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NATIONAL
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Labour of Love

**Selections from
Some Small Canadian Presses**

**5 Feb –
9 June
2019**

Check- list

- 1 **William Shakespeare. Engravings for MacBeth.** Illustrated by Laurence Hyde. Toronto: Golden Dog Press, 1939.
- 2 **George Ellenbogen. Winds of Unreason.** Drawings by Peter Daglish. Montreal: McGill Poetry Series, 1957.
- 3 **Joe Rosenblatt. The LSD Leacock: Poems.** Drawings by Robert Daigneault. Toronto: Coach House Press, 1966.
- 4 **David McFadden. The Great Canadian Sonnet.** Drawings by Greg Curnoe. Toronto: Coach House Press, ca. 1974.
- 5 **The Story So Far.** Edited by George Bowering. Designed and illustrated by General Idea. Toronto: Coach House Press, 1971.
- 6 **The Pipe: Recent Czech Concrete Poetry.** Edited by Jiri Valoch with bp nichol. Toronto: Coach House Press, 1973.
- 7 **Robin Bell. Bell.** Toronto: Coach House Press, 1975.
- 8 **The Last blewintment Anthology.** Edited by bill bissett. Toronto: Nightwood Editions, ca. 1985–86.
- 9 **Gérard Tremblay. Les semailles...** Engravings by Gérard Tremblay. Montreal: Editions Erta, 1968.
- 10 **Gilles Henault. Voyage au pays de mémoire.** Etchings by Marcelle Ferron. Montreal: Editions Erta, 1960.
- 11 **Claude Haelléy. La vie reculée: poèmes.** Engravings by Anne Kahane. Montreal: Editions Erta, 1954.
- 12 **Michael Kelly. Reminiscences of Mozart.** Prints by William Rueter. Toronto: Aliquando Press, 1991.
- 13 **Thomas James Cobden-Sanderson. Credo.** Prints by William Rueter. Toronto: Aliquando Press, 1980.
- 14 **Anne Henrietta Mulder. A Book Was a Life.** Prints by William Rueter. Toronto: Aliquando Press, 1979.
- 15 **Circus: Five Poems on the Circus.** Pochoir illustrations by Walter Bachinski. Shanty Bay, ON: Shanty Bay Press, 2002.
- 16 **Virgil. Virgil's Georgics.** Illustrations by Walter Bachinski. Shanty Bay, ON: Shanty Bay Press, 2007.
- 17 **Endgrain: Contemporary Wood Engravings in North America.** Mission, BC: Barbarian Press, 1995.
- 18 **Larkspur and Lad's Love.** Edited by Clare MacCulloch. Linocuts by Gerard Brender à Brandis. Carlisle, ON: Brandstead Press, 1977.
- 19 **Gerard Brender à Brandis. A Miscellany of Prints.** Poems by Marianne Brandis, Althea I. Tynedale and Lionel F. Willis. Carlisle, ON: Brandstead Press, 1970.
- 20 **Rod McDonald. Duke: A New Typface.** Kentville, NS: Gaspereau Press, 2005.
- 21 **Colville Tributes.** Edited by Andrew Steeves. Kentville, NS: Gaspereau Press, 2011.
- 22 **John Steffen. German Mills: A Novel Pertaining to the Life and Times of William Berczy, Painter, Adventurer, Spy, Speculator, Pioneer and Incidental Founder of the City of Markham.** Upper Canada, Kentville, NS: Gaspereau Press, 2015.
- 23 **Isaacs Gallery. Toronto Suite.** Photographs by Michael Torosian. Toronto: Lumière Press, 1989.
- 24 **Cole Weston. Edward Weston: Dedicated to Simplicity.** Toronto: Lumière Press, 1986.
- 25 **The Ballad of Soames Bantry and Other Stories from the Fabled Life and New York Years of Photographer, Painter and Poet Saul Leiter.** Toronto: Lumière Press, 2017.
- 1 **Robert Bringhurst. The Surface of Meaning: Books and Book Design in Canada (Vancouver: Canadian Centre for Studies in Publishing Press, 2008), 97.** For a more rigorous and multivalent definition of the small press, see Cameron Alistair Owen Anstee's PhD dissertation "Make Contact: Contribute Bookselling and the Small Press in Canada Following the Second World War," University of Ottawa, 2017.
- 2 **David Mcknight. "Small Press Publishing," in The History of the Book in Canada, Volume 3, 1978–1980,** ed. Carole Gerson and Jacques Michon (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 308.
- 3 **Kathleen Scherf. "A Legacy of Canadian Cultural Tradition and the Small Press: The Case of Talonbooks," Studies in Canadian Literature 25,** no. 1 (2000), <https://journals.lib.ubc.ca/index.php/scsl/article/view/12833/13853>.
- 4 **Bringhurst. The Surface of Meaning.** 49.
- 5 **William Hueter. Order Touched with Delight: Some Personal Observations on the Nature of the Private Press with an Account of the Aliquando Press (Toronto: Aliquando Press, 1982), n.p.**
- 6 **John Shoosmith. "Shanty Bay Press: A Visit and an Appreciation," Devils Artisan 81 (Fall/Winter 2017): 44.**
- 7 **Marianne Brandis. "Artist at Work: Gerard Brender à Brandis, Wood Engraver and Bookwright," Devils Artisan 64 (Spring/Summer 2009): 46.**
- 8 **Andrew Steeves. Sixty over Twenty: Lettress Books and Broadsides Printed at Gaspereau Press 1997–2017** (Kentville, NS: Gaspereau Press, 2017), 8.

“ There is, however, one kind of press that seems to me distinctively Canadian – so Canadian that it goes largely unrecognized in the world and has no name. It is easily described as a hybrid between the literary trade press and the private press, but it was not in fact created by cross-breeding. It is typically modest in size but has national distribution, and it is run like a Renaissance publishing house, printing what it publishes and devoting as much attention to physical workmanship as to literary values.”¹

The collection of the National Gallery of Canada's Library and Archives contains examples from Canada's small presses that highlight their enthusiasm for the production of beautifully conceived and executed books, as well as for unconventional subject matter often overlooked by large trade publishers. This exhibition will include work from both presses in which all aspects of production are done by hand (sometimes known as private or fine press) and non-commercial presses that produce larger editions (though still small compared to large publishing houses), in which the collaboration among artist, author and printer is paramount and the content of the works is avant-garde or literary in nature.²

Small presses played important roles in the publishing of poetry, literature and experimental work, to the point that the rise of the small press during the twentieth century can be considered one of the most important developments in Canada's literary culture.³ Small presses first gained visibility in Canada in the 1930s, inspired in part by William Morris's Kelmscott Press and a revival of the skills of hand printing, which Morris felt had been destroyed by mechanization. Toronto's **Golden Dog Press** (1933–39), founded by J. Kemp Waldie, produced only eight titles during its short existence. Waldie was chiefly interested in typography, and he was responsible for all aspects of book design, though printing was often outsourced to commercial printers. His most ambitious work, *Engravings for MacBeth* [1], features 14 dramatic woodcuts by the well-known graphic designer Laurence Hyde. Sadly, Golden Dog Press shut its doors at the outset of the Second World War and never reopened. **Contact Press** (1952–67), another early press that played a monumental role in advancing modern and experimental poetry,⁴ was started by poets Raymond Souster, Irving Layton and Louis Dudek. The press worked with many important Canadian poets whose work was felt to be overlooked by mainstream publishers, and it asserted the poet's role in the publication of his or her own work. *Winds of Unreason* [2], published in

1957 for the McGill Poetry Series, contains drawings by multidisciplinary artist Peter Daghish, who studied under Albert Dumouchel, an influential Montreal Surrealist.

By the 1960s, the small press movement in Canada had blossomed, thanks to Canada Council grants to publishers and authors, the country's centennial and the expansion of universities and their student bases.⁵ **Coach House Press** (1965–present), heir to Contact Press and a key player during the literary boom of this decade, was started by Stan Bevington in close collaboration with poet Victor Coleman. The focus of the press was twofold: adapting practices and traditions reminiscent of the Arts and Crafts movement and paying attention to contemporary art movements such as Pop, Surrealism and Dada. The press's second publication, *The LSD Leacock* [3], contains 18 lithographed and silkscreened illustrations by Robert Daigneault. *The Great Canadian Sonnet* [4], illustrated by Greg Curnoe, and *The Story So Far* [5], designed and illustrated by General Idea, exemplify the cooperative spirit among printer, poet and artist that the press was known for. *The Pipe: Recent Czech Concrete Poetry* [6], edited jointly by renowned poet bp nichol and Jiri Valoch, and *Bell* [7] also extended experimentation to the book form itself.

blewointment press (1967–92), operated by Vancouver poet bill bissett, also published many new poets in the late 1960s and early 1970s. bissett, like bp nichol, made interesting uses of the typewriter. [8]

Examples of this collaborative spirit among poet, printer and artist could also be found in French Canada, notably through the activities of **Éditions Ertà** (1949–92), founded by poet, typographer and engraver Roland Giguère, who has been credited with establishing the *livre d'artiste*, a French tradition combining the arts and the book trade, as a Québécois institution.⁶ *Les semaines...* [9], a portfolio of engravings by his friend and fellow Surrealist Gérard Tremblay, features 21 works, along with one of the original zinc etching plates. *Voyage*

au pays de mémoire [10] contains 7 relief etchings and an engraved slipcase by Automatiste Marcelle Ferron. Both elevate the art of bookmaking to a total work of art (*gesamtkunstwerk*).

Some of Canada's small presses that share this interest in fine bindings and paper, as well as refined design, typography and illustrations, tackle subject matter other than poetry. **Aliquando Press** (1962–present), founded by book designer William Rueter, is particularly interested in typefaces, and it was the first in Canada to use contemporary fonts such as Eric Gill's Joanna and Carter and Kindersley's Octavian.⁷ Rueter personally sees to all aspects of bookmaking, including the illustrations, which feature his own linocuts, silkscreens and wood engravings. His eminently elegant book works often feature musical themes [12] or celebrations of reading and book arts. [13–14]

Fine presses tend to be small one- or two-person endeavours. **Shanty Bay Press** (1996–present) is a partnership between Janis Butler, who is responsible for typesetting, presswork and bindings, and Walter Bachinski, who contributes illustrations that are either woodcuts, linocuts or pochoirs. Pochoir (a technique often associated with Matisse),⁸ a form of stencilling that gives a freshly painted look, is used in the illustrations for *Circus: Five Poems on the Circus* [15]. *Virgil's Georgics* [16], another example of exquisite craftsmanship, contains both pochoir and woodcut illustrations accompanying a classical text, another hallmark of the press's work. **Barbarian Press** (1978–present), co-founded and run by Jan and Crispin Elsted from Mission, BC, specializes in wood engravings. *Endgrain: Contemporary Wood Engravings in North America* [17], composed of 121 wood engravings by Canadian and American artists, has spawned an ongoing series of books called Endgrain Editions, each one featuring the work of a particular engraver. **Brandstead Press** (1969–93?), features the finely drawn wood engravings and linocuts of its proprietor, Gerard Brender à Brandis. *Larkspur and Lad's Love* [18] is an

important work, beyond its craft, for being the first anthology of love poetry by and for gay men published in Canada.⁹

Gaspereau Press (1997–present), founded by Andrew Steeves and Gary Dunfield and located in Kentville, Nova Scotia, is an anomaly among small Canadian presses in its melding of traditional letterpress and digital approaches. Steeves explains, “I mashed letterpress elements together with our contemporary trade work, often employing photopolymer plates to transfer digital typography to the letterpress realm.”¹⁰ Regardless of method, Gaspereau produces work with high production standards. The *Duke: A New Typeface* broadside [20], an example of Gaspereau's letterpress work, features a typeface designed by Rod McDonald for use by NSCAD, where he was a part-time lecturer. *Colville Tributes* [21], published on the trade side to commemorate Alex Colville's 90th birthday, includes four commissioned essays on the artist's life and work. **Lumière Press** (1981–present), another contemporary press that has distinguished itself by exclusively publishing hand-crafted photography books, was started by Michael Torosian, himself a photographer. [23] The books are published in limited editions of 250 at most and focus on a single photographer. The first was *Edward Weston: Dedicated to Simplicity* [24], featuring three silver gelatin photographs printed by Torosian himself and tipped-in amongst the text. In keeping with the title, the book is an exercise in restraint, the product of a 10-year learning curve during which Torosian taught himself all aspects of bookmaking. Every book published in the intervening years has maintained the refinement of this strong début, combining scholarly texts with the craft of bookmaking. [25]

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