Books on Exhibition


Moby-Dick by Herman Melville, with 100 wood engravings by Barry Moser, 1979.


The Apocalypse, with 29 woodblock prints by Jim Dine, 1982.


The Big Sleep by Raymond Chandler, with an introduction by Lawrence Clark Powell and photographs by Lou Stoumen, 1986.

Birds of the Pacific Slope, a portfolio of full-scale facsimiles of the 156 surviving bird portraits of Andrew Jackson Grayson, together with a companion volume containing a biography of Grayson by Lois Chambers Stone, with species accounts and field notes by the artist-naturalist, and with a preface by S. Dillon Ripley, 1986.

This exhibit was prepared by Melissa A. Donahue ('89) during May of 1988. We would like to thank Mr. Paul Smithson for graciously loaning us his collection and for providing valuable assistance throughout the display preparation. In addition, we gratefully acknowledge the Arion Press, which permitted us to utilize certain Press designs for our own purposes. The exhibit was made possible by the A.M. Todd Rare Book Room Fund, a growing endowment created by friends of the College.

Printed on 65# Warm White Teton Cover. Typefaces are Garamond and Helvetica. Cover design adapted from a composition by Dieter Roth.

A.M. TODD RARE BOOK ROOM
UPJOHN LIBRARY, KALAMAZOO COLLEGE

Unlike the proprietors of private presses in the past and even today, who develop what they believe is the ideal book and then refine the concept in various editions. . . . I am more interested in a more varied approach. We are not just following the footsteps of our predecessors.

--Andrew Hoyem, founder of the Arion Press

Since the days of the Industrial Revolution, the function of the private press has been that of creating a distinctive work rather than making a large profit, and the challenge to create a truly harmonious fusion of fine craftsmanship, art and the written word still exists for contemporary private presses. A press that has not only accepted this challenge but has endeavored to establish new standards of excellence is San Francisco's vibrant Arion Press.

Founder Andrew Hoyem, poet and printer, has an impressive background that includes experience with fine private presses. Having first been a partner in the Auerhahn Press, which was associated with many of the poets of the Beat Movement, Hoyem soon became affiliated with the Grabhorn Press, one of America's most renowned private presses. In 1966 Hoyem founded a printing house and was joined by one of the Grabhorn brothers, Robert, thus forming the press of Grabhorn/Hoyem. After Grabhorn's death in 1973, Hoyem continued the business under the name Andrew Hoyem, Printer. In 1975 the firm was re-christened the Arion Press, named for the legendary Greek poet, Arion.

Since the formation of the Press, Hoyem and a dedicated band of colleagues (generally no more than several others) have collaborated to design, edit and produce twenty-five works as well as numerous design commissions for other publishers and institutions.

All of the Arion publications are printed primarily by hand and possess a number of distinguishable features. The Press generally uses hand-made paper from one of a few privately owned mills in England, France, the U.S. and Canada. Every effort is made to insure that the paper reflects the artistic intentions for each book; thickness, weight, texture and color are always carefully considered. This concern for compositional integrity extends as well to each book's type, which is hand-set on the premises. In addition, the aesthetic dimension of the type's design and its relation to the subject matter of the book are also weighed. In the case of the Apocalypse, Hoyem uses three different sets of typefaces to denote the voice of the prophet, the voices of God and the angels, and those of minor characters. Moreover, the size of the typefaces varies according to the volume level of each voice.

The Arion Press also approaches the binding process in a number of unique ways. Although standard bindings are done by artisans in the San Francisco area, the more unconventional designs are executed at the Press itself. The plexiglass structure of The Big Sleep proved to be the most difficult binding to construct, while the Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror received no binding at all, but was instead housed in a stainless-steel case.

One of the most notable aspects of the Arion Press is, however, its art work. Art plays a significant role in Arion productions, and a survey of these works reveals a rich variety of artists and artistic methods. Woodblock, intaglio and lithograph are the primary techniques employed, and since the inception of the Press, many well-known American artists have served as Arion illustrators, including Jim Dine, Willem & Elaine de Kooning, Larry Rivers, Barry Moser, Jasper Johns and Robert Motherwell. As evidenced by this impressive roll call, it has become a prime concern at the Arion Press to insure that the value of the work lies not only in the subject matter and the technicalities of production but also in the creation of a book whose structural durability is equalled by its aesthetic impact.

Ultimately, the time-honored traditions of bookmaking are being reinspired by the trends in contemporary artistic and literary thought. By illustrating a successful fusion of tradition and modernity, the Arion Press publications reveal a uniqueness of craft that asserts itself with a truly creative force and vision.
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