

# ALPHABET



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LETTERS FROM ABROAD. Designed by THE WOODROW STUDIO, LONDON, ENGLAND. © 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12



JOAN  
IVERSEN

GOSWELL, long-time member and notorious book-making firebrand

artist extraordinaire, started making books in the early 1970s and has occupied her unique niche of powerful, immediate imagery, stamped lettering, and the expression of social and political fury in manuscript form since the early 1990s. Joan is also an extensively published haiku poet and former competitive equestrian. She resides in Valencia, Pennsylvania.

In the early days of her career, after years of what she calls, "doodling around, trying to make 'fancy' letters," she decided she'd like to learn "real" lettering. She began classes with Elizabeth Houston at the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts (now Pittsburgh Center for Arts

and Media). There she fell in love with what she found out was called *calligraphy*. Her first lettering hero was British iconoclast David Jones. "Wow!" she thought, "Who made letters that looked like art?! I was hooked." She then decided if letters could be art, she should make her lettering art into books. "I've always loved books. As soon as I was competent enough in calligraphy, I made my first one." She bound it following the instructions in the Dover edition of *Basic Bookbinding* by A.W. Lewis. Then she enrolled in hand-book-binding classes with Jean Gunner at Hunt Library, Carnegie Mellon University. "I learned classical methods, from the basics to designer bindings, using dyed Nigerian goatskin, alum-tawed pigskin, calf vellum, pared inlaid and on-laid leather images, and gold- and blind-tooling." She later took a printmaking course at Chatham College (now Chatham University), and has utilized those techniques ever since. She has attended other occasional classes in various arts like papermaking and terra-cotta sculpture. The techniques that stick always tend to find their way into her books.

# GOSWELL IVERSEN JOAN

HER FIRST books were traditional, but the expansion of subject matter and experimental structures began with classes from Kaz Tanahashi and soon moved towards the wild—an interpretation of "Jabberwocky" and tributes to British punk and psychedelized furniture, before she began mixing her art with her outrage at world events. As she says, "Then the Bushes arrived! That was the beginning of the end. I turned seriously political. I created a bunch of books on them."

Her books have been a platform for social and political commentary on and off for 35 years, since the day the US invaded Iraq in 1991, when she began her first serious political book, *The Tongue of War*. She worked on it daily and finished it the day of the withdrawal six weeks later. "I had a personal interest in that war as my son's friend throughout high school was fighting there. To our relief, he came home alive and well." But the pages of her career have been stamped and bound by the experience ever since. Republican administrations have inspired an amazingly inventive variety of original, clever, intricate, funny, serious, angry, stamped, written, collaged, and sculpted works of graphic visual power and furious expression at the madness of the world.

Despite the unlimited freedom of form her books can take, they are unmistakably hers, due primarily to her use of hand-cut eraser stamps for both illustration and lettering, as well as the shaped and sculpted silhouettes they frequently sport, both open and closed. Rectangles are definitely allowed, but an organic or deliberate

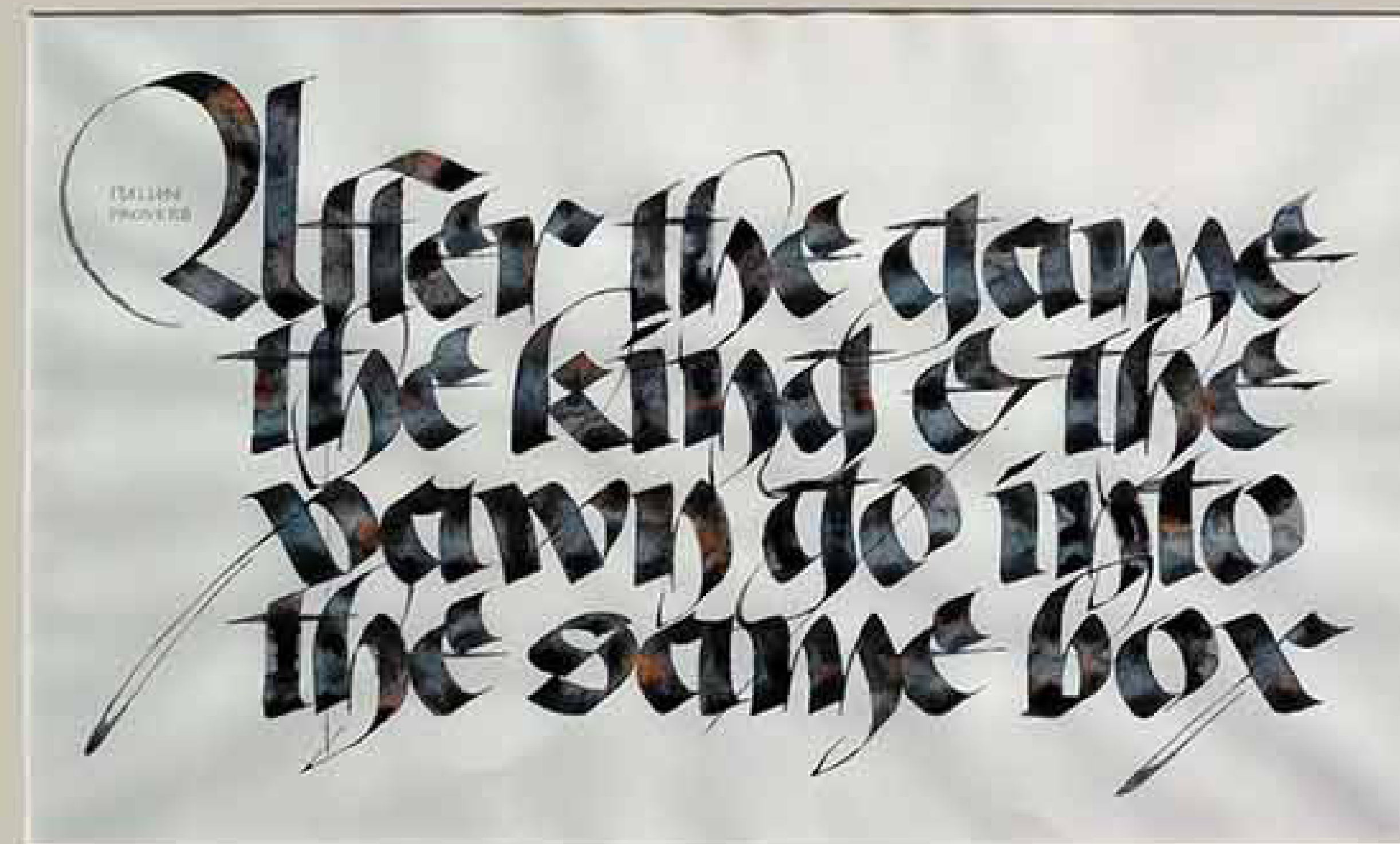
shape is often a primary vehicle. Equally characteristic of her work are her collages,

which can be complex or simple, but the sense of depth can be astounding.

She claims to be biting, serious, satirical, and sometimes downright nasty, but she wants you to laugh, too—seriously aiming to be an editorial cartoonist of a book artist. Even if it's her outrage fueling her efforts, she wants to be amused while doing it. "If I can't chuckle when I'm creating the book, I know it won't work." Sometimes her books start out one way but end up somewhere else. "I like that. It's exciting!"

She grew up in the 1950s, a member of a Republican family, but grew to embrace an identity as a progressive in the FDR tradition, to her family's dismay. "There was the discrimination [in the conservative world] against Blacks and Jews! I could not understand why. Then I became old enough to see that women were 'owned' by their husbands. If a woman being beaten by her husband called a cop, she had no legal recourse. Women were discriminated against not only in jobs, politics, and education but in the most mundane things... not being allowed to eat or drink in some 'men only' areas of a club, restaurant, or bar!" So much of it seemed to her to be just logically immoral. She didn't so much get radicalized as simply recognized her humanity. How could this not end up in her work? "My biggest influence and mentor is Kaz Tanahashi, who taught me to use my art in ways that might influence others to make this violent-world of ours into a more tolerant, kind, and compassionate place."

**Opposite: MIND FLOWS.** Text by Kazuaki Tanahashi. Accordion-fold book, sumi on Hosho paper, collage, eraser-stamp lettering, wooden cover. Collection of Kaz Tanahashi. 10 1/4 x 27 1/2", book open.

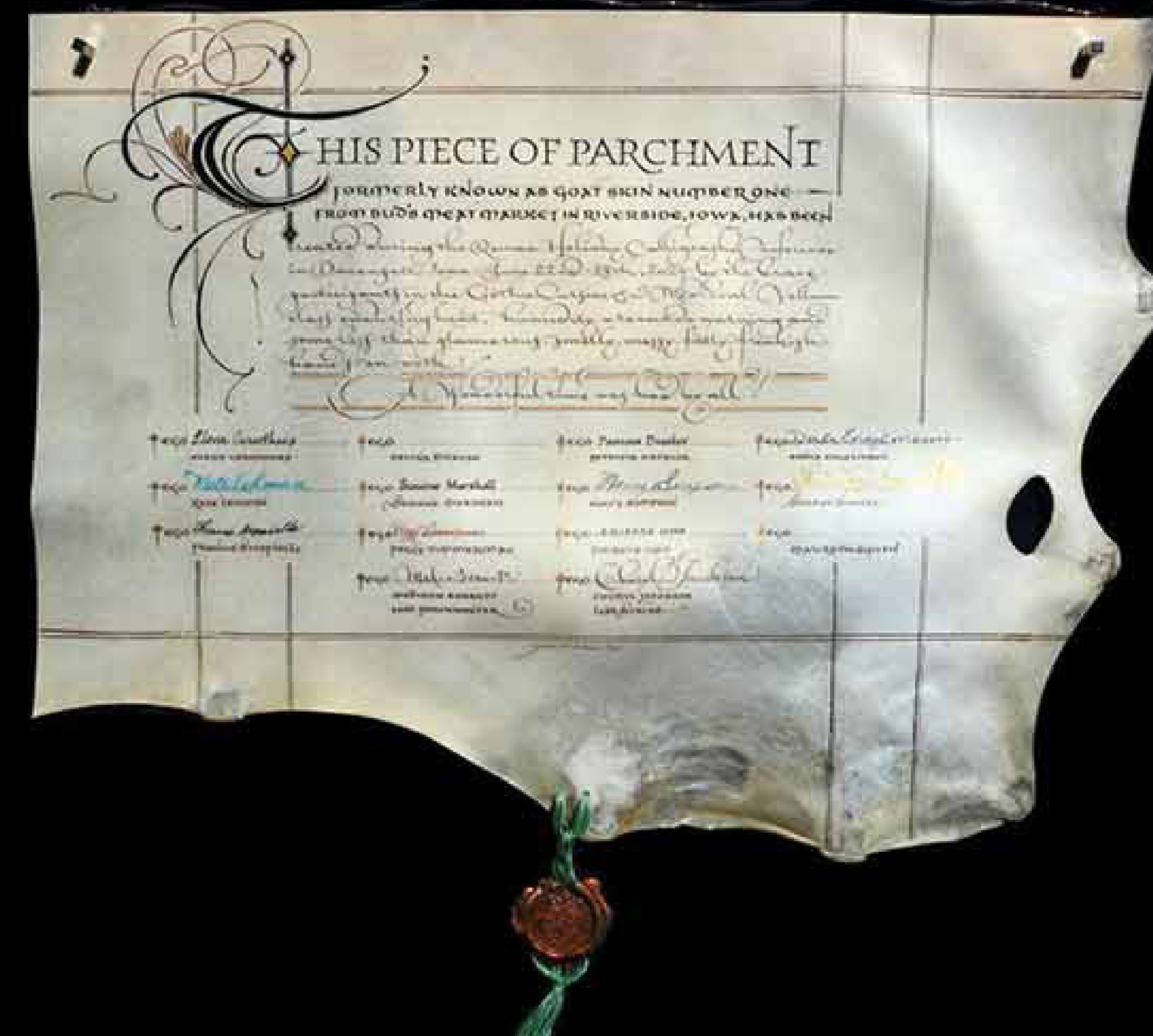


Left:  
JUDY  
DETRICK  
AFTER THE  
GAME

Watercolor  
on Arches  
text wove;  
13 x 20"

Below:  
CHERYL  
JACOBSEN  
GOAT SKIN #1

Walnut ink,  
gouache &  
gold leaf on  
goat skin  
vellum;  
18 x 18 1/2"



Opposite  
top:

DAVID  
BROCK  
DAILY  
SUTRA 4  
Graphite,  
colored  
pencil,  
gouache;  
Hahnemühle  
Ingres &  
Arches  
hot press;  
12 x 4 1/4",  
book closed.

Opposite  
bottom:  
DAVID  
BROOKES  
ASSYRIAN WOLF  
Bleach with  
metal nib on  
black paper;  
12 x 15 1/4"