

# WOMEN at the CENTER

Duke University Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library

Issue 9, Spring 2006

## Bound to the Bingham Center: *Pink Corset Book* Arrives

### Did You Know...

- The Bingham Center currently holds 230 artists' books.
- The Bingham Center is the only repository that focuses on artists' books by women that are specifically about issues related to gender.
- Artists' books transform our ideas and experiences of "the book" by pushing the limits of form and content often followed by traditionally bound volumes.

### Inside this issue:

<i>The Untitled Pink Corset Book</i>	1
Mary Lily Grants	1
Interview with Tamar Stone	2
Gay Fiction Collections	2
"Everyday Life & Women in America"	3
Kelly Wooten Joins the Staff	3

The Sallie Bingham Center actively collects women's artists' books as part of the Center's ongoing efforts to document both the activities of women artists and outside-of-the-mainstream publishing. Artists' books are a unique form of artistry that take the traditional codex as their starting point, combining the fine craftsmanship and aesthetic of the visual arts with the narrative of the book.

The work of Tamar Stone, a New York City-based book artist, has been at the top of our "wish list" for the collection. Recently, through a joint purchase with the John W. Hartman Center for Sales, Advertising, and Marketing History, Stone's one-of-a-kind *The Untitled Pink Corset Book* found a home here at the Bingham Center alongside other masterworks by some of the leading female book artists of the past several decades.

Stone's book, an assemblage of five nested pink corsets, transforms the simple act of turning pages, inviting the reader to unlace and unfold each corset in order to read the text embroidered within the panels. A seasoned historical researcher, Stone uses quo-

tations from turn-of-the-twentieth-century corset advertising, as well as the personal reflections of women who wore corsets, to create the text. The juxtaposition of the upbeat advertisements with the often conflicted and painful memories of the wearers is an effective comment on the historical legacy of women's physical and social confinement.



Bingham Center director Laura Micham, who coordinated the book's purchase, believes that Stone's work fits seamlessly within the charge of the Bingham Center. "She's taking something that is so intimate, so personal, and demonstrating that the personal is political and the political is personal," Micham says.

This past March, in celebration of *The Untitled Pink Corset Book's* arrival at Duke University, the Bingham Center welcomed Stone to campus for three days. The artist gave a public lecture on her work and met with several small groups of Duke students and library staff. An interview with Stone, conducted during this visit, can be found on page two of this newsletter.

## 2006-2007 Mary Lily Research Grants Awarded

The Bingham Center is pleased to announce the recipients of this year's Mary Lily Research Grants. The grants support the work of students, scholars, and independent researchers who wish to travel to Durham to make use of the Bingham Center's holdings, and are named in honor of Mary Lily Kenan Flagler Bingham. The grants have been

awarded to the following individuals:

**Samantha Barbas**, History Department, University of California at Berkeley, for work on a book about the life and career of Gloria Steinem and her involvement in the U.S. women's movement in the 1970s-1990s. (continued on p. 4)

## An Interview with Artist Tamar Stone

*The Sallie Bingham Center staff speaks with Tamar Stone, feminist, photographer, and book artist:*

**SBC:** Your books explore the ways in which women have been confined both bodily and socially. Why does this resonate with you?

**TS:** From the ages of 13 to 18, I wore a brace 23 hours each day for my scoliosis. I felt very isolated physically and socially. I felt I had no choice as to whether or not I could wear the brace—I had to wear it. This was my connection to women throughout history who have been confined physically by their clothing and socially by the rules of their society.

**SBC:** What inspired you to make *The Untitled Pink Corset Book*?

**TS:** I had made other books using paper, vellum, and acetate—overlaying words and images, creating new meanings, and making visual puns. Once I completed my second book, which had ideas about women's bodies being confined and defined by different objects—clothing, household appliances—to make them “perfect,” I wanted to make those ideas more “3-D.” I thought integrating those ideas and stories I had about women with their corsets—embroidering the text into the corsets—would be a good way to tell those stories.

**SBC:** How do you do your research?

**TS:** I collect a lot of text by reading women's diaries and historical etiquette books, and by corresponding with women from a scoliosis

support group. I read through my notes and connect similar themes; then I find the pieces of corsets that will work for the project. Once in a while I find an object—like a group of old photographs of women and their children—that I build the project around.

**SBC:** Is there a difference in having your book be part of a library's collection, as opposed to being part of a museum's collection?

**TS:** Seeing my book at the Bingham Center opened up a whole new world to me. The opportunity to have the students—or anyone who would like to see the book—touch it and read it the way it was meant to be read and seen is invaluable. Having the book in a collection where it will get used on a daily basis is really wonderful.

**SBC:** What are you working on now?

**TS:** I'm working on a few projects. I have a series of corset books about mothers and daughters and daughters and their dolls. I just started a piece on the history of women and exercise (with and without corsets). Besides the corset work, I've been doing a series of stories of women and their beds—stories about birth, relationships, and housework, among other themes, which are embroidered into the bed coverings. I have four “doll-size” beds completed, with stories worked out for at least six more. I am also planning to start on my first “life-size” bed story this summer.



Tamar Stone (r.) with Amy McDonald, Bingham Center volunteer



One of Stone's “doll-size” beds, “He said...She said...”

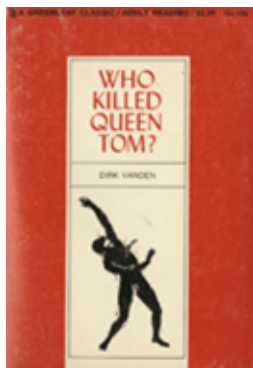
## Drewey Wayne Gunn Donates Collections of Gay Fiction

In November 2005, the Bingham Center and Special Collections received 378 gay male mysteries and police stories and 109 gay American pulps, the generous gift of Drewey Wayne Gunn, Professor Emeritus, Texas A&M University-Kingsville. Gunn is the definitive collector of gay male mysteries and wrote the book, *The Gay Male Sleuth in Print and Film: A History and Annotated Bibliography*.

The collections, which complement the Bingham Center's extensive lesbian pulp fiction holdings, are made up primarily of books printed by low-budget publishers in the Post-Stonewall era (after 1969). The pulp novels, mostly from the 1970s, are often pornographic explorations of gay male desires.

Common themes are enjoying same-sex relationships without fear, coming out with pride, finding love, creating families and communities, and fighting oppression. Countering these positive themes, pulps also titillate readers by depicting police willing to use their power to sexually abuse defenseless men and boys.

By the 1980s and 1990s, as gay culture entered more into the mainstream, gay-themed novels were printed by prominent publishing houses. The novels' themes expanded beyond a focus on sex to also include literary and genre fiction. The Drewey Wayne Gunn Collection of Gay Male Mysteries and Police Stories ranges from mainstream hardbacks, to Japanese manga, to specialized “adult only” titles.



The cover of *Who Killed Queen Tom*, written by Dirk Vandem

## Digital Collection Highlights Prescriptive Literature

A digital collection entitled "Everyday Life & Women in America, c.1800-1920," composed primarily of resources culled from the Bingham Center's holdings, has just been released by Adam Matthew Publications. It includes 19th and early 20th century materials that address politics, social and gender issues, religion, race, education, employment, marriage, sexuality, home and family life, health, and popular pastimes.

Adam Matthew, based in England, produces digital and microfilmed compilations of manuscripts, rare books, and other primary materials in a broad range of subject disciplines for scholars and research libraries. For over fifteen years, Adam Matthew Publications has increased the accessibility to and longevity of primary source materials otherwise largely unavailable.

A portion of the Bingham Center's extensive collection of prescriptive literature is included in this digitization project. Prescriptive literature has helped to define women's roles in seventeenth- through twenty-first-century America. This genre of literature typically includes manuals, guides, and treatises on facets of "proper" conduct and lifestyle. Prescriptions

for women's proper roles and behaviors were often written by conservative religious leaders seeking to uphold traditional gender roles and by radical feminists seeking to reject them. These texts describe dramatically opposing versions of "ideal womanhood."

This digital resource is the culmination of over a year's work on the part of the staff of the Bingham Center. Adam Matthew Publications carefully selected materials that offer a representation of the social and cultural forces affecting the everyday lives of women and men during the 19th and early 20th centuries in the United States.

Adam Matthew began taking orders for this exciting digital collection at the end of April 2006. This online resource is intended for educational and scholarly use and contains approximately 100,000 fully-searchable images (along with transcriptions) of monographs, pamphlets, periodicals, and broadsides, as well as contextual essays by scholars familiar with the material. More information about this project can be found on the Web at <http://www.ampltd.co.uk/> or by sending an email to [info@ampltd.co.uk](mailto:info@ampltd.co.uk).



The cover of one of the books in the digital collection, *The Glory of Woman, or, Love, Marriage, and Maternity: Containing Full Information on All the Marvelous and Complex Matters Pertaining to Women*

## Kelly Wooten Returns to the Bingham Center

We are delighted to welcome Kelly Wooten back to the Bingham Center. On April 17<sup>th</sup>, Kelly joined the Center as our Research Services and Collection Development Librarian, but she has already spent a good deal of time here.

Working as an intern during the summers of 2001 and 2002, Kelly helped curate the exhibit "Beyond Nancy Drew" and edited a frequently requested bibliography about girls' literature. She also processed the Atlanta Lesbian Feminist Alliance Archives for a microfilming project.

Kelly's master's paper, "Women's Zines in the Sarah Dyer Zine Collection," was based on a Bingham Center collection. She also attended Ladyfest Midwest with Bingham Center staff to

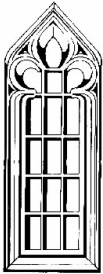
publicize the archive and to solicit zines for the collection. Kelly brings a lot of directly relevant experience to her new position.

Kelly received her BA in English and Women's Studies from UNC-Chapel Hill in 1999 and her MSLS from the UNC School of Information and Library Science in 2002. Before coming to the Bingham Center, Kelly worked as public relations and annual giving coordinator at the Health Sciences Library at UNC.

Kelly is a volunteer and member of the Board of Directors at Internationalist Books and Community Center in Chapel Hill. She is an accomplished knitter with an abiding interest in domestic arts. We're very excited that Kelly has re-joined the Bingham Center circle!



Kelly Wooten (l.) and Cristina Favretto at Ladyfest Midwest, 2001



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## Mary Lily Research Grants (continued from page 1)



**Elizabeth Bishop**, History Department, University of North Carolina, Wilmington, for work on a book and an article about access to abortion and women's citizenship in the USSR and Arab states, 1930-1980.

**Liz Bly**, History Department, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, for dissertation research on connections between second wave radical feminism and the third wave riot grrrl movement.

**Janet Davidson**, Cape Fear Museum of History and Science, Wilmington, NC, for work on an exhibition about women's lives in the Lower Cape Fear region before 1900.

**Katarina Keane**, History Department, University of Maryland, College Park, for dissertation

research on feminist activism in the American South, 1960s-1970s.

**Sarah Maitland**, for work on a book about zines written by women and women-identified people, 1990-2005.

**Kevin O'Neill**, English Studies, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, Scotland, for dissertation research examining plagiarism, authorship, and autobiography in the work of author Kathy Acker.

**Doreen Piano**, English Department, University of New Orleans, for work on a book about the production, distribution, and reception of independent "Do-It-Yourself" publications.