

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Mexico City has been called “the Rome of our civilization” by some artists. This issue of *Amphora* traces the journey of Edmonton bookbinder Alex McGuckin across the hemisphere on his journey to the origins of traditional book production and back again. Animated by the idea of “the book beautiful” – a phrase coined by England’s T.J. Cobden-Sanderson in 1892 – McGuckin rose from Bruce Peel Special Collections in the basement of University of Alberta’s Rutherford Library through colonial cities in Mexico to the heights of craftsmanship.

His experiences highlight the breadth of practice currently taking place, the important role custodians of traditional craft play and the enjoyment we receive from the ongoing engagement of tradition with contemporary circumstance.

It’s somewhat fitting that other stories in this issue dive into all manner of historical reflection: from medieval bookmarks to Northwest ephemera and the destruction – and revival – of one of Atlantic Canada’s enduring small presses.

This issue was marked by a number of changes. Jason Dewinetz of Greenboathouse Press stepped down last fall as *Amphora*’s layout man and designer, a job he executed with aplomb. With luck, however, his writing may appear in future issues of *Amphora* as his schedule allows. Meanwhile, various crises gripped several contributors to this issue, slowing production.

The changes and chances of the world were therefore very much with us as this issue was birthed, offering a timely reminder of the effort that goes into producing the printed word. While social media makes it seem that anyone can be a publisher, producing an honest-to-goodness printed magazine such as *Amphora* aspires to be requires teamwork.

Without giving away too many secrets, readers can look forward to the usual host of departments in the spring issue, as well as features on B.C. printers from the 19th century forward.

~ Peter Mitham

UPCOMING EVENT

Printing in the Shadow of Aldus

Peter Koch

An illustrated talk about **Joseph Brodsky’s** *Watermark: A Memoir of Venice*, with photographs by **Robert Morgan**. The book is a series of essays in memoir form, by the poet and Nobel laureate Joseph Brodsky. The speaker is **Peter Rutledge Koch**, artist, printer, writer, and publisher of fine editions and artist books, including *Watermark*. Mr. Koch will show slides and talk about the grand adventure of printing *Watermark* in Venice in collaboration with an international cast of distinguished printers, artists, and artisans. Mr. Koch will be introduced by **Robert Bringhurst**, with whom he worked to produce an English edition of *The Fragments of Parmenides* (2004).

Mr. Koch’s presentation takes place at Simon Fraser University’s Harbour Centre campus on March 25, 2010, beginning at 7 p.m. Admission is free.