
Best known as a senior member of the Group of Seven, J.E.H. MacDonald was a designer first and a painter second. Remarking on the lack of recognition that has been paid to the role of graphic design in Canadian visual culture, Robert Stacey and the late Hunter Bishop (1918-1985) move toward rectifying this neglect by focusing on the design work which was central to the development of MacDonald’s career. Described in the ‘Preface’ as a ‘pictorial celebration’ of MacDonald’s ‘first but too-often forgotten callings: graphic design, illustration, lettering, applied art in both its narrowest and widest interpretations,’ this book makes a contribution to the handful of books which have been devoted to the design work of individual Canadian artists. For the book historian, it lays the groundwork for much needed further research on MacDonald’s important contributions to print culture.

The illustrations, comprising three quarters of the book’s 151 pages, are preceded by Stacey’s ‘Preface,’ in which he describes his efforts to bring Hunter Bishop’s initiative to completion. Two essays by Thoreau MacDonald focus on the artist’s family life and growth as a painter. A third essay, the text of a slide lecture given to the Arts and Letters Club in 1981 by Hunter Bishop, summarizes major achievements and provides a chronology of MacDonald’s employment with various design studios within the context of the social and artistic environment in which MacDonald worked.

J.E.H. MacDonald was largely self-taught. With his art training limited to evening and Saturday classes, his real introduction to design began with his apprenticeship at age sixteen with the Toronto Lithographing company in 1889. In 1895 he moved to Grip Printing and Publishing, where he remained until 1904, when he accepted a position at the Carlton Studio in London, U.K. In 1907 he returned to Toronto to work for Grip until 1911, when Lauren Harris persuaded him to leave his job to paint full time. The small income he received from painting meant that he could ‘sustain his family only by accepting a crushing number of commercial commissions’ (9). It is fortunate that many of those crushing commercial commissions involved books and periodicals.

The twenty-three pages of colour illustrations, followed by sixty-nine in black-and-white, categorize MacDonald’s graphic works into six areas: (1) ‘Designs for Commerce’ include advertisements, brochures, window display sketches, Christmas cards, and catalogue covers designed for such companies as the CPR, Canadian Northern Steamships, Jasper National Park, Lawrence Park Estates, and Sheridan Nurseries; (2) ‘Designs for Culture’ include
posters and catalogue covers for exhibitions by the Ontario College of Art, the Canadian National Exhibition, the British Empire Exhibition, and the National Gallery of Canada; and (3) 'Illustration' focuses on books and periodicals, with designs for bindings, dust jackets, endpapers, title pages, frontispieces, decorative borders, and illustrations of the text. The chronological arrangement follows MacDonald's years with Carlton Studio, where he designed books for Adam and Charles Black of London, to his years freelancing for such publishers as J.M. Dent, McClelland and Stewart, Ryerson, the University of Toronto Press, and Louis Carrier of New York. Presenting designs for nearly three dozen books, Stacey and Bishop far exceed all previous attempts to identify MacDonald's book designs, neglecting to include only one previously identified title, Archibald MacMechan's *The Book of Ultima Thule* (McClelland and Stewart, 1927), noted by Sybille Pantazzi in her article 'Book Illustration and Design by Canadian Artists 1890-1940 with a List of Books Illustrated by Members of the Group of Seven' (*National of Gallery of Canada Bulletin* 7 [1966]: 24). *The Book of Ultima Thule* exhibits MacDonald's characteristic lettering, use of heraldic imagery, and portrayal of birds in flight. Designs for periodicals include covers for *The Canadian Courier, The Canadian Magazine, Maclean's*, and *The Canadian Forum*. Section (4), devoted to 'Lettering,' includes calligraphy and hand lettering designs along with decorative certificates, memorials, plaques, signs, presentation addresses, and business logos. It does not include MacDonald's own *A Word to Us All*, the text and cover of which appear only as endpapers for *J.E.H. MacDonald, Designer*. Stacey did, however, publish a facsimile reproduction of *A Word to Us All*, together with an essay on MacDonald's links with William Morris and the Arts and Crafts Movement, as a keepsake distributed at the launching of this book. Section (5), on 'Bookplates,' includes designs for the Toronto Public Library, Dalhousie College Library, the Library of Hart House, and numerous private libraries. Section (6), 'Designs for the Arts and Letters Club,' includes designs for the club's house organ, *The Lamps*, as well as designs for programmes, membership lists, and broadsides.

The book concludes with a chronology of major events in MacDonald's life and work. One shortcoming for the researcher is the omission of source identifications. Stacey cites his personal collection as the source of several books which are readily available in research libraries but he unfortunately neglects to identify sources for the less familiar and less accessible catalogues, advertisements, and calligraphic works which anyone seriously studying MacDonald's designs will want to examine more closely.

Throughout this book, the influence of William Morris is clearly evident in MacDonald's abundant use of medieval motifs, and in his use of birds, flowers, and intertwining leaves and stems for border designs. His use of distinctive Canadian imagery, including the jack pine, the trillium, the maple leaf, the fleur-de-lis, and the totem pole, is particularly noteworthy,
not only in his designs for books by such authors as Bliss Carman and E. Pauline Johnson, but in his designs for magazine covers, calligraphic certificates, advertisements, and bookplates. With its excellent reproductions, extensive coverage of designs, and accompanying text, this book is highly recommended for anyone interested in J.E.H. MacDonald and in the history of printing and graphic design in early twentieth-century Canada.

SHEILA LATHAM


There is an inescapable aura of romance associated with a literary pirate whose life has long been constructed around a rich range of sea imagery. The son of a sea captain, Thomas B. Mosher discovered his passion for books during his seafaring youth spent on a clipper ship, 'when all the world was young, when the days were of tropic splendour, and the long evenings were passed with my books in a lonely cabin, dimly lighted by a primitive oil-lamp, while the ship was ploughing through the boundless ocean on its weary course around Cape Horn.'

After several years of work as a publisher of law catalogues and legal books at a stationery shop, Mosher resolved in 1891 to pursue his passion for exquisite literature and fine printing by becoming a publisher of 'Books in Belles Lettres Issued in Choice and Limited Editions.' Steeped in the Aesthetic, Decadent, and Celtic fashions of the Pre-Raphaelite movement, Mosher introduced Americans to the 'literature of rapture': to Morris and Dante Rossetti, Swinburne and Walter Pater, Dowson and Arthur Symons.

As a printer, his choice of the anchor and dolphin for his publisher's device signals the noble tradition he aimed to join. William Pickering had adapted the anchor and dolphin from the Venetian printer Aldus Manutius. As Pickering had inscribed his design with 'Aldi Discipulus Anglus,' Mosher's use of the same device identified his vocation as the American disciple of Aldus and Pickering. Christopher Morley sought to link the publisher's device with the salty-dog heritage: 'What was there in this hearty sea-bred uncolleged down-easter that made him open so many magic portholes? He had the pure genius of book-fancy; an uneducated man, as uneducated as Chaucer and Lamb and Conrad; and I like to think