

## EDUCATOR GUIDE

Story Theme: Works on Paper

Subject: Julie Chen

Discipline: Visual & Literary Arts (Book Arts)

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## SECTION I - OVERVIEW

### EPISODE THEME

Works on Paper

### SUBJECT

Julie Chen

### GRADE RANGES

K-12 & Post-secondary

### CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Visual Arts & Literary Arts

### OBJECTIVE

To introduce educators to book arts as artistic objects and as vehicles for personal, political, and social commentary

### STORY SYNOPSIS

SPARK watches book artist Julie Chen work in her print shop, Flying Fish Press (est. 1987) as she and her assistant, Mary Chadwick create up to 100 editions of a book each year. Chen's inventive and captivating books are collected by museums, private collectors, and libraries, including the Special Collections Library at Stanford University, where many are preserved.

### INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES

To introduce the artist book as works of art  
To illustrate the presence and role of book artists  
To explore book art as forms of personal, social, and historical commentary  
To innovate with book art as a tool communication and expression for students

### INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Individual and group research  
Individual and group exercises  
Written research materials  
Group discussions

### EQUIPMENT NEEDED

SPARK story "The Book, Reconsidered" about book artist Julie Chen on DVD or VHS and related equipment

Computer with Internet access, navigation software, speakers and a sounds card, printer

### MATERIALS NEEDED

Access to libraries with up-to-date collections of periodicals, books, and research papers, and a variety of newspapers and comic art books

Different examples of book art works (see **Resource** section)

Basic bookmaking supplies, such as paper, glue, rulers, staplers, needles and thread, pencils, and any other binding material (grommets, snaps, buttons, etc.)

### INTELLIGENCES ADDRESSED

Intrapersonal - awareness of one's own feelings, emotions, goals, motivations

Visual-Spatial - the ability to manipulate and create mental images to solve problems

Bodily-Kinesthetic - the ability to use one's mind to control one's bodily movements

Logical-Mathematical - the ability to detect patterns, reason deductively, think logically

Linguistic Intelligence - the ability to effectively manipulate language to express oneself



See more information on  
[Multiple Intelligences](http://www.kqed.org/spark/education) at  
[www.kqed.org/spark/education](http://www.kqed.org/spark/education).

## SECTION II – CONTENT/CONTEXT

### CONTENT OVERVIEW

Reading a book is a uniquely intimate experience – a one-to-one relationship between object and reader. To participate, we must hold a book in our hands at close range to read what is inside. For all its intimacy, reading a book is also very familiar and customary, causing us to have developed specific and remarkably consistent habits from a lifetime of experience. Book artist Julie Chen counts on this familiarity and the traditional ways in which books are made, playing with our expectations about how a book *behaves*.

Inexplicably drawn to the book art form after completing a degree in printmaking, Chen entered the Book Arts Program at Mills College in 1984 with no formal training and not a single book project in her portfolio. Initially intrigued by the language, the equipment, and the materials, Chen worked diligently to learn the tricks of the craft. Today, Chen's books are considered exceptional for their craft and quality.

In the SPARK story "Bookmaker" viewers survey the startling variety of Julie Chen's books –shaped like shells, eggs, boxes, or designed to be playful sculptures meant to be assembled. Each one has embedded messages to be discovered and journeys to be taken in form and text. Her wide experimentation with form has brought her to her newest work "Personal Paradigm," a game with which readers play, moving pieces and recording their actions in a logbook.

Chen works like a Conceptual artist, allowing an idea to determine its form and content. The variety of her book forms reflects the variety of concepts that fascinate her, including language, history, memory, and time. Every element – its structure, shape, colors, and materials – is in symbiotic relationship with the concept. To read one of Chen's books is to engage with a complete, discrete experience that is simultaneously literary and sculptural.

### THE BIG PICTURE

In many respects, the history of the book reflects the development of human communication. Not only does a book convey information, the form of books overtime reflects changing ideas and attitudes about what books are and what they do. The artist's book, which became popular in the 1960s, emerged in reaction to the mass-produced, uniform structure of the book. Book arts, as the field is known, takes structure a step further by providing an intimate, physical journey for the reader by exploring the book's form as well as the information it holds. With the predominance of technology in offset printing and desktop publishing today, fine-crafted artist's books are once again *en vogue* and gaining in popularity.



Phaistos Disk. 1,700-1,600 BCE. Clay tablet. Heraklion Archaeological Museum, Crete. <http://www.philobiblon.com/isitabook/history>

Before the traditional book form we know today became common, information was recorded in many forms-- from ancient clay tablets, to scrolls, to knotted chords. These various forms were used to track inventory, express ideas, pass on folklore, and even convey sounds of ancient languages. It is said that the birth of the book can be traced back to the Phaistos Disc, a double-sided circular clay tablet with pictograms, shapes, and signs of objects and concepts designed in a spiral. Forty-five of the symbols have been identified by scholars using the hieroglyphs of the Proto-palatial period.<sup>1</sup> The arrangement of writing seen here is the product of years of evolution,

<sup>1</sup> Alexiou, Stylianos. "Minoan Civilization- Minoan Writing." Crete: Heraklion Archaeological Museum, 1969. Reprinted at <http://www.interkriti.org/culture/festos/phaist2.htm>

as people sought for simpler and more convenient ways to communicate and read. At the same time, they were also devising new tools with which to draw and more practical materials on which to write.

With the advent of the printing press in Mainz, Germany in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the circulation of ideas about religion, science, art, and literature increased. As a result, the literacy rate climbed as more and more people had access to information. The very first mechanically printed book, Gutenberg's Bible in 1456 employed the structure of the codex, a block of text in sets of folded pages sewn to a support with a cover. This format became standard because the volumes could be neatly separated within the beginning, middle, or the end of a book. Furthermore, it could be conveniently stacked and shelved.

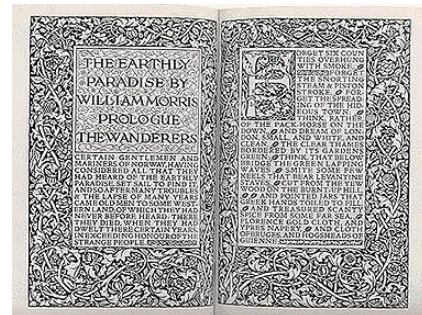
William Blake. "The Divine Image" from Songs of Innocence, 1789, (Copy X, coloured before 1794), Leaf 2, recto relief etching printed in green ink and finished in watercolour (NGV 39c). Felton Bequest - 1988 - P.122b-1988. National Gallery of Victoria <http://www.ngv.vic.gov.au>



The intimacy and craft of fine bookbinding was taken over by the trail of the typical, inexpressive, standardized books that came with the age of industry. During the Renaissance, traditional bookbinders wanted to revive the artistry and craftsmanship that the book once held in reaction to the mass production of books and its standard codex structure. In the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, engraver William Blake (1757-1827) brought back the illuminated manuscript by restoring hand-drawn text and intricate pictorial designs to bring depth to reading visually. Blake made use of illuminated printing, a process in which he drew his illustrations directly onto copper plates and then etched the plates in acid to prepare the design for printing. In "The Divine Image" from Songs of Innocence from 1789, the intertwining of text and image is dramatic, recalling illuminated pages from medieval manuscripts in which both the text and the images are highly

aesthetic – their forms interwoven to form one complete balanced design. In the Divine Image, a green plant motif with pairs of figures playing on top winds in and out of the text on the page, dividing the page into three sections, and visually reinforcing the complex message about virtues and the human heart.

William Morris (1834-96), a founder of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Arts & Crafts Movement was also concerned that craft and craftsmen were at risk of disappearing as a result of the printing industry's high-volume, economical production machinery. He and other artists of this movement began to create manuscripts featuring elaborately decorative hand-drawn illustrations and background patterns that were complimentary to or supportive of the text, such as such Morris' The Earthly Paradise (1896) in which a wide continuous border of delicate, interlaced plants and flowers crisscrosses both sides of a page, completely surrounding two blocks of text. Both the text and the background design are drawn in the same, highly stylized style, uniting them in a singular aesthetic, and making each as valuable as the other. In order to make the text readable against the heavily designed background, the text is printed on an overlay of the floral pattern that is a lighter color than the background. The design, based on nature visually represents the idealized earthly paradise discussed in Morris' text



William Morris. The Earthly Paradise, Volume 1. 1896. Reprinted from the William Morris Society (London & Ontario) Web site at <http://www.morrisociety.org/designs.htm#book%20arts>.

The Arts & Crafts Movement found a sympathetic and supportive community in the burgeoning culture of the Bay Area in the 1800s. The Gold Rush, started earlier in the century, had created a wealthy elite class that collected fine objects, including finely printed books as symbols of affluence and status as well as literary ability. Several fine printing houses



came into being during the Gold Rush, including Charles A. Murdock, to satisfy the increased demand for services in the area. Two hundred years later, in the 1950s and 60s this historical interest in literature and the arts in San Francisco fomented the rich literary culture of the Beat generation. By then, a number of prominent printing houses had become established and well known for their editions of creative books and poetry, including Grabhorn Press and Auerhahn Press. Today, the Arion Press continues this tradition in San Francisco, using one of the most important collections of type in the business inherited from Grabhorn and Auerhahn.<sup>2</sup>

As the literary scene flourished, offset printing became a popular and practical means to keep up with the production requests for large orders. As a result, the commercial value of offset printing grew, resulting in the selling off and giving away of the older, bulkier letterpress equipment. Many artists and other interested presses took advantage of the opportunity to sustain the tradition of making fine letterpress books while also expanding its explorations into the book as a work of art.

Many books produced today by artists intentionally depart from the traditional structure of the codex adapting complex forms similar to those of sculpture. It is often difficult to classify artist's books as fine art in the form of a book, or a book that has the impact of sculptural fine art. The works of Julie Chen and other book artists have had similar effect as ceramic artists such as Viola Frey and Peter Voulkos who stretch the boundaries of their medium's traditional forms. Despite the difference in medium, California book artists and ceramicists of the 1970s both blur the boundaries between art and craft. Their techniques challenge the limitations of the medium, extending the expression of the language to new heights.

As the world increasingly relies upon digital technology, the craft of the artist's book is weighted with more prestige and appreciation. Book arts is fast emerging as part of a growing movement of artists and bookbinders who embrace the versatility of the book's form as a creative medium. Julie Chen is one of many book artists whose works have found their way in such notable literary and art collections such

as Stanford University's Special Collections Library, the US Library of Congress, and the Museum of Modern Art, Metropolitan Museum, and Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City.

Artists' books perform like "sculptural vessels" in which viewers embark on an intimate journey through the interplay of image, text, and form. The artist's book goes beyond word and image by making use of the medium as an integral part of the message. Today, book arts is transforming from a niche form and "one of the best kept secrets of the art world" into an ambitious and influential genre in both the art and literary worlds.

## RESOURCES – TEXTS

Bindman, David and William Blake. William Blake: The Complete Illuminated Books. New York: Thames & Hudson, 2001.

Castleman, Riva. A Century of Artist's Books, NYC: Museum of Modern Art, 2002.

Clark, Robert Judson, ed. Arts and Crafts Movement in America: 1876-1916. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992.

Fisher, Leonard Leverett. Gutenberg. New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1993.

Gallagher, Connell B. and Cynthia Imperatore. Objects/Encounters: Bookworks at Flying Fish Press, 1987-2001. Burlington: University of Vermont Libraries, 2002.

Golden, Alisa. Creating Handmade Books. New York: Sterling Publishing, 1998.

Harrison, Steve and Patricia Harrison. Writing and Printing. London: BBC Educational Publishing, 1991.

Hubert, Renee R. and Judd D. Hubert. The Cutting Edge of Reading: Artists' Books. New York: Granary Books, 1998.

Johnson, Pauline. Creative Bookbinding. New York: Dover, 1990.

Krensky, Stephen. Breaking Into Print: Before and After the Invention of the Printing Press. Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1996.

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<sup>2</sup> Quoted in the "History of the Arion Press," printed at <http://www.arionpress.com/history.htm>.

Objects/Encounters: Bookworks at Flying Fish Press, 1987-2001. Connell B. Gallagher and Cynthia Imperatore, University of Vermont Libraries, 2002.

Scholastic Books. The History of Making Books. New York: Scholastic, Inc., 1996.

Spawn, William. Bookbinding in America: 1680-1910, PA: Bryn Mawr Pubs, 1983.

The History of Making Books. New York: Scholastic, Inc., 1996.

Waggoner, Diane, ed. The Beauty of Life: William Morris and the Art of Design. New York: Thames & Hudson, 2003.

## RESOURCES – WEB SITES

Arion Press has had a rich history of producing fine artist's book in the Bay Area which it continues to uphold - <http://www.arionpress.com/intro.htm>

Center for Book Arts, a non-profit organization that offers classes and workshops and features exhibitions. - <http://centerforbookarts.org/index.html>  
Home of the Book Arts Web which features links to a large selection of book arts related sites on the web, including educational opportunities, professional organizations, tutorials, reference materials, and galleries with images. - <http://philobiblon.com/>

Flying Fish Press - Julie Chen's print shop. - <http://flyingfishpress.com/>

Paper Source – A Web site that offers materials and tools for bookmaking - <http://www.paper-source.com>

National Museum of Women's Art – Press release for **Book as Art XV**, a exhibition featuring the works of 27 women and their approach to artist's books as a creative outlet. - <http://www.nmwa.org/news/news.asp?newsid=131>

San Francisco Center for the Book promotes both knowledge of traditional book arts and exploration of experimental book forms through workshops, exhibitions and public events. - <http://www.sfcb.org/>

Science and the Artist's Books – Web site exploring links between scientific and artistic creativity through

the book format. -

<http://www.sil.si.edu/exhibitions/science-and-the-artists-book>

Stanford University's Special Collections Library that preserves an array of rare maps, manuscripts and books - <http://www-sul.stanford.edu/depts/spc/spc.html>

The William Morris Society – Web site devoted to the life and works of William Morris - <http://www.morrisociety.org/>

## BAY AREA FIELD TRIPS

The SF Center of the Book  
300 DeHaro Street, San Francisco, CA 94103  
Phone: (415) 565-0545  
<http://www.sfcb.org/>

San Francisco Public Library History Center  
100 Larkin Street, San Francisco, CA 94102  
Phone: (415) 557-4400

Mills College  
5000 MacArthur Boulevard  
Oakland CA 94613  
Phone: (510) 430-2255  
Fax: (510) 430-3314

## SECTION III – VOCABULARY

### DISCIPLINE-BASED VOCABULARY AND CONCEPTS IN THE SPARK STORY

**Apprentice**

Someone who works under the guidance of a professional to learn a craft or trade

**Artist's book**

An art form defined by a range of artists' solutions to the book including manuscripts and sculpture

**Arts & Crafts Movement**

A arts movement led by William Morris that favored high-quality craftsmanship and design felt to be missing from the mass production of goods in the Industrial Revolution in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century

**Beat Generation**

The term used to describe the 1950s and 60s literary activity, characterized by views that challenged dominant ideas and politics of American society

**Book Arts**

Field of making books or book-like objects that embrace design, form, content, and context in which the emphasis is on the visual as well as the textual

**Bookbinding**

The technique of assembling a book together

**Codex**

A traditional, linear book format with pages fastened together on one side and sewn to a support with a cover

**Concertina**

A method of folding a sheet of paper, first to the right and then to left, so that the sheet opens and closes in the manner of an accordion

**Craftsmanship**

Skill in an occupation or trade requiring handiwork

**Edition**

The number of copies of a work printed and/or published at one time

**Engrave**

To form by incision; to impress deeply with a graver

**Fiber**

The main ingredient that binds together to create contiguous sheet

**Illumination**

The decoration of a manuscript or book with painted pictures, ornamented letters, designs, or a combination thereof, in colors and usually burnished gold or silver

**Letterpress**

The process of printing from a metal plate with raised characters where the ink sits on top of paper

**Manuscripts**

A hand-produced book or document to be published

**Offset**

The transfer of ink from one printed sheet or illustration to another sheet

**Origami**

The art or process, originating in Japan, of folding paper into shapes

**Pictograms**

Simple shapes and signs that depict objects and/or concepts

**Printing Press**

A machine that transfers lettering or images from an inked metal surface onto paper

**Solvent**

A liquid substance used in the process of printing to move or thin ink

**Volume**

A collection of written or printed sheets bound together by stitching, taping, or pasting

## SECTION IV – ENGAGING WITH SPARK

### STANDARDS-BASED ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION POINTS

#### Thinking About and Making an Artist Book

Play the SPARK episode on Julie Chen pausing the video or DVD to allow students time to look closely at the different artists books she has created. Play the opening segment again, this time without the sound to enable students to focus on the visual impact of these art objects. Discuss students' responses to her work.

Move on to brainstorm the concept of a book with the class. What is a book? Are these books? As students respond, construct a mind map on the board around the concept of a book linking the elements to the central concept. Ensure students include: text or words, pages, illustrations or visuals, a cover or binding. Are all these elements necessary? Do they shape or impact the purpose of the book or the way the book is perceived? Draw out the other elements that Julie Chen refers to in the story – texture, color, surfaces and materials such as plastic, wood, and paper. Invite students to consider the ways in which these other elements “unlock an idea” (Chen)

Working in groups, ask students to identify an idea and explore together how they might express this idea through the materiality of the artist book.

- What would it be made of?
- How could the materials work with the central idea?
- What shape would it be?
- Would they include text?

Encourage students to assemble the materials needed and put together their book, allowing them sufficient time to creatively explore their concept. Ask each group to display their book and explain their thinking to the rest of the class.

#### RELATED STANDARDS

##### VISUAL ARTS

Kindergarten

CAREER AND CAREER-RELATED SKILLS

5.4 Discuss the various works of art (e.g., ceramics, paintings, sculpture) that artists create and the media used.

Grade 1

CAREER AND CAREER-RELATED SKILLS

5.4 Describe objects designed by artists (e.g., furniture, appliances, cars) that are used at home and at school.

Grade 4

ARTISTIC PERCEPTION

1.5 Describe and analyze the elements of art (color, shape/form, line, texture, space and value), emphasizing form, as they are used in works of art and found in the environment.

Grade 7

1.0 ARTISTIC PERCEPTION

1.1 Describe the environment and selected works of art, using the elements of art and the principles of design.

Grade 9-12 Proficient

ARTISTIC PERCEPTION

1.3 Research and analyze the work of an artist and write about the artist's distinctive style and its contribution to the meaning of the work.

*Impact of Media Choice*

1.5 Analyze the material used by a given artist and describe how its use influences the meaning of the work.

Grades 9-12 Advanced

HISTORICAL & CULTURAL CONTEXTS

3.2 Identify contemporary artists worldwide who have achieved regional, national, or international recognition and discuss ways in which their work reflects, plays a role in, and influences present-day culture.



### Book Formats as Historical Artifacts

Invite students to work in small groups to explore different book formats throughout history. Assign one of the following to each group to research:

ancient clay tablets  
papyrus scrolls  
palm leaf book  
Mayan bark codices  
the parchment codex  
illuminated manuscripts  
books printed with moveable type  
another book format chosen from any culture or period in history

Have students take notes on the book format and assemble illustrations and information to present to the larger group. Each group should address the book format as a work of art and creative medium in itself. Display the research information around the room for students to look through at their leisure.

### Technology and Book Arts

Move on to discuss the impact of technology on the book arts. Invite students to identify and research key moments in the development of the book such as the advent of the printing press, offset printing and desktop publishing today. Draw a timeline on the board to record these landmarks and as a group discuss the impact of each advance in technology.

Encourage the group to consider the relationship of technological innovation to this art form by responding to the following questions:

Does the artistry and craftsmanship involved achieve prestige as a reaction to mass production and time-saving machinery?  
Does it become even more strongly an expressive medium upholding a tradition of handmade books?

Invite students to discuss these points and then extend the discussion to a consideration of other art forms, such as furniture making, stitching and textiles etc. in terms of technology and the mechanization of craft skills.

Ask students to write a 1,000-word essay on:  
*Discuss the impact of technology on the history of the book.*

### RELATED STANDARDS SOCIAL SCIENCE

Grades 6-8

Historical and Social Sciences Analysis Skills  
*Chronological and Spatial Thinking*

Students explain how major events are related to one another in time.

Students construct various time lines of key events, people, and periods of the historical era they are studying.

*Historical Interpretation*

1. Students show the connections, causal and otherwise, between particular historical events and larger social, economic, and political trends and developments.

### Making Books

Younger students may enjoy making an artist book. This exercise is taken and adapted from Make an Artist Book at

[http://www.arts.ufl.edu/art/rt\\_room/sparkers/artist\\_book/artist\\_bk.html](http://www.arts.ufl.edu/art/rt_room/sparkers/artist_book/artist_bk.html)

Students will need: a grocery bag, scissors, glue stick, stickers, ink stamps, old postage stamps, felt-tip markers, colored papers, and magazine pictures.

They should start by making the pages of their book employing one of the many ways to construct a one-of-a-kind book.

Elsewhere on the web, there are instructions for learning the [Japanese binding](#) technique.

Encourage students to use their books as special places for telling stories, expressing feelings and sharing ideas. Suggest that they write and draw in their book and illustrate their writing by cutting shapes from colored paper or pictures from old magazines and gluing them in the book.

They can also cut and fold the pages of their book, and paste stickers and stamp shapes in the book. Whatever they choose to do, they will need to have an idea or story they want to share with others. Remind students that, as a "book artist," each page of their book should be interesting to look at as well as interesting to read. They will need to think about

how to make their book special by arranging the pictures and text on each page.  
Once students have finished their book, invite them to share it with others.

**SPARKLERS:**

- \* Compare the work of these artists to the work of Julie Chen.
- \* Investigate local book artists who it may be possible to visit in their studios, or to invite them to the school to present their work and talk to the students.

*The Book as Friend and Companion*

Invite students to think of a book as a friend. Ask them to think of a book that has been significant to them in this way and to recall:

- the feeling or physical presence of the book
- its weight
- the process of moving through its pages
- the stories or ideas that unfold in the book
- the images, illustrations and visual presence of the book
- the thoughts, insights, memories, imaginings it unlocks
- the significance of the book as a moment in a personal history

Encourage students who feel able to talk about their choice of book in terms of these questions. If they have their book available, ask them to read an extract to the class to illustrate its significance. There may be students who have not related to books in this way, in which case the objective is to introduce reading as an intimate, pleasurable and personal pastime, a unique activity, which is not the same as watching a screen or walking on the beach. For students who enjoy reading or have been reassured, inspired and comforted by a book, encourage them to share their reflections with the class.

Finally ask students to consider the difference between reading a book and reading a screen i.e. what is the difference between a relationship with a book and a relationship with technology?