

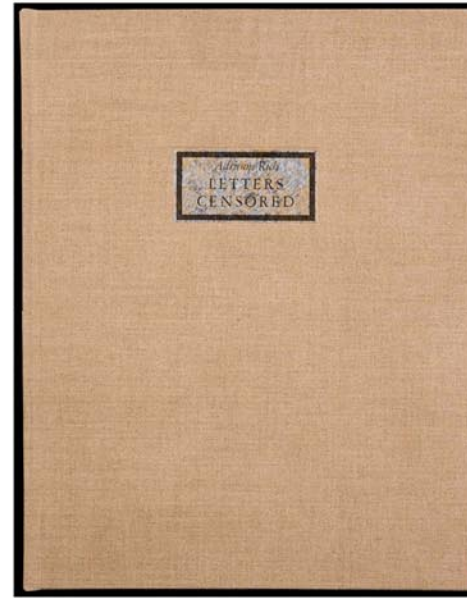
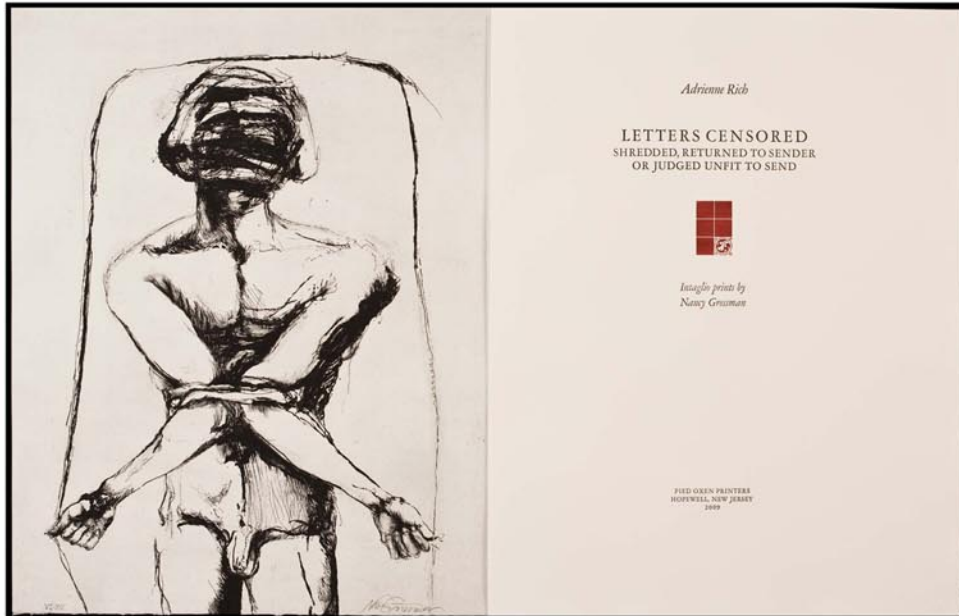
NEWLY PUBLISHED BY PIED OXEN PRINTERS

Letters Censored, Shredded, Returned to Sender Or Judged Unfit to Send

A poem by
Adrienne Rich

With two intaglio prints by
Nancy Grossman

Hopewell, New Jersey, 2009



The Book:

Design, typography, press-work and binding were done by David and Jonathan Sellers, Pied Oxen Printers. Printing was completed May 2009. The foundry types are hand-set ATF Garamond 459 and 460, printed on an 1848 Hopkinson & Cope Albion press. The two intaglio prints were drawn on copper plates by the artist and etched, steel-faced, and printed during summer 2008 by Marjorie Van Dyke at Van Deb Editions in New York City. Artwork and types are printed on dampened Somerset Bookwove (175 grs.) and hand-bound in Belgian linen-covered boards. Materials and processes conform to archival standards. The book measures 13 x 17 inches.

Edition/ Price:

One hundred copies signed by the poet, artist and printer, of which fifteen copies numbered I-XV are reserved, and copies numbered 1-85 are for sale at \$3,500.

The Press:

Pied Oxen Printers creates and publishes limited letterpress editions of contemporary poetry. Established in 1981 under the precursor imprint Eleutherian Printers, Pied Oxen has published books of poetry by Clayton Eshleman, Bei Dao (bi-lingual Chinese-English, bound dos-à-dos), Paul Muldoon, Susan Hahn, Gary Snyder, Jorge Guillén (bi-lingual Spanish-English), and Reginald Gibbons. The Press has collaborated with a number of artists, including Nancy Grossman, Diarmuid Delargy, Bill Paden, Charles Wells and Mary Azarian. The books published to date appear in the special collections of a number of institutions, including, among others, New York Public Library, British Library, National Library of Ireland, and university libraries at Stanford, Harvard, Princeton, Texas, and California. Located in Hopewell, New Jersey, the Press's workshop includes a collection of foundry types, presses and related letterpress and hand-bookbinding equipment. Additional details about previous titles may be found at www.piedoxen.com.



To order or for more information:

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The Poem:

Adrienne Rich's poem *Letters Censored, Shredded, Returned to Sender or Judged Unfit to Send* was composed in homage to the political philosopher and cultural critic Antonio Gramsci, who was incarcerated under Mussolini's fascist regime. Like Gramsci's own writing, *Letters* addresses the dynamics of cultural domination and resistance. An exploration of the relationship between power, history and art - a recurring theme in Rich's work - the poem recognizes on-going cultural repression while it also "...honors Gramsci's own resistance, combining quotes from his prison letters and diaries with fragments written by various 'imaginary persons' to demonstrate an un-intimidated capacity for passionate connection."* In *Letters*, Rich's exploration of struggle and freedom exists on the level of style as well as content. Pushing against the boundaries of language, Rich experiments, challenges, shatters, and re-constructs poetic form.

The Poet:

One of the most influential and celebrated poets in the United States, Adrienne Rich began publishing her poems in the 1950s. She found her mature style and voice in 1973 with the acclaimed *Diving into the Wreck*, a collection of probing and passionate poems that earned her the 1974 National Book Award. Since then her collections of poetry and books of non-fiction prose have received numerous awards, including the Bollingen Prize, Lannan Lifetime Achievement Award, Academy of American Poets Fellowship, Ruth Lilly Poetry Prize, Lenore Marshall/Nation Poetry Prize, a MacArthur Fellowship, two Guggenheim Fellowships, and a Wallace Stevens Award. In 1997 she declined the National Medal of Arts, expressing her disapproval of the policies of the Clinton Administration, explaining that art is meaningless "...if it simply decorates the dinner table of the power which holds it hostage." She has taught and lectured at a number of colleges and universities. In 2006 she was awarded the National Book Foundation Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters.

Artwork:

The two original intaglio prints by Nancy Grossman feature anonymous bodies under duress, appearing to depict the at once intimate and political act of torture. In one, a foreshortened nude female body is exploding in a landscape. In the other print, facing the title page, a nude male figure whose arms are bound at the elbows and whose face is obscured is eerily reminiscent of the infamous photos from Abu Ghraib. Both prints are representative of Grossman's style and her concern with the materiality of pain and struggle. Faceless, naked, bound, and/or butchered, Grossman's figures convey a terrifying vulnerability, a visceral sense of agony, and yet, in their solidity they remain strong and defiant even in apparent death.

*Meredith Andrea, "Too reflective, too fierce, too engaging," review of *Telephone Ringing in the Labyrinth: Poems 2004-2006*, *Stride Magazine*, 2008.



The Artist:

Born in New York City and raised on a working farm in Oneonta, New York, Nancy Grossman became famous in the 1960s for her sculptures of heads carefully carved from the soft wood of discarded telephone poles, overlaid with leather, and adorned with zippers, glass eyes, enamel noses, spikes and straps. The size, shape, and facial features of Grossman's heads evoke masculinity, but Grossman refers to them as self-portraits, implying the instability of gender identity and demonstrating that all artwork offers us a glimpse of the artist. The heads exquisitely contain central aspects of Grossman's art - its refusal to accept rigid gender positions, its daring choice of materials, its incorporation of contradiction and conflict, and its play on senses other than the visual. Equally skilled in collage, drawing, print-making, and sculpture, Grossman's works often incorporate objects and items with deep personal significance. Her work is exhibited internationally and she is represented in numerous museum collections, including the Museum of Modern Art, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Whitney Museum of American Art, National Museum of American Art, and the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden. The Michael Rosenfeld Gallery in New York City has been the exclusive representative of Nancy Grossman since 1996. Pied Oxen Printers is grateful to the Gallery for portions of the analysis included in this prospectus.

The Collaboration:

Rich's lifelong commitment to poetry as a dynamic mode of expression rather than a mere formal exercise or artistic salve for humanity's wounds complements Grossman's own approach to art throughout her forty year career. Both women explore questions of pleasure, pain, physicality and how to translate the material world into an abstract medium. The bodies at the center of their work are bound by history and power but courageously continue to resist.

Censorship of the Book's Announcement:

In August, ironically, the post-card announcement of a reception at the Michael Rosenfeld Gallery for this special edition itself became a letter "judged unfit to send" by the United States Postal Service. The post-card, reproducing the etching that appears opposite the title page was deemed by USPS to violate Title 39, Section 3010 of the U. S. Postal Regulations, designed to "protect" the public from "sexually oriented advertisement." Consequently, the Gallery was required to mail the announcement in an envelope, including an additional sheet of blank paper to prevent the possibility of the image being viewed through the envelope and offending the general public. The USPS's reading of Grossman's image as sadomasochistic, erotic and/or pornographic clearly misinterprets the artwork, while avoiding the obvious - yet potentially more disturbing - implications of torture, images of which are apparently not referenced in the postal regulations.