

The Other Audubon: Joy Kiser and The Nests and Eggs



The front wrapper of Part 1 of *The Nests and Eggs*. All illustrations courtesy of the Smithsonian Libraries and Archives

Leslie Overstreet

In 1995 Joy Kiser found her heart's delight and her life's work in an extraordinary old book about birds' nests in the state of Ohio. Through her years of research, she uncovered the remarkable story behind it, bringing it into the limelight that it deserves.

Illustrations of the Nests and Eggs of Birds of Ohio (hereafter just *The Nests and Eggs*, as we fondly refer to it) was drawn, written, and published in a small town in Ohio, from 1879 to 1886, by the collective effort of the Jones family – daughter Genevieve, son Howard, and parents Nelson and Virginia. You might think it was a little vanity production sent to family and friends at Christmas. Far from it – it consisted of two massive volumes (17.5 inches tall and more than three hundred pages), with detailed field observations and scientific texts accompanied by sixty-eight full-page hand-colored lithographic plates. The work



Plate XLVI *Telmatodytes palustris*, Long-billed marsh wren

was purchased and praised by professional ornithologists across the U.S. and abroad.

The book was sold by subscription in an edition of ninety copies (in fifty of which the illustrations were hand-colored) and issued in parts over seven years. *The Nests and Eggs* is quite scarce, but from the outset it was recognized as a superb and scientifically valuable contribution to the field. Elliott Coues, then curator of birds at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History, was an immediate admirer, writing in the *Bulletin of the Nuttall Ornithological Club* (1882:112): "There has been nothing since Audubon in the way of pictorial illustrations of American Ornithology to compare with the present work – nothing to claim the union of an equal degree of artistic skill and scientific accuracy."

The Jones family lived in Circleville, Ohio, twenty-five miles south of Columbus. Nelson Jones was a country doctor who often took his children, Genevieve and Howard, with him

on his rounds to farms and outlying homesteads and shared with them his interest in the natural world. Birds were a common and easily observable subject, and collecting birds' nests and eggs was a popular pastime of the period in which the children happily engaged. Unfortunately, they could not always identify the birds that built and used the nests that they found, since there was no guide to the subject in the published literature.

While on a visit to friends in Philadelphia as a young woman, Genevieve reveled in viewing the copy of John James Audubon's double-elephant *Birds of America* displayed at the 1876 Centennial Exposition, but she was disappointed that even there the birds' nests were hardly ever included. On her return to Circleville, she and the family decided to remedy the lack themselves. Howard would collect the nests and provide field notes, Genevieve would draw the nests for lithographic reproduction, and their father would subsidize the cost of publication. They put out a prospectus, solicited subscribers, and started publication.

Tragically, Genevieve died of typhoid fever at the age of thirty-two, only five plates into the project. Her mother, Virginia, stepped up to continue as the artist of the plates. The family worked for the next ten years – far from the cultural/scientific/economic centers of the country, and almost ninety miles from the nearest lithographic printing firm. Just think of the process as those sixty-five-pound blocks of stone had to be carried back and forth in horse-drawn wagons as Genevieve drew the nests on the stone in Circleville, had proofs printed in Cincinnati, corrected and re-drew on the stone back in Circleville, then sent it back to Cincinnati for more proofs, and so on until the desired result was achieved. Under these conditions, this family of complete amateurs produced a monumental work that is

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Plate LVI Picus pubescens, Downy woodpecker (cross-section view of tree)

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consulted and appreciated to this day.

It is a remarkable story that we know only thanks to Joy Kiser's efforts to unearth and share it.

I work in the Smithsonian's Joseph F. Cullman Library of Natural History, which holds two copies of *The Nests and Eggs*: one in two volumes bound in red morocco (a recent gift), and the other bound in a single fat volume as received in the original parts with all of the dated and priced part wrappers (probably the copy that Coues used). I knew nothing of them, and discovered that we had them only when Joy posted a query on the international rare-book list *ExLibris* in 1997 in search of copies of the book.

She had encountered it when a new assistant librarian at the Cleveland Museum of Natural History two years earlier, and she thought of it when an announcement of an upcoming conference on natural-history illustration was posted. She decided to present a talk about the book, and thus began a research project on which she would spend much of the next two decades. She did research in a number of archives, libraries, and historical societies, most productively the Pickaway County Historical and Genealogical Society (Circleville, Ohio) and the Ohio Historical Society. That research unearthed some stunning finds: photographs of all the family and their assistants in the project, the buildings they lived and worked in, family papers and correspondence, and even some of the original lithographic stones bearing the images for printing in *The Nests and Eggs*.



America's Other Audubon, by Joy M. Kiser

Later, Joy searched out and met the Jones's descendants (now often spelling the name as Jonnes), and through them she discovered one of the actual nests used for the illustrations, Genevieve's paint palette, and Virginia's paint box (all now donated by the family to the Pickaway County Historical Society, along with a copy of the book).

When her library career brought her to work in Washington, she volunteered with me at the Smithsonian and produced a lovely website about the Joneses and their book called *Illustrations of the Nests and Eggs of Birds of Ohio* (si.edu). It attracted the attention of editors at Princeton Architectural Press, which published Joy's book about the Joneses and *The Nests and Eggs*, titled *America's Other Audubon* (New York, 2012), with all sixty-eight plates reproduced from the Smithsonian's copy.

In the twenty-five years that I knew and worked with Joy, she pursued the Jones's story with enthusiasm, creativity, and intelligence, viewing it as an important contribution to the history of ornithology, but also most certainly as a labor of love in which she was herself emotionally engaged. Genevieve's story – there's more to it than I have outlined – is heart-wrenching, and the valor and dedication of her brother and parents correspondingly heart-warming; having learned so much about the family's lives and found so many touching personal mementos, I think Joy could not help responding personally herself and regarded them as colleagues, even friends, who deserved to be known and celebrated for their enormous accomplishment.



Plate XVI Spizella pusilla, Field sparrow



Plate XVIII Ortyx virginianus, Quail

Joy had her own small collection of birds' nests and became an excellent photographer of birds drawn to her exuberant garden as well as further afield. She enjoyed sharing these photos with those of us lucky enough to be continuing correspondents, along with charming shots of her beloved family, especially the grandchildren learning to ride and playing sports.

I have been an encourager (I hope) and beneficiary (certainly) of Joy's scholarship and generosity, not only learning so much from her about the Jones's fascinating book, but also meeting the current generations of the Jonnes family when Joy arranged a visit to the Smithsonian Libraries for them. On that occasion the family donated a copy of the

rare prospectus (1878) for *The Nests and Eggs*, which we now proudly display with the books themselves for tours of the rare book room, and has graciously adopted our single-volume copy with original wrappers in memory of a family member. Joy and the Jonnes family are now, and will always be, part of *The Nests and Eggs* story for us.

All of us at the Smithsonian who knew Joy and her work were saddened by her death in 2022 at the age of seventy-four, but I know that, just as she re-established the Jones family and their magnificent work in the history of ornithology, Joy herself will always be remembered and appreciated for her work on the book and for her warm and generous heart.



Plate XVII Mimus carolinensis, Catbird



Plate XI Thryothorus ludovicianus, Great Carolina Wren

The Jones's *Illustrations of the Nests and Eggs of Birds of Ohio* is held by over forty libraries in the U.S., including the Field Museum and the University of Chicago, but you can see both of the Smithsonian's copies which have been scanned cover-to-cover for the Biodiversity Heritage Library online: *Details - Illustrations of the nests and eggs of birds of Ohio : with text - Biodiversity Heritage Library* (biodiversitylibrary.org). If you are ever in Washington, you have a standing invitation to come to see our copies along with Joy's book about *America's Other Audubon*.

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Review of Public in Name Only

Patrick Olson

Public in Name Only / Brenda Mitchell-Powell.
University of Massachusetts Press, 2022.

Through three semesters of graduate coursework in library science, then a decade spent working in libraries, I do not recall ever hearing of the 1939 sit-in at the Alexandria, Virginia, library. We could chalk that up to my own faulty memory. Perhaps it is because Brenda Mitchell-Powell’s *Public in Name Only: The 1939 Alexandria Library Sit-in Demonstration* is the first book-length treatment of the subject. Why it took more than eighty years for the full story to be told is probably beyond the scope of the present review. There is no denying it is a chapter of American history well worth her comprehensive treatment. It was the first documented case of a sit-in used to force a city to provide Black residents with access to its public library. More than that, it “was among the rare recorded efforts to confront Jim Crow segregation directly rather than merely to demand better allocations of public accommodations or services.” That is, a library served as the site of one of the earliest challenges to the “separate but equal” doctrine.

Mitchell-Powell sets the stage: “In 1937 when Alexandria, Virginia’s, first public library was constructed just a few blocks from his home, Samuel Wilbert Tucker, a young, Black, native Alexandrian attorney, was enraged that he could not use the municipal facility solely because of his race.” Among his motivations were the taxes he paid to support a library he could not use. He was inspired by recent wins at court for the NAACP. Drawing on his legal education, Tucker conceived an approach designed to secure library access for himself and his fellow Black Alexandrians. The sit-in only lasted an hour and ended peacefully – but with arrests, which was entirely according to Tucker’s plan. He did not participate himself. His freedom allowed him to serve as defense attorney for the five demonstrators, the court being the pivotal platform for his challenge. Tucker did not set out

to bankrupt the local government in pursuit of separate but equal facilities. His objective was more sweeping. He sought an end to desegregation altogether. That is what made Tucker’s challenge exceptional.

Mitchell-Powell provides a concise review of Jim Crow laws, the Reconstruction period, and everything that came before them. In just a single page, she sketches the broad legislative and judicial activity stemming from white hostility since the Civil War, and touches on

white attitudes about Black literacy dating back to the eighteenth century, then on literacy advocacy for African-Americans in the next. She covers Alexandria’s Indigenous history, its colonial history, the influence of the young national capital on the city, its role as a center for the slave trade, and of course its library history. She walks us through earlier sit-ins and other movements that influenced Tucker with rich, deep context and background throughout. She states the uncomfortable truth that the American Library Association,

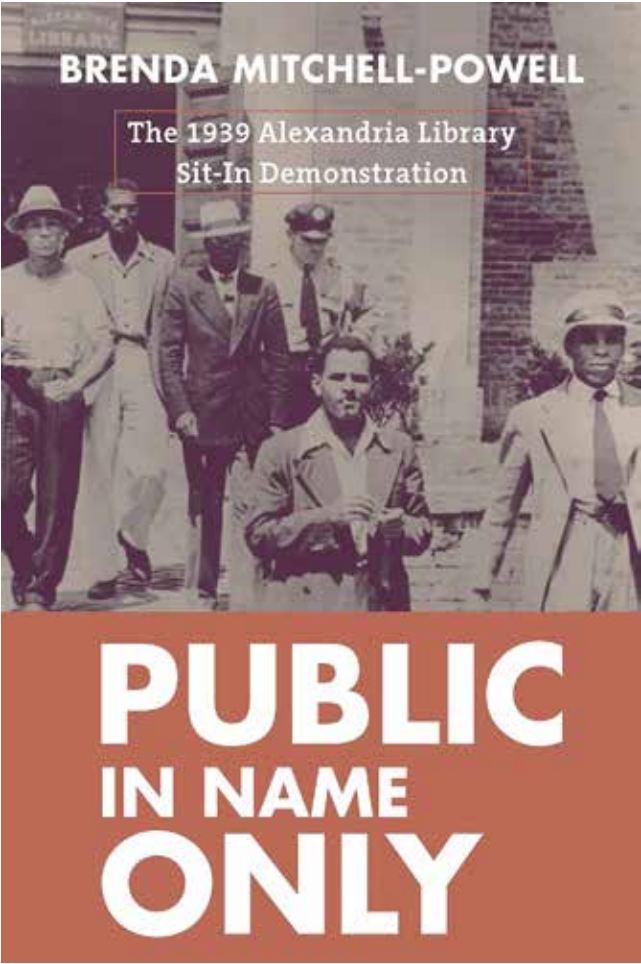
and many librarians, were complicit in the implementation of Jim Crow laws, the ALA waiting until 1961 to issue a statement against segregation. She provides clear contexts and definitions for *institutional racism* and *critical race theory*, and how both are muddled by misinformation with crassly political motives.

To me, her most illuminating discussions focus on Black access to libraries in the Jim Crow South. When available, library access was predictably separate and unequal. She writes, for example, of towns that chose to close their public libraries rather than integrate them. These peripheral vignettes of social injustice give the book its depth. The courage of the primary story is absolutely inspiring. It is no exaggeration to say that Tucker and his fellow activists risked not just bodily harm, but even death. The full story of Tucker’s actions is a cautionary tale. Decades after Tucker, for all the social progress in this country, it has become abundantly clear that backsliding is possible. In some parts of the country, access to our shared cultural inheritance is becoming less equal. A single loud complaint can easily whisk something from the shelf, and a chorus of loud complaints can shutter a library entirely.

Reading these fewer than two hundred pages is a revelation. Those who find footnotes distracting will appreciate her use of endnotes, and more adventurous readers can delve into the appendices reproducing historical ALA statements. The book (a product of her PhD work) is well researched. If you are the type who reads acknowledgments, you will find Mitchell-Powell’s thanks to fellow Caxtonian Michèle Cloonan. Available in paperback and modestly priced for a university press, its revelations can easily be yours. Better yet, check with your public library. If they have no copy, you could suggest they pick one up.

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(First in an occasional series of reviews by members of the DEI committee of books related to the reading and publishing of ethnic and other minorities.)



Robert Frost Reconsidered

Robert Cotner

Susan Hanes invited me to attend the 125th Anniversary dinner of the Caxton Club in 2020 and recite a poem. I chose Robert Frost’s *The Silken Tent*, which at that time struck my fancy. The structure of the poem interested me in particular. It was thirteen lines long, one line short of a standard sonnet. Why had the poet not made it a legitimate sonnet by writing fourteen lines? I am sure that if asked, he would have replied, with his wry smile, “I said everything I wanted to say in thirteen lines – I didn’t need a fourteenth.”

More significantly, Frost had written the thirteen lines of the poem as a single sentence, and, in doing so had created one of the most remarkable sentences ever written in the English language. Here is that single-sentence poem:

*She is as in a field a silken tent
At midday when the sunny summer breeze
Has dried the dew and all its ropes relent,
So that in guys it gently sways at ease,
And its supporting central cedar pole,
That is its pinnacle to heavenward
And signifies the sureness of the soul,
Seems to owe naught to any single cord,
But strictly held by none, is loosely bound
By countless silken ties of love and thought
To every thing on earth the compass round,
And only by one’s going slightly taut
In the capriciousness of summer air
Is of the slightest bondage made aware.*

As so often happens when you commit a poem to memory, I moved to a higher level of understanding of the text and greatly expanded its meaning. I realized that the opening line in structure and theme paralleled these lines in the *Book of Proverbs* from the Bible:

*She is like the merchants’ ships;
She bringeth her food from afar.*

What Frost did was to create a poem on his version of the ideal woman that derived from Jewish Wisdom Literature.

My mind then moved to his *Masque of Reason* and *Masque of Mercy*, each delightful biblical renditions. I thought of two Frost poems, *Fire and Ice* and *Nothing Gold Can Stay*, and was reminded of *Stopping by Woods*



Robert Frost, 1959, Library of Congress

on a *Snowy Evening*, *The Road Not Taken*, and many other Frost poems, which move toward profound wisdom. Then my mind turned to Frost’s prose – *The Four Beliefs*, *The Constant Symbol*, *The Figure a Poem Makes*, and others – essays written in language that moves from the elegant to the profound.

Perhaps I had identified a new literary genre: the wisdom literature of Robert Frost; this would, of course, be a subset of a greater domain – the wisdom literature of America. Both domains will require further investigation, validation according to established standards, and celebration.

These thoughts reminded me of a conversation with Robert Frost on an afternoon visit

with him in his Ripton, Vermont, summer home on June 3, 1962. Before I left, we talked of President John Kennedy and his inauguration. “What do you think of *Profiles in Courage*?” I asked.

“A great book – one every American should read,” he replied. He stood facing the setting sun, arms folded across his chest. “Kennedy shows us that to achieve greatness” – and here he raised his arm above his head and made a grasping motion with his fingers – “we have to grasp what we call the ‘Divine’ and make it a part of our lives.” He brought his hand to his chest and touched it. It was one of those rare, lovely moments in life.

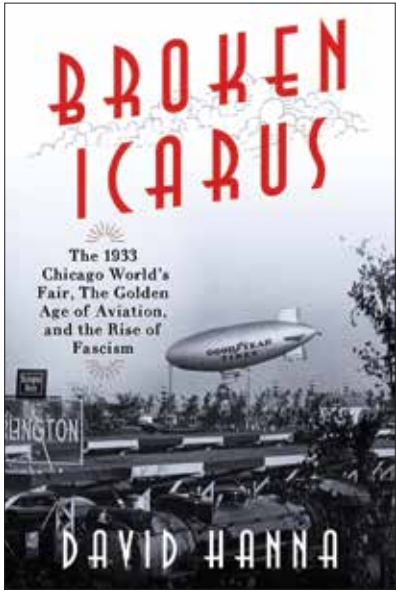
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Broken Icarus: A Review

Michael Gorman

Hanna, David. *Broken Icarus: The 1933 Chicago World’s Fair, the Golden Age of Aviation, and the Rise of Fascism*. Latham, MD: Prometheus Books, 2022.

The year 1933 was, in a way, the culmination of the forces that rose out of WWI and a foretelling of the forces that would lead to, occur, and follow WWII. It was FDR’s first year in office faced with the desperation of the Depression. It was the year that Hitler became *Reichskanzler* of Germany, Himmler ordered the construction of the camp at Dachau, and Austrofascism was declared in Austria. In 1933, as two prime examples of the modern age, construction began on the Golden Gate Bridge, and, despite many tragic crashes, records were set in aviation (including Wiley Post’s first solo flight around the world). Aviators were international celebrities. It was, despite the grim times, a year of technological optimism that was embodied in the World’s Fair that opened in Chicago in May 1933. The fair’s motto was “A Century of Progress” – a forecast made by William Randolph Hearst – and it looked forward to the transformation of everyday life through electricity and other technological innovations. In Hanna’s words, the fair was “a city of tomorrow” where “for a brief, shining moment” humanity “still seemed fully capable of breaking free, avoiding cataclysm, and claiming its noble heritage from Icarus.” Opening day, May 27, 1933, had perfect weather and one hundred and twenty thousand visitors came to see and marvel, not least at the multi-colored light show that, due to the efforts of university scientists working with those at GE, Westinghouse, etc., had, as its *on* switch, a single beam



of light from a distant star – Arcturus – that had begun its journey across the vastness of space forty years before in 1895, the year of the original Chicago World’s Fair. O brave new world!

Hanna, the author of well-received books on the War of 1812 and on the Americans who joined the French Foreign Legion at the outbreak of WWI, is a skillful storyteller. He describes how the 1933 fair came to be, and the people such as Rufus Dawes and Joseph Urban who played central roles in its creation. He goes on to elaborate on the interlocking themes of the 1933 fair – aviation and the rise of fascism – largely through the people who played their parts in those events and forces and epitomized them in the popular mind. He begins with the ace aviator, Italo Balbo, a black-shirted follower of Mussolini. Balbo was a symbol of the dynamism of the times and

of the fascist virtues of strength, action, and daring – a veritable superman with a goatee whose exploits gilded his repellent philosophy and actions. Other vividly depicted and different aviators who play their part in the story are Hugo Eckener, the disciple of the “mad count” Graf von Zeppelin, and pre-eminent zeppelin designer and voyager; and Jean and Jeannette Piccard, the married couple, each an identical twin, who sought to set new altitude records in balloons and conduct scientific experiments. On July 15, 1933, watched by many thousands on Navy Pier and along the shoreline, Balbo led his “glittering Armada” of huge white Savoia-Marchetti seaplanes as they landed on Lake Michigan. On October 26, 1933, near the end of the fair, Chicagoans awoke to see the vast Graf Zeppelin airship, piloted by Eckener, over the city, dwarfing the Goodyear blimp, as it took a course that was said to have been designed by the anti-Nazi Eckener to hide the huge swastikas painted on its fins. When the Piccard balloon, manned by U.S. Navy Lieutenant-Commander “Tex” Settle, took off from Soldier Field on October 1, 1933, hopes were high for a new altitude record, but it was a failure. It was more of a stunt and far from the scientific expedition of which the Piccards dreamed.

Broken Icarus tells of these and many other personalities in vivid and engaging detail; sets the 1933 fair in its time of despair and hope, of Depression and scientific and technological achievement, of recovering from a world war and ominous signs foreshadowing another world war – all this in a readable and well-researched book of interest to students of Chicago history and to anyone in search of a novel take on the inter-war years.

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Ruggles Prizewinners, 2023



Oscar Salguero

The David Ruggles Prize (named for the American abolitionist; publisher; Underground Railroad conductor; and owner of the store, opened in 1828, that became the first Black-owned bookstore in the United States) was established in 2021 to encourage and support young book collectors of color. The five-judge panel has announced this year’s Ruggles prizewinners. They are:

Oscar Salguero (\$1,000 grand prize). His “Interspecies Library” explores through artists’ books the interconnectedness of the planet’s many forms of life; for example, the complex relationships humans have with fungi, bacteria, plants, and everything that roams the earth. Moreover, it reflects humanity’s relationship with the environment at a time of climate crisis. International in scope, his



Jalynn Harris

two-hundred-book collection is as much a global survey of the subject as it is the expression of one collector.

Jalynn Harris (\$500 second prize). Their multi-genre collection on queer Africa documents the experiences of queer Africans, whether through poetry, graphic novels, magazines, or any other manifestation of print. Beyond this vital representation, the collection underscores the possibilities and the importance of collecting material outside major western distribution channels. Harris has collected this material while living and traveling in Africa.

Erin Severson (\$250 third prize) has assembled a collection on the British long eighteenth century. This is familiar territory, and she has many of the names that might



come to mind (Swift, Pope, Sterne, etc.). Her focus on works by or about women and people of color is less conventional, pushing against many decades of collecting traditions for the British eighteenth century. Her method is to seek books in the absolute worst condition imaginable. She speaks proudly of her “rat-eaten” and “water-logged” books. She says, “I feel like I am working against this devaluation of books as part and parcel of how I work against the devaluation of authors or subjects in my period based on their gender or race.” Cognizant of the enduring maxim that condition is everything, she is fascinated by “the tension between the durability of these books and the fragility of their value.”

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September and October 2023 Club Events

Full details and registration can be found on our website, under Events. (All events are Central Time.)

• September 8, 12:00p.m. **Carol Symes on The Play’s the (Medieval) Thing: What Manuscripts Reveal.** (Zoom program and in-person program at ULCC.)

• September 13, 5:30p.m. **David Hanna on Broken Icarus: The 1933 Chicago World’s Fair, the Golden Age of Aviation, and the Rise of Fascism.** Presented by ULCC, Chicago Art Deco Society, and Caxton Club. (In-person program at ULCC.)

• September 20, 6:30p.m. **David Hanna on Broken Icarus: The 1933 Chicago World’s Fair, the Golden Age of Aviation, and the Rise of Fascism.** Presented by ULCC, Chicago Art Deco Society, and Caxton Club. (Zoom program.)

• October 13, 12:00p.m. **Elizabeth Bradley on Washington Irving.** (Zoom program and in-person program at ULCC.)

• October 16, 5:30p.m. **Deborah Caldwell-Stone on Defending the Freedom to Read.** (In-person program at ULCC.)

November and December 2023 Club Events

Full details and registration can be found on our website, under Events. (All events are Central Time.)

• November 6, 6:30p.m. **Deborah Caldwell-Stone on Defending the Freedom to Read.** Presented by Caxton Club and Chicago Collections. (Zoom program.)

• November 10, 12:00p.m. **Esmeralda Kale on The Wonder of West African Manuscripts.** (Zoom program and in-person program at ULCC.)

• November 12, 4:00p.m. **Paul Shaw on Never Idle: The Tragically Short but Jam-Packed Life of Frank Holme.** (In-person program hosted by the Palette and Chisel Academy of Fine Arts.)

• November 15, 5:30p.m. **Selby Kiffer on Bibliotheca Brookeriana: The Sale of Caxtonian T. Kimball Brooker’s Collections.** (In-person program at ULCC.)

• December 13, 6:30p.m. **Caxton Club Holiday Revelries.** (In-person at ULCC.)

• December 15, 12:00p.m. (Note special date – third Friday) **Russell Johnson on Andreas Vesalius and De humani corporis fabrica – An Anatomical Masterwork.** (Zoom program and in-person program at ULCC.)

Bucky Fuller, the Dome, and His Disciples

Lynn Martin

What follows was originally created as a wall panel for an exhibition titled *Vision in Motion: The Chicago Bauhaus of Moholy-Nagy, which was to be a comprehensive view of the history and influence of Moholy's school, the Institute of Design. Scheduled for 2021, the exhibition was cancelled due to the pandemic.*

The visionary R. Buckminster (Bucky) Fuller arrived at the Institute of Design to teach product design and architecture in the autumn of 1948. He came at the invitation of Serge Chermayeff, director of the Institute, his car towing an Airstream trailer full of tetrahedrons, spheres, and other geometric models.

Famous for his Dymaxion House and Dymaxion Car, Fuller shared not only some of Moholy's views on interactions of art, science, and technology, but also his interest in creating a better world. He had spent the summer of 1948 at Black Mountain College in North Carolina, teaching and trying to erect a geodesic dome, which did not attain the necessary rigidity.

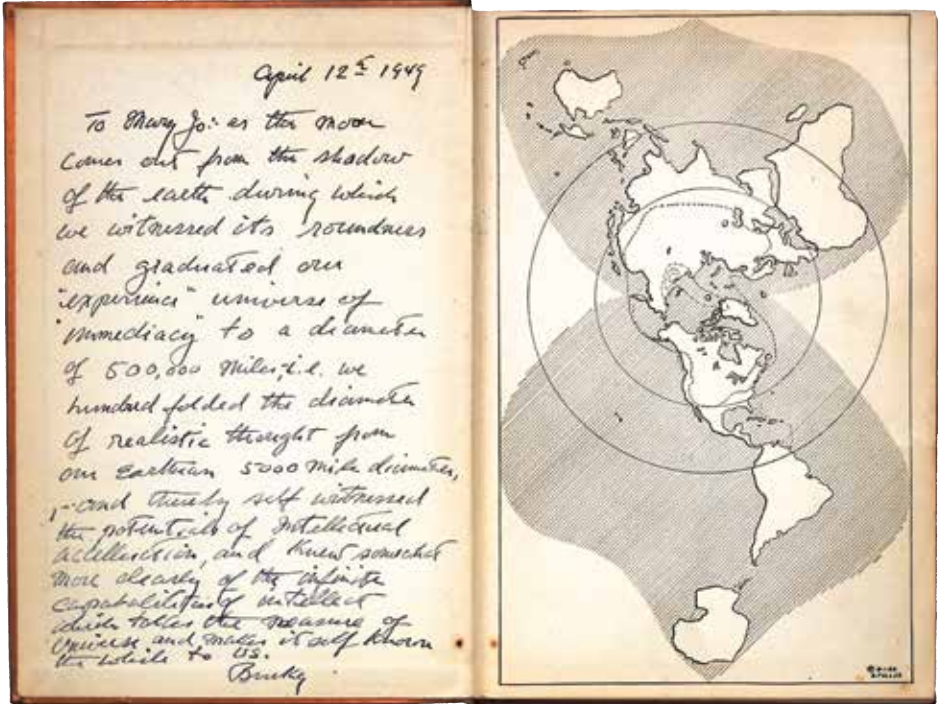
In a recording for the Chicago Architects Oral History Project (held in an archive at the Art Institute), Serge Chermayeff recalled: “We gave him the whole basement in which he did the most marvelous things of explaining the structure of geometry with the help of dowels and ping-pong balls, which we imported by the hundreds. He built wonderful things you see, just like Merlin’s Cave. Not only that, there was jazz. This kind of freedom and also the analogy drawn between shall we say jazz beat and geometry became visible. We ... Bucky and a few chosen students went to nightclubs. Everybody entered into the spirit of the thing, but it was not relaxation from the other work, it was a continuation in another medium. The whole thing was one.”

For his spring 1949 seminar Fuller instructed his students to research and develop an “autonomous dwelling structure,” standardized, pre-fabricated, and completely sustainable off the grid. A geodesic dome would be the protective shell for this structure. The construction of a dome was a major focus for Fuller and many of his students. There was an especially close group who worked on that idea, twelve of whom were tagged with the title of Bucky’s “disciples.”

Chermayeff described a collaborative breakthrough: “Bucky had a theoretical notion that



Top: Fuller in class



Bottom: Nine Chains to the Moon, inscribed to Mary Jo Slick

it was possible to make a structure, which was continuous compression, like brick on brick, or continuous tension, say, with a cable between two points. He couldn’t make it work; he just couldn’t make it. He knew it was possible but he couldn’t make it. And then one morning, downstairs, came a boy and said, ‘Bucky, here it is.’ It was the first prototype model ...”

The dome prototype constructed by Bucky’s students consisted of triangles made of aircraft tubing with cable which ran from the tubes through connectors at the joints. The cable could be tightened to erect the structure or loosened to collapse it for transportation.

In the summer of 1949 Fuller and the “disciples” travelled to Black Mountain College to test this prototype. Its erection was a complete success. Fuller then returned to the Institute of Design in the autumn to teach for another semester. Some Black Mountain students followed him, including Kenneth Snelson, whose tension-compression sculptures were instrumental in shaping Fuller’s thinking. Snelson would later achieve international fame with his tensegrity concept-based sculptures.

In December 1949, the first complete dome,

fourteen feet in diameter and weighing fifty pounds, was assembled at 6 Kinzie Street in Chicago, at the request of the U.S. Air Force. It was sent to Washington, D.C., and displayed at the Pentagon.

Many of the “disciples” retained ties to Fuller and to the geodesic dome after leaving the Institute of Design. Don Richter advised Fuller in 1952 on construction of a dome for the Ford Motor Company’s rotunda in Dearborn, Michigan – the first commercial application. Richter, with his brother Robert, and Louis Caviani patented a dome constructed of sheet-metal. Kaiser Aluminum bought the patent and hired Richter to head its dome design unit. Mary Jo Slick and Eugene Godfrey started a company, unfortunately short-lived, to market geodesic structures in California.

Jeffrey Lindsay, a Canadian who later moved his architectural practice to southern California, kept the strongest relationship with the dome. As Director of the Canadian Division of the Fuller Research Foundation, he and friends constructed a forty-nine-foot dome called “Weatherbreak” outside Montreal in 1950. It was the first large, practical dome



Dome being assembled

development project and attracted much attention. This was the beginning of a surge in commercial, governmental, and popular interest in geodesic structures. §§

MAKING OUR MARK *Celebrating Our Heritage*

Making our Mark: A Keepsake for the 125th Anniversary of the Caxton Club of Chicago documented the graphic history of the club through the evolution of its logo. It was issued in a limited edition distributed to members only in 2020. Since there has been continuing interest, Caxton Club historian Paul Gehl has prepared an update, a limited edition of which will be made available to members only. A portion of the funds raised will be used to support our mission.

Print specifications:

- **Size:** 7” × 9.5”; 68 pages; perfect bound
- **Stock:** 80# Mohawk Superfine Ultrawhite Eggshell Text with 100# Mohawk Superfine Ultrawhite Eggshell Cover
- **Ink:** Four color process throughout plus aqueous coating on outside covers

To purchase:

- Go to <https://caxtonclub.org/event-5441445>
- Cost: \$150 (members only).
- Orders will be accepted through December 15, 2023.
- Pieces will ship before the club’s anniversary in February 2024.
- We will print only the number of copies ordered.
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Review of Invisible Labors

Cheryl Ziegler

Susannah Papish is a Chicago-based artist, curator, and writer. I sat on the elevated back patio of her home in Morgan Park one luminous late summer afternoon with her and her collaborator Melissa Potter, a feminist interdisciplinary artist, writer, and curator. Susannah’s *boundary* art gallery/studio is in the renovated garage space below where we sat. We were there to look at and talk about their artist publication, *Invisible Labors: Reviving Histories of Women’s Land Work in the Blue Island Ridge Communities, Chicago, Illinois*, a work that is multi-layered in physical form as well as complex and multi-faceted in meaning. I hope to share – layer by layer – the origin, form, and meaning of this work.

Chance is often the spark. The beginning of the work lay in a serendipitous visit by Melissa to artist Joanne Aono’s *Harvesting Ethnic Roots* show at *boundary* with a friend and an introduction that eventually led to her working with Susannah on this project. They envisioned a garden project for the “2021 Terrain Biennial” – a project to bring contemporary art to neighborhoods. Melissa described the planning for this garden:

I like to do work that is mutual in the sense that I am not really interested in doing just an artistic installation plopped

into a space, so I wanted to do something that I felt tapped into. Susanna and I started talking about what kinds of plants we would want to have. The central idea was the prairie because a prairie, as you know, is an underground network before it is seen above ground. We have many plants native to the greater Midwest region, some native to the Chicagoland region ... milkweed, wild bergamot, compass plant. The research is only now really emerging on the prairie and these network systems ... some recent research suggests prairie plants are better carbon remediators than trees.

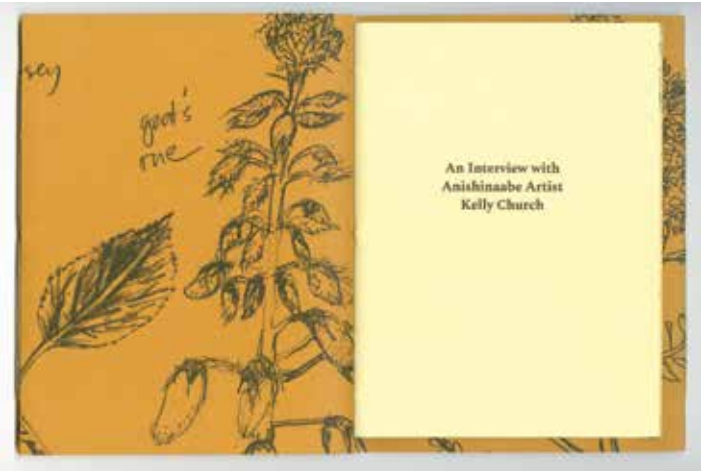
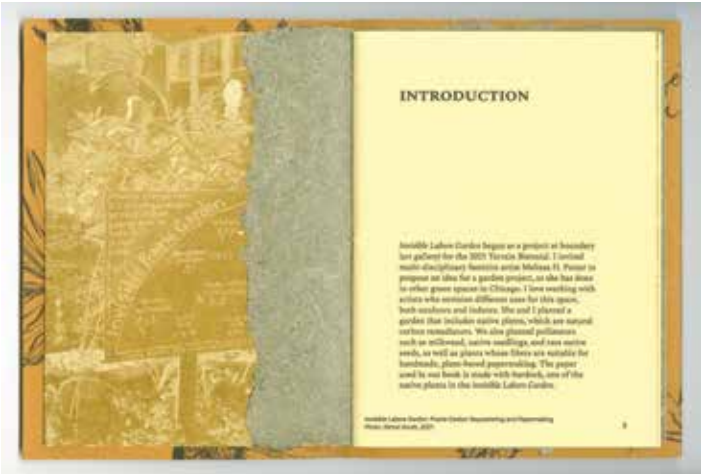
On the day of our interview, the garden was thriving. Susannah commented:

I go out there and I just stand. Once you are standing there for a while, you can really see all the life.... When you walk by it, you just see the plants, but then when you are standing in it, you smell the milkweed – [it] is so fragrant and then all the insects.... After the garden or during the garden [planning], I talked to Mel about doing a fold-out kind of broadsheet or just maybe a map that would document the women who lived in this community and used their property and their land to grow food, or like the victory gardens

that came on later. Women here were interested in the Kellogg sisters who were part of the farm that was here in the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century. We became interested in who these people were.

The prairie concept, with its underground network, formed the basis for an artistic work that revealed the land around it – the Ridge area – and illustrated the hidden networks of the women who were integral parts of Ridge history.

There were numerous happy chances as the historic pieces for the text and images for the book fell into place. Susannah described the process of doing research into the women of the Ridge idea through collaboration with Carol Flynn, a Ridge Historical Society researcher/writer and *Daily Southtown* journalist. Susannah had known her for a while and contacted her about getting more background. Carol became interested in the project and contributed a considerable number of references and resources. She also introduced them to Linda Lamberty, the Ridge Historical Society Historian, and several local women, including members of the Morgan Park Women’s Club. Susannah and Melissa identified four women who would represent the spirit of the Ridge with the help of an ever-expanding network of people and resources, including Hull House and the relatively



obscure Ridge Historical Society materials collected and organized by Edris Hoover. They were Kelly Church, a Potawatomi/Ottawa/Ojibwe Black Ash basketry artist, activist, educator, and culture keeper; Alice Kellogg Tyler (1862 - 1900), Chicago artist and arts educator; Kate Starr Kellogg (1854 - 1925), Chicago educator, and education reformer; and Louise Barwick (1871 - 1957), Chicago artist, cartographer, and educator.

All four shared a deep and abiding love of the land and dedicated themselves to sharing that love with others through art, craft, and education.

Drawing from their collective experience as visual artists and writers, Susannah and Melissa envisioned the book form of *Invisible Labors* as an accordion-folded enclosure with four booklets sewn in. To achieve the look and feel of aging images, they chose risograph printing that prints from a roll printer like a mimeograph machine using stencils.

A color palette of green, gold, and black enhanced the impact of their images, typography, and artistic use of ornament. The detail in work by artist/designer Tamara Becerra

Valdez made the design of the book even more beautiful. Unfolded to reveal the individual narratives, it was a feast for the eyes as well as the mind: overlapping, enclosed to open, hidden to seen, all connected by a running visual background of plants, paintings, portraits and the surprise of maps, song, a recipe for burdock paper, and birds. Melissa said that she finds the fun of art projects lies in following odd paths that lead you to unexplored sub-narratives. The book was issued in an edition of one hundred, of which fifty are deluxe (risograph with handmade burdock paper insert) and fifty are regular risograph. Included in both editions is a packet of four-color postcards with reproductions of Alice Kellogg’s and Susannah Papish’s paintings. *Invisible Labors* is a book that is more than a book. It has roots and wings. It is a song and a prayer.

Our two-hour conversation opened a world of meaning for the recognition and celebration of the women whose work and appreciation for the land celebrated its pre-industrialized beauty and complexity. The last word goes to Melissa:

Hidden histories are lessons for now. I think part of the reason these mysteries become obscure is because we are a capitalist-drunk society. Each one of these women featured had the idea that you could teach art to new immigrants to become whole members of a society [and] who could represent themselves is a completely radical concept. Thank you, Jane Adams. Thank you, Alice Kellogg, for the idea that you can make, that you can have an education that engages gardening and doing as part of the learning experience. Thank you, Kate Starr Kellogg, for the idea that the plants that are in danger of extinction today are sentient beings without which we cannot survive. Thank you, Potawatomi [peoples.] Thank you, Louise Barwick, for the record of what this place looked like before industrialization.

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Photo: Tom Van Eynde, courtesy of boundary

Caxtonian Profiles: Leslie Winter

Michael Gorman

Leslie J. Winter, the newly selected secretary of the Caxton Club, is a Michigander, born and raised in South Holland, a two-and-a-half-hour drive from Chicago and only seven minutes from Lake Michigan, her favorite place in the world. Leslie earned a bachelor's degree in art history and studio art from Wittenberg University in Springfield, Ohio, an MA from University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and an MLS, with a specialization in rare book and manuscript librarianship from Indiana University's library school. When Leslie went to Amherst, she had an idea of earning a law degree (an ambition she has not abandoned entirely) but a meeting with Martin Antonetti, then curator at Smith College's rare book library, inspired her to pursue a career in rare book librarianship. Upon gaining her MLS, she took a position in Texas A&M's library and from there to her present position with Hindman Auctions as a book and manuscript specialist. In that role she handles and catalogues thousands of books, manuscripts, and prints every year. She also coordinates photography for the sales and assists potential buyers. She enjoys the auctions and the opportunity it affords to work with a wide variety of people and materials. As well as books and manuscripts, the latter have included Ichiban flower baskets, cameo brooches, post-war lithographs, portrait sand bottles, and items of haute couture.

When young, Leslie visited Chicago on day trips with her family. She remembers feeling intimidated by the bustle and the towering heights of the buildings, though the Art Institute was an oasis of peace and a refuge from the hubbub. Long before she moved to Chicago, the only other place in which she felt that peace was when she attended a Caxton Club meeting in the Union League Club. She now lives in Oak Park, to which she was



Leslie Winter

drawn by its associations with Ernest Hemingway and Frank Lloyd Wright.

Leslie is an enthusiastic Caxtonian, finding the club's meetings both enriching and invigorating. She also welcomes the interactions she has had with other Caxtonians, and appreciates the way in which the club members' interests overlap with her own – personal and professional. She has wide-ranging personal reading interests, from the plays of Shaw and Shakespeare to “historical fiction, memoirs, and fiction with unreliable narrators. Extra points for books with a strong female character ... and references to art, art history, and anatomy.” A partial list of her favorite books includes the odd couple of Jane Austen (*Mansfield Park*) and Kurt Vonnegut (*Slaughterhouse Five*), books by Steinbeck, Wilde, Mark Twain, Billy Collins, and the Alphabet mysteries of Sue Grafton.

When it comes to collecting books, Leslie

has a problem that is, alas, all too common among Caxtonians (including this writer) – her partner is a minimalist and she is, as she admits, a maximalist. She is an ardent reader whose collecting interests are constrained by space and finances. She has not yet settled on the parameters of her collecting. She hopes “to look up one day and see that I already have collecting areas based on what I have brought into my home out of interest in reading. In the meantime, I just keep reading and exploring things that fascinate me.”

If Leslie achieved the bibliophile's dream of all the money, space, and leeway needed, she would like most to collect extra-illustrated works, fore-edge paintings, manuscript diaries, and printed works with heavy marginalia, all, naturally, in excellent condition. As it is, she envisions concentrating eventually on collections of memoirs written by female comedians, books on books and references sources, and contemporary signed works by authors she has met. The

current highlights of her collection include a first edition of Madeleine L'Engle's *A Ring of Endless Light*; a first edition of George T. Goodman's *Scattered Leaves*, with a gift inscription on the front pastedown to her great grandfather; and a splendidly bound 1896 edition of Robert Louis Stevenson's *Songs of Travel and Other Verses*.

Leslie Winter, a born Caxtonian, is fascinated by the book's existence as an art object in the world and the reader's interaction with the text, which creates a space in which two periods, places, and people (the reader and the author) are united. The magic of reading is, after all, created when holding (in the words of the poet Goodman who inscribed his book to her ancestor) “*Like scattered leaves, these poems / Have been blown about by the winds of chance / And are herein raked together / For the consideration of the reader.*”

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