

EMBODIED LANGUAGE AND
THE FORM OF THE BOOK

Peter Koch, Printer:

A Forty-Five Year Retrospective Exhibition



September 11 – November 23, 2019



The Grolier Club
47 East 60th Street
New York, NY

CONTENT MATTERS DEEPLY TO PETER KOCH.

He is a thinker first, then an artist, printer, typographic designer, and craftsman whose expressions in type, ink, and paper give form to carefully considered content. Whether inspired by his roots in the American West, his study of pre-Socratic philosophy, his affinity for cowboy surrealism and contemporary poetry, his training in the San Francisco literary tradition of fine printing, or the creative spark of his many collaborators, his books have in common that their form directly reflects and serves the ideas they embody. Koch put it best when he wrote,

My own approach [to designing a book] is to immerse myself in the material. To indulge my curiosity. Once I have all the bits and pieces around me, I begin to see a pattern or a geometry appear. The project becomes alive with possibility, and that life requires close attention and a sympathetic imagination. The challenge is to find simple and elegant solutions to the sometimes-complex problems that the material contains. To cut close to the bone of meaning and content.

Koch's printing career began in western Montana, where he spent his youth steeped in the lore of the American West and witness to its aftermath of environmental and cultural destruction. His aesthetic was subsequently shaped by apprenticeship to the great San Francisco printer Adrian Wilson as well as close study of the work of Jack Stauffacher and William Everson, and matured through various imprints in studios in San Francisco, Oakland, Berkeley, and Venice. The litany of Koch's imprints offers insight into his intelligence and seriousness of purpose as well as his irreverence and humor: Black Stone Press (with Shelley Hoyt-Koch); Peter Rutledge Koch, Typographic Design; Peter and the Wolf Editions; Editions Koch; Hormone Derange Editions; Last Chance Gulch; and Peter Koch Printer. The resulting work has an integrity that arises out of his engagement with ideas. It is richly varied and never predictable.

Forty-five years of creative territory is a vast amount to cover in eleven display cases. For this exhibition, we've selected books, prints, and broadsides from Koch's long trajectory of design thinking and collaborations with artists, type designers, poets, paper-makers, and binders to create works of substance and beauty. We invite you to become acquainted with him and his creative circle through viewing this work.

—Elizabeth Fischbach
Exhibition designer and curatorial partner with Roberto Trujillo,
Dina Pollack, Jonathan Gerken, Susan Filter, and Peter Koch

Philosophers & Poets

☛ Merwin, W.S. *Small Elegies*. Relief prints by Peter Rutledge Koch.
Berkeley: Editions Koch, 2011.

BINDING: Three sewn gatherings casebound in printed black paper-covered boards.

VARIANT EDITION: 42 black paper leaves at front and another 42 black paper leaves at end for a total of [220] pages.

NOTES: Printed on vintage Carta di Amalfi paper and hand set in Romulus Romein and Cursief types cast for the press in 1979 by Joh. Enschedé and Zonen, Haarlem. Bound at the press by Jonathan Gerken in hand-painted St. Armand paper with endpapers and preliminary pages printed in silver ink on black paper as a visual cosmos that act as prologue and epilogue to the elegies.

Late in his long career, W. S. Merwin composed some of the most beautifully touching elegies in the English language. At the suggestion of Robert Bringhurst, Koch contacted Merwin and reminded him that he had printed several of his poems back in the late 1970s and proposed further collaboration. Merwin responded immediately with this small suite of poems.

Small Elegies, a suite of poems by W.S. Merwin, explores the darkness that hovers around the death of a friend. Symbols of night and the black dog permeate the poems; I contemplated this project for years before I attempted to figure the inner dark in book form. Eventually, I composed a series of small typographic prints (compounding black on black abstractions), and added cosmic diagrams and constellation maps of the two dog stars, fore and aft (silver ink on black paper), to represent the night that brackets our brief span on Earth (the thin white section of leaves that support the poems).

—Peter Koch

☛ Brodsky, Joseph. *Watermark*. Photographs by Robert Morgan.
Venice: Peter Koch, Printer, 2006.

BINDING: Six sewn gatherings casebound into limp, brick-red, handmade paper boards. Title printed within double border on paper label, mounted to spine. Housed in a quarter-leather clamshell box covered and lined in black, raw silk with gold ultrasuede lining, and green morocco spine; title stamped in black on spine.

DELUXE BINDING: Sewn over alum-tawed pigskin supports on full, limp vellum. Accompanied by seven additional leaves of photogravures, each leaf with paired photographs from the book; laid into four-flap portfolio of gray paper, with black cloth-covered boards. Clamshell box and portfolio housed in slipcase of ebony; bronze plate on front of slipcase, in high relief: FONDAMETA | DEGLI | INCURABILI.

NOTES: This work is a series of lyrical meditations on time, loss, and beauty by Russian poet-in-exile Joseph Brodsky, paired with photogravures of snapshots of Venice by Brodsky's good friend, painter Robert Morgan. In early September of 2006, Koch, Susan Filter, and associates loaded up a letterpress—on loan from the Tipoteca Italiana Fondazione printing museum in Cornuda (near Treviso)—and brought it to Venice, the

home of the great Renaissance printer-scholar, Aldus Manutius. After floating it down the Grand Canal they installed it in the Scuola Internazionale di Grafica Venezia, where Koch was the visiting artist that fall. An international team of writers, artists, typographers, and printers worked for two months to hand set and print the text in a studio on the San Marcuolo canal. Koch described it as “a private-press book made with no concessions to the market ... it is a pure expression of the spirit of place and the esteem with which we hold our collaborators and friends.”

In his edition of *Joseph Brodsky's Watermark*, Peter has managed to capture both the romance and the loss that characterize Venice without succumbing to either.

—Russell Maret, Introduction to *Against Design*

✚ Buonarroti Simoni, Michelangelo. *Hard High-Country Poems*. English translation by Robert Bringhurst. Drypoint engraving by Joseph Goldyne. Berkeley: Peter Koch, Printer, 2015.

BINDING: Two sewn gatherings casebound in printed paper-covered boards with blue leather spine; cinnamon-brown endpapers. Title stamped in gold on spine. Housed with *The Typographic Legacy of Ludovico degli Arrighi* by Robert Bringhurst, in printed slipcase lined with terracotta-colored paste-down endpapers.

NOTES: *Hard High Country Poems* by Michelangelo Buonarroti Simoni was designed and printed by Peter Rutledge Koch with the assistance of Jonathan Gerken. The presswork was accomplished on a Gietz universal platen press acquired in 2015 from Jack Stauffacher and the Greenwood Press. The Italian poems – selected by Bringhurst – were composed by Michael Bixler in Monotype Arrighi with hand refinements by Mark Livingston. The translation was hand set by Livingston from original foundry Vicenza & Arrighi types cut in 1925–26 by Charles Plumet for Frederic Warde. The preface and colophon pages were composed in digital Centaur & Arrighi. The poems are printed on vintage Amalfi hand-made paper that has been in the possession of the press for twenty-five years. The portrait of Michelangelo by Joseph Goldyne, inspired by a drawing by Daniele da Volterra, was printed on British handmade paper by Robert Townsend. Bookbinding by John DeMerritt.

Given Koch's own predilections, the work is as much an exploration of Arrighi's type as it is the discovery of Michelangelo's poetry. Arrighi culled his type designs from his previous experience as a calligrapher and emerged as the only major type designer who devoted himself exclusively to italic. Various renditions of Arrighi's type are used to frame the context of Michelangelo's poetry, underlining the interplay between text and its representation.

—Mark Dimunation

“A Printer's Geography: Peter Rutledge Koch, Printer and Typographer”

✚ Bringhurst, Robert. *The Typographic Legacy of Ludovico Degli Arrighi*. Photographs by Amelia Hugill-Fontanel. Afterword by Peter Rutledge Koch. Berkeley: Peter Koch, Printer, 2015.

BINDING: Three sewn gatherings casebound into printed paper-covered boards with blue leather spine; terracotta-colored endpapers. Title stamped in gold on spine. Housed with *Hard High-Country Poems* by Michelangelo Buonarroti Simoni, in printed slipcase lined with terracotta-colored paste-down endpapers.

NOTES: *The Typographic Legacy of Ludovico degli Arrighi* was printed to accompany *Hard High-Country Poems*. The type is a custom-made digital variant of foundry Monotype Arrighi, printed letterpress from polymer plates on Hahnemühle Biblio paper by Peter Rutledge Koch with the assistance of Jonathan Gerken. Bookbinding by John DeMerritt.

We do not know whether Arrighi and Michelangelo ever met, but it does not appear unlikely. Arrighi was probably in Rome during most of the time that Michelangelo worked on the Sistine ceiling (1508–12), and Rome was then a small city, its population about the same as that of Bozeman, Montana, or Concord, New Hampshire, in the present day. If Arrighi and Michelangelo did meet, I imagine they talked about letterforms, for both were devotees of the chancery hand. In his mid-twenties, Michelangelo had deliberately reformed his own handwriting, trading the Tuscan mercantile hand he had learned from his father for the humanist chancery script that he would use for the rest of his life. Michelangelo did not write with a scribe's precision and polish, but the hand he created for himself around the year 1500 is nonetheless a very fine example of the kind of script that Arrighi was practicing, teaching, and translating into type a few years later.

—Robert Bringhurst, *The Typographic Legacy of Ludovico degli Arrighi*

☛ McEvelley, Thomas. *Diogenes Defixions*.

Berkeley: Peter Koch, Printer, 1994.

BINDING: One folded sheet and loose chipboard cards, housed in printed chipboard box (the “cheap paper edition”). Box printed in red and black.

NOTES: This edition of the *Defixions of Diogenes* was designed and printed letterpress, in an edition of 500 copies, by Peter Rutledge Koch, assisted by Richard Seibert. Lettering by Christopher Stinehour.

The *Diogenes* project grew directly out of the fragments of the *Herakleitos* project. Koch had long admired the anti-establishment attitude that *Diogenes* cultivated, and McEvelley's selected performance pieces helped him to develop his thoughts concerning art and philosophy and the next step in his Greek opera. While searching in the literature for examples of epigraphy (handwriting) roughly during the time of the early cynic philosophers, he stumbled upon *The Inscriptions of Kourion* and photographs of inscribed lead tablets known as *defixiones*, more commonly known as curse tablets. He was struck by the form's ideal congruence of medium and text, and the thought that *Diogenes* himself could have made these tablets using similar materials available in the 4th century BCE in the dump of ancient Corinth, where he is presumed to have lived. Koch imagined that the object he was creating was a faux-antique housed in a ceramic box or “crypt,” well suited to his archeological impulse to “un-earth” the truth.

Diogenes “The Dog” interpreted philosophy as a life-consuming action, a series of absurdist performances held up to the scrutiny of the people on the Athens streets on which he lived. His behavior as performance philosopher took the antithetical stance to the familiar, a sequence of nose-thumbing moments. . . . [He] accused society in the same inclusive manner that the Montana Surrealists critiqued contemporary culture. Koch conveyed *Diogenes*' gestures in the same fashion that curses were written at the time—on lead tablets, *defixiones*, rather than through lead type.

—Mark Dimunation

“A Printer's Geography: Peter Rutledge Koch, Printer and Typographer”

☛ McEvelley, Thomas. *Diogenes Defixions*.

Berkeley: Peter Koch, Printer, 1994.

BINDING: Loose lead sheets housed in ceramic box by the sculptor Stephen Braun.

What began as a continuation of my fascination with early Greek thinking and letterforms developed into an experimental use of lead as a suitable printing substrate. The feel of cool, heavy, malleable metal is disturbing; lead calls up dark feelings of toxic deformity. The union of materiality and meaning in this case is brutal. *Diogenes* was cursing the vanity of human nature. Lead curse tablets are, like poison, expected to do the dirty work. Together they multiply the effect that I was trying to achieve.

—Peter Koch

☛ Parmenides of Elea. *The Fragments of Parmenides & an English Translation* by Robert Bringhurst. Wood engravings by Richard Wagener. Berkeley, Editions Koch, 2003.

BINDING: Eight sewn gatherings casebound into tan paper boards, printed in black and red Greek text. Red leather spine, black endpapers. Housed in yellow, Japanese-silk-covered double-folding case, lined with burgundy-colored paper. “ΓΑΡΜΕΜΙΔΒΞ” stamped in gold on spine of book and on red leather box spine label.

DELUXE BINDING: Eight sewn gatherings casebound into black, embossed morocco; oxblood red endpapers. Accompanied by ten engravings, each measuring 16" × 10", housed in a two-flap portfolio covered in yellow Japanese silk. Both the portfolio of prints and the book are housed in yellow, Japanese-silk-covered double-folding case, lined with burgundy-colored paper. “ΓΑΡΜΕΜΙΔΒΞ” stamped in gold on spine of book and on black leather box spine label.

NOTES: This edition of *The Fragments of Parmenides* was ten years in the making and involved multiple collaborators. The volume was designed by Peter Rutledge Koch and printed by hand on Zerkall paper at Peter Koch, Printers. Richard Wagener created and printed a series of ten brilliantly-colored abstract wood engravings, five of which were chosen for inclusion in the book. The main text was set by hand at the press in Parmenides Greek, and the translation was set in Monotype Dante at the Golgonooza Letter Foundry, Ashuelot, New Hampshire. The Greek type on the cover is Diogenes. The afterword, which was printed from polymer plates, was digitally composed in Dante Roman and Italic with New Hellenic Greek and Lazurski Cyrillic. Two of these typefaces were designed especially for this edition: Diogenes Greek, a digital type created by Christopher Stinehour based on his hand-lettering for the Diogenes project, and Parmenides Greek, a metal type cut and cast by Dan Carr at the Golgonooza Foundry.

120 numbered copies were bound by Peggy Gotthold in quarter leather and Hahnemühle Bugra paper and protected by a case that is covered in Japanese silk. Twenty-six copies, lettered A to Z, were bound in full leather by Daniel Kelm and enclosed in a dropback box. Each lettered copy includes a boxed suite of ten signed wood engravings by Richard Wagener and a type specimen sheet of the Diogenes and the Parmenides types.

About 500 BCE, Parmenides of Elea, a Greek-speaking resident of southern Italy who was probably a practicing physician, wrote an extraordinary poem—a combination of shamanic narrative and metaphysical treatise, composed in epic verse. Several generations later, this poem made a powerful impression first on Plato, then on Plato's student Aristotle. Their numerous quotations from the work, together with their commentary and responses, have intrigued nearly every later thinker who has had a chance to read them.

Robert Bringhurst's translation of the fragments captures both the philosophic and poetic dimensions of the text. In an incisive afterword, “The Poetry of Philosophy and the Survival of Pagan Thinking,” Bringhurst also tells the extraordinary history of the text: how the poem of Parmenides survived for a thousand years in Plato's library at Athens, then was lost to the paranoia of a fundamentalist regime, and how the fragments, patiently collected by 16th-century scholars, including the printer Henri Estienne II, lay ignored for two more centuries. Two large sections of the poem survive, along with numerous smaller segments.

It was my intention from the very beginning to join the archaic and the classical, and bring them together, filled with light and color, into the twenty-first century.

—Peter Koch

☛ Herakleitos of Ephesus. *Herakleitos*. Translated by Guy Davenport. Berkeley: Peter Koch, Printer, 1990.

ORIGINAL BINDING: Six gatherings sewn through boards covered in paste paper, exposed spine, with title in Greek printed on paper label on front cover. Housed in Timothy Barrett's natural case paper, secured with two button-and-string closures.

LATER BINDING: Thirty-three copies bound at a later time. Six sewn gatherings casebound in printed paper-covered boards; terracotta-colored endpapers. Black Japanese cloth spine. Boards covered in Kabel Greek text, with Koch's device printed in tan, black, and orange.

NOTES: This translation of the fragments of Herakleitos by Guy Davenport first appeared in an earlier version under the imprint of Grey Fox Press. This edition is limited to 113 copies, 100 of which are printed on Nideggen and 13 on Serpa handmade papers. Pastepapers and binding structure by Shelley Hoyt. The Greek text, hand set by Mark Livingston, is composed in Monotype Gill Sans 672; the Latin fragment 103 and the translations are composed in Bembo and Bembo Condensed Italic.

Every fragment of thought attributed to the Pre-Socratic philosopher Herakleitos of Ephesus (540–480 BCE) survived antiquity as a quotation in another author's work. Tradition holds that the texts were originally from a book entitled *On Nature*, and that the philosopher placed a copy of the book at the feet of the statue of Artemis in her temple at Ephesus. Nothing more is known about Herakleitos or his book.

Koch's interest in the enigmatic proto-scientist who spoke like a poet stemmed from his undergraduate studies in the history of philosophy. The idea for the book originated in a dream, in which Koch visited the Library of Alexandria and requested Herakleitos' lost treatise, *On Nature*. Its design reflects a fifth-century Ionian manuscript bound in a manner reminiscent of the earliest known Egyptian codex. The spare typography is an homage to one of Koch's mentors, typographer and printer Jack Stauffacher.

☛ Homer. *The Helen Fragments : from books three & six of Homer's Iliad*. Translated by Richard Seibert. Drawings by Winifred McNeill. Berkeley: Editions Koch, 2003.

BINDING: Fifteen gatherings sewn into printed paper wrapper with exposed, long-stitch sewing on spine, through pigskin supports. Housed in gray paper-covered slipcase.

NOTES: *The Helen Fragments* was printed on Zerkall Bütten-Karten paper in an edition of 150 copies by Max Koch at Peter Koch, Printers. The text was composed in Monotype Quadraat and the epigraph is in Wilson Greek. Each of the fifty fragments is accompanied by a drawing by McNeill. The cover paper, made especially for this edition, is by David Kimball at the Magnolia Papermill. The binding, from the model by Victoria Heifner, is by John DeMeritt.

For me, one of the greatest joys of being a publisher is to successfully bring an artist and a writer together in a collaborative situation. My good friend and painter, the late Troy Dalton, introduced me to the artist Winifred McNeill in the late nineties, and after paying her a studio visit on my very next trip to New York I filed away a plan to collaborate with her if ever the opportunity should arise. . . . When Richard Seibert told me that he was concentrating on [translating] the parts of the *Iliad* that told the story of Helen, I knew it was the perfect occasion for our collaboration.

—Peter Koch

☛ Jeffers, Robinson. *Point Lobos*. Photographs by Wolf von dem Bussche.
Introduction by William Everson.
Oakland: Peter and the Wolf Editions, 1987.

BINDING: Loose sheets laid into four-flap portfolio covered in natural linen with white paper. Title stamped in brown, on spine. Housed inside walnut slipcase.

NOTES: Fifteen poems by Robinson Jeffers compose the text. The verse has been hand set by Larry Van Velzer and Peggy Gotthold in Berthold Wolpe's Albertus and Pegasus types. The introduction and colophon are set in Monotype Van Dijck Roman and Italic types. The poems are printed on the letterpress by hand, with the assistance of Deanna La Bonge on Rives BFK with publishers' chop in lower right-hand corner. Fifteen original photographs by von dem Bussche dramatically mirror the text and document the site of Jeffers' inspiration; they are archivally printed and individually mounted on Rives BFK White. Title piece, introduction, verse-sheets and colophon-sheet, together with the mounted photographs, are housed in a case of native black walnut, handcrafted by the master cabinetmakers at Shigoto-Ya, Inc. The contents are further protected by a removable case constructed by Klaus-Ullrich Rötzscher of acid-free materials covered with German linen.

Hailed as a masterwork, *Point Lobos* was published as a collaboration between the typographer and printer Peter Rutledge Koch and the photographer Wolf von dem Bussche. Jeffers' poems are accompanied by a lengthy introduction by poet, printer, and scholar William Everson. Though the edition was stated as consisting of 125 copies, issued on the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Jeffers, fifty-two were destroyed in the Oakland Hills firestorm of 1991, paring the actual number of the edition down to seventy-three copies.

Livres d'Artistes

☛ Wagener, Richard. *Zebra Noise with a flatted seventh*.
Berkeley: Peter Koch, Printer, 1998.

BINDING: Six sewn gatherings casebound into gray paper-covered boards with matching endpapers. Lettering and wood engraving of an armadillo printed on front cover; orange calf spine with title stamped in gold. Housed in folder of darker gray paper that fits inside slipcase of red and yellow Japanese raw silk, with title printed on gray spine label.

NOTES: *Zebra Noise* was designed and printed on Zerkall paper by Peter Rutledge Koch and Richard Wagener. The text was composed in Ehrhardt type by the Golgonooza Letter Foundry. The book was bound by Peggy Gotthold. Additional support came from Inge Bruggeman, Barry Gifford, Stefanie Marlis, Asa Peavy, David and Jan Peoples, Gregor G. Peterson, and Richard Seibert.

Zebra Noise is a result of the fruitful meeting of the artist with the printer at the Kala Institute in Berkeley in 1996. Since that meeting, Koch and Wagener have collaborated on more than a dozen projects, ranging from bookplates and cover designs to books and portfolios. *Zebra Noise* is composed of twenty-six laconic short fictions, evocative of the West where the artist lives and works, and obliquely related to his abstract/zoological alphabet of twenty-six wood engravings. The subjects range from the armadillo, *Tolypeutes tricinctus*, to the meadow jumping mouse, *Zapus hudsonius*. The finely detailed illustrations enact visual narratives, complementing the accompanying texts, at times in a cryptic manner and in other instances more literally. In addition to the twenty-six alphabetic blocks, twelve abstract engravings printed in red provide backdrops for the initial letters that signal each section.

Anyone who studies the history of printing must eventually develop a taste for woodcut and wood engraving—perhaps the definitive materials for illustrating the typographic book. The sharply cut black lines of type and image, when successfully paired, sing a subtle and yet vigorous duet. My favorite exemplars are the Aldine Hypnerotomachia Poliphili, and the Cranach Press Hamlet. When I first glimpsed the work of Richard Wagener, I was struck like lightning by the mastery and the originality of his work. I could hardly believe my eyes. Here was the master engraver whom I had always been looking for.

—Peter Koch

☛ Kadare, Ismail. *Coffeehouse Days*. Translated By Pirro Dollani. Photomontages by Peter Rutledge Koch. Las Vegas: Rainmaker Editions, 2004.

BINDING: Twenty-eight leaves with printed paper and cloth-covered board on top, all riveted into metal box. Front cover of metal box is hinged and designed to open as a book. “COFFEEHOUSE DAYS | ISMAIL KADARE | RAINMAKER EDITIONS” silkscreened in black on front cover of metal box.

NOTES: *Coffeehouse Days* was designed and printed in an edition of 26 lettered and 99 numbered copies by Peter Rutledge Koch with the assistance of Jonathan Gerken. The typeface was designed (in several states of decay) especially for this edition by Christopher Stinehour and is based on Paul Renner’s Futura Bold. The accompanying photomontages were created by Koch. The original postards of Albania were from the collection of Marina Luz and the galvanized steel clamshell boxes were sourced from G. and L. Manufacturing. The inner cover was bound by John DeMerritt Bookbinding.

☛ Wagener, Richard. *The Sierra Nevada Suite*. San Francisco: The Book Club of California, 2013.

BINDING: Nine sewn gatherings casebound into green paper-covered boards with navy raw silk spine. Front board printed in black and gray; terracotta-colored endpapers. Title printed in orange and black on cream-colored spine label. Housed in matching green paper-covered slipcase with top and bottom edges covered in navy raw silk.

The artist’s proofs and printer’s proofs are unbound gatherings with printed wrapper. An additional suite of four prints is housed in a gray, four-flap paper enclosure. Both the unbound book and the suite of prints are housed in a clamshell box covered in navy raw silk with tan morocco spine.

NOTES: *The Sierra Nevada Suite* was designed and produced in an edition of three hundred and eight numbered copies by Peter Rutledge Koch with the assistance of Jonathan Gerken for The Book Club of California. The wood engravings were printed by Richard Wagener. The typeface, Dante, designed by Giovanni Mardersteig, was originally hand-cut by Charles Malin and adapted for mechanical composition by Monotype in 1957. The text was cast at the letterfoundry of Michael and Winifred Bixler and printed by Max Koch on Zerkall Büttenpapier. Bookbinding and slipcases by John DeMerritt Bookbinding.

☛ Pavelich, Matt. *Himself, Adrift*. Illustrated by Peter Koch. Berkeley: Last Chance Gulch Editions, 2015.

BINDING: Three sewn gatherings casebound in boards covered in marigold-yellow paper, printed in red and black; tan endpapers. Reproduction of title page, with variant line space on front board; Territorial Press “advertisement” on back; title in black on spine.

NOTES: *Himself, Adrift* is the inaugural publication of Last Chance Gulch Editions, a collaborative imprint of Peter Koch, Printers and The Territorial Press, Helena, Montana. The

images are re-configured photographs from historical sources appropriated and altered by Peter Rutledge Koch and Jonathan Gerken. The printing and binding were accomplished by Gerken, Aaron Parrett, Mona Luo, and Dina Pollack at Peter Koch, Printers. The typefaces are an amalgam of antique metal and digital facsimiles including Fell Historical, Copperplate Gothic, Delraye, Greco Adornado, Onyx, Gold Rush, Thunderbird Extra Condensed, etc., all from the collections of the Territorial Press and Peter Koch, Printers. The paper is Zerkall Bütten-Druckpapier.

☛ Koch, Peter. [Ur-text. Volume I]
Berkeley: Peter Koch, Printer, 1994.

BINDING: Eighteen gatherings sewn onto alum-tawed pigskin laces and into a limp vellum cover; fore-edge secured with twisted vellum loops and bone bead clasps. One copy was also bound in a unique exposed-structure binding by Tom Conroy.

NOTES: *Ur-text*, the concrete poem “wordswords,” is both an icon and a meta-text, presented here in a form evocative of a medieval liturgical manuscript book. Koch submitted the text in its original form (wurdz) to Dr. Albert Borgman’s graduate seminar in metaphysics at the University of Montana in 1970, where it served as his final disarticulation from the master’s program in philosophy. Dr. Borgman, at the time, suggested that Koch was perhaps in the wrong department. It wasn’t until twenty-five years later that Koch realized the full potential of that act of disregard, and self-published his thesis. Koch has since worked this theme into the broadside “Discouraging Words” and other prints that denote censorship and the destruction of the Word.

☛ Koch, Peter. [Ur-text. Volume II]
Berkeley: Peter Koch, Printer, 2019.

BINDING: Six sewn gatherings casebound in brick-red covers with sewn headbands.

NOTES: *Ur-text* volume two, a work-in-progress first begun in 1993, is still undergoing changes and permutations. The text is composed of the Book of Genesis translated by Eusebius Sophronius Hieronymus (St. Jerome) known as the Latin Vulgate edition (ca. 405 CE), followed by “The Biological Effects of Nuclear Weapons,” a chapter appropriated and adapted from the third edition of *The Effects of Nuclear Weapons*, compiled and edited by Samuel Glasstone and Philip J. Dolan and published by the United States Department of Defense and the Energy Research and Development Administration (Washington, D.C., 1977). To these core texts, Koch has added extensive marginal annotations and collage elements, including engravings from the history of art and the printed book, and altered photographs documenting 19th- and 20th- century wars and unnatural disasters worldwide.

☛ Koch, Peter. [Ur-text. Volume III]
Berkeley: Peter Koch, Printer, 1994.

BINDING: Five gatherings sewn around brass rods threaded into acid-etched zinc covers. The front cover has “words” designed in the same manner as the text pages, in raised relief, the back cover with random dots also in raised relief. The doublures are lined with patinated brass sheets. Exposed spine. Housed in black, raw-silk case with red, raw-silk lining. Fore-edge flap secured with magnet. The binding and case executed by Daniel Kelm.

The 1990s brought us some of Koch’s most innovative and difficult work. More complex and thoughtful, these books challenge the reader to look beyond the meaning of the text to embrace the object and the

metaphor as a whole. Nowhere is this more evident than in his three-volume work *Ur-text*, a series that expands a poem Koch wrote in the 1970s, “Wordswords,” into a metaphorical reference to poetic language in the archetypal book. Volume 1 (1994), by look and feel, is a fifteenth-century book, bound in vellum and pigskin, the covers held closed by bone clasps. When opened—when revealed—the book immediately demands an investment on the part of the reader, for the superbly set Goudy text type simply plays out a repetition of “wordswordswords” throughout the entire text block. The initial temptation is to dismiss this as some clever post-modern gimmick—the book deconstructed to its most minimal function. But as we return to the work and accept the challenge, we begin to discover the poetry of the object.

—Mark Dimunation

“A Printer’s Geography: Peter Rutledge Koch, Printer and Typographer”

✚ Bowles, Paul. 2137 *Tanger Socco*. Paintings by Ira Yeager.
Berkeley: Del Milion Editions, 2011.

BINDING: Ten loose bifolia with terracotta-colored paper wrapper. Housed in red, raw silk lidded box, lined with turquoise suede. Painting, on canvas, laid into front cover above blue-printed title on yellow paper label.

NOTES: 2137 *Tanger Socco* was designed and printed in an edition of thirty copies for Del Milion Editions by Peter Rutledge Koch and Susan Filter with the assistance of Jonathan Gerken and Erin Fong. Each copy contains eight unique hand-colored relief prints and an original painting by Yeager. The paper is Hahnemühle Copperplate and the typeface is Bitstream Courier Bold. The boxes were made by John DeMerritt Bookbinding.

The text of this work consists of twenty unpublished letters written by Paul Bowles to Ira Yeager over a span of two decades. Bowles’ letters are peppered with bits of gossip about their friends in Tangier and the writers who briefly lived and passed through there: William Burroughs, Peter Orlovsky, Allen Ginsberg, Gregory Corso, Brion Gysin, Tennessee Williams, Gore Vidal, and Truman Capote. Yeager’s paintings were inspired by his memories and travels in North Africa.

The young, dashing handsome artist Ira Yeager arrived on the scene in Tangier, Morocco in the early 1960s. In those days Tangier was an exotic *mélange* of Berbers, French, Arabs, Spanish, libertine American heiresses, Gurdjieffians, artists, drunks, kif smokers, Russian spies, famous writers, Beat poets, and all sorts of riff raff. Yeager called the expatriate community the “Danger Queens.”

—Susan Filter, Introduction to 2137 *Tanger Socco*

Montana Roots & Ephemera

✚ Koch, Peter Rutledge. *The Koch Ephemera*.

Missoula; San Francisco; Berkeley: Black Stone Press & Peter Koch, Printer, 2007.

BINDING: Printed ephemera from 1975–2006 housed in slipcase. Interior has four compartments designed to hold increasingly taller items. Rounded spine, covered in marigold-yellow paper, printed in black with top and bottom edges covered in buckram. Slipcase covered in marbled paper with tan linen along edges.

✚ Koch, Peter Rutledge, Ed. *The Complete Montana Gothic – An Independent Journal of Poetry, Literature & Graphics: 1974–1977*.

Berkeley: Hormone Derange Editions, 2013.

BINDING: Perfect bound in white coated-paper cover. Cover printed in black and red.

[Montana Gothic] was made, like countless other American literary magazines, from typewriter ribbon, impatience, and adrenalin, with a low budget and lower life-expectancy, yet it lasted remarkably well: for three years and six issues.

—Robert Bringham

“Stepping into the Same Stream, and Catching Different Fish: The Printing of Peter Koch”

The Montana Suite

✂ Earling, Debra Magpie. *The Lost Journals of Sacajewea*. Photo-interventions by Peter Rutledge Koch.

Berkeley: Editions Koch, 2010.

BINDING: Three gatherings of Twinrocker and Kozo papers sewn into stiff paper wrapper with fore-edge flap. Sewn long-stitch through red calf supports, with brown and white beads covering each of the four rows of the sewing stations, with two .38 Special spent cartridge casings on spine.

NOTES: *The Lost Journals of Sacajewea* began during the bicentennial of the Lewis and Clark expedition in the spring of 2005. The Missoula Museum of Art had two exhibitions running simultaneously that were critical responses to the celebratory afflatus that customarily surrounds such events. Koch was at the museum to open his exhibition *Nature Morte* when he saw, hanging in the next gallery, a fragment of a poem that accompanied *Native Perspectives on the Trail: A Contemporary American Indian Portfolio*. Koch was introduced to the author Debra Magpie Earling, and based on that fragment, he proposed a collaboration. Over the next few years the two met occasionally and worked sporadically on the concept while they each pursued their own busy and demanding schedules. By 2006 Earling had completed the writing, and in 2009, Koch had collected the last photographs that he wished to accompany the text. Printing began in late 2009 and was completed in January 2010.

The typeface is a version of the historic Fell types presumed to be the work of Dutch punchcutter Dirck Voskens and interpreted by Jonathan Hoefler in a conscious attempt to reproduce the imperfect image that the Fell types left on paper when printed in the 18th century. The Fell types have been described as “retaining a retrogressive old-style irregularity” which somehow seems appropriate given the purpose here in this book. The text was printed on Twinrocker Da Vinci handmade paper at Peter Koch, Printers and bound at the press by Jonathan Gerken and Andy Rottner. The cover paper is from Cave Paper in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Images printed by Donald Farnsworth at Magnolia Editions on Kozo handmade paper and printed with the assistance of Gerken and Tallulah Terryll.

The appearance of the camera on the frontier changed the face of the Western mythos forever. . . . The earliest photographic records of the civilizations of the Missouri and Columbia river basins, often produced in a spirit of boosterish pride in scientific and industrial advancement, present us (perhaps unintentionally) with a haunting and fragmented record of environmental and cultural devastation. Commercial photographers arrived just in time to capture the reduced circumstances, starvation, and squalor on the newly formed reservations of the Upper Missouri and the Northern Rockies. Only a few photographs survive that document the extermination of the bison and the hunter's struggles against starvation (in the 1870s and 1880s) As the “Frontier” disappeared, the “Real West” burst upon the landscape like poisonous mushrooms after a forest fire.

—Peter Koch

☛ Koch, Peter Rutledge. *Nature Morte*.
Berkeley: Editions Koch, 2005.

BINDING: Thirteen folded sheets, laid into clamshell box covered and lined with natural linen; brown morocco spine. Title stamped in black on spine.

NOTES: *Nature Morte* is a portfolio consisting of eleven digitally re-configured pigment prints by Peter Rutledge Koch and enclosed in letterpress-printed bifolia. The images are accompanied by texts selected from the writings of Meriwether Lewis, William Clark, Ross Cox, William T. Horniday, L.A. Huffman, Elers Koch, and others. The text was designed and printed letterpress on Hahnemühle Copperplate by Koch with the assistance of Jonathan Gerken. The title page engraving was hand-colored by Susan Filter. The typefaces are Quadraat, Quadraat Italic, and Futura Extra Bold. The digital pigment prints were scanned, refined, and printed on Hahnemühle Photo Rag at Urban Digital Color in San Francisco. The box was constructed by John DeMerritt.

Nature Morte began as a commission by the Holter Museum of Art in Helena, Montana, for the occasion of the bicentennial of the Lewis and Clark expedition of 1804–1806. Koch's perspective was informed by stories he heard as a child at the knee of his grandfather, Elers Koch, and gleaned from journals in his great-grandfather's library. The prints are composed of layers, the background contextual layer being the Jeffersonian idealism portrayed through the words of Meriwether Lewis and William Clark. Their 18th century perspective is presented over "a nineteenth-century tableau of booster-ridden jargon and photographs of unnatural disasters that developed in the trail of the expedition." Through the juxtaposition of optimism and destruction, he aimed to "bring it all into focus through a twenty-first-century lens of irony and disappointment (my own)."

☛ Koch, Peter Rutledge. *Hard Words I*.
Berkeley: Editions Koch, 2000.

BINDING: Nine relief prints from found photo-engravings, wood and lead types. Loose sheets housed in clamshell box, covered in gray cloth with white Fabriano paper lining. Orange calf spine, with title stamped in black on spine.

NOTES: Koch began *Hard Words*, the first work in what would become the Montana Suite, in 2000. A series of visual one-word poems in the style of wanted posters emerged from Koch's search for a new form to express "what was wanting (wanted) in my own vocabulary of symbols." To produce the work, which he issued in two portfolio editions and a series of exhibition prints, he used lead and wood types, and electroplated copper and zinc photo-engravings—known as clichés—collected from such various sources as a newspaper office near Freezeout, Montana, and a printer's junkyard in San Francisco. His original intention was "to layer a generous serving of irony over what appeared to be archetypal images of (anonymous) western personalities." Eventually, he discovered the identities of two of the people depicted, one of whom is Jeannette Rankin, the first woman elected to Congress.

☛ Koch, Peter Rutledge. *Hard Words II*.
Berkeley: Editions Koch, 2000.

BINDING: Eight Iris prints from found photo-engravings, wood and lead types. Loose sheets housed in clamshell box covered in gray cloth with white paper lining. Orange calf spine, with title stamped in black on spine.

NOTES: Koch experimented with early desktop technology and discovered that digital scans of the type and engravings produced startlingly clear images that appeared three-

dimensional and could be manipulated, sized, and edited to enhance their color. He collaborated with his friend and fellow Montanan Griff Williams, owner of Gallery 16 and Urban Digital Color, to create the digital version of *Hard Words*.

✚ Koch, Peter Rutledge, Adam Cornford, and Jonathan Gerken. *Liber Ignis*. Berkeley: Editions Koch, 2015.

BINDING: Eleven sheets of alternating lead and microfiber sewn with black linen thread. Housed in clamshell box covered in dark gray cloth. Copper plate, with title, adhered to front board. Upper tray lined with black paper, printed in silver. Bottom tray lined with black felt, with painted wood support.

NOTES: *Liber Ignis* is a collaborative project of photo-interventions, appropriations, and constructs conceived and directed by Peter Rutledge Koch. “*Liber Ignis*,” a collage/poem composed in counterpoint to the images, was written by Adam Cornford. Engineering and artist contributions including image manipulation, surface engineering, binding structure, and aid in the execution of every stage of production by Jonathan Gerken.

Liber Ignis consists of six .033" lead sheets printed at Magnolia Editions on a UV-cured acrylic flatbed press. The text was composed in Fell Roman and Italic with Rockwell titling and printed letterpress on treated Evolon split microfiber sheets interleaved with industrial felt. The binding is constructed with soldered copper tubing and linen thread. Copper covering plate executed by Christopher Stinehour. Box construction by John DeMerritt Bookbinding. Photographs courtesy of the Montana Historical Society, Butte-Silverbow Public Archives, The World Museum of Mining, and the Library of Congress. Warning: Contains lead.

CODEX Monographs

Published in conjunction with the CODEX international Book Fair and Symposium (2007–) under Koch's direction, this series of fifteen essays, conversations, and musings by printers, designers, typographers, librarians, and others addresses wide-ranging topics in the art of the book. The series and their covers were among the AIGA 50 Books of the Year award winners in 2012.

✚ Bringhurst, Robert. *Why There Are Pages and Why They Must Turn*. CODE(X) + 1 Monograph Series No. 1. Berkeley: The Codex Foundation, 2008.

“Those quiet, reliable, portable, legible objects are the benchmark incarnation of the book for most of us now, yet we know that, to be real, a book must be more than a physical object. What makes the tangible form of a book rewarding is that it stands for an intangible reality alive in the heart and mind.”

✚ Koch, Peter Rutledge. *ART : definition five (and other writings)*. CODE(X) + 1 Monograph Series No. 2. Berkeley: The Codex Foundation, 2008.

“Contemporary art with its more comprehensive and sophisticated approach to physical and formal properties requires the book itself (full and present in all its particularness) to measure up.”

☛ Loney, Alan. *Each New Book*.
CODE(X) + 1 Monograph Series No. 3.
Berkeley: The Codex Foundation, 2008.

"The chosen book is the chosen community, even in the avant garde. The question remains – how do I value the book without rendering it 'sacred' – even if the sacred is read simply as 'a thing apart'."

☛ Stoltz, Ulrike & Uta Schneider. <usus>, Typography, and Artists' Books.
CODE(X) + 1 Monograph Series No. 4.
Berkeley: The Codex Foundation, 2010.

"<usus> does not design type, we design with type, and the medium we prefer is the book."

☛ Maret, Russell. *Visionaries & Fanatics: Type Design & The Private Press*.
CODE(X) + 1 Monograph Series No. 5.
Berkeley: The Codex Foundation, 2010.

"Within the community of typographic printers the problem of identity is generally assumed to be a problem suffered by book artists, by those other people working outside of the well-defined sanctum of the Fine Press. This comfortable view overlooks a division within the letterpress community that is too often blurred and as a result is the source of my greater concern: Does the private press have a future?"

☛ Mutel, Didier. Translated by Jonathan von Zelowitz. *Acide Brut Manifesto*.
CODE(X) + 1 Monograph Series No. 6.
Berkeley: The Codex Foundation, 2011.

"... the bite-of acid on metal ... the metal plate on paper ... the printed words on the mind..."

☛ Giroud, Vincent. *Parole in Libertà: Marinetti's Metal Book*.
CODE(X) + 2 Monograph Series No. 1.
Berkeley: The Codex Foundation, 2012.

"Futurism was much more than a literary movement: as much as in the writing of the book and its contents, Futurist poets and artists were interested in its making – its design, typography, printing ..."

☛ Marinetti, Filippo Tommaso & Tullio D'Albisola. *Parolé in Libertà: Futuriste Olfative Tattili-Termiche*.
CODE(X) + 2 Monograph Series No. 2.
Berkeley: The Codex Foundation, 2012.

A photo-lithographic reproduction of Marinetti's metal book itself, presented as an illustration to accompany Giroud's thoughtful essay.

☛ Bleitz, Karen. *The Mechanical Word*.
CODE(X) + 1 Monograph Series No. 9.
Berkeley: The Codex Foundation, 2014.

"The Mechanical Word is a series of books in which I constructed a mechanical language composed of cogs, cranks, levers and gears."

☛ Oppen, Monica. *This Is Not a Cathedral*.
CODE(X) + 1 Monograph Series No. 10.
Berkeley: The Codex Foundation, 2015.

This Is Not a Cathedral is a close up view of her unique collection from the founding ideals to the curatorial practice.

☛ Bringhurst, Robert. *The Timeless Art of Allowing Books to Thrive*.
CODE(X) + 1 Monograph Series No. 11.
Berkeley: The Codex Foundation, 2015.

Poet and essayist Robert Bringhurst interrogates (posthumously) the Mexican writer Ulises Carrión by interleaving his responses to Carrión's famous manifesto "The New Art of Making Books" in the form of a conversation.

☛ Manguel, Alberto. *The Universal Dream Library*.
CODE(X) + 1 Monograph Series No. 12.
Berkeley: The Codex Foundation, 2016.

"Karel Capek, in his wonderful book on gardens, says that the art of gardening can be reduced to one rule: you put into it more than you take out. The same can be said of the art of libraries. But the libraries of our material world, however great their hunger, can only hoard existing volumes. We know that every book holds within all its possible readings, past, present and future, but its Pythagorean reincarnations, those wonderful forms which depend on readers to come, will not be found on our shelves."

☛ Campbell, Carolee. *Chasing the Ideal Book*.
CODE(X) + 1 Monograph Series No. 13.
Berkeley: The Codex Foundation, 2015.

"When I inaugurated Ninja Press in 1984 it never occurred to me that it would lead to the kind of investigative bookmaking that has become a steadfast companion in my approach to book design."

☛ Bright, Betty. *Lines of Force: The Hand, The Book, & The Body Electric*.
CODE(X) + 1 Monograph Series No. 14.
Berkeley: The Codex Foundation, 2015.

"There is no question that in the past thirty years, the book arts (and in particular, letterpress printing) have expanded and matured light years beyond my imaginings when I joined the field in 1984."

☛ Strugalla, Johannes. *Between Drawing and Printing*.
CODE(X) + 1 Monograph Series No. 15.
Berkeley: The Codex Foundation, 2015.

"The more the social and political events are cruel and detestable, the more all human beings need to be elevated by spiritual and esthetic values; they need the tonic against melancholy given by the Arts and the creativity against the spirit of death and destruction. I want to contribute to this."

Exhibition Catalogue

☛ Schneider, Nina M. et al., *Peter Koch Printer: A Descriptive Bibliography [1974–2016]*
An illustrated catalogue published in three volumes.
Berkeley: Editions Koch & Stanford University Libraries, 2017

Vol. 1: *Peter Koch Printer: A Descriptive Bibliography (1975–2016)*

Vol. 2: *Hard Words: Memory and Death in the Wild West*

Vol. 3: *Against Design: On Thinking and Printing*

BINDING: Smyth-sewn. Black paper covers printed letterpress in silver and copper inks.

NOTES: Published on the occasion of the exhibition *Peter Koch Printer: A Forty-Year Retrospective*, curated by Elizabeth Fischbach and Roberto Trujillo, Green Library, Stanford University, May 24 – October 15, 2017. Design and production by Peter Koch with the assistance of Jonathan Gerken and Dina Pollack.