

# The WAYZGOOSE GAZETTE

## A Newsletter of the International Printing Museum



FOUNDED IN 1988 BY DAVID JACOBSON AND ERNEST A. LINDNER, THE PRINTING MUSEUM IS A PUBLIC CHARITY DEDICATED TO EDUCATION THROUGH THE PRESERVATION OF PRINTING HISTORY

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### *Beauty & Her Beast: Museum Presses featured in New Will Smith Pic*

Just after New Year's 2008, Museum Curator Mark Barbour received a by now familiar call from Hollywood. "We are looking to rent a printing press for a scene in our movie." It's a call the Printing Museum gets once or twice a year, having one of the largest and most diverse collections of antique printing equipment in Hollywood's backyard. Mark always begins the conversation with a series of questions: "what is the time period being shot, describe what is being printed, does the press need to be working on set, when is the filming, what studio is involved, who is the star of the film." Those last two questions are probably the most revealing. The budget for the counterfeiting scene on a Leonardo DiCaprio film is guaranteed to be higher than the time travel scene on a PBS-level children's program.

The voice on the other end of the phone was that of industry veteran Leslie Pope, a set decorator whom had Mark worked with years ago for the blockbuster movie "Catch Me If You Can." The current project was a movie for Sony Pictures, starring Will Smith and the beautiful Rosario Dawson, "Seven Pounds." Will Smith plays a down-on-his-luck character that finds redemption through helping seven anonymous people. One of those is Rosario Dawson, playing the operator of a garage letterpress business, printing specialty announcements and cards. Following medical treatment, she can barely operate her vintage press, nearly smashing her hand in the press in the process. If only she could get the other press in the shop working, the automatic letterpress that she refers to as "The Beast!" Will Smith manages to fix the Beast, wins her affection and love is born (We have always believed there is something romantic and sexy about old cast iron printing equipment).

Soon after, Leslie came down to the Printing Museum in Carson where Mark was able to show her a wide range of options for the scene. "For a set decorator who is used to scrounging several locations to find the necessary props for a given scene, the Museum is like a candy store," explains Mark, "whatever she needed for a printing scene was available, from the big equipment to the cabinets and tools, from the wall graphics to the actual shop rags colored with ink. They give us the size of



Beauty Rosario Dawson, with Docent Rich Tautenhahn, facing off with "the Beast", the Heidelberg Windmill press.

the room for the scene and we fill it."

Rosario's character in the movie is that of a "book artist," a real phenomenon of the modern printing industry: the art schools have discovered letterpress printing with the ability to make deep, three dimensional impressions into paper, as a new art form. Students are learning letterpress in college and then set up a garage-style printing shop with obsolete machines, printing wedding invitations and announcements on handmade paper for an exorbitant fee. In fact, the script for "Seven Pounds" was written by Grant Nieporte whose wife Jill is one of these book artists whom our enterprising curator had sold an old printing press to years ago.

Mark's advice to Leslie was for Rosario to first use a hand-fed platen press and then advance to the automatic Heidelberg Windmill Press; this would be a logical and common progression for a book artist and the Windmill, with its moving arms and suction noise would make a great "beast" for Will

Smith to work on. As a back up idea, he showed her another "beastly" candidate in our warehouse, the 1922 Miehle Vertical 36. With horizontal and vertical moving parts, arms and cylinder, this press would bring the image of "beast" up to "a B-level horror film," as Mark likes to joke. Though it is less likely for the modern garage printer-artist to advance to this level of automation, the V-36 would give a great on-screen performance.

The decision of which press lay in the hands of the Italian director, whose animated arm motions and heavily accented English gave Mark an idea of what he liked. *Il direttore* fell in love with the motions, sounds and visual image of the Windmill and V-36, almost dancing around the running presses at the Museum, hands creating the camera frame as he circled the machines. Watching him become enamored of the heavier, more costly machines, Mark was secretly doing his own little Irish jig!

Over the next several months, Mark and film people worked out the details of the rental; a myriad of cabinets and small artifacts were needed as well as wall graphics to create a realistic shop appearance. They wanted five type cabinets, of which the Museum has plenty. Only problem is that they were filled with type, making them incredibly heavy and hard for the grips to move on the set.

Fortunately, three weeks before the studio was set to pick up the equipment, we received a donation of five type cabinets from the California Club in downtown Los Angeles; this was courtesy of our friend Chris Madison, member of the exclusive club and former owner of Colorgraphics. Chris was having the Museum restore one of the cabinets from the Club's basement printing shop to put on display in the Club's library room. type cabinets, and the Club's type was mostly poor and needed to be dumped out anyway, I could just use the California Club's cabinets for the rental rather than digging through my crowded warehouse. To be convincing as a letterpress printer on screen, I arranged for Rosario to have some personal lessons at the Printing Museum under the tutelage of our veteran letterpress printer and docent, Rich Tautenhahn. Rich would also function as the technical advisor on set during the filming, a requirement we have whenever our equipment is expected to be operational. With her driver and personal assistant in tow, Rosario made it down to Carson for three short lessons (she had to leave early one time for an interview with Oprah).

Though very complicated and daunting machine to look at, the operation of a Windmill Press can be learned by a competent person. Mind you, we are not talking about getting Rosario to actually print, just turn on the press, feed paper through it and have the body language of a printer. The body language is probably the most critical, and challenging, when you consider we are working with a lithe actress with the motions of a dancer.

To turn on the press requires the operator to grab, push and twist the clutch arm on the left side of the press; this arm looks much the handle bar of a Harley, and you approach it with much the same mindset of a biker—firm, determined and with a bit of a strong curve to your back. With Rich standing several feet behind her for her first attempt, Rosario stood with both legs straight and together; she bent at the waist toward the press with a perfectly straight back and rear-end extended, and pushed the clutch to the left with a straight arm. It was the scene of a graceful, and beautiful, ballet though probably not one seen in most printing shops! Rich certainly enjoyed it. After a few more attempts, we managed to send off the dancer and bring out the biker-side of Rosario. Though the rental planning for Will Smith's *Seven Pounds* began in January, the actual equipment rental wasn't going to occur until spring. My gut, and Murphy's Law, told me this complicated rental would surely fall in May; this is when I would be out of town with the Museum's traveling educational program, *Museum on Wheels*. When the shooting dates were given to me in mid-April my suspicions were confirmed: the equipment needed to be at the studio on Monday, May 5th, the day after I would be leaving for San Francisco for two weeks. Usually I am there on the set, making sure everything arrives correctly, is placed where it should be, miss-

ing props are found, and everything is working. This would be the first time I had to manage every detail from a distance.

A week and a half before the scheduled rental, I receive a call from Leslie at Sony Pictures. She was inquiring about the availability of a second Miehle V-36 press; the director didn't think there would be enough time to make "the Beast" look clean and polished after Will Smith worked on it and before they shot the next scene. They wanted an identical press but in a restored condition to make a quick switch on the set.

The reader should understand that though the Miehle



*Rich Tautenhahn with the Museum's presses loaded up and ready to go.*

Vertical was a workhorse in the printing industry 50 years ago, very few are still being used. Secondly, because the press was a workhorse they are generally found in very worn and dirty "shop" condition. And lastly, our V-36 happens to be serial 155, the first year of production. Miehle had several models over the years, with the later ones being more common and available. And like your cars from 1930 to 1960, the curves and fins are always different; you can't use a late model V-50 and pretend it's a cleaned-up V-36. But

when it comes to renting machines to Hollywood for money, I've learned the correct answer—"Sure, I think I can do that. Let me get back to you. Now came the challenging hunt for a second V-36 in Los Angeles, one that was available next week, could be used for three weeks, was in good clean condition, and could be physically moved. An added complication was my extremely busy schedule with the Museum's school programs, leaving me little time to run around and find the press.

Two separate attempts with known Vertical owners failed, their presses being late models. And then I remembered seeing a V-36 in the shop of one of our Museum's friends, John McDowell, way up in Van Nuys. John actually took the time to restore and repaint his press, and it was in full working condition; and though he was using it occasionally, John was willing to let it go for a few weeks. Perfect solution! And a little more money in the rental. I even managed to get an afternoon open four days before I left town to drive up to the Valley and pick up the 3,000-pound beast and bring it back to the Museum.

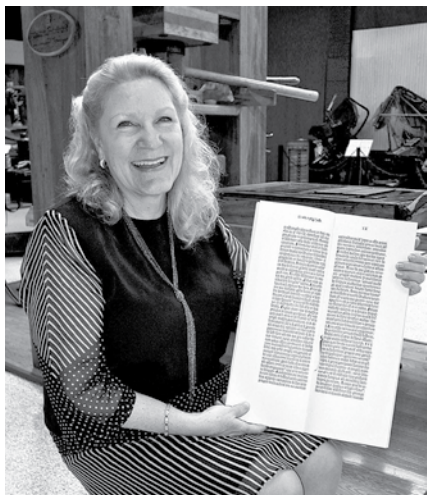
All of the machines were in place at the Museum, along with the cabinets and smaller equipment, posters, tools, even down to the inked up printers rags. I went over the group one more time before I drove out of town with the Museum's history trailer Sunday, May 4th. The plan was for the studio "grips" to pick up everything on Monday except the three big presses, and then my friend Jim Salazar Machinery Movers would deliver the presses on Thursday. While I was traveling to schools with Ben Franklin in the Bay Area, I kept in phone contact with my technical advisors and docents Rich Tautenhahn and Gary Remson. Small problems arose, but everything seemed to be working out, that is until Friday. -MB

**(To find out how it all turned out, go to [www.printmuseum.org](http://www.printmuseum.org))**

# Maryatt Lecture on Emulating Gutenberg Draws Sellout Crowd to Museum

On Saturday, August 23rd, Professor Kitty Maryatt, director of the Scripps College Press, described in detail to a sell-out crowd in the Museum's Heritage Theater an ambitious project she and her students recently undertook to hand-set a facsimile page of the Gutenberg Bible using Dale Guild Type Foundry's B-42 type. To create the page of medieval Latin required the project team to meticulously cast 245 separate characters, and to exactly duplicate the original's every word spacing, margin justification and hand-illumination. The result of all their labors, minus a little aging, was virtually indistinguishable from the original page housed in Scripps Library's own special collections department. The professor circulated a xerox of the Gutenberg page to allow any skeptics to closely compare the two versions. One high-ranking librarian from the

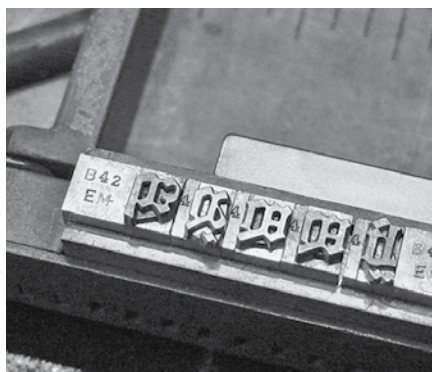
Huntington poured silently over the page for five minutes and then, apparently unable to find any discrepancies, stated "... this is good." Professor Maryatt went on to explain that her class incorporated the finished facsimile into a limited-run art book produced by her class, titled "Beorum II: An Investigation of Risk." It is modeled on the antiquarian "leaf book" method of incunabula preservation ~ one in which a page of the Gutenberg Bible would be inserted between the leaves of a subsequently published volume. Following the lecture, guests returned to the main hall for refreshments and a chance to inspect at close hand the actual B-42 type set in its galley, along with a collection of Scripps Press volumes and a display copy of the remarkable facsimile page. The lecture was sponsored by a generous grant from the Book Club of California and presented by the Museum as part of its ongoing series of free lectures, family days and seminars devoted to the printed word. -TG



Professor Kitty Maryatt holding the Gutenberg facsimile page, subject of her lecture



Guests enjoy visual highlights of the Gutenberg project in the Heritage Theater.



Detail of "Gutenberg" type specially cast by the Dale Type Guild Foundry.



Along with the Museum's full facsimile of the Gutenberg Bible, Kitty shows samples of student work on the Gutenberg project.



A Beautiful Full-size, Full-color Print of a Gutenberg Bible Page, Suitable for Framing. \$10

**Available for Purchase in Our Giftshop**

[printmuseum.org/giftshop.html](http://printmuseum.org/giftshop.html)

An Original Leaf from a Book Printed in 1492 by the German Printer Johann Amerbach, with Hand-painted Rubrication. \$100

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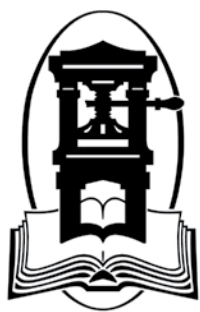
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*is issued regularly for the Friends of the International Printing Museum, founded in 1988 by David Jacobson and Ernest A. Lindner, featuring the Lindner Collection of Antique Printing Machinery. The term "wayzgoose" dates back to the 17th century and refers to a traditional printers celebration held annually around August.*

Mark Barbour, Editor

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the week for groups and other visitors.

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