

*Illustrated Periodicals of  
the 1860s: Contexts and  
Collaborations*

BY SIMON COOKE  
(PRIVATE LIBRARIES ASSOCIATION/  
BRITISH LIBRARY/OAK KNOLL,  
2010, £45/US\$75)

*Book of Hours: A Wordless  
Novel Told in 99 Wood  
Engravings*

BY GEORGE WALKER  
(PORCUPINE'S QUILL, 2010, \$19.95)

IT'S ALWAYS a curious thing to see what the tide of mail casts up, juxtaposing items that one might never have considered together. So it is with these two books, outstanding items for review that seem at first glance worlds apart but also have key points in common.

*Illustrated Periodicals of the 1860s: Contexts and Collaborations* is a distinctly academic book published in an edition of 1,300 copies, of which 600 are available for purchase, while George Walker's *Book of Hours* is a meditative work in the tradition of popular graphic novels. Both promise to have an appeal for those with an interest in popular illustration, however, and in particular the work of engravers. While *Illustrated Periodicals* examines the refinement and preparation of engravings for periodicals, and the relationships that made refinements and broader dissemination of the work available, Walker's book offers rustic, folksy woodcut images commemorating the 24 hours before the destruction of the World Trade Center in New York on September 11, 2001. It is a monument not just to an event but to the enduring power of traditional craft to capture experience.

The images in both books draw the reader in. In Walker's book, these are enigmatic images from daily life and require some attention in order to understand what he is offering. *Illustrated Periodicals*, on the other hand, reminds us of the



From George Walker, *Book of Hours*.

power images such as Walker's have by immersing us in the golden age of engraving, when woodcuts and similar images became widely reproduced in mass-market periodicals, often linked to the popular tales of novelists such as Thackeray and Trollope or well-known parables. These images brought the stories alive, opening new vistas to an audience for which such scenes were otherwise inaccessible. Walker's images, in turn, stand alone without words but speak to an event that in many ways marks the start of the 21st century and the end of the 20th. "It marks a vanished age," Walker says of his book in the preface.

An academic tome, Cooke's book also marks a vanished age: one for which we can long even as we celebrate the raw craft expressed in Walker's images. Cooke provides insight into how that age came to be, examining the roles and relationships of artist, author, editor, engraver and publisher. The six chapters in *Illustrated Periodicals* discuss the various permutations and combinations of these players (helpfully documented in an appendix, albeit a cross between biographical notes and bibliographic references). Alcuin members may also appreciate the notes Cooke offers on the collecting of illustrated magazines.



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From George Walker, *Book of Hours*.

Walker's contemporary work—at least in the Porcupine's Quill edition—is hardly as collectible, but the two original, hand-printed editions of just 10 copies are. Those copies sold for \$1,000 apiece, well above the price of the trade paperback reviewed here. This fact bears witness to the ongoing work of engravers to open new vistas to us and shape our perceptions of events. The parables of the sower and the prodigal son may have sunk deeper into the popular imagination through the work of Victorian engravers, but the vignettes Walker's work captures resonate with equal strength because we are familiar both with their mundane quality and the extraordinary backdrop that overturned their settledness.

As David Beronă writes in his introduction, “By focussing on the people prior to the attacks and representing a commonality of routines and actions, Walker's book binds us together as a community, a nation and a world.” This is not unlike the common culture the images of English periodicals inculcated through their own representations of the world. Without these points of reference, and the arts to remind us of them, our common experience is diminished.

~ REVIEWED BY PETER MITHAM

## *Beyond Words: A Meditation on Books and Art*

CARNEGIE GALLERY, DUNDAS, ONTARIO,  
OCTOBER 1 TO NOVEMBER 14, 2010

BEYOND WORDS was created to celebrate 30 years of the Carnegie Gallery. This exhibition had really three aspects—modern private press books and broadsides, some 19th-century books, some works of art incorporating parts of books—but lacked the focus that a curator with a clear vision could bring. The items in the show were determined by the individual artists.

The exhibition included three books and three broadsides from Will Rueter's Aliquando Press (including *Majesty, Order and Beauty*, the hundredth book of the press); plus items from Alan Stein's Church Street Press (*Golden Lilies* plus a broadside); two books by George Walker (including *Book of Hours*, plus an artist's book); three books by Gerry Brender à Brandis; and two works by Margaret Lock. All of these are fine works by mature book artists and represent their most recent work.

Generally, each book was placed on a plinth. White gloves invited visitors to page through the book. This is something rarely allowed in an exhibition and a move that I applaud. Significant exceptions were the presentation of books by Gerry Brender à Brandis, which were displayed under clear plastic shells.

The most interesting work of Gerry's that was exhibited was *A Pebble's Journey*. I know this to be a work on the Grand River that Gerry has been working on for some time, but I had never seen it before. It was displayed standing up with the pages splayed. By crouching down, I could look into the spaces between several pages of the book, but this gave a distorted view of the contents. I assume the organizers chose this method because the plinth was too small to display the book open resting on its covers. The other plinth held two books—a copy of *Heritage in Stone*, a 1989 work of Gerry's shown completely open at the title page, and also *A Sylph's Progress*, a work not known to me and displayed closed.

Before seeing this exhibition, I assumed that Margaret Lock had given up book work