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## The Eric Gill Exhibition and The Art of Selection

Eric Gill was an extraordinarily prolific artist. It has been estimated that he made over 1,000 engravings; he created a number of important type faces, including Joanna, Perpetua and Gill Sans, which have maintained their popularity as good, modern typefaces and are now even available on computer disk; his influence as a book designer was considerable — many consider *The Four Gospels* (1931) to be one of the most beautiful books to come from an English private press. He did many sculptures, from his first, small piece, "Estin Thalassa" (1910), to his last major public commission, "The Creation of Man" for the League of Nations building in Geneva (1937-8). His books and articles

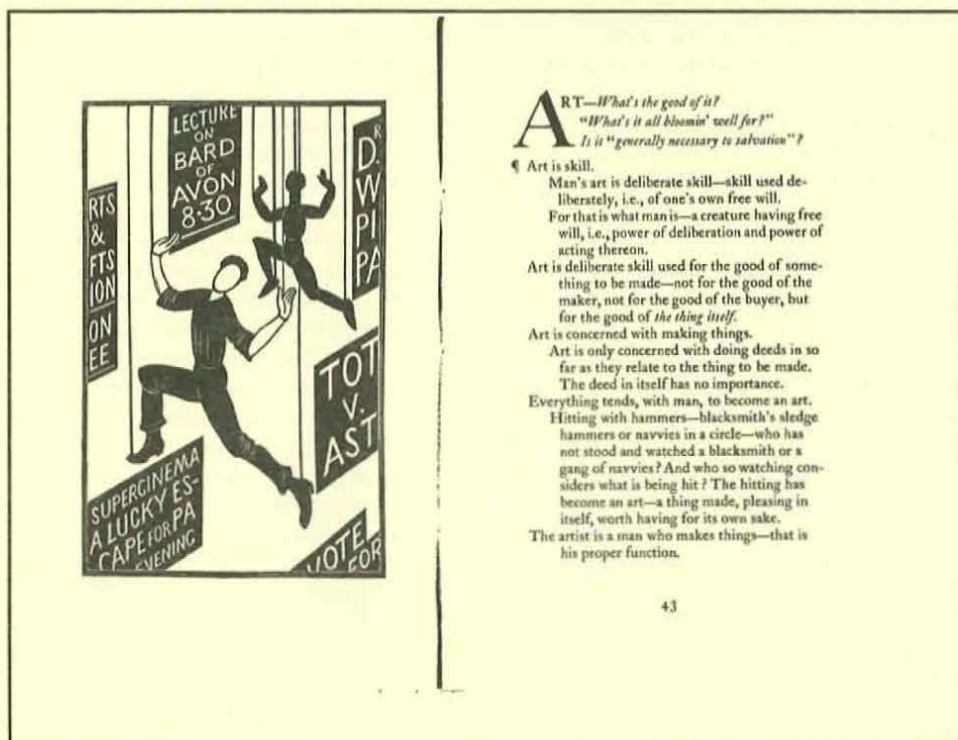
on art, religion, and social issues, often polemics against some pet hate and sometimes written in impenetrable prose, number more than fifty-four items, while an additional 200 or so contributions to books and articles are listed in the second edition of the bibliography by Evan Gill, revised by Steven Corey and Julia Mackenzie (Winchester: St. Paul's Bibliographies, 1991).

As one would expect, there are major collections of Gill's work in England and the United States, but it was an exciting experience to discover the rich holdings which exist in and around Toronto. The Fisher Library has a number of the major books illustrated by Gill, and a fair selection of works by his contemporaries. We were aware also of the exhibitions in the 1930s at Hart House, the Art Gallery of Ontario and in Winnipeg, of some seventy Gill engravings from J. Kemp Waldie's collection. When we were invited to view that collection, however, its size and content were a revelation. Kemp Waldie, founder of the Golden Dog Press in

Toronto in 1933, had throughout the 1930s been an enthusiastic purchaser of Gill's work both directly from the artist and from his gallery agents. The present owners allowed us to select what we wanted to display from a huge collection of prints, all the major books, and many ephemeral items. This was followed by a suggestion from Susan Bellingham, Special Collections Librarian at the University of Waterloo, to see the Gill collection there (which had been formed by earlier librarians who were Gill enthusiasts). We were allowed to borrow several unique items of original art, books from Gill's own library, and other items, which would provide another dimension to the exhibition. Other collectors, both institutional and personal, also kindly provided examples of Gill's work for the exhibition.

Such an abundance of course brings its own problems. After a careful study of the material available, we chose many items to display, selecting those which would reveal Gill's life and his progress as an artist, and demonstrate his immense talents. Of course, we wanted to include everything, but an exhibition, like a good book design, must allow for empty space. The organizers each had their favourite items, those which were felt to be indispensable if a proper balance was to be achieved. The space available seemed to shrink, and at the prompting of our display expert, further heart-searching decisions had to be taken after the material was laid out in a preliminary way in the cases.

The final result, warmly received by Friends and colleagues, was reviewed in *The Globe and Mail* on 29 October by its Visual Arts Critic, John Bentley Mays, who wrote that "the exhibition deserves to be seen by anyone interested in the art of modern printing, book design and print-making . . ."



ART—What's the good of it?  
"What's it all bloomin' well for?"  
Is it "generally necessary to salvation"?

Art is skill.

Man's art is deliberate skill—skill used deliberately, i.e., of one's own free will. For that is what man is—a creature having free will, i.e., power of deliberation and power of acting thereon.

Art is deliberate skill used for the good of something to be made—not for the good of the maker, not for the good of the buyer, but for the good of the thing itself.

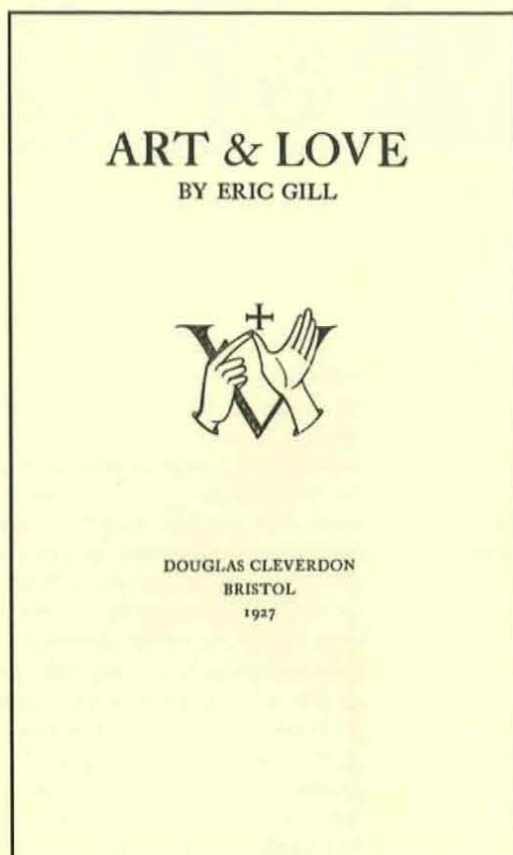
Art is concerned with making things.

Art is only concerned with doing deeds in so far as they relate to the thing to be made. The deed in itself has no importance.

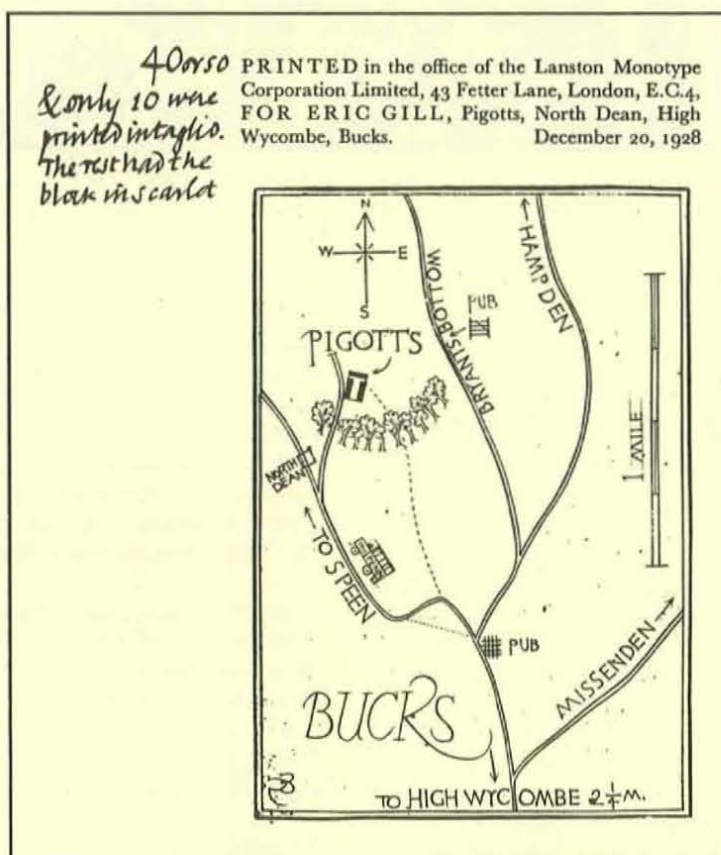
Everything tends, with man, to become an art. Hitting with hammers—blacksmith's sledge hammers or navvies in a circle—who has not stood and watched a blacksmith or a gang of navvies? And who so watching considers what is being hit? The hitting has become an art—a thing made, pleasing in itself, worth having for its own sake.

The artist is a man who makes things—that is his proper function.





The title-page of *Art & Love*, 1927, showing the hands of St. Thomas, engraved by Gill. (Private collection)



Engraved map of Pigotts, from *The Future of Sculpture*, 1928. (Private collection)

As has been explained, there were many delightful items which would have been included were it not for restrictions of space. Readers might be interested to learn that these included a large architectural drawing by Gill which was offered for display, too late for inclusion, from the Pratt Library of Victoria College. This shows a proposed renovation of the ground floor of Asheham House near Lewes, Sussex (1910), probably done for Virginia and Leonard Woolf, who lived there from 1912 to 1919. One fascinating detail on the drawing are the words "Opium den?" inscribed in Gill's hand in one small room.

Three omitted publications are illustrated in this issue of *The Halcyon*, all from the private collection in Toronto. The first is *Art and Love*, printed by the Golden Cockerel Press in a limited edition of 260 copies and published by Douglas Cleverdon at Bristol in 1927, when the Gills were living at Capel-y-ffin in the Black Mountains of South Wales. The engraving on the title page of the hands of St. Thomas became the author's device, to be used on many of his books. This work appeared first in the journal *Blackfriars* in

October 1924, and in the "Author's Note", Gill writes that "in thus republishing on his own responsibility, he has been able to include certain remarks which, though approved by sound doctrine, were formerly excluded in deference to puritan prejudice by editorial prudence." The book contains six full-page copper engravings, which were printed separately; and six wood engraved initial letters.

The second item is *The Future of Sculpture*, printed in December 1928 for Gill in the Office of the Lanston Monotype Corporation in London. This particular copy, inscribed on the front flyleaf by Gill to Stanley Morison, includes the comment in Gill's hand, that of the forty or so copies printed, only ten had the map of Pigotts printed intaglio from a copper engraving, this being one of them. This work was first given as a lecture at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London in December 1927, and appeared in various other published forms. It was included in an exhibition of books illustrating British and foreign printing, 1918-29, held at the British Museum in April 1929.

The third is *Art and Manufacture* (1929), No. 4 of the "Handworkers'

Pamphlets". This essay was originally delivered in November 1928 as a lecture entitled "Art in relation to life" to the Pangbourne Arts & Crafts Society. It was rewritten for this pamphlet and then revised again and given as a lecture entitled "Art and industrialism" to the Design and Industries Association in 1933. Gill rejected industrial methods of production and distribution as he also rejected modern worldly and irreligious values. In his "socialist years" he spent a lot of time at meetings of societies, giving many lectures even though he was not comfortable as a public speaker. He tended to "pontificate", and this pamphlet contains some of his rather dogmatic views on art — "Art is deliberate skill used for the good of something to be made — not for the good of the maker, not for the good of the buyer, but for the good of the thing itself."

The exhibition, "Eric Gill: His Life and Art" will continue in the Fisher Library until 30 January 1992.

Alan Horne





## Tours manuscript

France, in the first two decades of the fifteenth century, was a country in turmoil. Because the King, Charles VI, suffered from intermittent bouts of madness, two factions, the Armagnacs and the Burgundians, vied for power over him and thence over the country. The resulting hostilities left the way clear for the invasions of Henry V of England.

The Dauphin, estranged from his parents and now allied with the Armagnacs, held the duchy of Touraine. In June 1418 it was annexed to the crown, the Queen, Isabeau, having persuaded the King, in one of his periods of sanity, that his son had revolted against his authority. The people of Tours, capital of Touraine, were adjured to resist the army of the Dauphin and a sum was raised to repair the fortifications of the town. At the end of July the Dauphin besieged Tours but encountered such resistance that he was forced to retire. He returned in November and, after a five week siege, the town was

forced to capitulate, part of the walls and the great tower having been breached.

By 1419 the situation in France, was as follows: the Armagnacs, led by the Dauphin who had proclaimed himself regent of France, had control of Tours and were negotiating with Scotland and Spain for help to secure the rest of Touraine and to strengthen castles north of the Loire River. The Burgundians, led by Duke John the Fearless, held Paris but not much else; and Henry V's second expedition against France from 1417 to 1419 had resulted in his occupation of the whole of Normandy.

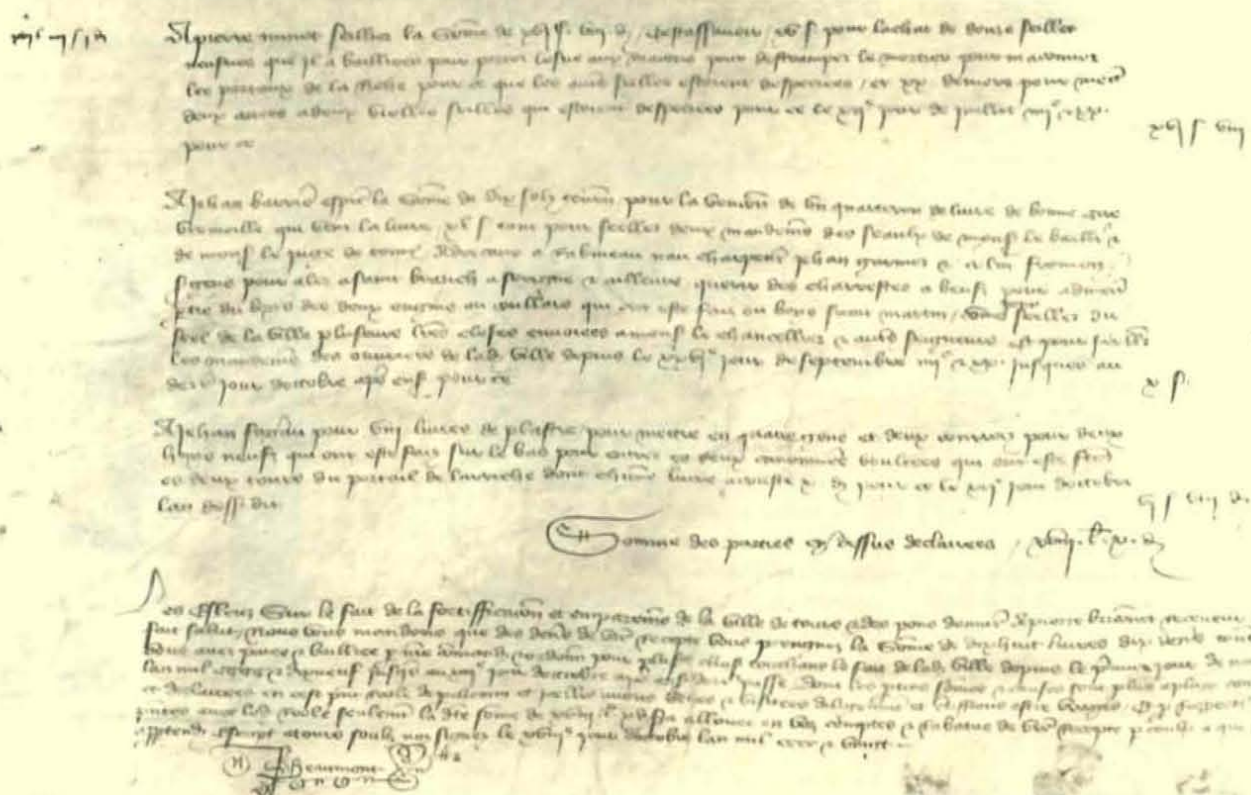
In September 1419 an attempt was made to unite the Dauphin and Duke John with the aim of driving out the English. They met at Montreuil on the 10th but all hopes were dashed when the Duke was murdered as he arrived at the meeting place and his troops attacked by the Armagnacs. The outraged Burgundians allied themselves with Henry V, and the Treaty of Troyes in 1420 made Henry master of France and excluded the Dauphin from the succession.

This long preamble is to set in context a manuscript recently acquired by the Fisher Library. It consists of three large

leaves on vellum headed "Pluseurs menues mises flaites & paieses p[ar] le commandem[en]t et ordonn[ance] de nous les Esleur sur le fait des fortificac[i]ons deffense de la ville de Tours par Pierre Briconnet receveur ..." These minor accounts were for moneys paid out for the period from 1 November 1419 to 12 October 1420. Incidentally they refer to subjects that elucidate the history of the period.

The Élus (Esleur or Esleuz in the manuscript) were the citizens responsible for the defence of the town, its upkeep and the repair of its walls. For 1418 to 1419 they were Michau Charbonneau, Pierre Valuchet and Jehan Semme; for 1420 to 1421, Pierre Briconnet, Jehan de Ponchier, Guillaume Lesaintier and Michau Charbonneau.

That Scottish troops were actually sent to join the Dauphin's army is evidenced by the second item on leaf 2. Two large "poz de vin" were sent to Pierre de Brinvau "conseill[er] de monsieur le Regent", lodging in "lostel de Jehan Gobin" accompanying eight prominent citizens who went to him to ask that the large number of Scottish men-of-arms reported to be coming take another route other than





through the "pays de Tours". The "poz" cost 12 s[ols] and the two men who carried the wine were given 20 d[eniers]. Each poz seems to have contained twelve pints.

Several entries refer to damage sustained during the siege in 1418. In February 1419, Michau Carre, Jehan de Saint Denis and Richart Peisant, masons, went several times with the Esleuz and others to visit the Tour Saint Jehan and decide what should be repaired. They received 5 s (leaf 2, item 14). On 6th May two of the masons and several carpenters went with the "capplitalne du chastel et ville de Tours" and the Esleuz to survey the outer walls and decide what had to be repaired immediately. For their time and drink ("pour leur peine et aler boire") they received 6 s 8 d (leaf 2, item 15).

On the 27th May 1419, brother Solnez gave "un sermon notable pour la paix". He received 3 s 4 d (leaf 2, item 12).

The second item on leaf 1 records the sum of 6 s 3 d paid to a boatman, Jehan Bidon, for hastily transporting twenty good oak boards by way of Port Ste. Anne to the bridge at Tours to be used to strengthen the said bridge. Other small sums were paid for equipment; 20 d, for example, bought two baskets to carry stones to the masons (leaf 2, item 8); 10 d bought plaster to hold the hinges of a door at "lostel Pierre du Soul" (leaf 1, item 11). A wine cask was bought for

7 s 6 d from Mace Heruppeau from which to make two tubs for "lyaeu", a fine grained material from the Paris area, for mixing mortar in the town workshop (leaf 2, item 9). Six iron shovels cost 20 s (leaf 2, item 7). Pierre Minot, bucket maker, received 16 s 8 d for 12 new buckets in which the masons could soak mortar (leaf 3, item 5).

The sum of 2 s 6 d was paid to Mace Heruppeau for a quantity of wood bought in February 1420 on the occasion when "le capplitalne le juge & autrels officiers et des gens" met at the "tablier" or town hall to discuss the provision of bread, wheat and other commodities which were being sold too dearly (leaf 1, item 15). Raoulet, clerk to Mace de la Bretonniere, received 10 d for writing up the "Registre" and the "greffier" or clerk who signed the entry got 3 s 4 d (leaf 1, item 5). Jehan Barric, grocer, sold vermilion sealing wax at 10 s for a quarter of a pound. It was used to seal, with the city seal, several letters sent to the Chancellor and other important people; to seal the orders for the town workers from 26th September to 31st October, 1420; and to seal two orders with the seals of the "bailli" and the "juge". These last two ordered a carpenter and two "sergens", Jehan Garnier and Colin Fromoy, to fetch from "Saint Branch a Sorigne" and elsewhere oxcarts in which to bring two "engins ou coullars" which

had been made in the wood of Saint Martin (leaf 3, item 6). The "coullars" may have been large pieces of wood used to cover windlasses.

One of the charms of a document like this is that it records the names and occupations of people who would not otherwise be remembered. Thus, apart from those already mentioned, Symon Dorge, who was crier and herald of the town, received 5 s for having made several announcements at various places, and the trumpeter, Jehan Crufollant, was given 2 s 6 d for trumpeting four times (leaf 1, items 12 and 13). Philippe de la Croix (leaf 3, item 3) was "sergent du Roy" at Orléans, Jehan Papinot (leaf 1, item 1) was lieutenant general "de monsieur le bailli de Touraine". Other masons were Olivier de Lemire and Jehan Cotin. Guillaume Houssier and Guillaume Veillon were carpenters, Alain Moreau and Michau Charbonneau, "fermiers".

The whole amount comes to 18 [livres] 10 d and the last item on leaf 3 is an order from the Esleuz to the Receiver, Pierre Briconnet, directing him to take from the moneys of his "Recepte" the amount paid out by him as detailed in this "Roole de plar]chemin". Below this is the notarial signature "Beaumont", and the scanty remains of three small seals (This is illustrated on page 3).

Anne Jocz, Fisher Rare Book Library

## Editor's Note

This issue was edited by Alan Horne and designed by Veronica Fisher. The photographs were by Philip Ower. Please send comments and/or suggestions for the next issue to Alan Horne, Director, Development and Public Affairs, University of Toronto Library, Ontario M5S 1A5 (416-978-7644).

## Programme for January - April 1992

### Thursday 13 February 1992

Professor Patricia Fleming will speak on the search for imprints, the nature of analytical bibliography, the book trade in early Canada and examples of early Canadian printing.

### Monday 27 April 1992

Anthony Rota (antiquarian bookseller from London, England) will speak on "A Week in the Life of a London Bookshop".

## Gill Catalogue Wins Major Award!

The Library's exhibition catalogue *Eric Gill: His Life and Art* has won two design awards in the typographic excellence and electronic competition sponsored by the National Composition and Prepress Association (NCPA). NCPA, a special industry group of Printing Industries of America, Inc., is the world's leading association in the electronic imaging field. The awards are Best of Category in the Book Category, and Best of Category in the Catalogue Category. The catalogue was designed by Veronica Fisher, written by Alan Horne, Richard Landon and Guy Upjohn, and printed by Fisher Litho Arts.

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