

Exploration of Analog Graphic Arts Processes; Book Design, Letterpress Printing, Paper Marbling, Field Drawing

By Susan Lowdermilk, Sabbatical Report
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Exploration: the action of traveling in or through an unfamiliar area in order to learn about it. A thorough analysis of a subject or theme.

Analog: of or relating to a device or process in which data is represented by physical quantities that change continuously — *Miriam-Webster Dictionary*

Advocate the Azure; Book Design, Letterpress Printing

My Spring Term sabbatical project focused on creating an artist's book featuring a selection of poems by Emily Dickinson titled, *Advocate the Azure*. My project involved re-designing an artist's book that I started in 2012.

I worked on my project at the studios of the Minnesota Center for Book Art in Minneapolis, as part of their Artist-in-Residence program. I worked in their studios for ten weeks, from April to June. MCBA is the largest of the three book arts centers in the United States—the others are in San Francisco and New York. I had never been to Minneapolis and was excited to explore the city and the surrounding area. While I had access to the entire facility (I worked in the type setting area, the paper making studio and the bindery), I was also given a private studio that included a one hundred year old Universal I letterpress where I did the majority of my work. I changed the design of my project in order to utilize this machine.



2nd prototype, 2012

My project began as a re-design of an artist's book that I had created in 2012. The text for the first prototype of the book was a selection of five poems by Emily Dickinson. Along with each poem I had designed a tri-fold spread that featured a movable pop-up. The imagery was a series of woodcuts depicting feathers and night sky. The mood was meant to be sublime and mysterious to echo the poetry. The viewer also discovered movable parts as they opened each tri-fold page layout.

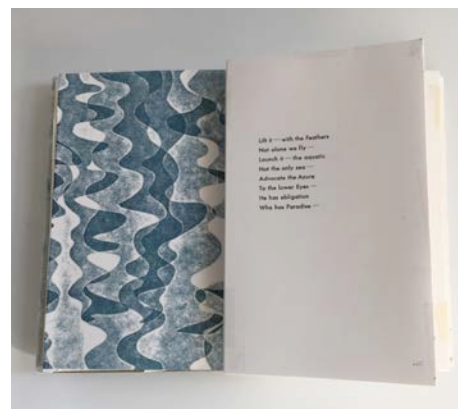
I created what I thought would be the final prototype, but certain inherent technical issues prevented me from making more than one book. I realized that I needed to start over if the project were ever to be realized. My residency at MCBA was an excellent opportunity for me to revisit this project.

As an artist working in the form of the book, I am interested in the idea of the book as a non-linear narrative journey for the viewer/reader. The viewer is meant to explore the pages, with information sequenced and paced at a rate designed by the artist. My artist's book will contain multiple narratives as well as images to support the main idea. I feel that the content in an artist's book is the best driver for the rest of the choices like the book's structure, the materials, and media. In my work, I strive to make all choices intentional to support the text and the main idea. Below is an example of one of Dickinson's poems that I reprinted.

You cannot put a Fire out—
A Thing that can ignite
Can go, itself, without a Fan—
Upon the slowest Night—

You cannot fold a Flood—
And put it in a Drawer—
Because the Winds would find it out—
And tell your Cedar Floor—

I began by re-reading *The Complete Works of Emily Dickinson*, edited by Thomas H. Johnson and for the most part, chose different poems for the project. I focused on the poems where Dickinson explores the natural world— our relationship and reverence for it. My final project will also include information related to the issue of global warming, connecting Dickinson's reverence for nature, juxtaposed with scientific facts and selections from news articles about the degradation of our environment from human caused climate change. I am exploring the paradox of having beauty and reverence for our natural environment along with the awareness of the damaging impact caused by our own lifestyles.



3rd and 4th prototypes

Letterpress

It was a rare opportunity for me to work with an extensive collection of letterpress equipment at MCBA. I hadn't printed on a motorized letterpress for about twenty-five years and believed I needed a re-fresher. So I enrolled in a letterpress printing class on the first day of my residency. In class we learned to print cast metal type as well as digitally designed polymer relief plates. We also learned a process called pressure printing, which is a direct (rather than reversed) printing process that typically yields soft textural images. We worked on personal projects as well as a group project and had lively and enriching critiques of our work. Being new to Minneapolis, I was happy to make friends with the other students and our instructor, Monica Larsen. One student Olli Johnson was also working with pop-up paper engineering. We met frequently outside of class for problem solving sessions on our various projects.



Letterpress II class, MCBA, Monica Larsen, Instructor

I found the experience of working in an active art center like MCBA energizing and enriching. I got to know the other artists working in the studios around me. We frequently shared ideas, technical information and critiqued each other's work. I learned a lot through the artists I met and I shared my skill set with them as well.

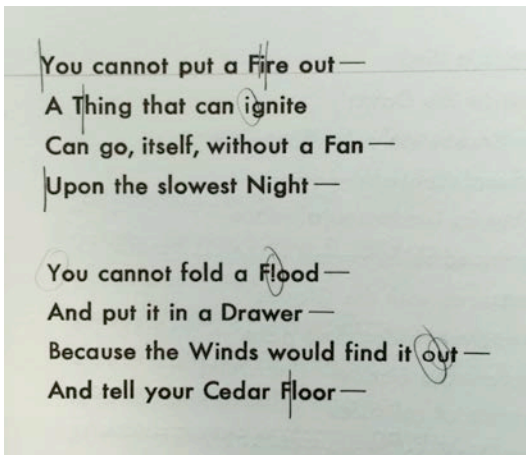
The process of hand setting and printing Dickinson's poems resulted in many hours of meditation on her poetry as I read and reread the text looking for typos, looking for damaged letters, making sure the spacing and leading was optically comfortable and that the inking and pressure was correct. Letterpress was a stable and quotidian printing technology for five hundred years. In typesetting and letterpress printing, each cast metal letterform is placed line by line on the press bed and locked in. The letterforms are inked and printed relief onto the paper.

MCBA has an extensive collection of metal type fonts. I had the option of generating the text digitally and printing it on the letterpress from polymer plates. However, I wanted the experience of working with handset type. This five hundred year old technique is a slow and deliberate process of micromanaging the spaces between the letters, words and sentences. The inherent focus on detail is prone to error and frustrating, as well as meditative and enjoyable. My goal was to create pleasing and comfortable letter and word spacing, leading and page layout in order to attain the most optically correct and therefore readable experience for the reader. My students learn these principals of good typographic design in my Typography I class where they will be applying these principals digitally as graphic designers.



Visiting Artist's Studio, MCBA

Working with the antique letterpress equipment and materials at MCBA was like taking a step back in time. As opposed to manipulating the type and layout virtually in a digital program, I physically had to place tiny pieces of lead, copper and brass amongst the letterforms to create an attractive typographic design. Now, I am excited to share this experience with our students while teaching the basics of setting metal type and printing on Lane's letterpress in our Printmaking studio in building 10. Students will be able to understand the history of the communication arts with the experience of printing on the letterpress along with their training in digital design.



Printing and proofing the poems

Currently, letterpress printing and the book arts are enjoying something of a renaissance. Many institutional art programs as well as community art centers offer letterpress printing, book arts and printmaking. Most are in connection with book arts and printmaking programs. The numbers of Book Arts programs are generally increasing. The gentle clanking of the mechanical parts on an antique letterpress is a familiar and comfortable sound to letterpress printers. Graphic designers often use letterpress for its quintessential antique look, as well as to create innovative contemporary designs. Here at Lane, in our Printmaking studio located in building 10, we have a refurbished one hundred year old Chandler and Price platen press. Our Graphic Designers are enamored with it. They are excited to have an experience opposite to the virtual world of digital design. Using it they are able to understand the principals of typographic design and the typographic terms that originated in the craft of letterpress printing. They are inspired by the physicality of setting type and printing. They begin to understand that language itself is physical. Ink pressed to paper, mind to heart, breath to ear.

Paper Marbling

One of the goals of my sabbatical was to learn paper marbling at MCBA. I learned traditional western paper marbling in two workshops from artist Sally Power. Paper marbling that was used in Europe originated in Central Asia around the 15th century and is traditionally used as decorative end sheets in books or as book covers. It is a process in which colors are floated in a vat containing a viscous liquid called sizing. A surfactant is added to the colors to make them float on the surface. Patterns are created by combing through the colors or by manipulating the surface with a brush. Paper is then laid on the surface to pick up the resulting pattern. I spent many hours practicing the technique, which resulted in at least fifty sheets of marbled paper. I posted some of my marbled patterns on Facebook and a friend shared the post. To my delight, her post was shared by a cultural historian in Istanbul Turkey. I guessed that he might have thought, “Marbling in Minnesota, who knew?” This Winter term, I am able to add paper marbling to my curriculum in my Artist’s Books and Pop-up course. My instructor generously shared her supply information and pattern handouts with us. I will also marble the end sheets and possibly the paper cover in *Advocate the Azure*.



Marbled paper, Flame pattern

Image inspiration; Rivers

While in Minneapolis, I had the opportunity to explore the countryside around the city as well as the rivers in the area like the St. Croix and the Mississippi. These big, ambling Midwest rivers inspired me to create a series of images using the pressure printing technique. Pressure Printing is a technique by which a low relief plate is situated behind the printing paper, and pressed over a flat inked surface using minimal pressure. The result is a direct, not reversed transferred impression from the plate. The look has a soft quality, similar to a rubbing. I experimented with plates made using adhesive backed paper. I created silhouetted shapes of wave shapes, fish and river swallows.



Pressure printing experiments

Sally Schneidkraut-Mars introduced me to writer and Professor Jon Lurie from Macalester College St. Paul, MN. We spent an afternoon canoeing the Mississippi through Minneapolis. Being on the river was an enriching experience that enhanced my research. Lurie shared fascinating information about the natural and Native American history of the area with me.



St. Anthony Falls, Minneapolis

Through my research of the Mississippi river watershed, I learned that the river drains almost half of the continental United States. Settlements along the Mississippi have relied on the river for thousands of years, first for transportation and agriculture, and later for energy generation, to discharge municipal and industrial waste as well as for the transportation of goods. Minneapolis is one of the many riverside cities that have been completely reliant on the river. Minneapolis translates to water (Dakota Sioux) + city (Greek). I also found a personal connection in my research. I learned that my Great-Great-Great-Great-Grandparents, John and Mary Colby traveled by steamboat up the Mississippi river from Memphis Tennessee in the mid 1800's to settle outside of Minneapolis in a village called Cottage Grove. I don't know where their property was, but I visited their graves. I like to imagine that someone is still working their dairy farm.



Mary and John Colby, my Great-Great-Great-Great-Grandparents

Sharing my Skills; Workshops and Presentations

As a part of my agreement as an Artist in Residence, I gave a slide lecture about my artist's books at MCBA. I also shared my knowledge of LED lights with pop-up structures in a one day workshop at MCBA called, Shadow and Light: LED-Illuminated Pop-Up Artist's Book. These activities help introduce my work to the public. I enjoyed a sharing of ideas and a continuing dialog with other artists I met through these activities.

I was also invited to be a Visiting Artist at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design. I gave an artist's lecture about my work to the students and spent the rest of the day critiquing undergraduate and graduate students' work either one on one or in pairs. I noted the similarities and differences in students at our two-year college compared to the students I met at this four year art and design school. I enjoyed the focus, and depth of artistic knowledge that these art majors had. I spent time with members of the graphic design and book arts faculty. We discussed the structure of our various programs. At the library I met with Kay Kroeff-Streng, the college's artist's books librarian. She showed me their teaching collection of artist's books and I brought some of my artist's books to show her.

I volunteered to teach two sessions of pop-up structures to Jessica Crawford's Second Grade class at the City of Lakes Waldorf School in Minneapolis. These eight year olds were absolutely delightful to work with. Their enthusiasm and creative joy was contagious. I was amazed by their creative problem solving abilities. I taught them a few basic pop-up structures and with their active imaginations and enthusiasm, they created very imaginative and original pop-ups with written narratives, and imagery that responded to the 3D forms on their pages. A few worked together to create an advanced three-dimensional pop-up cube with four sides. Others glued the individual pop-up pages together to create multiple page books. They all drew and wrote stories on their pop-up pages, turning them into animals, buildings, gardens, exploding volcanoes. It was a joy for me to teach children for a couple of days.

Other Artistic Inspiration

I visited the studio of painter and scratchboard artist Chris Mars. I have been showing his scratchboard work online to my Illustration students for years, although we had never met. I enjoyed discussing his working process and inspiration with him in his studio. I knew of Chris Mars' work through his wife, Sally Schneidkraut-Mars, a dear friend from my years as an

undergraduate at Colorado State University. Sally is now an artist who works in photography, fiction writing and film production. Throughout my time in Minneapolis, I spent time with them, often discussing art and creative ideas. They were also very helpful in my project, giving me critiques and discussing creative ideas with me.

I also re-connected with my long time friend Jessica Crawford. Jessica and I attended graduate school together at the University of Oregon. She is an educator and a photographer. I stayed with her at her house. We also had many valuable artistic discussions. She was instrumental in giving me feedback about my project.

Contemporary Art Museums

I saw exhibitions at Minneapolis museums such as the Walker Art Museum and the Minneapolis Institute of Art. I also visited many artists' studios and saw exhibitions at a Minneapolis' Art a Whirl Festival.

At the Walker Art Museum, I met with Margit Wilson, who showed me a selection of artist's books from the Walker's collection. She chose books that related to my own work in various ways. I also brought my artist's books to share with her. We discussed the content and attributes of the work.

Handmade Paper Mill

Upon the recommendation of Margaret Prentice, my former UO professor in printmaking, I visited Cave Paper. Cave Paper is run by owner/artists Amanda Degener and Bridget O'Malley. They gave me a tour through their facilities, which were vast and subterranean, highly humid and extensively equipped for all types of papermaking processes. Cave Paper has been specializing in creating handmade and hand dyed paper in their underground facilities in downtown Minneapolis for over twenty years. They are well known throughout the national book arts community. They create some of the highest quality paper in the country paper from a variety of plant materials, dyed with natural plant based dyes.

Non-Profit Centers for Printmaking

My letterpress instructor, Monica Edwards Larsen brought me to Hamilton Ink Spot, a non-profit printmaking studio in Saint Paul, Minnesota dedicated to poster art. It is operated by Monica Edwards Larson as well as Bill Moran, who is also the artistic director of Hamilton Wood Type & Printing Museum. Their 2200 square foot cooperative space gives artists the opportunity to print, exhibit and sell their work. The studio offers gallery space, a retail shop, working letterpress and screen printing equipment as well as a classroom venue. Bill Moran showed us his current project with German type designer Erik Spikerman. Bill is creating large format wood letterpress type of Spikerman's fonts in several sizes using laser cutters and routers. My colleague, Tom Madison is designing wood type with Lane's Graphic Design students. I am excited to share what I saw of this project with him and with my students and other colleagues.

I also visited High Point Center for Printmaking, a large nonprofit printmaking studio. One of their founders and the executive director Carla McGrath gave me a tour of their facilities which features an exhibition space, Intaglio and lithography presses and equipment for their artist

members, and workshop room for students of all ages, as well as a fine print publishing studio. Their studios are newly remodeled beautifully designed and highly functional. The nonprofit owns their 10,000 square foot building.

Rick Bartow & Seiichi Hiroshima Workshop at Lane's Printmaking Studio

In Winter term of 2015, I organized a printmaking workshop at our Lane Intaglio/Relief studio with Rick Bartow and his master printer, Seiichi Hiroshima. This workshop ran in conjunction with an exhibition of Bartow's work at the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art. Rick Williams, Dean of Lane's Art and Applied Design Department is a Board member with the JSMA, and was responsible for making this connection. The workshop was titled, Dynamic Collaborations, a Printmaking Workshop; Drypoint, Chine Colle, Monotype. I was happy to have the opportunity to host the workshop. I flew back from Minneapolis at the end of March to attend it. The weekend was a very inspirational experience. Community members as well as Lane and UO students attended. Students learned to create and print drypoints and monotypes. Drypoint is a process in which an image is created on a plate by scratching the surface. The print is created from the inked scratched image and printed under pressure using a printing press. Many impressions can be pulled from one drypoint plate. The resulting marks have a uniquely soft and feathered look.

Students also learned to create and print monotype prints. A monotype image is created by painting ink on a smooth plate, usually plexiglass. One clear image can be printed. A lighter ghost image can be created from a second pull from the same plate. Bartow worked on his own drypoints and monotypes throughout the weekend. He was available to students to discuss his creative processes and ideas with the students and gave demonstrations of his mark making, monotype techniques and thought process. He frequently discussed his sources of inspiration with the class. At one point he shared a native song with us that he had sung with a coyote on his property in Newport, Oregon. Hiroshima and Bartow worked together throughout the weekend. Hiroshima taught the students by helping them print their drypoint and monotype prints. Students observed Hiroshima as he printed Bartow's prints. Hiroshima taught the students techniques related to printing on a variety of papers and demonstrated a technique called chine colle, which is a traditional process where Asian paper is printed and glued to a base sheet using the press. Hiroshima also demonstrated mezzotint, the technique he uses most in his personal work.

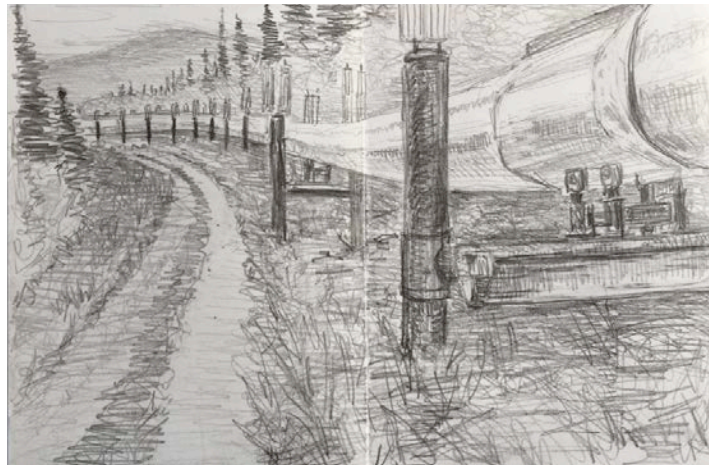
Bartow's prints have been inspirational to me for many years. I was thrilled to spend the weekend with him and Hiroshima and witness their collaborative way of working. I was inspired by the Bartow's commitment and focus to creating work that has his signature freshness, immediacy and directness while being in a busy, crowded workshop environment. I took the joy of this experience back with me to my studio at MCBA. I strived to apply a similar type of focus to my work.

Field Drawing; Alaska

In August, I spent twelve days field drawing on a seventy-five mile section of the Noatak River, which originates in the Gates of the Arctic National Park in Alaska. I drew the landscape daily in

a sketchbook that I created especially for the trip. These sketches have become reference material for the imagery in my artist's book project. I also took photographs to use as reference. However, I have found that working from photographs is a very different experience than drawing from observation. I learn so much more about my subject by drawing directly in the field. The intellectual and creative exercise of recording observation is richer and more dynamic. I typically spent about an hour working on each drawing. Through drawing, I noticed certain shape and pattern relationships that I would not have been aware of, had I not spent this time in an extended period of visual observation. For me, this experience is challenging, demands clear focus and is a meditative time of discovery and visual translation. I constructed my sketchbook as one long accordion. The accordion structure referenced the book as a river and as a visual journey.

The Dickinson poems I chose to print for my project describe sense of joy, reverence and responsibility towards nature. It is my intent to link these poems by including a secondary text throughout the book that will include selections from news articles and scientific facts related to human caused climate change. The imagery in *Advocate the Azure* will be woodcuts influenced by my observations and research on the Mississippi River and the Noatak River.



Alaska Pipeline, Coldfoot, Alaska



Noatak River, Gates of the Arctic National Park

The Noatak River system, located north of the Arctic Circle in Alaska, is thought to be the last remaining complete river system in the United States that has not been altered by human activities. It is studied as an International Biosphere Reserve and is designated as a National Wild and Scenic River. The area has relatively few visitors compared to other national parks and is accessible only by small aircraft or by hiking in as there are no roads or trails in the area.

Climate change is already affecting Alaska's weather. 2015 was the warmest recorded year from Anchorage to Barrow. For example, snow was trucked in for the start of the Iditarod sled dog race in Anchorage last March. This summer was one of the worst wildfire seasons on record, resulting in at least five million acres burned. On the Noatak, we experienced smoky skies from the fires burning in the Arctic region.



Noatak River, Gates of the Arctic National Park

Northwoods Book Art Guild

I was invited to meet the members of the Northwoods Book Art Guild at their July meeting in Fairbanks. The meeting included a workshop at the Fairbanks Folk Arts School where we were taught to print botanicals on paper using paint and ink by artist and educator, Laurel Herbeck. This is a simple and direct printing process that yielded interesting results. There can be many applications, the technique can be layered with other printmaking techniques or stand its own. I will definitely introduce it in my Relief Printmaking classes, my Artist's Books and Pop-up class and use it potentially in my own work. It is an easy way to include color without creating a second plate. Historically and before the invention of photography, explorers recorded their observations by drawing in their field journals. They also took inked imprints of botanicals as direct reference for plant identification. I saw several examples where guild members used botanical printing in their artists' books at the Bear Gallery exhibition in Fairbanks.



Northwoods Book Art Guild Botanical Printing workshop with Lauren Herbeck

At the workshop, I sat across from book artist and educator Susan Campbell. As we were talking we realized an amazing serendipity— that we had both run the Noatak River before and that we had met each other sixteen years ago on the river. She and her husband were stranded and without food after a grizzly bear had broken into their food and equipment cache. Susan's husband, Keith had dropped off their food and equipment ahead of time by small plane. They had hiked to their river put-in to continue their journey down the river by raft. When they got to their cache, they found it destroyed. They duct taped their raft together and made their way about five miles down the river to where they knew bush planes landed to drop off passengers. This is where my husband and I met them. We had given them some of our food and our pilot was able to get word to another pilot who could pick them up. All these years later, I was happy to learn that Susan and Keith had repaired their gear and finished their adventure that summer, floating the river all the way to where it meets the Bering Sea. Meeting Susan again was a thrilling coincidence. I will stay in touch with her as well as with the energetic and dedicated group of artists that I met at the Guild meeting. I hope to go back another summer and share my skills with them and teach a book arts workshop.



Re-meeting book artist and explorer, Susan Campbell

UAF Community and Technical College

While in Fairbanks I was invited to consult with Assistant Professor Thane Magelky, the Head of the Drafting Technology Program at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks Community and Technical College by Annie Vrijmoet, a freelance graphic designer and graduate of our Lane Graphic Design Program. The college is in the design stages of starting a two-year Graphic Design program at their college. I shared information about our Graphic Design program at Lane. I will continue to consult with Vrijmoet as they build their program. She will be teaching courses in their new program.

Reflections and Epiphanies

I met my goal of re-designing my book project. I also purchased the paper and printed the poems in an edition of thirty five. I have yet to work out the imagery for the book and the secondary text related to climate change. My residency allowed me to focus my thoughts and creativity, therefore my project expanded, became richer, more complex and more interesting to me as an artist. It gained layers of meaning and more questions for me to consider. I kept the trifold layout design in the book, but I changed the size, the paper stock and the text layout. I had an enriching experience of printing the poems from metal type that I handset, letter by letter, line by line.

My residency at MCBA was my first art residency experience. I realized that creating art outside of my home studio and away from my community was a valuable experience of artistic discovery. I stretched my boundaries in ways I could not have predicted. My work was immediately affected by my surroundings— being in a new city, working in a new space and interacting with new people, responding to and recording the landscape. I chose not to have a car while in Minneapolis and got around by bus and bike. I have a renewed respect and patience for our students who get around without the immediate convenience of a car. My ten-week residency was long enough for me to let my creative mind drift, to research and explore, to experiment artistically and to try unfamiliar techniques. I often feel a self-imposed pressure to produce work in my home studio because my time to create artwork is most often restricted due to my teaching duties. I found that working in a new environment with unfamiliar equipment caused a creative shift in me. There was opportunity for immediate growth and discovery, along with the doubt and discomfort that came naturally with stretching myself. I created work that I would not have been able to create in my home studio. I could not have predicted how my project took shape. The interest and focus I enjoyed due to my sabbatical leave continued into the summer. Because I had been so immersed, my project naturally expanded to include the landscape imagery that I sketched in Alaska. I had creative epiphanies and discoveries that I would not have been possible, had I not had this sabbatical opportunity. I found new juxtapositions and connections to explore. I came out with more questions than answers. Thus, my experience was rich, profound and artistically exciting to me as I continue to work on my artist's book.

Changes to my Sabbatical Plan from my Proposed Plan

In Eugene, I do not have easy access to letterpress type and presses. I had proposed to explore techniques in non-toxic photo etching processes for intaglio printing. Upon arriving in

Minneapolis, I found that MCBA was much more focused in letterpress and did not have much to offer in intaglio printing. I chose to design and print my project using hand set metal type that I printed on a letterpress. I did learn how to process relief photo polymer plates, which is applicable in intaglio as well as relief processes. However, instead of working with non-toxic photo etching processes for the imagery in the book, that would typically be printed intaglio on an etching press, I experimented with a technique new to me called pressure printing that is typically printed using a letterpress.

I also proposed to further my study of electronic, surface mounted LED circuitry and include LED lights in pages of my book project. During the process of re-designing the artist's book, I realized that it did not lend itself to including the lights.

I traveled to the Noatak River in the Gates of the Arctic National Park in Alaska rather than Glacier Bay National Park in Alaska. My goal remained the same, to draw the landscape everyday to use a reference material in my artist's book project.