

LETTERS

Kogawa talks to Alcuin

Seventeen Alcuin Society members and their guests participated in the first of a new series of members-only meetings last March 30, at the historic Joy Kogawa heritage house in Vancouver. Kogawa House Committee member Ann-Marie Metten started the evening by explaining the series of successful steps that were taken to save the historic house from demolition. Future plans are to return the house to its original condition and then to offer the house as a place of retreat for writers of conscience from around the world.

I then had the pleasure of saying a few words about Joy's considerable literary achievements in the areas of fiction, poetry and children's literature. Copies of her books were available for members to examine after the presentations.

The definite highlight of the evening, however, was a reading by Joy from her award winning novel *Obasan*. The reading had particular resonance for the audience since Joy continuously referred to places mentioned in the novel that were right before the audience's eyes. After the reading she spoke with incredible energy and passion about the Japanese internment during the Second World War, and all of the hardships and suffering experienced by so many Japanese families and the Japanese community in Canada as a whole. Fortunately some reparation for these wrongs has occurred in the form of Federal Government redress and in the saving of the Kogawa house itself. All of the audience members felt at the end of the evening that they had received a rare privilege in being able to hear Joy read and speak about her own moving personal experience.

Richard Hopkins
Vancouver, BC

Claudia Wober's Beauty & Power

It is with profound sadness that I share with you the loss of a talented book artist and very dear friend, Claudia Camille Wober, on February 26, 2007.

Claudia graduated with a BFA in Book Arts and Photography from Oregon College of Art and Craft in 2001. Despite being diagnosed with an aggressive form of multiple sclerosis at the start of her final year, her time at OCAC was the happiest of her short life. She threw herself into all aspects of the book arts with unflagging passion, intelligence, and commitment, quickly

THE ALCUIN SOCIETY was the idea of Geoff Spencer, to promote a wider appreciation of finely wrought books among book lovers around the world. Other founding members were Basil Stuart-Stubbs, Bill Duthie, Sam Black, Bill McConnell, Dale Smith and Sam Fogel.

The name Alcuin was chosen to honour the memory of Alcuin of York (A.D. 735 to 804). Alcuin was a man who cared deeply about books and literacy. As Charlemagne's "Minister of Culture," Alcuin selected the most legible script of his day and gave it official blessing. Known as Caroline minuscule, it ultimately led to our modern lowercase alphabet.

To further its aims, the Alcuin Society engages in a wide range of educational activities, many of them in collaboration with educational institutions—lectures, workshops, exhibitions, field visits and competitions. Annual design awards are made by a panel of expert judges for the best in Canadian book design. *Amphora*, the Society's journal, covers a wide range of topics related to the book: the future of the book, the history of the book, the book arts (typography, type design, calligraphy, papermaking, illustration, printing and binding), publishing, bookselling, book collecting, notable library collections, and reading.

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becoming, as the department head Barbara Tetenbaum noted in her eulogy, one of the best students to come through the book arts program at OCAC.

Several of Claudia's student books went on to win awards, most notably *The Child's Foot*, a book she created when she was selected for the OCAC's Commission Award in Book Arts in 1999. She also entered it in the Northwest Bookfest that year, where it so impressed the judges that a special category was added to acknowledge her as an emerging book artist. Sandra Kroupa of the University of Washington wrote of it that "the jury came back to this understated but very compelling book again and again as a favourite. It is a subtle, well-crafted piece based on a simple but potent line by (Pablo) Neruda which has been combined with soft photographs of baby feet and hands... It was a pleasure to see such a finely focused piece from a new artist trained at the Oregon College of Art and Craft."

Claudia returned to Vancouver after graduation where for the next six long and tortuous years she struggled to create while constantly battling her ever-diminishing motor skills. The agony this horrific disease put her body through was nothing compared to the loss of her ability to make art.

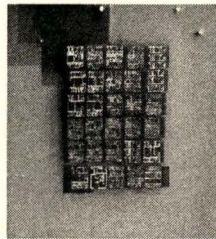
With the help of friends and volunteers she produced exquisite gocco-printed Christmas cards, redefining with her poetic sensibilities the beauty and perfection of simplicity. She also published *Poetry at Hand*, completing two in a series of cards featuring a letterpress-printed poem by an emerging Canadian poet on one side, and a gocco-printed design by Claudia on the reverse. These were distributed guerrilla-style and were meant to be found by people in unlikely places. The second was *Crows*, a poem by Gina Page, which unintentionally but fittingly became Claudia's last gesture as a book artist. The poem's description of the accidental death of a crow hit by a truck is beautifully expressed through Claudia's restrained and austere imagery. It ends with the haunting line "*Bare wires are left/to hum the elegy.*"

Powerless to slow down the inevitable, despite Herculean efforts, and unable to bear any more pain and anguish, Claudia, with typical strength, courage and deliberation, ended her suffering. Yet again, as she did in her art, Claudia has revealed the beauty in sadness, and the power in powerlessness.

Simone Mynen
New Westminster, BC

REALLY SMALL

Has anyone seen Teeny Ted?



VANCOUVER ARTIST, AUTHOR and publisher Robert Chaplin's latest work simultaneously expands and shrinks (by factors of ten) the scope of work for which he enjoys growing renown. *Teeny Ted from Turnip Town*, issued in April, has set a new record for the world's smallest book, measuring 0.07 by 0.10 millimetres. While the issue price of \$20,000 from the edition of 100 copies might seem steep, that's nothing compared to buying the scanning electron microscope needed to read the book.

Written by Malcolm Douglas Chaplin, it is the story of Teeny Ted's victory in the turnip contest at the annual county fair. Chaplin set the text in majuscules, and it was then carved into 30 microtablets (i.e., pages) on a single chip of polished crystalline silicon, using a focused-gallium-ion beam with a minimum diameter of 7 nanometres. (The work was done in conjunction with Simon Fraser University's Nano Imaging Facility.) Asked to describe the experience of reading the book, Robert is his usual effusive self.

"It's like flying into Las Vegas at night, or landing a space ship. At first you see nothing more than an atmosphere of constantly shuffling gray and black and white pixels, a shimmering mass of electrons. Then as you focus the electron beam, you lock in on the x, the mark on the surface of the chip, big enough to see with a naked eye. At this distance, it looks like a trench made by some twisted gigantic machine, and the pixels still shuffle like a boiling mass of cloud. Somehow in this chaos you begin to discern a vague outline, an area with a slightly more rectilinear boil. It begins to take shape, appearing like magic before your eyes, focused in a shower of electrons." To date only one copy has been produced, but as Robert says, "If even just one person bought a copy, how cool a world would that be to live in!"

For more on Robert's work, see www.robertchaplin.ca.