

Steven Daiber: Talks *Book Arts in Havana* at MCBA

June 26, 2017



Steven Daiber, Proprietor of Red Trillium Press, has worked with book arts for more than 20 years. The artists Daiber represents and the books he creates in collaboration with Cuban artists tell stories of the lived reality in Cuba in the 21st century.

Daiber presents “Book Arts in Havana” during the Minnesota Center for Book Arts (MCBA) Book Art Biennial Symposium July 22-23. For more information visit BookArtBiennial.org.

How does the MCBA Book Art Biennial theme “Shout Out: Community Intervention, Independent Publishing, and Alternative Distribution” inform your work?

In the early 90’s I worked with a group of mothers who were victims of domestic violence using simple book structures to share their stories with the Massachusetts state legislature. More recently I ran book arts workshops in conjunction with the Sexual

Minority Archives in Holyoke, MA for transgender men and women. My largest effort by far has been working with artists in Havana since 2003 to bring an awareness of book arts to the Cuban printmakers.

How do you define success?

I wish my successes were more profitable. I receive the greatest pleasure in sharing my skills and seeing that effort grow with the people I collaborate with.

What is the biggest lesson you’ve learned as an artist?

Patience and trying not to put my foot in my mouth.

Can mistakes lead to creative success?

Yes. In 2008-09 I completed designing the book “*El muro – The Wall*” by Eduardo Hernández Santos a book about the Cuban transgender community and the monetary world slipped. With no support or distributor of any kind, I knew breaking even with the book would be impossible but I went ahead and

published it. Yes, I still have 800 + copies of “*El muro*,” but that book has reached out across the US, South America and Europe helping Eduardo and introducing me to a community of transgender folks.

What is your greatest success as an artist?

The trilogy “*Cronica*” insular created with Cuban artists. “*Poder*” created in 2010 is the first book in the trilogy “*Cronica*” insular, based on themes Cuban artists feel describe their social and political relationships: power, privacy, and waiting. These ideas developed during a number of meetings and conversations in 2007 with the artists. The second book “*Privacidad*” was created in 2011 and the third book “*La Espera*” in 2013. The goals of the trilogy are to introduce Cuban artists to the skills necessary to create three different books structures symbolic to the theme of each book, develop a means of income, and place their work into collections.

As an artist, what keeps you up at night?

How do I price my skill, experience, and work as an artist to earn a living income?

What called you to the book arts as a profession?

In 1989 I bought the book of illustrations for Fergusson’s *Astronomy*. I took the book apart and drew on all 30 of the 19th century etchings. From then on I was hooked.

What quotation inspires you to follow your passion?

“As I come over the hill, I hear the wood thrush singing his evening lay. This is the only bird whose note affects me like music, affects the flow and tenor of my thought, my fancy and imagination. It lifts and exhilarates me. It is inspiring. It is a medicative draught to my soul. It is an elixir to my eyes and a fountain of youth to all my senses. It changes all hours to an eternal morning. It banishes all trivialness. It reinstates me in my dominion, makes me the lord of creation, is chief musician of my court . . .” —Henry David Thoreau, June 22, 1853

If you could travel through time to discuss a socio/political issue close to your heart, who would you reach out to and what would you discuss?

I would reach out to Aldo Leopold (1887 – 1948), an American author, scientist, conservationist, and environmentalist, to discuss the changing American landscape, environmental policy and the Wilderness Act.

BIO:

Red Trillium Press/ *Aqui en la lucha* is the work of [Steven Daiber](#) based in Massachusetts. Daiber has worked with book arts for more than twenty years. Daiber’s professional work as an artist originated with training in drawing and painting, with a M.F.A. from Cranbrook Academy of Art in 1981 and a B.F.A. from the University of Delaware in 1978. His books are in the collections at MoMA, Cuban Heritage Collection: University of Miami, Stanford, Yale, The British Art Museum, and the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Havana, Cuba to name but a few.