

PB+J Bookarts Studio

Peter Bartl and Jane Merks together are PB+J Bookarts Studio. Formerly just PB+J Press, The new name reflects the evolution of their art/design – moving from a strictly letterpress operation to a more complex and hard to categorize operation. Their not-so-fine printing (as opposed to tradition fine presses) is about experimenting with textures, layers and the wild side of ink and paper! Both Peter Bartl and Jane Merks were graphic design professors and practitioners, who happily gave up their teaching careers so that they could live life to the fullest in Balfour, BC but they continue to travel the world, lecturing and giving workshops at universities and conferences about their passion – the obsolete design that has become their art.

Their bookarts work is in private and public collections around the world, including the following libraries:

Simon Fraser University - WAC Bennett Library, Burnaby, BC, Canada
Yale University - Sterling Memorial Library, New Haven, Connecticut, USA
University of Alberta - Bruce Peel Collection, Rutherford Library, Edmonton, AB, Canada
University of Cincinnati - Special Collections, Cincinnati, Ohio, USA
Selkirk College Library, Castlegar, BC, Canada
Nelson Public Library, Nelson, BC, Canada
Cincinnati Public Library, Cincinnati, Ohio, USA
Sackner Archives - Columbia University Rare Book Library, New York City, USA
Their work can be seen on their website at: pbjbookarts.ca

Peter Bartl

Like many of the European designers who came to North America in the late 60's and 70's Peter started his professional life as a typesetter/compositor apprentice in Switzerland. After 10 years at art schools, travel and work in Holland, England and Switzerland he earned a Masters Degree from the Basel College of Design. He then emigrated to a post-Expo 67 Montreal and its vibrant design scene. Three years later he was invited to join the new design program at the University of Alberta in Edmonton. His teaching experience span the range of professional and academic subjects from fundamental art to professional practices to design theory and history to the ethics of visual communications. Former students haunt design schools and design studios from Europe to China. He also preached the gospel of good design at conferences, workshops and as guest lecturer throughout North America, Japan and Europe.

At the end of 2000 he stopped teaching design, followed a woman to Cincinnati and then in 2002 retired to the Kootenays with his soulmate and wife, Jane Merks, where he continues to work creatively at whatever intrigues him.

Jane Merks

Born in Kitchener Ontario, Jane Merks comes from a large family. Her father, an insurance manager and her mother, a seamstress, emigrated from the Netherlands after the Second World War. Jane always assumed she'd be an art teacher and in some ways that is what she did do. She received an art degree in her early 20s, a design degree in her 30s, a Masters in Design in her 40s. Jane taught a Friday afternoon art class to first graders at 15, then later batik classes to delinquent girls, and was a design professor at various universities after that. She still teaches a few bookarts workshops these days.

Aside from the teaching, Jane has also had a long career as an artist, craftsperson and graphic designer. While her earliest work were oil paintings, Barbie clothes and signage for the family campground, she is now a mixed media artist working with textiles, text and found objects. Jane also continues to design books. She is a traveller – having lived in six provinces, three states and approximately 32 houses in 56 years. Now, settled in the Kootenays since 2002, she lives with her husband Peter Bartl and spends most of her time in their studio in Balfour, BC unless she is off traveling again.

Exhibitions

CBBAG at ARPRIM – October 2008, ARPRIM, Montreal, QC (group show)

The Art of the Book '08 – toured select cities throughout Canada 2008-2011 (group show)

Renata Revisited – September 2008, Kootenay Art Gallery, Castlegar, BC (group show)

In/Visual Words – August - October 2007, Langham Cultural Centre, Kaslo, BC (with Peter Bartl)

In/Visual Words – May 2007, Revelstoke Visual Arts Centre, Revelstoke, BC (with Peter Bartl)

Leaf Through This: A survey of the hand-made book – Nov 2006 - Jan 2007, TouchstonesNelson, Nelson, BC (group show)

20 GDC Fellows Look at 50 Years of Design in Canada – toured throughout Canada 2006 (group show - Peter)

Words to Live by – July 2006, Kootenay Storytelling Festival, Procter, BC (solo show - Peter)

Wish You Were Here – May - June 2006, Tohono Chul Gallery, Tucson, Arizona (group show - Jane)

WordArt – Oct - Nov 2005, Universities Galleries on Sycamore, Cincinnati, Ohio, US (group show)

All about Blue – Aug-Sept 2003, Kootenay Art Gallery, Castlegar, BC (group show)

Pressing Words and Binding Books – Aug-Sept 2003, Mildred Erb Art Gallery, Nelson, BC (with Peter Bartl)

Artwalk – Jul 2003, Dancing Bear Hostel, Nelson, BC (with Peter Bartl)

Bookmobile Project – Spring-Summer 2003, an annual touring exhibition of artist books in Canada + USA (group show)

Bookworks III – April-May 2002, Cincinnati Public Library, Cincinnati, Ohio, USA (group show)

02txt – celebrating the visual word – Feb 2002, Chidlaw Gallery, Cincinnati, Ohio, USA (group show)
the Art of the Book – Sept 2001, Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design, Vancouver, BC (group show)
Bookworks II – Mar-May 2001, Cincinnati Public Library + University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, Ohio, USA
99¢ show – Mar 2001, Warsaw Gallery, Cincinnati, Ohio, USA (group show)
Interior Central – Southbound – Nov 1999, Art Gallery of South Okanagan, Penticton, BC (group show)
Under the G...53 – Dec 1998-Jan 1999, Latitude 53, Edmonton, AB (group show)
Cantextualities – Jun 1998, Latitude 53, Edmonton, AB (group show)
natural pursuits – the femaleness of nature – Dec 1997, Medicine Hat Cultural Centre, Medicine Hat, AB (solo show)

Presentations and Bookfairs of PB+J Bookarts Studio

Waygoose Book Fair– Oct 2009, Vancouver Public Library, Vancouver, BC (group presentation)
Banff Book Show – May 2006, ARLIS Conference, Banff, AB (group presentation)
Argenta Library – Bound Together Book Project – March 2006, Argenta, BC
Waygoose Book Fair– Oct 2005, Vancouver Public Library, Vancouver, BC (group presentation)
CCBAG AGM – July 2005, CCBAG Studios, Toronto, ON (group presentation)
Storytelling Festival – July 2005, Community Lawn, Procter, BC (group presentation)
CCBAG BC Chapter– Jun 2005, Vancouver Public Library, Vancouver, BC
Heart of the River– Mar 2005, with Eileen Delehanty Pearkes, Nelson Public Library, Nelson, BC
Visual Communications Department – Feb 2005, University of Idaho, Moscow, ID, USA
Red Butte Press – Jan 2005, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, UT, USA
Pyracantha Press – Jan 2005, University of Arizona, Tempe, AZ, USA
Kootenay Artisans Christmas Market – Dec 2004, Mary Hall, Nelson, BC (group presentation)
Waygoose Book Fair– Jul 2003, Nelson Fine Art Centre, Nelson, BC (group presentation)

Workshops

Fernie Writers Conference – July 2009, Letterpress workshop, Book design workshop
Fernie Writers (letterpress) – Aug 2008, PB+J Press, Balfour, BC
Canadian Mennonite University (letterpress) – May 2008, Winnipeg, MB
CBBAG - Saskatchewan Chapter (letterpress) – April 2008, Lumsden, SK
CBBAG - Saskatchewan Chapter (page layout + book design) – April 2008, Disley, SK
CBBAG - Calgary Chapter (letterpress) – April 2008, Calgary, AB
CBBAG - Calgary Chapter (page layout + book design) – April 2008, Calgary, AB
Nova Scotia College of Art and Design University (letterpress) – Oct 2007, Halifax, NS
Argenta Writers (bookarts) – March '06, Argenta, BC
Manitoba Printers (letterpress) – Nov 2005, PB+J Press, Balfour, BC (Peter)
Castlegar Writers (bookarts) – Jun 2005, PB+J Press, Balfour, BC (Jane)
Visual Communications Department (bookarts) – Feb 2005, University of Idaho, Moscow, ID, USA (Jane)
Apprenticeship (letterpress) – Dec 2004, PB+J Press, Balfour, BC (Peter)
Bound Together Book Project – Argenta Library – March 2006, Argenta, BC
Slocan Recreation Department (bookarts) – Oct 2003 + Feb 2004, Perry Siding, BC (Jane)
Fibre Department (bookarts) – Oct 2003, Kootenay School of the Arts, Nelson, BC (Jane)

Most Recent Lectures on the topics of design, art and bookarts

Art or Design: what's the difference anyway? – November. 2009, Basel School of Design, Basel, Switzerland
Obsolete Design becomes Art – April. 2008, CBBAG - Last Mountain Lake Cultural Centre, Regina Beach, SK
The technological imperative is NOT imperative – April. 2008, CBBAG - University of Calgary, Calgary, AB
Art or Design: what's the difference anyway? – March. 2008, Selkirk College, Nelson, BC
Art or Design: what's the difference anyway? – March. 2008, Kootenay Art Gallery, Castlegar, BC

Craft as Contemporary Art– March. 2008, Nelson Public Library, Nelson, BC
Obsolete Design becomes Art – Oct. 2007, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design University, Halifax, NS
Magic of Letterpress – Jan. 2007, TouchstonesNelson Art Gallery, Nelson, BC
Decommissioned Communications: the Wabi-Sabi of Dead Signs – Oct 2006, A'Typ.I Conference, Lisbon, Portugal (Peter)
Canadian bookarts studios, Keimyung University, March 2006, Daegu, South Korea (Jane)
Obsolete Design becomes Art: the revival of letterpress printing in North America – Oct '05, Royal College of Art, London, UK
Wabi-Sabi: decommissioned communications – Oct 2005, St. Brides Library Conference, London, UK
Obsolete Design becomes Art – Feb 2005, University of Idaho, Moscow, ID, USA
Obsolete Design becomes Art – Mar 2004, Malaspina College, Nanaimo, BC
Obsolete Design becomes Art – Feb 2004, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB
Obsolete Design becomes Art – Sept 2003, A'Typ.I Conference, Vancouver, BC
Obsolete Design becomes Art – Sept 2003, Nelson Public Library, Nelson, BC
Obsolete Design becomes Art – Oct 2001, Cincinnati Public Library, Cincinnati, Ohio, USA
The technological imperative is NOT imperative – Feb 2000, Okanagan University College, Kelowna, BC

Curating –

02txt: celebrating the visual word – Feb 2002, Chidlaw Gallery, Cincinnati, Ohio, USA
Design Kootenay – March 2008, Curated and designed regional design exhibition, Kootenay Art Gallery, Castlegar, BC (Peter)
Cantextualities and ImageNations – June 1998, EyeRhymes Conference, Edmonton, AB (Peter)

Grants + Awards –

Columbia Kootenay Cultural Alliance, 2004, grant to design + produce Heart of the River – by Eileen D. Pearkes, Nelson, BC
Alcuin Society National Book Design Competition, 2001, honourable mention for from Alph Bites: a Primer , Vancouver, BC

Related Writings –

Two Swiss Stops – in CBBAG Newsletter vol.28 no.1, Spring 2010, p.25 Toronto, ON (Jane)
Wood Speaks – in CBBAG Newsletter vol.26 no.1, Spring 2008, p.4-6 Toronto, ON (Jane)
Looking for Lead, Finding Gold – illustrated article on inland west bookarts, in DA Magazine no.57, Fall 2005, p.12-18 Toronto, ON (Jane)
PBI – in Northwest Guild of Bookworkers News, Winter 2003, p.4-6 Pendleton , OR, USA (Jane)
The Land where my soul is at home – in Sage Woman No.56, Winter 2001/2, p.33 Seattle, WA, USA (Jane)
Letterpress is alive and well and living in North America – in The Printer, Sept. 2000, p.14-15 Findlay, OH, USA (Peter)

'They're talkin' about us'

Arts Arisin' – radio show hosted by Richard Carver, Kootenay Co-op Radio, Sept 18, 2007
Textile Narratives in Book Form – by Robin E. Muller, paper given at Textile Narratives + Conversations Conference, Oct '06, Toronto, ON
PB+J Press: Labour of Love – by Sally Hartline, in ARTiculate, Fall 2006, p.24 the Kootenays, BC
Voice of the River – by Anne DeGrace, in ARTiculate, Spring 2005, p.13 the Kootenays, BC
Blast from the Past – by Sally Smith, in Nelson Daily News, Feb 13 2004, p.13 Nelson, BC
The Letterer – by Jodi Avery, in Print Action, Sept 2003, p.17-19 Toronto, ON
Merks art a celebration of goddesses – by Deborah Forbes in Medicine Hat News, Dec 6 1997, p85, MH,AB