

The Aliquando Press fonds

ADMINISTRATIVE HISTORY/BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH:

The Aliquando Press is a private press located in Dundas, Ontario. The Press was founded in late 1962 in Toronto, by William Rueter, who has been the sole proprietor and printer. It relocated to Dundas, Ontario, in 1998. The Aliquando Press was established primarily as a vehicle for Rueter to learn about all aspects of the hand-produced book. He studied at the Ontario College of Art and also at the City Literary Institute in London, England. He worked for the University of Toronto Press as a graphic designer and later Senior Designer between 1969 and 1998.

Rueter made the decision to immerse himself in the art and craft of making books after becoming enamoured with letterforms in London, England, in 1960, where he first saw the Book of Kells and examples of early printing. Upon his return to Canada, he enrolled at the Ontario College of Art, studying book design, and shortly thereafter purchased an Adana table model platen press. The area of the chase was 8" x 5" and could accommodate one small page at a time. It was during this period that he established The Aliquando Press, exploring the techniques of letterpress. Rueter acquired a small amount of one metal typeface only, consisting of roman, italic and small cap letterforms in 12pt. Bembo. Bembo is a significant typeface for the Press, one to which it has returned many times, and its Renaissance origins are reflected in many of the other typefaces the Press has used over the years, which include Jenson, Palatino, Poliphilus, Trajanus, Joanna, Castellar, Octavian and others.

The first Aliquando book was produced in December 1962-January 1963 and contained a short story on the importance of art, entitled *A Bach Fugue*. Constrained for the next several projects by using a single typeface with very few variants, Rueter made early discoveries about the potential of a single letter, about spacing and about combinations of characters. Typography studies at OCA tended to be exclusively concerned with modern contemporary styles that held little interest for Rueter, whose passions lay with classical European type. Rueter and Stan Bevington (of Coach House Press) sometimes shared the cost of or traded type and Rueter was greatly influenced by Bevington's experimentation. Rueter persevered in a fairly rigorous program of Press production and was essentially self-taught by the time he left OCA. He worked for a few years as a graphic designer, married, and received a short term Canada Council grant. In 1968, Rueter traveled to Europe for three months, staying in Holland, where he investigated the graphic heritage of his Dutch family and spent time at the Amsterdam Type Foundry, and also staying in London, where he visited the Monotype Corporation.

He came back to Canada saturated with ideas but without money. The mid-1960s was a rich time for book design in Canada, spurred on by the influx of ideas from New York, and from designers and printers such as Stan Bevington, Frank Newfeld, Allan Fleming, Stuart Ash, Frank Davies, and others. Rueter took a position at University of Toronto Press, eventually becoming a Senior Designer, and remained at U of T Press from 1969-1998. Under the creative leadership of Allan Fleming (described by Rueter as a classical designer with a tremendous sensibility towards books and with a great talent for

solving problems), Rueter undertook some of his most challenging design projects, beginning with Milton's *A Maske*, in 1973, and including the *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada* (1981) and Silcox's *Painting Place: The Life and Work of David B. Milne* (1996).

The Aliquando Press allows Rueter the freedom to select his own texts and to print, on the whole, for his own satisfaction. The overwhelming majority of Aliquando texts draw on themes from literature and the arts, music especially. Typically, a text will be selected for its visionary and meditative qualities. Rueter has printed works by European, North American and Asian writers. Poetry is commonly printed by the Press, also adages and quotations, including the works of contemporary artist friends and writers. Rueter often works with translations and prints publications in several languages, enjoying the subtleties of how one language plays off the other.

Broadsides constitute a sizable and important part of Aliquando production. Rueter uses broadsides as opportunities for experimentation, sometimes with future book projects in mind, but also for the possibility of anonymity that broadsides offer, in contrast to the book form. Many Aliquando publications contain Rueter's own illustrations, produced by linocuts or wood engravings. Rueter is also a skilled calligrapher.

The Aliquando Press has occasionally printed letters and journal extracts. The most notable project in this genre has been the Press' 100th book, *Majesty, Order and Beauty: Selections from the journals of T. J. Cobden-Sanderson* (2007), produced to celebrate the Press' 45th anniversary. Cobden-Sanderson was a close friend of William Morris and actively involved in the Arts and Crafts Movement. A project eighteen months in the making, the volume celebrates one of bookmaking's most articulate practitioners and a figure of significant influence on Rueter. The book is covered in a paper designed c.1900 by Rueter's great-uncle, Georg Rueter.

Other book publications that eminently elucidate the timbre and leanings of The Aliquando Press include *Order Touched with Delight: Some Personal Observations on the Nature of the Private Press with an Account of The Aliquando Press* (1982), *The Articulation of Time: A commonplace book*, compiled by the printer (1993), Jan Schreiber's *Bell Buoys: Poems by Jan Schreiber* (1998), Giovanni Boccaccio's *The Nuns and the Gardener* (2002), *Il Giardino d'Amore/The Garden of Love: Italian Renaissance Madrigal Poems* (2003), Gaétan Soucy's *The Anguish of the Heron* (2005), and *Pressing Matters* (2013), this most recent book published on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of The Aliquando Press.

Works of the Press from 1963 to 1972 were printed on the 8" x 5" Adana platen press. From 1972 to 1979 the Press used a 6½" x 10" Chandler & Price Pilot platen press. Since 1979, most items have been printed on a Vandercook SP 15 cylinder proof press. Book runs may typically be on the order of fifty to sixty copies. Rueter has accumulated metal type from various sources, notably Paul Hayden Duensing's typefoundry (1950-1996).

In 1980, Rueter co-founded *The Devil's Artisan*, a magazine for the promotion of fine printing, typographic design and book arts in Canada. He is a founding member of the Society of Canadian Book Designers and a member of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts. Rueter has collaborated with Paul Hayden Duensing (The Private Press and Typefoundry of Paul Hayden Duensing), Wesley W. Bates (wood

engraver), Don Taylor (bookbinder), Dave Farey (type designer), Rosemary Kilbourn (wood engraver), and Jan Schreiber (poet), among many others. He has associated with and been influenced by Stan Bevington (Coach House Press), Glenn Goluska (imprimerie dromadaire), Leonard Bahr (Adagio Press), Carl Dair (graphic and type designer), Jim Rimmer (Pie Tree Press & Type Foundry), Hermann Zapf (type designer), Allan Fleming (graphic designer), Rollin Milroy (Heavenly Monkey), Alan Suddon (librarian), Margaret Lock (Locks' Press), Rod McDonald (type designer), Andrew Steeves (Gaspereau Press), Tom Schweitzer (book collector), and the Canadian Bookbinders and Book Artists Guild. He has received support from many artists, craftsmen, and colleagues in publishing, fine printing, and bibliography, and he considers Paul Hayden Duensing to have been his great mentor.

Rueter sees himself as a steward of the word, an intermediary between author and reader. He attempts to keep faith with an author's text by clothing it in an appropriate visual form. He views this challenge as a tension between, on the one hand, the basically conservative tradition of the codex form and the limitations of handset type and letterpress printing, and, on the other, the experimentation with letterforms, non-traditional designs and colour. In order to respect the innate qualities of the book form and to not overpower the author's message, Rueter's experimentations favour subtlety over overtness, and invisible design over bold intervention. Good typography, according to Rueter, will not let design get in the way of the text. The Aliquando Press represents the balance that Rueter achieves in reconciling the printer's invisibility with individuality, and in reconciling necessary qualities of printer (and author) privacy with the inevitably public nature of book production.

Books and ephemera from the Press have been exhibited across Canada, the United States and in Japan, and are included in many private and public collections, including the Toronto, New York and San Francisco Public Libraries, the Meermanno-Westreenianum Museum/Museum van het Boek (The Hague), the British Library and the Newberry Library (Chicago). The Aliquando Press has received many awards, including an honorary diploma at the Schonste Bucher aus aller Welt Exhibition in Leipzig (1987) and bronze medal at the Internationale Buchkunst-Ausstellung in Leipzig (1989). Rueter has taught book arts at various universities and colleges in Canada, also in Barbados and the Philippines, and has written articles on the subjects of book design and printing. In March of 2013, Rueter received The Alcuin Society's Robert R. Reid Award and Medal for lifetime achievement in the book arts.

- prepared by Ruth Grossman, May 2013
