Modern American Poets and Their Printers

An Exhibition at the Watkinson Library

February 2 to June 15, 2009

The Raether Library and Information Technology Center
Trinity College, Hartford, Connecticut
A Young Birch

Robert Frost
Modern American Poets and Their Printers

I too, dislike it: there are things that are important beyond all this fiddle.

Reading it, however, with a perfect contempt for it, one discovers in it after all, a place for the genuine.

So begins Marianne Moore’s poem in which she explores the values of poetry. Moore was part of a tremendous flowering of creativity in the arts that was linked to modern life and, more specifically, new ways of writing poetry in the 20th century. This exhibition focuses on a selection of poets who broke away from the Romantic traditions of the 19th century. It also explores the independent, literary publishers who printed innovative writing because it was their passion. The exhibition begins with the expatriate writers in Paris of the 1920’s, who exuberantly lived and wrote in an avant-garde style, making it difficult for them to get work published by established firms. Instead, they were befriended, supported and printed by small publishers dedicated to helping new voices be heard. One of the printers of the expatriates was William “Bill” Bird, a Trinity graduate, who eventually sold his collection of these writers to the college. Similarly, the Beat poets of the 1950’s and 60’s and other independent American poets of the 70’s and after have been published by small literary presses.

Many of the presses in the exhibition shared the desire to print the work of promising yet largely unknown writers, an approach requiring a discerning ear for poetry and a willingness to take risks. Some of the presses were even run by the poets themselves. Other selections in the show are by established poets published in special editions by major fine printers, such as the Robert Frost holiday cards produced at the Spiral Press. And finally, toward the end of the century, some printers ventured into work that married text and image in a collaborative effort between artist, printer and poet.
Checklist

Publishing in Paris—the 1920’s

   Inscribed: “To Bill Bird from Bob McAlmon, Seville, June 2, 1923.”

   Copy 1 is the author’s autographed presentation copy to William Bird,
   annotated by Bird.
   Copy 2 has the original printed wrappers.

   “Printed at Dijon by Maurice Darantiere, M.CM.XXIII.”

4. *Contact Collection of Contemporary Writers.*
   Paris: Contact Editions, Three Mountains Press, 1925.
   “Printed at Dijon by Maurice Darantiere, M.CM.XXV.”

5. *Printer’s Notice from Three Mountains Press*

   Copy is no. 118 of 300. Hand printed at Paris by William Bird, amateur
   printer, with the collaboration of Roger Dévigne. *Indiscretions* was the
   first book printed at the Three Mountains Press.

   Paris: Printed at the Three Mountains Press and for sale at Shakespeare
   Copy is no. 66 of 170. Woodcut portrait by Henry Strater.
   “to robert mcalmon and william bird publishers of the city of paris …
   this book is respectfully dedicated.”

   Copy is no. 266 of 350. “This first edition printed … under the
   supervision of and for Caresse Crosby … to be sold at the bookshop
   of Harry F. Marks … New York City and at the Black Sun Press, Paris.”
   
   90 copies printed. Copy 1 is copy E on Japan paper, signed Ezra Pound. Copy 2 is no. 58 of 70 on Roma paper with variant binding.

    
    “200 copies of this book [were] set by hand and privately printed on a hand-press. Each copy has been signed by the author.”

**Publishing in London—the 1920’s**

    
    Printed red and black wrappers. Inscribed by the author: “Mr. H.B. Collamore’s copy of *Poems* Marianne Moore, April 8, 1952.”

    
    120 copies printed at the Curwen Press, Plaistow, London. Drawings are by George Plank. Inscribed: “For Mr. Bacon Collamore, signed with considerable wonder! Marianne Moore, November 7, 1953.”

**The Beat Poets**


    
    From the collection of Robert Kirschbaum.


Pocket Poets series, No. 14.

18. Frank O’Hara, 1926-1966. **Lunch Poems.**
San Francisco: City Lights Books, c1964, 3rd printing.
Pocket Poets series, No. 19.

Pocket Poets series, No. 21.

Pocket Poets series, No. 30.

21. **City Lights Journal.**
No. 1-2. Lawrence Ferlinghetti, editor.


Copy is no. 107; signed by the authors. Relief etchings by Jerome Kaplan.

24. Imamu Amiri Baraka, 1934-. **Preface to a Twenty Volume Suicide Note.**
First edition.

25. Diane di Prima, 1934-. **L.A. Odyssey.**
Printed in an edition of 100 signed, numbered copies.
Cover by George Herms.
The 1970’s

   No. 13 of 100 signed copies. Rubberstamped and photographed by William Katz. “*Mary’s Fancy* was written at the house of the same name January 13th, 1970 on Saint Maartens in the Dutch West Indies.”

   Monoprints by Bobbie Creeley.


29. Diane Wakoski, 1937- *Greed, Parts 5-7.*


K.K. Merker and the Windhover Press

   Graphics by A.D. Moore.


   200 copies printed; signed by the author.
   Linoleum cut by Thomas Kovacs.
37. Warren Slesinger, 1933-  **With Some Justification: Nine Poems.**  

38. **Letter from Kim Merker to Trinity College Library**

   Illustration from: Vesalius’ *De Humani Corporis Fabrica*.


41. Jeffrey Harrison.  **The Singing Underneath: Ten Poems.**  
   Illustrated by Jeremy Harrison, the author’s brother. Designed and printed by Candie Jamerson, Cathleen Micheaels & Renee Sager under the instruction of Kim Merker.

42. Robert Dana, 1929-  **Blood Harvest.**  

43. James Tate, 1943-  **Bewitched: Four Poems (pirated in a way) from the Works of James Tate.**  
   Illustrated by Kim Merker.

44. Gregg Hodges.  **A Music.**  
   Woodcuts by Bridget O’Malley.

45. Kathleen Peirce, 1956-  **Divided Touch, Divided Color: XII Poems.**  
   Woodcuts by Peggy Fitzgerald. Binding designed by Pamela Spitzmueller.

**Biography/Special Editions**

46. Una Jeffers, 1884 or 5-1950.  **Where Shall I Take You To: The Love Letters of Una and Robinson Jeffers.**  
   Copy is no. 116 of 175.


   Copy is no. 30 of 195; signed by the author & artist.
   Hand-colored drawings by Robert Andrew Parker.


Marianne Moore Keepsakes:
51. Silence
52. A Talisman
   Gift of H. Bacon Collamore.

   Copy is no. 681 of 975; signed by the artist. Designed, illustrated and printed by Leonard Baskin at the Gehenna Press, Northampton, Massachusetts. The first printing of White Buildings was by Boni & Liveright, 1926.

Recent Fine Printing
   Copy is no. 179 of 195. Drawings by the poet.

   Copy is no. 35 of 45. Lithographs by Enid Mark.

   From the collection of Robert Kirschbaum.

200 copies designed, printed and bound by Marie C. Dern. Drawings by Carl Dern.

**Verse into Type: The APHA Poetry Portfolio.**


### The Spiral Press and the Robert Frost

#### Holiday Greetings


Holiday greetings series printed by Joseph Blumenthal and the Spiral Press over the years 1929, 1934-1962:

1934. **Two Tramps in Mud Time.** Inscribed: “To H.B. Collamore from his friends Elinor and Robert Frost.”

1935. **Neither Out Far nor in Deep.** Woodcut by J.J. Lankes.

1937. **To a Young Wretch.** Woodcut by J.J. Lankes.

1938. **Carpe Diem.** (The year of Elinor Frost’s death)


1944. **An Unstamped Letter in Our Rural Letter Box.** First edition.


1947. **One Step Backward Taken.**


1949. **On a Tree Fallen Across the Road.** Inscribed “To Charles Green ...” by Frost.


1952. **Does No One but Me at All Ever Feel this Way in the Least.** First edition. Illustrated by Howard Cook.

1957. **My Objection to Being Stepped on.** First edition.
Wood-engravings by Leonard Baskin.
1962. **The Prophets Really Prophesy as Mystics, the Commentators Merely by Statistics.**

**Broadsides**

61. Clare Rossini. **To the Lilac Bush.**

250 copies printed. Woodcut by Jenni Freidman.
From the collection of Clare Rossini.

**American Poets Broadsides.**

63. Archibald MacLeish, 1892-1982. **Silence.**
64. John Crowe Ransom, 1888-1974. **Cloak Model.**
66. Louis Aston Marantz Simpson, 1923-. **Mexican Woman.**
67. Michael Casey, 1947-. **My Brother-in-Law and Me.**
68. John Logan, 1923-. **Poem for a Very Young Drinking Buddy in Albuquerque.**

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The exhibition was curated by Sally S. Dickinson, Special Collections Librarian, Watkinson Library.

Unless otherwise noted, items on display were selected from the H. Bacon Collamore, Charles R. Green, William Bird and general collections of the Watkinson Library.