

The title 'BIBLIOGRAPHICA' is rendered in a large, black, serif font. Each letter is contained within a decorative, square frame with intricate floral and scrollwork patterns. The frames are arranged in a horizontal line, creating a highly ornate and textured header.

A Tale of Two Books: The Debut of Greyweathers Press

By Larry Thompson

Early in 2005, after having produced only a few experimental broadsheets and pamphlets, I began to set type on a book treatment of *Kubla Khan*, the seminal poem by one of the Romantic era's literary titans, Samuel Taylor Coleridge. About the same time, I formalized a contract with a talented young poet to print a small collection of her work titled *Tenebrismo* later that same year. In the end, *Kubla Khan* would take nearly two years to complete, and the talented (and patient) young poet would have to wait a full year more before seeing *Tenebrismo* finished. It launched at last on July 14, 2007.

I conceived of *Kubla Khan* as a large book, perhaps an 8" x 14" text block to be printed on my Vandercook proof press. I prepared several linoleum cuts suitable for the larger version. Early in 2005, I abandoned the large version of *Kubla*; it was too ambitious and required more type than I possessed. It meant starting from scratch, but the exercise proved useful in that it forced me to consider more carefully several design issues, including binding and the placement of illustrations. As well, being forced to cut my illustrations resulted in more satisfactory images.

About this time, I settled on Italian Oldstyle as my house font, and purchased a fair quantity of it, but not enough to set four full pages at once. Decreasing the size of the book to 4.75" x 7.5" meant that I was able to

spread the type further. I worked with mock-ups, a pagination dummy and a template of the 4-up sheet with the text block cut out, so that I could lay it directly over the form on the press bed and see immediately if any of the pages were out of true.

I chose to print on commercial paper. I considered both *Kubla Khan* and *Tenebrismo* to be apprentice works, and therefore I was reluctant to invest many hundreds of dollars in beautiful paper that could wind up in the recycler. So I acquired a rather nice acid free commercial paper called Williamsburg Offset that was heavy enough to hold the ink well and pleasant to touch. Sure enough, I had to reprint sections of both books, so in the end I feel justified in my choice, although now I feel confident enough to risk future projects on finer paper.

Since *Kubla Khan* was the first book from Greyweathers Press, I wrote a very short 'Printer's Preface' and chose to set it in a different type – Canterbury – to distinguish it from Coleridge's words. The result is a bit peculiar, since I imagine a sans serif type like Canterbury is not frequently used in book prose. My plea is that I used what I had at hand.

After printing several pages, including the colophon (which will forever carry the publication date of 2005), life intervened in the form of a tsunami of work – that work which supplies my livelihood. The interruption lasted nearly a year, and I did not return in earnest to the book until the early spring of 2006.

After general printing was finished, I discovered a typographical error in my own introduction. Once I had put behind me thoughts of suicide, of destroying the entire edition, or of crawling off somewhere with a case of Jack Daniels, I set about the work of reprinting the sheet without the typo.

The most frightening moment in the process of both books involved the guillotine and the realization that I could destroy months of work with a single stroke. I measured five times, cut once and then folded and collated the sheets into a book.

And what about binding? In the end, I pillaged our studio's store of Saint-Armand cover weight paper of various colours, and some Saint-Armand white canal paper. Some of these white covers were painted rich greens and blues, then sprinkled with gold and copper powders. Others were left white, and my partner, Holly Dean, drew a decorative red swash across the lower portion of the cover with a ruling pen, which created a nice counterpoint to her calligraphic initials in the text. A simple side-stitch bound the end pages and text block to the cover.

Kubla Khan launched in July of 2006 and I did not return to printing until early in 2007. The beginning of work on *Tenebrismo* resembled more a set-piece military assault than any kind of creative endeavor. I blocked off an entire month dedicated to printing, set up a schedule to keep me on target, and tracked my hours. Working morning, noon and night for the entire month of May, I nearly finished all work, and only lost my momentum when forced to return to other responsibilities early in June.

My goals with *Tenebrismo* were straightforward enough: hold the line on more generous margins to let the poems breathe, and improve the consistency of the impression. In

some cases the lines do not scan across the entire text block. That, combined with the off-centre configuration of the classical page lay-out, created some imbalance on some spreads. Concentrating the work helped create an improved impression throughout, although I still have much work ahead of me before I achieve that perfect impression.

Production on *Tenebrismo* went more smoothly than it did on *Kubla*. And like *Kubla*, I waited until well into production to settle the illustrations, which made me feel akin to a reckless riverboat gambler. Lady Luck must have smiled on me, because the illustrations proved ideally suited to the subject matter, and fit in proportion the open spots I left in the text. They converted easily to the linoleum, cut quickly and printed crisply, with one frustrating exception. Two of the blocks began to deteriorate during their print runs, but held together well enough to complete the edition. This is yet another argument in favor of making the move to wood-cutting and wood engraving soon.

Between finishing the text and printing the illustrations, a typo revealed its flawed face in the book's opening poem. And just like in *Kubla*, I spent too much energy in angst and indecision before finally resetting the type, reprinting the spread and settling the matter. Part of the angst can be traced to simple exhaustion. However, in the future when faced with a typographical error during the production, I have vowed not to fuss and fret, but just get to work fixing it. If the error should be pointed out at the book's launch, well, then it will be time to start drinking out of the wine bottle. In the end, I've learned, typos happen. Deal with it.

The binding of *Tenebrismo* followed the same trajectory as *Kubla Khan*, with a simple side stitch in black cover stock, with the title device printed in black ink and cut-outs

revealing the only color in the book: color laser printed end pages of Europe and North Africa copied from an old atlas. At the last moment, I decided to do a deluxe edition, and had copies one through fifteen bound in leather out-of-studio.

I move into the future with several goals in mind. One: plan jobs carefully before beginning. Two: if possible, execute the work in a concentrated period of time. If this is not possible, break the schedule into rational steps, do one thing at a time and do it with care and thought. Three: learn to love the process. I'm setting type for books by hand and printing by hand for many very good reasons. It's my choice, so I should learn to love it and stop grumbling during production. I can't remember where I read it, but the phrase "kiss the chains that bind you" resonates with me. Four: don't waste time and worry over typos – just fix them. Five: I must accept my own fallibility and the imperfections in the books I make. I'll work to raise the bar on quality in my work, but I must not let the chance of failure or error make me stop printing.

Perhaps the most important thing that I have learned from printing *Kubla Khan* and *Tenebrismo* is that I want to print more books, and these are now in the planning stage.

Kubla Khan is available for sale at CAN\$90.00. *Tenebrismo* is available at CAN\$75.00 for the regular edition and CAN\$155.00 for the deluxe edition.

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The Artists' Press: Fifteen Years of Printmaking and Artists' Books in Africa

by Mark Attwood

Greetings! The other day we realized that we have an important birthday to celebrate; The Artists' Press has been making impressions for over fifteen years! When a studio reaches such a milestone it is time to take stock and to reflect.

In 1991, having returned from completing his Master Printer Programme at The Tamarind Institute in New Mexico Mark Attwood met with David Koloane and Sandy Burnett and joined the founding group of artists at the Fordsburg Artists Studios or Bag Factory in Newtown Johannesburg. The first press in the



Mark working with Norman Catherine on that first print.

studio was a Mailander, which Mark salvaged from being trashed in the UK (the press was

given to him free, the shipping to South Africa was not!). Now armed with a venue, a qualification, some equipment and a lot of optimistic passion Mark set out in search of an artist to work with. He approached Norman Catherine (whom Mark knew from his childhood, having been involved in Fook Island antics with Walter Battiss and Catherine via his father Bruce Attwood). Norman not only agreed to Mark collaborating on a print but also agreed to advance him money with which to buy paper, ink and sandwiches. The result was a print titled "Headman."

Rushing to Newtown after completing his 5am shift at a commercial printing factory in the West Rand Mark was able to start out on a journey that just seems to get more interesting and challenging as he continues along the road. A not so quick glance at the numbers reveals the following:

- ✿ Artists worked with: 107
- ✿ Artists from 6 African countries and 7 other countries have worked in the studio.
- ✿ Artists evicted from studio: one (in everyone's interest he will remain anonymous)
- ✿ Languages heard in the studio: Swati, Nharo, German, Ndebele, Afrikaans, Sotho, Xhosa, Tswana, Pedi, Flemish, Dutch, Shangaan, Zulu, French and English
- ✿ Editions printed on contract: 189
- ✿ Editions published: 475
- ✿ Total editions printed: 664
- ✿ Lowest year of edition printing: 1997, 6 editions
- ✿ Highest year of edition printing: 2004, 76 editions
- ✿ Artists books produced: 13
- ✿ Editions sold out: 229

✿ Editions in stock: 246 (take a look at them on <http://www.artprintsa.com>)

✿ Master printers who have worked in the studio: 6

✿ Fulbright scholars in studio: 1

✿ Other printers and assistants: 15

✿ Tamarind Master Printers trained: one, Leshoka Legate with Syneth Nyandeni currently studying at Tamarind.

✿ Presses in studio: 4

✿ Creative egos to deal with: 129

✿ Worst insult: "this is all just wallpaper to me" anonymous gallery owner

✿ Best compliment: "Mark Attwood is the best printer in the world" anonymous "blue-chip" artist

✿ Anxiety: all the time

✿ Passion and excellence: the reason to print!

✿ Print: the reason to live!

Work editioned by the studio can be found in leading international and local public collections, these include the Museum of Modern Art, The Smithsonian Institute, The South African National Gallery, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bodleian Library, U.S. Library of Congress, Johannesburg Art Gallery, University of the Witwatersrand Gallery Collection, Botswana National Museum and Art Gallery, South African National Archive, University of Cape Town, Winterthur Library (Switzerland), Durban Art Gallery, and Yale University. Private collections are too many to mention and span the globe.

Since the studio quietly opened its doors in 1991 The Artists' Press has been dedicated to bringing you the finest limited edition original prints available in South Africa. Our focus at

The Artists' Press is on hand printed lithography, monoprints, letterpress and photogravure work. The artists that we represent are among the best in South Africa and have exhibited locally and internationally.



Mark gets the thumbs up from Tommy Motswai.

Our vision has always been:

- ✿ To introduce global audiences to South African printmaking.
- ✿ To provide artists with the opportunity to collaborate with master printers.
- ✿ To produce original prints of the highest quality.
- ✿ To introduce visual artists to print techniques as a new medium.
- ✿ To work with artists from marginalized communities to offer them new opportunities to get their voices heard and to promote their work through the collaborative process.
- ✿ To contribute to the development and expansion of art in southern Africa by focusing on excellence.

Highlights from the past fifteen years include:

✿ The launch (1994) of the artists book *Qauqaua*, the first book ever published in a San language (in this case Nharo) as told by San storytellers and then translated into English.

✿ The arrival of the Tackach Lithography Press in 2000 and the only time the press has borrowed money from a bank.

✿ In 2001 making the decision to quit printing artist's invitations and catalogues and to totally focus on hand printing.

✿ In 2005 Mark and his partner Tamar Mason were awarded an Ampersand Fellowship. This included a private guided tour of the print department at The Museum of Modern Art and getting to check out Pace Prints in Manhattan. The time we spent in New York and Washington was mind-blowing and inspiring as well as confirming to us that what we do here on the southern tip of Africa sits very comfortably with the best in the world.

✿ In the Spring of 2005 we were taken on a special tour of rock art sites at Mthetomushwa when a group of Kuru artists were here to collaborate on prints, being with the San, probably the first to visit the sites since their very distant ancestors left the mountains hundreds of years ago was a moving experience and a reminder of the fragility of the planet.

✿ In 2006 welcoming Leshoka Legate home after he completed his Master Printing training at The Tamarind Institute. Leshoka joined the studio as a general assistant after completing matric in 1999.

✿ In 2006 wishing Syneth Nyandeni well as he made his way to Tamarind to do their Professional Printer programme. Syneth joined the press full time in 2005 after studying printmaking at the Artist Proof Studio in Newtown.



Alsetta Manthosi working on her prints for The Ultimate Safari.

Working with diverse artists has resulted in challenges upon challenges, which so far we have been able to meet. Recently, as Mark was leaving William Kentridge's studio in Johannesburg Anne Kentridge commented, "Got another impossible task to do?" Weeks of brainstorming and trials and the work will get onto and off (involves lots of hand tearing) the presses in time for Kentridge's exhibition at the Philadelphia Museum of Art in October 2007. Mark recalls being very nervous as he drove his battered sky blue Toyota Conquest through some of the roughest streets in Johannesburg to deliver Kentridge's edition of Portage books (a leparello). He had calculated the value of the job at being half a million rand and was very worried by the prospect of being hi-jacked. Fortunately he made it and the value of the load is now way in excess of what it was then in 2000.

It was by selling some of Mark's printer's proofs that enabled him to move to Mpumalanga and to build a dream studio outside White River. Since 2003 artists who work at The Artists' Press now do so in the luxury of a beautiful, quiet sub-tropical rural setting. Strijdom van der Merwe (a land artist of note who recently collaborated with Mark)

took full advantage of this and spent all his spare time using the wide variety of "new" materials at his disposal in the garden. Having the studio, artists' guesthouse and home all on the same piece of land has meant that we are also able to get to know artists, collectors, curators and gallery owners well. A braai or meal on the stoep under clear starry skies can only improve conversation!

Artists' needs have proven to be rather diverse: Nina Romm required a mattress to take cat-naps on, Vetkat was unhappy with the lack of trees and natural vegetation in Newtown, Alan Alborough needed burnt charcoal frames for his very limited edition prints, Robert Hodgins has firm toilet paper preferences for working on his monotypes, Dumisani Mabaso is happiest working with a sprig of jasmine clipped into his lapel, Johann Louw preferred to work in the studio late into the night with no one else around, Flip Hattingh requiring a plumber to assist with making the brass cover for his book, Pat Mautloa needing a variety of medical bandages to build up texture on his print. Pat also took a shine to an old piece of wood that the studio used as a cutting board; the textures have since become the base for a painting of his. The most fascinating artist to watch, according to Leshoka, was Nhlanhla Xaba who Sam Nhlengethwa described as like watching a master chess player at work. Working on the plate intensely and then taking a ten to thirty minute break, just staring at the plate while he thought about what he was doing.

In addition to the regular work of collaborating and editioning prints the studio has also participated in a number of exchanges, portfolios and artists' books. These include Emandulo (1996), The Trickster Project with the Tamarind Institute and the Kuru Art Project in Albuquerque, New Mexico (1997), Forum Book Art special

edition 2003/2004 (Germany), E-Pos II (2006/7) an exchange between South African and Flemish artists and writers. For the second Johannesburg Biennale (1997) Mark had established himself enough as a printer to produce work for Coco Fusco (USA), reference books which formed an integral part of her interactive piece, as did the rather Edgars-like red square printed on plain white for Felix Gonzalez-Torrez (USA). The beautiful "water" books that were printed for Cildo Meireles (Brazil) were installed at the Johannesburg Art Gallery and created the illusion of walking into a peaceful body of water.

It's been a fantastic fifteen years and we hope that you join us on continuing this printing path into the future!

To see more archive photographs please go to <http://www.artprintsa.com> and click on the fifteen years link.

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Mark and Sam Nhlengethwa and assistant planting a tree outside the window of Ezrom Legae's studio in honour of his memory.

You have been reading Issue 8 of *Bibliographica*, edited by John Russell, Kira Homo, and Skye Hardesty. We are always delighted to hear from our readers and are actively seeking articles for future issues. Want to comment on something you've read? Have an article or book review you'd like to write for us? Please contact the editors at aeoluspress@yahoo.com.