



Craig W. Jensen: Master of Fine Edition Binding

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Museum Hours: Tuesday through Saturday, 10:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. **Admission:** Free
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OPENING RECEPTION: Thursday, June 24, 2010; 6:00 P.M.-8:00 P.M.

The Museum of Printing History is pleased to present ***Craig W. Jensen: Master of Fine Edition Binding***, a retrospective of one of America's most well-respected bookbinders, Texas-based Craig W. Jensen. Visitors will see complex binding innovations and historical structures produced by Jensen in the last 25 years for prestigious national and international clients such as the Whitney Museum of American Art and Yushodo Co. Ltd. of Tokyo. An illustrated catalog is available.

In a time when e-readers are changing the face of publishing, we often fear the physical book will soon be a fleeting memory. The work in this exhibition reminds us of a time, not yet gone by, of highly skilled bookbinders and printers, making books by hand, in limited editions. These tactile treasures are not as rare as one might think, but few people are ever exposed to them.

Jensen is carrying on a long tradition of bookbinding. His reputation for fine edition work is unsurpassed, known never to compromise the quality of materials and craftsmanship. As an innovator, Jensen uses some antique equipment, but has also invented some modern tools and machinery to speed up the binding process. Craig's skills as a problem solver allow him to take on more demanding structural problems, like the super-deluxe version of *The Canterbury Tales* (The New Ellesmere Chaucer Facsimile edition) of large oak boards covered in goatskin, only 50 of which were made. The books were sewn on cords, hand twisted from linen thread and then laced into the oak boards, following the unique channeling pattern of the original 15th century binding.

The majority of these books are letterpress printed by renowned fine press printers. Illustration methods include pochoir, woodcut, etching, engraving, lithography, silkscreen, and wood engraving, among others. Edition numbers range from less than 50 for artist books and extravagant deluxe editions, up to 750 for clients such as W. Thomas Taylor of Austin, whose fine press books are internationally known. Additional clients include various university presses, Vincent FitzGerald & Company of New York, the Whitney Museum of American Art, Felicia Rice of Moving Parts Press in Santa Cruz, the Book Club of Texas, the Book Club of California, just to name a few.

With 44 different titles in the exhibition, there are many rare gems, such as *Sylvae*, woodcut images with historical anecdotes & observations by Ben Verhoeven & Gaylord Schanilec. The wood was engraved by Schanilec and printed directly from the specimen, resulting in beautiful color images of fifty different types of wood grain. Only 26 of the deluxe edition were made, bound in a 16th century-style binding. *My Pretty Pony*, written by Stephen King and illustrated by Barbara Kruger, is one of the Artist and Writers Series, published by the Whitney Museum of American Art. Produced in an edition of 250 copies and designed by Barbara Kruger, the front and back boards are overlaid with stainless steel and include an aluminum encased digital clock. With the book weighing a whopping 17 pounds, significant material and structural problems were overcome.

Jensen came to Austin in 1981, recruited by British-born conservator and fine binder Don Etherington, to head the new book conservation lab at the Harry Ransom Center (HRC) at the University of Texas at Austin. In 1984 Craig left the HRC to establish Jensen Bindery (1984-1988), which four years later

evolved into BookLab, Inc. (1988-1998)—a large scale studio specializing in fine book editions and boxmaking. BookLab also developed preservation photocopy and collection maintenance repair services offered to the library field. Today, with BookLab II (2002-present), Craig has returned to a small hand bindery in San Marcos, Texas, doing the fine edition work that built his career, alongside his business partner, Gary McLerran, whom he's known since the early Jensen Bindery days.



The Canterbury Tales

Geoffrey Chaucer
The New Ellesmere Chaucer Facsimile
Yushodo Co., Ltd, Tokyo and Huntington
Library Press, San Marino, California, 1995
Bound at BookLab, Inc., Austin, Texas
42.2 cm × 30.5 cm × 7.6 cm



My Pretty Pony

Stephen King
Illustrated by Barbara Kruger
Artist and Writers Series #6, Whitney
Museum of American Art, New York, 1988
Bound at BookLab, Inc., Austin, Texas
51.4 cm × 35.2 cm × 3.5 cm



Sylvae

Fifty specimens printed directly from the
wood with historical anecdotes &
observations by Ben Verhoeven & Gaylord
Schanilec
Midnight Paper Sales, Pepin County,
Wisconsin, 2007
Bound at BookLab II, San Marcos, Texas

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