

## Experimental Ex-libris

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### **ABSTRACT**

In every field there are attempts to avoid the main road, to develop new paths of thought, to reformulate the known rules, to create new technologies or use old ones in novel ways. It is possible to experiment with content or form, and the latter can imply combining media, or using new or adjusted techniques or technologies.

**Keywords:** Ex-libris; Experimental; Bookplate; Pop-up; Puzzle; Collage

## INTRODUCTION

With time things change: each and every technique that now is considered classical was wildly experimental when tried for the first time. We will try to give here an overview of what is done nowadays and the attempts which can claim to be experimental from our perspective today.



Rastko Ciric



Gevaert Veerle



Katrien Dellafaille

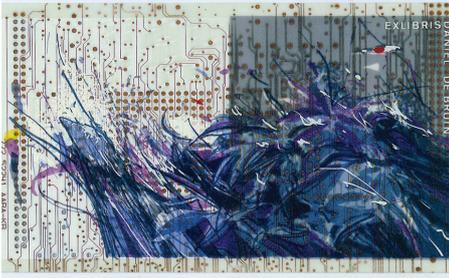
### 1. POP-UP

Pop-up ex-libris use the nice fact that a book, a sum of two-dimensional pages, suddenly occupies space when it is opened. To open a book, an act for which a reader is usually personally responsible, a certain amount of kinetic energy must be invested, and it can be used to produce additional effects. To “pop-up” means “to appear, to come upwards automatically”. By opening the covers of a book, something that occupies space appears.

The first pop-up ex-libris I heard of was made in 1988 by the Colombian artist Juan Carlo Franco for our friend Benoît Junod. The support was discreetly screen-printed, but the pop-up itself consisted of “clean” folded paper. Thus, apart from the graphic artist’s skill which had to be applied, “graphic engineering” skill was needed as well, to be able to create a spatial form which, when folded, becomes two-dimensional.

The second example is an ex-libris commissioned for the library of the Dutch magazine Exlibriswereld: when a book with this ex-libris is opened, the man on the picture simultaneously opens a little book peeking through the hole where an ex-libris should be placed. If one folds the booklet down, the text with the name of the owner is revealed. The bookplate is digitally printed on both sides in an edition of 300, hand cut, folded and glued.

## 2. OTHER SUPPORTS



Martin R. Baeyens

Belgian graphic artist and professor Martin R. Baeyens made experiments with screen printing (mostly polychrome) on different often surprising supports such as circuit plates from telecommunication equipment (picture above). If the support is paper, Baeyens uses geographic maps or even a banknote! The ex-libris shown here, Baeyens made for Hacettepe University in Ankara, Turkey, and it received the Special Award of the Turkish Ministry of Culture in the first biennial organized by the Turkish ex-libris society in 2002.

The following ex-libris was printed on transparent film in an edition of 50. The green texture (a dark square) was printed on a white sticker fixed by collage. No glue is necessary when the ex-libris is put into a book, as static electricity holds it firmly in place.



Martin R. Baeyens

## 3. COLLAGE



Martin R. Baeyens

Into one of his bookplates Baeyens incorporated a real postage stamp! In fact, only the first six prints contain an original stamp, and on the rest of the 80-print edition it was photo reproduced. For the following bookplate the collector requested that some “ready made” materials should be used in it. Martin R. Baeyens printed it in an edition of 50, and it consisted of three parts:

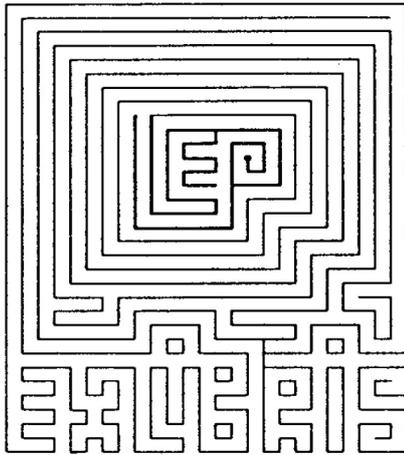
Part 1: the wallpaper texture is printed on a sticker paper and fixed on rag paper.

Part 2 is part of a printed magazine and is glued on the wall paper (the artist found enough copies of the same magazine for all the ex-libris to be the same).

Part 3 was double-side printed on normal paper and attached a few millimetres under the wallpaper sticker. Unfortunately one cannot see the other side here in the illustration.



Martin R. Baeyens



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#### 4. A PUZZLE

Ex-libris can also be, and there is sometimes a logical reason for it, an enigmatic addition to the owner's books. The first example is a regular labyrinth (based on the logo of the L.E.P.), and - following the classical method - one should reach its center. The second was inspired by an anamorphic puzzle that should be solved by reading the name of the owner when the paper is turned horizontally.

#### 5. MULTISIDED

An image can be created in a way that can be looked from several sides. The first example was made as a commissioned birthday present for Pavle Vučković, boy at the time, and now a film director with many awards to his name. This image was imagined as a small game: one side shows a frowning sheriff, and the other a smiling boy, so both sides can be used - for example, for children books and for serious literature. A similar idea was used by the well-known Swiss artist Hugo Suter in the only bookplate he ever made - for Benoît Junod, in 1992. Suter said to the owner: "Stick it into books you enjoy with the bookplate turned so you see the smiling face - and if you disliked the book, stick it in upside down!"

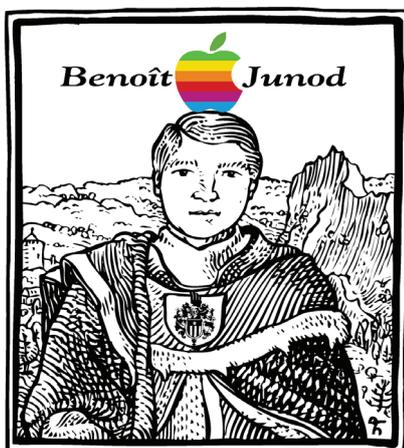


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The third example was conceived to be used as a couple's bookplate. Fixed in the position shown it marks "his" books (bought before marriage or professional literature). Turned 180 degrees, the book becomes "hers", and positioned thus, it marks the volumes that belong to both of them.

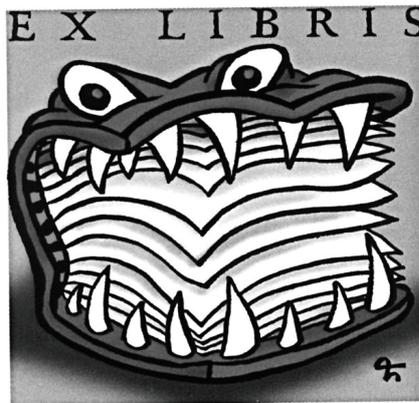
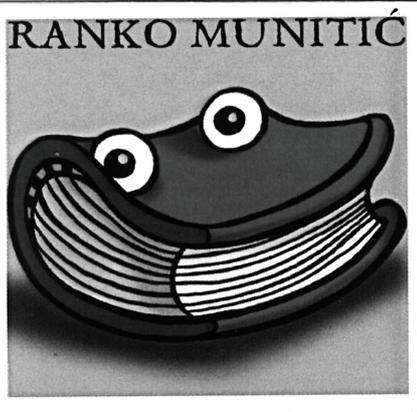
#### 6. VIRTUAL

"Power Book" is the term for a Macintosh portable computer, and Benoît Junod had one while we worked on the "World of Ex-libris" project. Joking, I said that it was his only "book" without an ex-libris. Taking the joke one step further, I made an ex-libris for Benoît Junod that was not created to exist in a printed form, but only as an image in a digital format. It would appear when one turns the computer on as a "start-up-item" and thus inform the user as to the owner of the computer. The portrait, costume and background were done in the manner of Dürer, both as a reminder of his collection which contains several of the artist's ex-libris, and in contrast to the digital nature of the image itself. The apple on Junod's head is the the Macintosh logo and obviously a reference to the Swiss folk hero Wilhelm Tell. On a medallion, the family coat-of-arms is shown.

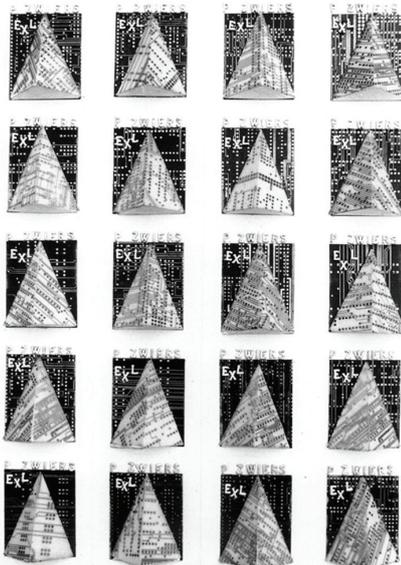


PowerBookExlibris

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Martin R. Baeyens



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## 7. ANIMATED

Ranko Munitić is without doubt our most important authority in animated film theory. His ex-libris consists of a folded paper and two images showing a book with an open and closed “mouth”. The open mouth shows its teeth threateningly, a reminder of the bookplate’s function to protect the book from theft. Quickly moving the sheet up and down creates an illusion of movement - it seems that the book opens and closes and its mouth changes its mood. The idea of animated ex-libris could be further developed as a series of animated stamps which would be printed one sequentially on the margins of the pages of a book, as in flip-books.

## 8. HOLOGRAM

The first and only hologram ex-libris made so far was created by Martin R. Baeyens as early as 1990 for Pim Zwiers. This ex-libris is the size of a polaroid picture and is totally black until it is subjected to direct light. Then, a three-dimensional pyramid appears, and a text made with macaroni-letters from a soup, as they have volume. This was made in cooperation with Gent University and Professor Pierre Boone. The bookplate was printed in 100 copies. As it can only be perceived in the presence of light, it is practically impossible to illustrate it. Here, enlarged, is just one of 20 different black and white images that create the original relief montage.

## 9. WITH SOUND

As far as I know, there is still no ex-libris with sound. It could be made inspired by Christmas greeting cards containing a sound chip with a small battery, activated mechanically by opening the card. I wanted to make the first “audible” ex-libris for Benoît Junod, and I recorded his voice saying: “I am Benoît Junod and this book belongs to me!”. Unfortunately, it remained



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a project only, as the only sound chip production companies I was able to reach, in Asia, said they could not take orders of less than 100.000 items!

## 10. LENTICULAR

Recent Lenticular technology gives to a flat image a possibility to achieve convincing illusion of space or a movement. The upper transparent layer made of tiny horizontal or vertical relief lines, reminds us to the funny postcard from the Fifties on which a photograph of a lady winks at us when we slightly turn it up and down. The transparent layer on these cards was consisted of many small elongated two-sided prisms, and the final image was made by two images precisely cut in small stripes and alternately put together again. By moving the card, the small prisms would alternately show the first and the second image.

New Lenticular technology, which can be realized only by using computers, is not using prisms, but equally small elongated lens. Expensive computer programmes make possible to interpolate up to 150 different images, by a gradual change of angles. The thickness of such an ex-libris is about half a millimeter, thin enough to be put in a book, and the effect is quite surprising. The first (that I know) lenticular ex-libris I have made in December 2006 and dedicated to Mrs. Gordana Fajndovic, who was the owner of the Logotext company in Belgrade, which was dealing with the new technology. The image I used was a scene taken from a short animated movie for children I made several years ago.

## CONCLUSION

With this short and incomplete overview of different, novel ex-libris, I hope to provoke bookplate artists and owners to look widely as possible at this graphic discipline. If this text refers mainly to the works of two artists, it is because these examples were the only ones available. That is why we would be happy if our readers would could send us pictures and texts about their experiments of those of other artists.

## References

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Jaume Carbonell