

Art you can read

ARTIST SHOWS OFF HER HAND-MADE BOOKS AT SILICON VALLEY OPEN STUDIOS

By Nick Veronin

As electronic reading devices and tablet computers become more ubiquitous, it is not uncommon to hear book lovers proclaim their preference for the genuine article — words printed on paper. Local artist Jacqueline Ernst is one of these people.

But Ernst's affinity for bound volumes goes beyond some of the more common arguments in favor of books over Kindles or

iPads. Yes, she does think books smell "wonderful" and she enjoys the feel of the paper between her fingers.

But she also likes the way the graphic design, typefaces, page binding and method of page-cutting add to the experience of reading a book.

For the past 10 years, Ernst has worked in partnership with her husband to create one-of-a-kind and limited-edition "artist books." Hers is a form of art that has sprung from the ubiquity

of the cheap paperback and the burgeoning e-reader market.

"Some people contend that books are outmoded," Ernst says, speaking on the phone from her home studio in Mountain View. "Like any craft that becomes endangered, artists kind of pick it up and it is elevated to a different level. It becomes fine art."

Ernst's artwork will be on display this weekend at her Pig Wings & Promises studio —

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COURTESY JACQUELINE ERNST

Mountain View artist Jacqueline Ernst makes art books on a variety of topics.



COURTESY JACQUELINE ERNST

Hand-made books are among the artworks on display at this weekend's Silicon Valley Open Studios.

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along with a wide range of work from other local artists. She is opening her studio to the public as part of the 27th annual Silicon Valley Open Studios event, which has artists from all over San Mateo and Santa Clara counties inviting the public into their world in a series of free events during the first three weekends in May.

Her open studio will be the largest event in Mountain View, with 16 artists, including Ernst, displaying their work in her converted garage at 247 Velarde St. The free event runs from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday, May 11 and 12.

More than paper and words

Ernst creates books on subjects that interest her — how perfume is made, the evolution of the written world, forgeries in the art world, a history of holidays. All of her books have lush illustrations accompanying the text.

Her books come bound

between elaborate covers, which are often made of wood carved by her husband. Others come in still more elaborate presentations — encased in ornate wooden boxes, also made by her husband.

In this way, the books are somewhat “sculptural,” Ernst says.

Ernst says she has always been drawn to old books. While studying abroad in Europe, the heavy, leather-bound, illustrated books she would find in old libraries were the most interesting to her. They were symbols of power and wealth, she explains. In ancient times, books were incredibly expensive to produce and during times of conflict they became “the spoils of war.” Conquering armies would either burn the enemy libraries or absorb them.

Books, she says, “are amazing creatures. They come to life and pull you in.” The idea behind artists books is to make the experience of reading a book that much more engaging.

Other artists

The 15 other artists will be displaying their work at her

gallery include: acrylic painter, Lisa Berry; ceramic sculptor, Vered Binyamini; bead jewelry designer, Wesley Brando-Barrow; pastel artist, Jerry Carpenter; mixed-media jewelry maker, Elizabeth Chen; potter and acrylic painter, Rona Foster; photographer, Jodi McKean; illustrator and watercolor painter, Michael McLaughlin; precious metal and gem jeweler, Stephanie North; photographer, Rich Osiecki; watercolor painter, Judi Richards; pastel artist, Karen Sandoval; oil painter, Anat Shmariahu; ceramic artisan, Nesity Varzilay; and semi-precious stone and bead jewelry designer, Mary Helen Weinstein. Local landscape painters Barbara von Haunalter and Robert Schick will be showcasing their paintings and drawings at Studio No. 106, 13781 Cicerone Lane in Los Altos Hills.

For a full list of local artists participating in this weekend's Open Studios, go to www.svos.org. ■

Email Nick Veronin
at nveronin@mv-voice.com

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