

“It’s a Labor of Love”

Local Nine Point Publishing
KEEPS PRINT ALIVE

By Sarah Earle

Geoff Gronlund, co-owner of EFG Books and Gallery in Bridgton, Maine, is a huge fan of the Beat generation. He credits finding a copy of Ken Kesey’s *Last Go Round* in an Ithaca, New York, bookstore in 2002 as the beginning of his loyalty toward collecting books. “It was boldly signed by him,” Geoff says, shaking his head incredulously. “And it was limited to 200 signed copies. I bought it for \$11, but it was probably worth \$100-150.” Once he started looking online, Geoff found an amazing array of limited editions. He says the Beats were always trying to get published anywhere they could, just like anybody would be. “So I got the bug,” he says. “Some people collect stamps, coins, boats. Whatever it might be, I collect books.”

Geoff and his wife, Angela, opened EFG Books and Gallery, named after their now four-year-old son, Ezra Finn Gronlund, in June of 2006. EFG mainly sells used books, from 19th century fiction to biography, poetry and art, as well as a modest selection of new titles. The couple wanted their store to sell more than just books, however; Angela created a single-artist gallery space in the back of EFG, and Geoff created Nine Point Publishing, putting him not only in the business of collecting books, but creating them as well. *Omphalos*, Nine Point Publishing’s semi-annual art and literary journal, is one of Geoff’s regular bookmaking endeavors. This June, *Omphalos* is in its ninth edition. “We want to give artists and writers an opportunity,” says Geoff. “And it ends up being a lot of local people who exhibit [in both the gallery and the journal].”

Excited by the letterpress editions in the Beat publications he collects, Geoff toyed with the idea of putting a letterpress in the back

of the bookstore. “My wife told me not to,” says Geoff laughing, acknowledging the painstaking process of putting letters down by hand. “She is grounding, she’s the earth and I’m the wind. We have a good partnership like that.” Consequently, Geoff designs each issue of *Omphalos* on Adobe InDesign and then out-sources the printing to Cardinal Printing in Denmark, Maine. The literary journal,

released in June and December of each year, has included many regionally known writers, i.e. Gary Lawless of Gulf of Maine Books in Brunswick, Martin Steingesser, the current poet laureate of Portland, and Mark DeCarteret, the seventh poet laureate of Portsmouth, New Hampshire. It has also included Bridgton’s own poet and sculptor, George Erikson.

“I’m grateful to know him,”

says Geoff of George. George’s newest volume of poetry, *Water*, will be Nine Point Publishing’s first limited edition book. Geoff says he invited George, who has a self-published volume of poetry called *Mirrors into Rivers*, to have his poetry published in their debut book after George’s poetry had been featured in *Omphalos* 6 & 7. The result, *Water*, will be no less than a work of art.

“It’s kind of like something George said and I agreed with,” says Geoff. “God forbid something should be beautiful in the book world.” George Erikson’s collection of poems, four to be exact, as his poems run long, will be bound by Rhonda Miller, a bookbinder in Halifax, Nova Scotia, whose work Geoff deems “astounding.” It will be bound in a cream colored cloth enclosed in a Japanese tri-fold case with a bone clasp. The hardcover book will be embossed with Nine Point Publishing’s logo. And true to a limited edition, there will be only 26 lettered copies for sale, complete with George’s signature.





“We’re trying to do something unique, to inspire people,” explains Geoff seriously. “It’s magical poetry, enlightening poetry and it deserves the binding it’s been given.” He won’t say how much the book will cost, though such a detailed work cannot come cheap. “We’ve been losing money on it, regardless,” he admits. “All this, it’s a labor of love.”

Geoff has plenty of ideas for Nine Point’s future. An avid Grateful Dead fan—*Omphalos* has published the Dead’s lyricist, Robert Hunter—Geoff is hoping that he’ll be able to put together an anthology of Timothy Truman’s Grateful Dead comics. These frequently appeared in the Grateful Dead Almanac after Jerry Garcia’s death. “He’s interested,” Geoff says of Truman. “It’s a big iron on the fire right now.”

Geoff is also working with a letterpress in Scarborough, to put out limited edition broadsides, or poetry printed on oversized paper. Broadsides or small card prints might be sent to subscribers on the holidays. “You can get creative and be unique with this stuff,” says Geoff.

Due to Nine Point Publishing’s exquisite quality, aside from the semi-annual *Omphalos*, Geoff is limiting himself to one hardcover book for now. The plan is to print *Water* as a paperback next summer, and also create a new hardcover with a new writer. “The limited editions are by invitation only, but we’re always seeking writers and artists whose work deserves to be published in *Omphalos*,” Geoff says. “We want to keep published books alive.”

EFG Books is located at 186 Main Street, Bridgton, Maine. Open 10-5pm Tuesday through Saturday.

Visit their website at www.efgbooks.com, and www.ninepointpublishing.com.



and I see the washerwoman
her hands an extension
of grey voices in a silver river
kneeling on a rock washing the dream she wears on a rock
she will pass it on
and it passes on

and the television shouts to the chair
and the telephone shouts
and the kids cry
and she cries into the pillow wishes
she would drown

the silent anaesthesia of tears sends back its dead
and on the river bank
the matted grass
is parted by a quick wind
then the fire sears
and the hair flows back to the horse tail
sizzles to the dry lizard skin
back to the dotted line the drafted chart of light

FROM *The Birthday*
GEORGE ERIKSON. *Water*. 2009