

GUILD OF BOOK WORKERS JOURNAL

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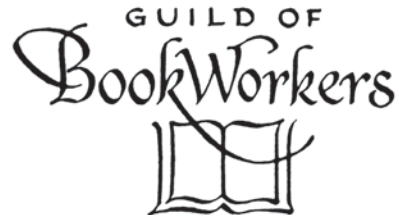
**Empowering Women's Voices: Two projects in the
Caucasus Region**
Melanie Mowinski with Suzi Banks Baum, and Miriam
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Ben Elbel

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A Leather Covered Harpsichord
Samuel B. Ellenport

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Hirtz, Lise and Miró, Joan. *Il Était une Petite Pie*. Paris: Editions Jeanne Bucher, 1928. 163/300, copy on Arches paper.

Bound by Ben Elbel in 2017. In the collection of the Royal Library of the Netherlands, The Hague. 32.8 x 26.4 x 9 cm.

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PUBLICATION POLICY

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The Guild of Book Workers also publishes a bimonthly *Newsletter* as well as catalogs accompanying each of our national traveling exhibitions. Current members of the Guild receive subscriptions to the *Journal* and *Newsletter* as benefits of membership. All of our publications that remain in print are available for order online at www.guildofbookworkers.org; discounts are available to current members. Please visit us at www.guildofbookworkers.org.

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EMPOWERING WOMEN'S VOICES: TWO PROJECTS IN THE CAUCASUS REGION

Melanie Mowinski with Suzi Banks Baum, and Miriam Schaer

7 *Suzi Banks Baum and Miriam Schaer have made multiple trips to Armenia, the Balkans, and the greater Caucasus region to work with and empower women artists through the book arts. This article reviews their work and invites the reader to consider their own responsibilities as artists, makers, educators, and book workers.*

A LEATHER COVERED HARPSICHORD

Samuel B. Ellenport

45 *The creation of a leather covered harpsichord in the late 1970s is one of those stories that catch our interest, illuminating what we do or are asked to do by patrons and clients. The story also illuminates the odd requests found within our craft, without going beyond the use of common and traditional techniques. If this anecdote can be categorized, it would be under the heading, "Economics of Desire."*

THE PIXEL BINDING

Ben Elbel

23 *The author is noted as the creator of innovative bookbinding structures. This article introduces his latest, the Pixel binding, a semi-flexible structure that can be created in any number of materials and material combinations. The article is not a how-to, but rather describes influences and shares examples by the author and others.*

NOTES ON WORKING WITH PARCHMENT FROM AN ALLIED CRAFT

Sarah Pringle

33 *The processes of covering an object in parchment is an advanced technique that requires respect for this material's demanding nature. After being introduced to parchment work as a hand bookbinder, Sarah Pringle has spent 35 years perfecting parchment applications for custom furniture, architectural panels and sculptures. Here she offers technical expertise and process insights to those interested in gaining a new understanding of parchment.*

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EDITOR'S NOTE

IT WITH GREAT PLEASURE THAT I INTRODUCE A combined issue of volumes 48 and 49 of the Guild of Book Workers' *Journal*. As you hold it in your hands you will notice that the format and structure are novel. This is called a "tête-bêche" (head-tail) that has its roots in the 19th century and was often used for popular (pulp) fiction. A benefit of the structure is that it treats the two titles as equals, without subsuming one into the other. Given the prolonged production process of Volume 48's two articles that were distributed via the Guild's member area on the website, I wanted both issues to stand on their own, with their own covers.

When I began as editor of the *Journal* it was on a hopeful note with article ideas and leads to follow up, ideas that came from a variety of sources and recommendations. Then COVID hit, we were forced to work remotely, and some lost access to the resources they needed for their articles or felt that they could not continue. Disruptions also extended to aspects of the production chain. But, despite these challenges, we found ways to continue and even expand how we communicated, shared, and taught.

Volume 49's articles cover a variety of topics that should find resonance with readers. Melanie Mowinski, Suzi Banks Baum, and Miriam Schaer speak to the book arts as a tool of empowerment and social justice in the Caucasus region. Benjamin Elbel, one of the most innovative bookbinders working today, introduces his "pixel binding" and shares examples of the effects that can be attained using this structure. Finally, there are two articles describing the kind of work bookbinders and extra binding departments in larger trade binderies often completed, works that holistically apply our skill sets and materials, but on non-book items. In one, Sarah Pringle describes how she works with parchment on furniture and related pieces, and in the other Sam Ellenport describes covering and decorating a harpsicord in leather. Volume 48 was distributed to members electronically back in May. These last two articles resonated with me from a historical

standpoint, but also because I was still able to experience aspects of this kind of work still being carried out at Monastery Hill Bindery in late 1980s Chicago where I had my first post-apprenticeship job.

Volume 50 of the *Journal* will be the catalog of *Wild/Life*, the Guild's upcoming national traveling exhibition scheduled to [hopefully] open in June of 2021. While the *Journal* works to help produce the catalog, work will also continue towards soliciting articles and making the *Journal* sustainable. Towards that end a co-editor interested in assuming the editor role when my term ends in October still being sought. The time to step forward is now, as there is much to learn, with opportunities to shape issues into the future.

I am grateful for the support given by the members of the Editorial Board who provided feedback and helped review the articles you see here. I could not have done it without them.

Peter D. Verheyen

Editor

The Guild of Book Workers *Journal*



Fig. 1

PIXEL BINDING

SEMI FLEXIBLE BINDING STYLES

BEN ELBEL

ONE OF THE WAYS TO CLASSIFY BOOK BINDINGS is by dividing them into two groups: stiff ones (hard-cover, or hard-back), and flexible ones (soft-cover, soft-back, or 'limp'). Somewhere in between is what I call 'semi-flexible' bindings. Those are not flexible due to the flexibility of the covering material itself but rather because they are made of stiff panels hinging with one another. ¶ Although recent, I would say that there is a tradition for this kind of binding. The Dutch bookbinder Pau Groenendijk has specialized in them, and for a while, so has Jean De Gonet. In a way, Andrea Odametey's *Daedalus et Icarus* (the winning binding of the 2017 Designer Bookbinders international competition) also falls into this category, and I'm sure there are plenty of other examples that I am not thinking about right now. ¶ I love the element of surprise and the playfulness that comes with handling such a semi-flexible binding, and, being a forwarder at heart, I appreciate that this type of binding offers design features and has a unique personality before any decoration is applied.

Benjamin Elbel (French nationality, 1983) has a background in illustration and trained as a bookbinder at the 'Centro del bel libro' in Ascona (Switzerland), and at the bench of various fine bookbinding firms in Germany and England, before setting up his own business in 2012, first in London and since 2015 in Haarlem, Netherlands. His studio provides services to bibliophiles, antiquarian book dealers as well as the hospitality industry, and aims at creating contemporary looking work executed at the highest possible standards. He also has a passion for sharing knowledge, to his own team members, in workshops, and via 'bookbinding out of the box', his platform dedicated to innovation in hand bookbinding. He is online at www.elbel-libro.com and www.bookbinding-outofthebox.com.

DEVELOPING MY OWN

I BECAME INTERESTED in semi-flexible binding styles in 2016, after seeing and handling some of the bindings mentioned above.

At first, I created covers made of vertical panels hinging with one another, similar to the kind that Pau Groenendijk calls *lamellen band*. (Fig. 1 and Fig. 2)



Fig. 2

Then, out of curiosity, I started introducing horizontal hinges as well. (Fig. 3 and Fig. 4) Soon after I was making boards composed of a multitude of little squares, which I now call “pixels”. (Fig. 5 and Fig. 6)

AS SHOWN IN THE IMAGES, the first two stages of my research were simple case bindings with flat spines, but I moved away from this structure when I realized that the multiple grooves caused the boards to shrink considerably after casing in, causing the text block to end up wider than the case—I had to re-trim the fore-edge in the first two examples! I have now settled on two structures more suitable in my view because they provide a type of cover-to-text attachment by



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

which the flyleaf is disconnected from the board paper. This way, the shrinking can be anticipated and realized before connecting the cover with the text-block.



Fig. 5



Fig. 6

JAPANESE BINDING STYLE

JUST AS IN A TRADITIONAL JAPANESE BINDING, this structure (Fig. 7) is suitable for books with a layout presenting enough margins in the gutter, and printed on paper with enough drape to function well as a stab binding. The grooves adjacent to the spine provide a logical place to run the sewing thread; the thread can be in a matching color if the goal is to blend it in, or in a contrasting color if the opposite effect is wanted. In any case, the threads will be recessed, which is very satisfying, and the sewing pattern is automatically integrated into the composition.

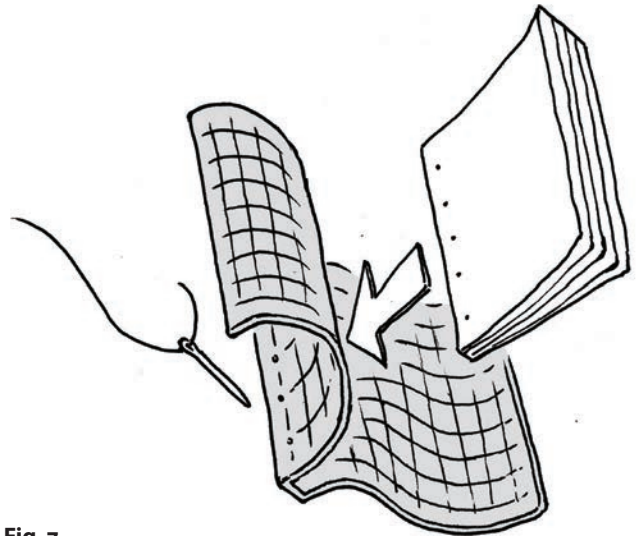


Fig. 7

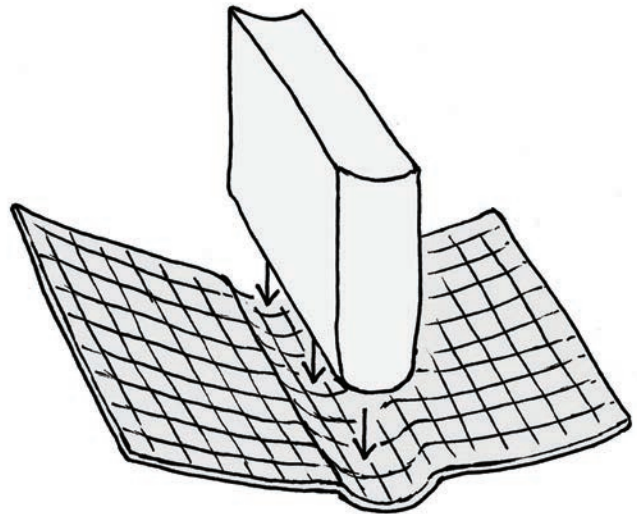


Fig. 8

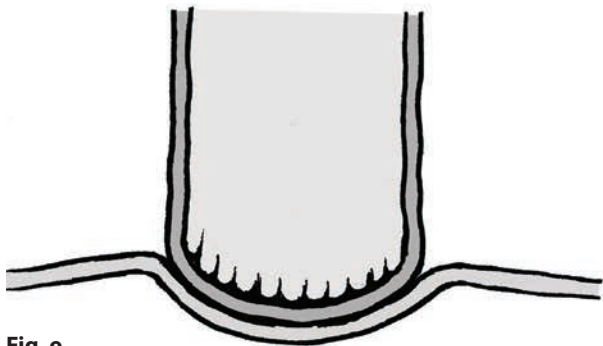
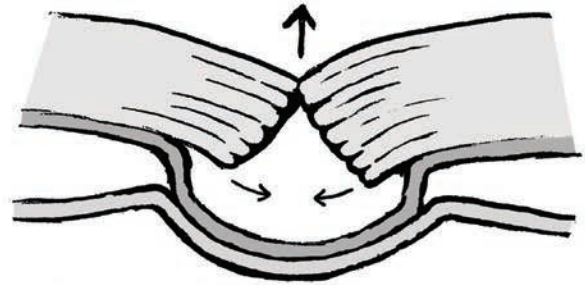


Fig. 9

TARAL METHOD

THE TARAL METHOD consists of wrapping the text-block in a piece of suede (unglued in the spine area) (Fig. 8), and connecting the text-block to the cover via the spine (Fig. 9). It has become one of my favorite constructions of late, and I have used it in different shapes or forms for my Elbum and Paniel structures. The form I use in combination with the Pixel binding is borrowed from Alain Taral, who developed it with Sün Evrard for his wooden bindings, and taught it to me back in 2008. This construction looks great (visually non-intrusive), is strong, and provides excellent opening to the text-block with no tensions at all. The only limitation I see is that with



the cover-to-text attachment taking place in the spine only, this method may not be suitable for very thin books.

Both methods are case bindings, allowing the covers to be created completely off the book, which is something I greatly appreciate.

So far I have used only paper and leather as covering materials. The execution with these two materials is quite different but either works very well. I love to use suede (real or imitation) for the flyleaves, because the grid pattern of the cover, which is present on the interior, casts its impression into it.



Van Capelleveen, Paul. *De Complete Verzameling: Notities over het einde van boekencollecties*

BINDINGS

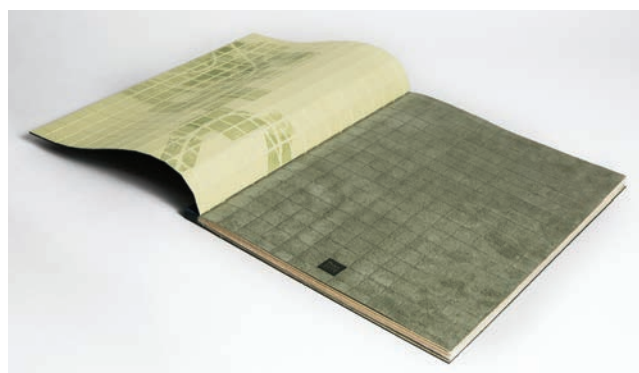
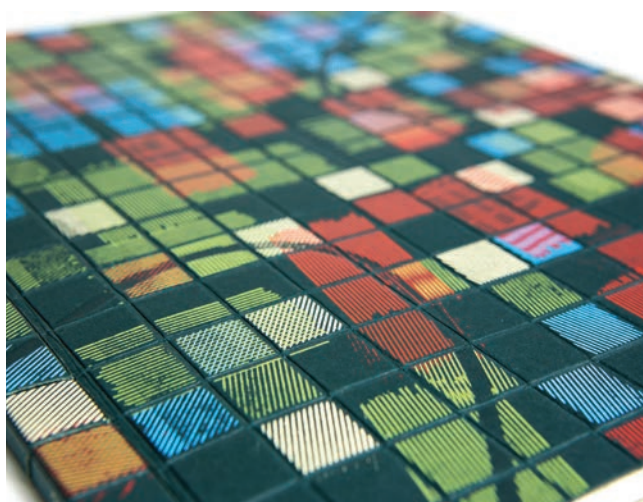
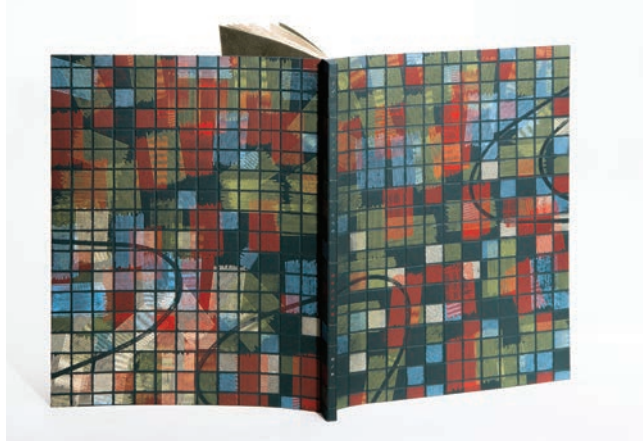
Van Capelleveen, Paul. *De Complete Verzameling: Notities over het einde van boekencollecties*. Amsterdam: De Buitenkant Publishers, 2016.
Bound in 2017. In the collection of the binder. 24.3 x 17 x 1.9 cm (height x width x thickness).

This is a Pixel binding in full paper, with suede flyleaves and Taral-type board attachment.

This book deals with a dark subject—the end of book collections—and I went for an almost-all-black composition: black paper for the cover and suede for the flyleaves, graphite on the cover and on the edges, and very sparse accents of orange in the lettering and leather endbands. I keep this binding in my bindery, and love to show it to people and see their reactions when I tell them it's made of paper. Their natural instinct usually tells them it's leather, or rubber.



Hirtz, Lise and Miró, Joan. *Il Était une Petite Pie*. Paris: Editions Jeanne Bucher, 1928. 163/300, copy on Arches paper. Bound in 2017. In the collection of the Royal Library of the Netherlands, The Hague. 32.8 x 26.4 x 9 cm. Photographs by Torben Raun

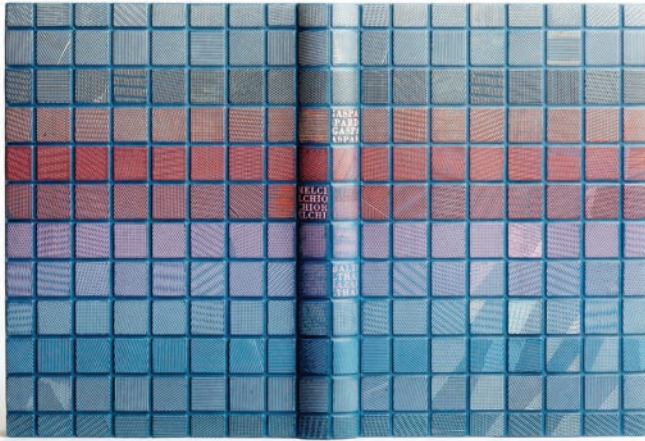


This is a full paper Pixel binding with suede flyleaves and Japanese structure. This is my first experiment with multiple line stamping, which is something I used on the next two bindings showcased in this article, and that I'm certainly not done exploring yet. The boards were first blind stamped with thick curved lines on the front board, back board and across the spine (echoing Miró's illustrations), then tooled all over with a single stamp using 4 different foil colors. Sometimes the stamp was applied to individual squares only, sometimes across several squares, and often overlapping each other, generating new colors. The board papers are tooled as well, but sparingly and with only one color.

The entire design was created in a kind of trance in one afternoon, with high energy and very little premeditation except the intent to create a colorful, playful and at the same time slightly eerie atmosphere to suit this weird and wonderful surrealist children's book for adults.

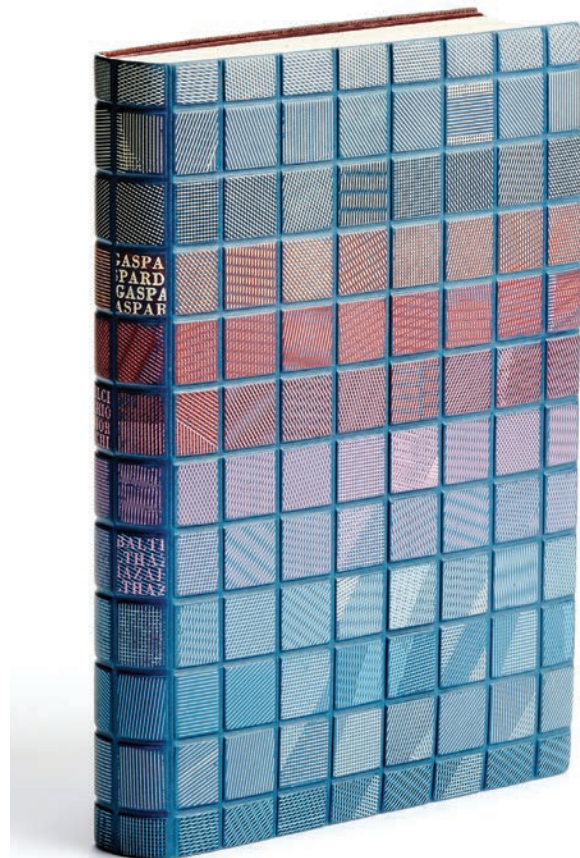


Tournier, Michel. *Gaspard, Melchior et Balthazar*. Paris: Gallimard, 1980.
Bound in 2019. In private collection (France). 21.8 x 15.6 x 3.2 cm.
Photographs by Dirk Wolf



Pixel binding in full calfskin with calfskin doublures, suede flyleaves and Taral-type board attachment. The design, based on selected colors in the book's only illustration, is a horizontal composition moving from blue (bottom) to green (top), with various shades of purples and reds in between. The background color is the same cobalt blue calf everywhere, and so the colors are obtained by stamping colored lines on top

of the leather and on top of each other. This time I restricted the stamping to the area of each square, one square at a time (no stamping across several squares). Each row has the same color combinations from left to right, and the same amount of impressions (between one and three), but there are variations in the direction of the lines and the angle between the various impressions, resulting in various textures and vibrating qualities from one square to the next. Some 'free-style' stamping was added here and there to introduce some more life into the composition. The lettering was executed on the same principle, with letters instead of lines.

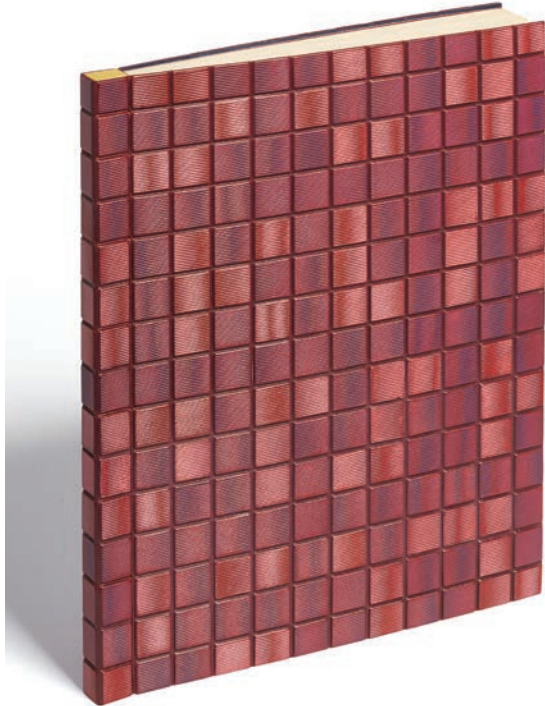


Laforge, Lucien. *ABCDEFGHIJKLMN O PQRSTU VWXYZ*. Paris: Henri Goulet, 1924.

Bound in 2019. This binding is in a private collection (France). 28.4 x 29.5 x 2 cm.

Photographs by Jan Van Schooten and Kieke Schaaper.

Pixel binding in full calfskin, with calfskin doublures



and suede flyleaves, in the Japanese binding structure. The decorative technique is similar to the previous binding showcased: line stamping limited to the square area. For this binding, I chose an effect that could be described as “moiré”, where I stamped each square twice, each time in a more or less horizontal fashion but with a slight angle between the two impressions; this technique created a vibrating effect, slightly different every time. I used two different color combinations in the same color family, one being lighter (pink + red) than the other one (red + purple), and distributed them throughout the back board, spine and front board in such a way that a full stylized alphabet would emerge from the composition, however at second glance only.

The covering leather is Burgundy veg-tanned calf, edge to edge doublures are in the same calf in Petrol blue, and flyleaves are orange pig suede lined with Burgundy paper. The head and tail panels were made in yellow goat and the sewing thread was dyed



as close as possible to the covering leather so it would blend into the composition and not stand out. There are 375 squares in total, including on the spine, and the cover is made out of one piece; this was not the case in the Miró binding, which had an additional spine piece.

Another interesting contrast with the Miró binding is the fact that in this binding everything was premeditated and nothing left to chance, which probably accounts for a more polished appearance. I like both approaches. What do you think?



WHAT'S NEXT?

I HAVE BEEN TOYING WITH THE IDEA of using other shapes than the square. The triangle, the diamond, the parallelogram—actually any shape which generates a grid of some sort with straight lines when combined could be used in a very similar way to the four bindings presented in this article. This would probably be rather fun to attempt, and maybe I'll do it at some point – but at the moment I am more interested in exploring decorative techniques applied to the basic square grid.

Together with my colleagues at Elbel Libro, we are currently working on an edition that will use the Pixel binding structure. The publisher reached out to us because he felt that this structure's futuristic outlook would suit the content particularly well: a science fiction book. We are extremely grateful for the opportunity, and for the chance to learn a lot more about this structure by making lots of them.

For those of you who are interested in learning about this structure in more technical detail, a workshop will be offered based on the structure in paper, with suede flyleaves and Taral board attachment. It will include the use of graphite on the edges, and as a powerful decorative feature on the boards.

A list of workshops can be viewed at www.bookbindingoutofthebox.com/pages/workshop-calendar.

Bind well and stay safe.