

BIBLIOTHECA ALEXANDRINA

7th International Biennale for the Artist's Book

Alexandria Library, Egypt
2016

Book Art Exhibition
Produced by



for



Book Art by the Graduate Students of Stony Brook University

Artist Index

1. Jasna Boudard
2. Ye-Seul-Choi
3. Myda El-Maghrabi
4. Karine Falleni
5. Razieh Jafari
6. Tanya Robinson
7. Justin Roxo
8. Katherine Schwarting
9. Rebecca Uliasz
10. Allison Walters
11. Dewayne Wrencher
12. Nobuho Nagasawa

Professor, and Graduate Program Director of Master of Fine Art
Affiliate Faculty, Theatre Art

Unbound

Book Art by Stony Brook University Students

Nobuho Nagasawa, Professor, Sculpture, Installation, Interactive Art, Public Art

When Bibliotheca Alexandrina was reborn in 2002 to reclaim the mantle of its ancient namesake, the vast complex of the library became a place where the arts, history, philosophy, and science came together for an open discussion. I was privileged to be invited to the first inaugural exhibition "Imagining the Books" at the Alexandria Library in 2002. Ever since the library has demonstrated their interest in exhibiting artworks that goes beyond the parameter of Book Art. When I received the invitation to participate in the "7th International Biennale for the Artist's Book," I was thrilled to discover that the entries included an international array of artists and their books, varying widely in style, subject, media, influence and approach.

In the new technological age, with E-books, Kindles, and other means of reading, many bookstores and libraries are closing their doors. Nevertheless, books have never failed to transport ideas, messages, and thoughts. Throughout history, books have been a stimulating vehicle for reflection and communication, formidable objects that have been banned, burned, collected, censored, hidden, sworn upon, quoted, treasured, adorned, discarded, chained, praised, and threatened extinction.

In considering the submissions for this Book Art Biennial, I first considered the possibility of including the works by the graduate students of Stony Brook University where I have been teaching for the last 15 years. My objective was not only to introduce the field of Book Art to my students whose practice range from drawing, painting, printmaking, photography, to ceramics, sculpture and time-based works, but also to introduce them to the artists of the Arab countries.

I titled the theme of the graduate students' works "Unbound." Hand-made artists' books are often pressed, altered, sewed and bound. However, I encouraged the students to think beyond the traditional format of a book by taking the concept of Unbound, both literary and physically. Within the context of Unbound, they explored their ideas in a unique and personalized ways to convey their artistic voices, exploring the socio-political, environmental, global, and poetic messages in their own ways.

My sincere congratulations go to the Bibliotheca Alexandrina for their remarkable exhibition, as well as gratitude for sharing the works of Egyptian and international artist, and making my task as a carrier of books by the Stony Brook University graduate students a real pleasure.

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Jasna Boudard

Global Citizen Passport 2016 Laser Paper

“Where are you from?” Our identity documents, such as our passports, suggest the response is simple. But for many of us, our official nationality fails to properly define us. My father is French and my mother is Bangladeshi. I was raised in both countries, but also in Morocco and in Texas, where I spent most of my life. As an adult, I lived in Barcelona and New York, traveled the world as a nomad, and finally fell in love with Japan. So where am I from? “I am from the world.”

Cultural identity comes from context. It is not simply our birthplace or ethnicity; it is a series of cultural experiences to which we

are connected. Perhaps it's where we spent a significant amount of time and developed strong bonds. Perhaps it's the songs we grew up with, the food that comforts us, the clothes that make us feel beautiful. Perhaps our lives were so transient that we lost track of the notion of home. But we are not homeless; we simply carry it within us and adapt. As we travel, we embrace other cultures, and as a result we become global citizens. We cannot truly say, “I am from” because we cannot be defined by one culture: we are multicultural. The people in this collection share this experience. Some of us are of mixed origins; others are modern-day immigrants. Some balance their lives in different continents, or even different tribes. No matter our location, we are foreigners. But our personal stories are universal. We sometimes relate better to a stranger with a similar story, than the locals who surround us. We don't belong somewhere, because we could belong anywhere. Everyone in this project submitted a passport style photo, along with handwritten phrases in languages with which they culturally identify. Their few words describe how they connect with specific locales and the essence of a relationship that is otherwise undefinable. Their faces and words compose the pages of this book; it is a record of a common experience. For us, national boundaries have become virtually meaningless. We believe in a united world.



Ye-Seul Choi

Linkable entities 2015 Watercolor Monoprint

After the creation of abstraction, I considered about the independent identity of it from the relationship between my work and I. The relationship makes me the performer; the one who is the source of all their invisible movement. It supports me in creating artwork, and this is the reason why I want to accept myself as an artist. Since the abstraction is not relying on reality, the exploration of its ambiguity became an important motivation.

I am not trying to extract the clarity from the abstraction due to the absence of reality. I would rather extract the ambiguity of the abstraction by emphasizing and revealing the ambiguity or decreasing, condensing. Thus I understand my work to be a collection of movement reversals. "A Movement Reversal" is giving new personalities to abstractions by the transformation of their original identity. Therefore, I want to stay in the moment where the invisible reality is evolving through movement reversal.



Myda El-Maghrabi

The Island of Man 2014

Paper, Chipboard, Digital prints

What drives not merely the individual but our society as a whole? How do we regard our own experiences and, as an extension, how does that affect how we relate to the experiences of another? How do our individual motivations affect our societal motivations and vice versa? These core questions serve as the catalyst for my work. By developing artwork with this line of inquiry in mind, which includes research into contemporary as well as historic social criticisms, I come closer to finding answers to the questions that fuel my artistic practice. Throughout the process, I mine the many ways our human community operates-to resolve how it functions and dysfunctions; how its members connect or disconnect and what leads one group to disenfranchise another.



Karine Falleni

The Nature of Line 2016

Graphite and Oil enamel on Mylar paper

This book is a direct extension of my practice in working with line. The relationship between line, light and sound are recent ideas I have been thinking about in my practice. I wanted the line and material to be very delicate and breathable, suggesting the pulsation of fluid movement. My choice of using mylar allows for the natural light to come through, letting the material bring it's own presence to the drawing. The viewer is to open the book replicating the unfolding of an accordion. As if the pulsation of music is unfolded. At the same time, I wanted to keep to the traditional concept of opening up a book and being able to read each page of movement, similar to reading sound notations.



Razieh Jafari

Princess of Persia 2016

Color Pencil and Acrylic Painting, Folded paper, String

There are societies dedicated to preserving and forwarding the art. I explore these societies to inspire and inform my art. Paper folding traditions originated in Europe, China and Japan — the country from which the most recognizable name for paper folding comes, “origami.” Folding techniques are an inherent aspect of most paper maps. We are still able to fold the maps but not as it done before. One reason why paper maps still retain their attractiveness to users is their fold ability.



The Turkish folding map is one the most popular techniques, which still is using. I tried to utilize this technique to make a small book of the larger size painted papers. And then embedded a narrative in, which caused an interaction between my past and present, as a designer as well as an illustrator.

Tanya Robinson

Explorations: From the Mother 2016

Watercolor on Canson paper

Tanya Kaiser Robinson is an emerging visual artist. Her artworks examine decidedly female themes while exploring and at times challenging preconceived notions of beauty. She often uses botanical and female forms as catalysts in her work because of their shared symbology when representing subjects of fertility, beauty and life. The watercolor paintings presented in “Explorations: From the Mother” have an aesthetic affect will at times have a deliberate haunting effect. Each piece is not pristine. There are moments of spontaneity, with deliberate drips, and over-saturation of color. Despite these forms somewhat unnerving appearance, they still represent a visceral connection with the sacred and divine that is life.



Justin Roxo

A Parent's Prayer 2016

Hand-cut paper

The way that parents are willing to place the needs of their children before their own is quite beautiful. Being a parent is a blessing, a responsibility, and a sacrifice. We are the protectors, providers, caregiver, killers-of-spiders, and shoulders to cry on. A parent's role is constantly evolving as they hope to see the day that they might give their child away to someone that might love them equally. I imagine a parent reading this book to their child in a voice that sounds similar to a prayer. As the parent reads this prayer, they should imagine all the hopes, dreams, and ambitions they hope for their child and reaffirm their own fortitude to help their children reach those goals.



Katherine Schwarting

Shifting Climates: Radiolarians and Diatoms 2016

Pen and ink, Canson paper, Clam shell

Radiolarians and diatoms are microorganisms with ornate glass skeletons called tests and have existed for hundreds of millions of years providing researchers with information about current and past environments since each of the thousands of species that have existed are adapted to specific habitats.



This book is contained within a shell representing information contained within fossils. Pages represent pieces of an imagined fossil record. Fossils pictured are mixtures of real and hybrid organisms drawn under a magnifying glass and represent both the extraordinary structures and variety as well as the limits of what we know and potential existence of undiscovered organisms. Pen, ink and silhouettes represent different types of preservation. Pages are unbound because no complete record exists in nature and allows readers to act as scientists to determine order based on evidence such as evolution and construct a story to explain changes that have taken place.



Rebecca Uliasz

1999-1.MPEG 2016

Printed GIF Image

In programming terms, a scalar refers to the storage location of a specific piece of information, or value. The scalar quantity can be recalled during the execution of a program in order to point the machine to access the information. In certain models of physical memory storage, the human brain works in a similar way, such that memories are broken down into many attributes and each is stored in a separate location, creating a constantly shifting memory matrix.

I aim to consider the relationship of digital and physical memories and the ways in which each influences our remembering experience. Working with found videos, photos, and generated 3D scans and virtual environments, I have generated an abstract “re-memory” of my childhood based on a clip of one home video recorded by my father on January 16th, 1999 on an analogue commercial video camera. In the presented flip book, I have further manipulated the nature of the memory by once again altering the format, this time from digital back to analogue. The interactive nature of the flip book lends itself to the idea of the reactivation of memory, a memory that in this case, has lost nearly every element of legitimacy.



Allison Walters

Asking Questions to the Lost City of Alexandria 2016

Magic 8 Ball

Allison M Walters' book object, "Asking Questions to the Lost City of Alexandria," is a Magic 8 Ball offering cryptic responses that reject most questions posed to it but instead present a fragmented vision of historical Alexandria and a past that is obscured by time and lost knowledge. The 8 ball may be shaken and presented with personal questions, as these questions are customarily presented to 8-balls; they are traditionally viewed as peripherally occult fortune-telling devices. However, the dark blue depths of this 8-ball produce text from a disembodied voice, answering any posed questions with responses such as, "I am lost," "inside a tomb," "Caesar's fortress," and "pillars of sand." Personal questions are thwarted and answered with a dusty voice that refers to a great expanse of time, impermanence, and loss.



Dewayne Wrencher

Childhood Games 2016

Black and White Relief Print on Masa paper

I remember back in the day, when I was a child, all my friends and I did was play, invent games and tell stories. I recall games like, Whooping Mama where some of us would pretend to be asleep and the others played the crazy mamas that would check on us periodically to make sure we were “sleeping.” The rules were, who ever got caught awake or moving around would get a whooping (pat on the butt) from one of the mamas. Well, not all of the games were gems. However, the hand clapping games were always my favorite. They were very entertaining and informative.

The one I remember most was a remake of the Rockin’ Robin song from the 1950’s. In my community this hand clapping game went by two names, Rockin’ Robin and Tweedily Dee. The melody remained the same as the original song from the 1950’s but the verse “He rocks in the treetops all day long, Hoppin’ and a-boppin’ and a-singin’ his song, All the little birdies on J-Bird Street, Love to hear the robin go tweet, tweet, tweet...” was replaced with “Mama’s in the kitchen cookin’ rice, Daddy’s outside shootin’ dice, Brother’s in jail raising hail, Sister’s on the corner selling fruit cocktail...” Completely divergent from the original with the inclusion of adult subject matter the hand clapping Childhood Game Rockin’ Robin takes the tune from a playful melody to melodic accounts of low-income family struggle.



Nobuho Nagasawa

Lost Knowledge 2002
Glass, Lead, Compact disk



Somewhere beneath the modern city of Alexandria lie the ruins of its Great Library, the vast and fabled repository of classical knowledge. Founded by Alexander the Great at the mouth of the River Nile in 331 BCE, the city of Alexandria was seized and held for three centuries by the Macedonian Ptolemies, and lost to the Emperor Augustus by Cleopatra, lover of Julius Caesar and Mark Antony. The Great Library was established during the 305-283 BCE reign of Ptolemy Soter, one of Alexander's generals and his self-appointed heir in Egypt, most likely as part of the Museion, an archive, art gallery, and academy attached to the waterfront royal compound. For over a half a millennium, Ptolemy's descendants and their Roman successors hosted a remarkable assembly of thinkers there, from the geometer Euclid, a contemporary of the first Ptolemy, to the last great philosopher of antiquity, Plotinus, the founder of Neo-platonism, who died in 270 AD. The library holdings were eventually numbered as high as 900,000 scrolls.

The Great library of Alexandria was a beacon of knowledge in the ancient world. Its collection was the first archive of human knowledge, experience and wisdom, a tribute to human will and imagination. The artwork originally created for the inaugural 2002 exhibition "Imagining the book" at the new Alexandria library consists of two glass plates framed in lead. Sandblasted symbols on one glass plate spell the words "Lost Knowledge" in hieroglyphs, a written text form that became mysterious symbols in Egypt after approximately 400 AD. The hieroglyphs is juxtaposed with a compact disc framed in glass, exhibiting a contemporary invention for preserving knowledge.

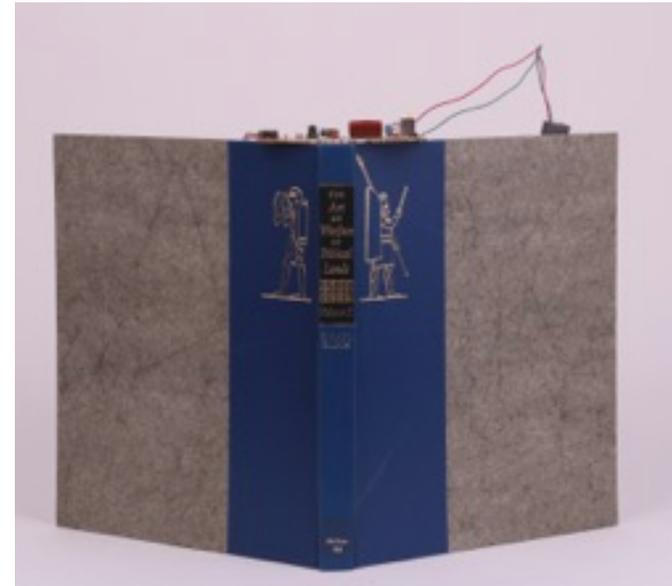
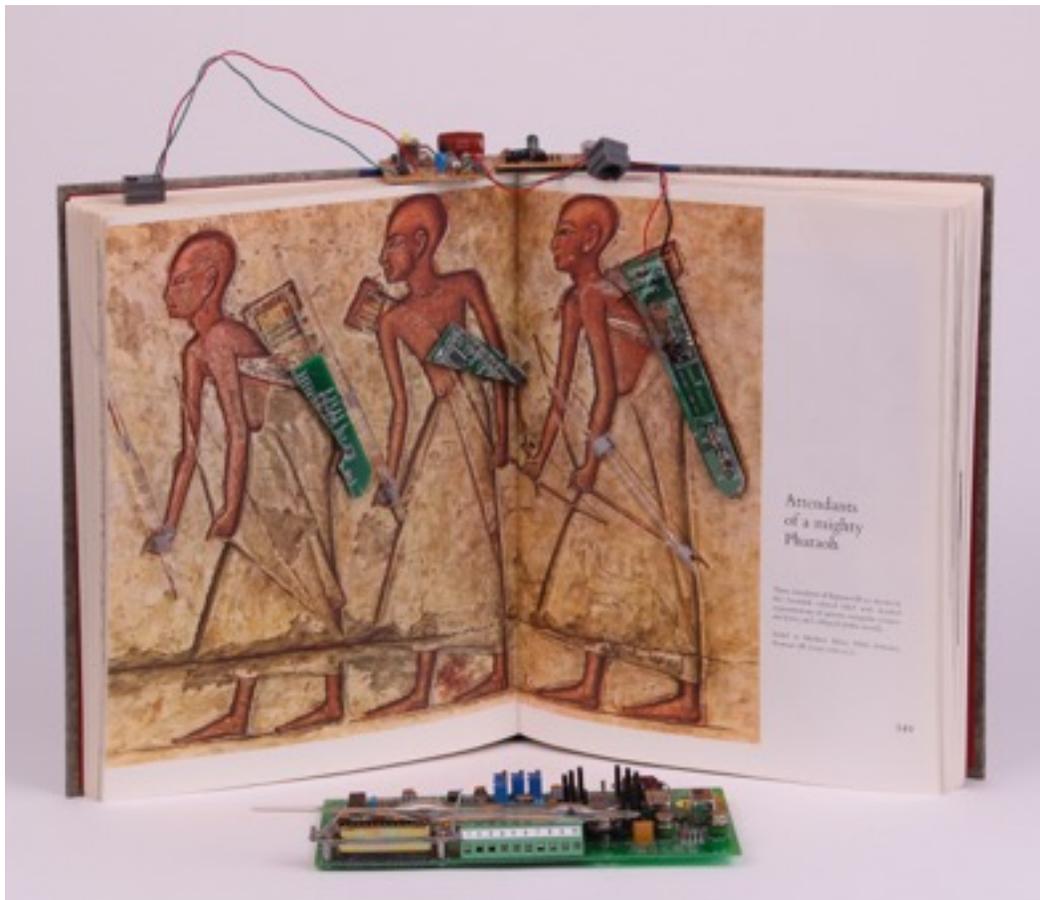


Nobuho Nagasawa

The Art of Warfare in Contemporary World 2016

“The Art of Warfare in Biblical Lands” Book, Microliter lambda, Circuit board

If contemporary technology were available during the Dynasty of Ramses III (1192—1160 BCE), the three attendants of Ramses III may have invented the new “Art of Warfare” to bring peace to the world.



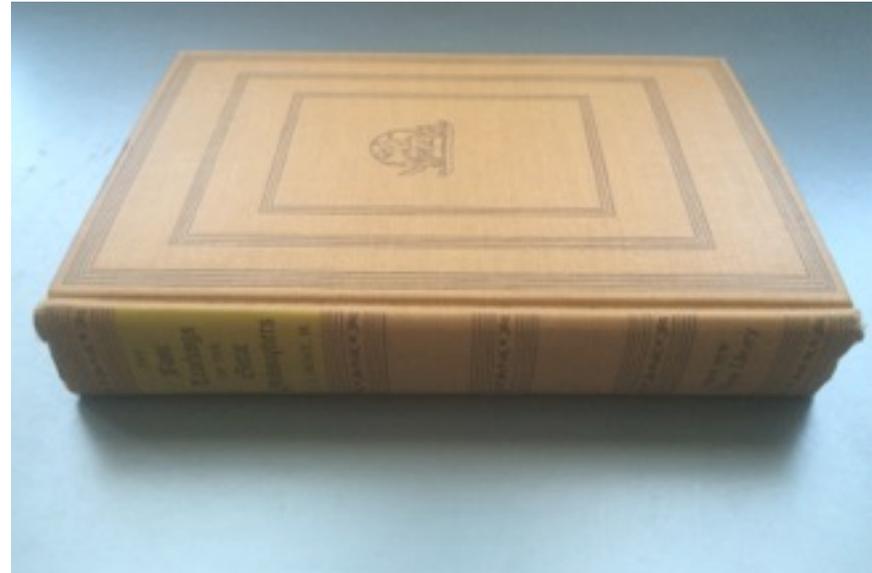
Nobuho Nagasawa

Embodied Soul 2016

“Great Book of Philosophy” Book, Cast resin

In ancient mythologies, cicadas represented embodied souls, and symbolized immortality in much the same way as for the Egyptians thought of the scarab. The first literary mention of the cicada was in the Iliad, reputedly in the seventh or the eighth century BCE, where Homer called them “sage chiefs exempt from war.” This was likely to refer to the peaceful and melodious sound that they make. Aristotle is attributed with seeding Grecian culture with cicada symbolism of resurrection and immortality.

In Phaedrus, a dialogue authored by Plato, Socrates and his student of rhetoric Phaedrus engaged in thoughtful repartee in an earthy setting by a lush riverbank in the shade of a tree occupied by a chorus of cicadas.



Socrates stated that some of life's greatest blessings flowed from mania of four types: (1) prophetic; (2) poetic; (3) cathartic; and (4) erotic. It is in this context that Socrates' Myth of the Cicadas was presented. The Cicadas chirped and watched to see whether their music lulled humans to laziness or whether the humans could resist their sweet song.

Cicadas were originally humans who, in ancient times, allowed the first Muses to enchant them into singing and dancing so long that they stopped eating and sleeping and actually died without noticing it. The Muses rewarded them with the gift of never needing food or sleep, but to sing from birth to death. The task of the cicadas was to watch humans to report who honored the Muses.

Nobuho Nagasawa

World is No Longer Round 2016
“Changes of Peace and Development” Catalogue

Why is creating peace such a challenge?



Nobuho Nagasawa

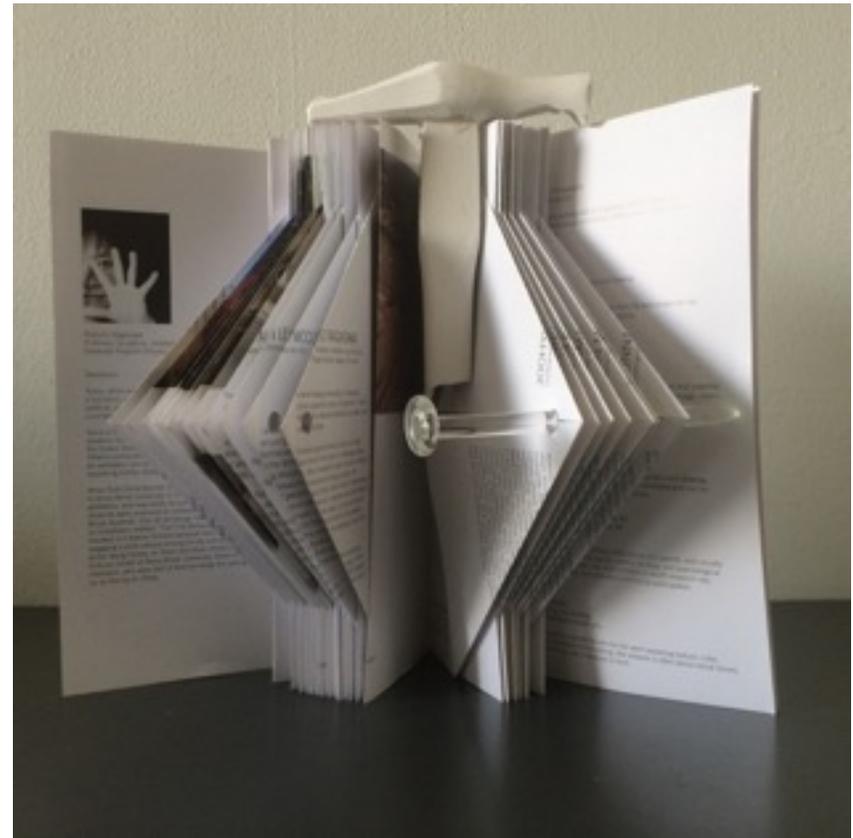
Tools of Resilience 2016

“Resilience” Catalogue, Cast plaster hammer, Glass nail

The archaeological record shows that hammer may be the oldest tool. It was used during the middle of the Paleolithic Stone age about 30,000 BCE. In ancient Egypt, papyrus grown along the Nile River was made into a material to write by weaving the stems of the plant, and pounding the woven sheet with a hammer-like tool. The first evidence of writing in papyrus is known as the account books of King Neferikare Kakai of the Fifth Dynasty (about 2400 BCE).

Nails also date back to 3400 BCE in ancient Egypt. In psychoanalysis, the tools that appeared in dreams implied self-expression. Hammers signified power, strength, and masculinity while nails symbolized hard work for little compensation, and were analogous to tough force. In an old Egyptian interpretation of dreams, nails were said to stand for hope, which comes true.

“Tools of Resilience” is a deconstructed catalog of an exhibition titled “Resilience.” This was an international exhibition organized for many years to take place in Shanghai in 2014. The artworks of students and faculty of Stony Brook University were shipped to China, but the crates containing the artworks were detained at the Chinese customs and were never released.



As a result, the exhibition had to be altered and transformed into a new form. The artwork I shipped for the exhibition was a set of hand-made glass hammers and nails—conceptually they were "useless tools." I also tried to carry-on another set of crystal hammers to China but the security at the New York airport declared them as "weapons" and threatened to confiscate. My attempt to affirm them as "artwork" by showing the catalogue was to no avail.

To overcome this unexpected situation, and with no packing materials available, I had no choice but to take off my shirt, sweater, and a coat to wrap the crystal hammers, surrender, and hand them over all in the few minutes that was left for me to catch the plane. On my arrival in China, I was dismayed to find out that one crystal hammer was broken.

Several hundred catalogues became the only visual evidence of the artworks that were never installed in the exhibition "Resilience." I deconstructed an outlived catalogue into a pedestal to "exhibit" the ordeal of this experience. Hammers and nails highlight skills and abilities symbolizing constructive thoughts so that you will not "be hammered" and be resilient.



Book Art Workshop at Alexandria Library

Transforming Books: Alter, Carve, Cut, Collage, Fold, Paint, Stitch & Sculpt
Nobuho Nagasawa

As a child growing up in Tokyo, I was an avid reader, a "bookworm" who was raised to value books. My first memory of being yelled at by my father was when I jumped over a stack of books that were left on the tatami mat. He said "never do that to books" and literary made me to turn around and apologize to the books. I was told that books were symbol of knowledge and ideas of human minds, and he gave me a lesson to treat them with care and respect.

The role of books has changed with the rise of the Internet, E-books, Kindles, and other means of reading, but I still cannot switch to holding a tablet to read. I still love books as visual objects. The smell of books often trigger memories, both visual and tactile. For me, recognizing the printed matter and following the fonts and illustrations by eyes with a weight on my hands conveys specific messages.

In this workshop, I want the artists to bring one of the books they are willing to alter, carve, cut, collage, fold, paint, stitch, sculpt and construct into a one of a kind book that will alter and transform the idea of a book into a new physical object. The original text can be obscured by the intervention of drawing, cutting, collage and/or other ways to give them new life.

This workshop is not about learning the technical aspect of book art, such as binding, sewing and treatments of papers. It's a workshop on conceptual art to alter, carve, sculpt, and transform the books in to visually stimulating objects. Workshop participants can bring any additional materials to alter the color, surface, texture, and pattern to enhance the visual depth of their books. The end product should evoke a visual presence, and challenge our own understanding of what book has been and extend the potential of the book while contemplate its future in the age of digital technology.