

The Whole Experience Is Art

CHARLES MAYRS was one of four brothers who attended the Vancouver School of Art in the 1950s, all of them dedicated painters. Charlie went on to establish an advertising agency and spent the next four decades working in that fast-paced world. But he continued painting the whole time, and when he retired a few years ago, he had the time and energy to redouble his artistic efforts. The steady flow of creative ideas that made him successful in advertising continued to spill out, and he began to look beyond just painting. In 2006 he produced a limited edition, letterpress-printed book of Haida-inspired drawings, titled *Dancers*. Shortly before the release this fall of his second book, *Color Blind*, Charlie spoke with Amphora about expanding his work into the book arts.



"I had always planned for life after my advertising career to be filled with the making of art. What drew me to limited edition books was that I have always loved books, especially books of art. Not necessarily as a collector or bibliophile, but the sheer joy of feeling the heft of a book or the delicate touch of a deckled edge or the imprint of letterpress type. Or when you open an offset-printed book for the first time and you can smell the aroma (if I can use that word) of the fresh ink and varnish. The limited edition book is an art form suited to my talents."



"Producing a limited edition book involves every aspect of what I learned as a creative director in advertising. For example, I can conceive the subject of the book; then I can write the book (whether stories or poems); then I can draw or illustrate the images; and finally, because of my background in design and typography, I can choose the paper and either design the final product or, in the situations so far, work with David Clifford on the final look. I enjoy tremendously the total experience of producing a limited edition book."



"I happen to paint and do limited edition books. It is true that I have found another medium to show my art, but what a wonderful vehicle I've discovered, that allows me to show off my art within the craft of fine bookmaking! The conception is art. The writing is art. The images are art. The paper selection is art. The printing and binding are art. The whole experience is art. And that is why I chose to pursue the art of limited edition books."



"I think one of the problems for me is that I am arriving fairly late in the game [i.e., as a book artist], so it's natural for people to wonder if I am real or not. I don't blame them, because one can see that I am quite naïve in much of the terminology of printing and publishing. However, aside from that I am very passion-

ate about design, typography and the simple pleasure of touching paper and feeling the roughness of a pebbled stock or the coarseness of a watercolour rag or the soft coated page of a coffee-table book. I believe producing a limited edition book is similar to producing a good painting. It's beautiful, it's rare, it's timeless and gives the creator a sense that what he or she has accomplished will not be forgotten. A sense of immortality perhaps?"



"One oddity for me is the amount of time it takes to actually put together a book. In my previous business life everything was done at warp speed, from concept to printing. Having said that, I really enjoy the leisurely pace and the attention to detail that is required to produce a well-crafted piece of art."



"I believe bibliophiles are no more quirky than art collectors, antique dealers or model train enthusiasts. They're all simply passionate about what they do."



Dancers (2006, 11 by 7.5 inches, 35 pp.) was published in an edition of 50 signed and numbered copies. A series of 13 Haida-inspired drawings of dancers, printed in duotone, with accompanying poems by the artist. The illustrations and text were set in Humana Script and printed from polymer plates by David Clifford at Black Stone Press. The book was bound side-stab in a printed paper cover, with a paper slipcase, by Yasmine Franchi at Black Stone Press. Copies are available for \$60.



Color Blind (2007, 13 by 8 inches, 17 pp.) consists of 12 stylized portraits, each accompanied by a poem written by Mayrs. The book is published in an edition of 60 signed and numbered (and 10 AP) copies. The book was set in Bauer Bodoni by David Clifford, who also printed the pages from polymer plates in up to eight colour runs by letterpress at his Black Stone Press. The sheets are issued loose in two formats; all are contained in a paper portfolio. Copies 1 to 20 are issued in a portfolio and slipcase, and include an original drawing (\$150); numbers 21 to 60 are in a paper portfolio (\$60). The portfolios and cases were made by Yasmine Franchi at Black Stone Press.

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