

**Wilber (Chip) Schilling**  
**Narrator**

**Betty Bright**  
**Minnesota Center for Book Arts**  
**Interviewer**

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**At the Schilling Studio**  
**Minneapolis, Minnesota**

BB: My name is Betty Bright, and today, September 10, 2015 I am interviewing Wilber Schilling—also known as Chip Schilling—at his studio in the Traffic Zone building in downtown Minneapolis. This interview is being conducted on behalf of Minnesota Center for Book Arts’ 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Oral History Project, which has been financed in part with funds provided by the State of Minnesota, through the Minnesota Historical Society, from the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund.

Chip, thank you for visiting with us today. You are the proprietor of Indulgence Press in Minneapolis, which you founded in 1992. To begin, I think we will set our context, and what might be interesting is for you to give us a brief introduction to the kind of work you do at Indulgence Press. I know we are going to look at some work later, but just in general how do you explain the work you do at Indulgence Press?

WS: Primarily my work is split between fine art books and fine press books, fine press being working with poets and authors, and reproducing literature. But I also do a lot of conceptual book work.

BB: Thank you. So let’s turn to the beginning of your involvement with MCBA, which takes us back to the Center’s earliest days. I think you were saying it was the fall 1987, which is just two years after MCBA opened its doors to the public. When and how did you hear about MCBA?

WS: Well I didn’t know about the MCBA, and I was working for a commercial photographer at the Wyman Building a few blocks away. I was the darkroom [technician] so most of the time I was in the darkroom, processing film, making prints. When there was a lull in that work I would eagerly accept little jobs to run errands for the studio. One day I was running an errand and it started to rain, and I was walking past the MCBA at the time, and it started to rain pretty heavily. They had this nice little alcove that you could stand under where you entered the door. Well, the door was open so I just went in and looked around, and just kind of stumbled in.

BB: What background or interests may have positioned you to respond to the idea of the book arts, or get you more interested to explore further?

WS: I was fascinated with the exhibitions in the [display] case: Patricia Hampl and Steve Sorman's Milkweed Editions of *Spillville*. I was struck by the production value, for one, but in particular Steve Sorman's prints, and how they integrated into the look of the book. It rekindled in some ways my passion for printmaking, and that primarily came out of, in a way, being a stamp collector as a kid, and looking at stamps under a loop. The old stamps were engravings, so they were little prints. So that was exciting to me. I remember that it was dark and stormy outside [and] there weren't many people in the space, and I walked around the entire space because everything was so open, and I believe Fred Brian's prints were on the wall in the bindery. I picked up a class brochure and was looking through the newsletter, and saw that Fred was teaching a class in wood engraving, and I was a little burned out working in the dark room so I thought, what the heck, I will sign up for a class in wood engraving. At the time I thought of myself as a photographer, and I remember in Fred's class I did a wood engraving of one of my favorite photographers of the time, Minor White, who was a historic figure in that field. I did a wood engraving of Minor White's portrait, because of the nature of it: it is small, kind of like a stamp in size. But in Fred's class we didn't just learn wood engraving; he actually had us print a broadside. And so we set type and I used a quote from Minor White to set, and a couple weekends, and class was over. The second weekend we pulled prints off the press, and it was pure magic, something clicked in me inside—you know, I want to do this.

BB: What press were you working on?

WS: It was on a Vandercook SP-20. And that was the first press I ever printed on, and so when I had the opportunity to buy a press, that was the press I wanted to get.

BB: Who else was around, in the studios? You mentioned, not that many people were around, and that is really true in the early days. There could be people there, but also there were quiet times.

WS: Yes. It was like 3 pm, it was mid-afternoon. I am not sure; maybe it was a Monday. I remember Allan Kornblum and Kent [Aldrich] were around, Amanda Degener was there, Susan Nees. I can't remember who was in that first class I took, but that made a big impact, too. Shortly after that, Scott Helmes did a mail art workshop, and it was a collaboration of the Walker with MCBA. And that was an energetic, fun and different thing. Being a stamp collector and doing a mail art project, it just all fit into my interests, and all the work we did ended up in the Walker Art Center Library's collection, so as an artist that was pretty darned exciting.

BB: Not bad! And I can share that one of the great gifts in the early days of MCBA [was that] you volunteered to be the photographer for the exhibitions.

WS: Yes, in that first newsletter there was a call for a photographer to document exhibits, so, it wasn't too long after I finished that class with Fred that I talked with you.

BB: Yes, and I thought, this is great! So, what you did was, you would take pictures of all the works in the exhibitions which, like today, were quite diverse. You could be taking photographs of contemporary sculptural work, you could be taking images of, I remember, the Kelmscott Centennial books, that we were just carrying them up to your studio, just incredible books. What was that like, or how did that affect your own development as a book artist? It meant a lot to us that you were offering your time, but as far as a trade-off how did that help you as you were forming your own artistic practice?

WS: Well, it is funny how different people come to the book arts, and what attracts different people to MCBA. I always liked books as objects, but I didn't really come because I was a printmaker or because I was interested in literature or publishing. I just came because it was a really interesting and exciting place, so, photographing all of these different books, I didn't have any preconceived ideas of what I thought the book and book arts was. I was very much learning as I was experiencing the Center. So, I never really thought any differently between an Ed Ruscha book, a conceptual book on *26 Gasoline Stations*, or the Kelmscott Chaucer, other than the production value—to me, they were really interesting objects in their own way. And so I guess that is the important thing, I didn't have any preconceived ideas of what it should be, or I didn't have any prejudices coming into it. So I was, in taking classes at the MCBA, I took typesetting classes, and binding classes, I took papermaking classes, and the whole umbrella of the organization. It was part of my life at that time. [MCBA] didn't have an offset press there, so everything initially was letterpress, and for the most part today it still is, and it wasn't until I got to graduate school [that] I had access to an offset press. And that is really where my artistic practice was formed. In graduate school and specifically for my pieces, I wanted to do two very different projects: I wanted to do an offset artist's book, a book for the masses that could be sold inexpensively and distributed [widely]. And I wanted to do a fine press letterpress edition. So, how does that affect my artistic practice? To this day I see the book arts as two strong camps for me: there is the strict artist's book, or the book as art, and then the fine press book where literature is art. I characterize fine press books as literature and poetry.

BB: It is interesting [that] your work has continued to let the idea lead the work. So here you are talking about these [being] interesting objects, and you were open to whatever you were finding. We are going to talk about your graduate work here in a little bit and then we are going to be able to see a few of your works that represent your graduate thesis. Do you have any other stories that come to mind? You were in the space, taking classes. Any other stories or thoughts about what it was like in the studios around then, hanging out and working?

WS: Well, everybody in the space was great. Everybody who used the space was great, all the artists. There wasn't a Co-op at the time, but one of the most incredible things was that the MCBA gave the artist the key, those that were really active and there a lot. I had a key to the space, and my studio and residence was a block away, and I had a full-time job, so I would come in at six, seven o'clock, eight o'clock at night, and I would often work until one or two in the morning, and there was a community that developed out of that, and a lot of those people are still very active in MCBA today. And even people that have moved away and aren't there, there is still this kind of friendship [from] that first four or five years that I was there, it is just priceless.

BB: When you started spending time there, Jim Sitter was still the Director, until the late 1980s, and then Hollis Stauber came in. You [left] in 1992 for graduate school. Did you do much with Jim? Did you have much interaction with Jim or with Hollis?

WS: Yes, a fair amount. You know, there were a couple of times where a number of us were working in the studio, and Jim would say, who wants to go for a beer? We would go to the New French Café, and there were six or eight of us sitting around the table, and Jim would just tell stories about the history of the book. I remember in particular him talking about the printing of the Gutenberg Bible, and then he talked about Aldus Manutius, and the development of type and whatnot. My undergrad degree is in history so I was really fascinated by that, and when I ended up in graduate school [my study of] the history of the book was enhanced by that.

BB: Starting over beer at the New French! So, at that time, as you mentioned, you were living and working in the Warehouse District just a few blocks from MCBA, and that neighborhood has changed quite a lot. Today we are in a different space here, but if you were thinking back to a neighborhood that you knew as your own, how would you describe it? If people were to walk the street and hang out a bit, what would they be encountering?

WS: Well, I remember feeling like where the MCBA was, and certainly Washington Avenue a block away, that that was really the edge of downtown, and it seemed run-down. It wasn't a place where you felt particularly safe, although I never thought it was unsafe. And the Wyman Building was full of art galleries, and was an arts hub center for the city at the time. It felt very avant-garde, and it was also a very exciting area to be because I was living in my studio, and it wasn't a space that was designed for living in, but everybody in that building, all the artists in there lived in their spaces, and that was something that was kind of accepted at the time; artists still squat in their spaces [today], I suppose. It felt like the edge of town in a lot of ways. It felt exciting; it was an exciting place to be before it became trendy.

BB: How about the exterior of the building? Harry Lerner the publisher owned the building that MCBA rented. What was the building like to approach? You mentioned that

you sought shelter under the awning. What was it like to walk into that space if someone were to visit?

WS: The space felt grand, it felt like a castle walking up to it, with the brown large brick, and the engraved plaque on the outside...

BB: Those [slate-cut signs] were cut by Will Carter [of Rampant Lions Press in England].

WS: There was a majestic quality to it, that this is a place of importance, which was pretty exciting. Being on that corner, and you walk into the space, and it was all there. I mean, in all four corners: the papermaking, the printing, the typesetting, the bindery. And you could see everything: the offices were little pods in a way; you felt like the space was yours and not the staff's. But there was interaction. So, it felt very welcoming with that openness. It was loud; it was a loud space.

BB: Loud meaning, you could hear...I remember hearing Amanda Degener sneezing, [Laughter] but loud meaning, you could hear the different corners? It was kind of exciting, but it was a little echo-y?

WS: Yes. It was a good energy.

BB: As I mentioned, you founded Indulgence Press in 1992, and that year you moved to Philadelphia to pursue....

WS: I had taken all the classes I could possibly take at the MCBA. And I had always been planning to go to graduate school. I thought I would be going for fine art photography, but I quickly realized that...Let me digress for a minute. One of the things that attracted me to the book was being able to put my photographs in a book and control a narrative visually. And that is something that I learned through the Minnesota Center for Book Arts, and in particular reading Keith Smith's books and seeing what different artists were doing with the book format. I had always thought of work visually, as a narrative. So, I was planning on going to graduate school for photography. I changed my mind and decided that I wanted to, one, further develop my skills in book arts, in printing and binding in particular, but also work more with narrative in the book form.

BB: So, what was it like, at the University of the Arts? They were known then, and perhaps still are known, to have a very diverse curriculum and an interdisciplinary approach. Was that your impression?

WS: Well, interdisciplinary wasn't thrown around in the early 1990s like it is currently. [Laughter] It certainly was to some degree. It was an early graduate degree program in artists' books. I was attracted to it because in the early 1990s, the artist's book as a medium wasn't as universally accepted as it is now, and the University of the Arts degree was in both book arts and printmaking. And I was primarily interested in book arts, but I

also was interested in printmaking, and I thought, for a Masters degree, having the printmaking aspect of that degree would help me more in the long run. And one of the main reasons I chose the University of Arts—I also considered the University of Alabama [but] the Alabama program was primarily fine press, and I didn't have an undergraduate degree in art. I had an undergraduate degree in history and one in photography, so I didn't have the basics of an art education, and the University of the Arts' book arts program encompassed not just fine press but artists' books—a wider umbrella.

BB: They have the Borowsky Center where they have an offset press, which is really unusual.

WS: It is a pretty amazing press.

BB: And remind me. Didn't you pursue typecasting?

WS: Well, I did that when I was there. The other reason I chose the University of the Arts, besides the bigger picture of the book arts [it] offered, is because Hedi Kyle was there. I had met Hedi Kyle at one of the Paper and Book Intensives a couple of summers before, and if you have ever met Hedi Kyle, she is just an amazing person, and I wanted to be a part of her world.

BB: She is one of the most generous and influential people at the same time.

WS: And then when I ended up there, prior to going there, I worked with Amanda Degener photographing for *Hand Papermaking* magazine, which was edited and produced by Amanda out of her house here in Minneapolis. Right at the time I was going to graduate school, Amanda gave up the editorship of *Hand Papermaking* magazine and it was taken over by Bobbie Lippman and Kent Kasuboske in Philadelphia. And they shared a studio with the director of the book arts program at the University of the Arts. So, in the first couple of weeks [at] the program, there was a new student welcoming party at Mary [Phelan], Kent and Bobbie's studio [Phelan directed the Book Arts / Printmaking program for ten years]. Kent was from Wisconsin and studied with Walter Hamady, then went to Philadelphia and bought the last type foundry in Philadelphia that closed. And so I walked into this studio and it had all this typecasting equipment, papermaking equipment and everything. And I became fast friends with Kent because we were both from the Midwest, and I saw an opportunity to pursue typecasting as a practice.

BB: That is a highly unusual opportunity. Literally you had the entire spectrum from typecasting to letterpress to offset printing. So, then you returned to Minneapolis from Philadelphia in 1994, and began to teach and work in the studio. Did you spend a lot of time at MCBA at that point in time?

WS: Yes, when I first came back, Chas, Chax, the new director...

BB: Charles Alexander was there for a year, MCBA's new Executive Director, of Chax Press.

WS: Charles Alexander was the director, and they were looking for an artist-in-residence, and I became, well, there was a printer-in-residence; I became the binder-in-residence, the artist-in-residence as the bookbinder, and then eventually became the artist-in-residence, which incorporated binding and printing and everything. So I came on, moved back in the fall, in the middle of the Winter Book with Tom Rose called the *Winter Book*, and I was brought in to do the binding on that. Yes, it was exciting. I used one of Hedi Kyle's structures, a long-stitch structure, and I think there were ten interns that worked with me that I directed, and a lot of them are still very good friends.

BB: Did it seem like things had changed in the couple years you had been away at that time, in the community there?

WS: There were a lot more people coming and going out of the MCBA, a lot more artists, and a lot of people I didn't know. History seems to have a short memory too. I was gone two years, and all the new artists working in there didn't know who I was. Redevelop community in a way.

BB: By the late 1990s the [Artists'] Co-op starts up.

WS: At that time, while I was artist-in-residence in the mid 1990s the last of the big commercial shops was selling off their equipment. I was able to acquire basically all the equipment you see in this space. [Gestures] The board shear came from the American Philosophical Society where Hedi worked in Philadelphia, and I interned with her, but the presses and whatnot are from commercial sales so that was a big change. Then the Co-op started, but I didn't really become involved in the Co-op because I was acquiring equipment. But I still was teaching workshops, I was around quite a bit. When I came back I continued to photograph for you.

BB: Were you on an Artists' Advisory Committee at that point? They would have artist advisory boards [or committees that] would form for a while to address a certain question, and then lapse for a while and come back. I think you were on one. What were the topics of discussion at that point?

WS: The whole artist, as far as I remember, the whole Artist Advisory Committee started because the MCBA and Jay Cowles at that time were exploring an option of maybe [co-operating] with MCAD [Minneapolis College of Art and Design]. And I think Amanda started that. She was very worried that MCBA would get subsumed by MCAD.

BB: She was Artistic Director at the time.

WS: Oh, she was. So, a bunch of artists were plotting how to explore that option. I remember going to MCAD with six or eight of us to meet with Cole Rogers, who was the facilities manager of MCAD's print studios. We were looking around at how this could actually work as an option. And there was a lot of discussion back and forth by the artists in particular, and also the staff, about whether it was a good idea or not. General consensus was that it was a bad idea. Some of us remembered Film in the Cities, [and] when they had financial difficulties they had been subsumed by MCAD and became more a program of MCAD than a community service organization.

BB: So, that didn't end upcoming to pass. When did you first start to hear about what become the Open Book opportunity?

WS: Shortly after that. I am a little foggy as to how long that period was. But it wasn't that long of a period. The Artists' Advisory Committee kind of stayed together as a group. They weren't meeting that often. Eventually, when MCBA was going to move to Washington Avenue, a number of us [from the committee] went to look at the space.

BB: What was that like?

WS: It was exciting and scary. It was a really raw space, it was completely undeveloped, it looked like nobody had stepped foot in it in probably thirty years. It was super dirty, holes in the floor. Hard to imagine what it was going to be, how it could actually be. But the idea of owning your own building and in control of your fate was more exciting than any doubts that I had about the space. The architects did an amazing job with that whole building.

BB: Do you remember Peggy Korsmo-Kennon talking about it, because she was hired shortly before that opportunity arose. Did she lead the tour?

WS: Peggy led the tour, I am pretty sure. Peggy is great; she is such a wonderful person. So exciting, I just love her, and she got us all excited about it, and she made it happen.

BB: Describe for me the Downtown East neighborhood around that site when it was still a raw site. What was there? If you said, oh yes, come over, I want to show you where this new thing is going to be starting up, what would they see?

WS: My earliest memory of that area is that there used to be a giant Ragstock where the hotel is now.

BB: Oh really? Where Aloft is?

WS: Where Aloft is. When I was in high school, back in the early 1970s, I remember going there because we were going to be Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band for

Halloween, so got the costume. But it was like, railroad tracks and weeds, tumbleweeds, and there was a giant liquor store across the street that seemed seedy in a way. It was kind of no-man's land to me. The stadium, when was that built, when I was in college—early 1980s—that changed that area dramatically.

BB: How so? There were a lot of parking lots around there. Is that what you are suggesting?

WS: Yes, it is all parking lots, and the stadium was its own little Pillsbury dough boy.

BB: It was a dome, yes. [Laughter]

WS: And I remember, when there was an event at the stadium, everyone went to the Warehouse District to party, if they were tailgating. But there were railroad tracks, and there was—that section of, was it Fourth Street? Down toward where the old MCBA was, that is a big dividing line between the stadium and Open Book Center is. It still is, to an extent. So it divided off that area.

BB: Were you around during the move into Open Book, during the moving of the presses?

WS: You know, I wasn't, we consulted on how the print studio would be set up and I helped with that. I did some consulting on how the type should be reorganized, but at that time in the late 1990s, early 2000s I was doing a lot of commercial letterpress work, and custom book and binding work for designers, ad agencies, photographers, whomever, so I didn't have the time to put in. I did what I could.

BB: So, the space opens up, and you have spent time over there; I know you have taught there. How is it different from the old MCBA? What is unique about this new space?

WS: It is still an open space, with the exception of the letterpress shop and typesetting, which is in the basement. You still walk in and you still feel like you can access everything. It still feels very open in some ways, but it also is more flexible in that you can close off spaces. It is a better space for teaching in now because you can control the environment. In the old space you couldn't really control it as much. You would be teaching a class and people would be walking through your class, people just coming in to look at the space. So, it is just very different now.

BB: How about the fact of MCBA is now in a shared space as opposed to being a distinct, solo occupant of a space before that? Do you think that has affected the character of MCBA at all, being in a place where there are different organizations and people coming and going?

WS: Well, I guess the old MCBA space was about the MCBA. And the new space is about the book, to me. There is this internal excitement about the book and all its possibilities, with the Loft upstairs, and Milkweed and the MCBA. It is just a giant celebration of the book. Does that color the narrative of the MCBA? I guess it just adds to the excitement. The MCBA still has that same core energy to me.

BB: You left again in 2012 to serve a one-year appointment at Columbia College Chicago Center for Book and Paper Arts, and then you came back. What that says among other things besides [your] being widely collected and teaching at a number of locations, is that you bring a substantial, broad perspective back to the Twin Cities for our benefit. Speaking from that perspective, where do you think MCBA fits nationally within this diverse cacophony of different kinds of book art centers and educational centers? Where do we fit in that?

WS: The MCBA is very much on everybody's mind nationally. In Chicago, people come to Minneapolis and they always talk about going to MCBA [such as] the graduate students, if they are coming to visit the MCBA, or they come to Cave Paper. It seems like a little bit of a circuit. People go up to Two Rivers, to Hamilton Wood Type, over to Minneapolis, down to Iowa; then back, and certainly on the east coast and on the west coast, Minnesota Center for Book Arts is very highly respected. The first thing that comes out of people's mouths is how beautiful the space is, how amazing, and how lucky I am to be here.

BB: I hope you agree!

WS: Yes!

BB: Do you think the MCBA Prize has played a role in that?

WS: Oh, in the last few years, for sure. The MCBA Prize.

BB: We just did the fourth one. It has been going since the early 2000s and it is a Biennial. Do you feel an impact with that? Do people talk about it at any other time of the year?

WS: I think the first one caught everybody by surprise. I can't remember who won the first one.

BB: That was Veronika Schäpers.

WS: Veronika Schäpers. So I remember when I was at Pyramid Atlantic book fair, that was the first time I saw Veronika's book that won.

BB: The [Squid] book [Title: 26°57,3'N, 142°16,8'E, Three poems by Durs Grünbein, 2007].

WS: It was an amazing book, and she was a German artist living in Japan. And when she won it, I think it really opened up a lot of eyes. And I think people really took notice when Sarah Bryant won [for *Biography*, 2010]. And Sarah's work is amazing. Clifton Meador won the third one [for *A Repeated Misunderstanding of Nature*, 2012], so, by the third one, the number of people who came to town was like, amazing. They had Clifton and Brad [Freeman] and Phil Zimmermann, just fun to be among that group of people.

BB: Yes. All that talent.

WS: Yes. And they were like, this core offset group of artist book people, and Robin Price and all the fine press people, it is such a great community nationally of artists, and a place like MCBA just welcomes that.

BB: Yes, it is a pleasure to see that happen in our own space. I have a few more questions that are perspective questions, but before we get to those I know you have a few books here and I would love to hear you talk about them.

WS: Sure. Great.

BB: Ok, what do we have here, Chip? Let's start us off. I would love to see these.

WS: When I went to the University of the Arts for graduate school, for my thesis I wanted to do two main types of projects that encompassed my vision of the book arts that I learned while photographing books for you. So on one hand I wanted to do an offset artist's book, which is this book, *A Reminder*, printed at the Borowsky Center for Publication Arts. I did an edition of seven hundred copies. And this other book is *Bartelby the Scrivener*. It is a letterpress book, and my fine press book. So, first I would like to talk about *A Reminder*.

At the University they have this Irwin Borowsky Center for the Book and they have a Heidelberg offset press. One of the main reasons I went [to graduate school was] to learn [to work with] the computer. In 1992 I felt the computer had come and passed me by; little did I know it was just the beginning. Nonetheless, on this book, none of it was done on the computer except for maybe some typesetting that was printed out and made into flats that were photographed and stripped into plates the old fashioned way, before computers. This is a book about addiction and addictive thinking, so it has this Marlboro cigarette box look. The book is an accordion book, and I wrote the text for this in the form of intelligence test questions, but they are questions that don't have a right or wrong answer; it is all about association. And there are a number of visual games that happen here. There is the idea of perspective: if you look at it this way you can see a labyrinth, [and] this way it is an image of the brain. So the questions, you go along and there aren't

any right or wrong answers. It is a test. So you get to here, you can take a break and then you continue into more questions.

BB: What kind of questions, Chip?

WS: Let's read one here. [Reading] Find the Elemental term, which refers to the Experience of heat, hardness, and patches of red? a. Aching void, b. Rush hour, c. Empty-headedness, d. Bed spins, e. Self-Image. Find the behavior that stands for thought: a. Truant, b. Antipathy, c. Trepidation, d. Discursive, e. Delirium. Then it gets a little more disjunctive. There is an ode to *Mad* magazine's way of creating an image of sorts. And then when you get to the end, the last question is, Change is to Behavior, as Recognize is to? a. Trust, b. Learn, c. Grow, d. Understand, e. Scream.

Since there are no right or wrong answers you can continually answer all of these questions. And since it is an accordion it is a circular structure. So it deals with the trap of addiction, which is a circular trap. That is a closed circuit, in a way.

The fine press book I did was *Bartleby the Scrivener*. It was the first piece of literature that I read. I read it in high school; I didn't understand the story at all; I was totally confused by it, but then I had this really excellent professor as a freshman in college. This was one of the short stories that we read, and this was the first time that I understood that literature could be art, there is more to literature than just a story. And so, having met Kent [Kasuboske] I had access to typesetting equipment, and I wanted to cast type for a book, and I chose this short story. It is a rather long short story. I cast all this type on a monotype caster over the course of a year, with Kent. This book is formatted like a legal ledger, and it is *Bartleby the Scrivener*. Bartleby was a legal scribe in a law office back in the 1850s, so the format of this book is legal ledger-like. And the story itself is told through the lawyer's perspective, and at a certain point in the story Bartleby was asked to do something, and he says, I would prefer not to, so that is Bartleby's voice, printed from photopolymer plate, which is different from lead type. Suzanne Moore did the lettering for this book, and Bartleby is the main character of this story. As the story progresses, Bartleby becomes more abstract as a character, so his voice—he keeps preferring not to do tasks—and so, his voice becomes more abstract as it wraps around the pages, and eventually gets bigger and blows off the bottom of the page, and becomes completely abstract. So I am using words and text as illustration, which appealed to a lot of people. And in the end, Bartleby, Ah, Humanity. Bartleby refuses to eat in prison and dies. Not a happy story. This is my colophon page.

BB: And the cover treatment?

WS: Yes. This is something I learned from [binder] Daniel Kelm, when I was interning with him. The story is the story of Wall Street, and Bartleby's window of his office looks on a brick wall. And so this is my anti-portrait of the lawyer and what Bartleby looks out on. I blew up a section of those bricks [in the image] and made a deep edge plate and

debossed the front with that brick pattern, which is something that runs through the entire story. The type is a typical type that would have been used in the 1850s, and the legal ledger and everything about the book illustrates the story.

I have always been interested in the history of books, and also pushing boundaries. At the time I did a workshop and a lecture out at Scripps for the Goudy lecture series, and there was a book dealer in the audience, David Ford, who actually spent some time in Hazelden [Clinic] in Minnesota, and worked for Jim and Mary Laurie Booksellers [in Minneapolis]. So he came up and talked with me afterwards, and he had this short story by Rick Moody about a bookseller that ends up in a mental institution, and it is really a story about the pathology of collecting.

I did a standard edition of this book that is more straightforward, but because it is about book collecting I wanted to do something that involved a fine binder. So I involved Daniel Kelm in this project [and] we conceived of a book that was bound in a straightjacket. There are all these levels in this book. There is a letter in here that actually is a prescription for drugs. There is a doctor's release letter from a mental institution; this is all in regards to the bookseller. It is literally a straightjacket that binds this book together and because it is about the pathology of collecting, I formatted the text for this book in the form of galley proofs. It is printed on handmade paper, there is a nod to the typesetting that I learned on the *Bartleby the Scrivener* book, and at the end of a long line we would put in all these extra characters, so I had the actual characters to replace broken type. Even though this is printed from polymer and that is completely useless, it is an inside joke that most people who know about typesetting understand.

In the book, the author, it is revisions, and editing, and he had written margin notes on the some of the illustrations in the original book. So, I sent proofs to the author, Rick Moody, and he handwrote these margin notes. I then made them into plates, and I also had him edit out certain things. But his edits are really interesting, so because it is letterpress I printed it with a deep impression, so that you can actually still read the edits while they are still being whited out. So it is something that breaks this barrier of literary voyeurism, where you are not supposed to read it, but you can't help but read it. The form of this book is a bookseller's catalogue, and the story of the book is read through the descriptions of the various books that are for sale. So, there are a number of books for sale in this catalogue. It is Rick spoofing on booksellers and their catalogues, and some of the outrageous prices that they charge for books based on personal preference and whether or not they want to sell the book. Again, we had a facsimile of a galley tray manufactured for this. At the time I was working on this, I was really interested in Joseph Cornell and his various boxes. I liked this idea of these layered boxes and I was also very interested in producing a book that was illustrated with physical objects as opposed to pictures of objects. This bookseller wasn't just interested in collecting books, he was interested in collecting in general, [and] he collected in particular, 1969 New York Mets baseball cards. So each of the twenty-six deluxe editions has a different New York Mets baseball card.

BB: Are those actual, Chip?

WS: They are real, they are real. And he talks about following Norman Mailer around Brooklyn Heights while Norman Mailer was smoking cigars and walking his dog, so we have a smoked cigar butts and locations in Brooklyn Heights. He talks about stealing books from the Widener Library in Boston, so there is a map in there of Boston, some voyeurism activities, Star Wars figures. The images for this book in the deluxe are printed like images from a production house: placement-only images. And then in order to bring the pathology full circle, here is an image of the standard edition. But if you buy the deluxe and you don't have the standard, you can complete your own collection and you buy the standard, there is a place for it in your collection box. I did have a couple of people grumble about having to buy the standard to complete the collection; they thought it was rather funny.

BB: Brilliant! How many nights did you stay up thinking about all this? This is such a complex and perfect world that you created here.

WS: The course of this book took about five years. So there was a lot of back and forth. I knew I wanted this kind of a box of multiple layers and this Cornell-ish like box. I was thinking I wanted to print galley proofs, and I convinced the publisher who paid me to produce this, to do the deluxe edition and to bring Daniel Kelm in on it. And once that happened, collaborating with Daniel, [we determined] how to make this look like a mental patient's box of personal belongings to bring in the padded cell on the cell door kind of thing. Daniel thought it would be really cool to bind it in the padded cell kind of thing. Daniel Kelm, even though he lives and works in Massachusetts, he is from Minnesota and has family here, so over the course of a few years and meeting back and forth here, we developed this narrative a lot.

BB: It looks like we have a Winter Book here? Tell us about this gorgeous book, Chip.

WS: I was involved in three or four Winter Books. In this one I was asked to contribute a print to it.

BB: This was the Bill Holm?

WS: Bill Holm, *Playing Haydn for the Angel of Death*. I also produced all these standard edition clamshell boxes for the book. It holds a number of prints, and then there is the book itself, it is a rather short story. But it is really a sweet story. If you have never heard Bill Holm talk, he was an amazing storyteller and a wonderful guy, what an event. I think Mary Jo Pauly did this. A number of artists did prints.

This was the first Winter Book I was involved with, that first year [*Staggerford's Indian*, by John Hassler]. Ann Borman was the printer artist-in-residence. She designed the book;

she came out of the Alabama program. Sue Nees did the linoleum cut illustration. This is 1988. And working with Ann, it was the first time I had ever collaborated with a large group of people, and it is a very different experience. You have to learn how to be a team, and you have to be a community. It all worked; everybody was super fun to work with. I learned that it is one thing to print one page, it is another thing to have to print on the back side of that page, on different signatures and folios throughout, and make sure the color of the ink is the same black or color all the way through, because you don't want to be distracting to your reader.

BB: Was it interesting to work with Ann, who had just completed a graduate program? Were you starting to think about possibilities as you were listening to her talk about it?

WS: Yes, for sure. It was my first introduction to the [University of] Alabama program, and I considered going there for a graduate program. And this is the first experience I had, setting long pages of text by hand, and learning about ligatures and widow and orphans, and all these typographical things that one has to pay attention to. And so as far as *Winter Books* go, it was really an important book for the Center and for me. They got a lot more elaborate over the years, but there is something really pure and beautiful about this book in particular.

And then, after the printing was done, Karen Wirth—I can't remember if she was a binder-in-residence, but Karen Wirth was active at the Minnesota Center for Book Arts, and she designed and directed the binding for this project. I also learned about paste papers. The cover of this book is a handmade illustrated paper using gouache, and methylcellulose to make a paste.

BB: Who made the paste papers?

WS: We all did. We would lay sheets out in the paper studio, and roll tires over them. And generally had fun with it.

BB: Well, thank you so much, Chip, for showing us those books, just wonderful work. Now we have a little bit of time left and I would like to ask you a few more questions from your broad perspective. Your involvement with MCBA and the book arts field spans more than twenty years. Do you feel, looking back from this thirty-year anniversary, that MCBA's vision, their mission, or the main focus of MCBA's programs, has shifted over that period of time? Or do you feel it has stayed fairly constant?

WS: I feel it has stayed pretty constant. There have always been a great number of master class workshops that come through, and that is still true today. I think that the quality of work that is done at the MCBA in the [Artists'] Co-op and in the member shows is higher across the board, craft-wise; conceptually it is impressive.

BB: So, it has matured with the field?

WS: Yes.

BB: What do you feel MCBA has contributed to the wider book arts field? What has been our piece in whatever's been happening in the book arts?

WS: I think that certainly there is recognition and also respect nationally and internationally. Certainly for the Minnesota Center for Book Arts, over the last ten to fifteen years the whole notion of artists' books has become, to some extent, I don't want to say a household word, but something similar to that. It is widely accepted, people no longer look at you blankly, so I think it has just helped the dialogue, it has added respect to the field as a whole, not just in and of itself.

BB: And then coming back locally, do you feel that in the story of MCBA, its founding and eventual growth, is there something characteristically Minnesotan in that? As a native Minnesotan, is there something you would see as specific to an Upper Midwest sensibility in the fact that it got going and has been sustained here, or not?

WS: I think something particularly Minnesotan to some degree is this sense of community that has developed, not just locally but nationally, and to some extent internationally, with what is going on in England, with what Jeff [Rathermel, MCBA's Executive Director] has done, and with the West of England Centre for Fine Print Research. I think it is this sense of community, but there is also a welcoming-ness and this innate sense of sharing. You feel like it is a place where you can just share information. To some degree the field is really wonderful in that way, people are really sharing, and developing, and inventing new ways of binding and printing, and are eager to share that. I have seen some, experienced some on the different coasts, in a way, people are more private about it [there], to some degree.

BB: When you reach an anniversary like this, people look at MCBA's story and think in terms of longevity, because sometimes it seems like a roll of the dice. Why does one organization survive, and another one doesn't? Every start-up has ups and downs; we had some with MCBA. When you think back, are there any particularly ingredients to longevity that you think might have played in our favor?

WS: Well there has always been a welcoming staff at MCBA. There is turnover, but every organization has turnover. And everybody that comes in has been really wonderful and excited and encouraging to interact with. Certainly the MCBA came about at a time, it was really at the beginning of the digital revolution. And there will always be talk about the demise of the book, but there was a lot more of it in mid 1980s and early 1990s. At the same time, Minnesota Center for Book Arts celebrates the book, and the digital revolution and certainly the revolution in Apple computers, [and] a lot of that nomenclature and development of different systems is still based on book ideas. Certainly digital typography is still using leading as a term, and kerning, and a lot of that is

interchangeable with the history of the book and the beginning of the digital revolution. That is not going to change. It came around at a particular point of time when everything was massively changing and at the same time moving forward. The whole way books are produced now is based on tradition, but we are using contemporary means of doing so.

BB: Coming from our thirtieth year here, what do you think can be a legacy that MCBA has left to the state of Minnesota and to the book arts field? What have we accomplished? How have we changed things so far?

WS: I see sustainability and legacy in the same way. The legacy for me really has more to do with the welcoming of community, and not just local community but national and the ever-developing international community. The world is getting smaller and bigger at the same time. And a place like the Minnesota Center for Book Arts expands that larger-world perspective. I have been able to sell books on every continent in the world except for Antarctica. And dealing with a collector like Jack Ginsberg in [South] Africa, or, I sold a book to the Auckland Public Library in New Zealand. They all know about the MCBA and what it has to offer, and it kind of puts that pinpoint on the map. People move around, but the Minnesota Center for Book Arts will always be in Minnesota. It is a place where international artists can come and go, and experience. And I think that speaking of legacy, it is important to have these places that anchor a community internationally.

BB: That is a good place to wrap this up. Thank you so much for your time, Chip. I want to also thank you on behalf of all the different people that make up MCBA's community: its board, staff, artists, the kids that participate; it is a broad community, and I thank you for your time today.