

*In the Beginning Was the Word*, by Sandra Bowden

art selection and comment by [John Kohan](#) in the [November 6, 2019](#) issue



Books, printed pages, lines of calligraphy, and single letters are raw materials for Massachusetts artist Sandra Bowden. Her fascination with the visual aspects of language comes out of her experience as an artist growing up in a conservative Protestant faith community where words took primacy over images and was deepened by her study of biblical Hebrew and the Dead Sea Scrolls. This collagraph print, created from a plate with textured materials on the surface, includes passages from two foundational Hebrew and Christian “in the beginning” narratives about the origins of the universe. In the central panel, the first glimmerings of light shine above primordial waters, whose wind-blown surface is formed from the Hebrew

letters of the creation story in the first chapter of Genesis. The outer white border of the print is embossed with the Greek words of the prologue to the Gospel of John. In the Hebrew scripture, God brings the world into being with a spoken word; in the New Testament, the Word creates all things and takes on flesh to dwell among us. Like marginal notations on an ancient manuscript, text comments on text.