

Exquisite Miniature Bookbindings Showcase Shakespeare on a Different Scale

“THE POET OF THEM ALL”: WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE AND MINIATURE DESIGNER BINDINGS FROM THE COLLECTION OF NEALE AND MARGARET ALBERT

June 16 – August 21, 2016

NEW HAVEN (May 10, 2016) – In June 2016, the Yale Center for British Art will present “*The Poet of Them All*”: *William Shakespeare and Miniature Designer Bindings from the Collection of Neale and Margaret Albert*, an exhibition that will explore the works of William Shakespeare from a fresh perspective, placing the literary giant within a tradition of fine craftsmanship on a completely different scale. Nearly one hundred exquisitely bound miniature editions of plays, sonnets, and books inspired by Shakespeare – each measuring three inches high or less and selected from the singular collection of Neale and Margaret Albert – will be on display in the Center’s newly restored and reconfigured galleries. The exhibition includes miniature editions of Shakespeare’s works published from the nineteenth to the twenty-first centuries by William Pickering, Knickerbocker Press, and others, all bound with artistic designer bindings commissioned by Neale Albert (Yale JD 1961) during the past decade. Focusing on designer bookbinding, an aspect of the book arts too often overlooked, this exhibition will offer a unique opportunity for visitors to examine these works closely. All of the books included in the exhibition are a promised gift to the Center from Neale and Margaret Albert.

The title “*The Poet of Them All*” is taken from a line in the song “Brush Up Your Shakespeare,” from Cole Porter’s lively 1948 musical *Kiss Me, Kate*. At the heart of the Alberts’ collection, and of this exhibition, are thirty-nine copies of a miniature book illustrating the lyrics and music to that song, published by Neale Albert at his Piccolo Press in 2009. Designed by Leonard Seastone, with drawings by Seymour Chwast, every copy has a unique artistic binding. For these bindings, as well as the others on display, Albert commissioned some of the most talented designer bookbinders working today in the United Kingdom, the United States, and throughout the world. As in all his commissions, Albert asked every artist to craft his or her own interpretation, offering no guidelines and imposing no restrictions. He wrote to one artist, slightly tongue-in-cheek: “My only instructions are to make this the finest binding you have ever done. How is that for pressure?” Every artist, whether working in leather, paper, cloth, wood, or metal, rose to the occasion.



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Having served two terms as president of the international Miniature Book Society, Neale Albert actively continues to support designer binders. In 2014, he was elected an honorary fellow of Designer Bookbinders, the principal society in Great Britain devoted to artistic bookbinding. “I wish there were more Neale Alberts in the world,” says British bookbinder Susan Allix. “It is a pleasure to know someone who values and trusts a creative ability to the extent that he can stand back and allow a binding to happen.”



The exhibition will be augmented by a number of other works from the Alberts' collection, with unique pieces by the London bespoke furniture designer Tim Gosling, including a scale model of the Globe Theatre and miniature bookcases.

The collection of miniature books on display illuminates the wide array of artistic responses that Shakespeare's plays and poems have continued to inspire in the four hundred years since he wrote them, and provides an overview of a vibrant branch of twenty-first-century practice in the book arts. The exhibition and the accompanying publication explore these books in depth, and they provide a glimpse into the heart and mind of a true collector, one who does not merely accumulate things for their own sake but actively engages in the process of creating a work of art.

CREDITS AND PUBLICATION

“The Poet of Them All”: William Shakespeare and Miniature Designer Bindings from the Collection of Neale and Margaret Albert has been curated by Elisabeth Fairman, Chief Curator of Rare Books and Manuscripts at the Yale Center for British Art. A fully illustrated publication, edited by Fairman and designed by Miko McGinty, and published by the Center in association with the Yale University Press, will accompany the exhibition. The book features an essay by the book historian and designer binder James Reid-Cunningham, written from his perspective as a practitioner as well as a historian of contemporary book arts. The Wendy's Company has generously supported the production of the publication.



OPENING LECTURE, June 15, 2016

The opening lecture will be delivered by James Reid-Cunningham, who will offer insights on the Alberts' collection gleaned from a thirty-year career as a designer binder, conservator, and book historian. Reid-Cunningham teaches, lectures, and writes about the history of bookbinding while serving as the proprietor of Hematite Press and Wages of Fear, small presses specializing in limited editions and designer bindings.



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EXHIBITION-RELATED PROGRAMS (LECTURE HALL)

PERFORMANCE, June 17, 4 pm; June 18, 11 am and 3 pm; and June 19, 3 pm

The Bookbinder:

From the award-winning company Trick of the Light Theatre comes a story of mystery, magic, and mayhem. For curious children and adventurous adults, *The Bookbinder* weaves together shadow play, paper art, puppetry, and music into an inventive performance about a young boy who is taken on as an apprentice bookbinder. The program is presented jointly with the International Festival of Arts & Ideas. Seating is limited, and tickets are required (please visit www.artidea.org). Most performances will be preceded by a special tour of the exhibition “*The Poet of Them All*.” These tours will meet in the gallery on the third floor (June 17, 3 pm; June 18, 2 pm; and June 19, 1 pm).



FILM, June 26, 1 pm

Kiss Me Kate (1953)

Directed by George Sidney (not rated; 109 minutes)

Two divorced Broadway stars are reunited amid backstage complications and romantic misunderstandings in this wonderful Cole Porter (Yale College, Class of 1913) musical adaptation of Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the Shrew*. Seating is limited.



CONCERT, July 16, 3 pm

Cole Porter and his Contemporaries:

In a musical performance that complements “*The Poet of Them All*” exhibition, one of the foremost interpreters of Cole Porter, legendary cabaret singer Steve Ross will perform many of Porter’s greatest songs, as well as other music from the American Songbook.



ADDITIONAL VENUE

The Grolier Club in New York City exhibited a version of this display, entitled “*Brush Up Your Shakespeare*”: *Miniature Designer Bindings from the Collection of Neale and Margaret Albert*, March 24 – May 2016.

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ABOUT THE YALE CENTER FOR BRITISH ART

The Yale Center for British Art houses the largest collection of British art outside the United Kingdom. Presented to the university by Paul Mellon (Yale College, Class of 1929), the collection reflects the development of British art and culture from the Elizabethan period onward. The Center’s collections include more than 2,000 paintings and 250 sculptures, 20,000 drawings and watercolors, 40,000 prints and 35,000 rare books and manuscripts. More than 40,000 volumes supporting research in British art and related fields are available in the Center’s library.



Visit the institution online at britishart.yale.edu.

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Images: Neale Albert with *Works of William Shakespeare*, 40 vols. (London: Allied Newspapers, 1904), bound by Jana Pribíková, 2005; *Brush Up Your Shakespeare*, designed and letterpress printed at The Tideline Press by Leonard Seastone with illustrations by Seymour Chwast (New York: Piccolo Press, 2009), bound by David Sellars, 2011, in reversed pigskin, with goatskin, calfskin, vellum, and frogskin onlays, Collection of Neale and Margaret Albert; *Brush Up Your Shakespeare* (New York: Piccolo Press, 2009), bound by Derek Hood, 2010, in goatskin with multiple colored goatskin onlays, Collection of Neale and Margaret Albert; American binder Gabrielle Fox tooling with gold leaf, *Queen Mab* (Cincinnati: Squiggle Dot Press, 2007), photograph courtesy of Tom Allen; *Brush Up Your Shakespeare* (New York: Piccolo Press, 2009), bound by Angela James, 2011, in goatskin with red, white, and printed calfskin onlays, Collection of Neale and Margaret Albert; *Shakespeare to Music* (Huddersfield, West Yorkshire: Final Score, 2011), printed and bound by Stephen Byrne, in black leather with inset embroidered panel by Marian Byrne, illustrated by Marian Byrne, Collection of Neale and Margaret Albert; *The Bookbinder*, photo by Philip Merry, Axolotl Photography; *Julius Caesar* from *Shakespeare’s Works* (New York: Knickerbocker Leather and Novelty Company, ca. 1910), bound by Santiago Brugalla, 2004, in goatskin with tooling and miniature hand-painted portrait medallions on front and back covers by John Hodgson, Collection of Neale and Margaret Albert; *The Taming of the Shrew* from *Shakespeare’s Works* (New York: Knickerbocker Leather and Novelty Company, ca. 1910), bound by Jenni Grey, 2006, in purple suede, with glass and pearl beads hanging from silver wire, and silver clasp, Collection of Neale and Margaret Albert; Yale Center for British Art, photo by Richard Caspole