

THE ALCUIN SOCIETY

1999 AWARDS

FOR EXCELLENCE IN

# BOOK

DESIGN IN CANADA



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## DESIGN AWARDS FOR CANADIAN PUBLICATIONS OF 1998

FOR THIS THE SOCIETY'S seventeenth annual presentation of design awards the panel of four judges spent Saturday, May 1st examining some 225 books published in Canada during 1998, each entered into competition by its Canadian publisher or designer. This was a decrease in numbers from the previous year's competition, down some 150 entries from the 375 submitted last year. The judges and organizers are at a loss to explain this drop in numbers.

Have increasingly hard times hit the Canadian publishing industry? Or has the Alcuin Society done a poor job in publicizing the competition? If anyone out there has any suggestions please contact us with your ideas.

Whatever the answer we are not resting on our laurels. Thanks to a generous donation by Dr. Yosef Wosk the Design Committee has been able to make several significant improvements to the competition during 1999. These include:

- strengthening the Design Committee by including more representatives from the Canadian publishing and design communities;
- bringing judges in to the competition from other parts of Canada to develop a better geographic representation;
- producing a more substantial catalogue of the award winning books;
- producing for the first time an award citation for the designer of the book as well as for the publisher;
- initiating work on the design and production of a seal for award winners to display on their books;
- displaying the award winning books more widely including Word on the Street Vancouver and at the Society of Graphic Designers of Canada, BC Chapter trade show.

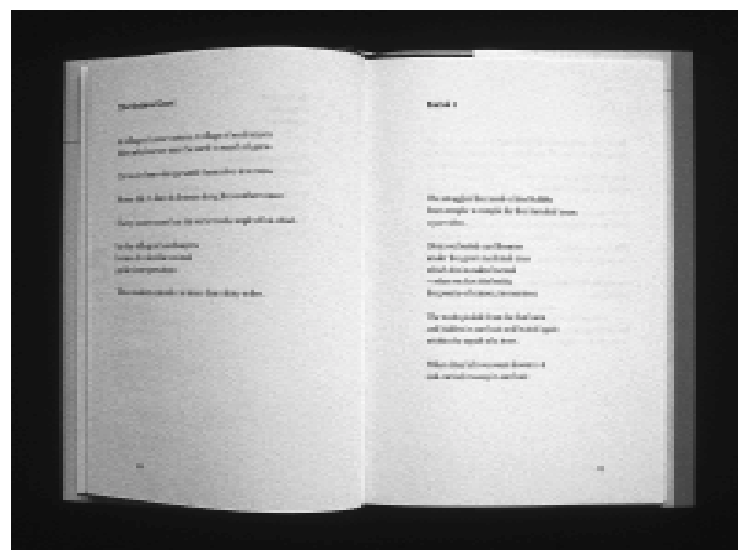
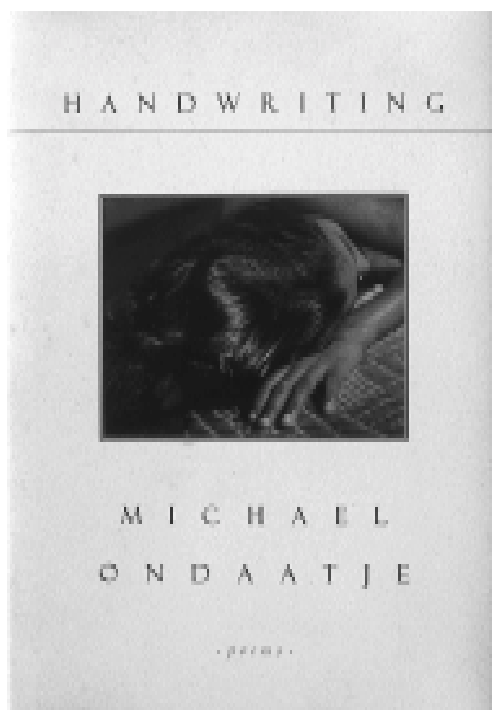
Some of the improvements the Committee plans for the year 2000 include:

- continuing to develop closer relationships with the Canadian publishing and design communities both to direct and to publicize the competition;
- continuing to increase the geographic representation of judges from across Canada;
- developing a student award for book design;
- audio or videotaping the actual judging to more fully represent the comments of the judges in forthcoming catalogues.

So in the spirit of the new millennium the Alcuin Society Design Competition Committee aspires to have a bigger and even better national book design competition. Wish us luck!

THE AWARD WINNING ENTRIES

## POETRY



### FIRST PRIZE

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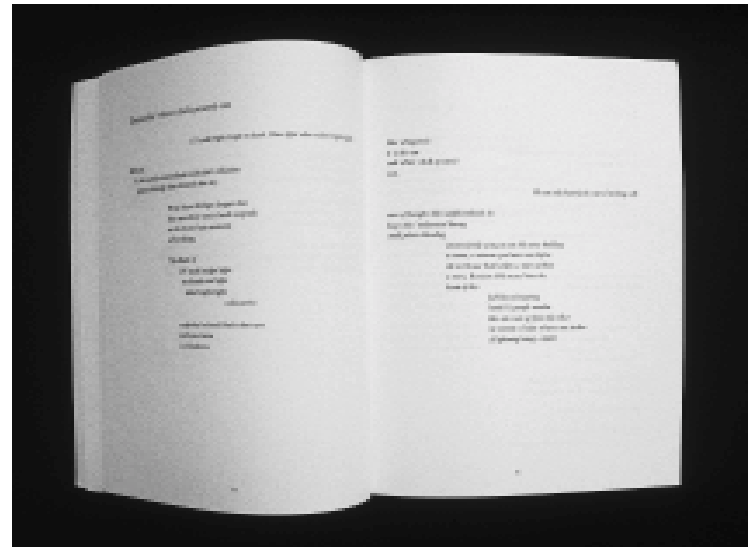
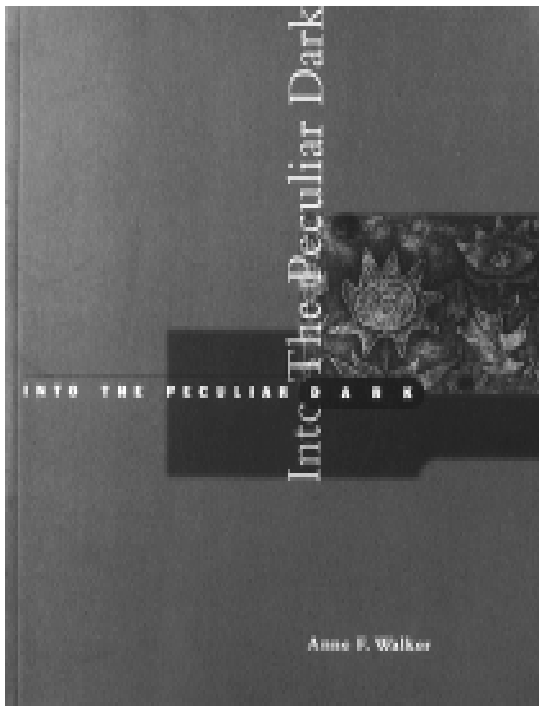
Ondaatje, Michael. *Handwriting*.  
Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1998.

DESIGNER: Sarmila Mohammed;  
Kong Njo (cover)

The judges liked the handsome treatment provided for this book of poetry by one of Canada's literary giants. First, it is unusual to see a book of poetry published in hard covers today. The design work is classic, conservative and simple, and careful attention to detail is noted throughout.

For example, the warm earthtone colours used on the book jacket, are picked up in lighter earthtones in the endpapers, and in the warm, off-white paper used throughout the body of the text. As one judge commented this book possesses “good character!”

## POETRY



### SECOND PRIZE

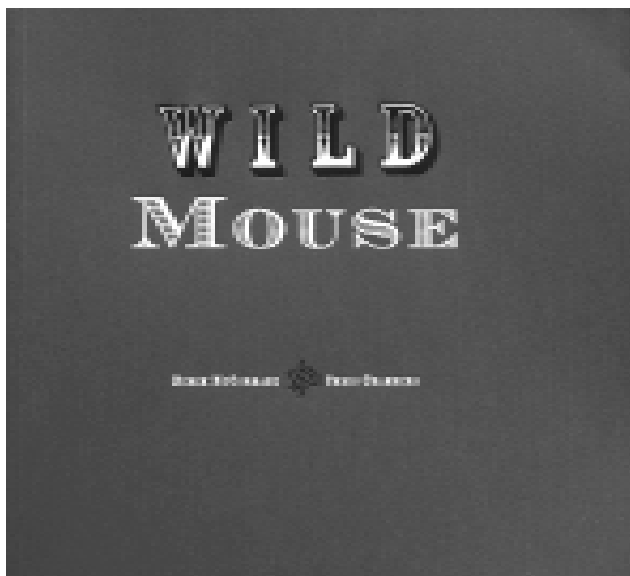
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Walker, Anne F. *Into the Peculiar Dark*.  
Toronto: The Mercury Press, 1998.

DESIGNER: Gordon Robertson.

The judges appreciated how the designer of this book respected the challenge presented to him by the poet. Walker likes to play with poetic form, and varying line lengths and stanza shapes meant that the designer had to pay particular attention to placement of the

poems on a single page or opening. Careful attention to typography (varying fonts, sizes, placement, etc.) is noted on the cover, the half-title page, the title page, and in fact throughout the entire text of this book.



THIRD PRIZE

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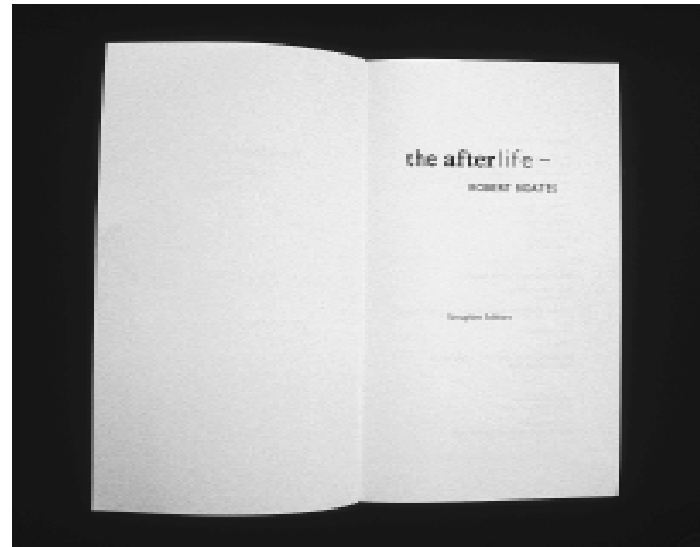
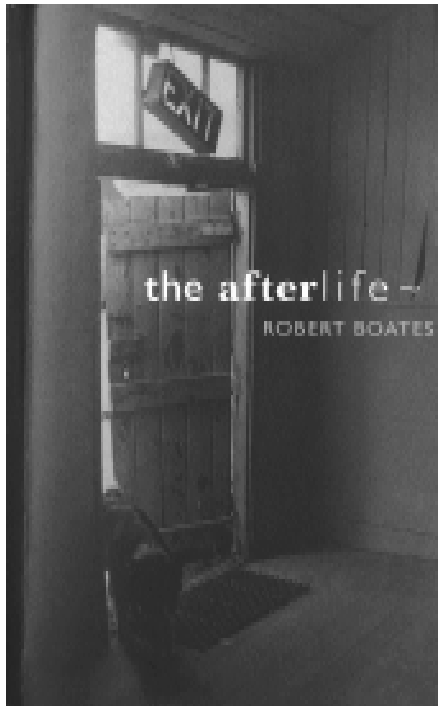
McCormack, Derek and Chris Chambers.  
*Wild Mouse*.  
Toronto: Pedlar Press, 1998.

DESIGNER: Zab Design & Typography.

The judges were delighted with this small book because the playfulness of the design echoes the theme of the book perfectly: the carnival midway. The *Wild Mouse* is matched by wild design. This starts, naturally, right with the cover which exhibits two different large display types on a bright red background spelling out the title “wild

mouse.” The same words are on the half-title page, only this time they are in different colours. They reappear on the title page in a different colour combination again, only this time they are superimposed on a red coloured photograph of the midway. Enjoyable text, enjoyable design, just like the midway!

## POETRY



### HONOURABLE MENTION

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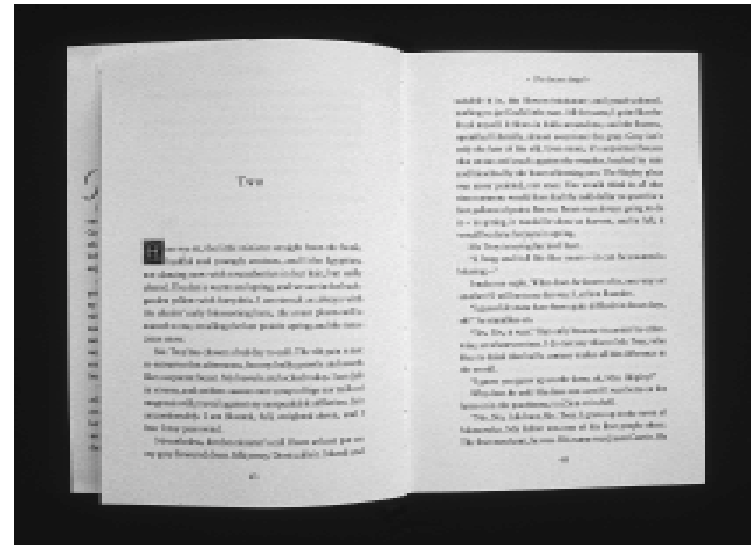
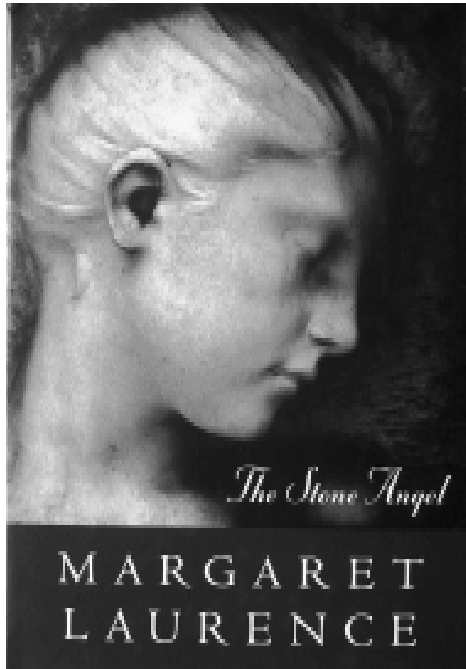
Boates, Robert. *The Afterlife*.  
Toronto: Seraphim Editions, 1998.

DESIGNER: Susan Becker.

The judges have described this book as “a straightforward poetry book but one that is handled in a very sensitive manner.” Careful attention to the use of different typefaces and to layout is noted throughout. For example, to give variety to the wording on the cover, half-title and title page, four

different type faces are skillfully combined, one for the first word in the title, one for the “after” in afterlife, one for “life”, and one for the author’s name. The results are pleasing, whereas they could have been a disaster in the hands of a less talented designer. A book that is a pleasure to hold and to read.

## PROSE FICTION



### FIRST PRIZE

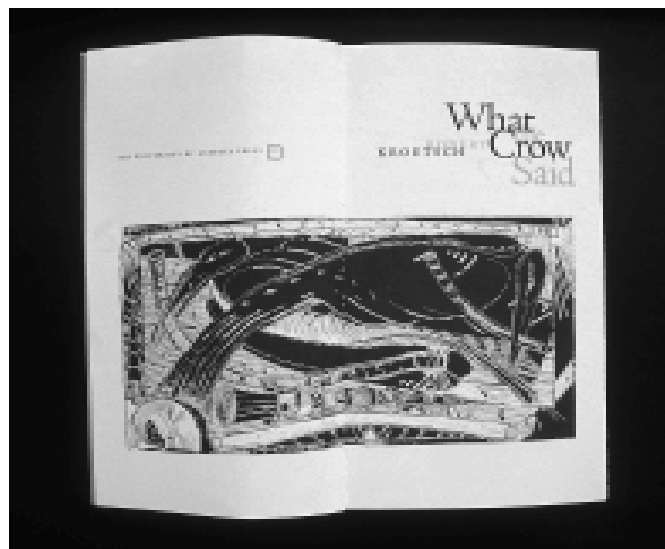
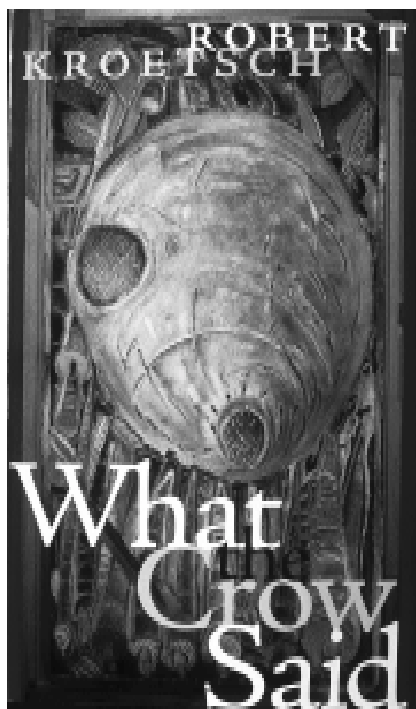
Laurence, Margaret. *The Stone Angel*.  
Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1998.

DESIGNER: Sari Ginsberg.

A pleasant surprise for everyone involved. One of Canada's most important novelists and novels reissued in a new, handsomely designed edition. And particularly gratifying in that the publisher is McClelland & Stewart, a publisher that many others look to for leadership in Canada. The design certainly shows respect for this Canadian classic with careful attention to detail throughout. The warm colours used on the

cover, the endpapers and the text paper invite the reader in. Consistency and care in the use of typefaces is found throughout: book jacket, half-title page, title page, running heads, body of text. Small features like the special initials marking chapter openings and the inclusion of a cloth book mark signal that the designer took extra care with this book.

PROSE FICTION



SECOND PRIZE

Kroetsch, Robert. *What the Crow Said*.  
Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1998.

DESIGNER: Alan Brownoff.

Bold, adventuresome design found here, right from the cover where a large display type in different sizes and colours, superimposed over a powerful, cast paper image of a wasp's nest, proclaims the author and title of this book. Other bold features include the use of a large calligraphic script to introduce

chapter openings and the recurrence of a woodcut image of a crow by Richard Yates throughout the book (title page, leaf between introduction and text, chapter openings, and back cover). A powerful handling of a powerful text.

## PROSE FICTION



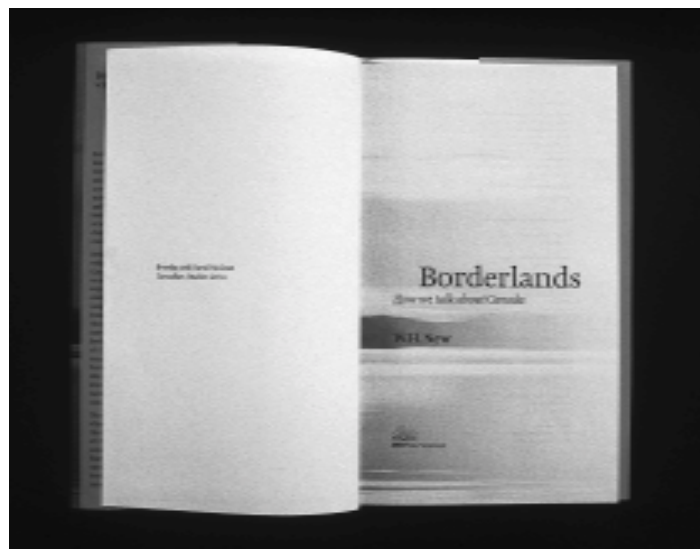
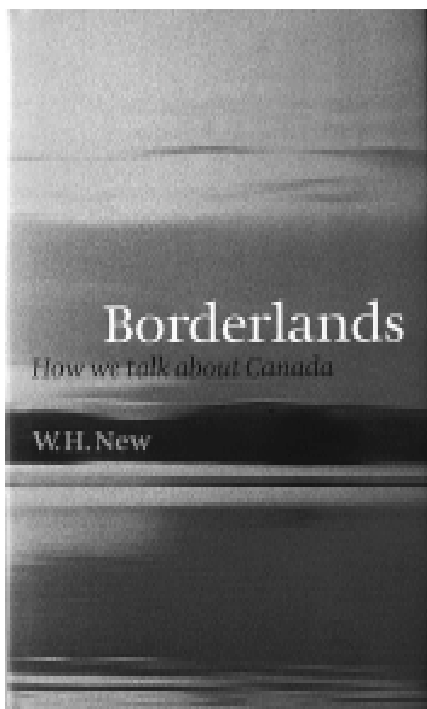
### HONOURABLE MENTION

Niedzviecki, Hal, editor. *Concrete Forest: The New Fiction of Urban Canada*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1998.

DESIGNER: Sari Ginsberg.

The design elements of this book have the same gritty or hard-edged feel of its urban theme. The use of a dymotape style typeface for covers, title page, contents page, chapter heads, page numbers, etc. is inspired design. The design challenge in this book, a

collection of diverse writings, was creating some unity out of diversity, and in this the designer has succeeded admirably. This book receives a lot of attention from younger designers whenever these books are on display.



FIRST PRIZE

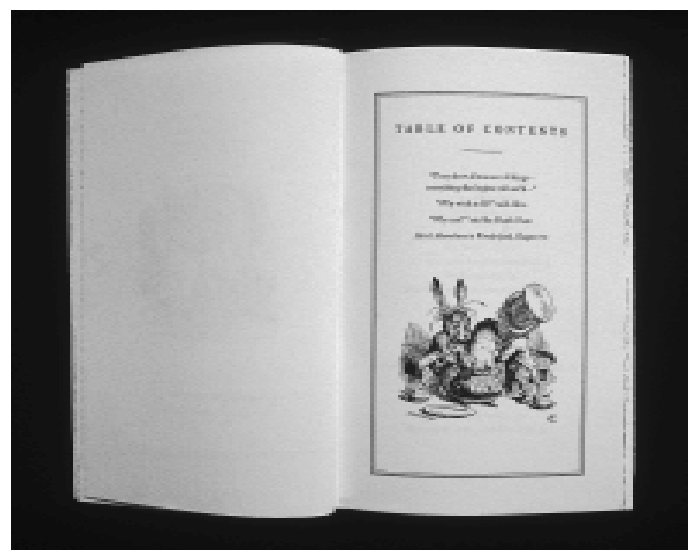
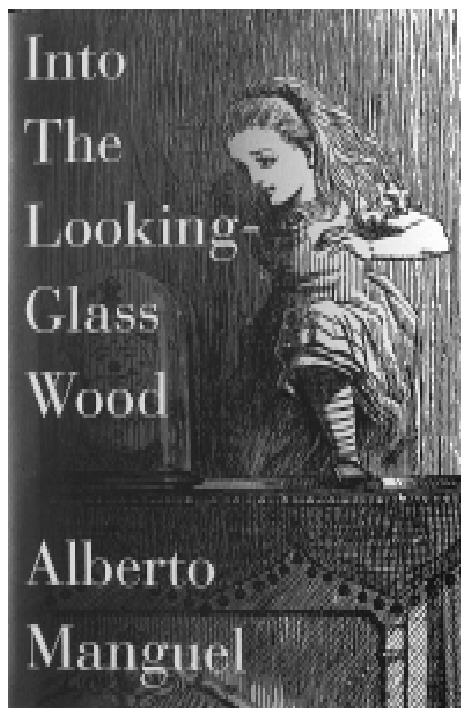
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New, W.H. *Borderlands: How We Talk About Canada*.  
Vancouver: UBC Press, 1998.

DESIGNER: George Vaitkunas.

An “exquisite” example of classic book design. Total attention given to control of all of the necessary details. For example, as one judge noted, usually the verso of the title page carrying cataloguing information, etc. is an afterthought for designers. Here this

page has been carefully organized and set. The restful image on the cover of the book is repeated on the title page and then before each of the three chapter openings. This book is a joy to hold, to browse and to read.



SECOND PRIZE

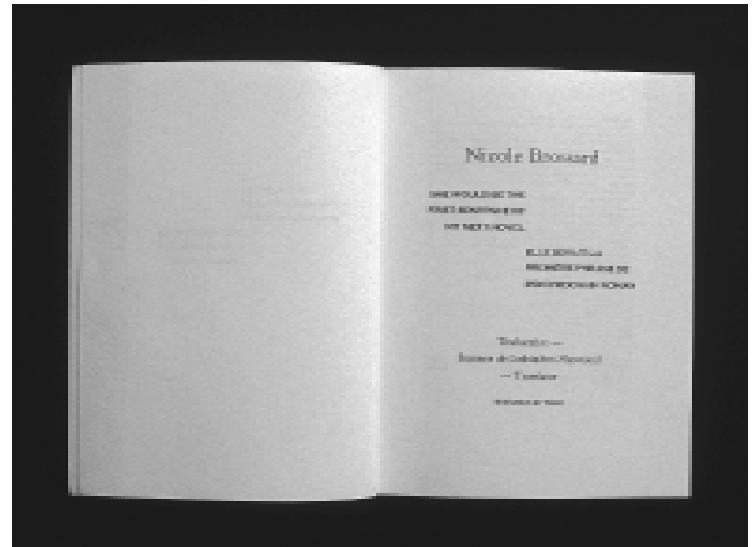
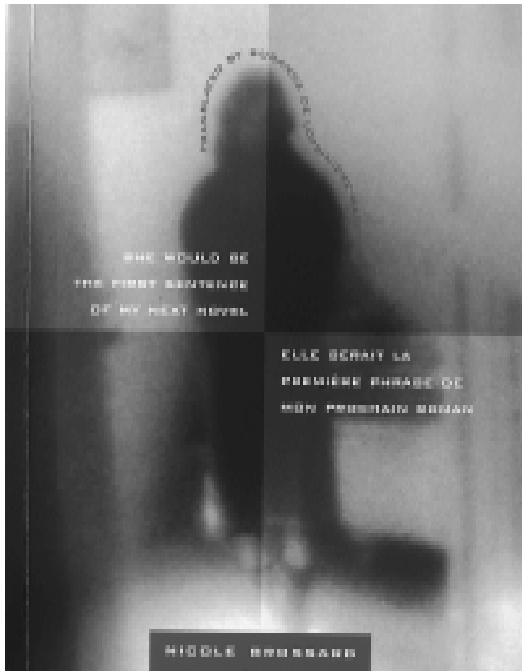
Manguel, Alberto. *Into the Looking Glass Wood: Essays on Words and the World*. Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 1998.

DESIGNER: Paul Hodgson (Sharon Foster Design); Spencer Francey Peters (cover).

This is a “solid piece” of bookwork which makes creative use of imagery from Alice in Wonderland. The cover features an image of Alice in grey with title and author in contrasting high intensity yellow. The image of Alice is repeated in reverse on the back

cover and the yellow lettering is reversed as well, picking up the mirror imagery of the text. Other effective use of Alice imagery appears as part of the title page, the dedication page, the contents page and chapter openings.

PROSE NON-FICTION-UNILLUSTRATED



THIRD PRIZE

Brossard, Nicole. Translated by Susanne de Lotbiniere-Harwood. *She Would Be the First Sentence of My Next Novel*. Toronto: The Mercury Press, 1998.

DESIGNER: Gordon Robertson.

This small book successfully faces the challenge of presenting parallel texts in French and in English. The designer at various points has fun with this challenge. For example, the English text is on the upper left on the cover while French is on the

lower right. This positioning is reversed on the half-title page but changes back on the title page. The intriguing and inviting cover captures readers' attention and draws them into the book.



FIRST PRIZE [tied]

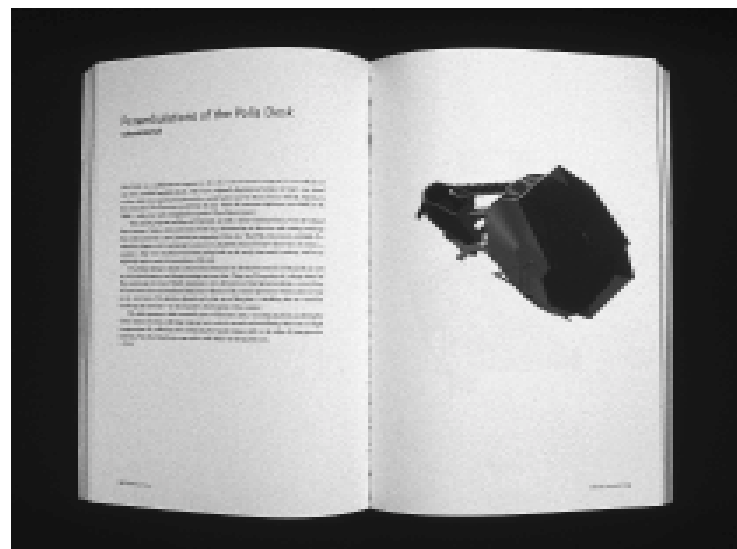
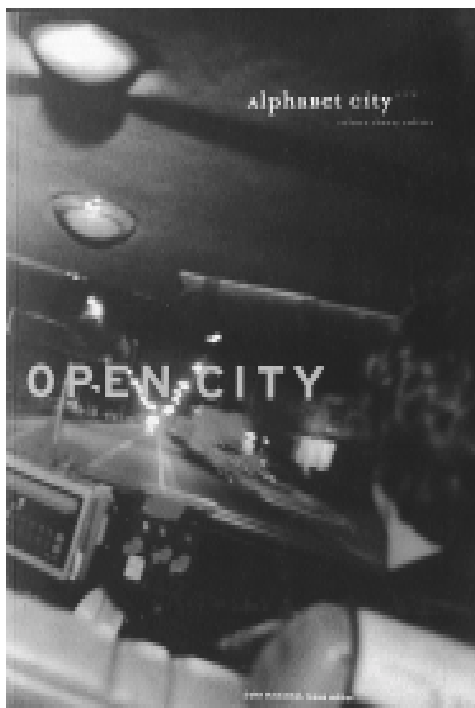
Baillargeon, Morgan and Leslie Tepper.  
*Legends of Our Times: Native Cowboy Life*.  
Vancouver/Seattle: UBC Press/Canadian  
Museum of Civilization/University of  
Washington Press, 1998.

DESIGNER: George Vaitkunas.

The judges admired how the designer managed to achieve unity and consistency in this book when so many disparate elements were involved: many levels of information (text, sidebars and captions) and many sizes and types of illustrations

(black & white and colour, period photographs, period paintings and contemporary photographs). This book demonstrates excellent balance throughout an in particular excellent rhythm and pace between its many parts.

PROSE NON-FICTION-ILLUSTRATED



FIRST PRIZE [tied]

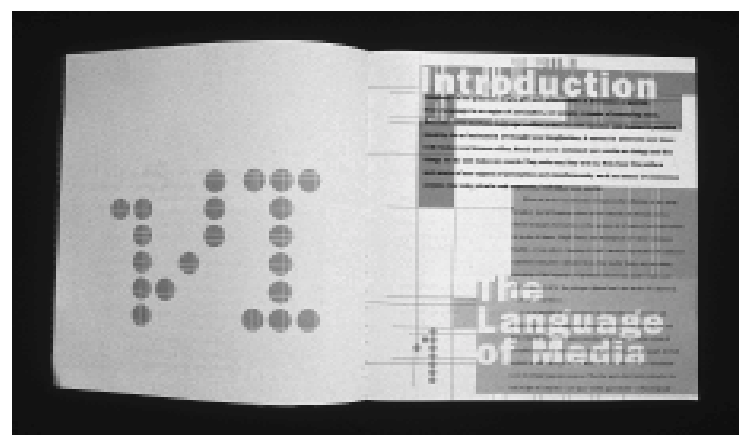
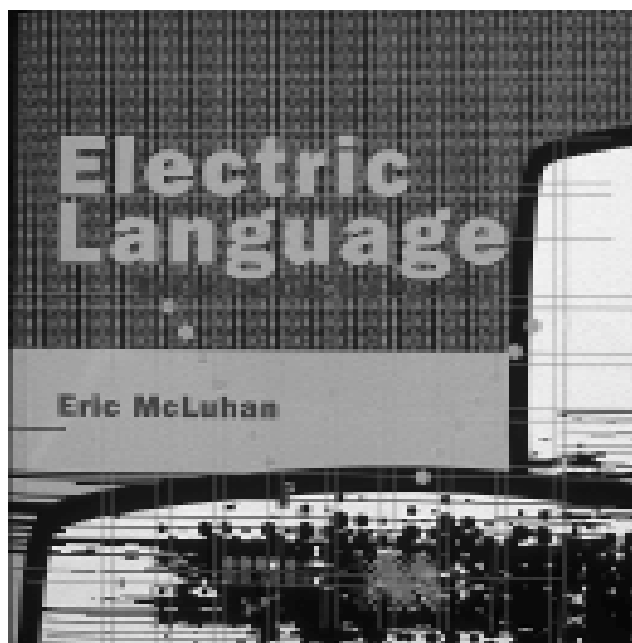
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Knechtel, John editor. *Open City*.  
Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 1998.

DESIGNER: Lewis Nicholson with Gilbert Li.

This publication is actually number six of the journal *Alphabet City*. Since it is a journal publication with over thirty different contributors it too presents the challenge to the designer of finding unity in diversity. Here the designer takes a bold and experimental approach to this challenge.

The designer deals with both poetry and prose, French and English, black and white photographs, serif and sans serif typefaces, black and white photographs and line drawings, italics and all caps, and yet somehow makes the whole thing work.



THIRD PRIZE

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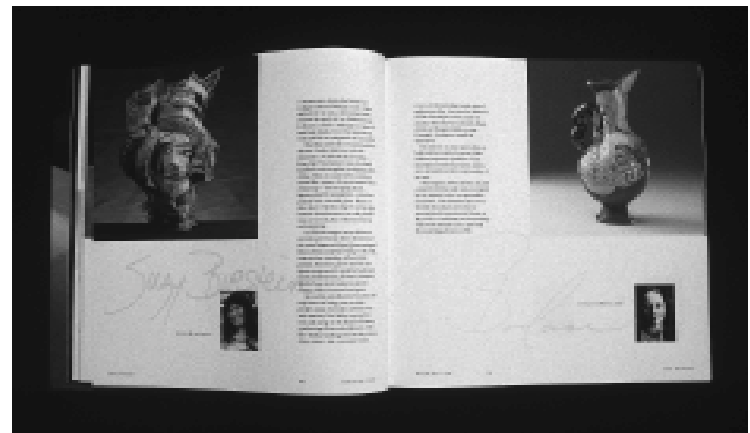
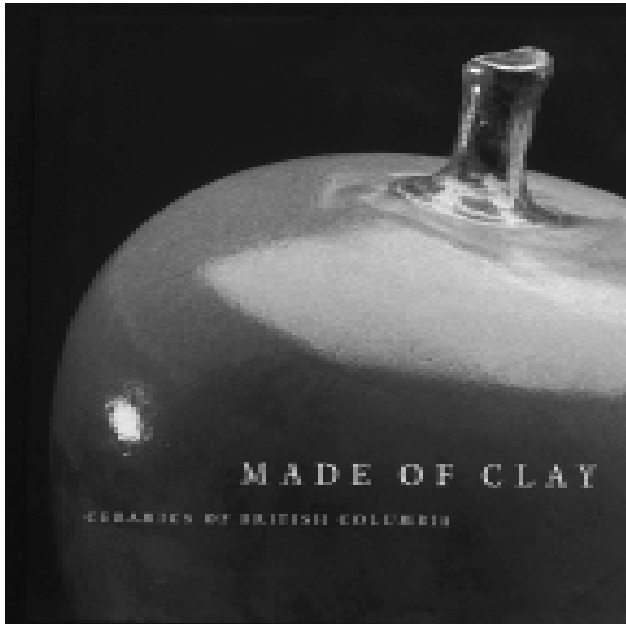
McLuhan, Eric. *Electric Language: Understanding the Present*. Toronto: Stoddart, 1998.

DESIGNER: Eskind Waddell.

As befits the subject, an interpretation in print of the impact of electronic media, this book is highly reminiscent of *Wired* magazine. Its design elements are bold and experimental: a liberal use of bright

colour, text over eye-catching images, imaginative page layouts, colour highlighting of text, etc. This book has some of the disjointed or fragmented rhythm of electronic communication.

## PICTORIAL



### FIRST PRIZE

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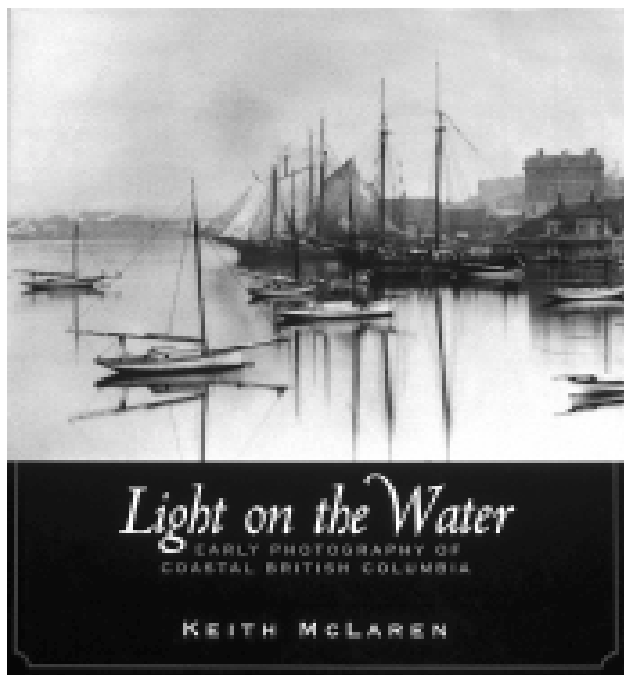
Doherty, Linda, compiler.  
Historical text by Carol Mayer.  
*Made of Clay: Ceramics of British Columbia.*  
Vancouver: Potters Guild of B.C., 1998.

DESIGNER: Praxis

It is befitting that a celebration of British Columbia ceramics should be presented in a book that is an accomplished work of art itself. On one page opening the designer had to accommodate black and white vignettes of two artists, colour photographs of two works of art, text featuring personal statements of the two artists, and either the signature or mark of each artist. This is

done to perfection. This book reveals good rhythm or flow throughout, right from the strong front cover, to the bold black end papers, to the striking colour images of the works of art, to the clean, forceful presentation on the back cover. How satisfying to handle a work of art when reading about another art form.

## PICTORIAL



### SECOND PRIZE

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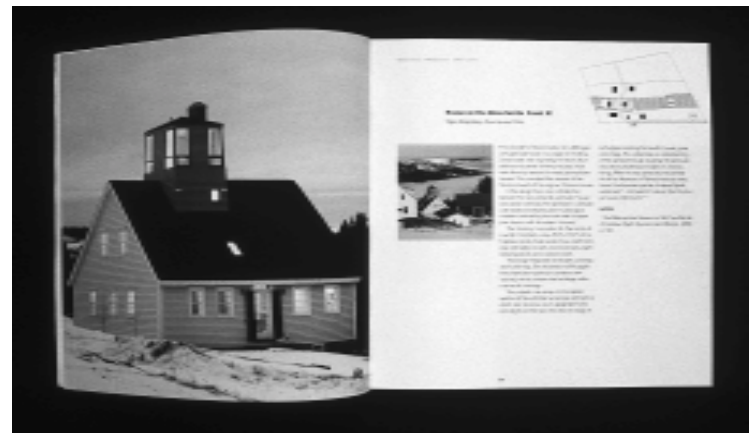
McLaren, Keith. *Light on the Water: Early Photography of Coastal British Columbia*. Vancouver/Seattle: Douglas & McIntyre/University of Washington Press, 1998.

DESIGNER: Val Speidel.

It is obvious upon opening this book that its excellent black and white photographs have received first class treatment by the book's designer. The images of various sizes have been superbly reproduced and are extremely well placed on each page opening. There is a good balance throughout the book between the images, explanatory text, and captions

for each photograph. There is also a wonderful consistency of tone throughout this book, from the black, grey and white front cover, to the grey end papers, to the black, grey and white title page, to the black and white images in the body of the book, and to the back cover. A very well integrated book.

## PICTORIAL



### THIRD PRIZE

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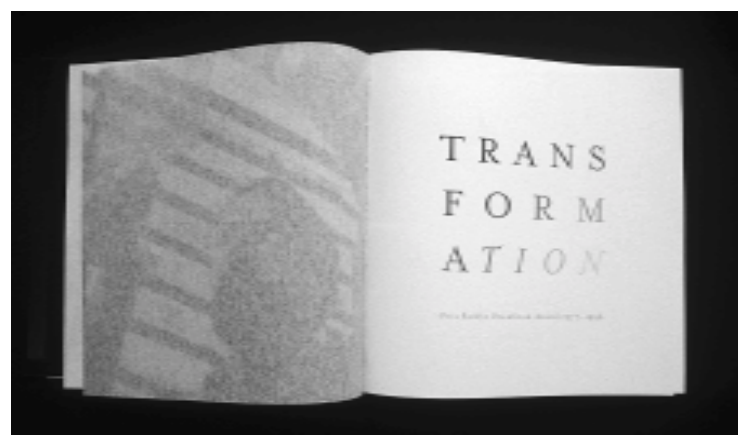
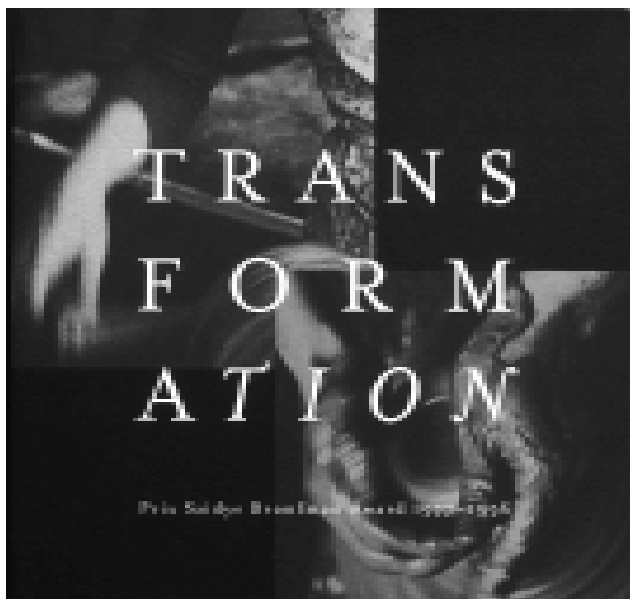
Carter, Brian, editor. *Brian MacKay-Lyons: Selected Projects, 1986-1997*.  
Halifax: Tuns Press, 1998.

DESIGNER: Brian MacKay-Lyons, Robert Meyer, Susan Fitzgerald, Marc Cormier.  
DESIGN CONSULTANTS & TYPE: Bhandari & Co.

A common theme in these notes, is the challenge of creating a unified whole out of many diverse elements. In this case the designers have succeeded admirably in integrating both black and white photographs and the architect's sketches and plans of many

different sizes and shapes into one pleasing whole. The three column page layout well suits the horizontal shape of the book. A good model to follow for other art and architectural catalogues.

## PICTORIAL



### HONOURABLE MENTION

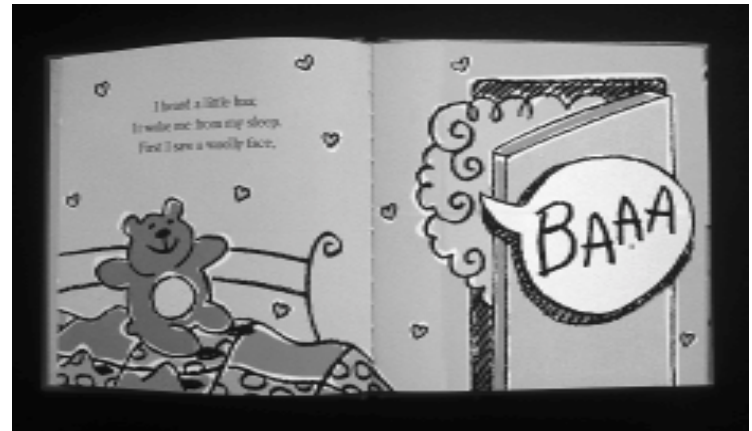
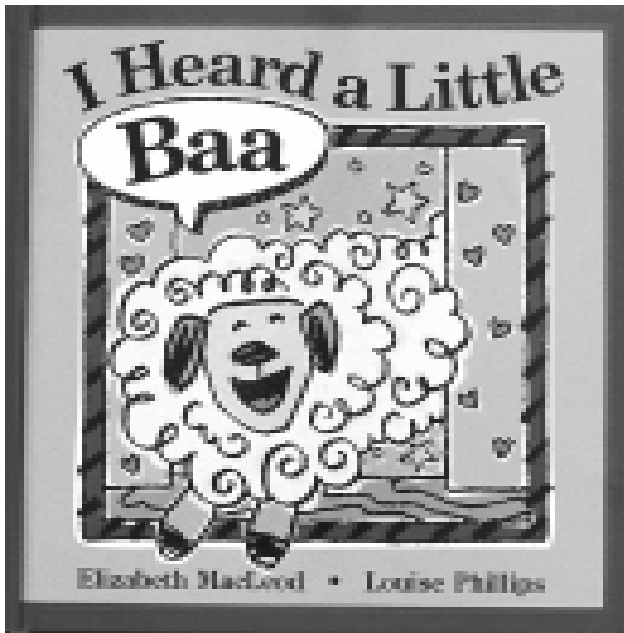
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Inglis, Stephen, Sandra Flood and Alan Elder.  
*Transformation: Prix Saidye Bronfman  
Award, 1977-1996.*  
Ottawa: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1998.

DESIGNER: Timmings and Debay.

The theme of this catalogue is transformation, and indeed the designers play with this theme in their book art. The word “transformation” on the cover, for example moves from a roman type starting with the “t” to a gradual transition or transformation to italic type near the end of the word. Colour also transforms from a strong yellow at the beginning of the word to white near the end.

The four images preceding the title page are on a parchment type paper, while images in the main body are on a heavy, glossy paper. The colour images of artwork throughout are brightly and vividly reproduced. If the judges had one constructive criticism about this book it was that the text should have been printed in a solid black rather than in the soft grey chosen by the designers.



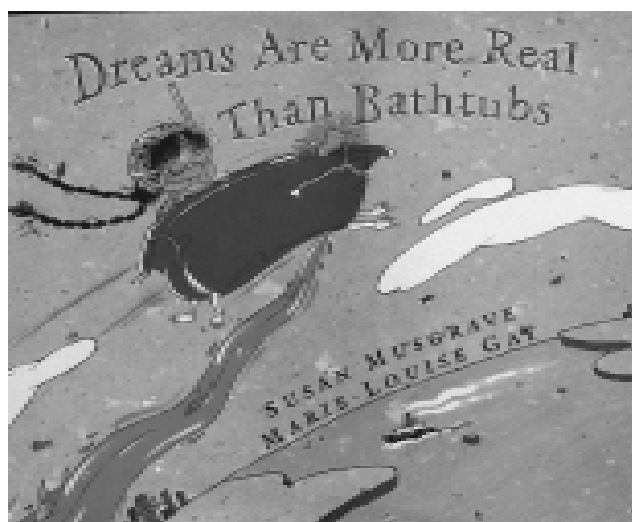
FIRST PRIZE

MacLeod, Elizabeth (text) and Louise Phillips (illustrations). *I Heard a Little Baa*. Toronto: Kids Can Press, 1998.

DESIGNER: Karen Powers.

This little book charmed all of the judges. Everything about it invites participation on the part of the reader, child and adult alike. The illustrations are childlike and as a result are friendly and inviting. The colours used throughout are vibrant and bold. The cover, for example, features a bright red and yellow

background with sharp, black lettering, while the title page opening is purple and black. A foldout feature for each opening, revealing the last line of a four line poem and the particular animal covered by the poem, is sure to delight youngsters of all ages. More please!



SECOND PRIZE

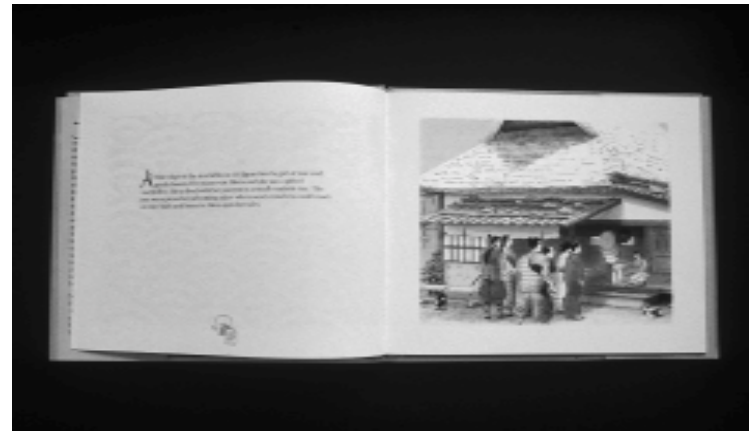
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Musgrave, Susan (text) and Marie-Louise Gay (illustrations). *Dreams Are More Real Than Bathtubs*. Victoria: Orca Book Publishers, 1998.

DESIGNER: Marie-Louise Gay.

Since the illustrator and the designer are one and the same for this book it is not surprising that the judges found an excellent integration of text and illustrations with the design elements of the book. The whimsy and humour of the text are matched by the whimsy and humour of the illustrations and design, making this a “friendly, bright, warm and inviting” book. Every page that

is turned brings a new adventure for the reader and not just in terms of the story and pictures. One encounters dramatic colour changes and unexpected playful typography. How about being chased by a giant hotdog or a worm that uses its own body to spell out that it is a worm. Fun and excitement for everyone.



THIRD PRIZE

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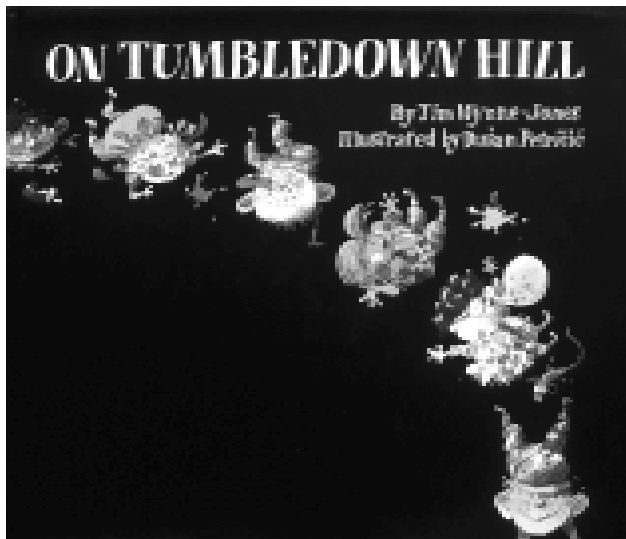
Langston, Laura (text) and Victor Bosson (illustrations). *The Fox's Kettle*.

Victoria: Orca Book Publishers, 1998.

DESIGNER: Victor Bosson.

Orca Books is to be congratulated for employing the illustrator of their books to do the design work, for it seems to be an arrangement that works uncommonly well. Here Victor Bosson's illustrations and design are completely successful in capturing the spirit of Japanese culture and the folktale quality of this original tale by

Laura Langston. For example, on the text pages the designer uses a faint coloured semi-circular image behind the text which effectively contributes to the tone and spirit of the book. In a similar way a small Japanese-like vignette of a kettle graces the foot of each text page. This is a beautiful, restful and very inviting book.



HONOURABLE MENTION

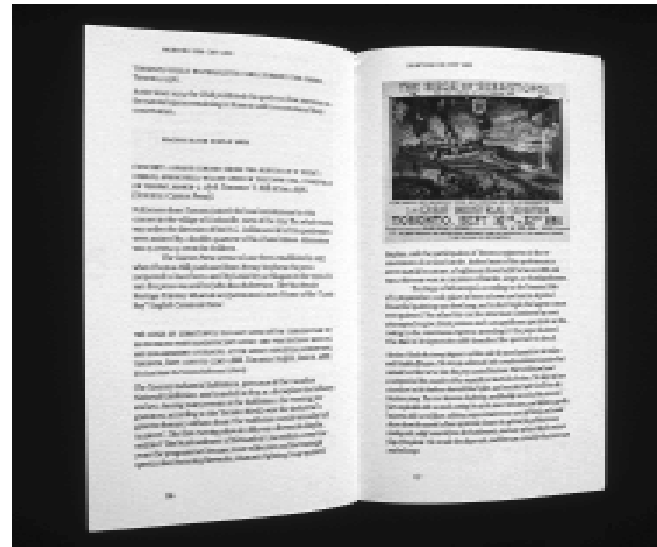
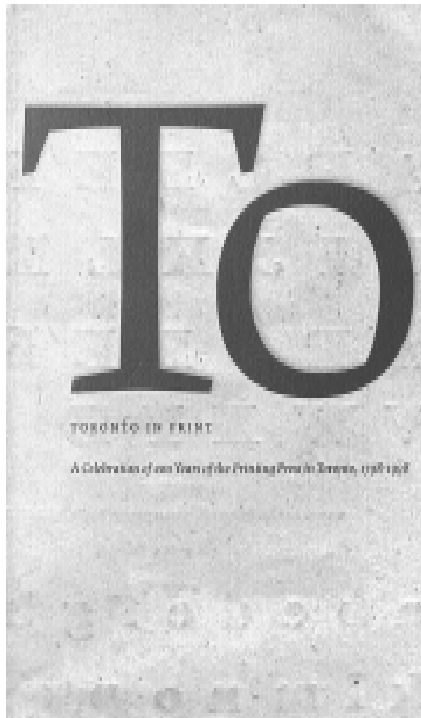
Wynne-Jones, Tim (text) and Dušan Petricić (illustrations). *On Tumbledown Hill*. Red Deer: Red Deer College Press, 1998.

DESIGNER: Dušan Petricić; Kunz & Associates (cover).

Again a most successful marriage of illustration and design. This book signals fun and pleasure right from its front cover on. Brightly coloured cartoon characters of children race across the black, back cover to come spilling out in a tumbledown on the front cover. Opening up the cover the reader is met with an incredible collage of bright colours on the endpapers. Turning to the

text pages one encounters a very innovative blend of illustration, typography and page layout. The black letters of large display type are superimposed on the illustrations. What is unique, however, is that each word is enclosed inside its own box. When you think of it this is probably how young children like to read, one word at a time. Brilliant, creative design work.

## TEXT & REFERENCE



### FIRST PRIZE

Alston, Sandra and Patricia Fleming.  
*Toronto in Print: A Celebration of 200 Years of  
the Printing Press in Toronto, 1798-1998.*  
Toronto: University of Toronto Library, 1998.

DESIGNER: Stan Bevington.

This catalogue for an exhibition held at the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library is truly a labour of love. But then that is not surprising considering the two authors are both ardent bibliophiles. Designer Stan Bevington has done them proud and has produced a very inviting book. The size is a comfortable one (13 cm. x 22 cm.), the

textured off-white paper is very appealing to the eye, the mass of text, so typical of a catalogue, is extremely well organized, the Carl Dair typeface Cartier Book used throughout for the text is graceful and readable and it is well integrated with many charming black and white and colour period illustrations. Would that all exhibition catalogues could be raised to this level!

## LIMITED EDITIONS



### HONOURABLE MENTION

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Toselli, Carlo. *Fra du giardini/Between Two Gardens/Entre deux jardins: Poesie/Poems/Poemes*.

West Vancouver: Le Grazie, 1998.

DESIGNER: Crispin Elsted, Barbarian Press.

Barbarian Press is certainly well known for its excellent bookwork, and this book is no exception. As one might expect from a private press there is meticulous attention to detail. This edition is “printed on Zerkall German Ingres Earth [paper], bound in full blue cloth with an inlaid photograph and gold stamping on the upper cover and

Japanese handmade Korotani endpapers, and boxed.” This work of art is admired, and coveted, by all when on display. Since there was very little competition in this category this year, however, the judges felt justified in awarding an honourable mention to this book rather than a first, second or third.

THE ALCUIN SOCIETY 1999 AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE IN BOOK DESIGN IN CANADA

AS WE ENTER A NEW YEAR, decade, century and millennium it is useful to reflect back briefly on the history of book design competitions in Canada. Certainly the heady days of the mid-1970s, when the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce and the National Design Council of Canada granted \$50,000 to a design committee of the Canadian Book Publishers Council to organize a national design competition, are long gone. All that we have to show for this short-lived government sponsored initiative are two wonderful bilingual catalogues entitled *The Look of Books/ Les plus beaux livres* produced by Design Canada in 1975 and 1976.

The Alcuin Society first began to think about a national design competition in the early 1980s. Board members of the Society at that time were concerned that while there were many competitions and prizes for other creative work in Canada, there was no competition or prize specifically for book design. It would take some research in the Society's archives to establish the exact starting date for our competition, for although the 1999 competition is designated as the 17th, we can only locate published records for the competition back to 1985. The results of this particular competition,

judging books published in 1984, were published in a slight, mimeographed catalogue dated 1985. The results of the next ten competitions were published in various issues of *Amphora*, the quarterly journal of the Society. The last four competitions have received more handsome treatment in beautifully designed catalogues by Roberto Dosil, produced by Vancouver printers Benwell-Atkins. That only accounts for 15 competitions; what happened to the first two? One thing we do know is that the most recent book categories chosen for the competition were established in 1989 and were based on those of the American Institute of Graphic Arts. The initial categories were: Prose (fiction and non-fiction); Adult Picture and Photography; How-To, Cooking, Craft and Hobby; Text and Reference; Limited Editions; Poetry; and Juvenile.

The Prose category over the years has evolved into three separate categories, since the various judges involved became increasingly tired of judging apples with oranges with bananas. The three Prose categories at present are: Prose Fiction; Prose Non-Fiction, Unillustrated; and Prose Non-Fiction, Illustrated.

The Adult Picture and Photography category has been renamed Pictorial Books; the recollection is that we thought that “adult picture and photography” might have carried some rather unseemly connotations!

The How-To category, due to a declining number of submissions, was folded into Text and Reference, where it seems to have found a comfortable home. Text and Reference remains, as does Limited Editions and Poetry. “Juvenile” was thought to sound rather dated and so it was renamed “Children’s Books.” We even tried a “Mass Market Paperback” category one year but the results were so god-awful that we rather hastily abandoned that category.

How is the actual judging done? Well the principles of the judging are that each book must be judged as a total entity, that is holistically. What the judges are looking for is conveyed by such words and phrases as “consistency,” “continuity,” “integration,” and “total attention to detail.” The judges examine every aspect of each book including the following: dust jacket, binding, end papers, half-title page, copyright page, title page, page layout, typography (size and font), integration of illustrations, chapter openings,

running heads, reproduction of illustrations, clarity of printing, and choice of paper. The method of judging is to place all of the books for each category on several large tables. If the judges feel that a book has been entered into the wrong category then they will move it to a new category where it is felt that it will receive fairer treatment. Each judge examines every book in a specific category. They place the books they believe merit attention of a finalist’s table. Then the serious, but friendly, debate begins. The judges argue, discuss, debate, joke, cajole and rebut for as long as it takes to reach consensus about which books deserve prizes (it is this series of debates that we hope to start taping for posterity!). If no meritorious books are found in any one category then no prizes are awarded. If books are judged to be equally meritorious then a tie occurs.

All that remains for these concluding remarks is to thank the judges for this year’s competition for their hard work, fellowship and sagacity. They are:

SUSAN COLBERG  
*University of Alberta*  
*Department of Art and Design*

ROBERTO DOSIL  
*Dosil & Dosil Incorporated*

DENNIS NAGY  
*Allsorts Design Group*

SYLVIA SMALLMAN  
*Emily Carr Institute of*  
*Art & Design*

THE ALCUIN SOCIETY WAS FOUNDED in 1965 by G.A. Spencer for booklovers world-wide to promote a wider appreciation of what goes into finely-wrought books. The name “Alcuin” was chosen to honour the memory of Alcuin of York (735 TO 804 ad). Alcuin was a man who cared not only about books but handwriting too, which he rescued from the proliferation of bastard styles of the period. As, in effect, Charlemagne’s “Minister of Culture”, Alcuin selected the most pleasing and certainly the most legible script of his day, and gave it official blessing. Known as the “Caroline Minuscule”, it ultimately led to our modern lower-case alphabet.

To further its aims, The Alcuin Society engages in a wide range of activities, many in collaboration with the Canadian Centre for Studies in Publishing at Simon Fraser University: lectures, workshops, exhibitions, and competitions. Annual design awards are made by a panel of judges for the best in Canadian book design. *Amphora*, the Society’s quarterly journal, covers a wide range of topics related to the book arts: collecting, typography, type design, type-setting, calligraphy, paper-making, ornamentation, illustration, printing and binding.

Honorary Past Chairs

G.A. Spencer  
 Bryan Peet  
 Peter Quartermain  
 Gwen Murray  
 Allen Segal  
 Ron McAmmond  
 M.S. Batts  
 Madeline Williams  
 Neil Brearly  
 Don Atkins  
 Anne Taylor  
 Richard Hopkins

Directors whose term of office expires in:

2000  
 Ann Cowan  
 Stuart Isto  
 Sylvia Smallman  
 Frances Woodward

2001  
 Geoff Spencer  
 Maureen Elston  
 Mark Stanton  
 Don Polak

2002  
 Richard Hopkins  
 Brenda Peterson  
 Jim Rainer

Membership in the Society has the following categories:

*Individual*  
 \$40.00 per year

*Patron*  
 \$100.00 per year

*Corporate*  
 \$40.00 per year

*Student*  
 \$20.00 per year  
 three years maximum

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