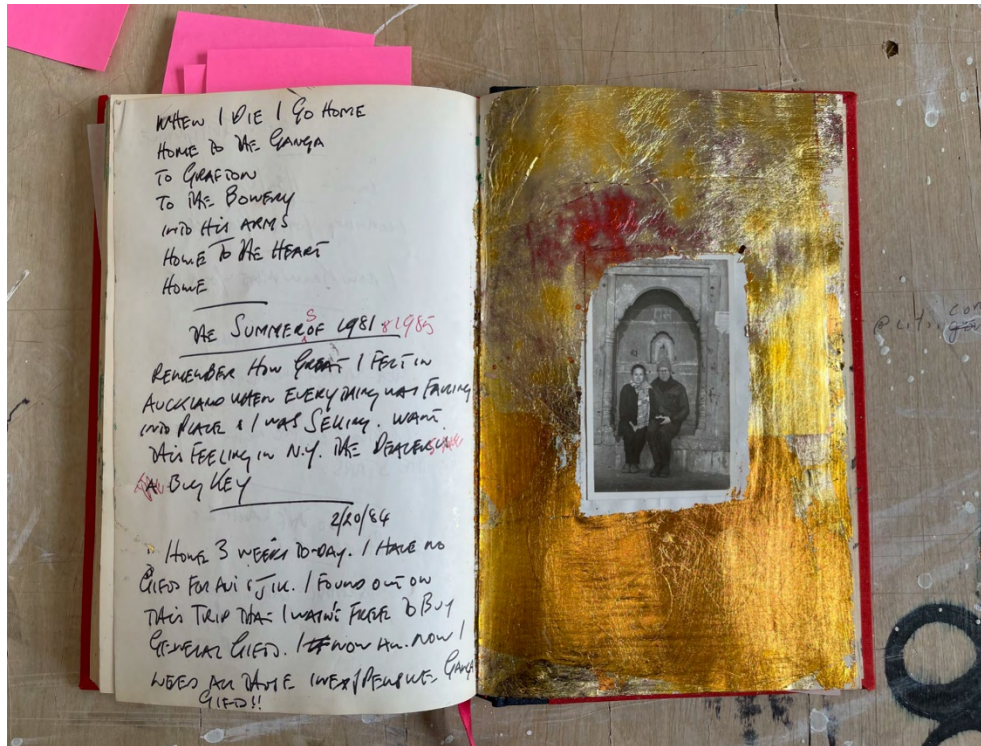


Max Gimblett's Archive of Artist's Books Joins Getty Research Institute Collection

Max Gimblett and Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett donate more than 250 unique volumes



Max Gimblett (New-Zealander-American, b. 1935)
Two-page spread from Lord Ganesh Journal, circa 1984
Pencil, ink, collage, and gold leaf gilding
Getty Research Institute

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Gift of Max Gimblett and Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett

LOS ANGELES – The Getty Research Institute has acquired an archive of more than 250 artist's books. The Max Gimblett Artist's Book Collection, created by painter, calligrapher, and Zen monk Max Gimblett, are a gift by the artist and his wife, scholar and curator Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett. These volumes join the GRI's internationally known Artist's Books Collection.

The stunningly bound volumes are not only unique but notably different from each other. Combining words and images, the journals contain writings, drawings, questions, calculations, small paintings, collages, notes on travel and conferences, and quotes from others. The books document the sources of Gimblett's work as a self-identified "Pacific Rim person" who grounds his practice, particularly his sumi ink painting, in Zen philosophy.

"Taken together as an archive and including Gimblett's personal comments and sketches, these artist's books portray a metaphysical richness of images and ideas," said Marcia Reed, associate director and chief curator at the GRI. "Far from casual jottings, these are carefully composed, supplemented over time, and specifically dated as the artist returns to them."

Born in 1935 to a working-class family in Auckland, New Zealand, Gimblett traveled extensively in Europe, before moving to Toronto, Canada, in the early 1960s and apprenticing with Canadian pottery master Roman Bartkiw. There he met his future wife, Barbara Kirshenblatt, and eventually moved with her to Austin, Texas, where she taught at the University of Texas and he held his first solo exhibition at Dave Hickey's legendary gallery, A Clean Well-Lighted Place.

In 1972, Gimblett and Barbara moved to New York, where he met his mentor, famed New Zealand filmmaker and kinetic sculptor Len Lye. There he began to make what he considers his first mature body of work, the Sacred Geometry paintings and works on paper, and large hard-edge abstract paintings.

Gimblett's practice continued to develop within his books, drawings, and canvases, as he experimented with materials such as silica, acrylic polymers, urethanes, resins, burlaps, linens, and precious metal leaves. In the 1980s, he began making quatrefoil canvases, often gilded to alchemical effect. While the quatrefoil is the hallmark of his shaped canvases, their range has expanded to include shapes of many kinds.

In 1989 Max and Barbara founded Jade Studio to publish unique artist's books and portfolios. For more than 40 years Gimblett has collaborated with artists, writers, and poets, including Robert Creeley, John Yau, Lewis Hyde, and Alan Loney, on drawings, paintings, and unique and limited-edition artist's books.

During the pandemic, as Gimblett was sheltering in his studio where he lived and worked amid his books, he realized that he wished to place the collection as an artist's archive to preserve his legacy for generations to come.

"I began writing and drawing in second-hand books when I was seven years old. Working in sketchbooks and journals has been the consistent and constant thread throughout my life," he said.

Now housed at the Getty Research Institute, the artist's books will be cataloged and made available to researchers.

About Max Gimblett

Max Gimblett, ONZM (Officer, New Zealand Order of Merit), is a painter, calligrapher, and Rinzai Zen monk, who currently lives and works in New York City. Born in 1935 to a working-class family in the Epsom and Grafton neighborhoods of Auckland, New Zealand, he began drawing, as many children do, on the blank pages of his storybooks—most notably and fortuitously, he drew a full-length portrait of "The Alchemist" on the back page of A.A. Milne's *When We Were Very Young* about Winnie the Pooh. He made his first drawing in a book when he was seven years old. These first books that Gimblett's mother brought him, along with her encouragement, set the stage for Gimblett's lifelong commitment to books.

After many years of Buddhist practice—meditation, koan study, and ink painting—Gimblett achieved his present profound relationship to the Zen philosophy of All Mind/No Mind (Mushin) which grounds his practice, especially in sumi ink painting. Before he performs an athletic brush stroke with a Chinese horsehair brush dipped in sumi ink, acrylic paint, or water-based size, on a sheet of luxurious Thai mulberry paper, an open spread in a handmade artist book, or a fresh quatrefoil canvas on the wall, he lets go. He pushes and pulls his brush across the work's surface, engulfed in no mind, his thoughts not fixed on an idea or emotion, and he experiences non-attachment.

As a young man, during the mid- to late 1950s, Gimblett traveled by boat to Europe twice. He worked for Samuel Courtauld's, the rayon manufacturing company, in London, as a management trainee. He returned to New Zealand and worked as a manufacturer's representative in textiles. After 18 months he sailed again for London where Gimblett worked odd jobs in restaurants, eventually becoming a manager. In the early 1960s he moved from Scotland, where he was living, to Toronto and became an apprentice to Roman Bartkiw, a Canadian ceramics master. In Toronto, at the Canadian National Exhibition in 1963, Gimblett met his future wife Barbara Kirshenblatt, who is currently University Professor Emerita of Performance Studies at NYU, and also the Ronald S. Lauder Chief Curator of the Core Exhibition at POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews on the site of the former Warsaw ghetto.

Gimblett studied at the San Francisco Art Institute; then the couple went to Bloomington, Indiana, where Barbara earned her doctorate. In Bloomington, Max began his sumi ink painting practice in both figurative and geometric works. In Austin, Texas, where Barbara taught at the University of Texas, Max continued to paint in abstract mode, using rollers. He opened a solo exhibition at Dave Hickey's legendary gallery, A Clean Well-Lighted Place, and at the Cranfill Gallery in Dallas. During their travels Max was characteristically immersed in a diverse world of ideas: postwar art and ideas of the Abstract Expressionists; works of Old Masters—most notably Delacroix—and the work of Zen masters Sengai Gibon (1750–1837), Tesshū the No Sword Warrior (1836–1888), Hakuin (1686–1769), and other spiritual and philosophical leaders such as Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895–1986), Thomas Merton (1915–1968), Ram Daas (1931–2019), and Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj (1897–1981), whose Shiva Advaita (Nondualism) philosophy, collected and expressed in his book *I Am That*, continues to have a profound impact on him.

Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and Max Gimblett settled in New York City in 1972. There Gimblett met his mentor, famed New Zealand filmmaker and kinetic sculptor Len Lye in 1974; Max has served as a trustee for the Len Lye Foundation for 31 years. In their Bowery loft home, next to the New Museum, from 1974 until 2018, Gimblett continued his Zen koan study, his sumi ink painting practice, and there he began to make what he considers his first mature body of work, the Sacred Geometry paintings and works on paper—large hard-edge abstract paintings consisting of one or two central colored “bars” on a differently colored ground, predating the NeoGeo movement of the 1980s. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett was a residential Getty scholar and Max Gimblett was an associate in 1991-2.

Gimblett's practice continued to develop within his books, drawings, and canvases, as he experimented with materials such as silica, varied acrylic polymers, urethanes, resins, burlaps, linens, and, to connect with the alchemical, gilded precious metal leaves including dyed silvers, platinum, palladium, and a spectrum of golds. Quatrefoils are the innovation in form that he made in the 80s, establishing the hallmark of his shaped canvas. He has expanded his shaped canvases and panels to squares, rectangles, fans, ziggurats, three kinds of ovals, keystones, circles with and without holes at center, squared quatrefoils, barbed quatrefoils, pentafoils, and hexafoils.

He worked closely with David Aldera at New York Central Art Supply on special papers, and he now works with Hiromi Paper in Culver City, to research and source exciting new and established handmade papers from throughout the world for his sumi ink practice.

For the last 20 years Gimblett has taught sumi ink workshops, sharing his experience and knowledge of calligraphic ink painting and the All Mind/No Mind philosophy at institutions around the world including the Guggenheim Museum, New York; the School of Visual Arts, New York; Hosfelt Gallery, San

Francisco; The Margulies Warehouse, Miami; Gow Langsford Gallery, Auckland; Nadene Milne Gallery, Arrowtown; Page Gallery, Wellington; University of Waikato, Hamilton; and Auckland University of Technology, Auckland.

He has had an NEH painting fellowship, and residencies at the Rockefeller Foundation, Bellagio, Italy, where he met Lewis Hyde; Queensland University, Brisbane; Auckland University; Anderson Ranch Art Center, Snowmass, Colorado; and the Laila Foundation in Maui, Hawaii.

In 1989 Max and Barbara founded Jade Studio to publish unique artist's books and portfolios. For more than 40 years Gimblett has collaborated with artists and writers on drawings, paintings, unique and limited-edition artist's books with artists, writers, and poets including Robert Creeley, John Yau, Lewis Hyde, Chris Martin, and Great Dragon. These include the brilliantly designed *Mondrian's Flowers* with Alan Loney, published by Granary Press in New York City in 2002.

Collaboration is an integral aspect of Max's creative practice. His participation in The Art of Remembrance project, in which thousands of 15-inch brass quatrefoils, each with one of four different calligraphic marks etched into their surface, covered the exterior of St. David's Church in Auckland, for three months, continues to capture the imaginations of people across New Zealand. It became the most successful art fundraising project in New Zealand history, raising a record \$1 million.

Max and Barbara now live in a beautiful loft in a historic building on Broadway in SoHo where he writes, draws, and paints his spiritual, gestural, and material-based works. He is represented by Hosfelt Gallery (San Francisco), Gow Langsford Gallery (Auckland), Nadene Milne Gallery (Arrowtown and Christchurch), and Page Gallery (Wellington).

He has had numerous one-person exhibitions including a recent works-on-paper survey based on a gift of his drawings to the Christchurch Art Gallery, *Ocean Wheel* (2020-21), and a career retrospective at the Auckland Art Gallery, *The Brush of All Things* (2004). In 2011, the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh, PA, held "The Word of God," a one-man show curated by Eric Shiner. His masterpiece, *Lion*, an 80-inch quatrefoil, was prominently displayed in Alexandra Munroe's landmark exhibition, *The Third Mind: American Artists Contemplate Asia, 1860-1989* at the Guggenheim Museum in 2009; the work is now in its permanent collection.

Gimblett's work is in the collections of many international institutions: the Guggenheim Museum (New York); Museum of Modern Art (New York); Whitney Museum of Art (New York); Grey Art Gallery, New York University Art Collection (New York); National Gallery of Art (Washington DC); Library of Congress, Dept. of Special Collections, (Washington DC); San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (San Francisco); San Francisco Art Institute (San Francisco); Achenbach Foundation, (San Francisco); Anne Bremer Memorial Library (San Francisco); Stanford University, Cecil H. Green Library, Special Collections (Stanford); Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book Library (New Haven); Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin (Austin); Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (Philadelphia); Bodleian Library, Oxford University (Oxford); Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa (Wellington); Auckland Art Gallery Toi O Tamaki (Auckland); Auckland War Memorial Museum, Te Papa Whakihiku (Auckland); Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū (Christchurch); Dunedin Public Art Gallery (Dunedin); Govett-Brewster Art Gallery (New Plymouth); The Suter Art Gallery Te Aratoi o Whakatū (Nelson); National Gallery of Art (Melbourne); Queensland Art Gallery; Gallery of Modern Art (Brisbane); Art Gallery of New South Wales (Brisbane); Museum of Contemporary Art (Sydney); and the Getty Research Institute (Santa Monica).

Current information can be found at the [artist's website](#).

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