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UCSB's Davidson Library Celebrates 3 Millionth Volume

UC Santa Barbara's Davidson Library will celebrate the acquisition of its 3 millionth volume -- "Trees" by book artist Charles Hobson -- with a series of special events beginning on Monday, November 8. They include book art exhibitions, a public celebration, and a presentation by Hobson. All events are free and open to the public.

"Trees" (San Francisco: Pacific Editions, 2010) is a visual presentation of the poem by W. S. Merwin, who was recently named the 17th poet laureate of the United States. The limited edition artist's book is housed in a wooden box, and the hinged pages and monotype images can be read both horizontally and vertically. The book is accompanied by a tiny flashlight, which, when shone through the opening at the back of the book, casts shadows of trees against a night sky.

The celebration of the 3 millionth volume begins on Monday, November 8, with the opening of exhibitions in Davidson Library and in the Arts Library. The Special Collections department, on the library's third floor, will feature works from Arts & Special Collections, including Hobson's "Trees," as well as book art from UCSB faculty members and alumni. The second exhibitions, on the library's first floor and in the Arts Library, will showcase works by current and recent book arts students. The exhibitions will continue through December 10.

Among other events are the public celebration, beginning at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, November 9, and a talk by Hobson titled "Reflecting on the Making of Artist's Books" on Wednesday, November 10. Hobson will speak at 4 p.m. in the University Center's State Street Room. The public celebration will include, among other activities, a public art piece called "3 Million + 1," which invites participants to contribute a page to a communal book that will be added to the Special Collections as the 3,000,001st item.

"The 3 millionth volume acquisition is a milestone that celebrates the continuing growth and breadth of the UCSB Library's academic collections and achievements in supporting faculty, student and community research," said Lucia Snowhill, who, with Sherry DeDecker, serves as co-acting university librarian. "As we celebrate our 3 millionth volume, we want to acknowledge not only the size of our collections, but also bring to light the range of resources that libraries now acquire for research use. We also want to take the opportunity to reflect on the future of books, libraries, and the exchange of information."

The artist book, "Trees," was chosen to showcase one of the strengths of the library's collections, according to Snowhill. "It highlights a highly respected and well-known academic book arts program at UCSB, provides a program for student book art participation, and emphasizes the interdisciplinary strength of the campus's academic programs," she said. "The volume also gives us the opportunity to draw attention to one of the library's non-traditional formats in our collections."

Said Harry Reese, book artist and professor of art at UCSB: "The artist book is a new hybrid, bred in the 20th century, with an identity distinct from any of its varied antecedents, for it took a convergence of cultural and technological influences to hatch the contemporary artist book. Book art as a field of study at UCSB today offers an unprecedented opportunity for students to explore and create traditional and contemporary artists' books in this rapidly evolving field. Undergraduates, graduates and, at times, community members continue to come to UCSB to engage in the study and practice of the art of the book -- or book arts, as the field tends to be described by its participants."

Reese noted the university's excellent collection of contemporary artist books, and its Skofield Printers Collection, which concentrates on fine press printing, typography, design, papermaking, binding, and other arts of the printed book. "It offers a rich archive of reference and research material for its ideal reader," he said.

Questions can be directed to Brian Mathews, assistant university librarian, at bmathews@library.ucsb.edu or (805) 893- 2674.

About UC Santa Barbara

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