

FAB Gallery judges books by their covers

The Alcuin Awards and the AAUP Book, Jacket and Journal Show

Runs until 27 January
FAB Gallery

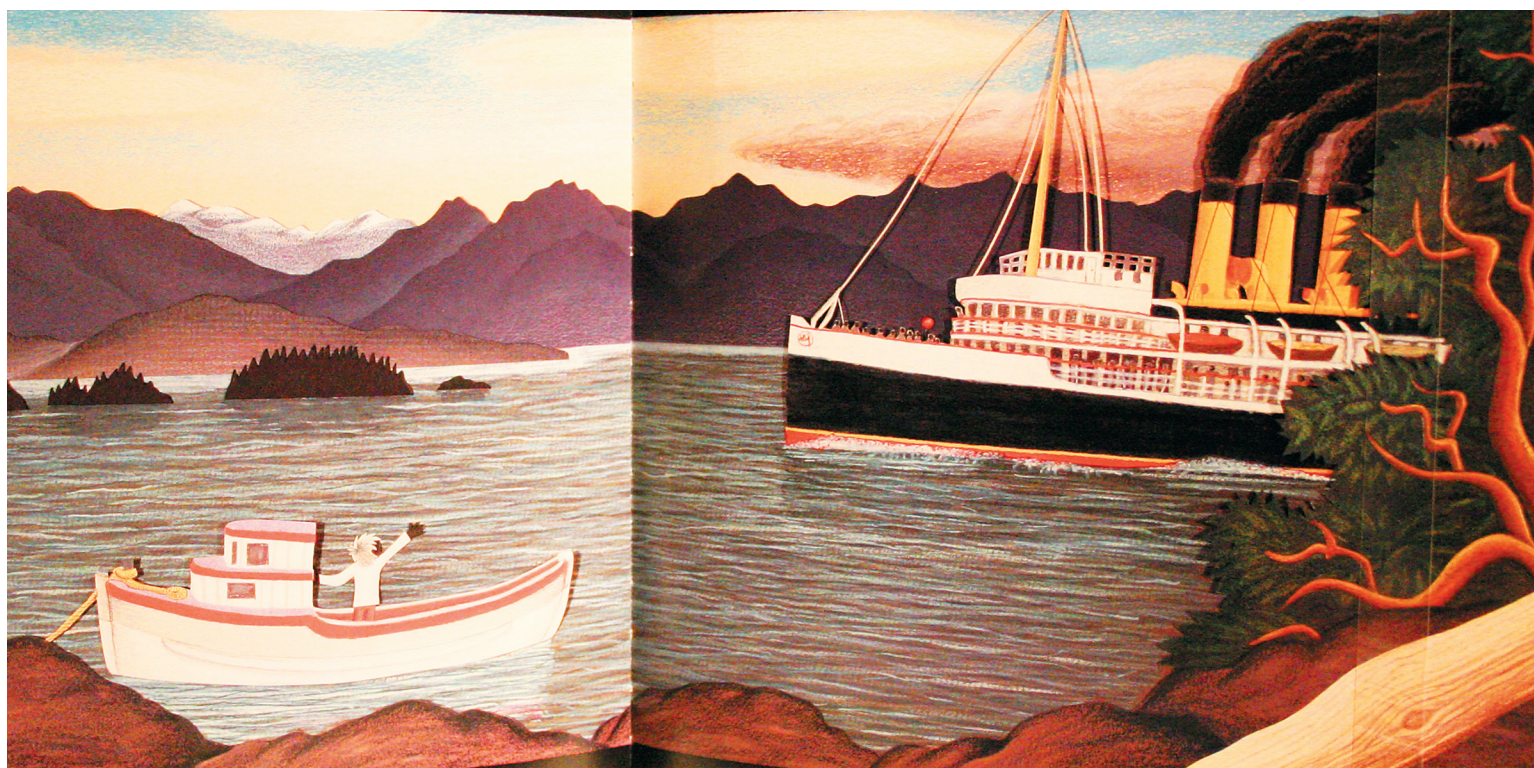
PAUL BLINOV
Arts & Entertainment Staff

The latest two exhibits in the two Fine Arts galleries want to remind us of unsung book heroes—not the author, with all of his or her precision writing and endlessly interlocking symbols and metaphors, but instead, the book designer's knack for making an author's story catch your eye in a sea of print.

"Book design is kind of transparent," explains Alan Brownoff, a University of Alberta press worker and local book designer. "People take it for granted. If you work for a publisher, or if you're a designer, you'll understand what went into it, but most people just read the book."

The American Association of University Presses' *Book, Jacket and Journal Show* has been running since 1965, celebrating the literary works of the AAUP's members—which, despite the title, includes the U of A and other Canadian institutions within their ranks. Sporting categories such as non-fiction, reference or poetry, the current travelling show hosts about 50 books, selected from the 400 submissions received by the show's judges.

The AAUP's sister exhibit, also known as the Alcuin Awards, is exclusive to Canadian book designers. Beginning in the '70s, the annual show is the only one of its kind in



JENNY FROGNER

I'S DA BIE DAT BUILDS DA BOOK FAB Gallery is exhibiting the colourful and artistic jackets of Canadian books while playing host to the Alcuin Awards.

Canada. Entries are categorized much like the AAUP's show, and as long as the designer is Canadian, they can be published anywhere.

Submitted entries can receive a ranking of first, second, third or honourable mention; however, the judges aren't required to award a first place if they don't see an entry deserving of the title. On any given year, the show could consist entirely of honourable mentions, or a first and second but no third. This confirms that the best designs end up representing Canada

in an international competition of the same nature.

To ensure that the designers with the most financing behind them aren't the sole winners, judges take into account the working budgets.

"The judges look at how the [designers] used the resources they had," Brownoff says. "Everything from low-budget to big-budget [is in the show]."

Both the AAUP and the Alcuin feature a catalogue of the showcased works in addition to the tour as a way

of helping bring national attention to the often-overlooked works of book designers.

"People just buy books, but [when a book] starts, it's just a manuscript, double-spaced on some publisher's desk," Brownoff explains. "The design is a parallel track to the writing. It helps the writing to be accessible."

"[A] good design gives clarity to the whole [book]," Brownoff continues. "It gives the author's words cohesiveness. [The book designer] is actually choosing the typeface that the book's

going to be set in, and in some cases, [the designer]'s choosing the size of the book. The designer/publisher may together decide to do a square book, just to make it stand out."

Overall, Brownoff hopes that these shows could help gallery-goers take a second look at something they usually just open read then place back on a shelf.

"[Audiences] might look more carefully at how books are put together, instead of just reading the words," Brownoff says.

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