

Plain Wrapper Press

A Half-century of Fine Press Publishing Renewed

The Rotary Club of Swarthmore

Thursday, November 9, 2023

Our Mission

- ❖ Create books in limited editions – books that honor pre-industrial methods of production and that are capable of stirring the heart by their beauty:
 - ❖ Excellent typography
 - ❖ Sensitively integrated artwork
 - ❖ All the elements – the texture of the paper, the subtle impression of letterpress, the binding and overall design – conveying a sense of wholeness and rightness that quicken the heart
- ❖ Surveying the current range of publications in the “contemporary book arts” domain, we perceive that, while there is abundant creativity and experimentation, the level of craft in service to the text that the Plain Wrapper Press of the 1970s-1980s exemplified is less in evidence

SIETE
POEMAS
SAJONES
JORGE LUIS BORGES

SEVEN
SAXON
POEMS

Impressions by ARNALDO POMODORO

Plain Wrapper Press

Our History

- ❖ As a teenager, I learned from master printer Gabriel Rummonds at the Plain Wrapper Press (PWP) in Verona, Italy (1973-1980).
- ❖ By age 14, I had established my own press, the *Stamperia Ponte Pietra*, which published four limited editions (1976-1980). However, my career took a different direction.
- ❖ Four decades later, in 2021, I began exploring the possibility of creating book editions in the tradition of the PWP, which had ceased operation in 1988. On Rummonds' 90th birthday, I suggested a "Plain Wrapper Press Redux."

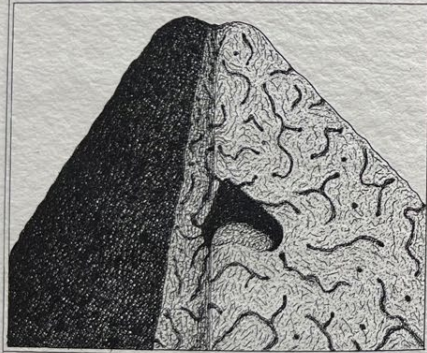
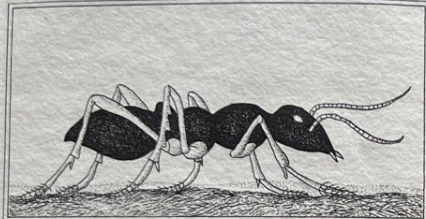
Quinti Horati Flacci

EST MODUS IN REBUS

Libri prioris sermonum primus cum
ARMANDI GALLINA
præfatione Italarum Anglorumque linguis et
FULVI TESTA
duabus imaginibus



Stamperia Ponte Pietra



SERMO

QUI fit, Mæcnas, ut nemo, quam sibi sortem
seu ratio dederit seu fors obiecerit, illa
contentus vivat, laudet diversa sequentis?

“o fortunati mercatores” gravis annis
miles ait, multo iam fractus membra labore; 5

contra mercator navim iactantibus Austris:

“militia est potior. quid enim? concurritur: horæ
momento cita mors venit aut victoria læta.”

agricolam laudat iuris legumque peritus,
sub galli cantum consultor ubi ostia pulsat; 10

ille, datis vadibus qui rure extractus in urbem est,
solos felicis viventis clamat in urbe.

cetera de genere hoc — adeo sunt multa — loquacem
delassare valent Fabium. ne te morer, audi,

quo rem deducam. si quis deus “en ego” dicat 15

“iam faciam quod voltis: eris tu, qui modo miles,

mercator; tu, consultus modo, rusticus: hinc vos,

vos hinc mutatis discedite partibus. eia,

quid statis?” nolint. atqui licet esse beatis.

quid causæ est, merito quin illis Iuppiter ambas 20

iratus buccas inflet neque se fore posthac

[1]

JULI

FRANK ALWEIS

Blue

*Three poems in an English and a French version
&
three drawings by the author*



Stamperia Ponte Pietra

THE CHURCH AT LE THOR

From that tower
a measured bell
gives word of the sun's huge whereabouts
and blackbirds scatter darkness down upon these stones.

Inside

a space hollow as an urn
all space become a twilight
no sound of Jubilate.

Abandoned are the banded saints
Shadows move in peace against the walls.



Original Plain Wrapper Press

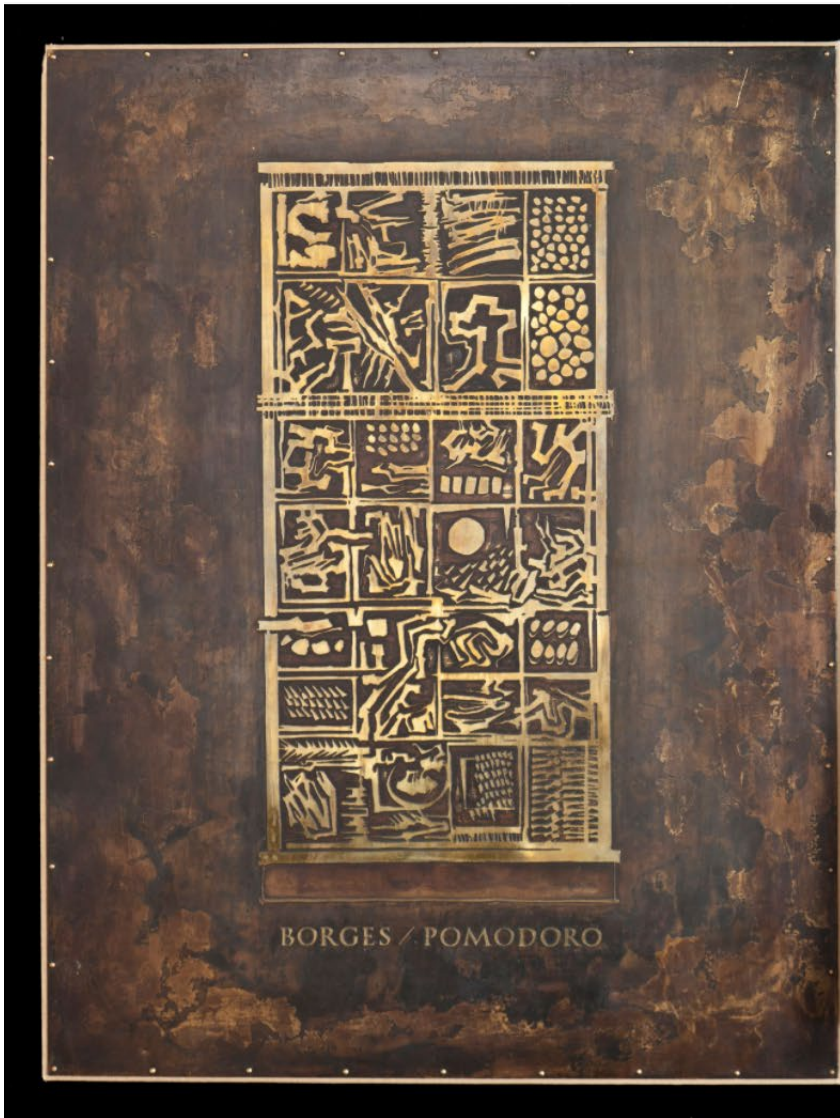
- ❖ Gabriel Rummonds founded the original Plain Wrapper Press (PWP) in Quito, Ecuador, in 1966.
- ❖ In 1967, Rummonds moved the PWP to New York City, where he first met the Verona-based handprinter Giovanni Mardersteig and he purchased a cast-iron Washington handpress.
- ❖ In 1970, Rummonds moved his publishing venture to Verona, Italy, where he remained until 1982.
- ❖ During this period in Verona, the PWP printed one of the great treasures of Twentieth-century fine-press publishing: *Siete Poemas Sajones/Seven Saxon Poems* by Jorge Luis Borges with artwork by Arnaldo Pomodoro. Other editions featured texts by Anthony Burgess, Italo Calvino, John Cheever, Brendan Gill, and Dana Gioia. Illustrators included Antonio Frasconi, Fulvio Testa, and Joe Tilson.
- ❖ In 1982, the PWP moved to Cottdale, Alabama, where it was eventually reborn as Ex Ophidia Press, and then ceased publishing in 1988.

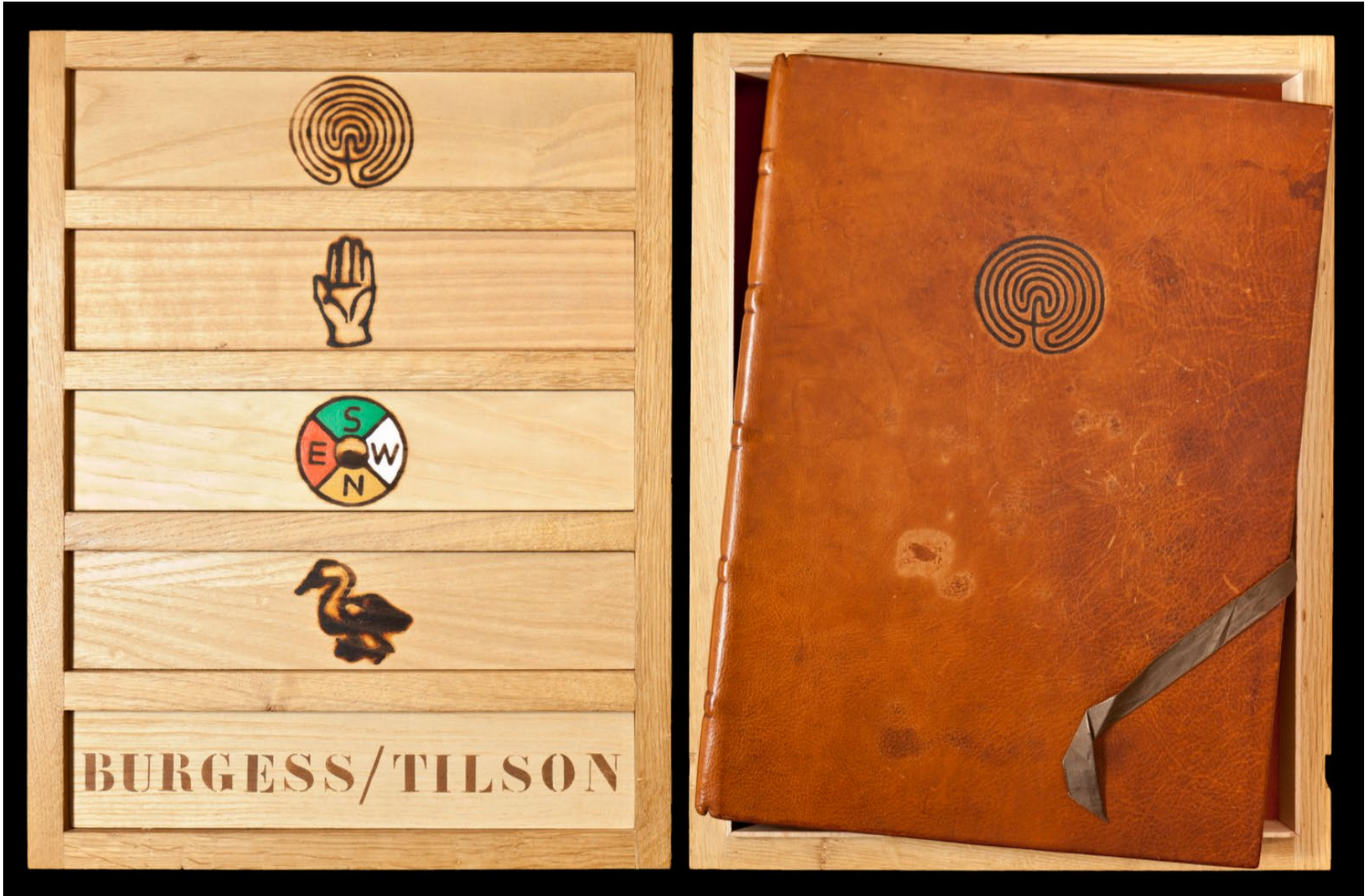













BURGESS/TILSON



WILLIAMSBURG



WILL AND TESTA MENT

A FRAGMENT OF BIOGRAPHY BY ANTHONY BURGESS

WITH EIGHT SCREENPRINTS BY JOE TILSON



PLAIN WRAPPER PRESS



LIKE FIRE



Robert Cecil, Earl of Salisbury, big-headed and dwarf-bodied, stood with his hunchback to the great fire. Papers, papers everywhere. He said:

"I am glad to be acquainted with the man. The plays I know. What is this story?"

Will told him. "And Master Jonson fears for his life now. He deserves, if I may say this, my lord, very well of you."

Cecil picked up a letter from his desk. "This has but now come to me. You know of a certain Francis Tresham Esquire?"

"His name is, I think, on the list I gave."

"He has a brother-in-law, Lord Monteagle. Lord Monteagle has sent me a letter from this Tresham, and it says nought but this: 'They shall receive a terrible blow this parliament, and yet they shall not see who hurts them. The danger is past as soon as you have burned this letter.' As you see, it was not burned, nor will it be. I am conveying it at once to His Majesty. So what you bring from Master Jonson conjoined with this does but confirm what the King will say he knew all along, that he hath enemies." Cecil smiled very thinly. "Moreover, it would seem that his dreams are often charged with what may be termed a *memoria familiaris*. Blowing up comes much into them, Master Shakespeare. His father, the Lord Darnley, was, as you will know, blown sky-high at Kirk-of-Fields in Scotland, while his royal mother was dancing at some rout or other. So, I thank you for this loyal work -"

"It was nothing, my lord."

"- And will have Master Jonson out of the jail where he languisheth as soon as the conspirators be apprehended." Cecil gave his hand, very crusty with rings, to Will. Will was not sure whether he was meant to kiss it. But he shook it sturdily and left.

When Ben Jonson was let out of jail he went straight to William Shakespeare's lodgings in Silver Street and said:

"Let us drink."

"Ben," Will said, "if you mean we are to go to this low papist tavern full of vomit -"

"Nay, show sense, man, that was but show. That was part of the part I played and played well. I am as good a son of the English Church as any that was fried under Bloody Mary and will prove it Sunday by drinking



CIRCUS—COCÒ

Sweetness. Caress. Little hushed slaps.

Cold fingertips on the windowpane.

Banners little intense winds/windows.

Banners, interests clear and just.

They caress unfettered restless. Tied on agile.

They banners, how-ever? How-here?

Distant battles. Battles in albums, in the medal box.

Towns. Very ancient. Young excavations, to excavate in the sky. Banners.

Cupolas/circus. Banners that are jumping, jumping high.

Whip raised for me, they whip the blue and the sky.

Tensioactive songs/foam fill frighten the wind. Banners.

Heavenly box office. Ticket sales. Real entrance.

Latches, latches in ready supply.

Key of circus-colors-coach circus. Banners.

In the toyed with fresh town, toy circus.

Tiny little circus. Tonguelings that lick. Inguens. Bifed,

trifed banners, battles. Billiards. Bottles.

Oh that like a stream of streams banners bounces all the circus-cocò.

Billiards bowling alleys slot machines tring tring are caught

in the gleaming [] mob trap of March—

as always mortal

as always in torture-laughing

as always in burning-laughing laughing.

And he goes on motor scooter along the wire stretched up to the top

of the bell tower, of the indigo azure absence.

And tosses into the air. Banners. But also builds coffins, or marks cards.

Cheats in the damp in the dry. Carillon of banners and banns.

Falls in love, makes circuses of evenings.

It scissors up, March. Catch traps. Cutting banns. Befehle like rays and quarterings.

Early next day the circus left—

furtive, with lambkins' scuffle.

I, because (it's my business), was of sleep bereft.

I knew of the dawn's departure, of the

circus lambkins' star-watched shuffle.

Departure the 15th, San Giuseppe

closely skimming the forest, the hoarfrost, the cracks.

for each other lies the beginning and the end of everything; of each other we will never know more than this rustling that fades and is lost along the line. A vain tension of the ear concentrates the charge of passions, the furors of love and hate, such as I - during my career on the staff of a great investment firm, in my days regulated by a precise utilization of my time - have never had the leisure to experience except in a superficial and absent fashion.

Obviously at this hour it is impossible to get through. Best to give up, but if I renounce speaking with you, I must immediately return to considering the telephone as a completely different instrument, like another part of myself to which other functions correspond: I have a series of business appointments in this city which I must confirm urgently, I must detach the mental circuit that connects me with you and plug into the one corresponding to my periodical inspections of the firms controlled by my cartel or in partnership with it. In short, I must perform a switching not in the telephone but in myself, in my attitude towards the telephone. Before that, I want to make a final try, I will dial one more time that sequence of numbers that by now has taken the place of your name, your face, you. If it works, fine; otherwise, I give up. Meanwhile I can continue thinking things I will never say to you, thoughts addressed more to the telephone than to you, which concern the relationship I have with you through the telephone, or rather the relationship I have with the telephone using you as a pretext.

In the spinning of thoughts that accompany the spinning of distant mechanisms I recall faces of other women, recipients of long-distance calls; voices of various timbres vi-



brate; the dial forms and breaks up accents, attitudes, and moods; but I cannot establish the image of an ideal recipient for my yearning for long-distance connections. Everything begins to blur in my mind: faces, names, voices, numbers of Antwerp, Zurich, Hamburg. Not that I expect more from one number than from another: neither in the probability of making contact or in what - once I reach the number - I might say or hear. But this doesn't dissuade me; I persist in my attempts to get through to Antwerp or Zurich or Hamburg or whatever other city might be yours: I have already forgotten it in the carousel of numbers I have been dialing alternately and in vain for an hour.

There are things I feel impelled to say to you, without

*Atlantic
Crossing*

Excerpts from the Journals of

John Cheever

Our Team



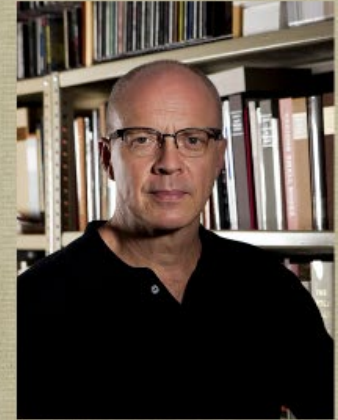
GABRIEL RUMMONDS
Publisher Emeritus



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JACE GRAF
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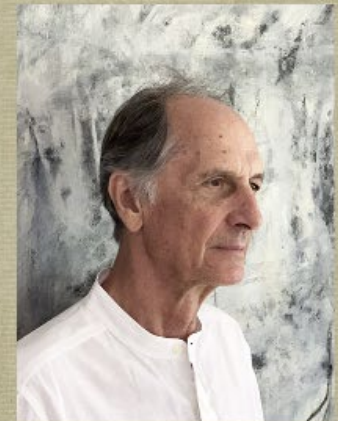
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ROBERT MAHON
Photographer

Our Team



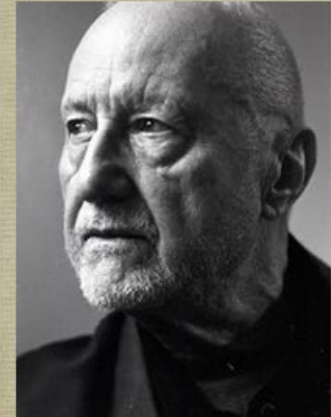
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LISA TETRAULT, PH.D.
Author



SANDY TILCOCK
Printer



FREDERIC TUTEN
Author & Artist

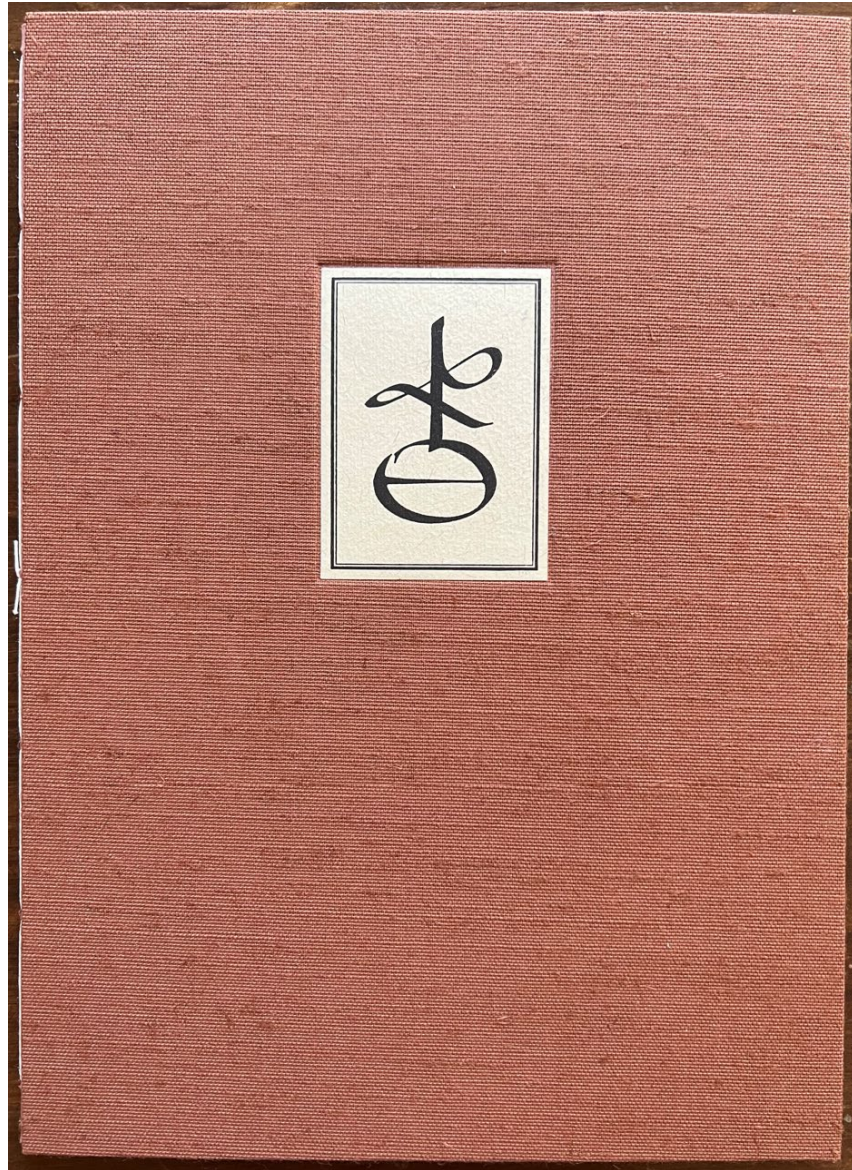


JOHN D. WAGNER
Poet & Artist

1. The Kallima Butterfly

Three poems and a photogravure by John D. Wagner. 8 pages. 29 x 20 cm. 80 copies. Quartus Series. December 2021.

Handset in Centaur; text in 16 point. Book design and title-page calligraphy by Jerry Kelly. Velké Losiny handmade Prague paper printed dry on a 219 Vandercook Press in black and green at Sandy Tilcock's lone goose press in Bisbee, AZ; photogravures pulled by Sandy Tilcock and John D. Wagner. Colophon signed by the poet/photographer. Handbound in cloth over boards, with accompanying folder, by Jace Graf at Cloverleaf Studio in Austin, TX. Publisher Emeritus Gabriel Rummonds oversaw the project.





*The Kallima
Butterfly*

Three Poems & a Photogravure
by John D. Wagner



Plain Wrapper Press Redux

2021

As It Was in the New-Spring Wind

Always careful
on the Lee River Road
for animals at dusk who charge
from the stand of pines to the water,
I swerved today to avoid hitting
what turned out to be just a leaf,
yet still chose, even knowing that,
not to hit it anyway, dancing so
beautifully as it was
in the new-spring wind.

Launching Infinity

As a child,
because my little voice
echoed right back to me
from across the near water
—and knowing this was
maybe as far as that voice
would ever carry—instead I
reached beyond
by launching light beams from
my flashlight, blasting them
into forever just by turning the light
on and off and on and off and on,
aiming at the summer night sky.
Those beams are out there now
and will be traveling longer
than I'll be alive, longer
than I'll be dead, moving
away from me hopefully, someday,
surely among the far stars.

TOO
MAYBE

QUARTUS IV

Eighty numbered copies, signed by the author/photographer, were printed on a 219 Vandercook Press at Sandy Tilecock's lone goose press, with assistance from Mark Fischer. John D. Wagner assisted in the pulling of the photogravure. The book design and calligraphy are by Jerry Kelly. The type is handset Centaur. The handmade Prague paper is from the Velké Losiny Mill. The binding is by Jace Graf at Cloverleaf Studio. Publisher Emeritus Richard-Gabriel Rummonds oversaw the project. The poems were previously published in *Fake Cities* (Ex Ophidia Press, 2016). All rights reserved.

This is copy number 43



VELKÉ
LOSINY



2. *Declaration of Sentiments*

Manifesto that emerged from the 1848 women's rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York, re-published on its 175th anniversary. New introduction by Carnegie Mellon's Lisa Tetrault, Ph.D., and two high-impact, three-color images by Susan Lowdermilk, both with wood engravings. 24 pages. 29 x 20 cm. 100 copies. Press Book Series. April 2023.

Type is Diotima, designed by Gudrun Zapf. Book design by Jerry Kelly. Velké Losiny handmade Prague paper printed dry on a 219 Vandercook Press in black, two blues, and two purples at Sandy Tilcock's lone goose press in Bisbee, AZ. Paste papers designed and produced for the covers by Sandy Tilcock. Colophon signed by the artist and by the author of the introduction. Quarter-bound in gold-stamped blue leather, with slipcase, by Jace Graf at Cloverleaf Studio in Austin, TX. Publisher Emeritus Gabriel Rummonds oversaw the project.



DECLARATION
OF SENTIMENTS

Seneca Falls, New York

July 1848

Introduction by Lisa Tetrault

Prints by Susan Lowdermilk



Plain Wrapper Press Redux

2023

WHEN, IN THE COURSE OF HUMAN EVENTS, it becomes necessary for one portion of the family of man to assume among the people of the earth a position different from that which they have hitherto occupied, but one to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes that impel them to such a course.

We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights governments are instituted, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. — Whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of those who suffer from it to refuse allegiance to it, and to insist upon the institution of a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly, all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are

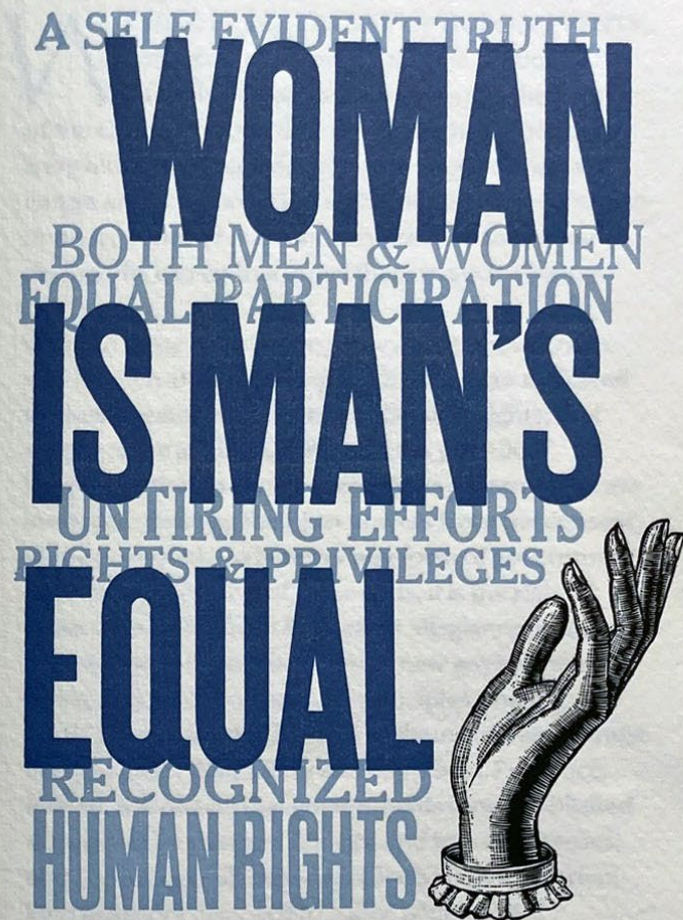
enjoys a new description, it remains on permanent display at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History – a sign of the reverence our nation bestows upon this sacred text.

As feminism took new shape in the 1960s and 1970s, many white women once again found inspiration in the Declaration of Sentiments. They fought to have the Wesleyan Chapel in Seneca Falls preserved as a National Historical Park – the first dedicated to women's rights. Congress approved the plan in 1980. Peeling away layers of history revealed only a few original bricks, and today a reconstruction stands on the original site. Reenactments of the meeting, and public readings of the Declaration, take place there every July.

The chapel is flanked by the full text of the Declaration of Sentiments, sharply etched into a low, long wall of black granite featuring a waterfall cascading over its immortal words and announcing their timeless durability. A spacious lawn separates the two, where tourists and pilgrims can sit and contemplate the manifesto's enduring legacy – and ongoing relevance.

Today, there is still much to discover inside this 175-year-old document, as we contemplate where and how this protest illuminates both past and present. The language sometimes hedges, as women chose to speak delicately – even, to our ears, incomprehensibly so – about indelicate topics, such as gender-based violence, but their clarity never wavers. This finely printed and bound anniversary edition, with moving original artwork by Susan Lowdermilk, affords readers a rare aesthetic opportunity to re-engage with this legendary document.

Lisa Tetrault, Ph.D.
Carnegie Mellon University
Author of *The Myth of Seneca Falls*



OPPRESSED

UNJUST

SUBORDINATE

LAWS

AGGRIEVED

DISFRANCHISEMENT

NO VOICE

CIVILLY DEAD



3. *Uncle Umberto's Orchard*

A short story by Frederic Tuten, with two multi-color screenprints by Gary Lichtenstein, inspired by original paintings by Tuten. 38 pages. 33 x 23 cm. 80 copies, numbered in the press and signed by the author/artist, of which 20 special-edition copies numbered in Roman numerals with a third screenprint laid in and enclosed in a clamshell box. Press Book Series. September 2023.

Set in Monotype Walbaum by Michael and Winifred Bixler in Skaneateles, NY; text in 14D. Calligraphy by Jerry Kelly. Papeterie Saint-Armand custom handmade paper from Montreal, Canada, printed dry on a 219 Vandercook Press in black and burgundy at Sandy Tilcock's lone goose press in Bisbee, AZ. Screenprints produced by Gary Lichtenstein at Lichtenstein Editions in Jersey City, NJ. Handbound in linen over boards, with a slipcase, by Jace Graf at Cloverleaf Studio in Austin, TX. Publisher Emeritus Gabriel Rummonds designed the book and oversaw the project.

Uncle Umberto's Orchard

A short story and two screenprints by

Frederic Tuten

THE TUG eased into the slip. I had seen it go down river two hours earlier with the same marmalade cat sunning on the prow. Now he held a quivering mouse between his teeth.

"That's horrible," Marie said. "Why do cats always have to torment the poor mice?"

"I don't know if they think of it that way."

The tug's captain came to us straightaway. The gold shield on his hat shone like a baby sun.

"Hi, Dad," she said, giving him a cheery smile. He cradled a harvest of wild irises he had just cut from a swampy cove off Governors Island, cut for her, he said, without looking at me.

"There's a sweet dad," she said.

"They're beautiful," I said. "The irises."

"Have you been at sea much these days?" he asked in a not too interested way. "Have you been out there in the vast?"

"Yes, sir," I answered, not too truthfully, thinking how brief were my voyages, now that I had left off the oilers, finding in them nothing but great floating steel hulks run by computers. How few now were the great cargo freighters with their slow passages, and how few of them remained for me to sail.

A fireboat swept by with a fierce blast of its horn. The marmalade cat at the tug's prow yawned and let drop a gray smudge with a tail into the river. I heard a rooster crow.

The captain's first mate limped down the tug's gangway. He sported one gold earring and nestled a rooster in his arms. The man was singing an ancient sea chantey that was heard long ago on many oceans



Coming in 2024

- ❖ *4. Pilgrims & Guests* by W.S. Di Piero (Stanford University Emeritus). Twelve poems, with four watercolor illustrations by Fulvio Testa. 16 pages. 29 x 20 cm. 80 copies. Typeface Walbaum. Velké Losiny Prague handmade paper. Colophon signed by the author and by the artist.
- ❖ *5. CELLINI: Casting The Perseus* by Benvenuto Cellini, with a new introduction by Professor Michael Cole of Columbia University. Photography by Robert Mahon. 46 pages. 33 x 23 cm. 80 copies. Typeface Centaur. Two Rivers handmade paper. Colophon signed by the author of the introduction and by the photographer.
- ❖ *Both editions:* Book design by Gabriel Rummonds. Printed on a 219 Vandercook Press at Sandy Tilcock's lone goose press in Bisbee, AZ. Handbound by Jace Graf at Cloverleaf Studio in Austin, TX.

Collections

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