



# News Release

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For Immediate Release

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## Erica Spitzer Rasmussen Wins the 2018 Minnesota Book Artist Award

***The artist and professor will be honored with an award and a retrospective exhibition for her work The Love Affair.***

December 21, 2017, SAINT PAUL, MN – The Friends of the Saint Paul Public Library announces Erica Spitzer Rasmussen as the winner of the 2018 Minnesota Book Artist Award for her work entitled *The Love Affair*. Sponsored by Lerner Publishing Group, this annual award is presented as part of the Minnesota Book Awards with the Minnesota Center for Book Arts (MCBA), and recognizes a Minnesota book artist or book artist collaborative group for excellence of a new artistic work. Winners also show demonstrated proficiency and quality in the book arts through three pieces of supporting previous work, as well as an ongoing commitment and significant contributions to Minnesota’s book arts community.

*The Love Affair* is a mixed-media sculptural book handcrafted from pieces of old family letters. Rasmussen was inspired to create the piece when she inherited two handmade wooden boxes filled with love letters exchanged between her maternal grandparents in the 1930s. She delicately cut the letters apart and interspersed them, binding them with a Coptic stitch. To retain the couple’s privacy, Rasmussen cut the pages small enough that significant content couldn’t be read by others. She then placed the book inside one of the wooden boxes crafted by her grandfather, in the twisted form of an infinity symbol, to suggest that the couple might continue their communion from life to death.

Members of the award committee praised the project as “playful, clever, and reverential in its reference to the art of love letters, 17th century fashion, stitching, and symbolism.” Said one judge, “the classical essence in Rasmussen’s piece gives way to an avant-garde play on the notion of a book, with the written letters rendered inaccessible, untouchable and unreadable...and yet, the narrative, the history, and the intimacy are mysteriously palpable.”

Erica Spitzer Rasmussen is an artist who creates handmade paper garments, neckware and small editions of hand-bound books. She received her BFA and MFA at the University of Minnesota (Minneapolis), which included coursework in Mexico and Greece. Her current work explores issues of identity and corporeality. Rasmussen is a recipient of an Artist’s Assistance Fellowship (1999) and an Artist’s Initiative Grant (2015) from the Minnesota State Arts Board. Other professional highlights include a papermaking residency in Vienna, Austria (2010), a solo exhibition in Mexico City, Mexico (2012), and a bookbinding residency in Venice, Italy (2016). Her work has been featured in such publications as *FiberArts* magazine, *Surface Design Journal*, *American Craft* magazine, *Hand Papermaking* magazine, and *the Huffington Post*. Rasmussen teaches studio arts as a full professor at

Metropolitan State University in St. Paul, Minnesota. Her artwork is exhibited and collected internationally.

A retrospective exhibition celebrating *The Love Affair* will be on display February 1 – March 13 in the Cowles Literary Commons on the second floor of the Open Book building (1011 Washington Avenue South, Minneapolis). A reception and artist presentation will take place there Friday, March 9 from 6 to 8 p.m. The exhibit will remain open during the Meet the Finalists event for the Minnesota Book Awards on Tuesday, March 13 at 6 p.m. Rasmussen will also receive special recognition and an award at the 30th annual Minnesota Book Awards Celebration on Saturday, April 21, 2018 at the InterContinental Hotel in downtown Saint Paul, sponsored by Education Minnesota.

**About the Minnesota Center for Book Arts (MCBA):**

MCBA's mission is to lead the advancement of the book as an evolving art form. Founded in 1983, MCBA is the largest, most comprehensive book arts center in the world, offering 12,000 square feet of artist studios, classrooms, galleries, and library space. MCBA serves over 81,000 patrons annually through classes, workshops, exhibitions, artist talks, special events, and community engagement.

**About the Minnesota Book Awards:**

Originally created in 1988, the Minnesota Book Awards is now a year-long program that fosters our statewide literary arts community. The process begins in the fall with book submissions and continues through winter with two rounds of judging. Winners are announced at the Minnesota Book Awards Ceremony. Woven throughout the season are various engagement activities and events that promote the authors and connect the world of Minnesota books – writers, artists, illustrators, publishers, editors, and more – to readers throughout the state. In recognition of this and its other statewide programs and services, the Library of Congress has recognized The Friends of the Saint Paul Public Library as the state's designated Center for the Book. For more information visit [www.thefriends.org/mnba](http://www.thefriends.org/mnba).

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