

MALTWOOD
art museum & gallery
presents:



the hold of our hands

Art from the Robin and Sylvia Skelton Collection

Robin Skelton and Alison (1985)
Myrtois Pavetic

August 31 - November 15, 2007

Maltwood Gallery, University Centre
University of Victoria

A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

The Maltwood Art Museum and Gallery welcomes the opportunity to partner with *The Malahat Review* in this fortieth anniversary celebration of its founding by the late professor Robin Skelton.

Robin and Sylvia Skelton were long-time supporters of the University of Victoria Art Collection and over the years built up a significant collection, mainly in three parts: Robin's own collages, Irish genre prints, and a large collection of works by contemporary Victoria artists. The collection reflects his own literary interests but also Robin and Sylvia's friendship and support of local artists. Many of the works are linked to Skelton's literary papers held in the University of Victoria Special Collections.

Two exhibitions at the University, *The Hold of Our Hands: Art from the Robin and Sylvia Skelton Collection* at the Maltwood Art Museum and Gallery, and *Mingling of Memory and Desire: Books and Paper of Robin Skelton* at Special Collections, McPherson Library, are complimented by an off-campus exhibition, *House of Dreams: Collages and Sculptures of Robin Skelton* at Carr House. Together with the lectures and events of the celebration program this is a fitting public tribute to two people who were pivotal in building the contemporary artistic community in Victoria.

I was a student and colleague of Robin, and a friend to both. I take particular personal pleasure in participating with other former colleagues, friends and admirers of the Skeltons in this Tribute.

Martin Segger F.R.S.A.

Director, Maltwood Art Museum and Gallery

CURATORIAL STATEMENT

This exhibition pays tribute to the lives of Robin and Sylvia Skelton and the circle of artists they gathered around them. The exhibition's name is taken from a collection of eight poems of the same name that Robin dedicated to his wife. It also affirms their gift to the University, a gesture that enriched the Maltwood Art Museum and Gallery with an important part of its modern art collection.

Robin Skelton's contributions to the visual arts at the University of Victoria were significant. As editor of *The Malahat Review* he often wrote on local artists, particularly those of the Limners artists group, and he also worked with professors Tony Emery and Don Harvey on the University art collection committee, ensuring that collecting focused on contemporary B.C. artists. In addition to the over 100 works personally donated by the Skeltons to the University art collection, Robin also gave the University some of his own collage work, currently held in Special Collections.

An exhibition such as this can be likened to a collage; it juxtaposes sometimes seemingly unrelated images and draws new associations or tells unexpected stories about an object, its maker or its owner. The Skelton's donation to the University of Victoria offers a glimpse into the life of a couple dedicated to the arts and reflects their desire to enrich the modern art scene in Victoria.

Caroline Riedel

Curator of Collections, Maltwood Art Museum and Gallery

Special thanks to Curatorial Assistants Jordan Beggs, Jennie Biltek, Marlaina Buch and Michelle Smith; Danielle Russell, Special Collections; John Barton and Rhonda Batchelor at *The Malahat Review*; Valerie Elliott and lenders from Fairbank Calligraphy Society; Al Bates and Pat Martin Bates; and student volunteer Aubrey Emlyn.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE EXHIBITION

Jack Butler Yeats Collection

Jack B. Yeats (1871-1957) was the quintessential painter to arise from the Irish Renaissance. The younger brother of the Nobel Prize winning Irish dramatist, author, and poet William Butler (W.B.) Yeats, J.B. felt a strong affinity for the north Irish countryside and people, as seen in his works. He began his artistic career as an illustrator in London in the late 1880's, and was well-established as an artist and illustrator by the turn of the century. In 1905, he met J.M. Synge (1871-1909), the Irish author, poet and playwright. J.B. and Synge travelled together through the north of Ireland, and became fascinated with Irish culture. J.B. illustrated these articles and several other books for Synge. The prints in this exhibition were obtained by Robin Skelton in the 1960s and likely produced by J.B.'s sisters Lilly and Lolly Yeats at Coula Press, Dublin.

Contemporary Irish Prints

Contemporary Irish artists represent a major focus of the Skelton's collection. The Skeltons donated a total of 49 Irish prints to the University, dating mainly from the 60s and 70s. Artists include Patrick Hickey, an artist, architect, and founder of the Graphic Studio in Dublin, printmaker Cliff Holden, whose work is held in public collections in Great Britain, including the Tate in London, and Jack Coughlin, whose "nightmare vision with [its] cool control and clarity" was admired by Robin Skelton. Coughlin's portraits are held in museum collections throughout North America.



The Sanachie (1910-25)
Jack Butler Yeats
Ink and watercolour
Acc #: U982.44.20



Evening (1910-25)
Jack Butler Yeats
Ink and watercolour
Acc #: U982.44.10



Heads (1966)
Leslie McWeeney
Lithograph on paper
Acc #: U980.2.19



Still (1964)
Pauline Berwick
Lithograph on paper
Acc #: U980.2.29

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE EXHIBITION

The Limner Collection

The Society of Limners was formed in 1971 and included Maxwell Bates, Herbert Siebner, Myfanwy Pavelic, Karl Spreitz, Nita Forrest, Ricky Ciccimarra, Elza Mayhew, Robert DeCastro, and Robin Skelton. A host of other members, including Jack Wilkinson, Pat Martin Bates, Walter Dexter, Colin Graham, Jan and Helga Grove, Carole Sabiston and Leroy Jensen joined in subsequent years. A number of works in the Skelton's art collection were gifts from fellow Limner artists. Robin Skelton was a generous promoter of his friends' work through various publications. He collaborated with Herbert Siebner on several art books while Sylvia established Pharos Press and under this name published books on The Limners (1981) and a monograph on Maxwell Bates.

Contemporary Canadian Collection

In addition to works by the Limner artists, the Skelton's art collection features a number of well-known western Canadian artists. During the 1960s and 70s, several leading members of the Canadian artistic community were also part of UVic's faculty. While some of these artists spent their careers at the University, the majority moved to other institutions. For Robin and Sylvia Skelton, this continual change in the local arts scene was an opportunity to collect work from a wide variety of artists including Biddy Gaddes, John Dobereiner, Pat Martin Bates, Peter Daghish, Donald Harvey and Douglas Morton.



Skelton Writing a Poem (1974)
Herbert Siebner
Sgraffito and paint
Acc #: U992.16.2

White Window Signal #17 (1968)
Pat Martin-Bates
Mixed media on paper
Acc #: U999.20.14



Untitled (Unknown date)
Peter Daglish
Lithograph on paper
Acc #: U980.2.1



Untitled (1964)
Bidy Gaddes
Ink on paper
Acc #: U999.20.6

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE EXHIBITION

Skelton's Collages

Although primarily known as a poet, editor and critic, Robin Skelton's inquisitive and creative mind quickly led him to the boundless territory of visual art. Skelton began making collages in 1946 and first exhibited the works in Manchester in the late 1950's with the Peterloo Group. His small collages are like visual poems and puns that he regarded as enjoyable exercises and a pleasant distraction from serious writing. They are part of a larger collection of collages donated by Skelton to the University of Victoria Special Collections in 1991.

Art Publications

Robin Skelton has published more than 100 works of poetry, fiction, non-fiction, art criticism and biography. A selection of his art-related publications, many of which include beautifully reproduced plates, are featured in this exhibition. Many of Skelton's publications include works by Limner artists, of which Skelton was a tireless promoter. He also collaborated with Siebner to produce books that were works of fine art. *Musebook* (1972) was published under Skelton's own Pharos Press, which he founded in 1972 with his wife Sylvia. *Inscriptions* (1967) combines Skelton's poetry and Siebner's illustrations and was printed by Morriss Printing on luxurious oversize paper.

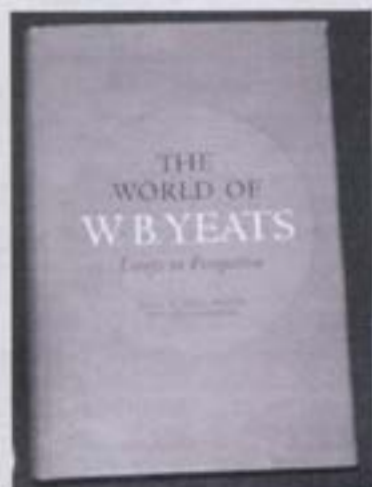
The Game (1966-69)
Robin Skelton
Mixed media



Ozymandias (1966-69)
Robin Skelton
Mixed media



Untitled (Unknown)
Robin Skelton
Mixed media



EXHIBITION LIST

<p>Basin, Leonard Head of Blake c. 1960 Intaglio print U989.6.7</p>	<p>Eadie, Myra Dry Point #2 Unknown date Intaglio print U966.1.7</p>	<p>Jensen, Lizzy Untitled 1989 Pastel on paper U996.25.39</p>	<p>Metcalfe, Eric To Robin and Sylvia 1967 Watercolour U989.6.5</p>
<p>Behan, John Head 1964 Lithograph U980.2.31</p>	<p>Gaddes, Biddy Untitled 1964 Ink on paper U999.20.6</p>	<p>Leathers, Winston Untitled 1972 Serigraph U975.1.3</p>	<p>Morton, Douglas Phoenix 1988 Serigraph</p>
<p>Behan, John The Rabbi 1966 Lithograph U980.2.20</p>	<p>Hamratty, Alice Figure from a Tomb Unknown date Intaglio print U980.2.35</p>	<p>Martin-Bates, Pat Arctic Silent Signal #10 1968 Mixed media U999.20.13</p>	<p>Favelle, Myfanwy Robin Skelton Unknown date Mixed media U984.27.1</p>
<p>Berwick, Pauline Still 1964 Lithograph U980.2.29</p>	<p>Hamratty, Alice Man Wearing a Laurel Wreath Unknown date Intaglio print U980.2.32</p>	<p>Martin-Bates, Pat Night Moon of the Sweet Singers 1960 Intaglio print U996.25.14</p>	<p>Favelle, Myfanwy Robin Skelton 1975 Mixed media collage U903.7.107</p>
<p>Cicimara, Richard Crucifixion 1967 Corte collage U996.25.21</p>	<p>Harvey, Donald Landscape with Three Suns 1966 Lithograph U999.20.15</p>	<p>Martin-Bates, Pat Symbols in Small Flight 1960 Intaglio print U996.25.15</p>	<p>Favelle, Myfanwy The Limmers 1975 Mixed media, tissue U903.7.108</p>
<p>Craddock, Una Figure 1967 Intaglio print U980.2.1</p>	<p>Harvey, Donald Fieldscape Unknown date Oil & pastel on paper U989.6.4</p>	<p>Martin-Bates, Pat White Window Signal #17 1968 Mixed media U999.20.14</p>	<p>Favelle, Myfanwy Robin Skelton & Allison 1985 Acrylic on canvas U903.7.12</p>
<p>Craddock, Una Figures 1967 Intaglio print U980.2.2</p>	<p>Heemskirk, Mariame Crookhaven 1966 Intaglio print U980.2.16</p>	<p>McGuinness, Nora Dublin Bay Unknown date Lithograph U980.2.30</p>	<p>Favelle, Myfanwy The Limmers 1973 Acrylic on canvas U903.7.125</p>
<p>Daglish, Peter Untitled Unknown date Lithograph U980.2.1</p>	<p>Hickey, Patrick Wicklow Lake Unknown date Lithograph U980.2.15</p>	<p>McTaggart, Brett Graveyard Unknown date Intaglio print U980.2.37</p>	<p>Favelle, Myfanwy Robin Skelton & Allison 1984 Graphite on paper U903.7.29</p>
<p>Daglish, Peter Palm Alarms Unknown date Moulded plastic U986.1.6</p>	<p>Hickey, Patrick Still Life in Black Unknown date Lithograph U980.2.27</p>	<p>McTaggart, Brett Street Scene in Mount 1985 Lithograph U980.2.4</p>	<p>Favelle, Myfanwy Max Painting 1974 Charcoal on paper U999.20.7</p>
<p>Doberriner, John Badlands Across the 49th Parallel Unknown date Collagraph U999.20.16</p>	<p>Hickey, Patrick Hornbill Unknown date Serigraph U980.2.5</p>	<p>McWooney, Leslie Heads 1984 Lithograph U980.2.19</p>	<p>Favelle, Myfanwy Herbert and Angela 1984 Graphite on paper U903.7.24</p>

Pavelic, Myfanwy
Study for the Limmers
1973
Acrylic on canvas

Rivers, Elizabeth
Saint Alonse
Unknown date
Intaglio print
U980.2.25

Sabiston, Carole
**Calligms by Robin for
Malahat Review**
2007
Paper, collage and print
U007.5.1

Skelton, Robin
Untitled
Unknown date
Photograph collage
U996.25.90

Skelton, Robin
Robin's Enaf
c. 1970
Soapstone
U007.7.1

Skelton, Sylvia
Alphabet Sky
Unknown date
Ink on paper
U007.7.3

Skelton, Sylvia
Continance
Unknown date
Ink on paper

Skelton, Sylvia
Advice to Calligraphers
Unknown date
Ink on paper

Folio of 8 poems
Poetry by Robin Skelton
Calligraphy by Sylvia Skelton
Illustrations, box & metalwork
by Yves Viol

Selected Herbert Siebner Works

Limmer Exhibition
Poster
1984
Serigraph
U987.13.2

Bella Belle
Unknown date
Print on paper
U998.33.17

The Circus Director
1966
Gouache on paper
U999.20.3

Istanbul
1965
Ink on paper
U999.20.4

Joker with Egg
1949
Watercolour and ink
U998.33.8

Riddle for Robin
1971
Woodcut
U998.33.5

Robin and Herbert Both 60
1985
Ink & watercolour
U998.33.22

Priest, Poet, Professor
1967
Ink on paper
U998.33.7

Untitled
Unknown date
Watercolour and ink
U998.33.19

From a Limmer to a Limmer
1980
Serigraph
U998.33.18

Untitled
1956
Mixed ink and wash
U998.33.16

Lovebook
1980
Mixed media on paper
U998.33.15

Selected Jack Butler Yeats Works

Leafy Munster
1910-25
Ink and watercolour
U982.44.1

The Post Car
1910-25
Ink and watercolour
U982.44.10

Island People
1910-25
Ink and watercolour
U982.44.12

The Jockey
1910-25
Ink and watercolour
U982.44.3

Bird with Letter
1910-25
Ink and watercolour
U982.44.5

Sailor Boy
1910-25
Ink and watercolour
U982.44.24

The Bog Road
1910-25
Ink and watercolour
U982.44.27

Fair Day
1910-25
Ink and watercolour
U982.44.14

The Sunachie
1910-25
Ink and watercolour
U982.44.20

Steeplechase
1910-25
Ink and watercolour
U982.44.7

A Horse Race
1910-25
Ink and watercolour
U982.44.6

Evening
1910-25
Ink and watercolour
U982.44.13

Robin Skelton was born in East Yorkshire, England and attended Cambridge and Leeds Universities. In 1963, he and wife Sylvia emigrated to Canada, where he was instrumental in starting the Creative Writing program at UVic, as well as the Special Collections department at the school's McPherson Library. He edited UVic's literary journal,



The Malahat Review, from 1967 to 1983, and became the publications' longest acting editor. Known principally for his writing and poetry, Robin was active in the Limner Art Group in Victoria and used collage as his primary artistic expression. He later delved into soapstone carving, printmaking and sculpture. He first exhibited with the Peterloo Group in Manchester in 1957 and continued to contribute art works to group shows in Victoria as well as Vancouver Island Jury shows. His work is included in a number of public collections in Canada and several private collections in Canada, U.S.A., and Great Britain.

Sylvia Skelton was born in Manchester, England. She was active in the Limner Art Group in Victoria as the society's secretary and archivist. A highly organized and motivated individual, she divided her time between the volunteer committee of the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, orchestrating Limner exhibitions, chairing the visual arts committee of the Community Arts Council, singing in the Victoria Choral Society, and raising three children. Together, Sylvia and Robin maintained a diverse and active social group and promoted local artists from the start. Sylvia was also the founder of the Fairbank Calligraphy Society, which was her chosen artistic medium, and a talent she worked on for much of her life.

Maltwood Art Museum and Gallery

University of Victoria
Box 3025 STN CSC
Victoria, BC V8W 3P2

Phone: 250-721-6562

Fax: 250-721-8997

www.maltwood.uvic.ca