

Please Touch the Art! Building a Mobile Artists' Books Collection to Inspire Student Creativity

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Why Artists' Books?

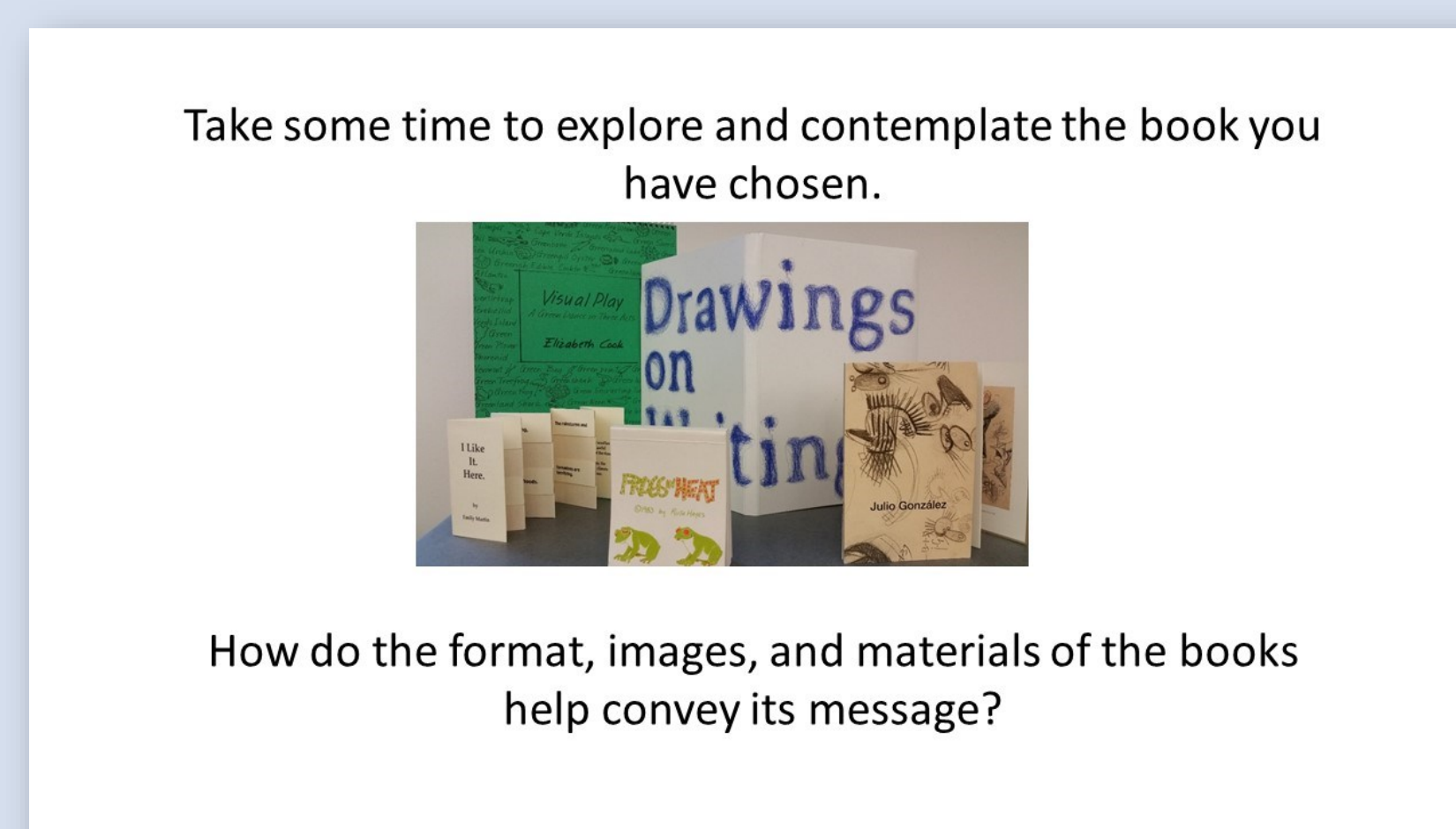
The UW Bothell Library's Artists' Books collection functions as a special collection outside of the UW Libraries' Special Collections department. Its creation was spurred by the need for a **hands-on teaching collection**, which contributed to its **portable format**. The collection allows students to **tactilely and visually engage with these unique works of art** in the classroom and at the UW Bothell Library, without the need to make extra trips to the UW Seattle campus.

"Chris G. and I are planning to focus on artists' books for our Winter soft-link integration between his printmaking and my poetry class, so I'm thrilled that we'll be able to incorporate the collection!"

~ English and Humanities Professor, Cascadia College

(Books) On the Move ...

The mobility of this collection allows it to **move from library to classroom** in order to **aid in student inspiration and instruction**. Librarians brought a portion of the Artists' Books collection into the Advanced Interdisciplinary Arts Workshop course during Spring 2015 and 2016, and also into a first year Discovery Core course, Visual Language: Creative Writing and Graphic Design.



To aid student exploration of the collection, librarians and faculty have used question prompts to generate thought and discussion:

- How would you **describe** this book to someone who can't see it?
- What is going on in this book? What do you see or read that makes you say that? What **message** do you think the creator is trying to get across?
- How do the **format, images, and materials** of the books help convey the message?
- List three **ideas or thoughts** that you feel are important messages conveyed in this book.
- Respond to the following: Looking at this book, it **made me think about...**
- How does the book **make you feel** about the topics you've been discussing in class?

Prompts from University of Puget Sound Course Guides: "Reading Artists' Books"



What is an Artists' Book?

"An artist's book is a medium of artistic expression that uses the form or function of 'book' as inspiration. It is the artistic initiative seen in the illustration, choice of materials, creation process, layout and design that makes it an art object."

~ Anne Evenhaugen, Smithsonian Unbound Blog

Artists' Books both **challenge and expand** upon the traditional form and content of print books:

Mixed-media	Collage
Transformative + Interactive	Tunnel Books
Visible Construction	Accordion Books
Flip Books	Papermaking + Papercraft
Typography	Pop-up Books



Photo credits: Marc Studer, Suzan Parker, & Chelsea Nesvig

Key Players

We thank the following **essential collaborators** for their help in building the UW Bothell Library's Artists' Books collection:

- Sandra Kroupa, UW Libraries Book Arts and Rare Book Curator
- Paul Constantine, UW Libraries Associate Dean of Special Collections
- UW Libraries' **Special Collections staff**
- UW Bothell MFA & Interdisciplinary Arts faculty & librarians
- UW Bothell Library Materials Processing and Access Services staff

Build Your Own: Collection Development Considerations

Funding Considerations:

- Buy items directly from artists or bookstores. Items with imperfections may be discounted (or even donated!) and will still function as teaching/learning objects.
- **Incorporate student work** into the collection. Student artists may provide excellent examples of the genre's various forms (and will inspire other students!).
- Pursue **small grant funding** opportunities at your campus, and through community arts organizations.

Acquisition, Processing, and Preservation Considerations:

- Leverage existing expertise of library staff, faculty members, and local artists.
- **Determine a processing workflow in advance**—which individuals and departments will be involved, and what level of commitment is involved for each?
- **Keep it simple!** Collections designed for teaching and mobile use can be minimally cataloged, processed, and housed.
- **Strike a balance** between preservation of fragile materials, and access.

*"I just wanted to say **three cheers** and sincere thanks for all your hard work on this! It's amazing what you and Jackie have assembled this year. I'll look forward to using the collection in my class on **Chapbooks and Artists' Books** next spring!"*

~ Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences Professor, UW Bothell

Looking Forward ...

A future goal for this collection is to incorporate **exemplars of student work**. The addition of student work will **highlight student voices**, while increasing the **number of titles** in our Artists' Books collection at a minimal cost.

Next steps:

- **Develop criteria with faculty** for inclusion of student work, and procedures for obtaining student permissions.
- **Collaborate with technical services** to catalog and process student work.
 - **Assess how the collection is being used** by students, and incorporated into instruction by faculty and librarians.

