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BEGIN TRANSCRIPTION

[00:01 - 02:01] Lynn Boland: Welcome, everybody. I'm Lynn Boland, the director and chief curator of the Gregory Allicar Museum of Art. Thank you all for being here for tonight's presentations and panel discussion. Colorado State University acknowledges with respect that the land we are on today is the traditional and ancestral homelands of the Arapaho, Cheyenne and Ute nations and peoples. This was also the site of trade, gathering and healing for numerous other native tribes. We recognize the indigenous peoples as the original stewards of this land and all within it. CSU is a land-grant institution, and we accept that our mission must encompass access to education and inclusion. And significantly, that our founding came at a dire cost in native nations and peoples whose land this university was built upon. This acknowledgement is part of the education and inclusion we must practice and recognizing our institutional history, responsibility and commitment. This evening's program is presented in conjunction with the current exhibition Off the Shelf Contemporary Book Arts in Colorado, curated by Anna Bernard, director of the Stanley G. Wold Resource Center, and Johnny Plastini, associate Professor of printmaking. The World Resource Center within CSU's Department of Art and Art history, is a library dedicated to sourcing visual and academic resources to further scholarship and artistic expression. An academic librarian and archivist by training, Anna received her bachelor's from Bates College in Maine, her Master of Philosophy degree from Trinity College Dublin in Ireland, and her Master of Library and Information Science degree from the Pratt Institute in New York City. Johnny Plastini received his Bachelors in Interdisciplinary Studio Art from the University of California, Santa Cruz, and received his Master of Fine Arts degree in printmaking from the Tyler School of Art and Architecture at Temple University. He is currently Associate Professor and Area Coordinator of Printmaking in the Department of Art and Art history at CSU. Our thanks

and congratulations to Anna and Johnny for their important work on this project and in the area of artist books.

[02:03 - 03:47] Lynn Boland: Together with their colleague, Associate Professor of Graphic Design Roberto Muntoreanu, Johnny and Anna direct CABIN, CSU's Center for Artists' Books and Inclusive Narratives. Many of the works featured and Off the Shelf are courtesy of the CSU library, Archives and Special Collections, partners with CABIN. Exhibited artworks are also drawn from the museum's permanent holdings and from book art collections around the state, with loans from the Fine Press and Artists Book Collection at the University of Denver Special Collections, the Press at Colorado College, University of Colorado Boulder, Rare and Distinctive Collections, and several artists themselves. We are deeply grateful to all of these institutional and individual lenders to the exhibition. Support for the exhibition has been generously provided by the City of Fort Collins Fort fund, the fund endowment at CSU and Colorado Creative Industries. CCI and its activities are made possible through an annual appropriation from the Colorado General Assembly and from federal funds from the National Endowment for the Arts. This project is also made possible in part through a grant from the Lilly B Morgan Memorial Endowment. This fund works to enhance the cultural development and atmosphere for the arts at CSU, and benefits from the generous support of those who love the arts. I'd like to offer our profound thanks to these essential sponsors. I'd also like to thank my colleagues, the museum staff, Keith Gens [phonetic], Suzanne Hale, Theresa McLaren, Madeleine Boyson, all of our fabulous student employees and interns, all of whom make all that we do possible. I hope you'll join us after the program for a reception downstairs in the museum, to continue the conversation, enjoy some refreshments and of course, see the exhibition. And with that, I will turn things over to Jana, Johnny and [laughs], who's our panelists. Thank you all.

[03:48 - 03:56] Johnny Plastini: [unintelligible]. [applause]

[03:56 - 04:37] Anna Bernard: Well welcome for, thank you guys so much for coming and enjoying the AC that we have here. A few minutes respite, which we all needed. Two and a half years ago, Johnny and I started researching for this show and at the time, in-person research felt precarious and risky. But, even despite the masks and the social distancing, we instantly felt the warmth and vibrancy of the book arts community. And we're so excited to be able to show the work that comes out of that community, with you all here in the first show of its kind, solely devoted to book arts at CSU.

[04:38 - 05:09] Johnny Plastini: There was something about that time when we were so inundated with requirements of screens and zoom, that this exhibition seemed very timely with the physical book. And I'm so happy we could gather today in person. Our hope now is to hear from our three

panel artists Aaron Cohick, Sammy Lee and Alicia Bailey. The little introduction to themselves, their journey into book arts, and the focus of their current work. After each artist presents, we'll move on to some questions. Aaron, would you mind going first?

[05:10 - 05:13] Anna Bernard: And if it's easier, we can, you can manually do it.

[05:15 - 06:46] Aaron Cohick: All right. Hey, everybody, is this, can you hear me all right? Cool. All right. I'm Aaron Cohick. And so we were asked to talk about how we got into book arts and then a little bit about our work. So, I live in Colorado Springs. The sorry. There we go, image on the, on the screen is the first book that I made as the NewLights Press. So I got into making books when I was in college, when I was 20 years old. I took a class called zines, where I learned how to screen prints and print letter press and bind books. And I was really introduced to making books through the lens of zines and small press publishing. So this first book, this, yeah. Not so well screen printed cover of my first book. It's poems by Justin Edwards, who was a friend of mine, when I was in high school. And, and then from there the, I started my press, the NewLights press, kept doing different things. And that work has grown in various ways. Some of the work, this image, so some of the books are done completely on my own. So my text, my images this is a unique book. So there's a single copy. And then other books are collaborative and made with other folks.

[06:46 - 09:01] Aaron Cohick: This is a book called the Palingenesis, which is drawings by the artist Corie J. Cole, who's one of my favorite artists in the universe. And, yeah. So that's one aspect. And then 13 years ago, I was hired to run the press at Colorado College. You're seeing a picture of our studio here. And it's a letter press and book art studio, where we teach book arts classes, we print posters for campus events, and we make artist books and broadsides. And there is some work from the founder of the press at CC, James Tressel [phonetic]. There's actually this piece, the Cycle of the Day, in the, in the show here at the museum. But, so the press at CC yeah, we make books and broadsides, and the students all help with them. This is the most recent book that we have, which is also in the show. It's called CURB. It's a collaboration with the poet Divya Victor. And to sort of briefly talk about the book, so the poems are about the murders and assaults of people of South Asian descent in public spaces in the United States. And we, Divya wrote the text specifically for this project. And we collaborated very closely on the book. And so what you're seeing there, you can see those kind of textures, those are rubbings made directly from sidewalks and curbs, because a lot of the events that are described in the text happened in front of people's homes, in front of people's businesses in the street. And so the book uses that texture, plus a repetitive, meditative Overprinting process to sort of align the process of making the book with the kind of mourning and grief activity of the poems themselves. So, it's a lot of thinking about materiality and legibility, and how reading

happens, and how attention is focused in these various ways. And that's what's really exciting about books for me, is, how they become these sort of structures of attention and time. And, I think I'll just stop there. [applause]

[09:03 - 11:25] Alicia Bailey: Hi everyone, it is so exciting to have book arts activity going on here in yet another place in Colorado. I have always felt that being in Colorado and being really immersed in book arts is a bigger challenge than if you're on either coast, because it has been slower to develop here. So, this is super exciting. I'm glad to see so many of you here. So my name is Alicia Bailey and I'm a Colorado native, and I actually went to school for three semesters here at CSU. And then I moved to Boulder, where I studied photography and printmaking. And moved to a very small, remote town in Southwestern Colorado. And after living in that town for several years, I was really starved for more interactive, interactivity with other artists. So I applied to be an assistant in the photography program at Anderson Ranch Arts Center, which is near Aspen, and they have a summer workshop program. And as the photography assistant, I assisted all of the photographers and the book artists, who came through that program. I worked there for two summers in that role, and that's when I got really exposed to, and excited about artists books. got to work with some, amazing book artists who I still have a lot of communication with. There's a lot of Susans in this list, Susan K. Grant, Susan King and Susan Shearer, as well as Sass Colby and John Wood. And he did, was doing book arts at the time, and that is, and Keith Smith. And that is when I really started thinking about how the ability for a viewer to become more involved with the artwork can happen with haptic interactive media. So, what you're seeing here is a fairly early work of mine. It's a limited edition book work, and I do really small editions.

[11:25 - 13:48] Alicia Bailey: There's ten copies of this. It's called Cosmeceutical Collection, and it's three pieces that kind of poke fun at the beauty industry. And also it's a little bit alarming what's happened in the beauty industry. And they're all created with, there's a compact, there's an eyeshadow case, and there's a mascara wand that all help support the content of the individual books. I also work a lot with unique book works, and this is an example of three pieces that combine 1940s photographs with specimens taken from an inherited collection, and then in unique book works that all are housed in each of those boxes. This is from an archive that I inherited in, in 1999, and I'm still working with materials that were in that archive. The woman that owned all this was a biologist, and so she had all these really great specimens. So, I figured out ways to encapsulate and present these specimens, but still keep them from falling apart. You know, a lot of natural specimens kind of disintegrate. The book that you're seeing now is specimens and text encased in mica, with laser etched text. This is another book work that has a box that holds specimens in the bottom right of the box. It's a nest with broken fragments of eggshell. And in the cover of the book, which is on

the left side of the image, is a sand dollar. And then the photographs in this structure are all of young women being enchanted by what, what they're seeing in the natural world. This is a little ferret, I think, that the girl is looking at. And these are all photographs from the 40s. So then I started getting more, less interested in words and more interested in just what objects and the physicality, and how things feel can tell a viewer.

[13:48 - 16:39] Alicia Bailey: And so I've been working quite a lot with mica, and there's an example of one of this series in the show. And so these are thin sheets of mica with specimens encapsulated. And this book has ebony covers and a shell somewhere, I don't know what that shell specimen is in a box. And you'll see this over and over again where the box housing the work contains a specimen and becomes more than a container for the work. It becomes a contributor to the story. This I'm showing here because it has a magnifying lens in the lid of the box. So, if you take that lid off, you can actually carry the lid of the box around and look at specimens more closely. And this book work is about moths. So it seemed like a good pairing with insect watching to have the magnifying lens there. This is another from the Animal Mineral Vegetable series, all with mica pages. And this I, view I'm showing so that you can actually see a little bit more what the individual pages look like when they're backlit. So, there's all these specimens that, um, really show up well, when the, when the light is passing through the pages. I've still continued doing some limited edition book work. This is an edition of 18. It's called Extinct Extant, and it features, um, seven extinct species with photographs I took of what are called bird skins at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science, with store like narratives about why those birds became extinct. This speaks to my idea about books as not traditional book forms. This piece has two scrolls that pull out and then roll back in, so it's very mechanical and it doesn't present at all like a book, but it really is, because reader, the viewer is in control of unfolding the story. And this is the last piece, and this is, a piece very similar to this is in the exhibit. And it's a round ball with sliced pages that sort of unfold to create what I think of as a book. [applause]

[16:39 - 18:42] Sammy Lee: Hi, my name is Sammy Lee. Thanks so much for being here tonight. I'm a first generation immigrant who came here at age of 16. Then I study art at UCLA. Then I study architecture in graduate school at UMass Amherst. The conceptual, the, conceptually, my practice is around me creating this spatial condition or portal, as you said in a press release. I was happy, delighted to see that work. Create that portal, and let that like audience engage with or respond to it. So whether I create, like full scale installation art piece, or very personal, intimate scale, handheld scale artist book. Mainly the design, creative thinking is the same. So for me, this project that I'm introducing, and I brought two projects that I wanted to tell you about, they're both of them are in the gallery space. And I think this creating portal and putting in another the, the spatial condition that is

out of certain context and placing it some other context is something that is like similar to my immigration like history. So this, Soil can I, embodies directly that idea. So this kind of cubic volume you see here, it's a soil, as if I just shovelled it out of the earth. And when you open it, it has four elements out of soil: metal, flesh, water and fire. And it has all these, its own like, book element within that. And each books talk about that element. So, this is metal book completely made out of metal.

[18:42 - 20:49] Sammy Lee: Then you pull out this flesh book, made with the vellum and water and fire in this intaglio print, me making burning pages, putting into the water, to create this pages. And the second project is called Memorial. And it is actually coming from the personal experience of breastfeeding. So, I created this cover that wraps the book, and it is like skin. I made it by felting Korean paper and created this skin. And obviously this is kind of dry skin that lost the youthfulness and elasticity. And if you open that book, there is this silicone press and resin cast with some text. And once you remove it, basically there are 16 sections within this book. And each section, and it kind of reflects the whole process of breastfeeding, from the beginning stage to the end of it. And each section has one radiology imaging of, the breast imaging of mammary gland. And from it's kind of bears, kind of state to blossoming and becoming quite dense, like what you see here and withering and shriveling, which mimics quite amazingly, like a botanical images, like tree branches. And after all, it is life's phase and very natural stages that you go through. And on top of that, you know, which I actually don't have images, there is a tissue, different thicknesses of tissue, referencing to the breast tissue becoming thinner as you progress with this books. That covers it and the pages has this kind of playful marking as if you did it with the breast milk, squirted all over. And the text that you have in this book is actually from what's called breast pump chanting.

[20:50 - 22:58] Alicia Bailey: There's a search term, because I heard it. It's talking, you know, it was talking to me. And then I thought I was going crazy, so I googled it, and there a bunch of other moms, probably because of their exhaustion, like, you know, 2, 3 a.m. in the morning and hearing this repeated sound of a mortar. Then you're kind of, mind is making sense out of it, and they hear a bunch of different things from breast, breast pump. So I collected those words and put it in, because that is really reflecting their psychological state. So that's the main text within the book. And once you kind of read the whole 16 section, this is an inspirational image of this old, from early 1900 of Korean women showing bare chest, which was kind of very against the norm of very strict constructionist, conservatives, you know, society. But, when you were actually giving, when you gave birth to male heir, that's something that I want to say, and breastfeeding, you're proudly showing your chest, which was something that I wanted to talk about. This kind of duality of pride and shame that was around the breastfeeding. So I have a scene about that, and at the end there is

the CD that I asked local DJ to mix that breast pump with the music. [laughs] And, and it is in a really oddly perfect shape of circle, kind of like breasts, but obsolete now. And there is a music and this hideous bra extender and all this element, are wrapped in this paper skin cover that I created. So, it was kind of, you know, breastfeeding was one of the most difficult thing of becoming a mother. But, I was just fortunate to kind of channel that experience through, artistically through the medium of book and and research, and kind of transcend as an art. So, thank you. [applause]

[23:06 - 23:16] Johnny Plastini: So, this last summer Anna and I co-taught a class called ART 280A3, Book Arts: History, Meaning, and Form. Our students, some art majors [laughs].

[23:16 - 23:17] Anna Bernard: There's a couple of them [laughs].

[23:18 - 23:54] Johnny Plastini: There's a couple of them. Some art majors, some major-majoring and other disciplines across the university. It was this interdisciplinary think tank surrounding the medium of books and the history of books. They were able to preview pieces that would be included in the show. Looking back through some of the responses to these pieces, we picked a few of their questions, if some of them couldn't be here. If some of them are here, please feel free to speak up and ask more questions. So maybe we'll start off this conversation with one of the pre-prepared questions, and then we can kind of go around if people have questions for the artists.

[23:54 - 24:30] Anna Bernard: We'll start with like one question each from the students. And then we can always, we can switch and take a moment. So actually, since Sammy, you were last, we'll do for you one of the, many of the students in the class were really taken with your clear sense of material research and the importance of materiality in your work, which is true with your work as well. But one of them, Sarah, was asking how you take kind of a fragile material in her mind's eye and, and make it stronger. And how that process, what the, how meaningful that process is for you.

[24:31 - 26:00] Sammy Lee: Yeah, that, I was very happy that somebody asked that question. Like, like I briefly said that my creative process kind of reflect my immigrant narrative, right? And I felt it, you know, for example, this memorial book has discovered that I felted. And the paper felting is kind of impossible with the western wooden like pulp. It will all disintegrate if you were to do the same process that I do, which is like soaking and doing like agitating fiber to felt it. But, I'm I'm able to do that with this green paper, and that paper, particular paper goes through, if it's done well, like 100 step. And 100 step actually has very symbolic meaning in Korean context. It's kind of a number of perfection because people don't live up to 100, right? And there are many different reasons why 100 is important, but it's nearly divine number. So paper reaching that point and me actually starting that perfection as a beginning point and putting it back to water and layering in and do this kind of nearly

destructive process to felted into new substrate is very important. Because then I feel like that's reinventing, you know, starting from, you know, my heritage and just kind of going through that, like, stress agitating process to create something new. And that is also cyclical because I can always put that paper skin, which is a, in a term that I just called it, back to water to that beginning point. But it is something that I, it is very important because the material has a connection to my ancestral history, different narrative. And that is probably something that is legal, that is like a plant like material that I can legally smuggle, and not smuggle, but bring into the country too, right, from Korea, because you're not supposed to bring any plant material. But something, so it is something that I am putting a lot of meaning because material has that past history energy, came from the living source. And ,and I am actually transforming, transforming with my kind of laborious process of doing this. So yeah, I think, I think that I am attracted to using the material that I resonate in that level.

[27:06 - 27:19] Johnny Plastini: This question is for Aaron, actually. Could you elaborate on the imagery you included? What did the process look like? You mentioned using color graph matrices. How did that change the way you interacted with the piece?

[27:19 - 27:25] Anna Bernard: I think they're talking about CURB or oh, no, they're talking about this piece. I don't think it's in the slide. But yeah.

[27:26 - 29:42] Aaron Cohick: Yeah, it's in the show. So this is a question about the, a piece called the Other Room, which is a short story by the author Brian Evenson. And, and the question was about collagraph matrices. So collagraph is a printing method that I'm really interested in because it's basically, it's making a printing plate from stuff. So colla as in collage, as in gluing stuff together. Brian and I like to think of it as printing from the world. So, you're gathering things from the world and assembling it and printing it. So, in the case of the Other Room, the narrative, so Brian Brian Evenson [unintelligible] like really creepy stories. And part of that narrative is this, this character is stuck in a strange place, but there's a, a red, a threadbare red curtain at, in one of the rooms. And there's something hidden behind that curtain, and this character knows it's sinister, but doesn't know what it is. And so what I did in order to sort of use that, to integrate that into the book, was just took cloth and attached it to a block. Um, but set it up so that it's not fixed on the block, it's actually just attached around the sides. And so with every pass of the printing press, the cloth shifts, the strings move around and it creates this pattern, but it also creates like a fairly, you know, high fidelity image of a piece of fabric, at the same time. So that, and then that, that book actually, was really important for me because I got way into collagraph printing after that. Now, it's kind of like central to my process. And that book CURB that had the rubbings from the sidewalk. Like, I think that, again is like printing from the world, right. So there's a kind of, um, collage sensibility in there. In that case, we

stamp in some paper, laid it on the sidewalk, hammered it with a brush in order to mold it to the concrete, and then rolled it out with ink. So every copy of in that book is different because those rubbings happen in this different way each time. So that's definitely like a thread throughout all of my work.

[29:43 - 29:43] Johnny Plastini: Interesting.

[29:43 - 29:45] Anna Bernard: I can't wait to see that book. I haven't seen it yet.

[29:46 - 29:47] Sammy Lee: Very interesting.

[29:47 - 30:19] Anna Bernard: So, Alicia, actually, I know that Rachel is out there, but I won't put her on the spot. And I'll ask her question for you because she, she read up on you, and she noted that you've called your work sculpturally interactive, like that they're sculpturally, interactive objects rather than using the term book arts. And she was wondering, and I wonder too, if, if using that term helps the viewer kind of detach from these contexts of the codex in the traditional way we think. And whether that was something you purposely wanted to do.

[30:20 - 31:40] Alicia Bailey: Well, I think to think of book arts in general and my work in particular, as interactive sculpture sort of helped me with that. You know, that elevator speech version, like, what do you do? I'm a book artist. Oh, you illustrate children's books. And so, people know what sculptures are, and most people know what interactivity means. So, it just sort of meant I could be more clear in my explanations of the work that I was doing. And that was sort of how it started, but it's evolved into a definitely, acknowledging that my interest in this form has a lot more to do with the engineering than with the, the story or the individual images or the text. And I'm a person who has way too many interests and good enough at a lot of things. So I'm kind of a good enough image maker, a good enough writer, a good enough. But, none of those things am I really, really skillful, at except putting it all together. And so being able to interact makes a sensible format to put those things together, because otherwise it would just be, you know, a pile of stuff. So.

[31:41 - 32:05] Anna Bernard: Thank you. So I think we should let people ask questions. So maybe we can take this moment to to thank the panelists specifically. But, but I also, I want, I want to open it up to you all and see if there's any questions from the audience. And then we can jump back to student questions. But yeah, Noah, I know who that is.

[32:05 - 32:20] Noah: Just following up on what [unintelligible] said. Where you're creating the context of the book and [unintelligible]. Why, why do you work in the context of the book rather than just make sculptures or just make prints? What like contributes to the art?

[32:23 - 32:24] Alicia Bailey: Is that for any of us or?

[32:25 - 32:25] Noah: All of you.

[32:25 - 32:26] Alicia Bailey: Yeah.

[32:26 - 32:29] Johnny Plastini: Yeah, maybe one answer for each person. [Anna laughs] Not to put you on the spot.

[32:29 - 32:30] Anna Bernard: Or whoever feels inclined.

[32:35 - 32:36] Aaron Cohick: Okay.

[32:37 - 33:20] Alicia Bailey: Well, it's because I can't stick with any one thing to me. And book arts really, you can do almost anything and put it in book form and somehow figure out how to make it work. And both, all of us love materiality pretty clearly. And I think we, it sounds as though we all really put a lot of thought into both material and the processes that end up in the book, rather than using canvas and paint. There's all these other ways that we can contribute to the content, with material and structure. So it's just like this never ending rabbit hole of excitement to me.

[33:20 - 34:27] Aaron Cohick: So, for me, there's, there's two, two big things for me. One, like thinking inside the books themselves, thinking of, like, artwork as a way to focus attention. And attention, as a proxy for kind of like, how we are present in the world. And, and, and also as a process that happens over time, and books are these kind of space time structures. So as a way to like, think about attention and to, maybe make our attention visible to us. I think a book is kind of like an ideal structure in its internal way. And then thinking outside of the books, one thing that's super important to my practice is collaboration. Books are like a natural sort of space for collaboration and community. You can work with different people. You can also make multiple copies and then, sometimes sell them very cheaply, sometimes not. And so you can do this kind of, yeah. That's like a central part of my, my practice. So.

[34:29 - 36:03] Sammy Lee: It's, it's difficult question like, not logical, I think it's kind of like fate, you know. The way I went to, I wonder around, like with, like fine art, media art, which is more the design with the technology. And then I went to architecture school in Western Massachusetts, which

happened to be kind of the Mecca for bookbinding and printmaking. So just kind of led me there and met amazing mentor Daniel Kelm [phonetic], who was making crazy things. I was very inspired and architectural thinking. I kind of had this moment that the reason why I was so interested in architecture was this narrative quality. And like I said, I create installations. So, I do kind of special like sculptural installations. I do kind of 3D, like really fast, I have to print, I do many different medium. And they're all kind of conceptual, research based and all this material, I can bind it together and make it into that portal and it's magical. I love it. So I, and if you think about artists, you know, just a mid-career artist making, like if they were to kind of break down their hours making maybe, let's say 2D work, we'll probably minimum wage, right? Book art is worse [laughs] because you're making multiple of that and binding it into one, right? So it's not logical, it doesn't make any sense. [laughs] You just have to love it, you know? Yeah.

[36:04 - 36:49] Anna Bernard: I just want to add that also, it's been interesting teaching this when we taught the summer class because we had all these non art majors. And I think there's something, like they all have a relationship with the book as an object, and it can be a great medium through which then they can practice creativity. And seeing that, and seeing that they felt empowered to have those conversations and to play was really wonderful. And, and I don't, and some of them, I don't know that they would have been comfortable taking a different studio course. But they knew, they knew that they liked books. And then that was their starting point of how can we make this into reflective or, you know, talk about a conversation that's, that's intriguing us on the national scale. So I think that was really empowering.

[36:49 - 37:12] Johnny Plastini: And yeah. There's an approachability. I like what you were saying about community. And the idea of print or a book as a democratic medium, but also a medium of oppression to a certain degree. And thinking about the fact that, yes, maybe not everyone has held a lithographic stone in their life, but pretty much everyone, I hope at least, has held a book. So there's an approachability and an intimacy that I think is.

[37:12 - 37:12] Anna Bernard: Yeah.

[37:14 - 37:15] Johnny Plastini: Kind of what you were talking about.

[37:17 - 37:19] Anna Bernard: Any other? Is there another question?

[37:20 - 37:21] Speaker 1: [unintelligible] on.

[37:21 - 37:25] Anna Bernard: That's a hard one to follow. Yes.

[37:26 - 37:30] Speaker 2: Alicia, could you elaborate a little bit about working with mica?

[37:33 - 37:33] Alicia Bailey: Well.

[37:37 - 37:37] Speaker 2: Isn't that impossible? [laughs]

[37:37 - 38:14] Alicia Bailey: It's not. What's really challenging is to find mica. And I have a pretty big stash that I acquired years ago [laughs]. But it's a, it's a material. If you just think of really thin plastic and how you would work with it, you can cut it, you can drill it, you can mark on it. It's, I, there's been articles in different publications about that. So, I can direct you to those perhaps after the. But it's, you know, it's just like thin plastic, really.

[38:14 - 38:30] Johnny Plastini: One thing I love about those works is this relationship of geology and time, and layering to the medium of a book, or the idea of all this information being contained under the surface. I find it a very poetic metaphor through material, the layering of the mica.

[38:31 - 38:40] Alicia Bailey: Yeah, thanks. And because of that, it those those books don't require text in my mind because there's so much, there's so many other things speaking.

[38:40 - 38:41] Johnny Plastini: Mhm mhm.

[38:53 - 38:53] Speaker 2: [unintelligible] it's pretty small so.

[38:53 - 39:03] Alicia Bailey: Yeah, but the mica that I use probably came from India. I bought it from a mica factory in North Carolina. So. Yeah.

[39:04 - 39:05] Anna Bernard: Yeah.

[39:05 - 39:18] Speaker 3: I'm wondering, if you could name an unusual object or material that you would use, and hope that people would necessarily think of, both as belonging to the book. And what inspired you to use it in [unintelligible]?

[39:21 - 39:23] Alicia Bailey: Hmm. That's a great question.

[39:23 - 39:24] Anna Bernard: Yeah.

[39:29 - 39:30] Alicia Bailey: Can you repeat the question again? [laughs]

[39:31 - 39:34] Anna Bernard: Yeah. So you want to repeat it one more time?

[39:34 - 39:35] Alicia Bailey: Yeah.

[39:35 - 39:44] Speaker 3: Name an unusual object or material that you put in a book that you made? And what inspired you to put it in that?

[39:47 - 40:19] Alicia Bailey: I have books that have edges of broken glass. And the inspiration to use that material was because the idea behind the book was about fragility and danger in, in one piece. And those books, actually, if you handled them, could injure you. So, I was inspired by the the content of the book.

[40:22 - 41:12] Aaron Cohick: I think for me it wasn't actually technically in a book, but in an extension of the CURB project. We made a broadside of one of the poems. And this is further, so Divya took the text that she wrote for this book, and then she expanded on it, and it was published as a real book by Night Boat Books. And for the release of that, we did a broadside of one of the poems. But to sort of follow through on this idea of the rubbings from the concrete, I took actual chunks of sidewalk, and figured out how to lock them up on the press like a printing plate, and then printed directly from this concrete onto the, as the kind of image of the background. And altered the heights and the surface a little bit to get like a kind of, um, painterly sort of texture.

[41:15 - 42:22] Sammy Lee: I think I put, you know, unusual objects all the time into my books. If the narrative is, and I kind of, you know, have this kind of special collect- that connection with the material that I think that I need to use it. I, I figure out how to make that happen, how to, you know. So, one element that I had to express was like fire and water in a book, right? So, how do you embody that in a book form? So, I ended up burning pages and putting the ashes and papers into another paper, paper-making pulp. I mixed it because paper, you know, the water is that kind of birthing agent. So, there is a presence of water and fire in one page. So, yeah. So I think that certain material has to be there. If I think the narrative is kind of going there, then I just try to figure out how to put it there. Yeah.

[42:22 - 42:48] Johnny Plastini: That's interesting. I like linkage between Alicia and what you said, Sammy. About this idea of a merging of different materials or different processes. And I'm thinking now of the book like a soup, [laughs] where, you know, the water and the fire and everything are coming together. And it's hard to kind of pick out each individual ingredient because it's relying on this balance as a whole together. So, yeah.

[42:49 - 42:58] Sammy Lee: That's excellent analogy because I'm always thinking about, I mean, alchemy sounds great, but I think cooking is something that I can relate better. [laughter]

[42:58 - 42:58] Anna Bernard: Yeah.

[42:58 - 43:21] Sammy Lee: And as much as good ingredient, you know, by itself is great, but it is really ultimately creating that taste, right? And that is more than the synergetic, you know, more than the individual ingredient. And that's great cooking. And I think that's kind of great book making. Right? So yeah.

[43:24 - 43:24] Anna Bernard: Yeah.

[43:25 - 43:36] Speaker 4: As a new way to progress our [unintelligible] you are saying that it's changing [unintelligible]. where is [unintelligible] going?

[43:39 - 43:42] Anna Bernard: Alicia's a good person to answer.

[43:42 - 44:46] Alicia Bailey: Oh. Well, so one thing I haven't mentioned so far is that I also have a business representing other book artists, and I curate exhibits and have been doing so for about ten years. And ten years ago when I started, fewer people knew what book arts was than now. So, I think there's a broadening awareness of book arts. I feel like there's more graduate programs in book arts and more undergraduate programs that have elements of book arts in the curriculum, than there used to be. So that means that there's more practitioners as to where it's going, I, I think it's just going to keep growing. The downside to that is that the pots of money that help support the people that are making this work have not exponentially grown in the way that the arts seem to be doing. What do you think? You guys seem to have a different relationship to that.

[44:47 - 46:13] Aaron Cohick: Yeah. I mean, I think what you said, what you said is totally right. What I worry about for folks who are just getting into the field is what, similar to what Alicia was saying is access to equipment and materials and opportunities, and things like that. It's hard, the equipment is expensive, it takes up space. Like you've got to be like, you need, access is difficult. And, and I've been super focused recently on how we can change that and my, just this is like general advice, I think that for all of my students. Is just to like the, teaching, teaching students to enter some sort of competitive art world is the last thing we need to do. What we need to do is to teach them to work together and to build networks of support to rely on each other. Because that's what you need to be an artist. You need people and a community, and, you need to help each other out because it's hard. No matter what you do, and, and we're kind of the best resource that we have for each other. So, yeah. I think that's, like, the most important thing to think about, especially as your, as you're entering the field is, you know. Find your people and then connect to all the other groups and then figure out how to support each other. Not they asked for my advice but [unintelligible].

[46:13 - 46:14] Alicia Bailey: No. It's good.

[46:17 - 46:35] Sammy Lee: I don't really have anything else to add to what you said. I already said that it's worse than minimum wage per hour. You just, if you love it, you just have to do it right. And you, then you have to figure out how to do that. Yeah, in whatever ways, you know.

[46:35 - 47:10] Johnny Plastini: I'd like to piggyback a little bit on something that you were saying, Aaron, in relation to community and book arts and circle back to your introduction and talking about zines and zine culture. And for those who may not be aware of what zines are, it's a bit different than what we consider as a book or, you know, printed ephemera and things that are not super expensive to produce, perhaps. Would you mind kind of sharing your experience or how you feel in relation to contemporary zine making or things like that?

[47:10 - 48:26] Aaron Cohick: Um, I'm definitely not an expert on contemporary zine making. I do sort of, kind of participate in that world. I helped organize the San Francisco Zine Fest for a number of years. This is like, oh, shit, like 12 years ago, longer. And yeah. But so, and I love how like artist books and forms, zine making, and making and forms, artists books. Like there's a lot of crossover in that world. also, like a lot of my work, like, I make books that cost \$1,500 and books that cost \$5. So, I have like a really wide range of my practice very purposefully. And I love that stuff, and yeah. There's something about like the not precious and the large edition, and the sort of thing that can go out into the world in a different sort of way. That's really, I think, fun, but it's not always the book that I want to make. So I'm, I also make other kinds of things. And, yeah. So but I still, you know, I love zines and I love going to zine fests and. There's a Pikes Peak Zen Fest that's happening in Colorado Springs in October that I, I applied for a table at. And I'm excited to do that. And yeah. So I'd love to see that it's still happening.

[48:30 - 48:32] Alicia Bailey: Well, I have a question for us.

[48:32 - 48:32] Anna Bernard: Okay. [laughs]

[48:34 - 49:07] Alicia Bailey: So, you both, I know, collaborate extensively, and I think that can kind of help to answer this question. This idea of how best to move forward and, um, to not be that solo, you know, practitioner. Have you found that the collaborative way of working has made it easier or more difficult to get, or probably a little bit of both, but to get from where, from here to where you envision you want to be?

[49:09 - 49:12] Johnny Plastini: In terms of individual piece or like career?

[49:12 - 49:22] Alicia Bailey: Both. I mean, or just the sense of, oh, that was worth doing. I want to collaborate more, or though, that was, it's just I'd rather not get ahead in that way.

[49:24 - 50:31] Sammy Lee: I had both experiences. I really try to work with good person. You know, because that would be fun. You know, like, even if their talent is so amazing, you know, if, it's all relational, you know. So I, because I do my studio practice with multiple, you know, mediums, media, I think some of that is just it's a solo work. But I see artists book as something that I want to really have a great time with other artists working together. So I, I approach people that I want to collaborate with [laughs]. And, but even so, there are, sometimes it wasn't all, you know, what I expected. But I'm, still I think collaboration is good. We are learning from each other, not just the technical way, we really feed each other. It is kind of a way to create that more of the intimate community within the big artist community. So I like it, I enjoy it.

[50:34 - 52:06] Aaron Cohick: I think I would just second everything Sammy just said. [laughs] Yeah. I love being, like one thing I like about collaboration, which is similar to what you were just saying, is that, like, you can be surprised by what the thing is. And, like, I never would have imagined CURB, as an example, as a book that I would have made. But working with Divya was a lot of fun. And we have a long relationship, and we work together very well. And so there was a lot of trust, and it was easy, and it was fun, despite the kind of, like, serious subject matter of the book. And so, and that actually sort of thinking about like kind of career stuff. One thing that I'm really excited about, that Divya and I are doing is, we're going to collaborate further where she's going to be. So I've never in my own publishing practice had like, another person. And like, it's always been me as the editor, and printer, and designer. But now, Divya is going to become an editor. And we're also working with a book binder because I'm not a good book binder. And we're going to create spaces for contemporary authors and artists to make new work. Kind of like a mini, a mini non-residential residency to be published, like, specifically an artist book form. So I'm really looking forward to that. It's a very slow getting started process. But we're going to make some really weird, interesting books, I hope. And I'm excited about those possibilities.

[52:09 - 52:11] Johnny Plastini: Yeah. One more question.

[52:11 - 52:11] Anna Bernard: Okay.

[52:12 - 52:15] Speaker 5: How are you classify a successful use of the material?

[52:27 - 53:13] Alicia Bailey: Doesn't fall apart. [laughs] You know that there, there's a book that is made from packaged slices of American cheese. And that book went into so many collections, it was

like, do you remember that book? Okay, well, it was an edition of maybe 20, and it's sold out almost immediately. So pretty successful, right? Until, [laughs]and then not so successful. So no more cheese books will probably ever be purchased by the same institutions that bought that American cheese book. So I don't know it's, I don't know if there's a single answer to that question.

[53:14 - 54:32] Sammy Lee: Yeah. Material has to yet, to structurally do its job. If you're using it for hinging, then it needs to be able to do that multiple multiple times, right? And, but I still kind of go to that emotional connection. So for me, when I see that in my breast book, that hideous bra extender, I just have, oh gosh, that time, you know. That it conjure up certain emotions, and that's why I used it in that book. So I think that is successful. When I touched this book, the cover, that dry skin that I really, get really emotional. So those are kind of important to me, that can it really take you, again, you know. That using the portal or, you know, can, can because it's a tactile quality that you get to experience, which is very unique to book art, John. That you can touch it, you can, you know, experience it more than just visually. I think it really needs to do that for me. And hopefully also kind of going back to that cooking analogy. It needs to all come together and become more than bra extender, you know.

[54:43 - 54:43] Speaker 5: [unintelligible] pages of the book?

[54:43 - 54:44] Sammy Lee: Pages of the book?

[54:44 - 54:44] Speaker 5: Yeah.

[54:44 - 55:18] Sammy Lee: Those are actually commercial paper. If you go to the gallery and see it, it has this kind of grain that is very, like, defined. That appear as a stretch marks on your skin. But, it's a Neenah paper called Architecture Series. That's the reason why I got it, Ames [phonetic] is a, kind of actual product name. But, it really has a flesh tone. It has enough translucency, and very dry kind of texture with those grain.

[55:21 - 55:35] Johnny Plastini: Well, speaking of the gallery, perhaps we should head down there and go take a look at these fantastic works. I'd like to thank the three of you for coming and sharing your time with us. It was really wonderful to have you here, so thank you very much. [applause]

[55:44 - 56:25] Anna Bernard: And as I mentioned at the top of the hour, one of the great pleasures of researching this show was not just the pieces themselves, which certainly will enrich our students understanding and hopefully the public that visits the Allicar, but also speaking and connecting with these artists. There's a number of artists here who have pieces in the show who may be in

attendance. If you want to just cautiously raise your hand, Schragger [phonetic], I'm looking at you, there's some other people, there's some cautious hands going up. So, I'm hoping that the reception will provide you opportunity to both speak with our panelists, but also some of the other artists here, who are phenomenal and amazing and warm people. So, thank you. [applause] Let's leave.

[56:33 - 56:34] Alicia Bailey: Oh, my gosh [unintelligible] about your support?

END TRANSCRIPTION