

# Long friendship finds expression in rare book

By ERIC GOLDSCHIEDER

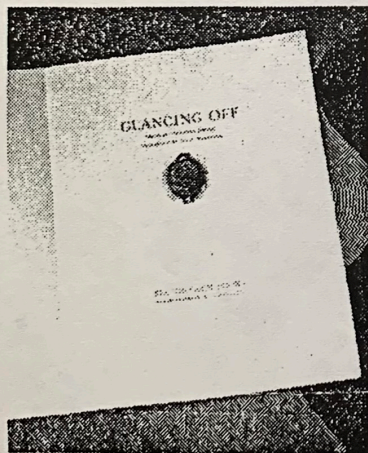
**LEVERETT** — Susan Mareneck started doing engravings when she had her first child 20 years ago.

For an artist, this was a form she could develop without an elaborate studio and it fit into her parenting schedule.

Now she is entering the world of rare books in collaboration with two other women whose lives have been intertwined with hers since they were steeped in the counterculture of the late '60s.

"Glancing Off" is the title of a limited edition handmade book featuring the verse of Vermont poet Veranda Porche and nine of Mareneck's engravings.

The title is from one of the poems, "Glancing Off the Coast." Which is what Porche did upon arriving in Seattle one



time only to turn right around because her father was dying back east.

The illustrations are abstract lines scattered across the page, which taken together impart the artist's impression of the subject.

The book was designed by Cathy Rogers, a would-be revolutionary in the '60s, who came to Western Massachusetts after taking part in the 1968 occupation of Columbia University in New York City.

Along the way she picked up an interest in book binding. This made her a valuable addition to a group calling itself the "Liberation News Service,"

which was feeding articles to alternative newspapers sprouting up around the country.

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The three women got together in a big red farm house LNS had bought in the Franklin County town of Montague.

Rogers has since moved to Seattle. Porche became a founding settler of a Vermont commune; and Mareneck, a former Smith College student, eventually found herself in Manhattan where she teaches art in a private school for girls.

The closeness of the relationship the three women formed in the heady days of the '60s kept them in the same spiritual and intellectual orbit for two decades even though their journeys took them in different directions.

"Glancing Off," Mareneck says with a broad smile, is the "first tangible form we have given our friendship."

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Each of the 50 copies of the book they are putting out under the name "See Through Books" sells for \$650. It is hardly what one would expect of political hippies who once used their radical fervor to decry elitism.

"Many of my friends question the political correctness of doing a limited edition," Mareneck said during a recent interview in her Leverett summer home. "They want to know 'where's the people's copy?'"

That doesn't bother Mareneck, who said she has come to appreciate rare books as a medium.

"I normally do 30-foot paintings but this is something small I can hold in my hand and lend to friends overnight."

The fact that it comes out of a collaborative effort makes it special in other ways. Through working with close friends "the product has been liberated from this ego need so much art work is laden with," Mareneck said.

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The seed for the project was planted in 1976 when Mareneck gave Porche a painting in exchange for a folder of poems. In 1983, Mareneck had her second child. Two years later she rediscovered the folder of poems and that's when the wheels in her head started spinning.

She picked out poems "people could relate to." Selections include Porche's



STAFF PHOTO BY VINCENT S. D'ADDARIO

**BOUND TOGETHER** — Engraver Susan Mareneck confers with bookbinder Dan Kelm at his bindery in Easthampton. Mareneck, a Leverett resident, did the engravings for a limited edition book of poems, "Glancing Off," by her longtime friend Veranda Porche.

musings on a lace curtain, visiting her mother-in-law, canning pears, wintering in Vermont, and the fall equinox.

The project got started with a \$2,000 grant given by the alumni of the school where Mareneck teaches in New York. Part of the money was used to fly Cathy Rogers out from Seattle so the collaboration could begin.

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"Glancing Off" got more support from collectors of Mareneck's work and from others who bought the first 10 copies at a reduced price in advance of production. Now that a new batch of 20

copies is ready for distribution she is busy finding customers.

Her former dorm mates from Smith are buying one for the school's rare book collection in memory of a classmate who recently committed suicide.

Dartmouth College is buying a copy to mark the 10th anniversary of its becoming coeducational.

Later on Mareneck will show copies on visits to such places as the Women's Museum in Washington, D.C., the New York Public Library rare books collection, and the J.P. Morgan Library in New York.