

Crossett Library Receives Gift of Rare Book

Nov 07, 2013



Bennington College's Edward Clark Crossett Library announces the addition a two-volume, limited edition Pennyroyal Caxton Bible, designed and illustrated by printmaker Barry Moser. Generously donated by Bruce and Suzie Kovner, the exquisitely crafted book is the first illustrated Bible of its kind since Gustave Doré's edition of the Le Saint Bible in 1865. Bennington holds number 162 of 400 copies printed.

"It's wonderful for our students, in this digital age, to experience the transformative power of the printed book through this extraordinary gift," said director of library and information services Oceana Wilson. "The book is sublime in the truest sense of the word. It is our privilege, as its custodians, to share this exceptional work with students, faculty, and members of the local community."

Published by the Pennyroyal Caxton Press in 1999, the work contains 232 illustrations, which took Moser nearly four years to complete. Volume one contains the five books of Moses, the historical books, and the books of poetry. Volume two contains the books of prophecy and the New Testament.

Each volume measures 16 x 11.5 inches and fits into its own full linen tray case. The hand-sewn bindings are reminiscent of Renaissance vellum bindings with the titles stamped in 24-carat gold on the front covers and spines of both volumes. The pages were composed and printed on a Heidelberg KSBA printing press with specially manufactured paper from the village of Zerkall, Germany, where the first mill for hand papermaking was built in the 16th century. The typographic achievements include a newly designed and handcrafted type modeled after the 16th century letter forms of Robert Granjon, as well as an entirely new Hebrew typeface called Le Bé Hebrew.

"Many courses at Bennington will be able to use this valuable teaching tool," said visual arts faculty member Thorsten Dennerline. "This book was a major project that encompasses scholarship, book design, typography design, fine printing, wood engraving illustration, and was completely hand bound. This was a truly monolithic project that connects with so many aspects of the history of the book and book production."

Added history faculty member Carol Pal: "Crossett's addition of The Pennyroyal Caxton Bible presents a wonderful opportunity for our students. This modern book project was clearly a labor of love and devotion, executed with exquisite craftsmanship and individual attention to all the details we would look for in a book printed 500 years ago."