Connecticut College Digital Commons @ Connecticut College

Friends of the Connecticut College Library Newsletter

Friends of the Connecticut College Library

7-1-2006

Summer Newsletter 2006

Laurie M. Deredita Connecticut College, Imder@conncoll.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.conncoll.edu/fol

Recommended Citation

Deredita, Laurie M., "Summer Newsletter 2006" (2006). *Friends of the Connecticut College Library Newsletter*. Paper 10. http://digitalcommons.conncoll.edu/fol/10

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Friends of the Connecticut College Library at Digital Commons @ Connecticut College. It has been accepted for inclusion in Friends of the Connecticut College Library Newsletter by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Connecticut College. For more information, please contact bpancier@conncoll.edu. The views expressed in this paper are solely those of the author.

SOUND LAB LECTURE TO BE GIVEN BY FILMMAKER RIC BURNS

The Sound Lab Foundation lecture committee is pleased to announce that documentary filmmaker Ric Burns will give the annual Sound Lab Lecture at Connecticut College on the evening of Wednesday, October 4. Burns is known in southeastern Connecticut for his acclaimed American Experience film about the life and work of playwright Eugene O'Neill, some of which was shot on location at the Monte Cristo Cottage, childhood home of O'Neill on Pequot Avenue in New London, and which incorporated many images borrowed from the Sheaffer-O'Neill Collection in Shain Library.

Burns is the director/producer of many films but perhaps he is best known for his award-winning New York: A Documentary Film, a seventeen and a half hour epic which appeared in eight episodes from 1999 to 2003, and is considered by many to be a masterpiece of the documentary genre. Burns has been producing historical documentaries for nearly twenty years, including his collaboration with his brother Ken Burns on the memorable PBS series, The Civil War that aired in 1990. The Burns brothers may

perhaps be credited with bringing the historical documentary genre into the mainstream of popular culture.

Since founding New York-based Steeplechase Films in 1989, Ric Burns also has directed Coney Island (1991), The Donner Party (1992), The Way West (1995), and Ansel Adams (2002). His current film project is a portrait of American artist and pop culture icon Andy Warhol. Drawing heavily on interviews, still photos and archival motion picture footage, some never shown before, Burn's film will be released at the end of September. When he comes to New London, he may perhaps also talk about his 2007 film project, The New York Times, which documents the most influential newspaper in America.

Burns's talk at Connecticut College should be of interest to students of contemporary filmmaking and to aficionados of the life and work of Eugene O'Neill. The event is free and open to the public and will take place at 7:30 p.m. on October 4, in the Ernst Room of the Blaustein Humanities Center.

Friends of the Connecticut College Library

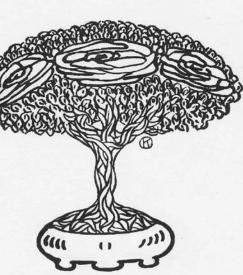
NEW ACQUISITIONS IN THE BOOK ARTS

For many years the Special Collections department at Connecticut College has collected representative examples of work in the book arts, and over time we have built substantial collections of the fine printing produced by William Morris's Kelmscott Press, Leonard Baskin's Gehenna Press, Barry Moser's Pennyroyal Press and many others less famous. Even in the age of electronic communication and mass market publishing the arts of fine binding and letterpress printing — the books arts in general — are by no means dead. In fact, it could be said that the Internet has given the book arts more exposure and that developments in technology have encouraged more people to become interested in the art of the book. At any rate, at Connecticut College we continue to acquire interesting specimens of fine printing as well as artists books, and these examples are used by

In the past the library has acquired several examples of Boston book artist Laura Davidson's work but this year we were able to buy one of her limited editions, number 7 of 20 copies of Rome, from her "Travel Guide Series" printed in 2003. When she came to visit earlier this year Davidson explained that she loves to travel and has always been fascinated by travel guides. She collects old maps, Baedekers and interesting illustrations that eventually she incorporates into her artists books. *Rome* is bound into thick wooden

students in design studies classes.

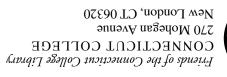




Helen Marguerite O'Kane

boards that have been painted to emulate the red cloth covers of the Baedeker guides. The text and the maps have been scanned from an 1893 Baedeker and then overlaid with linoleum block printed illustrations. Each page of Frankfurt white paper was dyed in Lavazza espresso coffee to convey an appropriately antique and Italian impression.

Book artist Mary McCarthy, who exhibited her African-themed work in Shain Library in 2005, came by recently to show some of her latest work, including an interesting project with artist Betsey



End paper illustration for Pre-Raphaelite Ballads (1900) by



Webber. It is called *Passage of Light: an Artists' Collaborative*, and Connecticut College bought copy number 6 of the limited edition of 25. Bound between Japanese cloth covered boards, the book is printed accordion style, with images by McCarthy on one side backed by Webber's on the other side. When the six panels are open for display—to about six feet--the effect of the color and images is dazzling.

The Friends of the Connecticut College Library

W. Lee Hisle Vice President for Information Services and Librarian of the College

Laurie M. Deredita Director of Special Collections and Archives, and Newsletter Editor

Charles E. Shain Library Greer Music Library Connecticut College 270 Mohegan Avenue New London, CT 06320-4196 Telephone (860) 439-2654 E-mail: Imder@conncoll.edu Thanks to Susan Lindberg of College Relations for her assistance

This and other issues of the *Friends of the Library Newsletter* may be viewed online at <http://www.conncoll.edu/is/ info-resources/special-collections>

July 2006

Karen Hanmer of Glenview, Illinois creates interesting objects with a decidedly political message such as The Patriot Alphabet. Number 10 of 20 copies, this accordion-folded inkjet printed book has a crying American bald eagle on the cover and creates its alphabet from the vocabulary of the war against terrorism, homeland security, and the Iraq War. Her open edition America's Most Wanted: Black Gold Texas Tea is a deck of cards featuring 52 different sports utility vehicles. In a different vein Beaut.e (Code): Computer Professionals Reflect on the Art in Software is an appreciation of the aesthetics of computer programming. It consists of 34 punch cards each with a line of text about the art in software, held together with a thick rubber band that says "It's a living thing." And in Big River, Hanmer has created a toy, like the child's pocket game, in which the viewer maneuvers the box to get each of the balls into a divot corresponding to a city mentioned in the Johnny Cash song, Big River, where the lovesick narrator chases his woman down the Mississippi River, missing her at every port. The image has been scanned from an 1816 map provided by the Library of Congress. Our copy is number 6 of an edition of 20.

All of the book artists mentioned above

have used computer technology very

resourcefully to produce their works. In

contrast, Massachusetts artist and printer

Michael Russem's Sixteen Small Portraits

of Katherine: Made by Her Friends and

Colleagues, printed at the Kat Ran Press

in 2003, is a beautiful example of the

more traditional arts of the book. The

subject is Katherine, a very special dog

who narrowly escaped death by ingestion

of a corncob, and this charming limited edition was created with great care to celebrate her recovery and to raise money to cover the expenses of her medical bills. The Kat Ran Press also did the letterpress printing for the folio volume *Flesh* & *Spirit*, number six in the photography series 21st, a beautifully and expensively produced book displaying images by many prominent contemporary photographers. Our copy is number 65 signed by all of

the artists and authors involved.

Lest we forget the history of printing, we also purchased Notes on the History of the Elston Press which traces the story of one of America's foremost private presses from its beginning in New York City in 1900 to its untimely closing in New Rochelle, New York, in 1905 after a disastrous fire. The Elston Press, which was run by Clarke Conwell and his artist wife Helen Marguerite O'Kane, is considered to be the most successful American interpreter of the Kelmscott style. In addition to a carefully researched history of the press, author Herbert H. Johnston includes a checklist of the 26 books that it produced, of which Connecticut College is fortunate to own two: Some Notes on Early Wood-Cut Books by William Morris and The Rape of the Lock by Alexander Pope. The library also has two copies of Pre-Raphaelite Ballads, illustrated by O'Kane and designed for and partially printed by the Elston Press but published instead by A. Wessels in 1900. As might be expected this book about the Elston Press is itself a beautiful example of the art of the book, printed letterpress on Zerkall-Bütten laid paper at the Press of Michael and Winifred Bixler in Skaneateles, New York. It is number 118 of 225 copies.

All of the books mentioned above, with the exception of the *Pre-Raphaelite Ballads*, which were the gifts of individuals, were purchased with income from endowed funds established for the purpose of supporting the acquisition of new material in Special Collections: the Friends of the Library Fund, the Palmer Memorial Fund and the Fund Established in Honor of Brian Rogers.

WHAT'S NEW IN THE CHU ROOM

The academic year 2005-2006 has been a very busy time for the Charles Chu Asian Art Reading Room with no fewer than four new exhibitions, culminating in the current show "Painting as Living: Natural World through the Eyes of Charles Chu" which will run through September 29. This is the first time that a retrospective of the work of Charles Chu has been shown in the room in Shain Library that was named in his honor. This exhibition was curated by Ning Qiang, Chu-Niblack Associate Professor of Art History who is Professor Chu's successor as Curator of the Chu-Griffis Collection.

Charles Chu has played many roles at Connecticut College: as a beloved professor of Chinese language and founder of a department; as an artist in the traditional Chinese style; as an art collector and donor of the Chu-Griffis Collection of Asian art; and as the curator and tireless promoter of the collection and its place in the curriculum. Now that professor Chu has retired from his role as curator of the Chu-Griffis Collection it is fitting that we take a look at his work as an artist.

In Chinese painting there is a long tradition of the artist as scholar. Charles Chu takes his place within this tradition transposed to another homeland. His inspiration comes from nature and the events of everyday life and, like other artists in this tradition before him, Professor Chu observes his surroundings and transforms them into created worlds that mirror but do not replicate reality. His squirrels and his birds charm and speak to us in calligraphic epigrams. Sometimes his landscapes are familiar such as "Acadia" and the long hand-scroll of "The Connecticut River." But they can also be mysterious as in the haunting "Red Cliff" painted in 1991 but evocative of another continent and another time.

Professor Chu favors the traditional scroll style for displaying his work and the paintings in this show are mounted mostly in the scroll format. Unlike paintings

framed in the Western style, scrolls are not usually hung for long periods of time. They are meant to be taken out and studied, alone or with a friend, and then rolled up and put away for another time. Of course, we cannot do this in a gallery space such as the Chu Room. Once the scrolls are hung, they have to stay there for several months. But the room is laid out in such as way that it is possible to view the works from different angles and at different times of day, and to come back many times to think about what they mean. The overwhelming feeling of this show is of peace and tranquility and of a life that has been lived well and fully.

The force of tradition seems to be very strong in contemporary Chinese art despite the violent attempt to break with the past during the Cultural Revolution and the strong influences of international culture that prosperity has brought to the new China. Many young artists continue to interpret traditional themes. This was very apparent in the two exhibitions of new art from China that were shown in the Chu Room during the past year.

The extraordinarily vivid flower and bird paintings of artist Li Weihong lit up the cases and walls of the Chu Room during the dark days of early December. Li Weihong teaches art in Xi'an and lives and works in Beijing. She accompanied her work to New London where she helped to set up the exhibition and gave a gallery talk interpreted by Professor Ning. Her court style art work, with its attention to detail and its flower, bird and insect motifs, is definitely traditional but there is also a distinctly contemporary feel to her bold colors and strong expression.

The spring exhibition "New Buddhist Art from China" brought to the Chu Room the work of two artists, whose work is inspired by their study of the ancient religious art in the Dunhuang Caves in the desert of northwestern China. Gao Shan and Wang Feng went to Dunhuang in the 1980s and began to produce new Buddhist paintings that reinterpret the ancient paintings and sculpture. In April and May the Chu Room was filled with flying angels and Bodhisattvas painted in the flat ochers, grays and yellows inspired by the cave paintings.



"Baby Owls" by Charles Chu (1991)

Professor Chu and his friend and collaborator Toby Griffis spent many years building the Chu-Griffis Collection, which now numbers around two hundred items, and during that time they collected examples of some of the finest Chinese artists of the 20th century. The current curator's job is to continue to build the collection at a time when the market for Chinese art has become extremely expensive and thus it is harder to compete with private collectors and large museums to acquire interesting work. Professor Ning's solution to this problem is to make a virtue of necessity by drawing upon his connections with artists and art historians in China to find interesting new artists who are willing to send their work to New London to be shown at Connecticut College. Thus, the Chu-Griffis Collection acquired two works by Li Weihong and one work each by Gao Shan and Wang Feng. In this way the Chu-Griffis Collection will grow and the Chu Reading Room will continue to have very interesting new exhibitions.