



CBAS

CINCINNATI BOOK ARTS SOCIETY

CBAS EXPLORES NEW TERRITORY

The Cincinnati Book Arts Society moved into new territory this fall with its first-ever juried exhibition, **Word Art**. The exhibit ran from October 15 through November 23 at the new University Galleries on Sycamore and featured seventy-two works that focused on the word in contemporary visual art. Three hundred guests attended the show's opening, and an estimated seven hundred viewed it during its run, including a number of classes from UC and NKU.

CBAS president Keith Kuhn thanked CBAS member and former president Celene Hawkins "for her unflagging vision and energy for Word Art" and for being the "driving force behind this project, taking it from concept to reality." Kuhn also thanked CBAS members who helped prepare and mount the exhibition, including Celene Hawkins, Jerry Hawkins, Gabrielle Fox, Cran Campbell, Jack Campbell, Cecie Chewning, Peg Rhein, and Jeannie Taylor.

Kuhn said that the exhibit "marks a milestone for our organization, and within the short span of a week has provided CBAS with widespread exposure to the local arts community and, we hope, widened our audience." The show, said Kuhn, indicates that CBAS is a "strong presence on the art scene here in Cincinnati." He also praised the dedication and hard work of members in all aspects of the show. Inspiration for the show's theme came, in part, from Gabrielle Fox and from Jack and Cran Campbell, who had seen a similar show in Antwerp two years ago.

Judges awarded Juror Excellence Awards to four artists: Jen Thomas, Shawn Sheehy, Su Lund, and Richard Harned. Thomas' piece *I Do (I Don't)* filled one case by itself, and included a gameboard for *Husband Hunt*, game box with cards and money, and a wedding cake. Sheehy's *In Preservation of Decay VI* was the largest piece in the show, measuring approximately 9'x12'. Its definite architectural presence in the show combined letterpress on pieces of handmade flax/cement paper sewn together with linen thread. Lund brought together hand colored intaglio prints, handwritten text, and leather binding and box in *Under African Skies*, inspired by the Paul Simon lyrics. Harned, who had three pieces in the show, received the award for his cast iron piece *Your Person and Every Particle That Relates to Your Person*. Other pieces were the cast iron *I Look Like My Mother but the Character was My Dad* and the cast glass *In Life, Beauty Perishes and Not so In Art*.

Besides inspired vision and exquisite craftsmanship, variety was one strength of the show which works in watercolor, screenprint, letterpress, digital typography, neon, collage, handmade paper, origami, fine bindings, cast iron, cast glass, sterling silver, brass, as well as various book structures: accordion, Jacob's Ladder, flip, tunnel, and circle books.

This variety could be seen in differing approaches to letters themselves. Done in ink and graphite on paper, *Raw Sienna You* reflected the artist Kate Kern's interest "in letters and shapes that look like letters." About this work, Cincinnati Kern said, "Shapes that float centered in their own white space are deeply satisfying. I was thinking about these shapes as a part of the larger vocabulary in my work. Making them concrete was a useful exploration." A more traditional exploration of letterforms was seen in the calligraphy of Maine artist Jan Owen's *Only in Time*. The text was set off with woven strips of Tyvek.

In terms of size, the variety might be between Colleen Stepanic's and Lynn Medsker's works. The show included two of Stepanic's pieces. The larger piece, *A Real Problem* (84"x80"), caught the viewer's eye upon entering the gallery while Medsker's collage on wood *In God We Trust?* – with index card-sized dimensions – was clustered with other smaller works.

Variety was also evident in content. Elka Kazmierczak's *I Wish She Was Dead*, dedicated to seven women was written "in homage to survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and emotional, psychological, and physical abuse. It translates emotional turmoil from the darkness of private experience into a shared public language of illustration and poetry." Near Kazmierczak's work were David Edgar's whimsical and brightly colored pieces *Scallop-tailed Tide Diver* and *Pin-Finned Reef Runner*, tropical fish constructed from parts of recycled plastic detergent containers.

Three pieces from Karin Vance's *Cupcakes Make Everyone Happy* series made me smile. *Monsters, You Will be Surrounded by Snakes*, and *You Will be Forgotten* combined vacuum formed plastic, fabric, and embroidery thread to form confections – the kind that drive dieters crazy.

Besides being evident in the show as a whole, the eclectic nature was evident in works presented by a strong showing of local artists. Perhaps most prominent, upon entering the gallery, were three collaborative pieces by Cincinnati John Campbell and Pittsburgh artist Huang Xiang. The pieces, *Asylum House – Failing Light*, *Desire Freedom*, and *Hole of Light* (numbered 1, 2, and 3) were suspended from the ceiling. Campbell constructed two of the houses from handmade paper on wooden frames. Xiang painted his poems in Chinese calligraphy on the paper. *Asylum House #1* was selected for the postcard announcing the exhibit. Nearby were two pieces by Jane Cheng, *Jacobs's Ladder 1: Silhouette Alphabet* and *Jacob's Ladder 2: Baucis and Philemon*. Cheng's translation from the Latin provided the text in the latter.

Smaller scale works included Cecie Chewning's series of nesting six nesting boxes, *Think Inside and Outside the Box*, and Julie Mader-Meersman's miniature flap book *Weird is Normal* and altered book, *Ode to the Dictionary*. Also, small in scale, was Mark Palkovic's book *No Roman a Moron*. This collection of letterpress printed palindromes delighted word-play enthusiasts.

In Alice Pixley-Young's piece *Sabotage*, coffee/tea dyed rag papers – inscribed with the words triage, sabotage, and ménage – cascaded down from the ceiling, flowing into a collection of stones spread on the gallery floor. Cranford Campbell based her two neon pieces, *Maybe Blue and Unless Pink*, on an earlier letterpress book, *Two Color Studies*. Campbell found that working in neon was "not that much different from painting," in terms of light and color.

Familiar Queen City collaborators holmes + riordan had two pieces in the show: The triptych *Haiku Landscapes*, with embroidered text, and the more structural work *Ava at the VA*. Eileen Delenhanty Pearkes' *Heart of the River* provided the text for another collaborative work in which Peter Bartl's typographic illustrations complemented Jane Merks' concept, images, and binding.

Along one wall of the gallery, a small table with two stools seemed to invite viewers to sit down and take a closer look at the works displayed. Among the works were Edwin Jager's on-going series of booklets, *Iconometer #1-36*. Jager, who teaches at the University of Wisconsin, used maps, ads, technical diagrams, packaging, stamping, textural excerpts and ephemera to complete the four-inch square booklets. Each volume was bound in frosted mylar covers.

In closing, it is my hope that, knowing that these comments reflect fewer than half of the pieces in the show, the reader will sense the scope of **Word Art**. If CBAS can mount an exhibit such as this as its first organizational venture into the world of juried shows, we all have great things to look forward to.

www.cincinnatiartbookarts.org

WANT TO JOIN!?

Do you love books, bind and sculpt books, write poetry, or make images that always seem to fold up into pages? Then join the Cincinnati Book Arts Society! Visit our website: www.cincinnatiartbookarts.org



THE PENLAND BOOK OF HANDMADE BOOKS

BOOK REVIEW: The variety seen in the works in the CBAS **Word Art** exhibit is reflected in a fairly recent book that would be an excellent addition to any book artist's collection: *The Penland Book of Handmade Books: Master Classes in Bookmaking Techniques* (Lark Books, 2004).

Ten Penland faculty artists were invited to participate in this project, and each of the ten chapters is organized into three sections. First came an essay about technique and inspiration followed by a clearly photographed, step-by-step demonstrations of a representative piece of their work. A photographic gallery of works, suggested by the artist, wrapped up each chapter. Any of these three sections – essay, demonstration, or gallery – would make this book a worthwhile addition to a library. In the gallery section, it was interesting to note how many of the artists included works by other artists in the book.

In her introduction, Penland Director Jean W. McLaughlin says that the book reflects the school's philosophy in its diversity, "...presenting traditional techniques along with approaches that challenge the very definition of what constitutes a book."

A glance at the table of contents reveals the diversity to which McLaughlin refers. Several of the artists have presented CBAS workshops in recent years. Book arts pioneer Hedi Kyle presents her folded blizzard book, Carol Barton describes one of her magical pop-ups, and Susan E. King describes how content influences technical and structural decisions. Other artists and techniques include Steve Miller's reduction linoleum cuts, Eileen Wallace's simplified binding, Barbara Mauriello's box construction, Jim Croft's wood covers and metal clasps, and Julie Leonard's stiff leaf structures. I especially enjoyed the juxtaposition of Daniel Essig's books as sculpture and Dolph Smith's sculpture as books.

This beautiful volume is the second joint venture between the folks at the Penland School of Arts and Crafts and Lark Books. For those seeking inspiration in other arts, similar books are available from the Penland-Lark team for jewelry and ceramics.

2005 IN REVIEW

For an organization as young as CBAS, 2005 proved to be a busy year. Besides the **Word Art** show at the University Galleries on Sycamore, **Bookworks VI**, at the Main Branch of The Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County, provided a showcase of works by CBAS members.

It was a busy year for workshops. The year began with Rebecca Schaffer and Gabrielle Fox's workshop on portfolio construction. Then, in conjunction with Bookworks, California book artist Peter Thomas presented a workshop on Exploring the Book: Innovative Structures. Pamela Barrios also presented a workshop on Sewn Board Bindings and Protecting Small books with Matchbox and Chemise Casings.

During February's Fine Arts Weekend, CBAS volunteers once again invited visitors to the public library's main branch to construct a single sheet booklet or a Valentine's card.

Members of the CBAS Project Group (formerly known as the Study Group) met at the Corryville Branch of the Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County.

Finally, to keep members informed, Diane Dennis stayed busy publishing the CBAS eNews.

LOOKING AHEAD

In her May, 2005 edition of this newsletter, CBAS member Alice Balterman called Robert Sabuda "the foremost pop-up master in the world." This coming fall, the Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County will be bringing Robert Sabuda to Cincinnati. Dates and times of events are still being set. Sabuda's books include *Winter's Tale: An Original Pop-up Journey*, *The Night Before Christmas Pop-up*, *America the Beautiful*, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, *The Twelve Days of Christmas*, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, *The Movable Mother Goose*, and two *Encyclopedia Prehistorica* editions: *Dinosaurs* and *Sharks and Other Sea Monsters*. CBAS members can look forward to participating in a city wide POP-UP Fest!

www.cincinnatiartbookarts.org

BOOKWORKS 7

*7th Annual Exhibit of the Cincinnati Book Arts Society
May 5 through June 19, 2006*

*CBAS, Cincinnati Book Arts Society, announces its 7th annual exhibit at the Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County.
The exhibit serves as a showcase for the book arts.*

*The featured book artist this year is Karen Hanmer of Glenview, Illinois,
with an exhibit of her work at the Main Library
and a workshop for CBAS members.*