

The Palm Beach Post

Wednesday, December 26, 2007

South County

50 cents

MEET YOUR NEIGHBOR: John Cutrone, 43; Seth Thompson, 34

Duo's exhibit offers glimpse into business of book arts

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The art of making books by hand has taken John Cutrone and Seth Thompson from Maine to Florida and quite a few places in between.

For that reason, the founders of Lake Worth-based Convivio Bookworks named their first exhibit, *Long Ways to Travel*, after the Woody Guthrie song.

The retrospective, in the Library Gallery at Florida Atlantic University's John D. MacArthur Campus in Jupiter through Jan. 20, features books printed by letterpress as well as broadsides, or items printed on one side of a sheet of paper.

Many of the broadsides, which can be framed, feature artwork plus quotations or literary passages.

Among the duo's collection are miniature books, books with pages that fold out, and books with unusual items tucked within the pages.

"I've always liked interesting books," said Cutrone, 43, a native of Valley Stream, N.Y., who grew up in South Florida. "When you see something that catches your eye, it leaves an impression."

Cutrone and Thompson are full-time employees of FAU's Arthur and Mata Jaffe Center for Book Arts on the university's main campus in Boca Raton. They live in Lake Worth and dedicate their free time to Convivio (www.conviviobookworks.com), their home-based studio formerly known as Red Wagon Press.

The name Convivio is an Italian word that means feast or banquet. "A lot of what we do is centered around traditions," Cutrone said. "It just seemed like a good fit."

Cutrone, who is the program coordinator for the Jaffe Center, said he developed an interest in the book arts while majoring in English and art at FAU. He later studied book arts as a graduate student at the University of Alabama.

He started printing and binding books in 1994, and he met Thompson a year later. At the



ELIZA GUTIERREZ/Staff Photographer

Seth Thompson (foreground) and John Cutrone work at the Jaffe Center for Book Arts at Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton, where they're standing

next to a Wesel Iron handpress from the 1800s. The Lake Worth pair also run a home-based business called Convivio Bookworks.

time, they were taking an eight-week course at Penland School of Crafts in North Carolina.

Cutrone calls Thompson, who attended Grinnell College in Iowa, the problem-solver of their team.

Thompson was born in Westbrook, Maine, and grew up in the town of Gray. He is an artist specializing in ceramics and pottery. He credits Cutrone with getting him interested in the book arts. "We tend to work well together," said Thompson, 34, collections specialist at the Jaffe Center.

Thompson moved to Lake Worth from Maine after Cutrone bought a home here seven years ago. During the late 1990s, Cutrone spent two summers doing printing projects in a Shaker community in New Gloucester, Maine, near Thompson's hometown. Those books are among the 20 printed works on display during the exhibition.

The show also features the duo's latest book, *Works on Paper*, a book of poetry by Shin Yu Pai, and a broadside featuring a poem by Iraqi poet Zaid Shlah.

Convivio Bookworks donated most of the broadsides of Shlah's poem, titled *From Occident to Orient*, to the Mutanabbi Street Coalition, which uses proceeds from the sale of each broadside to benefit Doctors Without Borders in Iraq. Mutanabbi Street was the center of bookselling in Baghdad until a bomb attack destroyed it earlier this year.

Of the copies that remain, Cutrone and Thompson plan to donate 10 percent of the \$32 selling price to Doctors Without Borders.

Thompson and Cutrone do much of their work on antique printing equipment that they acquired over the years from others in the business. There is a tight community of book artists and printers nationwide, Cutrone said, and they frequently stay in touch through the Internet.

It is an art that is about preserving things that are in danger of passing away, Cutrone said. "It's something that's not being done by a lot of people anymore."

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