

C & C Press Artists' Book: *That's What You Write About, Give & Take*
Poems by Morton Marcus

That's What You Write About, Give & Take is a C & C Press artists' book, which contains two original poems by poet, teacher, writer and film critic, Morton Marcus (1936-2009). While preserving the integrity of the author's original text, the decision to marry these two poems and their respective titles creates a third poem in which urban and rural themes interact. This poem focuses on the environmental impact of urban life. It highlights how easily human exploitation of nature's resources can be overlooked when one is immersed within the urban bubble. This prospectus provides a brief interpretation of the poems as well as an explanation of how the decisions in format, color, typography, page layout, image and material were aesthetically and conceptually appropriate to enhance the two poems.

In the first poem entitled, *That's What You Write About*, Marcus journeys back in time in an exercise in self-deconstruction and introspection; back to when he first picked up a pen and paper; back to the tree that was cut down to make the paper; and the soot from paper mills that fell from the sky. He explores the impact of commercial papermaking on the environment, specifically the tree.

In the second poem entitled, *Give & Take*, the poet participates in a conversation with "Johnny Longo" in a classic urban setting. A conversation between two guys in the back of a taxi headed to a boxing match echoes the action of the sport as well as the attitude, "you've got to give more than you take." Morton Marcus was an avid boxing fan. His deep interest in the sport was the clear inspiration behind this poem.

As to form, the circular format of the book and its deckled pages are reflective of the shape of the cross section of a tree. The square format of the box relates symbolically to the square shape of the boxing ring. Each of these formats is aesthetically cohesive with one another in that a circle fits perfectly within a square.

In addition, the color choices for both the book and the box correspond both aesthetically and conceptually to themes present within the respective poems. The bright white color of the paper, along with the blue lines and red margin reference the white lined paper mentioned in the poem, *That's What You Write About*. The green and brown organic colors of the covers and end sheets are linked to the topic of trees. Correspondingly, the colors chosen for the box were driven by the topic of boxing in the poem, *Give & Take*. The colors of the box visually connect to boxing's hallmark colors of bright red and blue as well as the red and blue of the book's white lined paper. This visual connection aids in uniting the book and box in a cohesive way.

The typographic choices for both poems were selected to aesthetically and conceptually connect with the text, and to visually distinguish the two poems from each other. This decision allows the reader to experience the poems conjoinedly, as well as individually. The font for *That's What You Write About* was based on the poet's handwriting, linking it to the subject matter: the act of writing. A font was produced, by scanning the poet's handwriting into a computer. The text was then digitally composed and photopolymer plates were created to print the text letterpress. The typeface for *Give & Take* was created using a Playbill wood type, owned by poet and printer Gary Young of the Greenhouse

Review Press. Gary obtained this boxing type from a basement of a boxing ring in Seattle, Washington. The boxing ring had a shop in the basement where they printed posters for upcoming fights. A special thank you to Gary for allowing us to borrow this type for the printing of *Give & Take*.

The page layout for this project serves a double function. As in the typographical choices, it assists in differentiating the two poems from one another. A single poem, *That's What You Write About*, can be read on the left hand page of the double page spread and a single poem, *Give & Take*, can be read on the right hand page of the double page spread. A second choice comes into play when the reader chooses to read the book in sequential order, from left to right. Only then a new poem is realized in which the urban and rural interact with the turning of each page.

The choice of materials for both the book and box were driven by the respective poems. The decision to create handmade paper for the text block, end sheets and covers of the book was made to reference the poem, *That's What You Write About*. Specifically, it references the poem's attention to "the tree the paper once was." In reference to *Give & Take*, the synthetic red leather and blue book cloth of the box reflects the contrasting qualities of glossy red leather boxing gloves next to the blue boxing mat.

The use of blue lines and a red margin as imagery within the book assists typographic and page layout decisions in distinguishing the two poems. In addition, the imagery correlates to the white lined paper mentioned in the poem, *That's What You Write About*.

In this prospectus, it has been made evident that choices in format, color, typography, page layout, image and material enhance the poems, protect the individuality of the two poems, and create the setting for a third new poem. This last aspect was what excited Morton Marcus the most about *That's What You Write About, Give & Take*. It is not simply an artists' book in which an artist or artists finely print a text in book form. It is artists taking two poems and constructing, as Marcus stated, a "very clever" new poem from them. The conjoined poems create a springboard for addressing human over-consumption of natural resources.

"That's What You Write About, Give & Take" was printed letterpress on C & C Press handmade paper using sustainable resources of cotton and abaca. The text was printed using photopolymer plates in an edition of seventy-five copies, with the poet's permission. The colophon, dedication and quote page were printed using 13 pt. Bembo & Bembo Italic. Dedicated in loving memory of our friend, the poet Morton Marcus.

Book Size: 9.5" Diameter Circle Box Size: 10.125" x 10.25" x 1.625"

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