

book—*A Canadian Child's ABC* (1931), for instance, or *Something from Nothing* (1992)—to name only two from a multitude of loving pauses.

Along the way they set themselves a series of riddles: “What do Canadian children see when they pick up an illustrated Canadian children’s book? How have creators and publishers shaped the image of Canada presented in children’s books? Have those images changed over time, and why? What role do illustrated books play in the creation of communities of readers? And, finally, why have critics argued that Canadian children need children’s books in order to develop a Canadian cultural identity?” Their proffered answers point beyond the bounds of the specific topic and into the labyrinth of Canada’s beleaguered publishing industry.

They do not mention Harbour Publishing, which has kept *Timmy the West Coast Tug* in print for two generations, or Whitecap’s Walrus Books, or the tale of Raincoast’s dramatic encounter with the magic alien Harry Potter. On the other hand, I rejoice that Canadian children’s books are too numerous for one volume to embrace them all. As a seller of books for, by and about coastal British Columbians, I marvel at the large percentage of shelf space occupied by kids’ books. Please, let’s not let the story of *Picturing Canada* end any time soon.

~ REVIEWED BY PHYLLIS REEVE

The Art of the Book 08

MALTWOOD GALLERY, MCPHERSON
LIBRARY, UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA,
UNTIL JANUARY 5, 2011

THE CANADIAN BOOKBINDERS and Book Artists Guild was established in 1983 and since that time has held an exhibition of members’ work every five years. The exhibition of 2008 has been travelling around the country and this year finishes its tour with a flourish at the McPherson Library, University of Victoria, in the Maltwood Gallery—the exhibition’s sole showing in British Columbia.

The exhibition is very professionally put together. Past shows have been curated by two

dedicated and hard-working people, Shelagh Smith and Susan Corrigan. Three jurors are enlisted to jury the applications; this year they included the fine printer Crispin Elsted of Barbarian Press, the fine binder Nicole Billard and the book artist Edward Hutchins. Fine printing, fine binding, calligraphy, hand paper making, paper decoration, box making and artist books are the categories for entry, although many of these may be represented in the same piece of work.

As most of the exhibits are books, the glass-topped display cases and plinths in the gallery are ideal and show the works to best advantage. The plinths allow a 360-degree view of the 3D works, and if you are able to go on one of the tours, the guide will take out some of the exhibits to show further pages.

There were approximately 250 submissions, of which less than 75 were selected. These came not only from Canada, but the USA, U.K. and Japan. Shelagh Smith remarks in Peter Sramek’s essay in the exhibition catalogue, “The quality of work in this year’s submissions is far greater overall than in the past.” The catalogue is worth obtaining; it runs to 95 pages, with each exhibit beautifully photographed on its own page, a fitting tribute to this CBBAG 25th-anniversary celebration. Sramek’s essay thoughtfully explores some of the questions that inevitably arise out of this exhibition and seeks to put those varied arts into context as part of the “book as a functioning entity.”

CBBAG (as it is affectionately known) has in recent years made changes to its constitution to allow the establishment of regional groups. CBBAG BC Islands is an active “chapter” established a few years ago to foster the practice of the various book arts, by putting on workshops, “show and tell” meetings and visits, as decided by the members. BC as a whole, and Vancouver Island in particular, are well represented in this exhibition with at least 10 entries from BC, and seven of those from Vancouver Island. We can safely say that the book arts are alive and well in Canada.

In addition to the Maltwood Gallery and previous locations across Canada, the CBBAG exhibition is also available for viewing online at www.cbbag.ca/AB08Web/AB08.html.

~ REVIEWED BY JAN KELLETT