

Society's Wayzgoose

Impressed Even the Best

Biennial printing fair featured new leaves, old hands and much youthful talent

by Emma Jensen



FOR PRINT FOLK, October 24 was a good day: a day to celebrate, showcase, get reacquainted, and enthuse as printers and book artists from around B.C. gathered at the Vancouver Public Library for the Alcuin Society's biennial wayzgoose.

Besides raising funds for Alcuin Society activities, the event—tagged by the society as printers' very own thanksgiving—delivered displays by approximately 20 private presses from B.C., demonstrations relating to the book arts and inspired conversation.

And although the wayzgoose didn't last nearly as long as one could hope—so it goes with any date one awaits and anticipates—it didn't disappoint. Rather, this year's printing fair impressed even out-of-town visitors such as William Rueter (the sole non-B.C. printer in attendance) and visitors who came from as far away as Alberta.

A number of familiar faces were on hand: Charles van Sandwyk, beside pamphlets containing the humorously illuminating story behind his new Savuti Press venture and meticulously constructed *Mr. Rabbit* books; Andrea Taylor of Cotton Socks Press showcasing etchings from her *Artists' Portraits* series;

illustrator Mariko Ando with her delightful bunny-centric intaglio prints, reminiscent of a cross between Beatrix Potter's *Peter Rabbit* and the surreal imaginings of Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*; Illtyd Perkins, with his

display of traditional woodworking; Reg Lissel and his beautifully crafted, delicate handmade paper; and Stuart Isto and his Isto Press, whose table included a petite press. Here guests could print quotes onto take-home bookmarks, overseen by Salt Spring Island's Peter Haase, who would, in fun, present a \$100 bill in place of their finished product.

Tables offering hands-on demonstrations attracted the biggest crowds throughout

the day, with one of the most popular being a demonstration of the delicate intaglio printing process, performed by Katie Dey and Peter Braune of Granville Island's New Leaf Editions. Peter Braune established New Leaf Editions printmaking workshop just over 20 years ago. One of his most recent collaborations was the contribution of five intaglio prints to *Carnival*, a collection of poems by musician Harold Budd, published by Rollin Milroy's Heavenly Monkey. Braune felt Budd's pencil-drawn arabesques were





perfectly suited for intaglio printing and gave Budd the copper plates to etch that were used for the collection.

Conceivably, wayzgoose visitors congregated around New Leaf for a chance at receiving a small print of a remarkably wise-looking frog that Katie Dey and Peter Braune confessed had its copper plate completed at just “5 p.m. the night before the fair.” More probable, however, is that onlookers discovered interest in the artistic value and care that comes with the process itself.

Observing the process took time. Braune had to first ink his frog by hand so that all the etched lines of its copper plate were fully covered, at which point he would begin to slowly wipe the ink off, while Dey prepared a small piece of dampened paper. When satisfied, Braune would hand Dey the plate, which she would place under the dampened paper and run through the press, forcing the softened paper fibres down onto the inked lines of their frog, completing the process. Though it was lengthy, Dey and Braune made the process look effortless.

Yet perhaps the most noteworthy addition to this year’s fair was William Rueter, who displayed several recent works from his Dundas, Ontario-based Aliquando Press. In addition to a dozen other skilfully hand-crafted books was his 100th book, *Majesty, Order and Beauty* (journals of the renowned bookbinder and private printer Thomas James Cobden-Sanderson). The project took him more than 18 months to complete, the binding featuring lithographed paper from the early 1900s designed by his uncle Georg Rueter in Holland.

After I spoke with William Rueter about his work, the processes he goes through as a printmaker and his reasons for printing what he does, it became evident he was less excited to talk about his own accomplishments than the West Coast printing community and this year’s printing fair.

Rueter, who handles all aspects of Aliquando’s bookmaking operations (as he has for the past 45 years), was impressed with the number of young people in attendance. Students from Emily Carr University’s visual arts program displayed various printing projects, including artwork placed in leather bindings, while ECU instructor Beth Howe demonstrated silkscreening, filling the wall behind her with examples she offered up to passers-by.

It all energized Rueter, who reminisced about his love for the West Coast and the warm welcome he receives whenever he returns. “It’s so nice to see so many young people,” he said. “I see more enthusiasm and a higher level of workmanship here on the West Coast than back in Ontario.”

~ Emma Jensen is a Vancouver writer and recent graduate of the University of British Columbia’s English department.

