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Bookplate for the West Australian Society of Arts, 1904

Gael E Phillips FRCPA, Brisbane, Queensland

The bookplate for the West Australian Society of Arts was drawn in 1904 by Francesco Vanzetti, at the time treasurer of the Society, and chosen by the Society for its library books. The example shown is pasted on the inside cover of *The art of enamelling on metal with a short appendix concerning painting on enamel* by Alexander Fisher (London: Studio, 1906). The book provides a practical guide to enamelling on metal and also depicts fine examples of the enameller's art. Vanzetti's design for the cover of the Society's 1904 catalogue was in a similar style.

It is a very beautiful example of Art Nouveau, which in 1904 was soon to metamorphose into Art Deco. The style of the lettering is known as the Liberty Style, named after the famous store in London, opened by A L Liberty in 1875. The original would have been a pen and ink drawing which has been made into a block to be printed by process techniques readily available in 1904. The sinuous curves of the roots of the trees are typical of the Art Nouveau style, as are the stylised representations of the parchment scrolls and the escutcheon-like space for the name of the Society. The bookplate is unusual in having a space for the value of the book, in addition to the number in the library catalogue and the date of accessioning.

The design is loosely based on a motif in *The Studio* magazine, but the trees are said to be quandong trees rather than the orange trees depicted in *The Studio*. The quandong is also known as the Australian native peach *Santalum acuminatum*. It is high in vitamin C, a favourite 'bush tucker' of indigenous peoples, and of emus too. Quandong seeds are used as beads and when I was a child they were commonly used as Chinese checker pieces. The sun motif, with its crepuscular rays, presages Art Deco, and was a popular motif in Western Australia in the

early twentieth century. For example the Sunny West Co-operative Dairies Ltd used "Sunny West" as their trade name and trademark.

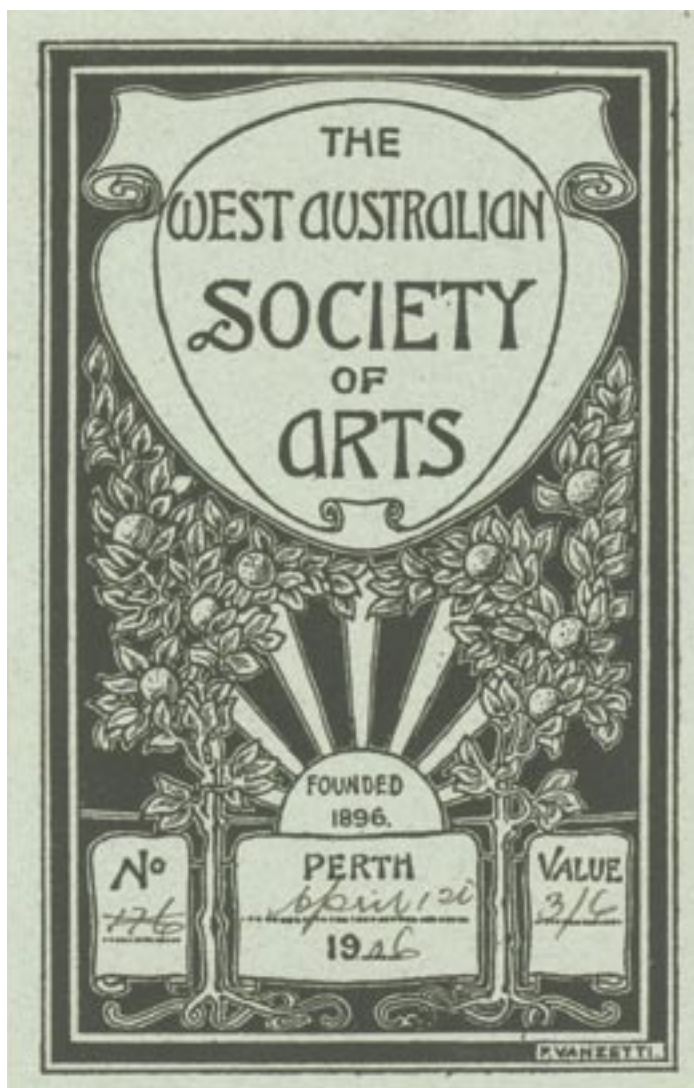
Research into the life of Francesco Vanzetti has revealed an interesting story. Born in Padua on 29 April 1878, he was orphaned at the age of 17 years. His uncle arranged for Francesco to join him in Western Australia, where he arrived in January 1896. Prior to emigrating, he had studied architectural drawing, history of art and related subjects at the *Liceo Artistico* in Florence. In 1898, Francesco joined the West Australian Society of Arts which exhibited both fine and applied arts and crafts. In Western Australia Francesco painted watercolours, designed buildings, jewellery, fountains, furniture, furnishings, embroidery designs, trophies and engaged in some graphic arts projects, including a design for a souvenir booklet for the Children's Hospital fair of 1898. Repousse copper panels were also popular at the time and he made these for his house and included them in his furniture designs. He attempted to develop a career in architecture but when this failed he obtained a position as a clerk in the Mines Department.

Vanzetti married Evelyn Baxter in 1903 and soon after designed the family's home at South Perth. The house included metal repousse panels made by Francesco and was near the home of his friend, James Linton, the well-known artist and silversmith. Francesco sold his home in 1912 and took up farming in mallee country close to Moora. Subsequent droughts caused him to join the Department of Agriculture, where he became an expert on wheat and wheat breeding. His posters for the Department showed some elements of his previous artistic output, with Liberty style Art Nouveau lettering. He was a very prolific author of articles on various aspects of agriculture during his time with the Department and continued to



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Bookplate for the West Australian Society of Arts,
by Francesco Vanzetti, 1904

write on agricultural subjects for some years after his resignation from the Department in 1924.

In 1929, with the help of Walter Murdoch, the greatly revered Professor of Modern Languages and English at the University of Western Australia, Vanzetti was appointed as a lecturer in Italian. In addition to his teaching role, he would welcome newly arrived Italian immigrants to the state. He was one of the founders of the Dante Alighieri Society in Western Australia and held a pivotal role in the local Italian community. He retired from the University at the age of 85 years and died on 10 September 1967, aged 89.

The bookplate Francesco Vanzetti designed in 1904 is not his only memorial. An annual lecture is held in his memory at the University of Western Australia, whilst members of the Vanzetti family still live

in Western Australia and other parts of Australia.

Further reading

Joseph Gentilli, *The unbent poplar: Francesco Vanzetti and his times*, Perth: Dept. of Geography, University of Western Australia, 1988

Dorothy Erickson, 'Vanzetti, Francesco Cesare Luigi Stefano (1878 – 1967)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography* online, at <http://adbonline.anu.edu.au/biogs/A160529b.htm>

Dorothy Erickson, *Gold & silversmithing in Western Australia: a history*, Perth: UWA Publishing, 2010

Maurice Cullity, *A history of dairying in Western Australia*, Perth: University of Western Australia Press, 1979, p. 441

Personal communication, members of the Vanzetti family

Auckland report: the bookplates of Mike Ferris

New Zealand artist and printmaker, Mike Ferris (b. 1929) was first brought to the attention of readers in *Newsletter* no. 2 (September 2006) when we provided a brief biography of Mike and reproduced his design for Diane Baynham (no. 1 in list below) in the report of the Auckland Ex Libris Society, of which Mike had just been elected member.

He was born in Cornwall, and whilst still at school was selected to attend classes at the Falmouth School of Art. Despite being colour-blind, he first produced drawings at age 18 for the *West Briton* newspaper. As a recently graduated marine engineer, Mike found himself in 1951 in Wellington (NZ) at the time of the waterfront strike and soon became a part of the arts community. Marrying in 1955, Mike and his wife lived for a few years in the UK but in 1958 returned and settled in Whangarei. His art-related work since that time has included wood engravings for the *Northland Magazine*, a long series of images for successive editions of the New Zealand Insurance Company calendar, drawings of some of the historic buildings of Northlands, and illustrations for a number of historical books and environmental reports.

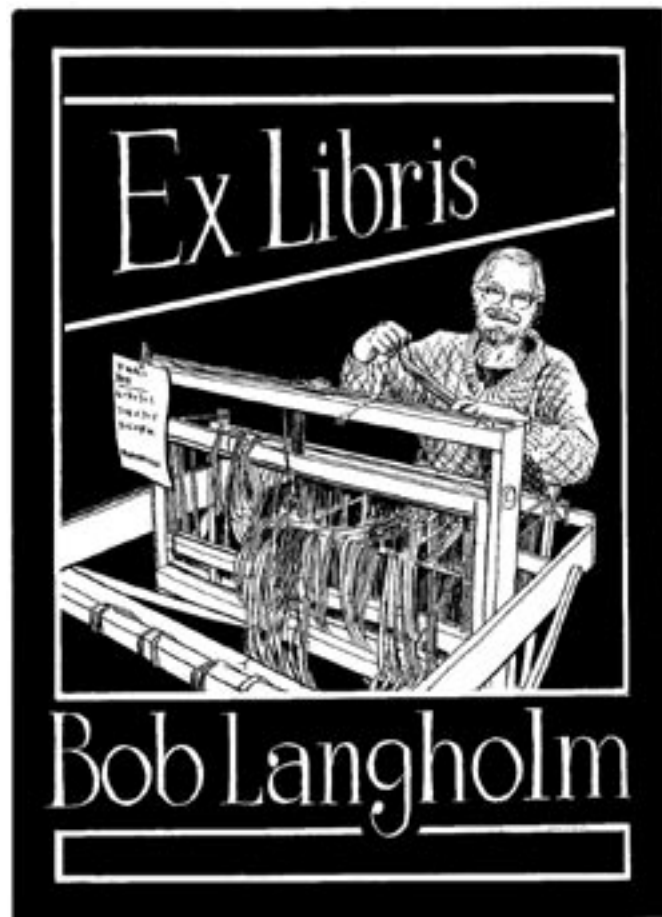
Since retiring in 1992 Mike has continued to work in his home studio as well as helping at local primary and intermediate schools, at the Cottage Papermill, Whangarei, and at the Community Arts Centre, Whangarei Heads. He was a member of the New Zealand Calligraphers and since joining the Auckland Ex Libris Society has designed a number of bookplates for members and friends. Mike has intimated a few of his artistic sources – a long interest in mathematics and geometrical shapes and also a fascination with Islamic calligraphy which has led to incorporation of monograms in some of the designs. Apart from his first, for Diane Baynham, executed using scraperboard, and his most recent one, a linocut design for your Editor, Mike has generally drawn the original in pen and ink, mostly in A3 size.

He uses a commercial printer who employs high quality laser printing at reduced size, usually 16 images to the A3 sheet on Hann Stella Multimat 150gsm paper. Mike also writes, in response to my question about ownership of the bookplate artwork:

Ownership of the original artwork affects the cost and most people are happy with a full-sized copy of the design. I feel that ownership of copyright should belong to the client, but I have not had difficulty in having free use of it for my publicity and information-giving purposes.

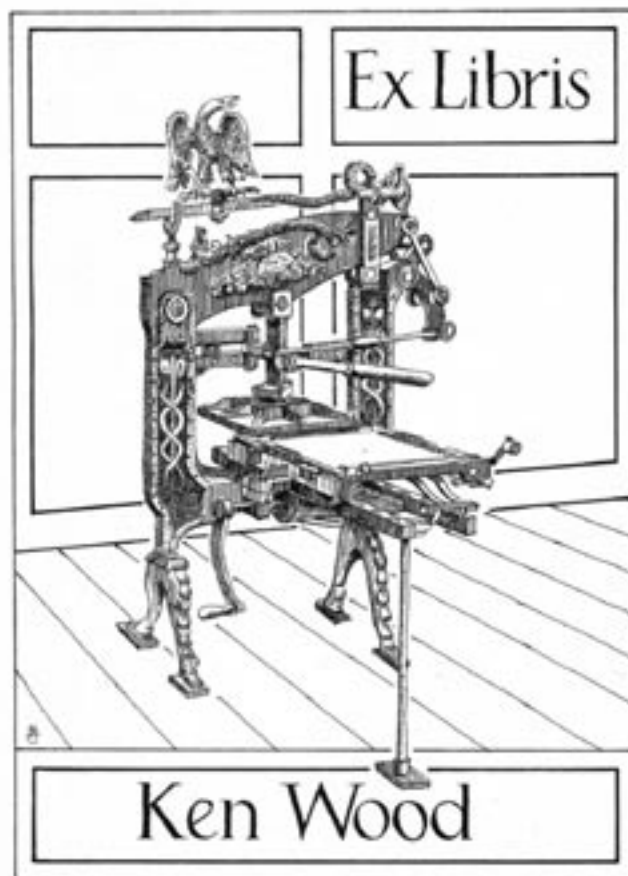
Mike has kindly provided the full-size artwork so that we can reproduce high quality images in the *Newsletter*. A list of his bookplate designs, with their original sizes and other details, can be found below. Unfortunately it is only possible to show a sample of Mike's wonderful designs, and I have tried to show representative examples.

- 1 Ex Libris DIANE BAYNHAM, scraper board (from an A3 original) October 1993.
- 2 Ex Libris I G T [Ian G Thwaites], pen and ink (A3), calligraphic, August 2006.
- 3 Ex Libris Bob Langholm, pen and ink (160 x 210mm), October 2006.
- 4 ex libris brendon waters, pen and ink (A3), January 2007.
- 5 Ex Libris Tod Thompson. Master Mariner, pen and ink (A3), July 2007.
- 6 knowwedhen ow lyver hazel bennett, pen and ink (A3), March 2008.
- 7 Ex Libris Tor-Håkon Torsvik, pen and ink (A3), March 2009.
- 8 From the library of Judith Ann Brebner J B, pen and ink (A3), May 2010.
- 9 EX LIBRIS JOHN STACPOOLE OBE, pencil (A3), August 2010.
- 10 Ex Libris Ken Wood, pen and ink (A3), October 2010.
- 11 FROM THE LIBRARY OF MIKE FERRIS, pen and ink (A3), October 2010.
- 12 Mark Ferson Ex Libris, linocut (100 x 80mm), February 2011.



Pen and ink design by Mike Ferris for Bob Langholm, 2006
Pencil and ink drawing by Mike Ferris for John Stacpoole, 2010





Above: Pen and ink design by Mike Ferris for himself, 2010
 Right: Pen and ink design by Mike Ferris for Ken Wood, 2010
 Below: Linocut bookplate by Mike Ferris for Mark Ferson, 2011



Australian bookplate
 bibliography, 2010
 Mark J Ferson, Sydney

1 *2010 centenary guide. One hundred. Celebrating the Mitchell Library centenary 1910-2010.* State Library of NSW, Sydney, 2010
 Includes image of the D S Mitchell armorial bookplate

2 **BIDGOOD, JEFF.** An Australian bookplate. *Biblioneus and Australian Notes & Queries*, nos. 365-6, March-June 2010, pp. 27-32

Describes detective work involved in identifying the bookplate of Katherine Shaw of 'Wooriwyrite'

3 **CONTRIBUTORS, THE.** December 2008 Sydney show & tell meeting. *Biblioneus and Australian Notes & Queries*, nos. 365-6, March-June 2010, p. 20

Note of presentation by M Ferson on manuscript ex libris, with illustration of design for W J Rock

4 **PITT, ELSPETH.** Ex libris: the printed image and the art of the book. *Imprint*, vol. 45, no. 1, autumn 2010, p. 14

An introduction to the exhibition of the same name held at the Art Gallery of South Australia from February to May 2010

5 **STITZ, CHARLES.** *Australian book collectors: some noted Australian book collectors and collections of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.* Bread Street Press, Bendigo, 2010.

Stitz uses bookplates and other marks of ownership to illustrate many of the entries in this valuable contribution to the topic

6 **TAYLOR, BRIAN.** Launch of Jeff Bidgood's *Mark Ferson: bookplate artist (Studies in Australian Bibliophily, no. 7)* at the BCSA meeting in Summer Hill on 6 March 2010. *Biblioneus and Australian Notes & Queries*, nos. 365-6, March-June 2010, pp. 37-40

With photo of author, artist and launcher; also image of bookplate by M Ferson for his mother Ida Ferson

7 **WHITEWAY, PENELOPE.** 'Bookplates', in, Roslyn Follett (ed.). *Found in Fryer: stories from the Fryer Library Collection.* University of Queensland Library, Brisbane, 2010, pp. 76-7

Refers to bookplates in the Hayes Collection such as that by Lionel Lindsay for Margaret Reynolds and other bookplate donations to the library; includes images of Lindsay's design for M Reynolds, and of the copper etching plate for this design

Letter to the Editor

Here are a few copies of bookplates which may be of interest. My main collection period was 20 or 30 years ago. However, in the last year I have found quite a lot of old books with ex libris – pretty exciting. Queensland artists include Vincent Sheldon for H C Behan, a person I don't know. Maybe a relative of Dr Norman Behan, former trustee of the Brisbane [Queensland] Art Gallery. James Wieneke – plate for Somerville House at Brisbane Girls High School. He was born in Bundaberg, is represented in Queensland Art Gallery and was director of that Gallery. Sam Fullbrook, born in Sydney, worked for many years in Queensland. His much loved portrait of Ernestine Hill is in the Brisbane gallery. I think his ex libris for Ernestine's niece Louise Campbell is delightful.

The ex libris for Cyril Pearl is designed by Francis Broadhurst, who also illustrated a book of poems in which I found the bookplate. The plate by R E Curtis (illustrated) may be for members of his family. The endpaper where it occurs also has an inscription to (I think) R R and R Emerson Curtis. I have been enjoying your *Newsletters*, a good deal of fascinating and useful information in each one.

*Allan Brown, Brisbane
20 February 2011*

Bookplates of the Art Gallery of New South Wales

Mark J Ferson, Sydney

The Research Library at the Art Gallery of New South Wales holds a significant collection of books and exhibition catalogues; it also manages the archives relating to the Gallery's administration since its foundation in the 1870s, and the papers of artists, galleries and art societies. From time to time the Library holds a small book sale to dispose of books which are no longer of use. At one of these sales I picked up some interesting, if outdated books, and also a number of bookplates marking the Library's volumes.

The oldest is an undated bookplate by Charles Henry Hunt (1857-1938) for the then National Art Gallery of New South Wales. The head of the Library and Archives, Steven Miller, has written that the Gallery archives hold no correspondence about the bookplate, but estimates its date at c. 1905. I have not asked Steven for the basis for this dating, but it is noteworthy that John Lane Mullins, intimately involved in the Sydney art world and its



Above: Design by R Emerson Curtis for R R Curtis
Below left: Pen and ink design by C H Hunt for the National Art Gallery of NSW, c. 1905
Below: Bookplate for Arthur Acland Allen in books donated to the Gallery





Bookplate for the Art Gallery of New South Wales, c. 1950s – 1960s

pre-eminent bookplate collector, joined the London-based Ex Libris Society in 1905 and that year commissioned a bookplate from Hunt for his daughter Hilda.

Also in one of the withdrawn books was the unsigned armorial bookplate for Arthur Acland Allen (1868-1939) a British member of parliament who served from 1906 to 1918. An art collector, he donated prints and drawings to the British Museum and in 1939, perhaps after his death, his wife donated works including two prints by J M W Turner to the Art Gallery of New South Wales through the Empire Art Loan Collections Society.

Finally, by way of contrast we have a relatively plain design dating most likely from the 1950s or 1960s and found in a copy of *The modern encyclopaedia of Australia and New Zealand* (Sydney: Horwitz-Grahame, 1964) discarded from the Library's reference section.

Notes and happenings

Trove and on-line access to *The Australian Women's Weekly*

The March 2011 issue of the *National Library [of Australia] Magazine* announces on its inside rear cover that issues from 10

June 1933 to 15 December 1982 of the iconic *Australian Women's Weekly* magazine have been scanned and are available in digital form through the library's Trove interface (<http://trove.nla.gov.au/>). Having picked up only one article from the *Weekly* in my *Australian literature on bookplates: a bibliography 1899-1988* (Book Collectors' Society of Australia, 1988), I put the words 'bookplate' and 'ex libris' in the search engine to see what I had missed. A number that I had not previously known of came up, which must be a subject for a future article. However, one that jumped out at me, appearing on page 9 of the issue dated 15 July 1933, was 'Commercial art an attractive field. Careers for girls' and I quote: 'Both of these mediums [linocuts and wood block prints] are employed a good deal for book-plates, which is another avenue in which women show marked facility.'

Recent publications

ROBERT C LITTLEWOOD. *Lionel Lindsay. The printmaker's printmaker*. Douglas Stewart Fine Books, Melbourne, 2011. 48pp. Standard (paperbound) edition of 1000 copies, deluxe edition (cloth) of 160 copies.

Catalogue essay by Littlewood; includes reproductions of bookplates at nos. 87-98

ROBERT C LITTLEWOOD. *Six bookplates engraved by David Frazer*. Lytlewode Press, Stoke-on-Trent, 2006. Edition of 150 copies signed by the author.

Brief introduction followed by six tipped-in original wood engravings; although published in England, this book was planned in part to raise the profile of the Melbourne-based Australian Bookplate Society. The colophon states that 'one copy of the book has been given to the President of each of the Ex Libris societies throughout the world in the spirit of international Bookplate fellowship.'

International Rauf Denkas exlibris competition

A letter arrived from the Faculty of Fine Arts & Design of the Near East University

(Nicosia, Cyprus) saying that they are organising a bookplate design competition in honour of the Founding President of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, His Excellency Rauf R Denktas. The closing date is 1 November 2011 and further information is available from exlibris@neu.edu.tr or at <http://exlibris.neu.edu.tr>

Can anyone advise of the current international political status of this Republic?

New members

We are pleased to record the following new members of the Society in 2011: Richard d'Apice, NSW; Brigid Gregg, NSW; Carol Page, Vic.; and Jim Walker, NSW.

Editorial

The year is progressing at a great rate and my next pressing duty is to organise a venue and speaker for the Society's next Annual General Meeting. However, whilst I am seeking hither and yon, I hope you will be enjoying the latest *Newsletter* which has now, almost unbelievably, completed five years of publication. With Ronald Cardwell's help, we are planning a small surprise to mark this milestone, but I will drop no further clues till the outcome is more certain.

I must thank contributors to this issue, generous as always with novel ideas and the time required to research and write material, whether it is of an academic bent or not. Medical colleague Gael Phillips has sent an article on the century-old bookplate of the West Australian Society of Arts; New Zealand artist Mike Ferris has kindly submitted to an examination of his own work with a checklist of his bookplate designs; whilst Allan Brown, in writing to me from Brisbane recently, has found his words pressed into service as a Letter for which he has also kindly provided (with the assistance of his son Robert) an illustration.

MF