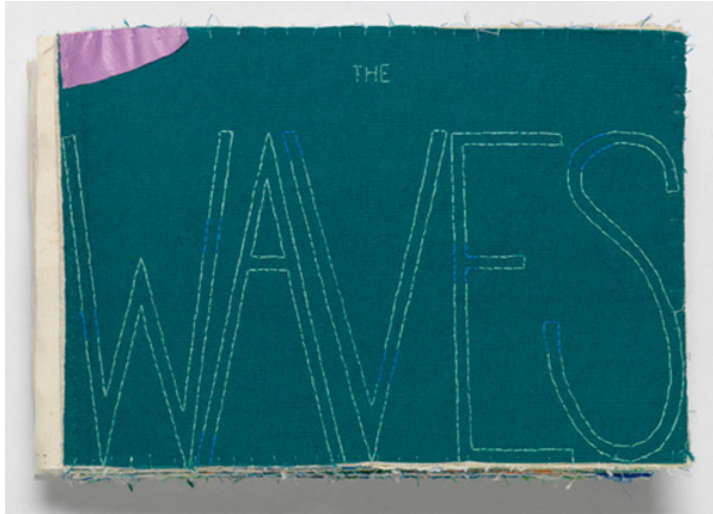


FEBRUARY // BOOK ARTIST OF THE MONTH: DIANNA FRID
([HTTP://WWW.HERRINGBONEBINDERY.COM/BLOG/2013/02/BOOK-ARTIST-OF-THE-MONTH-DIANNA-FRID/](http://www.herringbonebindery.com/blog/2013/02/book-artist-of-the-month-dianna-frid/))

February 2, 2013 by Erin Fletcher

VISIT MY BINDERY

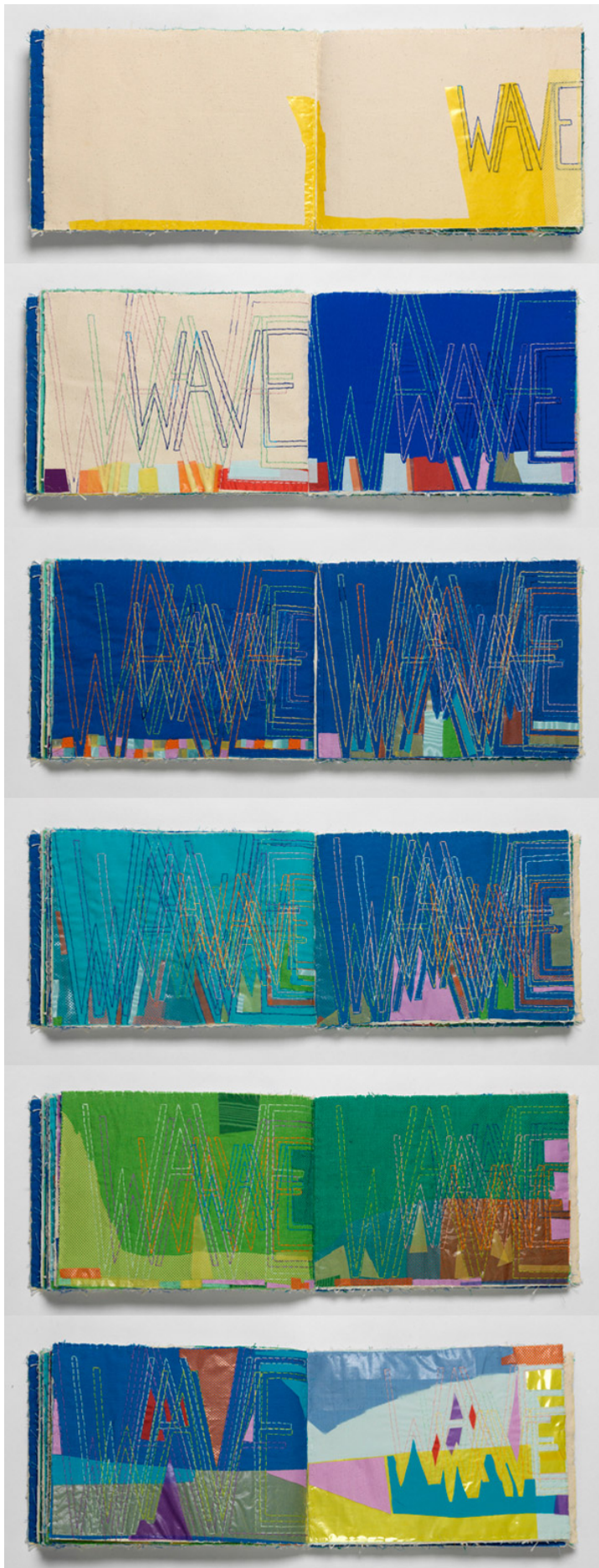
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(http://www.herringbonebindery.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/waves_diannafrid.jpg).

The Waves is an artist book by Dianna Frid (<http://www.diannafrid.net/home.php>), created in 2011, taking inspiration from Virginia Woolf's experimental novel of the same name, which Woolf said she wrote "to a rhythm, not a plot". Exploring this same idea, Frid focused on the structure of the book form itself. Using canvas and cloth for the pages, the word 'wave' is embroidered once, then twice, slowly building up to six repetitions per page before retreating out of sight. In addition to the repetitious text is a build-up of material which include various fabrics, paper, acrylic paint and cellophane.

My name is Erin Fletcher and I live in Boston working as a Bookbinder. This blog is an extension of Herringbone Bindery where I can share my inspirations with you. [Read more...](#) (<http://www.herringbonebindery.com/blog/about/>).



(http://www.herringbonebindery.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/thewaves_diannafrid2.jpg).

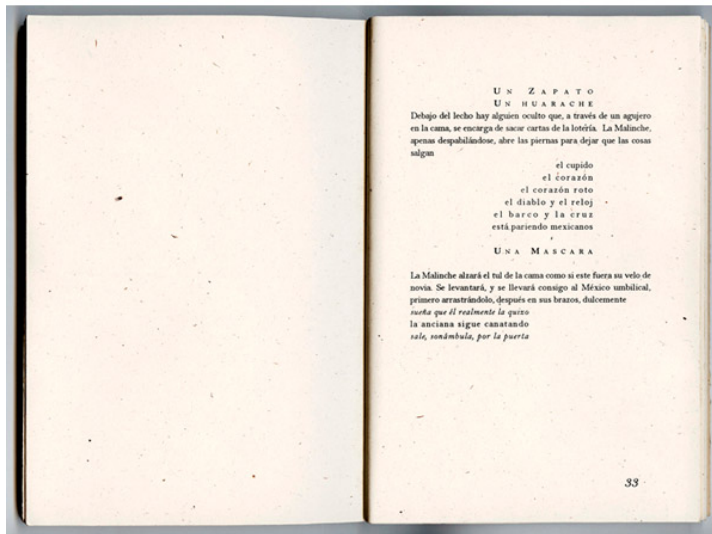
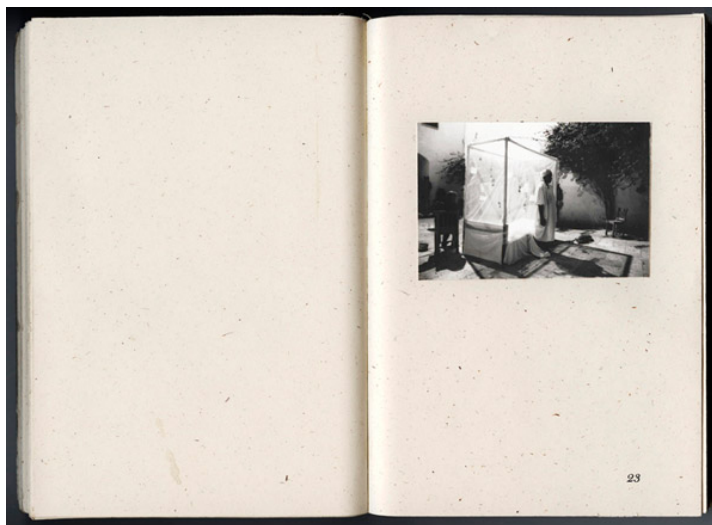
Frid was born in Mexico City before immigrating to Vancouver as a teenager. She currently lives and works in Chicago as both an artist and Assistant Professor at the School of Art and Design at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Come back every Monday this month for more posts on Frid's work.

You began making artist's books in 1993 while living in Vancouver, Canada under the pseudonym The Artery Archives. Did you have prior training or knowledge of bookbinding? What structures/form did your first bindings take?

In 1993 I returned to Vancouver after living in Oaxaca, Mexico for about six months. I had finished my undergraduate studies in anthropology and sculpture, which I undertook in part at Hampshire College (in Amherst, Massachusetts) and then at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Spending time in Oaxaca fortified my interest in pre-Columbian and early post-conquest codices that were made in that region and throughout Central Mexico. These codices are rich pictographic narratives that often depict the trajectory of a journey. As someone who had migrated from Mexico to Canada in her teens, I identified with the theme of movement and traversal and this is how I began to make some works.



(http://www.herringbonebindery.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/malinchedreams_diannafrid1.jpg).



(http://www.herringbonebindery.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/malinchedreams_diannafrid.jpg).

excerpts from 'La Malinche Sueña que Hernán Realmente la Quiso (Malinche Dreams that Hernán Really Loved Her)', based on a collaboration with Sergio Santamaría. 1995. edition of 4. Digital typeset with silver negative prints.

When I returned to Vancouver I took a course in desktop publishing, a new thing at the time. It was a very basic and completely instrumental course that was entirely divorced from any kind of theoretical or historical connection to graphic design, but it became the beginning of my attempt at making books, and has turned into an ongoing area of research and interest

When I came back from Oaxaca to Vancouver, I had hundreds of negatives of images that I had taken while I lived there. My parents had a darkroom in their home, and after much editing, a few of the photographs became the content of my first books. Some of the books were based on interviews I conducted with a woman who made corn tortillas for a living. In retrospect I see it as a very elementary "ethnography of process" (I had studied anthropology in college after all). Another early book consisted of photographs based on images taken during a performance and ephemeral installation piece that a group of friends and I created. These books were made in editions of four and some of them are now housed in special collections libraries.



(http://www.herringbonebindery.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/albumofaninterview_diannafrid.jpg).

unbound excerpts from 'Album of an Interview'. 1995. edition of 3. digital typeset and silver negative prints.

With one exception, I have not made multiple editions since—my books have been one-of-a-kind artifacts. In terms of what held the pages together, my bindings were (and still are) rudimentary. I know that the binding styles that I use have names, but frankly I do not know what to call them. Perhaps I can learn from you! This is a peculiar if not ironic fact given that in my work I have often researched nomenclature systems. But to answer your question about binding, which I know is a topic dear to you, my approach to binding has been urgent and intuitive. Nobody taught me how to do it.

In an interview with Violet Shuraka of *Cheap and Plastique*, you spoke of the structure of the book as 'a site where movement yields to movement from one pair of pages to another' similar to navigating oneself through the structure of a building. Can you elaborate on how your concepts are best expressed through the book form and not another avenue of art in which you work?

Holding a book in one's hands can be a profoundly intimate experience. It is a tactile, interactive object. This fact applies to all kinds of books—not only artist's books—and it can be a problem when artists' or rare books are exhibited in vitrines, protected from touch or activation.

My long-standing production of one-of-a-kind handmade objects represents an engagement with lineages of craft in a domain that has, for the last several centuries, increasingly been mechanized: first as print and most recently as digital dissemination. Like my manual transformations of other mechanically reproduced representations (charts, graphs, blueprints), my artist's books draw sensuous attention to the potentials of a form—the book—that, in its predominant mass-produced version, has come to seem little more than a neutral, even disposable medium for conveying information in linear sequence. By calling attention to the embodied physicality of the book, I push against this neutralization.

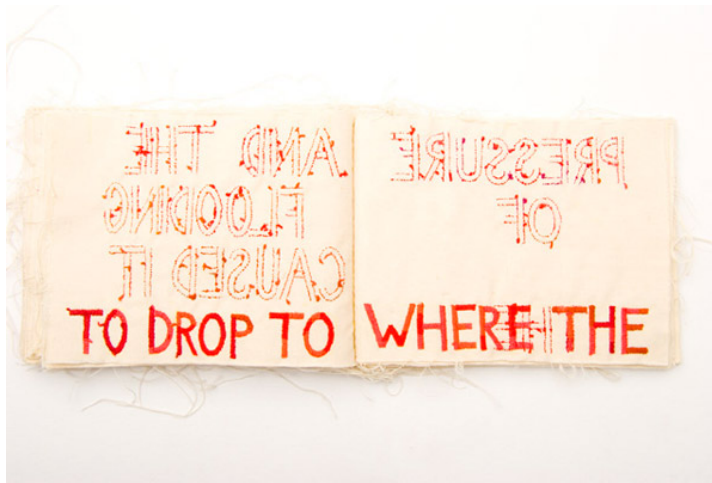
In terms of content, my artist's books pull together concerns with translation. My books address the translation between language and its material embodiment as text and image, as well as the translation between sensation and objects—even in the absence of language. Like the rest of my work, my books, in a less format-specific sense, are explorations on how art contributes to our described experiences of time, sequence, light, space, mortality...

I was first introduced to your work as a student in the book arts at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago; a few of your pieces are housed in the Joan Flasch Artists' Book Collection. At the time I was drawn to your work due their uncommon tactile characteristics and the pleasure I would find in handling them. Historically, we view a book as having either paper or vellum pages with text applied by hand or printed. Your book structures employ the use of cloth

and thread, along with other materials. Have you always worked with these materials to create book forms? How do these elements project your themes and concepts as oppose to those more traditional to the book form?

As I mentioned earlier, the first books were photographic editions in which an ephemeral event, a conversation, or a sculpture was documented and encapsulated sequentially. Over time, I started to use components traditionally used for the binding of pages, namely thread and needle, as the tools for marking and configuring content. This became an opportunity to think critically about craftsmanship and to expand on delineations of drawing and mark-making within contemporary art, beyond book works.

I can speak about specific examples of books in which the work needs to be sewn because it delineates very clearly the content of the books and the relationship between “front-and-back” that sewing produces on two sides of the same piece of fabric. This is evident right away in “The Plot of the Story” and in “Leak;” and I revisit the concept of back-and-front in “Reversal.” These books explore the potential that a book holds for reversing time, reading backwards, reading something more than once, making text or icons defamiliarized or weird by means of repetition. Through this process I have come to understand in a fully embodied way that language is a material itself composed of smaller units. I had always understood this factually, yet the making of artist’s books generates an embodied understanding: the tactile staging of this fact.



(http://www.herringbonebindery.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/leak19_diannafrid.jpg)

excerpt from 'Leak'. 1999, unique book.

Book Arts continually challenges the definition of a book by reformatting the structure, using unconventional materials and omitting the text. Your books very much rely on imagery to advance the viewer. In the same interview with Shuraka, you so beautifully describe this as ‘rhythm without plot’ as initially explored by Virginia Woolf in her novel *The Waves*. Can you talk about how you formulate a fluid composition that will guide the reader from page to page?

My first books were perhaps more guided by a narrative sequence. An example would be “Just Wait and See,” which you have seen at the Joan Flasch Artists Book Collection in Chicago. My works emerge from a dedicated studio process that also includes sculpture, drawing, collage, and installation. Over the years these pieces have become less representational, more formal, and in commensurate ways also thematically more open-ended. This includes the artist’s books, but to different degrees. The way a book unfolds in time is related to the concept of montage in film. I do not make moving-image work, but the books, as sequential vessels of time, require the production of a flow. This may happen immediately or it may take a lot of planning. I first plan out the books with tiny sketches and the rest follows.

The example of the Virginia Woolf reference is important because once I came cross it I could not shake it off. It stood for what I look for in the books. I had read somewhere that “The Waves” was Woolf’s favorite among her own works, but she also understood it was more difficult for a wide audience to embrace because in it she had been “looking for rhythm, not plot.” This stroke me as inherently poetic and important— as a gesture that encapsulates the significance of PROCESS and RHYTHM that I engage in the studio performance of making art.

You’ve been working with the book as an art form for over 15 years, how do you see your work evolving within this medium?

Lately, I have been thinking about making limitless editions on CreateSpace, Amazon’s self-publishing site. This would be an experimental start for what I want to see becoming more accessible copies of artist’s books that I have made in the past. Because the medium is so different, I am excited to change the aspect of the books in ways it might require. As you know, my one-of-a-kind books circulate in very different modes from the way multiple editions are able to reach an audience, and I am curious to make an artist’s book that has a life that exceeds the singular copy.

I will still continue to make the one-of-a-kind books because I have constant ideas for these. However, it is not unusual for me to need months or even years to actually figure out how to execute a specific idea in book form. This was the case with "Reversal," for example, a book that I wanted to make five years prior to figuring out how... Some book ideas fail or never materialize. For example, I wanted to make a book that dealt with Odysseus surviving the Sirens, but instead the book idea resulted in a sculpture that is now called "I Alone Was to Hear Their Voices..." It's a long story, but the fact is that the initial idea resolved itself into the form it needed to become, which was not a book. As you can see, in my work there is a back-and-forth between non-book objects and book objects. They inform and enhance each other.



(http://www.herringbonebindery.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/ialone_diannafrid.jpg)

'I alone was to hear their voices'/Their ravishing voices out across the air".

2011.

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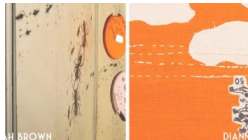
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