

Media Contact: (not for publication)

Nancy Netzer, Director

netzer@bc.edu; (617) 552-8587

Public Contact:

(617) 552-8100; www.bc.edu/artmuseum

BOSTON COLLEGE McMULLEN MUSEUM OF ART HOSTS
The Book As Art: Artists' Books From The National Museum
of Women in the Arts

February 14 –May 31, 2009

Exclusive venue since its 2006-07 Washington, DC display

CHESTNUT HILL, MA (1-09) — The McMullen Museum of Art at Boston College will host *The Book As Art: Artists' Books From The National Museum of Women in the Arts*, on view February 14 through May 31, 2009.

Organized by the National Museum of Women in the Arts (NMWA) in Washington, DC and curated by NMWA's Curator of Book Arts Krystyna Wasserman, as a 20th anniversary exhibition, it was displayed there from October 2006- through February 2007. The McMullen Museum is the exhibition's exclusive venue since its NMWA display.

The Book as Art has been sponsored by special NMWA friends. In addition, generous support is provided by the Estate of Rose J. Bratton; NMWA Library Fellows; Lorraine Grace; and Margaret M. Johnston. Presentation at the McMullen has been underwritten by Boston College and the Patrons of the Museum.



'Eight Slices of Pie' by Emily Martin

The Book as Art is a landmark exhibition of artists' books by artists from the NMWA's permanent collection, which is recognized nationally and internationally as one of the outstanding collections of this interdisciplinary art medium in the world.

According to NMWA organizers, the exhibition welcomes visitors to the amazing world of artists' books, and is designed to spark viewers' imagination and to broaden popular understanding of and appreciation for this interdisciplinary art form.

They write: "Treasures of intricate craftsmanship, artists' books take every possible form, include every artistic medium and method of bookmaking, and engage every subject from food and family to politics and poetry, familiar tales to wild fantasy. A majority of the most gifted book artists are women, owing perhaps to women's attraction to storytelling, intimacy and collaboration."

"Within the context of a University where books have long played a key role in the educational enterprise and where text has been privileged as the primary source of information, the McMullen is pleased to invite viewers to contemplate an exceptional selection of artists' books. These objects expand the traditional definition of books; they impart information through a variety of innovative—and more

balanced—interrelationships between text and image,” according to McMullen Museum Director and Professor of Art History Nancy Netzer.

[MEDIA NOTE: Jpg images available upon request from the Museum: email Kirsten Ataoguz at ataoguz@bc.edu. A slideshow of images, and more exhibition details, at www.bc.edu/artmuseum]

The Book As Art

“Artists’ books can be defined as art objects in the form of books,” according to the NMWA’s press release on the exhibition. “When the content and form of a book are considered together, and given equal significance, the book becomes more than a simple container for information. The goal of many book artists is to involve the reader actively in the viewing process, not only to see the words on the page but also to think about how the words, pictures, and physical form of the object all contribute to the meaning.”

This exhibition comprises the work of 86 artists—from 25 states and 12 foreign countries—and presents 87 unique books and book-objects, fine press limited editions and multiple bookworks created between 1970 and the present.

NMWA organizers describe it as reflecting the times in which we live. “It penetrates the darkest corners of the soul, reveals human victories over violence, sickness and death, and touches on the vagaries of love. It is relevant and exciting because of the artists’ interests in humanity that so strongly reverberates in the majority of the works.

“The medium of artists’ books needs more champions,” they add. “In the highly competitive, constantly changing world of contemporary art, where name recognition and shock value often bring fame and fortune, artists’ books ask for slow contemplation and yield unprecedented intellectual rewards.”

Public Opening Celebration: Monday, February 16

On February 16, the public is invited to join Boston College community members at an opening celebration, free of charge, at the Museum at 7 p.m. [Information: (617) 552-8587.] The public opening will be preceded by a black-tie opening for invited guests on February 14.

Exhibition Theme Sections

The Book as Art is divided into the following nine theme sections drawn from the artists’ ideas, concerns and experiences. Below are brief descriptions culled from the NMWA’s exhibition fact sheet:

Storytellers: Women all over the world and in every age have played the role of storytellers. A number of artists maintain the book in this role, though the tales and fantasies they recount are not meant for children.

Nature: A number of artists created works in praise of nature, and expressed the ambivalence deeply felt by the majority of the society that our feeling of kinship with nature engenders both empathy and guilt.

Food and the Body: The modern woman gives a great deal of thought to her physical self. Several artists take a serious look at women, illness, aging and the medical industry, underscoring physical, emotional and sexual aspects of the female experience.

Autobiographies: Women artists are often concerned with issues of identity and gender that find expression in confessional and autobiographical narrative.

Dreamers and Magicians: Dreams, magic and the subconscious have long been a source of fascination for artists, particularly those of the 20th century.

Historians: Artists’ books are common containers for political thought and expressions of public consciousness. Several artists in this section confront dark episodes such as the Holocaust and the tragedy of September 11, 2001.

Mothers, Daughters and Wives: Central to many women’s personal histories are their roles as mothers, daughters and wives. Here artists explore personal happiness in the family setting.

Travelers: Traveling, whether across the globe or through the imagination, is a frequent source of inspiration for book artists.

Inspired by the Muses: A large number of artists are inspired by the muses of poetry, music and theater. The works in this section include books with recordings of music, a volume incorporating a set of shadow puppets, the visual representations of Schubert's Unfinished Symphony, and Purcell's opera Dido and Aeneas.

Accompanying Exhibition Catalogue

The NMWA produced a fully-illustrated catalogue to accompany the exhibition. It includes an essay by Krystyna Wasserman, NMWA Curator of Book Arts and curator of *The Book As Art*. The catalogue also includes statements by the artists.

McMullen Museum Installation

The McMullen installation has been designed by McMullen exhibition designer Diana Larsen and McMullen graphic designer John McCoy. Wall texts for the sections of the McMullen Museum exhibition will be written by the following from Boston College: Cutberto Garza, provost and dean of faculties; Ben Birnbaum, executive director, Office of Marketing Communications; Clare Dunsford, associate dean, College of Arts and Sciences; Richard Kearney, Charles Seelig Professor, Philosophy Department; Zine Magubane, associate professor, Sociology Department; Eric Strauss, research associate professor, Biology Department; David Quigley, interim dean, College and Graduate School of Arts and Sciences; Dana Sajdi, assistant professor, History Department; Judith Wilt, professor, Newton College Alumnae Chair, English Department. Labels for the 87 books have been written by the artists.

McMullen Museum of Art

The McMullen Museum is renowned for organizing interdisciplinary exhibitions that ask new questions and break new ground in the display and scholarship of the works on view. It serves as a dynamic educational resource for all of New England as well as the national and the international community. The Museum displays its notable permanent collection and mounts exhibitions of international scholarly importance from all periods and cultures of the history of art. In keeping with the University's central teaching mission, the Museum's exhibitions are accompanied by scholarly catalogues and related public programs. The McMullen Museum of Art was named in 1996 by the late Boston College benefactor, trustee and art collector John J. McMullen and his wife Jacqueline McMullen.

McMullen Museum Hours and Tours

Admission to the McMullen Museum is free; it is handicapped accessible and open to the public. The Museum is located in Devlin Hall on BC's Chestnut Hill campus, at 140 Commonwealth Avenue. During this exhibition, hours are: Monday through Friday, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday from noon to 5 p.m. The Museum will be closed on the following dates: April 10, 12, 20 and May 25, 2009. Free group tours will be given every Sunday at 12:30 p.m. They also may be arranged upon request; call (617) 552-8587. For directions, parking and information on public programs, visit www.bc.edu/artmuseum or call (617) 552-8100.

The National Museum of Women in the Arts

Founded in 1981 and opened in 1987, the NMWA is the only museum dedicated solely to celebrating the achievements of women in the visual, performing and literary arts. For more information about the museum, located in Washington, DC, visit www.nmwa.org