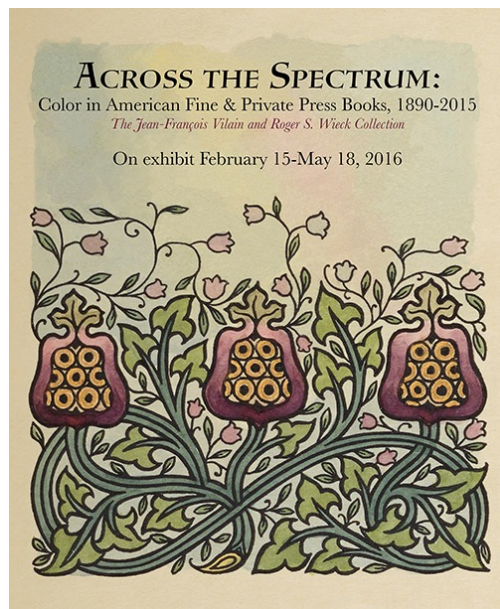


A Couple Exhibitions Continue to keep Mosher in the Public Eye

Recently there have been two exhibitions which contained Mosher material, one of which ended May 31st, and the other which will continue to the end of July. Both were devoted to a much wider array of material coalesced around a theme, but both afforded the opportunity to put some Mosher material before the public eye.



“Across the Spectrum: Color in American Fine & Private Press Books, 1890-2015” was sponsored by Penn Libraries / Kislak Center from February 15th and was extended two weeks beyond its formal closing date of May 18. As noted in their on-line press release:

Across the Spectrum: Color in American Fine & Private Press Books, 1890-2015

This exhibition explores the establishment of a fine and private press movement in America, beginning at the end of the nineteenth century and continuing to the present day, through its various uses of color. Color was used not only to enhance the page visually, but also to convey important information. Techniques employed to impart color to the page varied, from hand-coloring printed outlines to colored woodcuts and engravings, from applying color through stencils (pochoir) to color lithography, from silkscreening to typographic color. The exhibition celebrates the recent acquisition by the Penn Libraries of The Jean-François Vilain and Roger S. Wieck Collection of Private Presses, Ephemera, & Related References.

To kick off the exhibition, a sold-out symposium was held on February 26-27

entitled “The Art of the Book: Fine Printing in North America in the 21st Century” which included a number of speakers including the keynote address by Mark Dimunation, Chief of the Rare Book and Special Collections Division of the Library of Congress. Themes covered in the symposium dealt with the creation of fine press books, the history of color in books, art in/art of fine press books, teaching the book arts to a new generation, and collecting and exhibiting fine press books. Following the program there was a reception held just outside the exhibition hall. The exhibition itself was held in the Kislak Center’s new state-of-the-art Goldstein Family Gallery in the Van Pelt Dietrich Library Center.

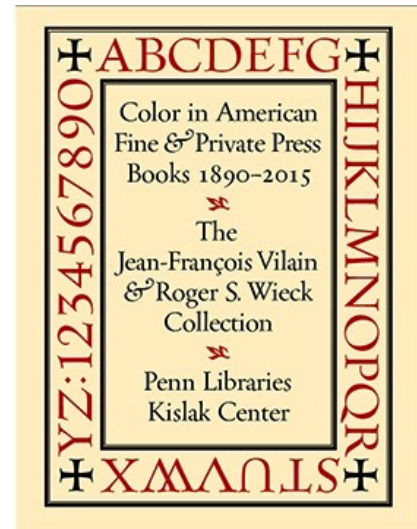
An accompanying catalogue, *Color in American Fine and Private Press Books, 1890-2015: The Jean-François Vilain and Roger S. Wieck Collection of Private Presses, Ephemera, & Related References*, was designed by Jerry Kelly and includes essays by Lynne Farrington, Russell Maret, and Jean-François Vilain (“Book Illumination in America”) as well as a complete exhibition checklist and an extensive list of presses in the collection. One hundred and eighty items were selected for display from the thousands of books donated. Among those treasures there was but one book which was not

part of the collection, but which was given an honored spot in the “From England to America” case which included the Kelmscott edition of D. G. Rossetti’s *Hand & Soul*, the Doves Press edition of J. W. Mackail’s *William Morris: An Address...*, and some of the “American Experiments” from the Gottschalk, Philosopher, Elston, Blue Sky, Clerk’s, and Hillside presses. Three Mosher books were also exhibited in this case: (1) Item 10, two copies of Mathew Arnold’s *Empedocles on Etna* (1900) one colorized by Bertha Avery for Flora Macdonal Lamb, Mosher’s secretary and assistant, and the other uncolored, and (2) a copy of a small Mosher Press book described in the catalogue as:

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Mosher Press (Portland, ME)
Oscar Wild, *Poems in Prose* (1906)
Courtesy of Philip Bishop

This extensively hand-illustrated copy was formerly in the collection of Jean-François Vilain. It was illuminated by Clara Chipman Newton, one of the co-founders of Rookwood Pottery in Cincinnati.



The title page opening of the volume also appears in the exhibition catalogue as Fig. 29 reproduced here below:



More pages from this extensively hand-illuminated book can be seen on the MOSHER PRESS website under Bindings and Illuminated Mosher Books.

Upon leaving the exhibition room to the left, was a large sign simply entitled "Acknowledgements" written by Lynne Farrington, Senior Curator of Special Collections, which extolled Jean-François Vilain's accomplishments as a book collector:

Collections always bear the marks of their collectors—their interests, their knowledge, their passions. Great collectors are obsessed, but it is these obsessions that result in great collections... Jean-François Vilain's obsessions have created an amazing collection of books and related materials... [which] gives us the broader history of this movement in the United States, from its beginnings in the late nineteenth century through to the present day...

The acknowledgements went on to thank many others, but what caught my eye was the simple statement "Many thanks as well to Philip Bishop for his loan of a specially illustrated Mosher title he originally sold to Jean-François, and then bought back when he discovered he couldn't live without it." Cute, although necessarily glossing over a whole story which admittedly would take too long to

tell here, so we'll leave this be the last word. It was quite the exhibition, and I have recommended to others that they get the catalogue designed by Jerry Kelly and beautifully printed—of course.



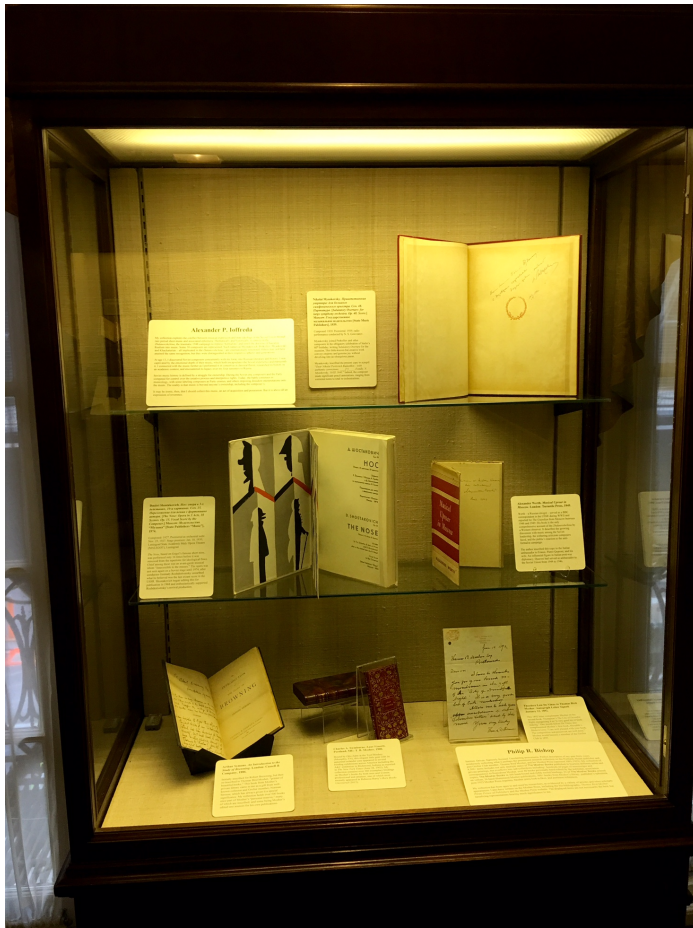
The second exhibition in which some Mosher related material is presented has to do with the Grolier Club in New York. Presently viewable, having opened to the public on June 16, it will continue until July 31st in the second floor gallery. There are nineteen new Grolier Club members who agreed to exhibit and selected up to three items from their collection to show to both the older Grolier Club members and to public alike. I'm honored to be one of those nineteen presenting three items which I thought would be of interest to the Club at large, to book collectors, and to whomever might wander into the gallery. Below is a picture of the case in which my material is housed (bottom

shelf, at my request), and the general "collector" write-up and placards to each of the items on display. Here beginning with the collector's statement:

Philip R. Bishop

Smitten. Driven. Narrowly focused. Unrelenting monomania. Perfect descriptors of my past thirty years assiduously collecting what is perhaps the preeminent research collection on the Portland, Maine publisher and past Grolier Club member: Thomas Bird Mosher and his Mosher Press (operated 1891-1923). My collection of 4,500+ items includes not only multiple states of *The Mosher Books* published in fourteen different series and private printings, but overflows into sub-collections including: hundreds of pages of manuscripts and correspondence to/from/about Mosher, over 40 books personally hand-edited by the publisher, association copies, *The Mosher Books* in 360 hand-bound and richly tooled bindings, 33 of *The Mosher Books* printed on animal vellum, 34 hand-illuminated Mosher publications, 500+ books from Mosher's library, publisher's ephemera, post-1923 Mosher Press imprints, Mosher press look-a-likes, and pertinent references.

My collection has been open to and used by researchers as evidenced by a variety of articles and other scholarly appearances. I also have written on the Mosher Press, including the bio-bibliography, *Thomas Bird Mosher: Pirate Prince of Publishers* and the Mosher Press website. The displayed items are not necessarily the best, but tantalizing representations bearing much significance to me.

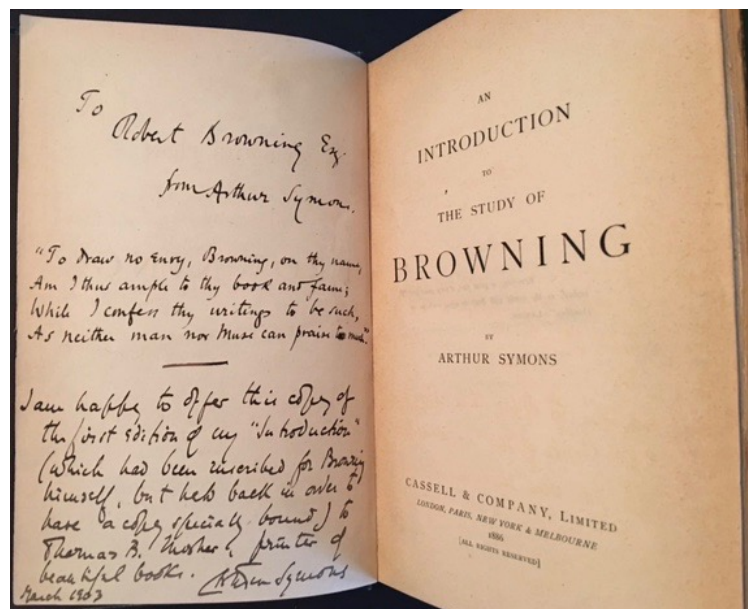


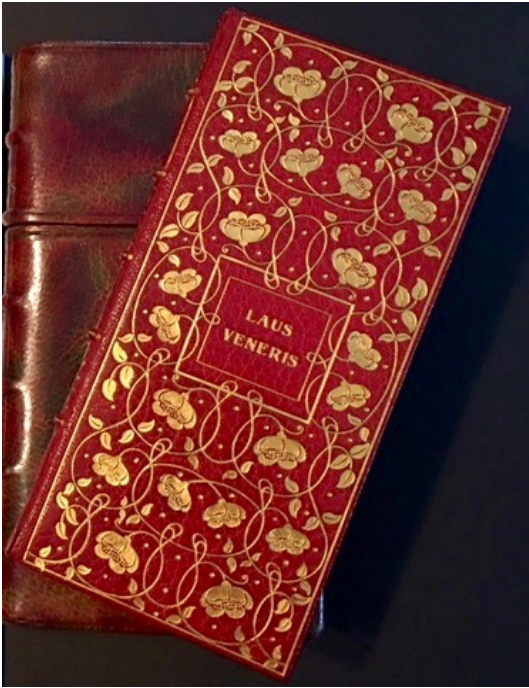
Then going on to present each of the items exhibited in the case. The upper two shelves are those of my Grolier Club compatriot, Alexander P. Ioffreda. On the bottom shelf, the position I took so as to keep these items protected as much as possible from any deleterious affects of light even though I was assured that the bulbs were UV protected, appear from left to right: an inscribed book from Arthur Symons to Mosher, an exquisite little binding by Otto Zahn of Memphis, TN on a small "Vest Pocket Series" book from the Mosher Press. Lastly, there appears a short handwritten letter from Theodore De Vinne, one of the founders of the Grolier Club and printer par

excellence, to Mosher expressing his approval of Mosher's second book, *The City of Dreadful Night* by James Thomson. A closer look at each of these appears below:

Arthur Symons. *An Introduction to the Study of Browning*. London: Cassell & Company, 1886.

Initially inscribed for Robert Browning, but then re-inscribed to Thomas Bird Mosher, "printer of beautiful books." This book from Mosher's private library came to me as a gift from well-known collector and Grolier member, Norman Strouse, which has always given it a special significance. My collection holds over 500 books once part of Mosher's "personal reserve," many of which are inscribed, and some being Mosher's edited text sources for his own publication.





**Charles A. Swinburne. *Laus Veneris*.
Portland, ME: T.B. Mosher, 1900.**

Bound by Otto Zahn at the Toof Bindery (Memphis, TN), this elegant little gem with its autumnal solander case appeared in several binding exhibitions across America including the A&C exhibition in Richmond, Indiana as reported in *The New York Times* (June 28, 1902). My collection contains over 360 exemplary bindings on Mosher's books by both men and women, professional and amateur, one of which most recently appeared in Rebecca Barry's *Rare Books Uncovered* (2015).

**Theodore Low De Vinne to
Thomas Bird Mosher. 1 p. ALS.
Jan 12, 1892...**

This 1892 letter compliments Mosher on his second book, Thompson's *The City of Dreadful Night*, recognizing it as "a very good bit of book-making." One month before De Vinne also complimented Mosher's first book, Meredith's *Modern Love*: "I am well pleased with your book. The composition and presswork are well done." Mosher would become a member of the Grolier Club in 1895.

