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The Incline Press prizes independence and craftsmanship – and has proved that you can print what you want and still attract customers. David Bailey finds out more

The Incline Press is proud to call itself a private press. Each of its books is made by hand as a deliberately designed craft object and the type faces, illustrations, book cloth and paper are all selected to complement the text. The press is run by Graham Moss and Kathy Whalen in a workshop in the back streets of Oldham in the industrial north-west of England.

In the 1980s Moss was a time-served history teacher with a professional interest in paper conservation that slowly developed into a book-repair business. In 1990 he bought a small printing press to print labels for acid-free paper wrappers and spine labels, but he soon became inspired to print more than just labels. An Arab press, powered by foot and fed by hand, was the next step, and in 1993 Moss left teaching to pursue his publishing projects. He intended his first book to be Oliver Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village*, but in fact this came out second, following a reprint of Enid Marx's 1938 wood engravings for *Nursery Rhymes*. Detours and distractions are equally a curse and a blessing for a private press publisher – as Eric Gill said: "A private press prints solely what it chooses to print, whereas a public press prints what its customers demand of it."

The press has gone from strength to strength since those early days and has now published over 30 books with remarkable success. The single fount of metal Baskerville type has now been joined by many cabinets of type, featured in the Incline Press type specimen portfolio, *Forty Sheets to the Wind*.

Incline Press books tend to be illustrated with specially commissioned illustrations. Each copy is

STEEPED IN HISTORY



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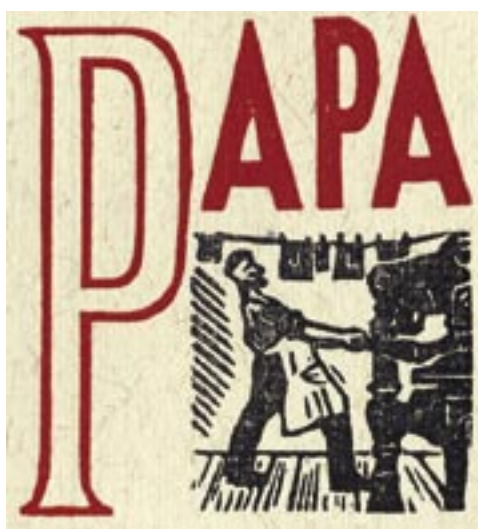
1 Peggy Angus's "Raggle Taggle Gypsies". A portrait of the Brinkley family in Bog Lane, Barnett (1923-25)

2 and 3 Marco's *Animal Alphabet* (2000) contains 27 large linocuts by Enid Marx. The cloth binding features one of Marx's patterned papers from the 1920s

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4 and 5
John Liddell:
A Phonetic
Alphabet features
wood type initials
with lino cut
lettering and
illustration

6 The prospectus
for *Art for Life –*
The Story of
Peggy Angus

7 “And E for the
elephant who
never forgets”
from *Marco’s*
Animal Alphabet

numbered and is usually signed by the author or artist. Books are often made available as sheets for binders who wish to bind the book according to their own taste. Owing to the labour-intensive craft ethic, few editions exceed 200 copies and there is usually a special edition of between 20 and 30 copies.

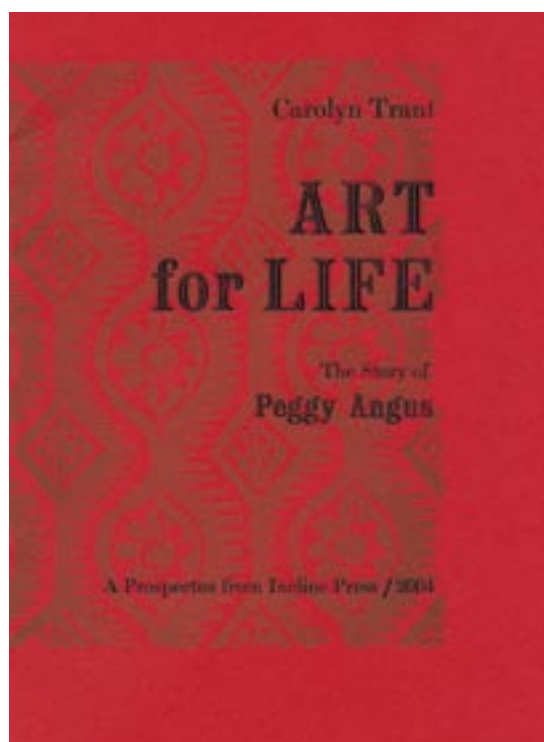
The press gained a transatlantic alliance in partner Kathy Whalen. She was formerly manuscripts librarian at Bryn Mawr College, near Philadelphia, and has been working at the press since early 1999. Incline aims to achieve the supreme feat of producing up to six books every year – but it never quite manages it.

One recent success is *Marco’s Animal Alphabet* by Enid Marx, who provided the images for Incline’s first book and has also illustrated others such as *Birds & Beasts & their Feasts* (1996). For the *Alphabet* she cut 27 large and charming linocuts accompanied by a cumulative doggerel explanation. The edition comprised 160 copies for sale, hand-printed on acid-free Fabriano Artistic paper, made from 100 per cent cotton fibres and retaining the deckle edge to the paper. Generous 15 x 11 inch pages and a cloth binding featuring one of Enid Marx’s patterned papers designed in the 1920s make the book a real treasure. The 10 special copies include a similarly bound portfolio of black prints and the two volumes are enclosed in a slipcase. It is truly a beautiful object to behold.

Incline’s latest publication is nothing if not ambitious. *Art For Life*, the story of Peggy Angus by Carolyn Trant, celebrates a woman of many talents. “Peggy Angus was part of the great outpouring of talent in the early 1920s. It was the time of Hepworth, Ardizzone, Nash and Ravilious – and Peggy was there as well,” says Moss.

Angus created tiles for interiors and exteriors and she etched marbled decoration for glass cladding. She even invented Anguside, which was used in the building of Gatwick Airport. “Peggy spent her entire life as a painter,” Moss says, “but she is particularly known as a craft worker – a designer of tiles and creator of hand-printed wallpaper from carved linoleum blocks.”

Her paintings of John Piper and of the family of Ramsay MacDonald hang in the National Portrait



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Gallery in London. Eric Ravilious stayed with Angus and painted pictures of her house, Furlongs, and the Sussex countryside around it. Furlongs also features prominently in Helen Binyon’s biography of Ravilious and in the paintings that were shown in the recent exhibition of his work “Imagined Realities” at the Imperial War Museum.

To generations of students, Angus was simply head of art at the North London Collegiate School. Throughout her life she was a tireless champion of art for all. She wanted people to be educated not simply as creators, but as “enlightened patrons” of art in all its forms. The title, *Art for Life*, is taken from a prospectus she prepared to advertise her Community Art School at the Camden Studio Workshops in the 1970s.

The book’s author, Carolyn Trant, is an adept artist herself and runs the Parvenu Press in East Sussex. Trant has written a sensitive biography, bringing together all aspects of Angus’s life and work in a definitive text. She traces Angus’s progress from her childhood in Chile to



'I'm keen on the idea that Peggy Angus was an independent craft worker – she was still working on handmade wallpaper printed using her lino blocks in the 1980s.'

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the Royal College of Art, and the friendships she established with fellow students in the “flowering of talent” of the early 1920s, including those with Binyon and Ravilious. The book includes her post-war work as an industrial designer for the YRM Partnership, Carters Tiles and Sandersons, before detailing her years working with friends and family in London at Camden Studios and at her beloved Furlongs.

As those who knew her will appreciate, Angus's output is much too large to be contained between the covers of a simple book. The pages are filled with photos, reproductions and prints. “The book has 120 tipped-in plates,” Moss explains. “It's printed letterpress on a large 15 x 10 inch page and also has facsimiles of her sketchbooks. It even includes a CD of her stories and singing.”

It is a substantial endeavour. For a start, the book needs to be specially housed. *Art For Life* is hand bound in the workshop of designer binder Stephen Conway, using book cloth and a patterned paper featuring one of Angus's designs. In consultation with Conway, a slipcase has been devised to hold the book along with a specially designed portfolio. This contains four facsimile sketchbooks and a CD of Angus taken from the tapes Trant made while working on the book. The CD holds a few of her stories of life in the 1940s and opens and closes with a song.

What attracted Moss to the work of Angus, however, was not her painting, her craftwork or her teaching. “It was her life. None of her friends left her. I'm keen on the idea that she was an independent craft worker – someone who was still working on handmade wallpaper printed using her lino blocks in the 1980s.” As someone who makes his living in a very independent way, Moss's inspiration is clear.

“She was a great supporter of an independent lifestyle. She began learning Romany early in life and later used it during her travels in Pakistan. One of the songs she sings on the CD is *Raggle Taggle Gypsy*. It was sung at her funeral. You couldn't have a better subject to make a book about, and you couldn't do a little book about Peggy,” he adds. “She stayed up to date, yet developed and progressed over the years. This is a biography, not a book about her art – that book is still to be written.”

Moss and Whalen take obvious pride in every

aspect of the design and construction of their books – a fact that comes through clearly as soon as a reader opens any one of them. Ann Muir's charming *Harvesting Colour – The Year in a Marbler's Workshop* is a perfect example. Each month of the year is a chapter illustrated by a specially made sheet of marbled paper, as the author leads us through a year in her marbling workshop. Each marbled design unfolds from the book to a full 20 inches wide. Half-bound in buckram, the boards feature yet another of Muir's papers. *Harvesting Colour* has sold out, but Incline still has a handful of copies of Muir's miniature book *The Ancient Art of Ebru*. This little jewel features 10 tiny monoprints framed in gold alongside her introduction to this rarefied branch of marbling. If you enjoy marbled paper, you cannot fail to be enchanted by it.

The spring 2005 offering from Incline Press will be *A Paper Snowstorm: Toni Savage & the Leicester Broadsheets*. Derek Deadman and Rigby Graham have collaborated on the text for this long-overdue biography of Toni Savage and the Leicester Broadsheets. An integral part of the folk music revival of the 1960s, Savage and his Leicester folk club inspired a concurrent revival in the art of the printed broadsheet. It will include facsimiles of broadsheets printed by Savage, as well as new ones printed by other presses. It promises to be another perfect example of the fine work achievable by an inspired practitioner working in the spirit of that “independent craft worker” whom Moss so admires.



David Bailey is a partner in the Avenue Press, publishing heavily illustrated, beautifully bound, limited edition books. www.avenuepress.co.uk

Further information

Incline Press books can be ordered from Incline Press, 36 Bow Street, Oldham, Lancashire OL1 1SJ, England. Telephone and fax +44(0)161 627 1966, e-mail books.inclinepress@virgin.net. Books can be viewed at www.inclinepress.com. Graham Moss and Kathy Whalen warmly welcome visitors by appointment.