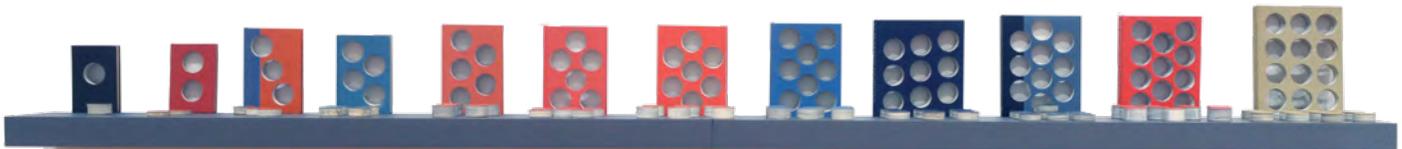


HIGHLIGHT "UNBOUND"

An Exhibition About
Books at Two Rivers
Gallery



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About one year ago, Two Rivers Gallery's (TRG) curatorial department was faced with a predicament. The library that it had developed over the years had begun to overflow. Six large bookcases could no longer contain the publications that had amassed and books began to spill over into bankers' boxes stacked on top of one another. Ultimately, many were culled and donated to the Prince George Public Library (PGPL) for their annual book sale.

During this process I remember being quite amazed by the number of boxes we had designated for donation, but when a library volunteer arrived to retrieve them, I learned that our cull was quite small compared to

that of others. This realization left me overwhelmed by the sheer number of things that populate our world. Thinking specifically about books, I considered the large amount that can be found in both new and used bookstores and the fact that the PGPL was unable to accommodate our culled books in their collection. Having said that, people love books, and even with the dawn of e-readers like Kindle and Kobo, they continue to be made; a fact which tends to deflate the ongoing proclamation that print is dead.

It was this experience that added to the ongoing development of an exhibition titled *Unbound*. The project brings together work by Jennifer Bowes, Robert Chaplin, Adam David

Adam David Brown,
*Core Sample: Twelve
Books*, 2019, *Twelve
Days*. Reclaimed
books.

Brown, Angela Grauerholz and Guy Laramée, to expand perceptions of what a printed book can be and prompt dialogue concerning the value of books in contemporary times. Angela Grauerholz's *Privation*, represented by five images selected from a series of seventy-five, features large scans of burned books from her personal collection. As a whole, the work tells a story of loss while her artist's book, containing all images from the series, gives them new life. Guy Laramée's sculptural landscapes, *Adieu* and *Desert of Unknowing*, are carved from books—an act which renders their content useless and posits them as expendable. Adam David Brown's *Core Sample: Twelve Books, Twelve Days* and *Core Sample: A Century* are sculptural installations, made entirely from found books discarded in his Toronto neighbourhood; pointing towards a disvalue of specific titles. Jennifer Bowes' *Beyond Surrender*, a large wall installation made from pages of her diaries and collagraph prints, *Cradled Silence No.1* and *No.2*, respectively, embody fewer literal forms of books and writing. Robert Chaplin's diverse array of sculptural objects, from a silver brussels sprout (*The Brussels Sprout Testimonial*) to a barrel of bronze monkeys (*More Fun Than . . . Monkeys*), have all been assigned an ISBN and thus push conceptions of what a book can be.

The exhibition opened to the public on January 17th, 2018, with Jennifer Bowes giving an artist talk on her practice. This date also marked the beginning of many associated programs, special projects, and local partnerships. Early on in the exhibition's development, TRG's curatorial and programming staff shared news of the project with the PGPL. Not only was the exhibition's theme met with enthusiasm, the PGPL offered to promote it in various ways. This involved featuring

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Robert Chaplin
Malleus
Maleficarum

books relevant to the exhibition in a display case at the library, and advertising the exhibition within their 2019 Library Guide. Perhaps most vitally, the PGPL provided the gallery with plenty of books culled from their own collection for use in gallery programs.

Sunday Open Studios, make Art Make Sense, Uncork & Unwind, and Booze & Build are three such programs that made use of PGPL's donation. Books were altered and black out poems developed from their pages. For those less interested in book alterations, TRG also offered a book-binding class which gave people the chance to experience the largely unpractised art. The class introduced participants to Coptic binding, 8-figure stitch and accordion books. Elements of this workshop were also taken off site with Art Heals; our hospital outreach program.

A special project developed in the same spirit of *Unbound* was a panel discussion about the printed book, moderated by Andrew Kurjata, of CBC Prince George. Upon the panel's initial conception, it was determined that artists Guy Laramée and Adam David Brown would participate. Happily, our ongoing relationship with the PGPL led us to connect with Gillian Wigmore; a local poet and librarian of PGPL's Nechako Branch. When we decided to invite a fourth panellist, our search led us to yet another partnership with a local organization: 'Ut'loo Noye Khunni - Weaving Words Celebration; an annual festival designed to celebrate and showcase Aboriginal storytelling. As it happened, the date of the panel discussion overlapped with their 2019 programming.

Book Binding Class:
February 9th -
March 2nd

Opposite Page:

Adam David Brown,
Core Sample: Twelve Books, 2019, Twelve Days. Reclaimed books.



Because of this coincidence, I had a conversation with the organizing committee about possible cross promotion and collaboration. After expressing an interest in an additional panellist for our project, the committee gladly recommended Indigenous poet, author and artist, Janet Rogers, whom they were already bringing to Prince George.

As a whole, the panel offered diverse perspectives, sentiments and ideas. Wigmore positioned books as valuable to society and touched on the changing roles of libraries. Rogers offered her perspectives as an indigenous writer, poet and storyteller and discussed her recent declaration to stop publishing work in print for environmental reasons. Laramée described books as symbols of humanity's obsession with progress and expressed discomfort with the sheer amount of content in the world.



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Brown positioned books as useful tools for solitude in a time where we are hyper-connected by technology. Although the panel lasted for about an hour and a half, there remained a feeling that the conversations could go on, thus positing books as a rich and reverent topic.

Upon writing this article, *Unbound* is in its final week of exhibition. On Thursday, March 28th, artist Robert Chaplin will be arriving to deliver an artist talk; an event that will mark the final program associated with this project. Reflecting on the development of this exhibition and the programming that accompanied it emphasizes the value of the exhibitions topic, but also the importance of developing community partners who have a direct connection or interest in an exhibition's theme. As described here, these kinds of partnerships can make projects not only possible, but also better than originally imagined.



On Plinth: Guy Laramée, (The Great and At Times Frightening) DESERT OF UNKNOWING (Where the Space Between Thoughts is Enjoyed More than the Thoughts Themselves), 2016. Carved books, inks and pigments. Left: Jennifer Bowes, Cradled Silence No.1, 2002

Inset: Closeup of Jennifer Bowes, Cradled Silence No.1, 2002





Above: · Installation view

Left: Visitors to Robert Chaplin Artist's talk play with his work *More Fun Than ... Monkeys*, 2019. (ISBN 978-1-894897-79-2)