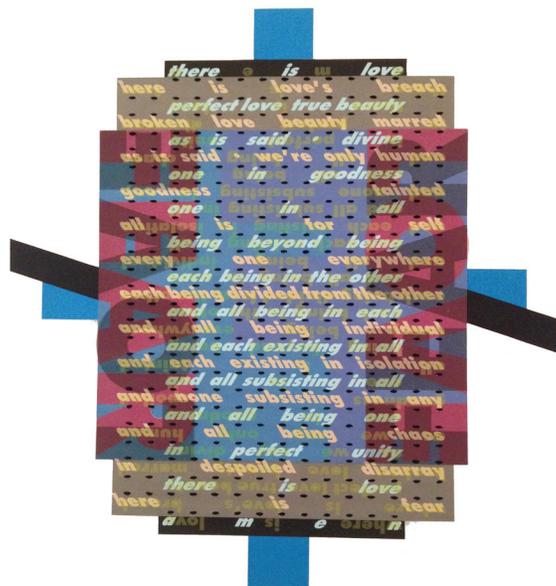


# Typoems & Prints

Norman Schmidt

School of Art Gallery: Special Collections

August 30 - September 29, 2016



Love/Fear; [words: anonymous]  
Mixed media prints & paper cutouts 12" x 14.75"

Norman Schmidt's work is a constrained surge of sewn narratives and a hand printed gospel choir of words and colour. His graceful toil is mesmerizing in its familiarity yet often impenetrable without considerable focus and patience. Themes of benefaction, the awesome power of nature and seasons, and a matter of fact display of penitent duty in creating precisely detailed flourishes of printers ink, type, and paper demonstrate Schmidt's belief that an artists toil can also count. Prints, books, and what Schmidt calls 'Typoems' are presented together to weave a narrative of artistic labour and a fulfillment of religious duty over the last decade or so of production.

You can almost imagine the artist as Kierkegaard's Knight of Faith, partially armoured, stooped over a press winding letters up onto a page. Recycling old poems and entreaties into a rhythm he hears calling loudly, and then almost imperceptibly, outside of himself. He is situated in a comfortable studio on the prairie beside a stand of ash trees with a view of the moon, but he himself is never comfortable. He is speaking to an audience, which you are welcome to join. You will not be able to understand everything that is said or all that is written, but all of the information is presented. The knight will work tirelessly and with full knowledge that the work will never be completed or finished. But continue it must, as a voluntary payment to a divine force that has never asked for it, nor expected it, but requires it nonetheless.

Norman Schmidt's exhibition *Typoems & Prints* represents a return to the institution that he helped steward for over 20 years as an instructor in the School of Art's Design Program. Known for his typographic innovation, book-making and expertise with a variety of print making technologies bridging several eras, Schmidt's works all demonstrate a keen interest in the language of design. He is adept at presenting all the available information in a manner that engages the viewer visually while not necessarily communicating in a didactic manner. Romantic poetry from A.L. Tennyson, R. Bridges, W. Blake and H.H. Jackson share pride of place alongside Christian scholars and sacred texts such as the Epistle of Paul to Philemon. While the effect is initially overwhelming in its scope and possible interpretations, much like the Mennonite tradition that he is clearly engaged with, the choice of investment is left to the viewer. We can allow the works to wash gently over us and delight in the shapes and colours, the impressive technical skill and the precise intricate ornamentation, or we can dive headlong into a close reading, comparing and contrasting poets and prophets to arrive at a place of contemplation and an entreaty for devotion to repay a gift that is impossible to fully understand or reciprocate.