

I make artist book with many considerations in mind and firstly it is not What is an artist book but why.

what or why

1 – Beginnings and endings

Text /poem / article

Event

Documentation

Found object

Investigation of form / structure / bindings

No beginning or ending

2 – Sequence of reading

The journey

The revealing

The making

3 – Materiality

Paper

Lead

Stone

Wax

Thread

Found objects

4 – Technology

Hand printed

Hand drawn

Photocopy

Offset

Letterpress

5 – Containment

Box

Soft or hard cover

Found object

6- Form

Unique / Multiple

Illustrated book / fine press

Political pamphlets – zines

Book object / altered

Concrete poetry / multiple media / 3D

7 – Accessibility

Collection

Drawer

Gallery exhibition

Commercial distribution

Free

After much thought, this morning at 7am I made coffee. While struggling with the packaging, I noticed the words ‘Signature Blend’ and found my key words.

The ARTISTS BOOK is the SIGNATURE BLEND of all these considerations

SIGNATURE

The artist, your name – your mark and all that comes with that

Your intention / knowledge / skills / interests / personal history /personality

BLEND

Is with many things

Intention / materials / technology

That blending in artists books often goes further - blending with a paper maker, a master printer, a book binder, a typographer, a graphic designer, poet, journalist, maybe the laser printer at Officeworks down the road, or even an unconventional combination like the welder who keeps asking what is this for?

These hidden elements in an artist book create what we see here—the artist book itself and its distinctive, occasionally shared signature blend.

As judge, my job is to objectively review the curators' selections and choose a winner—a very challenging task. I’ve been on the plinths many times myself.

To bring back the analogy to coffee Not every signature coffee blend suits my taste, but I can recognise when one is nearly perfect, promising, needs improvement or just works.

As a judge the challenge lies in the calibre of artist books selected by the curators. As I moved through the space, engaging with each piece by opening, closing, and interacting with them, I encountered numerous instances of beauty, sensuality, and insightful commentary.

The materiality of **(4) – August Carpenter**, the sensuality of lifting waxed pages out of the box, is like touching skin, bringing the drawings closer to the body.

Deceptive materiality **(37) – Lizzie Nagy**, a volume of 5 books on a shelf that weigh nothing, soft and pink like some children's books but are nude studies of adults.

Several structures are featured, with at least half of the exhibition's books being variations of the concertina, accordion, or flutter book.

Bold and colourful, like **(22) Graham Blondel's** saturated chaotic ***off the Streets 2025*** or **(51) by Robyn Foster** with a business card as the colophon declaring she is a 'sculptural artist book maker' including phone number address etc.

Or exploring a personal journey, as in **(21) Gina Piroska**, ***I followed a worm for a day***, or reinterpreting original works, **(46) Pam Slattery's A Little A-Z of Australian Birds**, which presents miniature digital watercolours in a circular concertina form—the box possibly with a magnifying glass top—the artists offer new perspectives and reading of ideas through the connected folding pages. Though with Pams book I do wish to see the originals.

There are moments in each book selected.

That beautifully printed photogravure on the expanding page **(57) by Silvi Glattauer** ***It's not a travel shot /It's not a snapshot***

The delicate cover and its relationship to the solander box that houses the book in **(16), Fiona Davey's Of Texture and Desired Formations**

The spine of ***We want Peace not War (42) by Monica Oppen*** is exceptional to hold and the intention in **(45 by Pablo Alvarez Grover's, Las Aventuras de la familia Walker**, making a book to house the first pages of others books is a delight that wants to be opened but is difficult as it is restricted by the binding itself. An altered experience not so much an altered book.

After much consideration there were 6 books that felt solid as artist books, a work of art, had a sense of wholeness, and revealed much of that idea of the signature blend.

(27) Judy Barras, *Memory*.

The work demonstrates clear intent through its selection of materials and scale. Draws the eye, prompts thoughtful questions for the reader, evokes a provocative and slightly unsettling response, and consistently encourages engagement with the book.

(52) Roz Kean, *Jukatu +Ma*

This book presents a thoughtful exploration of a particular architectural style focused on micro homes and a Japanese architectural design for small plots of land. It reflects the artist's deep expertise in Japanese woodblock printing and her sophisticated understanding of colour.

(24) Jan Davis, *Groundwork*

This book is very personal but reaches out to all of us. A pleasure to hold and journey through, delicate watercolours, a thoughtful layout and typography that mixes stamped, typed, and handwritten text. It's the kind of personal favourite you want to carry with you—like that essential gardening tool for the well-timed planting or an ingredient that completes the perfect meal.

(34) Lisa Sowards, *Attraversare*

Italian for to cross over or tranverse.

This book is a personal memory of conversations with her migrant father crossing many landscapes to get to Australia in 1960. A known story for many migrants from his generation and different from the refugee or modern migrant. It is seamless, beautiful, well crafted and printed with gentle hands that embrace the intent of the artist.

(2) Anita Johnson, *Workbook*

The book object, or "found book" as I refer to it, holds a unique charm that depends less on the artist's technical ability and more on their philosophical creativity. Discovering something that already exists—created for various reasons—and seeing how it connects and evolves into a new narrative is part of its magic. The artist reshapes and organizes these elements to broaden and enrich the story. Such a work transforms into an artist's book, resembling ikebana, the Japanese art of flower arrangement, where formal

presentation follows established guidelines. In this context, the guiding principles are aesthetics, imagination, and composition.

‘Work book’ achieves this with clear intent—its presentation is bold and direct while incorporating a refined selection of materials. The choice of the container’s colour, the heat resistant found glove, felt, fired clay, and the bolts securing each element all contribute thoughtfully to an expanded narrative presented with clarity.

I have awarded **Anita Johnson**, the local artists award for her artist book ***Workbook***.

My final consideration Is a collaboration between artists, a bookbinder and a photographer and writer.

While this book may not be the most visually stunning one here, it requires genuine engagement from the reader, who must interact with its pages to grasp its intended meaning. Readers might interpret the content in various ways; rather than offering clear conclusions, the book presents thought-provoking ideas shaped by a long history of questioning. In the artist’s words, “it doesn’t take sides, exposes war as a business, always seeking humanity, seeks to expose the cruelty, the suffering.” I found myself continually drawn to a particular combination: an image marked by scratchings reminiscent of self-harm scars overlaid on a photo of a confident man in a suit proclaiming, ‘*the bullet never lies*’; you move across a blackened lights out landscape to a page that depicts a protestor in the snow confronted by police, holding a sign reading ‘*no war*’. The book’s commercial spiral binding gives it an informal, report-like feel, yet it rests in a finely crafted open folder—clearly the work of a skilled bookbinder—signalling that what lies within deserves careful attention.

This work is modern, intimate, international in scope, and deeply purposeful. As an artist book, it creates a direct conversation between creators and readers, combining various elements into a polished and reflective whole.

For these reasons I have awarded the artist book by **Monica Oppen and Peter Lyssiotis, *War against War / War or Peace (43)*** as the overall winner of Crescendo 25 .

Thank you to the curators for inviting me as this year's judge and selecting the finalists showcasing their outstanding contributions. Thanks also to Maria for her perceptive catalogue essay and Akky for opening the exhibition and her significant contribution to works on paper and love of artist books.

Dianne Fogwell, 2025

JUDGE CRESENDO25