



# **AMERICAN ACADEMY OF BOOKBINDING**

An International School

Founded 1993

## **Student Diploma Program Guidelines for Fine Binding**

*Updated April 2009*

# THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF BOOKBINDING

## A Program of Excellence

Founded in 1993, the American Academy of Bookbinding offers a program that gives serious bookbinding and book conservation students an opportunity to initiate and improve their skills in a fertile and supportive setting. The Academy holds intensive courses in the fine art of leather binding, conservation and related subjects. The goal of the Academy is to graduate professional level binders and book conservators who have the knowledge and skills to produce the highest quality work and the ability to pass on these skills to the next generation. The Academy is unique in the United States in its ability to offer a comprehensive diploma granting program in the study of bookbinding and book conservation, taught by some of the most experienced and highly regarded book artists and conservators in the world. Students have the opportunity to study at either of two locations: Telluride, Colorado, or Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Founders of the Academy are Tini Miura, Einen Miura and Daniel Tucker. The Program Director is Monique Lallier. Current and past faculty members include Monique Lallier, Don Etherington, Tini Miura, Einen Miura, Louise Genest, John Franklin Mowery, Eleanore Edwards Ramsey, Hans-Peter Frölich, Helene Jolis and Don Glaister.

## AAB DIPLOMA OPPORTUNITIES

The American Academy of Bookbinding has designed diploma programs in both Fine Binding and Conservation. This document will outline the requirements for a **Diploma in Fine Binding**.

A student seeking a diploma in fine binding is required to complete twenty bindings through a combination of practical *Course Work* at the Academy, *Elective Course Work* and *Independent Study*.

The student will then chose a *Diploma Project*, consisting of two design bindings with protective enclosures and a research paper. Experts in the field will then jury the Diploma Project and successful candidates will graduate with an official diploma from the Academy.

### Course Work

Students will learn fine binding techniques through a series of courses in which a total of ten books will be realized during five courses. In addition, the student must complete other essential courses. Required courses for all students are as follows:

- Fine Binding (introduction to leather binding, intermediate leather binding and advanced leather binding)
- Decorative Techniques (one week) The student may choose from a variety of courses to fill this one week requirement; it is recommended but not required that the student attend more than just one week of decorative technique classes. Examples of decorative technique classes include: Gold Tooling; Onlays and Inlays; Alternative Decorative Techniques; and more.
- Titling (one week)
- Fine Box Making (one week)

- Note that students may enter the program at different levels, and that curriculum requirements may differ based on personal skills and previous experience.

Through instruction in the above courses, each student will be introduced to the following techniques:

*Bookbinding techniques:*

- sewing & forwarding
- edge decoration
- headbands
- board shaping
- leather work (overall, and with attention to interior & exterior joints)
- headcaps
- corners
- titling

*Design techniques:*

- relationship between design and book
- design
- execution of design

*Fine box making techniques:*

- drop spine box
- clamshell box

To assist a student in understanding his or her skills, a review is held at the end of each course taken. During this 'review,' the student will receive a numerical grade from 1-5, with 5 being excellent. The instructor bases a student's grade on:

- understanding of techniques
- quality of work
- rate of performance
- skill development

During this review process, a student's weakness in a particular area or areas is explained. This becomes a focal point of the 'homework'. (For example, if the instructor feels the student needs to practice his or her design with onlays, the student's homework might be "Full leather binding with onlay work.")

These assignments will be detailed in the *Certificate of Course Completion*. This is a document that verifies the student's participation in an AAB course and lists the student's grade, as well as any other instructor comments. It is sent to the student after the completion of a course. It also serves as the yearly diploma guide for both the student and the administration of the Academy. Copies of all certificates are kept on file at the Academy for later review during the diploma evaluation period.

### **Independent Study**

As well as the ten books produced in class, each student will make ten 'homework' books independently. All books produced at home will demonstrate the techniques learned in each course.

Students will complete their homework assignments before the next class they attend. Work completed at home should be sent to the instructor for review following each class – one book should be sent within 6 months and any others within 12 months. Homework is critical to the development of each student and is taken seriously by Academy instructors. Documentation of homework assignments is the responsibility of the student. Please contact the Academy to make sure your homework assignments are being properly recorded.

### **Additional Courses**

The Academy offers a variety of courses that students are encouraged to take, though they are not required for the diploma. The additional courses are meant to enhance training, giving the student a stronger and broader background in fine bookbinding. For example, courses may be offered in German Style Leather Binding, Alternative Designs for Leather, Decorated Paper,

Vellum Binding, Millimeter Binding, and other relevant classes. These “extracurricular” courses are taught by permanent faculty and visiting experts.

### **The Student as a Candidate for Diploma**

After required course work is completed, the Director and student will meet to discuss the student’s readiness to be a Candidate for Diploma. They will review the student’s file, including prior grades and ‘homework’. At that time the Director determines if the student is satisfactorily producing independent bindings, or if more work is required. If it is determined that the student is ready to begin work on the *Diploma Project*, possible topics for the Research Paper will be discussed, and a date for the jury process will be proposed. This will enable the student as well as the Director and staff of the Academy to prepare for this process. Note: a final meeting of similar nature must occur *a year in advance* of expected graduation, confirming the jurying date.

By this time, the student will have executed examples of the following bindings:

- a half-leather binding
- a raised band binding
- an example of ‘sunken suede doublures’ in a binding
- an example of edge-to-edge doublures in a binding
- examples of paper, suede and leather flyleaves in various bindings
- two full leather bindings with design and protective enclosures
  - one in a tray and slipcase
  - one in a clamshell box or fine drop spine box

### **GRADUATION PROCESS FOR A DIPLOMA IN FINE BINDING**

The Diploma Requirements for Fine Binding are accomplished through *Required Course Work, Independent Study*, and by study in non-required elective courses offered by the Academy. Upon satisfactory completion of this work, the Director elects the student as a Candidate for Diploma. The student then has one year to produce the *Diploma Project* (two bindings with protective enclosures, and

a research paper.) The Project will be evaluated by the jury. There is an additional filing fee of \$150 required for the jurying process.

## **DIPLOMA PROJECT GUIDELINES**

### **Two Complete Bindings**

The Diploma Project books are meant to showcase the student's creativity and skill at fine leather design bindings. The Candidate for Diploma must produce two bindings with protective enclosures, realized entirely independently, without any exterior help (except for leather paring.) The books should demonstrate the student's skill in decorative techniques such as gold and blind tooling, onlays, inlays, headbands and edge decoration. Both books and protective enclosures should be titled. A single page explanation of the title, materials and techniques used in the binding should accompany each book. The student should also write an artist statement about the design. (Please see attached sample descriptive sheet.) Both projects should reflect the knowledge and skills that the student acquired from the Academy's instruction and independent study.

### **Research Paper**

The Candidate for Diploma must also write a *Research Paper* on a topic approved by the Director. Examples of potential subjects are as follows:

- Historical bookbinding techniques, i.e. "The History of Gilding"
- Noteworthy bookbinders and their careers
- Specialized techniques and their traditions

Academy instructors will be available to discuss and offer suggestions for the topic of the Research Paper. The paper should demonstrate the student's ability to do independent study and write effectively on the subject of bookbinding. It must demonstrate a thorough understanding of the subject matter. The paper should be a minimum of ten pages in length, double-spaced.

## **Portfolio**

Each applicant will submit a comprehensive "Portfolio," which should show a varied selection of different kinds of fine bindings. The portfolio is comprised of photographs of the bindings. The portfolio may include both in-class and homework assignments, and this should be noted with each project. Care should be taken in how the portfolio is displayed.

## **Jurying Process**

Academy Director Monique Lallier and founder Daniel Tucker will select a jury of three or four professional bookbinders. The jury convenes each year in the autumn, during the annual Guild of BookWorkers 'Standards of Excellence' Conference. The Director will not be a member of the Jury but will be on hand to answer the jury members' questions.

The student is required to send his/her Diploma Project and Research Paper to the Director for review. At least eight weeks prior to the jurying process after the Director has reviewed all Project materials, the books will be returned to the student. Copies of the research paper will be forwarded to all jurors. After graduation, a copy of the paper will be kept in the AAB library in Telluride for reference by other students.

The student is responsible for bringing his or her final projects to the jurying. The jurying will take one or two days, with the jurors meeting both privately and with the student in attendance. The jurors will be looking for the student's proficiency in the following areas :

- Fine Binding
- Edge Decoration
- Headband Sewing
- Design and Execution of Design
- Titling
- Protective Enclosures and Boxes

(Please see the Fine Binding Evaluation Sheet, attached, for a more specific list of areas of concern to the Jury.)

After reviewing and discussing the diploma student's bindings and research paper, the panel will arrive at a decision to either grant the student a diploma, or it will provide specific guidelines for further work necessary to meet the required standards.

### **Receipt of Diploma**

The signed Fine Binding Diploma will be sent to the student within three months of the jurying process.

**American Academy of Bookbinding**  
**Diploma Requirements Checklist for Fine Binding**

\_\_\_\_\_ Completion of course work in Fine Binding instruction. This includes the completion of two bindings during each course (a total of ten bindings). The following classes are required:

- Introduction to Leather Binding
- Intermediate Fine Leather Binding
- Advanced Fine Leather Binding

\_\_\_\_\_ Completion of ten bindings produced independently, at home

\_\_\_\_\_ Completion of Additional Courses in:

- Fine Box Making (one week)
- One class in Decorative Techniques (one week). Examples of decorative technique classes include: Gold Tooling; Onlays and Inlays; Alternative Decorative Techniques; and more.
- Titling (one week)

\_\_\_\_\_ Completion of a Diploma Project to be juried:

\_\_\_\_\_ Two books with protective enclosures

\_\_\_\_\_ Descriptive paper with each book

\_\_\_\_\_ Research paper

\_\_\_\_\_ Completion of a Comprehensive Portfolio

## FINE BINDING EVALUATION SHEET

Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Title of Book: \_\_\_\_\_

Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### BINDING EVALUATION (scale of 1-5 with 5 being the highest)

Rounding and Backing	1	2	3	4	5
Squares	1	2	3	4	5
Edge Decoration	1	2	3	4	5
Headbands	1	2	3	4	5
Board Shape	1	2	3	4	5
Leatherwork	1	2	3	4	5
Headcaps	1	2	3	4	5
Corners	1	2	3	4	5
Inner Joints	1	2	3	4	5
Outer Joints	1	2	3	4	5
Doublures / Flyleaves	1	2	3	4	5
Titling	1	2	3	4	5
Design	1	2	3	4	5
Execution of Design	1	2	3	4	5
Tray and Slipcase	1	2	3	4	5
Drop Spine Box	1	2	3	4	5
Clamshell Box	1	2	3	4	5
Overall	1	2	3	4	5

Comments: