

The Neale M. Albert Collection of
MINIATURE DESIGNER BINDINGS



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MINIATURE DESIGNER
BINDINGS

A CATALOG OF AN EXHIBITION
HELD AT THE GROLIER CLUB

SEPTEMBER 13 — NOVEMBER 4, 2006

Photographs by Tom Grill



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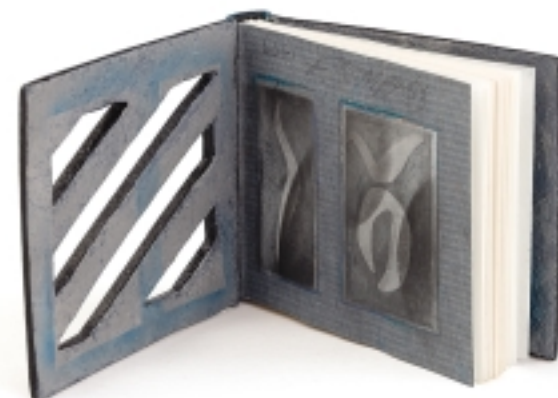
Frontispiece: *Neale M. Albert*, 1997, silver gelatin photograph
by Lee Friedlander

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ABOUT MINIATURE DESIGNER BINDINGS

Some Thoughts on the Neale Albert Collection of Contemporary Designer Bindings and the Grolier Club Traditions

IN a tradition that started in 1886, with two exhibitions of fine bindings, the Grolier Club honors its namesake, the sixteenth century bibliophile and patron of book binders, Jean Grolier, vicomte d’Aguisy. Jean Grolier’s collection of fine bindings, commissioned by him from binders working in his day, is still a benchmark for collectors of contemporary bindings. Since its founding in 1884, and continuing with this exhibition of Neale Albert’s collection of contemporary designer bindings on miniature books, the Grolier Club has mounted over 35 exhibitions of finely bound books. At least 12 of these exhibitions were dedicated to contemporary fine bindings, starting with the May 1886 exhibition of “Modern bookbindings—French, English, and American—executed since 1800” with a printed catalogue issued! [I’m indebted to J. Fernando Pena for his detailed research on this matter.]

In 1897, the Grolier Club mounted its first exhibition of contemporary American bookbinding. In 1905, French bindings were featured at the Grolier in an exhibition. One year later, the Club again focused on contemporary American bindings with an exhibition of the work of the Club Bindery with “Artistic Bindings Done at The Club Bindery” and issued a printed checklist. Interestingly, the subject was revisited in 2004 (it appears the Grolier’s 1906 Exhibitions Committee chose a lasting topic) with another Grolier exhibition, “Bound to Be the Best: The Club Bindery,” although the 2004 exhibit could

not be called a “contemporary” binding exhibition. In 1947 there was another contemporary American binding exhibition, “Contemporary American Hand Bindings.” In 1956, the Grolier embarked on the first of a continuing series of collaborative exhibitions with the Guild of Book Workers on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of that group’s founding. In 1961, an exhibition of contemporary English book bindings was organized. In 1981 “The 75th Anniversary of the Guild of Book Workers,” and in 1990, “Finely Printed Finely Bound,” two further exhibitions with the Guild of Book Workers, were mounted, each containing contemporary designer bindings. Member (and designer binder) Jill Oriane Tarlau shared her collection of nineteenth and twentieth century bindings with the Grolier Club in a member’s exhibition in January of 2001, and there were a number of contemporary designer binders represented, among them Georges Leroux, Jean de Gonet, and Monique Mathieu.

More recently, in 1990, the Grolier Club mounted an exhibition, “Contemporary American Bookbinding” that opened at the Bibliotheque de l’Arsenal, traveled to the Bibliotheca Wittrockiana in 1991, and then opened at the Grolier in May of 1991. This was a juried exhibition, mounted at the invitation of Les Amis de la Reliure Originale, in response to their exhibition of 1987 loaned to the Grolier, “La Reliure Francaise Contemporaine.” Under the

very able guidance of chair Mary Schlosser, and with the assistance of the Guild of Book Workers, jurists Mary Schlosser, Robert Nikirk, Frank Mowery, and I selected 106 beautiful books for inclusion in the exhibition. My recollection of our “selection” meetings was the unanimous verdict that even ten years previous, the Grolier could not have mounted a show of such quality. We all felt we had the proverbial embarrassment of riches—and a worthy successor to the 1987 exhibition of La Amis de la Reliure Francaise. It seems to me that the very same assessment could be applied to this exhibition.

This exhibition of Neale Albert’s collection of contemporary designer bindings on miniature books increases the Club’s number of exhibitions of contemporary fine binding adds to the Grolier Club’s support of the tradition of Jean Grolier.

What a wonderful show this is! Mary Schlosser noted in her excellent Introduction to the exhibition catalogue Contemporary American Bookbinding, “There has not been a strong tradition of patronage for artistic fine binding in North America.” She was, of course, absolutely correct. With very few exceptions, private collectors as well as institutions, do not commission fine bindings for their books as is done with regularity in Europe. One has only to note the organizer of the Grolier’s exhibition of contemporary French binding, Les Amis de la Reliure Originale. No such “friends of designer binding” exists in the United States.

Neale Albert, however, has certainly done his best to ameliorate this situation. Because he came to this area of collecting from a world other than that of books (a dedicated collector of commissioned miniature works), he was not intimidated by the task of commissioning bindings from the great binders working today. He didn’t know them, didn’t know their reputations, or their fees; he simply wrote first to each member of the Designer Bookbinders and asked if they would do a binding for him on a miniature book. He started receiving catalogues and wrote directly to the binders of books he liked. The result is these 250+ bindings. Binders from France, Belgium, Sweden, Hungary, Finland, Japan, Israel, Austria, Germany, Czech Republic, England, Ireland, Denmark, Argentina, Australia, Malta, Spain, Greece, Canada, and the United States (among others) are included. Often, several binders have bound the same book, affording the viewer the great luxury of looking at several distinct aesthetic interpretations of the same text. The several

bindings on *A Winter Garden* from Alembic Press reveal a different artistic impressions of a winter landscape, all chillingly lovely. Stuart Brockman’s floral tribute in ice cold nacre onlays is such a book. There are several lovely bindings on *A New House*. The binding by Evangelia Biza showing the various building stages—from wood frame to bricks and mortar to finished surface—and all at once—is particularly effective and quite elegant in its wood and morocco case.

Another unusual facet of this collection is the ingenious “boxes” or containers for the bindings. Because the texts are so small, and the resulting bindings so small, the protective boxes or slipcases are often something more fantastic than the usual clamshell box or chemise and etui. One such binding is the structure George Kirkpatrick devised for *The Atlas of the British Empire*. The book itself is handsomely bound in dark blue morocco with onlays of light blue, green, and pink morocco featuring a map of the world laid out flat on the back, spine and front panel. Those areas of the world that form the British Empire are set off in hot pink morocco onlays. The center of the map is, of course, the spine with Great Britain at the top of the spine in bright pink. This tiny atlas is housed in a baseball-sized leather globe (complete with all the oceans, continents and longitude and latitude lines). The globe opens in half with the push of a small metal button revealing the *The Atlas of the British Empire* nestled in the center. The globe itself is housed in a carefully constructed wood veneer box. And, it all fits in your hand. The work is impeccable, and the concept—the British Empire as the actual, if not imagined, center of the world—perfectly suits the book.

The late Roger Powell and Peter Waters devised a chained library tower of black morocco with gilt fillets tooled with such regularity as to suggest library stacks with glass floors. It is a solander case that opens to reveal the chained library: each of the six miniature books held with a metal chain in a wood and glass case. It is ingenious. The reader/viewer of these chained books must engage in enough effort to render him sensible to the value placed on books by those who first devised a chained library. Nicole Deltour has housed *Benjamin Franklin’s Letter* in an envelope of watered silk. For *Megalo Patte*, a book in the shape of a dog, Jill Oriane Tarlau has created a most beautiful embroidered “dog house” as elegant a residence as one could imagine. Susan Allix has devised a binding for *Shakespeare’s Flowers* in which the flowers, wrought of

silver showing blooms and vines, enfold and encase the actual book. To read it, one must slip off the flowers and vines (of silver) revealing the bound book. Lori Sauer’s witty bindings on *Predators In My Garden* are housed in box with the “predator” (an insect that stands on wire “bug” legs and the flower ominously next to another. Upon opening each, the books are revealed and the viewer delighted.

Although small in size, many of the binders represented have chosen not to be limited in exuberance, elegance or execution. Donald Glaister’s pierced screen binding on *Venus Explored* is such a book. The viewer does not confront Venus directly, rather sight is partially obscured as one peers through an obstruction. Philip Smith’s unusual structure on *Colour And Sayings* is not visible when both panels are opened. The figure on the spine, disappears when the book is closed, leaving the unusual view of three of the sewing cords exposed, with the front and back cover extending into the space over the spine, as if a surgeon had just started a delicate operation. Timothy Ely’s binding on *Art In Miniature* is, in fact, a miniature world, no less beautiful for its diminutive size. James Brockman’s use of a single-hinged structure and stained translucent vellum on Oscar Wilde’s *House of Judgment* makes a “house” that is a marvel.

Michael Wilcox’s binding on *Summer Sun* could not be more beautiful—larger, possibly, but not more beautiful. The image of Apollo drawing the sun across the sky on against star-filled blackness is contrasted with the benefits of the sun shown on the guards. Fiery red-gold sunflowers explode off these pages. The same artist’s binding on *A Young Stork’s Travel Guide* is so accomplished, so detailed in its beauty, that one almost doesn’t see it—the charming images of the storks so readily capture one’s eye that it is only on closer examination that the binding reveals the impeccable execution. Deborah Evetts has painted in leather on *Covered Bridges In Pennsylvania*. When the front and back panels of this deceptively simple binding are viewed on the closed book, one sees barn-like structures made from earth-toned morocco onlays. When opened, the image becomes the dark chasm that is a covered bridge when viewed before entering, and the binding itself appears to have a void at its center. The parallel between viewing a covered bridge and entering it with seeing a book and reading it and losing one’s self in it, is complete—without a written or spoken word.

Angela James has bound several books for Neale Albert. The binding on *The Art Of Binding Books* more than meets the challenge implicit in the title. Her binding on *The Rose Trilogy* combines an unusual structure as protective box that is also quite lovely and perfectly suited to the bindings on the three books. Her binding on *The Whole Benefits That Paper Brings* is one of her most subtle, the design of various papers as elegant as any. The resist-pattern calf is combined with marbled paper onlays. The sheer exuberance of her binding on *Country Life* charms.

Eleanor Ramsey’s exotic binding on *Desert Tale* takes on the appearance of a pasha’s jewel bag to hold his treasure, or perhaps a minaudiere for only the most fastidious of creatures. Monique Lallier’s binding on *A Small Book Of Dahlias* has glass leaves complementing a beautiful design. Louise Genest’s abstract multi-planed binding, suggestive of a relief map, on *Marco Polo* is notable for its beauty. There are three bindings in this collection from the renowned Spanish binder, Santiago Brugalla. All display the abundant and elegant gilt tooling that is a prominent feature in his binding. For *Portraits Of The Sovereigns Of England*, he has created a miniature binding in the “Cosway” style with portraits of the sovereigns on the covers in jewel-like colors. It is witty and charming—and perfectly executed. Peter Jones has bound a number of books for Neale Albert. One of the most successful is *Dutch Windmills*. With its earth-colored morocco’s and geometric design—one imagines gear-shifts and mechanical things turning—he has captured the fantastical nature of the windmill, bringing it to ground. The delicate beauty of Romilly Saumarez Smith’s binding on *Hesitation* immediately draws one to it. And, I love Ann Tout’s *Roosters!* These colorful fowl are delightful dandies—true coxcombs.

To sum up, there is a whole world of fine bindings reflected in these small treasures. Those bindings I’ve mentioned here are only a small portion of those in the collection. They all deserve serious consideration from any bibliophile—or any lover of beautiful objects. If I were to begin this Preface again, I could re-write it and cite an entirely different group of bindings. There is that wealth of creativity in this collection. Neale Albert has generously shared his collection through this exhibition and catalogue, and we are the richer for it.

—Priscilla Juvelis

ON COLLECTING MINIATURE DESIGNER BINDINGS



Library at Cliveden

I AM A COLLECTOR. It's an inherited disease. I collect photographs, paintings, works on paper, Coalport porcelain, English brass tobacco boxes, walking sticks. The list goes on and on.

But in the beginning I wasn't a collector of designer bindings or even of miniature books. I wasn't a bibliophile at all.

Starting in the mid-1980's I began collecting doll house miniatures. Then I began commissioning miniature reproductions of my favorite things, like this Piero Della Francesca diptych, the original of which is in the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, Italy.



Then I began to commission miniature rooms. The first was a model of The Falkland Arms, a pub which is located in Great Tew, England.

Then in the early 1990's, while my wife Margaret and I were living in England, one weekend we went to stay at Cliveden House, a very old English manor house outside of London. Cliveden has a beautiful library, which I fell in love with. That became my second miniature room project. It was built for me by Kevin and Susan Mulvanney, two of the finest miniaturists in England.

Now I needed miniature books for my miniature library. At first I was purchasing these at doll house shows, with blank pages. Then I discovered the world of real miniature books, with real type and real illustrations, all under one inch in size. 250 or so of these later, the shelves my Cliveden Library were completely filled. But by then I was addicted to miniature books, so I continued to collect them, until I now have more than 3,000 of them.

On July 31, 1997, a fateful day in the history of this collection, I was introduced by Anne Bromer, a Boston book dealer who specializes in miniature books, to the world of designer bindings of miniature books. Anne gave me a catalog of a collection of 37 of these miniature artistic bindings. I decided instantly that this perfectly combined with my love of art and miniature books and that I would commission the finest hand book binders in the world to create bindings for me.

I began to learn a lot about this fascinating world. I learned about the English society, Designer Bookbinders, and I asked almost all of their Fellows

and Licentiate to create miniature bindings for me. I searched out the leading book binders in France, in Italy, in Switzerland. I would send them sheets or, in some cases, bound miniature books. But I never gave specific instructions to a binder. If asked, I would reply “why are you asking me, I’m not a binder, bind it as you think best.” So when the completed bindings arrived, I had little, if any, idea what the binders were doing. Little boxes would arrive at my home. It was like getting Christmas presents all year long.

The binders responded by creating for me the incredible works of art which are in this collection. All different. All creative. All beautiful.

In the course of this journey I have made many friendships. I received wonderful letters from the binders, like this one from Andreas Ganiaris in Greece:

“Dear Mr. Albert:

Thank you for your letter of February 11th which gave me great pleasure and at the same time a taste of sadness.

Pleasure, because all of my life I have been working [on] binding books and this great art offered me a pleasant way of gaining my life, finding the joy of creation and understanding the deepest meaning of life. For yes, I feel a “happy man” and this precious feeling allows me to work only for pleasure and not money. This is my way to stay FREE.

On the other hand there is this taste of sadness I mentioned. Your proposal is of great interest to me, but has it come at the right time? Do I have the right to think of art, creation or other goods of civilization while the clouds of war, probably a disastrous one, surround my country?

To this dilemma my answer is yes, I accept your proposal. My “alibi” is that I have not the right to refuse to a man who has great sensitivity to love the art of bookbinding, an art that delivers things made of peace, beauty and mind. So please do not hesitate to send me the book you prefer, no matter what the content is. Each bookbinding is to me like a puzzle I have to deal with and finally resolve. I touch the book for the first time and the endeavor begins. My last attempt will drive me to the most preferred binding. What will the book [look] like exactly? Beautiful or not? I cannot tell. But I can tell that it will be honest and true.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Truly yours,
Andreas Ganiaris”

The quotations in the descriptions of the bindings are in the words of the binders themselves. I asked them to tell me about their work, to give the reader an insight into the creative process of their work.

Many of my new friends will be traveling to New York City to be present at the opening of the exhibition of my collection at The Grolier Club.

I published this catalog to bring this artwork to the attention of the many people who couldn’t see the exhibition in person.

—*Neale M. Albert*

VARIATIONS



ANGELA BOGLE

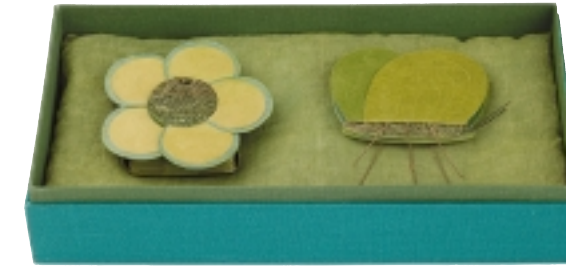
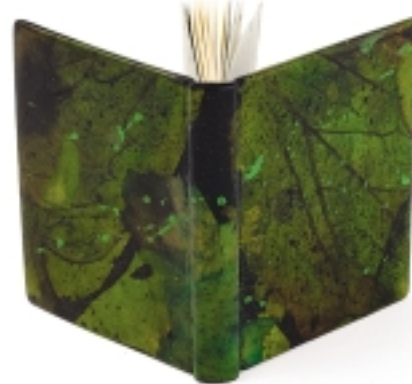
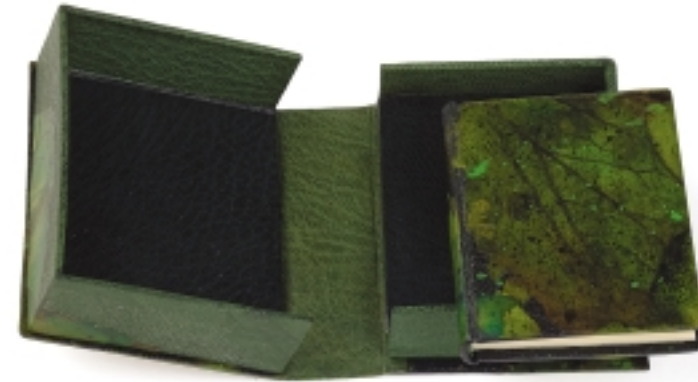
Predators in My Garden

Miriam MacGregor

Lorson's Books & Prints and
The Whittington Press, 1993

2 $\frac{3}{8}$ " X 1 $\frac{7}{8}$ "

Bound in full morocco, with onlays of
painted box calf. Doublures matching the
covers; endleaves of oriental paper.
Matching drop-back box.



LORI SAUER

Predators in My Garden

Miriam MacGregor

Lorson's Books & Prints and
The Whittington Press, 1993

3 $\frac{3}{4}$ " X 3 $\frac{3}{4}$ "

Text bound as butterfly; sewn on guitar
strings with green silk thread. The spine is
made from four panels of vellum laminated
to Japanese tissue. Endpapers made with
zerkall and pastepaper. Bi-wings made
from laminated Japanese tissue, edges col-
ored in pencil and waxed with silicon.
Insect pins used for antennae. Extra proofs
bound as flower; concertina structure;
petals made from laminated Japanese tissue,
edges colored in pencil, petals waxed; olive
leather hinges to attach rear board, covered
in pastepaper; board edges colored with
gouache.

Housed in a double-trayed box with
inner cushions, title label on lid; box inside
a slipcase.

LOUISE GENEST

Erte Maquettes

Erte Design

Rebecca Press, 1984

1 $\frac{9}{16}$ " x 2 $\frac{1}{8}$ "

Bound in goatskin, with onlays of patinated metal leaves. Doublures are patinated bronze leaves. Drop-back box covered in paper lined with black felt, with gold-tooled leather label.



EINEN MIURA

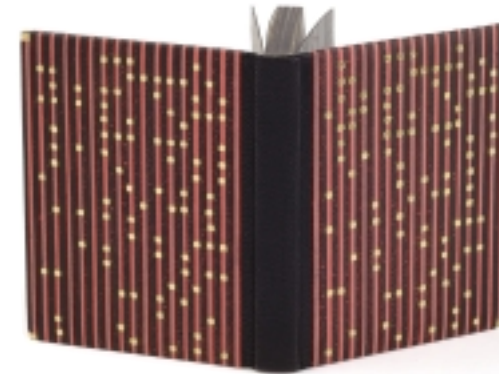
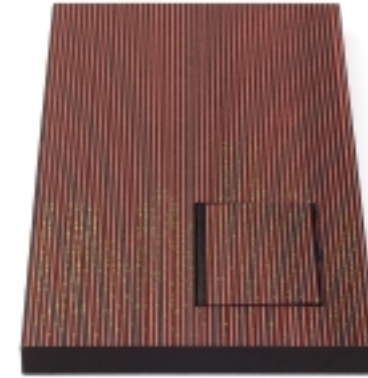
Erte Maquettes

Erte Design

Rebecca Press, 1984

2 $\frac{13}{16}$ " x 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ "

Bound, French-style, in green morocco. Uncut tail and fore-edge in gold, top edge in blue/green with gilding; headbands hand-sewn in lilac and purple; doublures: purple chagrin goat with tooling; multi-colored leather onlays; blind tooling. Drop-back box in pink half-leather morocco with oleograph paper covers; tray in purple morocco; tooling in gold and purple foil.



ERI FUNAZAKI

Erte Maquettes

Erte Designs

Rebecca Press, 1984

2 $\frac{7}{8}$ " x 2 $\frac{3}{16}$ "

Bound in leather with self-decorated paper sides. Unsupported link stitch with full linen board attachment and secondary sewing; hollow back with handmade paper headbands; hand-printed endpapers; leather doublures with gold tooling.

“This miniature binding is housed in the box which is also part of the design and creates an extended canvas for the book.

“My design is based on a city landscape which possibly indicates Erte’s successful years with *Harper’s Bazaar* magazine during the 1920-30s.”

HEATHER NICHOLS

Erte Maquettes

Erte Design

Rebecca Press, 1984

2 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ "

Bound in black Oasis goatskin. Cut out reveals dyed calfskin with multiple goatskin and calfskin onlays in various colors; endbands in rose Oasis goatskin; edges colored in brushed graphite; endsheets of black Moriki paper. Full black morocco box, title onlaid in red leather, decorated with multi-colored onlays.



ADAM LARSSON

Erte Maquettes

Erte Design

Rebecca Press, 1984

2 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 2 $\frac{1}{8}$ "

Open joint binding sewn on vellum tapes, covers attached to the tapes made of three folios of different colored paper; back of signatures lined with colored Japanese paper. Drop-back box covered with colored paper, with a black leather spine, title tooled on blue leather, lined with black paper.



MIA LEIJONSTEDT

Last Gods

Galway Kinnell

RavenPress, 2003

Full leather binding in natural beige goatskin. Goatskin doublures and leather joints; silk endbands; gold tooling on covers; blind tooling in red ink on doublures; red goatskin inlays; edges painted red with rough-edge gilding; end papers Venetian marbled paper. Housed in a decorative box covered in raw silk with details in leather, lace, marbled paper, silk stitching, metal and silver.

“The concept for this binding is about ‘the book.’

“You, the reader, the viewer, the book’s handler, are in the crucial role of completing the concept, being part of it, and the book only then fulfills its complete task. With this binding, it is not just about the reading of the poetry or looking at the images on the pages. The experience starts with undressing the book until it is naked, until you can open the covers and delve in. It has ‘clothes’ which you need to remove. Be gentle. . .

“The look and feel of this piece centres around bringing the poetry alive, or rather, being the embodiment of a moment in time that the poetry describes. The book box is



like a ‘treasure box of memories’ with a hint of the past in its materials and colours. The contents of the old silver locket is a live reflection of the illustrations in the book, the illustrations brought alive, a snapshot of a moment in time. As you gently untie the delicate knots that hold the lid of the box in place, and remove the silk ribbon, lift up the naked book. The hooks, the lace, they are from a specific garment that has a ‘memory’,

they have heard the tongues of the Last Gods. In certain colour symbolism, orange is considered the colour of sexuality. There are also other layers of symbolism within the piece, visual details that can be read into, such as the tooling on the cover that would be abstract for someone seeing the book out of context.

“With that, I leave you and the book alone.”



LORI SAUER

Last Gods

Galway Kinnell

RavenPress, 2003

2 ¹³/₁₆” x 2 ⁷/₈”

“The binding is a cross-structure binding laced together before sewing. The textblock and the covers are sewn at the same time around the head and the tail only. The front cover is dyed yellow calfskin laminated to yellow Japanese tissue. The head and tail sewing supports are lined with calfskin and fold back on themselves to cover the sewing. The design on the doublures is made from the cutouts of the design on the outside of the binding. Translucent paper is laminated to the swirl on the front doublure, as well as the space between the cutouts on the back doublure. All the edges of the design are colored in colored pencil, as are the edges of the binding.

“The box is in a tray in a slipcase covered in reliance backcloth and lined with felt. The front of the slipcase has a recessed window with a drawing from the book laminated to translucent paper.

“I wanted to complement the illustrations, which I find playful and spontaneous, while alluding to the poem’s sensual subject and themes of union. The structure of the binding itself was chosen because of the way it weaves across itself from front to back.”

MARIA SOL REBORA

Last Gods

Galway Kinnell

RavenPress, 2003

2⁷/₈" x 3¹/₈"

Full leather binding in different shades of blue goatskin with onlays, relief work on front and back cover; edges decorated with watercolor. Leather doublure decorated with onlays and blind tooling. Cloth-covered drop-back box, gold-tooled leather label.



NINA JUDIN

Last Gods

Galway Kinnell

RavenPress, 2003

2⁷/₈" x 2¹⁵/₁₆"

“To reflect the book’s text and illustrations I was aiming at a sensual binding— something that feels soft and warm to the touch but also has that deep and mysterious sparkle of erotic energy. I chose to make the covers of laminated leather, the book sits in the hand light and soft. On the front cover there is a landscape—peacock feathers are like tall grass that you can push aside, take a look. The inside of the covers and the endpapers have that deep sparkle. The wrapper of the book is in keeping with the softness of the binding. It has an outside of natural, earthy and wild character and the inside is luxurious. The wrapper is my artist’s statement on the erotic.”



PAUL DELRUE

Last Gods

Galway Kinnell

RavenPress, 2003

2 $\frac{7}{8}$ " x 2 $\frac{7}{8}$ "

Bound in beige Harmatan goatskin, with onlays of blue, natural, green, yellow and brown. French sewn by Gavin Povey. Colored endpapers; suede flyleaves; matching leather doublures; edges colored; silk-sewn headbands. Brown cloth drop-back box lined with brown suede; leather labels with inlays of red and dark blue leather.

"It's a time for finger work; even a small brush is clumsy."



JUHANI HARVIANEN

A Winter Garden

Claire Lawson-Hall

The Alembic Press, 2001

3 $\frac{1}{8}$ " x 2 $\frac{15}{16}$ "

Bound in full dark gray morocco, with onlays of paper and white leather. Lettered in gold on label; hand-sewn; decorated doublures and endpapers.

BRIGITTE CONVENT

A Winter Garden

Claire Lawson-Hall

The Alembic Press, 2001

3 $\frac{3}{8}$ " x 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ "

Bound in reversed pigskin, with red leather spine and underlays of multi-colored paper and airbrushed in a tartan pattern. Sewn on extended guards. Full gray calfskin box, lined with ultrasuede.

