

American Little Magazines of the 1890s: A Revolution in Print

The above titled exhibition was on view at the Grolier Club, 47 East 60th Street, New York, from February 20-April 27, 2013. A fully-illustrated 103-page catalog entitled the "American Little Magazines of the 1890s: A Revolution in Print" was made available at the Grolier Club.

The exhibition items on view represented the crème-de-la-crème of little magazines--aesthetically beautiful and culturally important productions such as *Bradley*, *His Book*, the *Lark*, the *Chap-Book*, the *Bibelot*, *M'lle New York*, the *Philistine* and the *Echo*, magazines whose aesthetic appearance would influence developments in graphic arts and magazine and book design in the twentieth century. Featured were over 160 items, including magazines, books, posters, manuscript material and decorative objects. The exhibition placed these magazines in their context, demonstrating their links to the Arts and Crafts movement, Decadence, Symbolism, and Art Nouveau; developments in book design and the graphic arts; the international poster revolution; Progressive-era cultural movements such as the rise of Utopian communities, Free Thought, Tolstoyan Socialism, and Anarchism for which these publications served as a vehicle of protest for the expression of alternative and radical social and political ideals.

On Wednesday, March 13, 5-7 p.m. there was a PowerPoint presentation by Philip R. Bishop entitled "The Bibelot: Thomas Bird Mosher's Vision of Introduction" followed by a Collectors' Forum which included Mark Samuels Lasner (moderator), Jean-François Vilain, David W. Lowden, Susan Barribeau, and Philip R. Bishop.

On March 28, 2013 a Symposium on the exhibition included: Johanna Drucker who is famous for her work on artists' books but who has also done an edition of and written on *Le Petit Journal des refuses*; Brad Evans from Rutgers who does some interesting work on little magazines; David Weir from Cooper Union who has written a book on Decadent Culture in the United States that includes quite a bit on little magazines; and Kirsten Macleod, the exhibition's curator.

In the presentation on *The Bibelot*, included a variety of introductions Mosher made through his literary instrument, including: the quantity and type of the Introductions themselves which he wrote for the little magazine; his mission to introduce the American public to major and minor British poets of the 19th & early 20th centuries; and his introductions to various literary movements (e.g., the Irish Renaissance, Pre-Raphaelites, Symbolist Movement, revival of classical literature, and the private press movements of England). As a form of introduction *The Bibelot* also pointed toward the larger works published under "The Mosher Books" flag. There was some discussion on how some of the issues themselves became a magazine-to-book introduction for serious bibliophiles, and how *The Bibelot* afforded Mosher the opportunity to introduce himself to the Republic of Book Lovers and to members of the wider literary community.

The exhibition's materials were drawn from institutions such as Columbia, Princeton, the Delaware Art Museum, the University of Delaware, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, The Grolier Club, and from the private collections of David W. Lowden, Mark Samuels Lasner, Jean-François Vilain, and from The Mosher Press Collection of Philip R. Bishop. The items provided for *The Bibelot* case included:

- (1) Copies of *The Bibelot* in various guises: regular paper white paper spine with blue boards, library buckram volume, red morocco volume, green morocco (Mosher's assistant, Flora Lamb's set) volume, a Japan vellum volume, a single issue bound by Giulio Giannini-Firenze, a bound volume by Otto Zahn of the Toof Bindery of Memphis, TN. Also present will be an ultra-rare brown paper trial issue of Vol. 1, No. 1.
- (2) Mosher's 1898 reprint of *The Germ*.
- (3) William Morris's *The Hollow Land—A Tale* (1897) from Mosher's Reprints from 'The Bibelot' Series.
- (4) A boxed set of Walter Pater's *Imaginary Portraits* from the Brocade Series, the box and all volumes being in pristine condition.
- (5) Thomas Bird Mosher's copy of *The Century Guild Hobby Horse* for April 1887.
- (6) A copy of *The Phoenix*, Vol. 2, No. 2 for January 1915 which includes Michael Monahan's tribute to Thomas Bird Mosher.
- (7) A miniature prospectus for the Chap-Book taken from one of T. B. Mosher's "Mark Twain" scrapbooks.
- (8) A large inscribed portrait of Thomas Bird Mosher.
- (9) A hand-written letter from the grande dame of the Victorian/Edwardian stage, actress Ellen Terry, to Mosher placing a standing order for several issues of *The Bibelot*.
- (10) Mosher's copy of Oscar Wilde's *Poems—Together with His Lecture on the English Renaissance* (Paris, 1903) with his holograph editorial notes on the Renaissance portion which was then used for some of his subsequent publications.

Philip R. Bishop
18 April 2013