

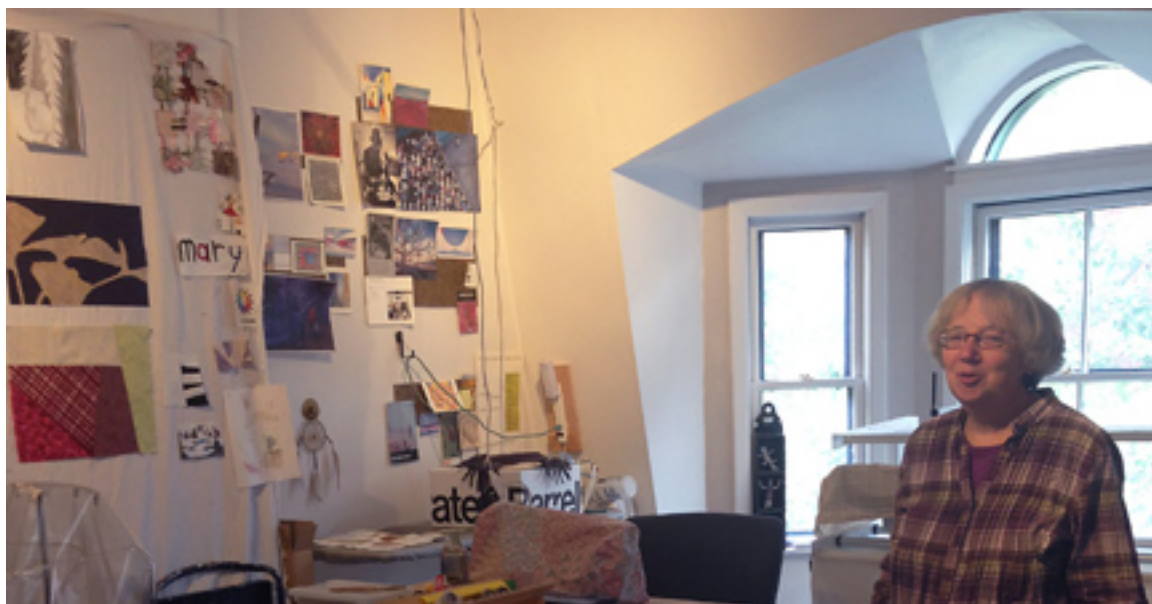
Mary Gillis – Book Artist Carrying on a Tradition in Boston

by Rakks | November 13th, 2015



Recipe Book Page – by Mary Gillis

This past July, we did a Blog post about Book Art. The subject fascinated us. Little did we know that book art was very much alive right here in Boston. In an unusual twist of fate, Rakks got the attention of a book artist looking for a shelving solution for her studio.



Artist Mary Gillis in her Boston South End studio

This story begins in Boston's South End where artist Mary Gillis resides. Mary is a very talented lady who makes beautiful quilts and practices Book Art. Her studio, up a winding staircase in a lovingly restored brownstone, is filled with inspiration including fabrics, art, poetry and found objects. For her, the progression from creating a quilt to producing Book Art was a calling. Both art forms share her desire to tell a story through tactile materials and structural elements.



W S Merwin Poem – by Mary Gillis The box contains a scroll which can be viewed by turning the little knobs. The subject of the poem is 'mistakes'—hence the coffee stains along with the text.

When we asked Mary how she became interested in book art, she explained, "It all started when I saw Book Art exhibited at the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington, D.C. a few years ago. The minute I saw the exhibit I realized Book Art was something I wanted to pursue. When I retired, I had more free time, so I took a class in Book Art at Boston University. During that class, we made 14 books in an intensive 6-week session including my 'Moby Dick' book that was juried into the "Call Me Melville 2012" exhibit in Pittsfield MA."



Moby Dick – Coffin book cover by Mary Gillis



Moby Dick – inside front cover by Mary Gillis

Rakks and Mary's paths crossed when she was looking for a shelving system for her studio. She was searching for products and came across a mention of Rakks in a design publication. When she visited the Rakks website, she said, "I was very happy to see that they were local. I still had questions, so I emailed them, and included a diagram of the configuration I designed. Within the hour, a Rakks salesperson emailed me back with very clear answers, even to my nitty-gritty questions. He made a list of what I would need and soon my project was off and running."



Finished Rakks system in Mary Gillis's studio

I began by having Boulter Plywood in Somerville, MA ([link](#)) cut four 14" deep plywood shelves for the top of the system. Next I installed Rakks vertical standards and the top mitered pieces. Once that was done, it was back to Boulter for the desktop and lower shelves. My walls are a little uneven, and I needed more stability for the top shelves, so I screwed a cleat into the wall under the back of the desktop shelves and secured them for stability.



PC4 Pole with Mitered Tie Pole



Offset L-Bracket



Rakks Style Bracket with Universal Wire Bookend

During the process, I learned that the Door Store in Cambridge carries Rakks. It turned out that I had space for an additional shelf, so I went there and added brackets and couplers to my system. Mission accomplished!”

Thank you, Mary, for sharing your story with us. We’re looking forward to seeing your next project!