

**Doug Spowart and Victoria Cooper's Winter members talk** was a great success. Fortunate ACT members who gathered at Bon Amici on 24 July appreciated the treat these busy artists gave us. Recognised in national and international circles, but rarely heard of locally, we followed Doug's artists book journey began which Vicki said with a multi-layered wedding album in 1992. Their books are in the collections of the National Library of Australia and the State Library of Queensland.

Doug and Victoria told the story of illustrated books from early religious books like the *Book of Kells* and artist books from the livre d'artiste at the end of the 1800s to what has become a powerful world art form. We saw, held in our hands and appreciated a series of subversive books on topics including regional artists visiting the coast, the global financial crisis, and Swine flu. We heard about an event, *Palimpsest*, held at Mildura, which involves an Art–Science collaboration around issues on the Murray Darling Basin.

We connected with the story of *One Man's Whisper*, an artists book about *Myall Park Botanic Garden* at Glenmorgan. Visited by early *Flying Arts* people and still visited by artists, this garden was created over 50 years ago by David Gordon and later with his wife Dorothy, an accomplished botanical artist, who planted native species from all over Australia. In this garden the popular *Grevillea Robyn Gordon*, a hybrid between grevilleas from Western Australia and Queensland came to being. Named after David's daughter who died at an early age this plant illustrates what can happen when people care about the land. Some of the plants there are no longer growing in their native habitats. We need to be aware of a problem that, when generations of farmers who have cared for the land and kept native bush are been bought out by large corporations that we don't lose these last patches of bushland. The Gordons also donated a large patch of bushland to be protected for future generations.

Doug has produced about 60 powerful artists books in the last nine years usually one at time, but sometimes editions of two and rarely three. Doug does fine work including making acrylic containers to house the books and his flip books are most amusing. As a photographer he would feel fortunate if he had one image in a collection. Now he can tell the whole story in these books not just one photo. Doug and Vicki's work is site specific. Doug talked about his book, *Borderlines*, which was awarded runner up in the 2010 AIPP Photo Book of the Year award. The issue of water is the topic of Victoria's PhD and she is working on a series of site specific artists books in 3 sites. One powerful site-specific series, *Watermarks* brings modern photography with printing blueprints into three rivers in the area. She exposed the blueprint emulsion on quality Arches paper to these rivers, developed the blueprint, photographed them and used modern technology to prepare the printed artists book. We saw how this artform combines a passion for ideas with printmaking, photography, adding text on the computer and book-binding.

Libraries and physical book collections make artists' books accessible and we heard about State Library of Queensland's highly acclaimed collection of artists books including works by the heroes of the AB movement including Ed Ruscha. Closer to home, we discovered that the SQIT (TAFE) library in Bridge Street has a wonderful artists books collection. ACT could organise an opportunity for members to look at these fine collections if there is interest. We went away thoroughly impressed and inspired and grateful. Here is a bibliography provided by Victoria and Doug.

**Private Galleries that show Artists' books:**

Barratt Galleries, Alstonville, NSW; [www.barrattgalleries.com.au](http://www.barrattgalleries.com.au)

Grahame Galleries, Brisbane; [www.grahamegalleries.com](http://www.grahamegalleries.com)

**Collections in Qld and Northern NSW:**

State Library of Qld

Artspace Mackay, they also run a forum and an award for artists' books every 2 years.

SCU, Lismore.

**Web blogs:**

Artist Books 3.0

The Artist Book 3.0 forum is for artists, curators, librarians, students, and researchers interested in artist books and the book arts.

**Journal:**

***The Australian Book Arts Journal (ABAJ).***

This journal is about and for book artists, fine binders, printmakers (including letterpress), calligraphers and writers. If International artists have an *Australian Story*, please don't hesitate to contact Linda Douglas OFF LINE on <mailto:theraggededge@hotmail.com>theraggededge@hotmail.com for more details.

<http://www.philobiblon.com/bonefolder>

<http://www.bookarts.uwe.ac.uk/banlists.htm>