BOOK ARTS have evolved over the last few decades as evidenced by the continuing growth of book arts organizations, exhibitions, workshops, and collections. The expansive use of materials, tools, and techniques has broadened the concept of artists’ books in dimensionality and presence—from handheld tomes to environmental installations. These four organizations demonstrate the scope of this flourishing field.

MINNESOTA CENTER FOR BOOK ARTS

Minneapolis Center for Book Arts (MCBA) was established in 1984 after two years of planning by book artists, enthusiasts, and supporters. Conceived as a space where artists could create and exhibit, it outgrew its original location after 15 years and joined with The Loft Literary Center and Millowed Editions in 2000 as a founding tenant of Open Book, the first extensive literary and book arts facility in the US. "We believe creative expressions in book arts is open to all people," said Tilea Eris, director of exhibitions and artist programs. "MCBA is an inclusive space for people at all levels and backgrounds, from novices to professional artists. Our goal is to generate space for everyone." MCBA annually serves more than 80,000 students and adults of all ages from across the state, with programs for every skill level, including 13,000 K-12 students. Specialized services are available with the MCBA Artist Collective Membership which offers 24/7 studio and equipment access, on-site storage, Ar-Shares, sessions with MCBA staff and artists, and MCBA members' opportunity to exhibit in the annual Artist Collective exhibition in MCBA's Main Gallery and a generous consignment split on work accepted for The Shop at MCBA, as well as discounts on workshops.

Access to equipment is a vital part of MCBA's mission. Experienced artists can rent the MCBA's equipment and studio space by the hour. The studios are equipped with many presses including several Vandercook presses, plus guillotine cutters, binder equipment, paper beaters, and hydraulic presses. MCBA offers Studio Labs, bi-monthly open studio events for letterpress, marbling, and screen printing. "The marbling lab is the most popular," said Eris. "It appeals to a broad group, it is trendy, it is messy, and not always convenient to do at home."

MCBA offers three different fellowships each year: the McKnight fellowship for Minnesota-based mid-career artists comes with an unrestricted stipend of $35,000; the 24/7 studio access, participation in panel discussions, travel expenses for one conference per year, and MCBA membership. The Jerome Residency encourages new work for three early-career Minnesota artists. The recipients receive studio access for one year and participate in group critiques with MCBA staff and guests and a culminating exhibition in MCBA's Main Gallery. The MCBA/MCAD College Fellowships is a six-week residency program for Minneapolis College of Art and Design (MCAD) seniors and graduate students to complete projects. It comes with a project stipend and the opportunity to sell work in The Shop at MCBA.

MCBA presents six to seven exhibitions in the Main Gallery each year, with five to six exhibitions in the Outlook Gallery, named because of its windows facing Washington Avenue in downtown Minneapolis. Of the Main Gallery exhibits, four are related to the artist's programs, and one each for the Jerome early-career artist program, the annual Artist Collective exhibition, the biennial MCBA Print, and the biennial Minnesota Book Art Award in partnership with the Friends of the Saint Paul Public Library.

Three exhibitions curated by Eris are generated from proposals or the MCBA task force, and/or traveling exhibitions or partnerships with other curators and organizations. Eris has a background in filmography and, with her team, has created the online galleries. She is assembling one-minute videos for the artists to talk about their work in the exhibitions.

"Going forward, hybrid programming with virtual workshops is in the works," explained Eris. "Virtual workshops are an opportunity to engage a much broader audience. Participation in the 2020 virtual workshops was international. People are hungry for virtual learning, but we will keep the in-person workshops, too." The MCBA website offers tutorials and a series of how-to videos along with information about all the available workshops.

TOP: Open Book Takeover at MCBA with social advocate and activist Arlis Paul Kennedy, Jr., 2017
CENTER: Ruthann Goodell, The Wish Machine, MCBA Outlook Gallery, 2020
BOTTOM: Mimic Modern Marbled Objects, MCBA Main Gallery, 2019

TOP: Pulling prints for Playing with Words event, 2019
ABOVE: Enca paper marbling with Sally Power