

# Cotton Socks Press

*Andrea Taylor*

## **History of Cotton Socks Press**

Cotton Socks Press started in June 2000 with my taking a 6 day letterpress intensive at Barbarian Press. Having studied calligraphy for many years and having enjoyed a variety of bookbinding experiences and other art exposures, I decided to become a printmaker and to create letterpress books as an artist/printer. Before leaving my home of 2 years in New Mexico, I wrote a list of things to do when I returned to my hometown of Vancouver; take a letterpress course, study printmaking, print my own book with linocuts in it. After the hard work and the pleasure of printing my first little chapbook, *The Sea Child* by Eliza Cook, at Barbarian Press under the expert tutelage of Jan and Crispin Elsted, I was ready to buy a press! Entirely upon the Elsteds' recommendation, I purchased a Vandercook with an adjustable bed. Manoeuvring the 1800 lb press in through the narrow basement door and into position was a harrowing experience, but well worth it as this press prints like a dream. Through 2000 and 2001, I took multiple printmaking courses, completed a 6 month printmaking student membership, and by 2002 was a proud full member at Dunderave Print Workshop at Granville Island. This allows me to pursue my dream of printmaking.

Over my initial fear of the great beast press, I set to work to print my first book. In summer 2001, I wrote 10 poems about my childhood summers at Bowen Island, BC. Over the course of the next 2 years, I cut 10 linocuts to go with the poems, chose paper, type, and designed a book. I finished printing it in August 2003 and had the book and accompanying prints on display at my first solo show at Dunderave Print Workshop & Gallery at Granville Island for the month of September 2003.

## **Brief Description of the Press**

Where does the press get its name? My Grandad used to call me Cotton Socks when I was a little girl. I've always been fond of the name.

Printing equipment at the press includes a Vandercook Proofing Press from 1956, an etching press on its way, very little type so far: 3 drawers of wood type, 16pt Centaur, and 24 and 18 point Cochin Open. The studio is geared towards multiple tasks: drawing, painting, printmaking, letterpress printing, bookbinding, and related arts.

The press is an artist's press. As such, I tend to focus on books that are easily identified as hand bound, make a great effort to execute good design and create an aesthetically pleasing product. Also, focus on colour

and images in the books. The prints and/or letterpress books of Cotton Socks Press are available at the following locations: Ian Fry Gallery at Bowen Island, Vancouver Museum Gift Shop, Dundarave Print Workshop & Gallery at Granville Island, and from Andrea's portable shop at East Vancouver Farmers' Market and Granville Island Market, or from [www.cottonsockspress.com](http://www.cottonsockspress.com). E-mail [cottonsockspress@telus.net](mailto:cottonsockspress@telus.net) for dates.

### **Reflections on My Art**

I love the graphic quality of relief prints. Thinking in reverse to carve an image and thinking about different textures to carve to represent different parts of the image is a never ending game for me. There is always a magic about pulling the print. The paper is blank. I ink up the block, pull the print and voila — the image is perfectly printed on the page. It never ceases to amaze me. Reduction linocut (like "Market Onion" on the cover) is even more of a challenge. The image is planned to be four colours in this case. The parts that will remain the colour of the paper (white) are carved away and the image is printed in the lightest colour on as many papers as can be spared. The image looks disappointingly dull, but the printmaker perseveres carving the next and printing, carving more and printing again in a darker colour until the dramatic moment when the darkest colour (purple in this case) is printed and the image pops up. The days and days of work have paid off. It always seems like a miracle.

### **Publishing Profile**

Cotton Socks Press has published two works so far. The first of these was *The Sea Child* by Eliza Cook in 2000, printed on an 1850 Super Royal Albion Hand press at Barbarian Press. This is a small chapbook with a four-verse poem written in the late 1800s about a child playing by the sea. It is printed on Silurian Green and wrapped in Ingres with a second decorative wrapper in burgundy in an edition of 20. There are only three copies left at \$25 each.

The second work published in 2003 was printed at Cotton Socks Press on a 1956 Vandercook 15-21 Proofing Press. It is a collection of short writings by the artist. The writings came through reflection on the experience of spending every childhood summer at Bowen Island, a short ferry ride from Vancouver, BC. Each poem has an accompanying linocut printed on the facing page. Here are two of the poetic prose pieces from the book:

## FERRY

Boarding the ferry  
on the way to Bowen  
I rush to find myself the only one  
on her top deck.  
Ferry captain smokes his pipe  
as he watches me and where he is going.  
The cold air numbs my cheeks  
and makes me feel like an adventurer  
sailing through this passage of rosy light  
and glistening waves.



Ferry © 2003 Andrea Taylor

## BLACKBERRIES

Blackberries,  
sun heated,  
ripened to pie sweet flavour;  
picked with gentle touch  
so as not to spoil their jewelled flesh;  
placed on the tongue,  
licking fingers  
as they return  
to find another.

*Childhood Summers by the Sea* was published August 2003 in an edition of 125 regular copies and 10 deluxe (numbered I to X) on Zerkall Book. The regular edition is bound with blue-green paste paper over boards and an exposed spine sewing. The deluxe edition is sewn over salmon skin tapes onto wooden boards and contains one of the writings in holograph. Each of the ten linocuts is printed in an edition of 185, that is 135 in the books and 50 available as broadside prints. This 60 page book measures 7.5" x 6.5". The writing, design, presswork, linocuts, paste paper and binding are all by Andrea Taylor. The type is handset in 16 point Centaur with 18 point Cochin Open for display. The edition is signed and numbered.

REGULAR EDITION: C\$185 / (US \$145 approx)

DELUXE EDITION C\$350 / (US \$295 approx)

Cotton Socks Press intends to produce one larger work like *Childhood Summers by the Sea* every other year. In the interim year the press intends to produce two smaller works. While decisions are still to be made on items for 2004, being considered are one piece on shells and another on ampersands. To order directly from the press:

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