

Treasures of Our Memorial Library

The Dictionary of Art

Among the residents of Tiddlycove and Ambleside, (with a bow to Len Norris), there can be no doubt that books concerning Art are among the most popular - for reading and study. So, every year, when the "thundering herd" stampedes into our annual book sale (apologies to Zane Grey), Art Books are among the first to vanish from our shelves. Hence, inevitably, as "the customer is always right", one of the earliest major book purchases by the Friends was a magnificent set of volumes about art.

This great treasure of our Library - the Dictionary of Art - consists of 34 handsome, bound volumes. Their size may be described as borderline quarto. Their editor was Jane Shoaf Turner, and they were published in the States in 1996, by Grove. They were published about the same in Britain by Macmillan.

The Friends of the Library bought this set at the pre-publication price of Cdn\$8,437, and presented it to the Library. To digress for a moment: some may wonder what is the Friends' source of such significant funds. The annual book sale is the answer. For such purposes, this source provides the greatest sums, by far. Even greater sums are raised by our gruelling Casino Nights, but disbursement of these is

tightly controlled by the BC Gaming Commission, and directed to other worthy causes.

This extraordinary compendium of the visual arts is a breathtaking storehouse of facts, history, reviews and illustrations. The volumes have no dust-jackets and no coloured illustrations. However, each runs to some 900 pages, except for the last volume, which has 1081 pages, and contains only the index. Over several pages is a list of the 850 or so abbreviations used in the text. The fifteen thousand illustrations, including maps and diagrams, are all in black and white, but have obviously been chosen with meticulous care.

A masterful review of these wonderful books was published in the December 1996 number of "Booklist" magazine, including the following: "This dictionary contains 41,000 signed articles by 6,700 scholars for 120 countries. It includes more biographies (20,800) than any other English language publication in the field of art. Its 15,000 illustrations are the largest collection of images ever published in a single work".

And what of the text? its scope and precision are mind-boggling. It offers endless detail for specialist scholars, but also offers surveys of broad topics for generalists. It even covers the present locations of outstanding art works, with references to sales catalogues. The range of art media represented seems almost endless.

The Friends are indeed proud to have presented this remarkable work to our Memorial Library.

Memorial Library Art Gallery

"Grad Beat" and "Kids Beat" are the upcoming Arts events at the Library. They will be different to the usual Artists' Receptions. The "Grad Beat" reception will be held on Tuesday, April 28 from 7 pm to 8.30pm. The theme is "As We See Ourselves". There will be live music, and, in addition to the tea and coffee that the Friends provide for these receptions, punch is to be served. "Kids Beat" will take place on Tuesday, May 12 from 6pm to 8pm, and the theme is "Follow Your Dreams". Again, live entertainment will be provided with tea, coffee and punch for all the family. This will be a first at the Library and it is hoped a real community event. It is being arranged in collaboration with the Ferry Building.

We will discuss these two events further at our April meeting, and arrange for sufficient members of the Friends to help at the receptions to ensure that they are very successful.