

Bibliographica

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Chester Creek Press by Robert Walp

In *One Writer's Beginnings*, Eudora Welty writes: "I learned from the age of two or three that any room in our house was there to read in, or to be read to . . . It had been startling and disappointing to me to find out that story books had been written by people, that books were not natural wonders, coming up of themselves like grass. Yet regardless of where they came from, I cannot remember a time when I was not in love with the books themselves, cover and binding and the paper they were printed on, with their smell and their weight and with their possession in my arms. . ."

My own early experience with books was somewhat different. I have no recollection of being read to by either of my parents, only by my grandmother, who was Austrian and struggled with the English of the children's books she read to my brother and I at night. Neither do I remember having books among my toys as a child. This strikes me now as odd, since my parents were both educated people who placed value on learning, encouraged us to study hard, and never doubted that their children would go to college. Maybe they seldom read for pleasure themselves and so never read to us. There were books on a book shelf in our family room, but aside from the *World Book Encyclopedia* they seldom left the shelves they stood lined up on, just gathering dust.

Nevertheless, by the time I was in second grade I was an avid reader, and from that time on I clearly remember falling in love with many books that became very special to me. But up to that time the word *book* was pretty much synonymous with *reading* to me. Books were a source of pleasure, and of information, and aside from an occasional cherished hard cover volume or set, the physical object meant little to me. That changed in my last semester at Vermont College in September of 2000, when I began to learn about bookbinding as part of a senior year studio art project.

To be honest I'm not sure how I came to be doing that study. In previous semesters I had studied basic design concepts and typography. I had also read a smattering of things about the design of books. So the germ of the idea was probably formed during that time, but I think when I began the semester my thoughts were still more on the contents than on the physical thing. There was no great moment of inspiration when I suddenly realized I was born to be a

book maker. At least not until the first eight page pamphlet I sewed. Suddenly my eyes were opened to the possibilities of handmade bindings, handmade papers, and the real beauty of handset type impressed into the pages of carefully bound books. That semester began a time when I devoured everything I could about bookbinding by reading, taking workshops in binding and papermaking, and spending every available hour making books in my studio, seeing books in a way I never had before. My interest led me to the two week *Paper and Book Intensive* in 2002 when it was held on Deer Isle, Maine. There I met Steve Miller and first learned about the book arts program at The University of Alabama, where I eventually went to earn an MFA.

Now, several years later, my idea of what makes a good book is still changing and I hope it always will. Today, while I marvel at, and am sometimes excited by the complex and conceptual work of many contemporary bookmakers, my own interests are somewhat more traditional. I believe there are certain properties of books that cannot be ignored. Books need to be designed with the purpose of giving an easily understandable organization to the contents. And they need to be able to withstand the stress of usage for a long time. They have to be easily transportable, and they need to be able to be used anywhere. To read a book outside under a tree, or inside on a couch, or in bed, or on a train, a plane, a bus, or anywhere you feel like being with it at the moment, is an inseparable part of what a book is to me.

By this definition something like a solar-powered handheld display screen that could display, screen by screen, the complete text of a novel or textbook might fit. But it doesn't because there are also things that appeal to the senses about books. The way they feel in the hand. The way the pages sound when they turn. The way you can see the whole text, as if the ideas the book contained had volume and shape in the physical world. The way you can make a mental mark about where a certain bit of information is in a book and go there by turning a whole group of pages instead of just one of a time. All this would be lacking in such an electronic book.

And that is meant to explain why I print the kind of books I do; books carefully designed to make a cohesive whole with paper, type and binding. Books of poetry and prose, bound in the form of a codex, with typography that is hopefully interesting, without becoming the primary focus of attention. Sturdy books

that feel good in the hand with bindings that work well, because they are designed to be read over and over.

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Ottawa Book Arts Fair 2006

by Grant Wilkins

Book Arts Fair 2006 - the Canadian Bookbinders and Book Artists Guild's (CBBAG) annual fair - took place in Ottawa, Ontario on Saturday, June 17th. This was the second time in the last few years that the Book Arts Fair has been set in Ottawa, and CBBAG's current plan is to have the event alternate years between Toronto, where the Guild's headquarters & bindery is located, and Ottawa.

This edition of the Fair saw twenty tables of vendors and exhibitors set up shop for the day at the Library and Archives Canada building on Wellington St, just a couple of blocks west of Parliament Hill. Given Canada's geography and the travel distances involved, most of the vendors at these Fairs usually come from CBBAG's Ontario membership. This time around though, we were lucky enough to have book artist & bookbinder Terry Rutherford in attendance from British Columbia, while Quebec's Lucie Lapierre and Jacques Fournier - from Montreal and Chateauguy respectively - also had tables.

Lucie Lapierre's paper marbling is exceptionally beautiful to see up close, and she is always one of the highlights of any fair she attends. George and Michelle Walker spent the day in Ottawa as well, exhibiting woodcut work from George's Biting Dog Press, and also selling and signing copies of his recent book, "The Woodcut Artist's Handbook". Lise Melhorne-Boe also had a table, showing off some of her remarkable book structures, while Audrey & Kevin from The Papertrail, a papermaking supply shop in Waterloo, Ontario, had a wide range of samples and stock on display. Other notable vendors included Norma Frolander, Peter Sramek, and Beth and Susan from Grace Notes Press in Burlington.

Local Ottawa talent at the Fair included the Ottawa Calligraphy Guild, various members of The Ottawa Press Gang - an informal collective of printers, papermakers & book artists - and Janet Jancar, a bookbinder & paper supplier.

CBBAG itself also had an information booth at the Fair, and set up an exhibit of their "Book Arts Mosaic" project, the Guild's most recent collective work.

The Fair's location was also taken advantage of, with Library and Archives Canada showing a selection of the fine press works from their extensive collections.

One of the most interesting and most appealing things about this edition of the Book Arts Fair was simply the breadth of the work on display. Artist's books, papermaking, fine press printing, woodcut engraving, paper marbling & calligraphy were all present, as well as various types of bookbinding, book conservation and restoration.

An apparently unplanned bonus to the event was the fact that spring edition of the Ottawa Small Press Book Fair was happening on the same day, with the two events running in locations about a fifteen minute walk apart. Some cross-advertising was in evidence at both events, and there seemed to be a fair number of people who took in both fairs.

Traffic at the Fair was characterized by CBBAG veterans as "pretty heavy", with a guestimate of 400+ people coming out to see the show. All of the exhibitors whom I spoke to seemed very pleased with the day's events, and all said they would be back the next time the Book Arts Fair was held in Ottawa.

Tom Killion: An Appreciation

by Skye Hardesty

Tom Killion's engravings look like the work of an alternate-universe Katsushika Hokusai - beautiful landscapes of mountains, coastlines, and forests with ample sky in bright, lush colors. Mr. Killion describes his work as "faux-ukiyo-ë"^[1] and he does use Japanese engraving techniques, but to stress this influence casts his work in an imitative light that isn't deserved. Mr. Killion's work appears more magisterial and crowded, though still with an eye for space, than his Japanese inspiration. He uses text well, making both word and image an extension of each other: his books have the satisfying cohesive quality of an exquisitely illustrated, well-made book. It's surprising how many book artists, printers, and engravers set that goal but don't quite achieve it.

I consider Mr. Killion to be a West Coast artist both in the mundane sense (he lives in California and frequently uses its landscape as the subject of his books) and in a less direct fashion. He comes out of the University of California, Santa Cruz/William Everson school^[2] of book making and his books share some of that aesthetic: excellent printing and illustrations that are intense but at the same time lackadaisical; that is, the understanding of technique is so good that the engravings appear technique-less. Tom Killion's engravings do not look completely technique-less, as the mastery of technique and its evidence on the page is what makes Tom Killion's style his own, but you can see where the mix of training by William Everson and the appreciation of Japanese prints fits in with his art.

If you can find a library that has some of Mr. Killion's fine press books, go see them. They are wonderful and his talent really shines through in his fine press work. He does have two trade editions of his fine press books: *The Coast of California* (1979) and *The High Sierra of California* (2000). I haven't seen *The Coast of California* but I do have *The High Sierra of California* and it is beautiful - a good way to look at his work if you can't go out and see the original. Unfortunately, as with most trade copies of fine press books, the trade edition doesn't quite do the work justice. That's okay though: I have a commercially printed postcard of a Tom Killion engraving, "Timber Top, Big Sur" in my office that I've been glancing at while writing this essay and I can still appreciate the beauty of what he's doing.

I was prompted to write up this appreciation when John and I were both speaking admirably about Tom Killion and we realized that quite a few people have never heard of him, which is a shame. While Tom Killion may not be breaking any new ground in the world of fine press artists' books his work is too gorgeous and too well-done to have just the West Coast cult audience that I imagine he has. It is a pleasure to look through a book where someone cares enough about their craft to produce consistently beautiful and thoughtful work.

To find more information about Tom Killion (and to purchase his prints and books), visit <http://www.tomkillion.com>.

Tom Killion/Quail Press Bibliography

Fine Press

28 Views of Mount Tamalpais (Cowell Press, 1975)

Fortress Marin (Quail Press, 1977)

The Coast of California: Pt. Reyes to Pt. Sur (Quail Press, 1979)

Eastward the Armies (Labyrinth Editions, 1980)

In Medias Res (Adrian Wilson, 1985)

The Poet is Dead (Good Book Press, 1987)

Walls: A Journey Across Three Continents (Quail Press, 1990)

The High Sierra of California (Quail Press, 2000)

Trade

The High Sierra of California: poems and journals by Gary Snyder; woodcuts and essays by Tom Killion; with excerpts from the writings of John Muir. Berkeley, Calif.: Heyday Books; Yosemite, Calif.: Yosemite Association, 2002.

The Coast of California. Boston: David R. Godine, 1988 (and a 2006 pbk. available from Killion's website).

Libraries

Surprisingly, there are a number of libraries in which one can see examples of Killion's work. Obviously, most of the University of California schools and the San Francisco Public Library are good places to try; for those in other parts of the country,

there are books at the Library of Congress, Indiana University, the University of Georgia, Harvard, Dartmouth College, Bucknell University, the University of Alabama, the University of Iowa, or, if you're in England, the Victoria & Albert. There are many others, so if your local special collections has a fine press/book arts collection, ask if they have anything by Tom Killion.

Notes:

(1) <http://www.tomkillion.com/technique.html>

(2) Some people are big William Everson fans, both as a poet and as a printer; others are not (I'm pretty neutral). If you're curious about William Everson as a printer try to get your hands on *Quarry West 32: William Everson and the Fine Press Artists' Book* (also known as *The Poet as Printer: William Everson and the Fine Press Artists' Book*): it gives a good overview of the Man and his Work. If you want to see some of Everson's ex-students' work here are a few examples: Felicia Rice, Moving Parts Press <http://www.movingpartspress.com/>; Peter & Donna Thomas <http://members.cruzio.com/~peterandonna/index.htm>.

A Note from the Editor

First off, my apologies for another late issue; I especially apologize to Robert Walp and Grant Wilkins, who were likely expecting to see their articles in print well before now. There's no point in making excuses, but I will say that the editors have been very busy and I'm sure our readers can appreciate the difficulty in producing a newsletter in one's spare time. Readers may also notice a different design scheme, but this is only temporary (Kira's computer died).

On a more personal note, I've taken a job with the University of Oregon (as the History and Medieval Studies Librarian) and am moving out to Eugene immediately after Christmas. Besides being a very nice professional and personal move, I'll have access to a wider variety of fine press books than I did in Atlanta.

I also would like to use this space to advertise an upcoming event: the CODEX Foundation Book Fair & Symposium, which will be held in Berkeley, California from February 13-15, 2007. The theme for the symposium is "The Fate of the Art, The Hand Printed Book in the 21st Century." More information can be obtained by e-mailing the Foundation: contact@codexfoundation.org. There are also links to registration forms, etc. via our own Fine Press News: <http://finepress.wordpress.com/2006/07/03/codex-foundation-book-fair-symposium/>. Do consider attending, as it looks to be a very interesting event.

We are always delighted to hear from our readers. Want to comment on something you've read? Have an article or book review that you'd like to write for us? Please contact the editors at aeoluspress@yahoo.com.