Winter Newsletter 2006

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The views expressed in this paper are solely those of the author.
The Death of the Narcissus, published in 1970, is one of Barry Moser’s earliest publications and his first illustrated book. Moser was teaching at Williston Academy in 1969 when he convinced the headmaster that the school needed a printing press. Used equipment was purchased and installed on school property. In the essay “Leper & Witch’s Garden” in his book of essays In the Face of Presumptions Moser describes the establishment and early years of the fledgling Castalia Press when he taught his students and himself the art of printing, printmaking and other aspects of the arts of the book. He enrolled in the MFA program at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst to learn more.

To avoid fiscal confusion, Moser soon established the separate name “Pennyroyal Press” for the prints and books produced for his own profit. During the period from 1970 to 1974, Moser produced six books under the Pennyroyal imprint and two under Castalia.

Moser writes of his early efforts, “Etching was, for me, then, an easier medium to handle than wood engraving, so the next project that I did was a portfolio of etchings on what I called a “Botanico-Erotic” theme. It was called The Death of the Narcissus, and consisted of eleven sequential images, a haiku poem by Onitsura printed in 48-point Centaur, a title page, half title, a colophon. It was laid into a rather ill-fitting tray case that was, again, made by the South Hadley Book Bindery.”

As we go to press, plans are being made for the following exhibitions and lectures. Dates and times will be announced.

May-end of summer. The 75th Anniversary of the Arboretum will be celebrated with a display of materials from the College Archives.

Dale Wilison, Assistant Professor of Music, on Chinese music
Nancy Steenberg, Assistant Professor of History, at the University of Connecticut, Avery Point, on New London historian Frances Caulkins

FIRST PURCHASE FROM PRICE FUND

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Special Collections has now acquired a scarce copy of this limited edition of 35.

Moser inscribed this copy to his printer. It bears the imprint “Castalia Press” although the artist himself considered it a Pennyroyal publication. The workmanship of The Death of the Narcissus is noticeably less sophisticated than his later Pennyroyal publications of which Connecticut College has a respectable collection including Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland, Through the Looking Glass, Frankenstein, The Holy Bible, and The Wizard of Oz.

The late Charles Price was a great fan of the work of Barry Moser so it is fitting that The Death of the Narcissus is the first major purchase of the fund that was established in his memory.
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ERAGNY PRESS BOOK FROM THE LIBRARY OF JOHN MASEFIELD

One of the most interesting recent additions to Special Collections is a rare publication by the Eragny Press, an edition of Pierre de Ronsard’s *Abregé de l’Art Poetique Français*. The Eragny Press was the collaborative enterprise of Lucien Pissarro, the son of the French Impressionist painter Camille Pissarro, and his artist wife Esther Benusssan Pissarro, with whom he ran the press in England from 1894 to 1914. Born in Paris, trained as an artist and greatly influenced intellectually and artistically by his father, in England the younger Pissarro was caught up in the private press movement.

According to Lora Urbanelli in her book *The Wood Engravings of Lucien Pissarro & Bibliographical List of Eragny Books* “…Lucien brought together, in a way that no one else at the time was able, the avant-garde ideas of the Parisian Neo-Impressionists and the rich tradition of the English Arts and Crafts publishing embodied in the work and life of William Morris.” Lucien and Esther Pissarro made their home in Epping and named their press after the Pissarro ancestral village in France. The Eragny Press produced thirty-two titles, printed in small editions, all distinguished by their beautiful flowered covers, wood-engraved borders, illustrations and fancy capitals. Needless to say, this collaboration of art and business was not profitable and it took little more than the difficulties presented by the outbreak of the First World War to close the press.

It is the connection with John Masefield that makes this copy of Ronsard’s *Abregé* particularly interesting to Connecticut College. In 1983, C. Herbert Simmons and his wife Roxanne (the parents of Rob Simmons, Representative of the Second Congressional District of Connecticut) purchased an edition of sixty copies by the Eragny Press for the Simmons gift to Special Collections. This year, John Masefield and an inscription on the front endpaper, “To Macey, Christmas 1938.” Special Collections is fortunate to own two other examples of the work of the Eragny Press, *Aesopagistics: a Speech of Mr. John Milton For the Liberty of Unlicenc’d Printing*, *To the Parliament of England and A Brief Account of the Origin of the Eragny Press & A Note on the Relation of the Printed Book as a Work of Art in Lift by T. Strang Moore*.

CONSERVATION AND RESEARCH FOUNDATION PAPERS

Professor Emeritus of Botany Richard H. Goodwin, a former Chairman of the Botany Department at Connecticut College and one of the nation’s leading conservation advocates, gave the papers of the Conservation and Research Foundation to the library a number of years ago. Dr. Goodwin has served as the President of the Foundation since it was incorporated in 1953.

The purposes of this foundation are “to promote the conservation of our renewable natural resources; to encourage study and research in the biological sciences; and to deepen understanding of the intricate relationship between man and the environment that supports him.” These objectives are fulfilled primarily by awarding grants to organizations and individuals to aid their conservation programs and to support research in neglected areas. This broad philosophy is reflected in the diversity of grants awarded by the Foundation.

The collection deals mostly with the grants that were awarded by the Foundation between 1953 and 2003. The papers are arranged into 22 document boxes. Although the papers have been available to researchers, there has never been a guide to the collection. But now with the creation of a detailed finding aid by reference librarian Linda Alexander and its publication on the Special Collections home page, the Foundation’s papers are likely to attract the attention they deserve.

NEWS FROM THE CHU ROOM

We hope that many of you got a chance to see *Reviving the Flower and Bird Traditions: Paintings by Li Weihong*, an exhibition of sixty works that was on display in the Chu Room from December 1-15. At once traditional and modern, Chinese artist Li Weihong’s strong use of color created a stunningly beautiful show, her first in the United States.

Fans of the work of Charles Chu will be pleased to hear that the next major show in the Chu Room will be an exhibition of his paintings curated by Ning Chang, Chu-Nihlack Associate Professor of Art History and Curator of the Chinese Art Collection. The details for this show have not been finalized but it will open sometime in May. An announcement will be mailed in the spring.

PLEASE JOIN THE FRIENDS OF THE CONNECTICUT COLLEGE LIBRARY!

Another year begins and we invite you to renew your membership for 2006, as an old or a new member, in the Friends of the Connecticut College Library. Membership contributions are the primary source of support for Special Collections events.

During 2005 the Friends sponsored a variety of interesting lectures and exhibitions, such as the African-themed artists books of Mary McCarthy, a lecture on Chinese bronzes by Professor Chen Wangheng, a PowerPoint presentation on Historic Neighborhoods of New London by New London Landmarks, a lecture on Eugene O’Neill by professor Linda Herr, an exhibition of Japanese prints from the collections of the Art History department and from the library, and an exhibition of World War II artifacts and documents from Special Collections. This year money from the Friends was also used to pay for the archival preservation of seventeen of the most valuable prints in the Japanese Print Collection.

Membership includes the benefit of receiving this newsletter and announcements of events and invitations to exhibition openings and lecture receptions. Members who contribute at the $50 level and above are entitled to borrowing privileges from the excellent collections at Shain Library and Geer Music Library.

Laurie M. Deredita
The Friends of the Connecticut College Library