Artist Books

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Abstract

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Artists' books are books made or conceived by artists. There are fine artists who make books and book artists who produce work exclusively in that medium, as well as illustrators, typographers, writers, poets, book binders, printers and many others who work collaboratively or alone to produce artists' books. Many artists' books are self-published, or are produced by small presses or by artists' groups or collectives, usually in limited editions. Artists' books that maintain the “An art book is a museum without walls.” —André Malraux Artists' books span the range from sculptures in the form of pop-up books to artworks realized in a more traditional book format. The much-debated term, attributed to curator Diane Vanderlip in her 1973 exhibition “Artists' Books” at the Moore College of Art in Philadelphia, emerged in a climate of social and political activism in the late 1960s and '70s, wherein artists viewed books as a democratizing medium in line with thinking about the dematerialization of the art object. Artists’ books (or book arts) are works of art that utilize the form of the book. They are often published in small editions, though they are sometimes produced as one-of-a-kind objects. Artists' books have employed a wide range of forms, including scrolls, fold-outs, concertinas or loose items contained in a box. Artists have been active in printing and book production for centuries, but the artist's book is primarily a late 20th-century form with roots in earlier avant-garde movements, such as Dada.