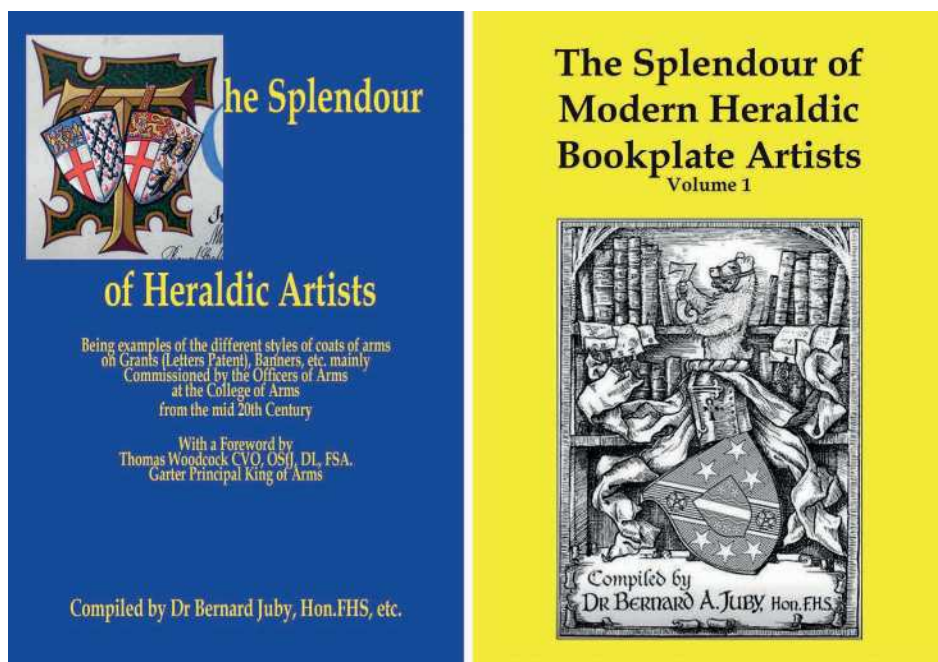


BOOK REVIEWS

Bernard A. Juby, *The Splendour of Heraldic Artists*. Church Crookham, Hampshire: White Rose-Ankh, 2019. 136pp, many illus. Softcover. ISBN 978-1-527238244. \$38.44. E-book £10 direct from the author via bjuby@wanadoo.fr.

Bernard A. Juby, *The Splendour of Modern Heraldic Bookplate Artists, three volumes*. Church Crookham, Hampshire: White Rose-Ankh. 2019–20. 130+134+132pp, many illus. Softcover. No registered ISBNs. \$38.40, \$39.19 and \$38.42. E-books £10.



Somewhere I once wrote ‘Heraldry possesses universal appeal in the unrestrained vigour of its art, the mystery of its symbolism and the nobility of its tradition.’ This set of books from Dr Bernard Juby illustrates splendidly the truth of this assertion. All four were published or revised in 2019 or 2020 and all follow, more or less, the same format: the three volumes of *The Splendour of Modern Heraldic Bookplate Artists* being distinguished simply by numbering, while *The Splendour of Heraldic Artists* is further defined (somewhat opulently) as *Being examples of the different styles of coats of arms on Grants (Letters Patent), Banners, etc. mainly Commissioned by the Officers of Arms at the College of Arms from the mid-twentieth Century*.

Appropriately, this last volume also includes a foreword by Thomas Woodcock, Garter Principal King of Arms. In this, Garter points out that ‘Original artwork always goes out to those who commission it and where an artist only has photocopies of work [it is understandable] that he or she would not want them reproduced.’ Consequently, there are omissions, where artists have withheld their consent to publish or have indicated that they do not want to be identified, while a number of the illustrations are inevitably of somewhat inferior quality. It should also be noted that, because of restrictions due

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Figure 1: Library drawing of the arms of Mr Robert S. Harrison, current Chairman of the Heraldry Society, by Dan Escott, from p. 21 of *The Splendour of Heraldic Artists*.

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to coronavirus at the time of writing, and the fact that all four books are published on a 'print on demand' basis, I have had to review the books on a computer screen which almost certainly reduces the vibrancy of the colour and sometimes the accuracy of the line drawing. In his Introduction Dr Juby also apologises '...that it is impossible to do justice to the full brilliance and lustre that the use of gold leaf imparts to an achievement of arms with the result that a dull yellowish brown is depicted.' However, I must emphasise that none of this detracts from the sheer exuberance of much of the artwork in all four books.

The Splendour of Heraldic Artists includes the work of thirty-two identified artists, eleven of whom are technically Herald Painters (a designation formally approved by the Chapter of the College of Arms in 1980), while thirty-six pages are devoted to 'Unattributed Artwork' and 'Artists for whom only sparse details are known'. The result is a somewhat uneven distribution of illustrations, some artists enjoying several pages while others have only a single representation of their work. What is very clear, however, is the quite extraordinary efforts made by Dr Juby, in this and in the bookplate volumes, to obtain as much material and information as possible – on occasion his frustration is almost palpable!

For me, the outstanding work among the one hundred and sixty full-colour paintings in *The Splendour of Heraldic Artists* comes from the late John Bainbridge (whose interpretation of the arms in my letters patent are illustrated, so I may be biased) and two of the triumvirate of exceptional British heraldic artists of our times: Anthony Wood and Dan Escott. (Regrettably, the third, John Ferguson, is allowed only a passing reference, for he did not work directly on commissions from the College of Arms.) In particular, the examples of Dan Escott's work are exceptional and include the arms of Robert Harrison (1986 **Figure 1**) and two paintings: *Banners into Battle* and *Battle of Nancy 1477*, both of which will be familiar to Escott enthusiasts. The stunning historiated initial (from unidentified letters patent dated 15th June 1996) graces both the cover of this volume and the author's introduction. There are also photographs of the artist and, as with several other entries, biographical details.

Anthony Wood, who is President of the Society of Heraldic Arts, has just three paintings illustrated, including the familiar arms of the late John Brooke-Little (1952). (The Heraldry Society, together with the Boydell Press, has recently published *The Heraldic Art of John Ferguson* (2018). Is it not time that similar tributes were paid to the work of Dan Escott and Anthony Wood?) One particularly interesting section is devoted to the work of Quentin Peacock SHA who describes himself as a 'digital heraldic artist ... working closely with the College of Arms'. Here are illustrated no fewer than eleven of Peacock's works, including the arms of the British Olympic Association, elements of which were incorporated in the Stella McCartney-designed Team GB kit at the Rio Olympics. The acknowledgement of the value of heraldic digital design by both the College of Arms and the Society of Heraldic Arts will, no doubt, continue to encourage debate among traditionalists.

Heraldic flags and other artefacts are also well represented, notably a number of attractive illustrations of banners, standards, carved crests and painted stonework by Margaret J Fitzpatrick (another Reigate pupil of Anthony Wood) that serve to demonstrate the variety of media available to heraldic artists when interpreting work commissioned by the College of Arms.

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Figure 2: Arms of Baz Manning from his Letters Patent of 2000 drawn by an artist who wished to remain anonymous, *The Splendour of Heraldic Artists* p. 42.

When considering the heraldry in this volume, one should not forget that, as Thomas Woodcock points out in his introduction, herald painters are responsible not only for the heraldry in letters patent, but also for the decoration, gilding, and scrivening of the document. Here there are illustrated a number of letters patent, including a splendid example of a grant to fellow artist 'Baz' Manning (2000) by A.N.Other (**Figure 2**), an 'artist who ... did not want his name to appear but is included for historical completion'. Those of us who are familiar with his work can be in no doubt to whom this refers: his artistry and originality are exemplary. Unfortunately, not all the illustrations of letters patent in this volume are of sufficient scale to be fully appreciated.

Superficially the three volumes of *The Splendour of Modern Heraldic Bookplate Artists* appear to be similar in appearance and format to *The Splendour of Heraldic Artists*. However, the content is on an entirely different scale – a quite extraordinary compilation of heraldic bookplates and bookplate-makers of various nationalities and traditions. As one progresses through each of the three volumes, the extraordinary determination of the author to delve ever deeper into his subject is increasingly apparent.

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Inevitably, the bulk of each volume is devoted to artists who are currently practising while other sections refer to artists who may not work commercially or have retired from active work; those for whom full details have yet to be found; those who are known but (strangely) do not wish to be named; and those whose work the author has been unable to identify. Roughly half of the third volume is devoted to artists who have already been featured in the first two volumes but have produced further work or for whom other examples have been found.

In most cases biographical information is provided, sometimes at somewhat excessive length, and many of the entries include portraits. Some artists (notably those who are Craft Members of the Society of Heraldic Arts) have sensibly offered their contact details and several illustrations have captions.

Of course, the majority of bookplates have been created as black and white line drawings and reproduce well. Unfortunately, several of the monochrome plates fare less well (though it should be remembered that I viewed these on a computer screen and not with the books in hand). Unlike much of the work in *The Splendour of Heraldic Artists*, most of the illustrations are of the finished artwork which results in greater uniformity throughout. There are also many splendid examples in full colour which, for the most part, reproduce well. The collection also includes examples of bookplates created using digital technology, the work of Quentin Peacock again providing a number of excellent examples. Others have simply ‘converted’ their original artwork to digitised form.

It is quite extraordinary how even the most bland and unimaginative shield of arms can be enlivened in the hands of a skilled practitioner, as seen in the work of artists such as Kevin Grieg and David Fernandes da Silva. Decoration is often highly imaginative, intricate and, where appropriate, will include pictorial biographical references to the owner of the bookplate. There is humour aplenty – see Marco Foppoli’s work (**Figure 3**) – and even mild eroticism, evident in the bookplates of Xon de la Campa Valdes and several others. Taken together, it is the quite extraordinary variety of style and originality, vibrancy and artistic audacity evident in these three books that make them such a pleasure.

My only significant quibble (and one which Dr Juby addresses to some extent in the third volume) is the disproportionate allocation of illustrations: for example, Daniel de Bruin has twenty (all quite outstanding) while Kevin Arkinstall and Neil Bromley (both also exceptional heraldic artists) have only two each. To be fair to the author, I suspect this is not for want of trying: I know from experience that extracting information from many artists is akin to getting blood from a stone! In evidence, the acknowledgements in his Introduction are numerous and international in flavour. Like the author, I was amazed to discover that there is a Portuguese Academy of Bookplates! There are one or two typos and errors – for example, the biographical details for Kevin Arkinstall and Neil Bromley (in Volume 1) are confused – but bearing in mind the immense task facing the author in collating all this information, with additions and addendums arriving on his desk at all hours, we can forgive the occasional slip.

As Dr Juby explains in his introduction to Volume 1, bookplates ‘...have been with us since the middle of the fifteenth century but this book is mainly those since approximately the middle of the twentieth century.’ Many of the bookplates illustrated are from Dr Juby’s own collection and, as he explains, ‘...in order to show clearly defined images I have tended towards three to four bookplates per page and in keeping with an

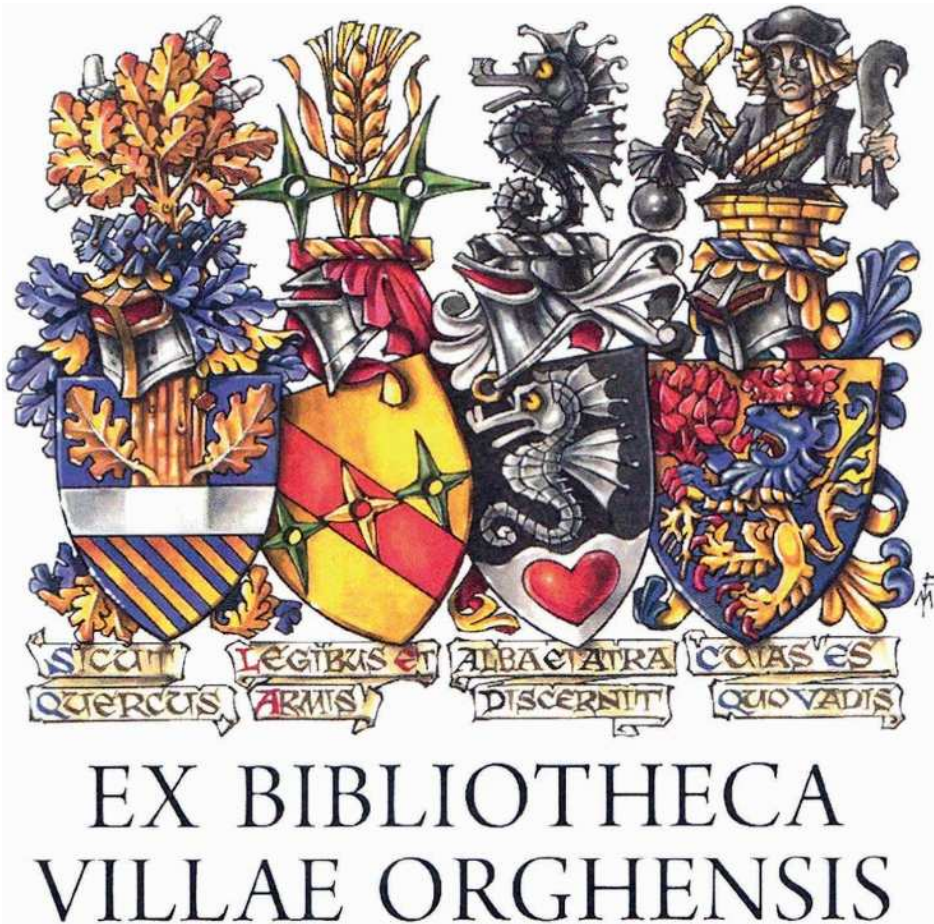


Figure 3: The work of Marco Foppoli from *The Splendour of Modern Heraldic Bookplate Artists* volume 1 p. 19.

approximate full size'. In his Introduction to the series, the author states that 'Throughout the world there are millions of small gems of heraldic art hidden away within the pages of books ...Their lot is to be hidden in the frontispieces of books but which, when given the light of day, bring unexpected pleasure to the eye of the beholder.' In these three volumes Dr Juby has brought enormous pleasure to the eyes of this beholder.

Stephen Friar

The Heraldry Society is an educational charity. Its purpose is to promote greater understanding and appreciation of heraldry and its related subjects. The society organises lectures, study days, congresses, dinners and other social activities. It offers a course in heraldry leading to examination for a diploma. It publishes a range of source material at modest cost. Members receive the *Coat of Arms* and the quarterly *Heraldry Gazette*.

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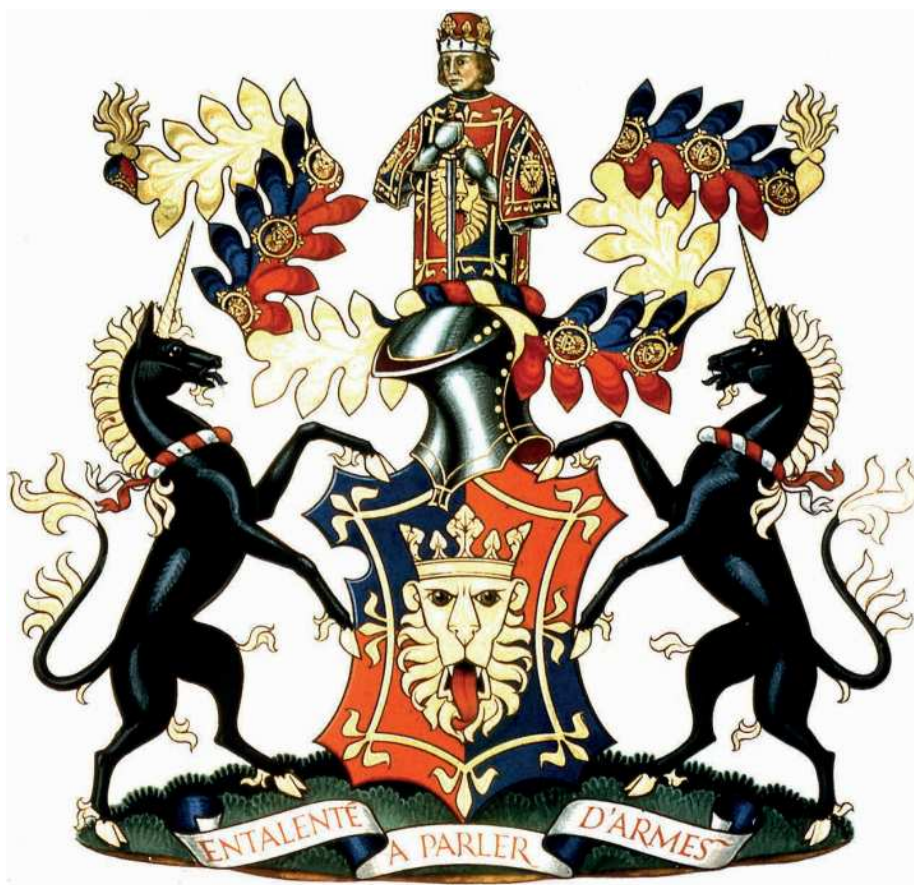
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