



### **Building narrative and making meaning in artists' books**

Stories and storytelling are fundamental to humanity. They help us make meaning of our world, they connect us and they entertain us.

Artists' books offer a unique medium through which to tell stories. They invite readers to slow down and they are often navigated in an intimate, tactile and interactive manner.

Central to the ideas presented in this paper is the notion that, in artists' books, narrative is not simply conveyed through words but also through the physicality of the book itself.

Narrative in artists' books can be established in a variety of ways, using a range of means. In this presentation, both extrinsic and intrinsic narrative are investigated through the establishment of a practicable framework.

Mindful, deliberate and purposeful decisions taken within this framework guide artists' book makers to create works which have integrity, engage the senses, actuate memory and invite personal interpretation.

With a focus on the codex, this presentation explores the intersections of materiality, content, structure and temporality in the making of meaning and the building of narrative within artists' books.

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"I am a maker with words

An artists' book maker, a calligraphic artist, a stitcher of words and a traditional letterpress printmaker, my work nearly always involves text.

Words are the way I make my way through the world and whilst I make in many ways, text and words are nearly always present. Words are my launchpad - they create connections, they build images in my mind and they spark my imagination.

My inspiration comes from snippets of conversations, lyrical fragments of language, pared down meanings and, in particular, the wisdom of women. Social justice is a theme I return to often, as is the quest for peace and peaceful ways of being in the world. As respite from difficult matters, I turn to the natural world and its wonder

My finished work has a calm and gentle order and holds a quiet stillness. There is always space to breathe as I strive to make work that can be complex and challenging appear simple and elegant.

Slow making is at the heart of my practice and all my work takes time. Time to stitch, time to prepare calligraphy, time to bind books, time to set type and time to ponder...

Making helps me make sense of the world"

Fiona's work is to be found in numerous university and library collections throughout Australia, the United States, the United Kingdom and Iraq.

Her blog *Paper Ponderings* ([www.paperponderings.blogspot.com](http://www.paperponderings.blogspot.com)) has been archived by the National Library of Australia as part of the Pandora archive.