

# Letter Arts Review



\$14.50

*Dead Sea Scroll (detail)*  
from the Department of  
Antiquities of Jordan.  
Photographs by Dr. Bruce  
Zuckerman and Kenneth  
Zuckerman, West Semitic  
Research. Courtesy of the  
Department of Antiquities  
of Jordan and West Semitic  
Research.



if it had been written yesterday. The Hebrew hung from its guidelines like ornaments of a stark and timeless kind, suspended in its air of invincibility. Panel after panel the museum helped you along with blow-ups of the featured piece, accompanied with commentary on its significance and translations of selected lines. Of particular interest to readers of *Letter Arts Review* would be the fragments of Job Targum for its visible stitching where animal skins were pieced together to make a scroll (one fragment even bears a strand of runaway thread), and the fragments of Paleo-Leviticus whose significantly sloped paleo-Hebrew script—the exclusive hand of the First Temple period before the Babylonian exile and Diaspora—differs significantly from the more angular, squarish bookhand in most of the other scrolls. (The scribes reserved the use of paleo-Hebrew for their copies of books from the Torah.) An hour or so later, it was hard to imagine there was anything left to see.

As a kind of coda to the scrolls, the exhibit brought you up to date with examples of the scribal tradition as it has carried on since Qumran: eleventh-century folios of the Pentateuch from the National Library of Russia; video footage of a contemporary scribe in Ethiopia preparing his parchment and copying the book of Psalms on his lap, perhaps in the

same way the scribes at Qumran might have worked; and several openings from the Prophets volume of *The Saint John's Bible*. Featuring the work of Shelomo ben Buya'a at one end, the eleventh-century scribe to whom the Aleppo Codex is attributed (long honored with the Leningrad Codex for being the earliest known copy of the Hebrew Bible until the scrolls were discovered), and the work of Donald Jackson at the other end, this coda shows that the tradition at Qumran hardly vanished with the Essenes.

My only complaint with the exhibit is that at this point you were ushered up a stairwell right into the bookstore where consumerism awaited you, despite the sobering experience you hadn't even begun to digest. This arrangement also ran the risk of losing viewers for a full-length showing of *Ancient Qumran*, placed in a room across the hall. (Robert R. Cargill, a doctoral student in Second Temple Judaism and Archaeology at UCLA who has created the film as part of his dissertation, recently informed me that the film will be available to the public through its website, [virtualqumran.com](http://virtualqumran.com), and it is a wonderful resource for anyone interested.) Not that I didn't take advantage of the bookstore. When in Rome, they say, even on the heels of an exhibit about a community destroyed by Rome. So I bought myself the catalogue, a book, and a bit of bric-a-brac: a miniature replica of a scroll jar from the Israel Antiquities Authority. Back home in Brooklyn, I opened it to unroll a thin paper copy of a long portion of the Temple scroll spanning chapters 28-43 of Isaiah. Though I couldn't put my finger on it, somewhere on the right-hand side lay verse 30:8 — "And now, go, write it before them on a tablet, and inscribe it in a book, that it may be for the time to come as a witness for ever." The scribes of Qumran would appreciate the San Diego Natural History Museum for the role it has played in celebrating the legacy of their fidelity to that edict.

#### **Book**

#### **THE MAKING OF A POSTAGE STAMP**

*Designing the Mentoring Stamp*

By Lance Hidy

Kat Ran Press, 2007

*By Jerry Kelly* · Someone intimately involved with this book warned me that it may seem to be a bit of overkill: 60 pages devote to a stamp about 1.25 × 1.5 inches in size. I was prepared to agree with him. However, I should have known that Lance Hidy, one of the finest graphic artists active today—and one of the most intelligent—would



not waste words on any facet of design to which he turns his attention, whether it be a folio book of hundreds of pages, a calligraphic broadside, or a diminutive stamp. In a well-organized discourse, containing chapters with such titles as *Gesture*, *Photographs*, *Composition and Color*, *Type*, and *Reflections* (to name only five of fifteen sections in the book), Hidy goes into absorbing detail about the challenges facing the designer offered a commission to design a stamp on a specific theme.

In July 2000 the United States Postal Service asked Lance Hidy to design a stamp on the subject of mentoring. His design is closely related to the decades of experience Hidy had as a poster artist, which in turn was informed by his work as book designer and calligrapher. Several of Hidy's poster designs are reproduced in full color in his book (as are a few of his photographs), showing the application of his design theories on both a large and small scale. It is interesting to see how similar concepts are applicable across a wide spectrum of uses and sizes.

Hidy brings an unusually large amount of technical expertise to his various graphic design activities. He graduated from Yale, where he came under the influence a former Yale graduate, Leonard Baskin (though Baskin did not teach at Yale, his work at the Jonathan Edwards Press was seen by many students). After graduation Hidy was a partner in the early years of the publishing firm of David R. Godine, doing a good deal of the design work for Godine's first publications. Following that Hidy pursued—and excelled at—more areas of the graphic arts than many of us even touch upon, including poster design, photography, printmaking, and type design (his *Penumbra* design for Adobe Systems has proved to be a popular titling font, and is used in the Mentoring stamp).

Before attending Yale, Hidy studied calligraphy with Lloyd Reynolds at Reed College

in Portland Oregon. While we do not have the opportunity to see his penwork in the various journals and books on the subject, Hidy's broad-edged pen writing is quite accomplished, even if it doesn't have the finish which is so prized today. The rhythm and texture of his writing, combined with his impeccable page layout skills, almost always makes for a handsome manuscript (see, in particular, his calligraphic books *Ammagansett Beach* and *Rudolf Koch*, as well as a broadside of bindery rules—all excellent examples of the calligrapher's art). Beyond his formal education Hidy has made a thorough study of the various elements involved in what is lumped together under the heading of "graphic design," and he applies his deep historical knowledge to the job at hand, whether it be a book, manuscript, portfolio of photographs, or a postage stamp.

The nebulousness of a concept such as mentoring presents a challenge to the designer: how can one represent in line, composition, type and color such an abstract concept? Of course such a nonspecific mandate is where an artist as talented as Hidy can excel: the very fluidity of the concept offers unusual opportunities for expression. In this book we see how Hidy attacked the problem from numerous angles, in the end bring together the various elements to convey the meaning of mentoring.

Perhaps more importantly, Hidy's comments on the numerous facets involved with this project are readily applicable to myriad design challenges. For example, the chapter on color delves deeply into color harmony, primary and secondary color combinations, and color theory as espoused by Johannes Itten in the 1920s. All this in just three pages. Similarly, chapters on light, theory, and type are succinct and informative. Therefore, rather than finding the book fluffed out, I found it economical and eminently readable. More importantly, much of the information relating to this specific project is easily related to various other graphic design assignments, making this slim volume not only informative but also educational.

The volume has been designed and published by Michael Russem of the Kat Ran Press. Like the text, the design is austere and functional. The materials and printing by the Stinehour Press are top-notch. With Stinehour closing their doors in April of this year, this may be one of the last books printed by that famed establishment. As an interesting and thorough examination of a specific design project, as well as useful text on other levels and an attractive book in its own right, this volume is well worth adding to one's design library.