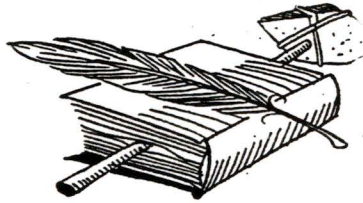


*The photographs are by courtesy of the Board of Trustees V. & A. Museum, London.*

## THE ALCUIN SOCIETY, VANCOUVER

### DESIGN AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE IN CANADIAN BOOKS IN THE YEAR 1993



The undersigned judges spent much of April 9, 1994 examining and discussing the merits and drawbacks of visual characteristics of the books submitted for these twelfth annual design awards by the Society. Books bearing an imprint date of 1993 had been solicited from Canadian publishers and/or designers and nearly three hundred were received, a significantly larger number than the 244 submitted last year. Most submissions consisted of one or a few chosen titles from among a publisher's annual output for the year; some smaller houses or designers appear to submit everything produced. Despite the Society's efforts to publicize these awards, we are aware that there is meritorious work produced which is not submitted to this competition. Yet we recognize the "winners" listed and described below as evidence that excellent design and production work remain possible in Canada at a time when some publishers are sufficiently demoralized to decry the "collapse" of all or part of our book market. Through these awards, we cheer on those who feel able and compelled to attain results which continue to be remarkable even when compared with examples of the best produced anywhere.

The following categories for judging were revised by the Society's Design Awards Committee most recently in 1989:

- General Trade Books: Prose (includes Fiction and Nonfiction)
- General Trade Books: Adult Picture and Photography Books
- General Trade Books: How-To-, Cook-, Craft- and Hobby Books
- General Trade Books: Poetry
- Text and Reference Books
- Limited Editions (numbered and/or signed)
- Juvenile Books other than Texts.

The person submitting is invited to check one of these categories on the entry form accompanying each book but the Society's Committee and the judges reserve the right to assign it to a more appropriate category (as was done in some cases of award winners this year). First, second, and third prizes are available in each category, with ties permitted. A book is judged as a whole on its suitability and harmony (in respect of both the text block and the binding/covering/wrapper) in respect of the choice of types, illustration (if any), layout, and materials used. Their appropriateness is also considered in relation to the book's subject matter, intended audience, etc. This year, a few submissions were received with the suggestion that only part of the book (usually the cover) be considered for an award. This practice would contradict the basis of judging specified above but "honourable mention" has always been a

ranking available to the judges to acknowledge exceptionally noteworthy feature(s) in a book (for example an excellent cover) even if as a whole the book does not attain prize-winning standard. Where a cover-designer is named in the following listing, it does not imply that the cover was separately judged or is better than the rest of the book, but only that the person responsible for that part of the design work was separately, or alone, acknowledged within the book or on the submission papers.

### General Trade Books: Prose (includes Fiction and Nonfiction)

**1st Prize:** *Born Naked* [by] Farley Mowat. Toronto: Key Porter Books. ISBN 1-55013-501-5. [Designer: Scott Richardson; Printer: Friesen Printers]

**2nd Prize:** *Wisteria: A Novel* by Victoria Stoett. Stratford: The Mercury Press; distributed by General Publishing. ISBN 1-55128-000-0. [Designer: Gordon Robertson, TASK; Printer: Coach House Printing]

**3rd Prize:** *Maxwell Bates: Biography of an Artist* by Kathleen M. Snow. Calgary: University of Calgary Press. ISBN 1-895176-25-5; 1-895176-45-X. ((one of these is for ltd.ed. with Courtland Benson binding and portfolio of original prints; in slipcase)) [Designer: Cliff Kadatz; Printer: Friesen Printers]

**Hon. Men.:** *The Emily Carr Omnibus*, introduction by Doris Shadbolt. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre. ISBN 1-55054-031-9. [Designer: Barbara Hodgson; Printer: Friesen Printers]

The use of small photographs as chapter-captions is only one of the pleasing touches in the finely crafted Mowat memoirs. Among the almost one hundred books submitted in this one category (the largest), many of them competent but ordinary, this one stood out because of its careful blending of all the design decisions. The Mercury Press had far more modest sales hopes for its *Wisteria* and economized by using a novel kind of "hard" binding of flush-trimmed raw cardboard but this is redeemed with a tasteful dustwrapper. Its type composition and layout are excellently designed for a short novel. The University of Calgary Press issued the Maxwell Bates biography in both a trade and a limited edition, the latter with a portfolio of four original prints and in a special binding and slipcase. The judges decided that the superior quality of those features common to both editions - treatment of chapter heads, margins, placement of illustrations, etc. - stood out more among the other trade products in this large category. The almost nine hundred pages of Emily Carr's seven books, originally published separately, include both very short "chapters" and full-length illustrated books. Reproducing this diversity in one unified (if not quite sleek) volume was quite a challenge. Although top and



bottom margins are skimpy, the space is generally well used and the type face and captions are inviting.

### General Trade Books: Adult Picture and Photography Books

- 1st Prize:** *Robert Davidson: Eagle of the Dawn*, edited by Ian M. Thom. Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery in association with Douglas & McIntyre. ISBN 1-55054-075-0. [Designer: Barbara Hodgson; Printer: Hemlock Printers]
- 2nd Prize:** [no award this year]
- 3rd Prize:** *Eadweard Muybridge et le panorama photographique de San Francisco, 1850-1880* [par] David Harris en collaboration avec Eric Sandweiss. Montreal: Centre canadien d'architecture/Canadian Centre for Architecture. ISBN 0-920785-41-7 (hardcover) 0-920785-43-3 (paperback). [Designer: Glenn Goluska; Printer: Steinhour Press]. Also published in English.
- Hon. Men.:** *If You're Not from the Prairie ...*; David Bouchard, story; Henry Ripplinger, images. Vancouver: Raincoast Books [and] Summer Wild Productions. ISBN 0-9696097-4-4. [Designer: Ken Budd; Printer: Friesen Printers]

There were notably few exhibition catalogues in last year's competition, probably because galleries were shying away from the financial risk of producing high quality ones. It is good to see two excellent examples among this year's award winners. First prize goes to one co-produced by a gallery and a commercial publisher, which gives it a potentially wider market and may represent a trend for the future. Its generous layout leaves a wide margin for captions and quotations; the three-dimensional nature of many of the objects is suggested by the carefully toned backgrounds in the illustrations. Colour is used as necessary rather than routinely: an economy which comes out as a "plus" rather than an indication of cheapness. The catalogue of the Muybridge exhibition recreates the look and feel of the nineteenth-century photograph, often because a mounting is also reproduced; the final foldout juxtaposes the thirteen photographs of the great panorama stunningly. Finally, Raincoast and Summer/Wild must be complimented on their pleasing juxtaposition of prairie poems and paintings for non-prairie people.

### General Trade Books: How-To-, Cook-, Craft- and Hobby Books

- Hon. Men.:** *The Canadian Traveller's Diary* [Wendy Bond, editor]. Vancouver: Raincoast Books. ISBN 1-895714-23-0. [Designer: Dean Allen; Printer: Kromar Printing]

Fewer than a dozen books were submitted in this category, one which in the past has seen more than its share of disappointing entries. The only one to attract the judges' attention at all is this almost-blank book consisting mostly of lined pages for a traveller's day-by-day "diary" and notes of restaurants, hotels, museums, etc. visited. The minimal text, a travel checklist and reference information, is effectively presented. The cover is attractive and its plastic wrapper useful in the rain.

### General Trade Books: Poetry

**1st Prize:** *Lo Specchio di Peltro; The Pewter Mirror; Le Miroir d'Etain; poesie/poems/poemes* [di] Carlo Toselli. Victoria: Sono Nis Press. ISBN 1-55039-039-2. [Designer: Bev Leech; Printer: Morriss Printing]

**2nd Prize:** *Dwell* [by] Jeff Derksen. Vancouver: Talonbooks. ISBN 0-88922-328-9. [Designer: Kelly Wood; Printer: Hignell Printing]

**3rd Prize:** *Truth, a Book of Fictions* [by] bp nichol, edited by Irene Niechoda. Stratford: The Mercury Press; distributed by General Publishing. ISBN 0-920544-98-3. [Designer: Gordon Robertson, TASK; Printer: Metropole Litho]

**Hon. Men.:** *Marigolds in Snow* [by] Jocelyne Villeneuve. Waterloo, Ont.: Penumbra Press. ISBN 0-921254-55-5. [Designer: Stan Bevington; Printer: Coach House Press]

**Hon. Men.:** *Storm Dancer; Poems* [by] Wayne Keon. Stratford: The Mercury Press. ISBN 0-920544-97-5. [Designer: Gordon Robertson, TASK; Printer: Metropole Litho]

Most of the approximately fifty books of poetry submitted are slim, ordinary, and produced as inexpensively as the limited market for poetry would suggest. It remains the brave publisher, or the more-than-usually subsidized one, who risks the cost of better cover design, higher-quality paper, etc. The trilingual book of Toselli poems is a casebound book with dustwrapper, generous in its spacing on the page: a careful, superior - and expensive - production. Yet *Dwell*, a more clearly commercial book, shows as much attention to details of cover, type/spacing, and layout; the use of the title with each page number is a pleasing subtle touch. The presentation of the work of the late bp nichol is totally in keeping with his original manner and mannerisms in poetry and print. Two honourable mentions are primarily for their books' externals: the cover/endpaper/icon motif of the marigold immediately recommends the presentation of Jocelyne Villeneuve's poems; *Storm Dancer* has a particularly suitable and attractive cover treatment in the context of a standardized, if quality, text treatment.

## Text and Reference Books

- 1st Prize:** *Exploring Vancouver: The Essential Architectural Guide*, text by Harold Kalman, Ron Phillips, and Robin Ward; photographs and book design by Robin Ward; additional photography by Ron Phillips. Vancouver: UBC Press. ISBN 0-7748-0410-6. [Designers: George Vaitkunas and Robin Ward; Printer: Friesen Printers]
- 2nd Prize:** *Financial Accounting: An Introduction to Concepts, Methods, and Uses* [by] Brian G. Gaber [et al.]. Toronto: Dryden, a division of Holt, Rinehart and Winston of Canada. ISBN 0-03-922934-3. [Designer: Dave Peters; Printer: John Deyell Co.]
- 3rd Prize:** *Les oiseaux aquatiques du Quebec, de l'Ontario et des Maritimes* [par] Marc Surprenant. Guides nature Quintin. Waterloo, Quebec: Editions Michel Quintin. ISBN 2-920438-82-4. [Designer: Le groupe Flexidee; Printer: Imprimerie Trigaphic]
- Hon. Men.:** *Proceed with Care: Final Report of the Royal Commission on New Reproductive Technologies*. Ottawa: Canada Communications Group - Publishing. ISBN 0-660-15359-9 (2 vols.). [Designer: Quorum Graphics; Printer: Canada Communications Group Printing Services]

There is much more "design" explicitly noticeable in books in this category than in general fiction, non-fiction, and poetry. A text/reference book is made up of a diversity of elements and often has to struggle to keep its reader's interest which is not normally to read it consecutively. Lack of care is tempting since these books typically sell themselves to a large or small, but motivated, target audience. The Vancouver architectural guide is not a coffee-table book but an expanded version of a successful handbook/field guide, of somewhat smaller page size than those now popular for several cities. The typical page contains three photographs reproduced about the size of a slide accompanied by a caption/description of about ten lines set in Gill Sans. The detail and clarity of the photographs, (even the angles and lighting from which they were taken), are a credit to both the photographer's and the printer's art, the visual separation of all these elements in an exceedingly full but never crowded book belies the most careful design allowing excellent value for its price. The accounting textbook shares the same qualities in very different subject matter. Table layout, discreet but effective use of colour, and the use of margins in which to print definitions all show attention to the problems of making a textbook of over a thousand pages more useful and less dull and/or intimidating. The guide to eastern Canadian water birds shares many of the excellent features of the books just described. Most of its illustrations are photographic (half- or full-page in colour); the problems of their selection and reproduction were doubtless significant: birds don't stand as still as buildings do!

The text is clearly separated into sections for quick reference using colour and header-icons (shades of Windows and Macs). Through its Canada Communications Group, the federal government is demonstrating awareness of a need to present its important publications in a more attractive way than was typical of the government document of yore. A decade ago, a two-volume Royal Commission report would still have been designed almost to repel. In the way this one highlights statistics, quotations, and recommendations, and treats its captions, bibliographies, etc., it goes a long step toward meeting the quality standards of attractive commercial work.

### Limited Editions

**1st Prize:** *Anatomy* [by] Michael Torosian. Toronto: Lumiere Press. ISBN 0-921542-07-0.  
[Designer, printer, and binder: Michael Torosian]

**2nd Prize:** *The Articulation of Time, a Commonplace Book*, selected by William Rueter.  
Toronto: Aliquando Press. [Designer, printer, and binder: William Rueter]

These two very different books are of almost identical size and share a traditional cover treatment of marbled paper (Rueter's, in three different-sized layers), one speckled with silver, the other with gold. Torosian's continues to produce limited editions containing his own creative work; in this, tipped-on duotone reproductions of his photographs are accompanied by some twenty pages of text set and spaced just as its Optima type demands. The colouration of the gelatin-silver frontispiece, an original photograph, is carried through the endpapers, title page, and slipcase. Bill Rueter, longtime designer for the University of Toronto Press, celebrates thirty years of his private Aliquando Press with an anthology of short poetic and prose texts each set in a different but appropriate style, on different paper, using different typefaces and colours: a sampler of the techniques of traditional printing.

### Juvenile Books

**1st Prize:** *Brewster Rooster*, written by Berny Lucas; illustrated by Russ Willms. Toronto: Kids Can Press. ISBN 1-55074-109-8. [Designer: Russ Willms; Printer: Everbest Printing Co., Hong Kong]

**2nd Prize:** *Last Leaf First Snowflake to Fall* [by] Leo Yerxa. Toronto: A Groundwood Book, Douglas & McIntyre. ISBN 0-88899-183-5. [Designer: Leo Yerxa; Printer: Everbest Printing Co., Hong Kong]



**3rd Prize:** *Day Songs, Night Songs*, by Robert Priest; pictures by Keith Lee. Toronto: A Groundwood Book, Douglas & McIntyre. ISBN 0-88899-179-7. [Designer: Michael Solomon; Printer: Everbest Printing Co., Hong Kong]

**Hon. Men.:** *The Ferryboat Ride* [by] Robert Perry; illustrations by Greta Guzek. Gibsons, B.C.: Nightwood Editions ISBN 0-88971-155-0. [Designer: Greta Guzek and Roger Handling; Printer: Friesen Printers]

**Hon. Men.:** *Rabbit Blue*, written and illustrated by Marie-Louise Gay. Toronto: Stoddart. ISBN 0-7737-2750-7. [Designer: M.-L. Gay; Printer: Book Art Ltd., Hong Kong]

Many features of *Brewster Rooster* call for recognition: the earth colours, the two-page-bleed spreads alternating with more traditional page layout, the choice of an unusual but appropriate typeface always shown clearly even against coloured background (how often does the type of a picture book get lost as if it were not important?). Leo Yerxa's pictorial art is already well known; here, the understated leaf and snowflake motifs and the silhouette graphic elements of the large initial capital letters recommend his sense of design as well. The tall, narrow format and bright colours just suit the Priest/Lee book of short-line poems. Two books called for honourable mention from among the remaining seventy-plus entered in this category. *The Ferryboat Ride* is exemplary for its coherent use of bold colour in both illustration and decoration. Marie-Louise Gay, no stranger to these awards, designed a book full of motion from first to last page.

### Concluding Comments

The Alcuin Design Awards continue to be dominated by names now familiar in Canadian book production. Two who were absent last year, Gordon Robertson and the children's-book designer Michael Solomon, happily return to this award list. Victoria's Bev Leech and Morriss Printing appear yet again; the Manitoba printing firm of D.W. Friesen continues to be responsible for more excellent printing than any other on the list, spanning an ever greater variety of styles as Canadian designers exercise their originality. Almost all winners except in the juvenile category are again printed in Canada. In hard economic times and with new taxes and reduced grants, publishers are becoming more skilled at knowing where they can cut some production costs while continuing to ensure that the state-of-the-art in Canadian book design remains praiseworthy.



## Judges

The judges for this year's Alcuin Society Design Competition were:

*Roberto Dosil* (Praxis Design, Vancouver)

*Ronald Hagler* (Professor, School of Library, Archival and Information Studies, The University of British Columbia)

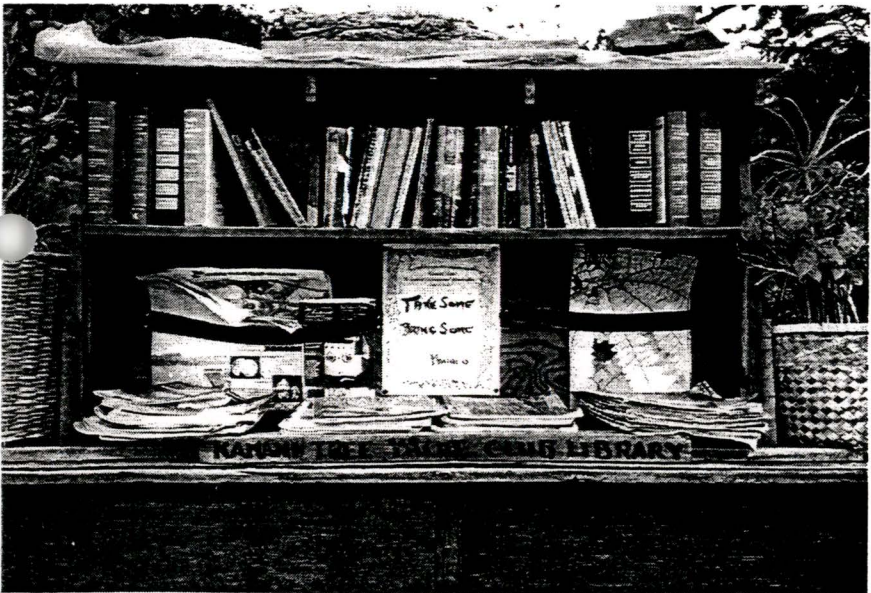
*Dennis Nagy* (Studio Allsorts, Vancouver).

Professor Hagler compiled the above comments as, he hopes, a reasonable summary of the hours of discussion involved.

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## TRAVELING BOOKS:

A fellow member of the Society, when visiting the island of Maui in Hawaii, was also struck by the small wayside open-air library (vide Amphora-96) on the quay of Lahaina put there by the Kamani Tree Yacht Club Library. He has sent us a photograph, which catches the charmingly unorganized spirit of the thing.



## BOOKS TO AVOID READING - *The Art of Instant Rejection*



Peter Andrews

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In the face of the avalanche of publishing that engulfs us, the reader is almost, but not entirely, defenceless. However, traditional methods such as skimming or speed-reading are of little value in today's fast-moving society.

Even a moment spent reading a book you don't want to is a moment lost forever. No. Bad books must be fought at the water's edge; at the very bookstore shelf itself. The reader must learn to master the art of Instant Rejection: the ability to look at nothing more than the dust jacket and pick out those little signs that tell him he doesn't want to read another word.

I discovered the value of Instant Rejection quite by accident when I decided not to buy a book simply because the cover announced that it was "destined to become a classic of our time." Since then, I have not read one single classic of our time and I cannot tell you how much better I feel for it.

As I developed my skills, I found that almost any part of the jacket can be used to form the basis of an I.R. For example, books with a colon in the title (as in *Bulgaria at the Cross-roads: The Illusion and the Dilemma*) can always be safely skipped. Artwork should be checked and the book immediately dropped at the first sign of an oil painting of a Southern mansion - especially if there is a lady in a ball gown standing in front.

Even plugs from other writers can be grist for the mill. I have always tried to steer a middle course between the recommendations of both Earl and Edmund Wilson and have spared myself God knows how much heartache.

I have developed my system until it is now ready for publication as a public service. Keep one copy with you at all times and post another inside the medicine cabinet where the whole family can readily refer to it.

### DO NOT READ:

Any book entitled *Notes on ....*

Any book by someone who has personally known Henry Kissinger, Judy Garland, the Kennedys, the Reagans, Clintons, or Hugh Hefner.

Any book that promises to raise your consciousness or lower your weight.

Any book that reads like a veritable 'Who's Who' of show business.

Any book by an author who has inherited the mantle of either Damon Runyon or Macaulay.

Any serious book of poetry by a Latin-American author who has won the National Book Award in the past five years. (In the case of Nobel Prize winners, it is best to wait at least seven years.)

Any book by Norman Mailer that purports to be about women.

Any book illustrated by tarot cards or signs of the zodiac.