Onlay, Incision, and Wrinkling.

#### TOOLING



#### INLAY & ONLAY



#### RAISED ONLAY



#### WRINKLING



#### ONLAY



#### INLAY



#### INCISION



## INFLUENCES

*In this show there are historical techniques—such as marbling and calligraphy—that influence a binder's work and notably reach beyond the historical methodology.*

*There are also the influences of typography, illustrations and authorship, among others, that mark a path.*

### MARBLING

Marbling, a technique most commonly seen on paper that binders use in the pastedown and flyleaf areas, is here expanded and used on the cover leather, on each interior spread, and on all edges.



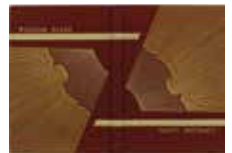
### CALLIGRAPHY

Calligraphy and hand lettering is in use on the cover and through the interior spreads of this book.



### TYPOGRAPHY

Sensitivity to typographic decisions is critical. In these examples the horizontal movement of the typography across and down the page dictates or began the path of the design.



### ILLUSTRATIONS

Interior illustrations and images are often an influence on the binder. On left, exterior covering material follows interior coloring schemata; on right, the ideas of William Blake as a writer and engraver.



### BLAKE AS AN ARTIST

Many binders in this show were influenced by the enduring influence of William Blake. Here, the use of transfer techniques to transmit copies of Blake's artwork or his visage entwined with their own artwork.



### BEYOND BLAKE

Two binders notably transformed the text block with additions of commentary of their own, including a written reply after the end of the letter and strong responses throughout the textblock, that created an interactive and new book entirely.



### MUSIC

On these books of poetry from the Set Category, “rhythm” and “cadence” are in evidence.



### MIRRORING

This is a design technique that occurs naturally due to the triptych nature of a book cover.



## QUALITIES

*There are certain qualities of design that ask attention, as here.*

### EMPHASIS

There are several books that use Emphasis to extend their design, whether through direct indication (as the book on the left), or technique (as the tooling on the book on the right), or subtlety (as the quiet use of gold on the middle book.



### HARMONY

Harmony brings a sense of quiet perfection through use of design or color.



### COLOR

Choice of color is one of the most forthright decisions a binder will make. Here, examples of bold and selective use, subtle and celebratory use.



## CONCEPTUAL

*Binders embrace a variety of conceptual ideas in design that assist in bringing their interpretation to form and engage the viewer.*

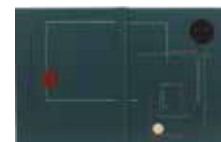
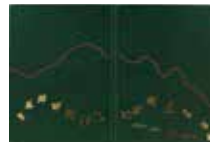
### ART IN PROCESS

Some binders built on their own process as an avenue toward design. The book on the left was developed from a painting the binder made, subsequently transferred to the cover leather. On the middle book the binder worked the leather prior, during and after the binding to achieve the final result. On the book at right, the binder first developed the interior pages with a quiet white line that grew with the turning of each page and subsequently influenced the “built” cover.



### THE JOURNEY

Some designs took the idea of “the journey” and represented that visually, both as a path and in a more abstracted manner.



### THE ENVELOPE

The envelope makes appearances in the Set Category, both as a container for a letter and as an item that travels from one place to another.

