MALTWOOD
art museum & gallery
presents:

the hold of our hands
Art from the Robin and Sylvia Skelton Collection

August 31 - November 15, 2007
Maltwood Gallery, University Centre
University of Victoria
A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

The Maltwood Art Museum and Gallery welcomes the opportunity to partner with The Malahat Review in this fortieth anniversary celebration of its founding by the late professor Robin Skelton.

Robin and Sylvia Skelton were long-time supporters of the University of Victoria Art Collection and over the years built up a significant collection, mainly in three parts: Robin’s own collages, Irish genre prints, and a large collection of works by contemporary Victoria artists. The collection reflects his own literary interests but also Robin and Sylvia’s friendship and support of local artists. Many of the works are linked to Skelton’s literary papers held in the University of Victoria Special Collections.

Two exhibitions at the University, The Hold of Our Hands: Art from the Robin and Sylvia Skelton Collection at the Maltwood Art Museum and Gallery, and Mingling of Memory and Desire: Books and Paper of Robin Skelton at Special Collections, McPherson Library, are complimented by an off-campus exhibition, House of Dreams: Collages and Sculptures of Robin Skelton at Carr House. Together with the lectures and events of the celebration program this is a fitting public tribute to two people who were pivotal in building the contemporary artistic community in Victoria.

I was a student and colleague of Robin, and a friend to both. I take particular personal pleasure in participating with other former colleagues, friends and admirers of the Skeltons in this Tribute.

Martin Segger F.R.S.A.
Director, Maltwood Art Museum and Gallery
CURATORIAL STATEMENT

This exhibition pays tribute to the lives of Robin and Sylvia Skelton and the circle of artists they gathered around them. The exhibition's name is taken from a collection of eight poems of the same name that Robin dedicated to his wife. It also affirms their gift to the University, a gesture that enriched the Maltwood Art Museum and Gallery with an important part of its modern art collection.

Robin Skelton's contributions to the visual arts at the University of Victoria were significant. As editor of The Malahat Review he often wrote on local artists, particularly those of the Limners artists group, and he also worked with professors Tony Emery and Don Harvey on the University art collection committee, ensuring that collecting focused on contemporary B.C. artists. In addition to the over 100 works personally donated by the Skeltons to the University art collection, Robin also gave the University some of his own collage work, currently held in Special Collections.

An exhibition such as this can be likened to a collage; it juxtaposes sometimes seemingly unrelated images and draws new associations or tells unexpected stories about an object, its maker or its owner. The Skelton's donation to the University of Victoria offers a glimpse into the life of a couple dedicated to the arts and reflects their desire to enrich the modern art scene in Victoria.

Caroline Riedel
Curator of Collections, Maltwood Art Museum and Gallery

Special thanks to Curatorial Assistants Jordan Beggs, Jennie Biltek, Marlaina Buch and Michelle Smith; Danielle Russell, Special Collections; John Barton and Rhonda Batchelor at The Malahat Review; Valerie Elliott and lenders from Fairbank Calligraphy Society; Al Bates and Pat Martin Bates; and student volunteer Aubrey Emlyn.
HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE EXHIBITION

Jack Butler Yeats Collection

Jack B. Yeats (1871-1957) was the quintessential painter to arise from the Irish Renaissance. The younger brother of the Nobel Prize winning Irish dramatist, author, and poet William Butler (W.B.) Yeats, J.B. felt a strong affinity for the north Irish countryside and people, as seen in his works. He began his artistic career as an illustrator in London in the late 1880's, and was well-established as an artist and illustrator by the turn of the century. In 1905, he met J.M. Synge (1871-1909), the Irish author, poet and playwright. J.B. and Synge travelled together through the north of Ireland, and became fascinated with Irish culture. J.B. illustrated these articles and several other books for Synge. The prints in this exhibition were obtained by Robin Skelton in the 1960s and likely produced by J.B.'s sisters Lilly and Lolly Yeats at Coula Press, Dublin.

Contemporary Irish Prints

Contemporary Irish artists represent a major focus of the Skelton’s collection. The Skeltons donated a total of 49 Irish prints to the University, dating mainly from the 60s and 70s. Artists include Patrick Hickey, an artist, architect, and founder of the Graphic Studio in Dublin, printmaker Cliff Holden, whose work is held in public collections in Great Britain, including the Tate in London, and Jack Coughlin, whose “nightmare vision with [its] cool control and clarity” was admired by Robin Skelton. Coughlin’s portraits are held in museum collections throughout North America.
The Sanachie (1910-25)
Jack Butler Yeats
Ink and watercolour
Acc #: U982.44.20

Evening (1910-25)
Jack Butler Yeats
Ink and watercolour
Acc #: U982.44.10

Heads (1966)
Leslie McWeeney
Lithograph on paper
Acc #: U880.2.19

Still (1964)
Pauline Berwick
Lithograph on paper
Acc #: U980.2.29
The Limner Collection

The Society of Limners was formed in 1971 and included Maxwell Bates, Herbert Siebner, Myfanwy Pavelic, Karl Spreitz, Nita Forrest, Ricky Ciccimarra, Elza Mayhew, Robert DeCastro, and Robin Skelton. A host of other members, including Jack Wilkinson, Pat Martin Bates, Walter Dexter, Colin Graham, Jan and Helga Grove, Carole Sabiston and Leroy Jensen joined in subsequent years. A number of works in the Skelton’s art collection were gifts from fellow Limner artists. Robin Skelton was a generous promoter of his friends’ work through various publications. He collaborated with Herbert Siebner on several art books while Sylvia established Pharos Press and under this name published books on The Limners (1981) and a monograph on Maxwell Bates.

Contemporary Canadian Collection

In addition to works by the Limner artists, the Skelton’s art collection features a number of well-known western Canadian artists. During the 1960s and 70s, several leading members of the Canadian artistic community were also part of UVic’s faculty. While some of these artists spent their careers at the University, the majority moved to other institutions. For Robin and Sylvia Skelton, this continual change in the local arts scene was an opportunity to collect work from a wide variety of artists including Biddy Gaddes, John Dobereiner, Pat Martin Bates, Peter Daglish, Donald Harvey and Douglas Morton.
the hold of our hands

Skelton Writing a Poem (1974)
Herbert Siebner
Sgraffito and paint
Acc #: U992.16.2

White Window Signal #17 (1968)
Pat Martin-Bates
Mixed media on paper
Acc #: U999.20.14

Untitled (Unknown date)
Peter Daglish
Lithograph on paper
Acc #: U980.2.1

Untitled (1964)
Biddy Gaddes
Ink on paper
Acc #: U999.20.6
HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE EXHIBITION

Skelton’s Collages

Although primarily known as a poet, editor and critic, Robin Skelton’s inquisitive and creative mind quickly led him to the boundless territory of visual art. Skelton began making collages in 1946 and first exhibited the works in Manchester in the late 1950’s with the Peterloo Group. His small collages are like visual poems and puns that he regarded as enjoyable exercises and a pleasant distraction from serious writing. They are part of a larger collection of collages donated by Skelton to the University of Victoria Special Collections in 1991.

Art Publications

Robin Skelton has published more than 100 works of poetry, fiction, non-fiction, art criticism and biography. A selection of his art-related publications, many of which include beautifully reproduced plates, are featured in this exhibition. Many of Skelton’s publications include works by Limner artists, of which Skelton was a tireless promoter. He also collaborated with Siebner to produce books that were works of fine art. Musebook (1972) was published under Skelton’s own Pharos Press, which he founded in 1972 with his wife Sylvia. Inscriptions (1967) combines Skelton’s poetry and Siebner’s illustrations and was printed by Morriss Printing on luxurious oversize paper.
The Game (1966-69)
Robin Skelton
Mixed media

Ozymandias (1966-69)
Robin Skelton
Mixed media

Untitled (Unknown)
Robin Skelton
Mixed media

THE LIMNERS

THE WORLD OF W.B. YEATS
Loyalty to Progression
EXHIBITION LIST

Baskin, Leonard
Head of Blake
1960
Intaglio print
U899.6.7

Behan, John
Head
1964
Lithograph
U890.2.20

Behan, John
The Rabbi
1966
Lithograph
U890.2.31

Bemwick, Pauline
Still
1964
Lithograph
U890.2.29

Cicimara, Richard
Crucifixion
1967
Conte collage
U996.25.21

Cradock, Una
Figure
1967
Intaglio print
U890.2.2

Cradock, Una
Figures
1967
Intaglio print
U890.2.2

Diglish, Peter
Untitled
Unknown date
Lithograph
U890.2.1

Diglish, Peter
Palm Alarm
Unknown date
Moulded plastic
U86.16

Dobervinets, John
Redlands Across the
48th Parallel
Unknown date
Collograph
U999.20.18

Eadie, Myra
Dry Point #2
Unknown date
Intaglio print
U966.1.7

Gaudier, Billy
Untitled
1944
Ink on paper
U999.20.6

Hanretty, Alice
Figure from a Tomb
Unknown date
Intaglio print
U980.2.35

Hanretty, Alice
Man Wearing a Laurel
Wreath
Unknown date
Intaglio print
U980.2.52

Harvey, Donald
Landscape with Three
Suns
1966
Lithograph
U990.2.15

Harvey, Donald
Fieldscape
Unknown date
Oil & pastel on paper
U999.6.4

Heenskirk, Marianne
Cronkhaven
1966
Intaglio print
U980.2.16

Hickey, Patrick
Wicklow Lake
Unknown date
Lithograph
U980.2.15

Hickey, Patrick
Still Life in Black
Unknown date
Lithograph
U980.2.27

Hickey, Patrick
Hornbill
Unknown date
Seriograph
U980.2.5

Jensen, Leroy
Untitled
1989
Pastel on paper
U996.29.39

Leathen, Winston
Untitled
1972
Seriograph
U973.1.3

Martin-Bates, Pat
Arctic Silent Signal #10
1968
Mixed media
U999.20.13

Martin-Bates, Pat
Night Moon of the Sweet
Singers
1960
Intaglio print
U996.25.14

Martin-Bates, Pat
Symbols in Small Flight
1960
Intaglio print
U996.25.15

Martin-Bates, Pat
White Window Signal #17
1968
Mixed media
U999.20.14

McGuinness, Nora
Dublin Bay
Unknown date
Lithograph
U980.2.30

McTaggart, Brett
Graveyard
Unknown date
Intaglio print
U980.2.37

McTaggart, Brett
Street Scene in Munt
1983
Lithograph
U980.2.4

McWeeny, Leslie
Heads
1964
Lithograph
U980.2.19

Metcalf, Iric
To Robot and Sylvia
1967
Watercolour
U989.6.9

Morton, Douglas
Phoenix
1988
Seriograph

Pavelic, Myfanwy
Robin Skelton
Unknown date
Mixed media
U984.27.1

Pavelic, Myfanwy
Robin Skelton
1975
Mixed media collage
U993.7.107

Pavelic, Myfanwy
The Limmiers
1975
Mixed media, tissue
U993.7.988

Pavelic, Myfanwy
Robin Skelton & Allison
1985
Acrylic on canvas
U993.7.12

Pavelic, Myfanwy
The Limmiers
1973
Acrylic on canvas
U993.7.123

Pavelic, Myfanwy
Robin Skelton & Allison
1984
Graphite on paper
U993.7.29

Pavelic, Myfanwy
Max Painting
1974
Charcoal on paper
U999.28.7

Pavelic, Myfanwy
Herbert and Angela
1984
Graphite on paper
U993.7.24
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selected Herbert Siebner Works</th>
<th>Selected Jack Butler Yeats Works</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Limmer Exhibition</strong></td>
<td><strong>Leafy Munster</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poster</td>
<td>1910-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Ink and watercolour</td>
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<tr>
<td>Serigraph</td>
<td>U982.44.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U987.13.2</td>
<td><strong>The Bog Road</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bella Belle</strong></td>
<td>1910-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown date</td>
<td>Ink and watercolour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print on paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>U999.33.17</td>
<td><strong>Fair Day</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The Circus Director</strong></td>
<td>1910-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>Ink and watercolour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gouache on paper</td>
<td>U982.44.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U999.20.5</td>
<td><strong>The Sanachle</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Istanbul</strong></td>
<td>1910-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>Ink and watercolour</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ink on paper</td>
<td>U982.44.20</td>
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<tr>
<td>U999.20.4</td>
<td><strong>Steeplechase</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Joker with Egg</strong></td>
<td>1910-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>Ink and watercolour</td>
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<tr>
<td>Watercolour and ink</td>
<td>U982.44.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U988.33.8</td>
<td><strong>A Horse Race</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Riddle for Robin</strong></td>
<td>1910-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Ink and watercolour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodcut</td>
<td>U982.44.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U988.33.5</td>
<td><strong>Evening</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>1910-25</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ink and watercolour</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Robin and Herbert Both 60</td>
<td><strong>Leafy Munster</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>1910-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ink &amp; watercolour</td>
<td>Ink and watercolour</td>
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<td>U988.33.22</td>
<td>U982.44.1</td>
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<td><strong>Priest, Poet, Professor</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Bog Road</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown date</td>
<td>1910-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print on paper</td>
<td>Ink and watercolour</td>
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<tr>
<td>U999.33.17</td>
<td>U982.44.27</td>
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<td><strong>Untitled</strong></td>
<td><strong>Fair Day</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown date</td>
<td>1910-25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Watercolour and ink</td>
<td>Ink and watercolour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U988.33.19</td>
<td>U982.44.14</td>
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<td><strong>From a Limner to a Limner</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Sanachle</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1980</td>
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<td>Serigraph</td>
<td>Ink and watercolour</td>
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<td>U988.33.18</td>
<td>U982.44.20</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Untitled</strong></td>
<td><strong>Steeplechase</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown date</td>
<td>1910-25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mixed ink and wash</td>
<td>Ink and watercolour</td>
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<td>U988.33.16</td>
<td>U982.44.7</td>
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<td><strong>Lovebook</strong></td>
<td><strong>A Horse Race</strong></td>
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<td>1910-25</td>
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<tr>
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<td>U988.33.15</td>
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</table>
Robin Skelton was born in East Yorkshire, England and attended Cambridge and Leeds Universities. In 1963, he and wife Sylvia emigrated to Canada, where he was instrumental in starting the Creative Writing program at UVic, as well as the Special Collections department at the school’s McPherson Library. He edited UVic’s literary journal, The Malahat Review, from 1967 to 1983, and became the publication’s longest acting editor. Known principally for his writing and poetry, Robin was active in the Limner Art Group in Victoria and used collage as his primary artistic expression. He later delved into soapstone carving, printmaking and sculpture. He first exhibited with the Peterloo Group in Manchester in 1957 and continued to contribute art works to group shows in Victoria as well as Vancouver Island Jury shows. His work is included in a number of public collections in Canada and several private collections in Canada, U.S.A., and Great Britain.

Sylvia Skelton was born in Manchester, England. She was active in the Limner Art Group in Victoria as the society’s secretary and archivist. A highly organized and motivated individual, she divided her time between the volunteer committee of the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, orchestrating Limner exhibitions, chairing the visual arts committee of the Community Arts Council, singing in the Victoria Choral Society, and raising three children. Together, Sylvia and Robin maintained a diverse and active social group and promoted local artists from the start. Sylvia was also the founder of the Fairbank Calligraphy Society, which was her chosen artistic medium, and a talent she worked on for much of her life.

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