

Letter from the President

December 2024 • Number 157



Dear Friends,
 Whew, this year has been a challenge in so many ways, yet here I am in one piece and greeting you all. As we close in on the end of another year, I don't want to forget to thank the Council members, officers, and members at large who have given me such wonderful support and advice over this year. Truly, I needed it and couldn't have done this job without them. My hope for you is that you also have received the warm, caring support that you need, and that the coming year will be calm and unstressful. It's a lot to hope for, but I'm sending it out to the Universe, and we'll see what happens.

By now you should have received the new FOC Membership Directory, and it's a beauty. The inside back cover shows Alan Blackman's playful cats and mice, and the outside back cover shows Ward Dunham's Gothic Buzzsaw. Each letter that introduces a new section is from an FOC member that celebrates founding members, honorary members, and other early members who have made significant contributions to FOC. It's worth taking some time to read through and look for these treasures.

As you know, FOC is celebrating our 50th anniversary. Each month throughout our 50th year, you will receive an email from me with updates about what is currently happening and what to expect in coming months. Thanks to Ann Marie Foley, excellent co-leader of the organizing committee, and a great help to me for writing those emails.

To mark the recent death of our beloved Alan Blackman, FOC, the San Francisco Main Library, and several of Alan's relatives and close friends held a remembrance memorial. I do not doubt that the event pleased Alan. There were rubber duckies from Laura Bernabei on every chair and she also made dozens of smiley-face sugar cookies. Little happy faces were strewn about everywhere. Members of Alan's choral group, Singers of the Streets, sang a couple of songs, including "Rubber Ducky" from Sesame Street. Family and friends told stories from their memories of Alan. As expected,

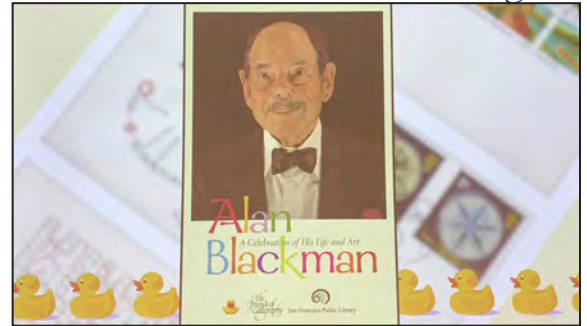
because it was Alan we were talking about, a lot of humor was involved.

Throughout the year FOC offers many classes and workshops. Some of the coming classes are Footless Fraktur, Uncial, English Roundhand, Book of Kells Script, Textura, and The Calligrapher's Process.

For more details about these classes, see page 8 or go to: friendsofcalligraphy.org/pages/classes.html

Take care of yourselves and have a pleasant end of the year. XXXOOO

Evelyn



Above: The Memorial Program for Alan, designed by Michael Starkman.

Below: Front row, left to right: Elena Caruthers and Georgianna Greenwood. Standing: Jerry Lehman, Dorothy Yuki and Marcia Friedman at the Celebration of the Life & Art of Alan Blackman



FOC Council Members

President

Evelyn Eldridge

Vice President

Elena Caruthers

Treasurer

Dean Robino

Secretary

Michael Starkman

Council Members

Fredi Juni

Raoul Martinez

Laura Bernabei

Katie Leavens

Martha Slavin

Alphabet Editor

Carl Rohrs

Bulletin Editor

Nancy Noble

Visigothic Versals Workshop

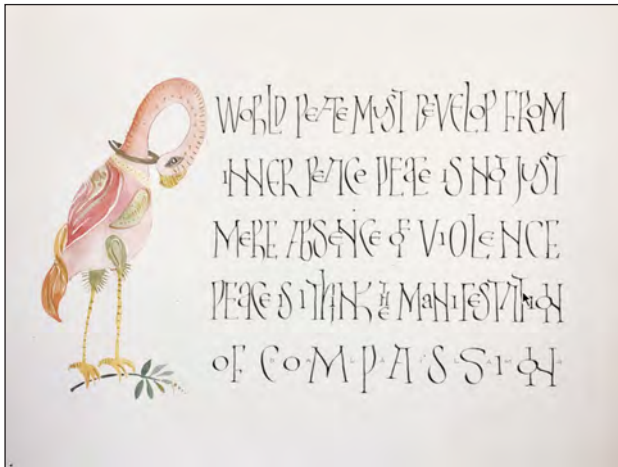
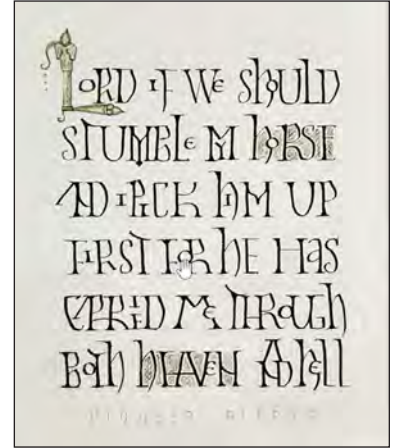
Visigothic Versals with Risa Gettler

Risa Gettler's six-week Visigothics Zoom workshop was increased to seven weeks, much to the joy of everyone enrolled. Risa covered a tremendous amount of material through lectures and her extensive library of examples of historical pieces, all combined with demonstrations of the letterforms.

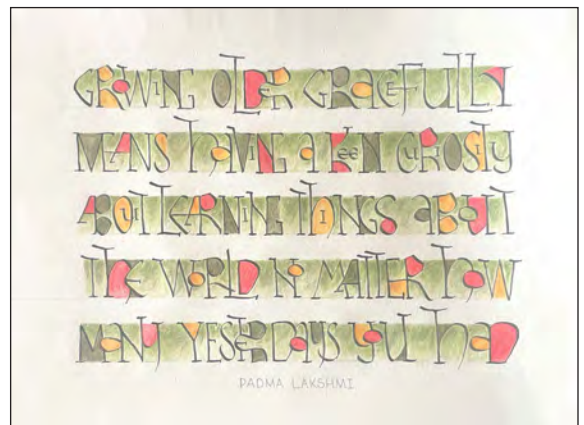
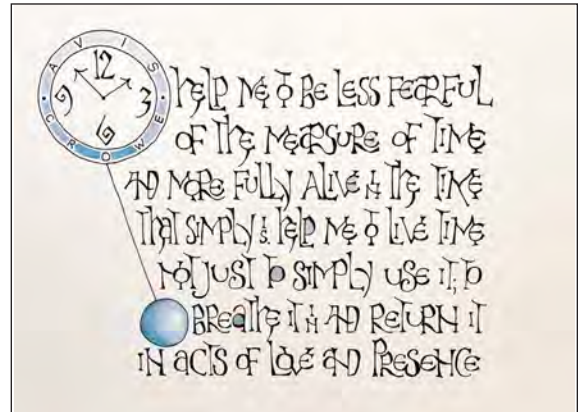
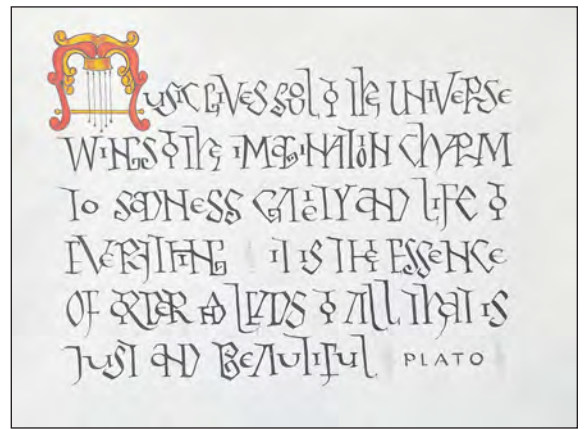
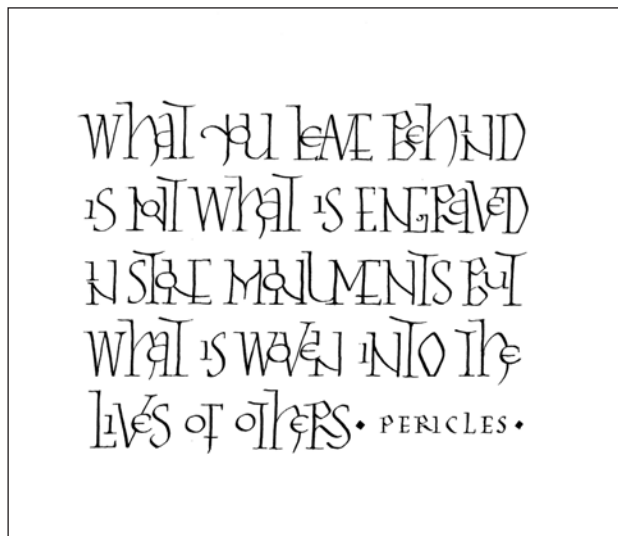
While traveling through Spain many years ago with another calligrapher, Carole Johnson, Risa was taken with the beauty and uniqueness of the shapes of these letters. Since then Risa has spent years studying the forms and developed her trademark style and work that is recognized widely in the calligraphy world.

The work on this page is the completed work of some of the participants. Risa offered her time generously during the Zoom workshop sessions, through email critiques, comments and suggestions, and through one-on-one Zoom sessions. She continues to work with students who are in the work-in-progress stages.

Above: A second piece by the prolific Janet Glessner
Middle: Elena Caruthers, Below: Lisa Bogart
Bottom: Linda Kruger



Above: Janet Glessner
Below: Shari Jobst



Tea Time Lettering



Suzie Beringer discussing the importance of the Flow-Thru Tea Bags used for this process.

Examples of Suzie's exquisite work in the three images below.



As coordinator of this workshop, Suzie sent me this beautiful tea bag stuffed with lavender as a thank you gift.... your trusty editor, Nancy Noble. Thank you Suzie.



Suzie Beringer's Tea Time Lettering class, taught on Zoom, was outstanding. At first, the thought of an all day workshop from 9:30 AM to 4:30 PM on Zoom might be a bit too much. The opposite happened. Suzie is organized and knows how to keep us engaged and working the entire day. We started out with a discussion of proper *flow-through* tea bags. Absolutely necessary and listed on the thorough Supply List. We were all prepared. Next, Suzie showed us how to correctly *open* the tea bags and remove the tea. We did this as she explained the process and showed us amazing examples of the work we were about to take on. Now, we were ready to paint these empty tea bags so they would be dry after lunch. By the end of the day, we had painted a large number of tea bags with watercolor or colored, dye based inks. Finally, the lettering and artwork was about to take place. Using Dr. Ph Martin's Pen White or Bleedproof ink and our favorite pointed pen we dove in and created our masterpieces.

Suzie walked us through the many techniques to add words, artwork, and even how to add dried lavender to our tea bags if we wished.

What a day and what a workshop.

Once our tea bags were painted, Suzie recommended we hang them to dry.

Right: Evelyn Eldridge taped hers to her overhead lamp. Below: Nancy Noble's hanging from bamboo skewers as Suzie also demonstrated.



Brody Neuenschwander Lecture

Jessie Evans

Brody Neuenschwander on the Graphic Thrill of Writing

Brody Neuenschwander is a calligrapher and artist who currently lives in Bruges, Belgium and Umbria, Italy. He has worked with letters throughout his life in various media, from traditional parchment and paper to more unconventional materials like silk, metal, and even human skin.

In his lecture Brody showcased pieces from his expansive body of work that show how he has pushed the boundaries of what calligraphy can be. His creative

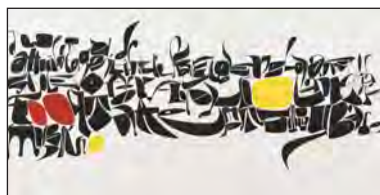


journey has led him to work with letters in ways that transcend traditional paper-based calligraphy. Brody's off-paper work spans an

extraordinary range of media: from massive canvases to architectural-scale metal installations to book projects for the Rijksmuseum to performance art.

Brody discussed his exploration of collage techniques: using a whitewash method that creates surfaces resembling aged walls, he builds layers of meaning through historical

documents, twisted letterforms, and what he calls *wrong letters*, which are deliberately misshapen characters that challenge our perception while remaining recognizable. This style emerged from a simple question: what happens when we deliberately make letters "wrong"? The concept asks each character to carry some imperfection while maintaining its essential identity. "I want to push each letter as far as I can without it not being that letter," he explained, demonstrating how an 'e' might be twisted almost beyond recognition, yet still carry its fundamental three-bar nature. Brody said that calligraphy isn't always about presenting clear information. Instead, it's about exploring what he calls *the graphic thrill of writing, its puzzlement and mystery, and the miracle of being able to read*.



Brody's work with metal is a significant part of his calligraphic portfolio. He shared the story of creating a remarkable shrine for a medieval saint in Cologne, where he designed letters that were water-jet cut from bronze plates, each costing €8,000. The final piece, featuring a gold-covered copper reliquary box within a metal framework of text, stands as a testament to the enduring power of letters in sacred spaces.

Brody recently completed a project in a Belgian village where he worked with local schoolchildren to create

their community's origin story. The story was then transformed into a metal pavilion, demonstrating how lettering art can serve as a bridge between history and community.

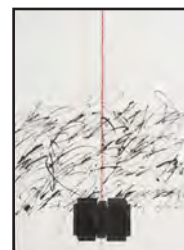
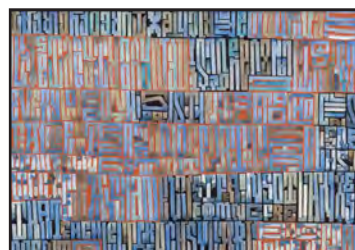
At the end of the presentation, Brody shared that he, along with Amity Parks has established a teaching studio in Umbria, Italy, dubbed *Alphabetter*. The two-week intensive workshops combine calligraphy instruction with Italian cultural experience.

Whether he's working on massive architectural installations or intimate artist books, Brody demonstrates how letters can carry meaning far beyond their literal content. He reminded us that calligraphy isn't just about writing beautifully—it's about exploring the endless possibilities of how letters can speak to us, challenge us, and transform the spaces we inhabit.

A recording of Brody's *Life and Times of an Off-Paper Calligrapher* presentation is available through the Friends of Calligraphy website in the Lectures and Presentations section on the Resources page, at www.friendsofcalligraphy.org.



Brody and his wife on the bridge where his amazing "cut-letters" grace both sides. Below: examples of his wide range of work.



Alan Blackman's Celebration of Life

Meredith Klein

On Sunday, November 10, 2024 a large group of family, friends and calligraphers gathered at the Latino/Hispanic Room of the San Francisco Public Library to celebrate the wonderful, long, and amazing life of Alan Blackman. Please enjoy the photos.



Article and additional photos on pages 9 - 13



From top: Clockwise: Marcia Friedman, prior FOC Alphabet Editor, with Karen Haslag's slideshow of Alan; Lissa Spitz, Alan's Niece; Michael Starkman, Co-Coordinator making sure everyone signed in and received the Memorial Program; Andrea Grimes, SFPL & Co-Coordinator; Laura Bernabei, Baker Extraordinaire and providing the Duckies and other gifts representing Alan; Meredith Klein, Co-Coordinator; Evelyn Eldridge, FOC President sitting next to Jerry Lehman, long-time FOC Secretary and members of Alan's family; the Duckie Collection and the "Singers of the Street".

FOC Council Meeting Minutes

14 July 2024 FOC Combined Council Meeting Minutes

Starting Time: 1:30 PM

Attending: Laura Bernabei, Elena Caruthers, Evelyn Eldridge, Fredi Juni, Katie Leavens, Raoul Martinez, Nancy Noble, Dean Robino, Martha Slavin, Michael Starkman. Guests: Meredith Klein, Dorothy Y

Meeting Minutes

April 21, 2024 — Moved to approve, seconded. Unanimous approval.

May 5, 2024 — AGM Moved to approve, seconded. One abstained, motion approved.

Welcomed new members to the council and Fredi and Michael to new roles.

Reports

50th Anniversary Planning

Picnic: Postcards were mailed and information added to the FOC calendar and social media. More detailed email communication to members will follow. Moved to approve budget. Seconded. Unanimous approval. New subcommittee set to help.

Jane Brenner and Barbara Lande created the commemorative bookmark sent to members. Second bookmark in the works for 2025 by Carol DuBosch.

Virginia LeRoux and Karen Haslag have completed several video interviews with longtime FOC members and founders, with more to come.

Membership

Meredith: 2023-24 Year End Totals, as of June 30, 2024: Renewed paid: 635, Honorary: 6, Honorary Spouse: 2, Renewed total: 643, New: 53, TOTAL: 696
2024-2025 Estimated Membership totals, as of 7/14/24: Renewed, paid, 387, Honorary 6, Honorary Spouse 2, Renewed total: 395, New: 37, TOTAL: 432

Meredith asked for a moment of silence to honor Alan Blackman and all he meant to FOC

Treasurer Report

Dean Moved to approve the 2024-2025 budget,

seconded. Unanimous approval. Moved to approve the transaction report, seconded. Unanimous approval.

Received signed Conflict of Interest Policy documents from all.

Workshop Committee

Elena: Upcoming workshops 2024: Carl Rohrs – Summer Workshop August 6–10, Peter Greco, Risa Gettler, Yukimi Annand, *to be rescheduled for November for May cancelled sessions.*

Upcoming Workshops 2025: Jurgen Vercaemst, Massimo Polello, Elinor Holland, Suzanne Moore, Nina Tran. Possibilities: Katie Leavens. Nancy Hays Hills, Suzie Beringer.

Fort Mason

Katie: Raoul's Bâtarde class went to the Bancroft Library to view historic manuscripts. Meredith's upcoming Italic class met the minimum enrollment, will start a week earlier than scheduled, and will be in-person. Rick Paulus's upcoming class will probably meet its minimum as the start date gets closer. The annual committee meeting for 2025 classes will be in August, TBD.

Social Media

Katie: The new 50th Anniversary logo is profiled. The Featured Member is Louise Grünewald. The Early Member is Virginia LeRoux Silbowitz. FOC Creates asked for calligraphy done on fabric or leather, next images from spreads of handmade books that include calligraphy. FOC Remembers features Theo Jung. Carl Rohrs's demo has been posted.

Publications & Mailings

Mailings: *Bulletin*: Nancy: Elena will create the masthead. *Alphabet*: Meredith for Carl: The Autumn issue will be entirely devoted to Alan Blackman. Karen Haslag is writing an article.

Web Administrator

Raoul: FOC is fifth in followers on both

Instagram and Facebook.

Lecture Committee

Evelyn: Carl Rohrs – August – Psychedelic posters. Flyer forthcoming, Brody Neuenschwander moved to November, Nancy Hays Hills, no date.

Events

Trivial Pursuits

Evelyn, Fredi, Nancy: co-coordinators; Dorothy doing the Goody Bags. Marcia Friedman creating flyer. Moved to raise teachers' reimbursement. Seconded. Unanimous approval.

Kalligraphia 17

Meredith & Katie Co-chairs Dates set: June 7 to August 31, 2925, in Skylight Gallery, and to extent necessary, the North Salon; April 16, 2025 – entry forms due; May 13 or 14–May 17 – intake; mailed entries due May 16; September 10–13 – pickup of work; Demos 2:00–4:00 PM on June 14, 21, July 5, 12, 19, 26, August 2, 9, 16, 16, 23

Unfinished Business

Roman Holiday: Elena attended the Guild Representatives Meeting. Sea Scribes and Pacific Scribes: Building on FOC's long relationship with these guilds, Elena suggested we formalize our "sister" relationship.

Pen Show San Francisco Pen Show—August 23–25. Evelyn will organize a bookmark brigade.

Celebration of Life for Alan Blackman

Michael and Meredith will coordinate. Consensus to do this sometime in November or December.

Motion to adjourn *Moved and approved.* Adjourned at 4:35 PM. *Edited for Publication*

30 July 2024 FOC Special Council Meeting Minutes

Starting Time: 10:00 AM

Attending: Laura Bernabei, Elena Caruthers, Evelyn Eldridge, Katie Leavens Excused: Fredi Juni, Raoul Martinez, Dean Robino, Martha Slavin, Michael Starkman; Guests: Meredith Klein.

Retreat

Meredith proposed holding the 2025 retreat at a new site, Mercy Center in Burlingame. Those present decided to forward for Council vote by email.

Adjourned at 10:30 AM moved and approved. *Edited for publication*

15 September 2024 FOC Council Mtg Minutes — Zoom

Starting Time: 1:30 PM Attending: Laura Bernabei, Elena Caruthers, Evelyn Eldridge, Katie Leavens, Raoul Martinez, Dean Robino, Michael Starkman. Excused: Fredi Juni, Martha Slavin Guests: Meredith Klein, Nancy Noble

Meeting Minutes

July 14, 2024—Moved to approve, Seconded. Unanimous approval.

July 30, 2024—Special Meeting—Moved to approve, Seconded. Unanimous approval.

Reports

50th Anniversary Planning

Karen Haslag and Virginia LeRoux interviewed early and founding FOC members. Raoul is posting instructional series on YouTube. Social media continues to spotlight Early Members. Cookbook deadline is November 1. An embroidery patch, a second bookmark, this one by Carol DuBosch, the 50 Years of Leadership keepsake, and a 50th Anniversary History Webpage are in the works.

Membership:

Meredith: Renewed paid: 558, Honorary: 5 Honorary Spouse: 2 Renewed total: 565 New: 50 up 13 from last report TOTAL: 615

There are twice as many new members this time over last year. August 29 began sending new member welcome letters with decorated envelopes and 50th Anniversary bookmarks. New title: *membership secretary*, prior: *membership chair*.

Held a moment of silence to remember Gottfried Pott and Ward Dunham.

Treasurer Report

Dean moved to approve the transaction report, seconded. Unanimous approval. Tax filings due 15th November. Evelyn and Martha Slavin to help with the mini audit, date: TBD by the participants.

Workshop Committee

The summer workshop with Carl Rohrs was great.

Upcoming workshops for 2024: Risa Gettler, Visagothic Versals; Suzie Beringer, TBD.

Upcoming Workshops 2025: Jurgen Vercaemst, Massimo Polello; Elinor Holland; Yukimi Annand; Suzanne Moore, summer workshop; Katie Leavens.

Fort Mason

Katie: Meredith's Italic class had its first meeting, in person at Fort Mason.

Rick Paulus's upcoming November Engrosser's Script class still has only four students so an email will be sent in October.

The annual committee meeting was September 13 and established the 2025 class schedule: Judy Detrick, Fraktur, 4 weeks, start January, online; Meredith, Uncial, 4 weeks, March, online; Katie, English Roundhand, 7 weeks, summer, in person at Fort Mason; Meredith, Book of Kells, 4 weeks, August, online; Raoul, Textura, 7 weeks, beginning September 9, in person, location TBD; Rick Paulus, TBA, 4 weeks in November, online.

Social Media

Katie: National Calligraphy Day, August 14, posted online with three visual responses. Featured Members: Gemma Black, David Brookes. Recent Early Members: Nini Smith, Summer Stone. FOC Creates request a examples of decorated envelopes. The Conversation Starter is "What do you listen to as you practice calligraphy?" FOC Remembers features Lili Cassel-Wronker. A feature on Judy Detrick's manuscript workshop includes both photographs and videos. Photos of the 50th Anniversary

Continued on Page 7

Kalligraphia 2025!



Get Ready For Kalligraphia 2025!

Also in this mailing is the Kalligraphia 2025 Call for Entries. This is the starting point to a summer of calligraphy at the San Francisco Public Library. For those who are new to FOC, every three years we have held an un-juried exhibition of works by our members. Members are entitled to submit one work. It could be a broadside, a book, carved stone, a three dimensional form—but a work of original calligraphy (e.g., not a giclee print of an original work). The Call for Entries contains the guidelines. It is important to meet the size restrictions. The deadline to enter is April 16, 2025, which should give you time to create a work or to mat or frame a recent piece you want to show. We are again offering two options to enter. In addition to the traditional mail-in form, we are offering the option to complete and submit the entry form electronically, and pay the entry fee with a credit card or PayPal.

The vitality of Kalligraphia has always come from the variety of calligraphic work—newer calligraphers' work shares the space with that of professional calligraphers and artists, and it all just works. Members who have entered a piece will bring or mail it to the Library in mid-May (on the Call for Entries, "intake" is a volunteer job—these people check in the artwork). The exhibit opens Saturday, June 7, with a reception—a great kick-off to our summer of calligraphy.

And many thanks to Judy Detrick, who designed the Kalligraphia 2025 logo. —Meredith Klein & Katie Leavens, Kalligraphia co-coordinators

picnic and the Summer Workshop have been posted. Judy Detrick's eloquent remembrance of Ward Dunham elicited heartwarming comments. Raoul is posting FOC instructional videos and interviews on YouTube, which will be announced on Instagram & Facebook.

Publications & Mailings

Alphabet: Meredith for Carl: *Alphabet* Vol. 50, No. 1 is in progress and fully dedicated to Alan Blackman. Joan Passarelli is replacing Sandy Collins as proofreader. Joan has been an editor and proofreader at Stanford.

Bulletin: Nancy Carl Rohrs will send remembrances of Alan Blackman and his work for the next *Bulletin*. Will discuss Ward Dunham commemoration with Linnea Lundquist.

Directory—Meredith Cassandra Wilson will design and compose this year's directory, based on Judy Detrick's design from previous years. The alphabet initials are culled from early FOC members and founders, supplied by Carl Rohrs, with supplemental letters by Katie as needed. The inside front cover will contain a list of the initial letter contributors; Ward Dunham's buzzsaw and artwork by Alan Blackman will be on the back cover and inside back cover.

Web Administrator

Raoul: Migrated all FOC documents from Dropbox to Google Drive. Held Google Drive training for council before the migration and will do post-implementation training if needed. Posted Risa Gettler's upcoming workshop and upcoming lectures by Izzy Pludwinski and Brody Neuenschwander.

Events

Trivial Pursuits

Evelyn, Fredi, Nancy: Emailing teachers to gather their supplies and seek donated materials, if needed, for their classes. Fredi Juni created the masthead for the flyer.

Teachers: Laura Bernabei, Sara Loesch-Frank, Marcia Friedman, Sherrie Lovler, Vicky Lee, Dorothy Yuki.

Retreat: Meredith Tuesday March 4–Saturday March 8, 2025, Mercy Center, Burlingame. After the Special Council Meeting on July 30, an email motion authorizing Meredith to contract with Mercy Center was moved, seconded, and approved. Meredith signed the Mercy Center contract. Fifteen early enrollments enabled us to pay the deposit without encumbering FOC. Meredith will announce retreat with full payment required. Those who made early deposits will have until December to pay the balance. She plans on the usual maximum of 30.

Kalligraphia 17 Meredith & Katie Co-chairs: Judy Detrick will design the logo. Deinstallation will be moved to Wednesday, September 3 and Thursday, September 4. The call for entries will be ready soon.

Lecture Committee

Evelyn: Izzy Pludwinski – September 25, 10:00AM Brody Neuenschwander moved to November 13.

Unfinished Business

Pen Show: August 23–25. Approximately 859 bookmarks were scribed over three days. Many FOC brochures were distributed. FOC will participate again next year but a better table location is unlikely.

Roman Holiday International Conference

Dean: The postal service honored FOC's claim for the box that was delivered empty. They denied the claim for the missing bookmarks since their records show delivery; Dean will appeal that decision.

Celebration of the Life & Art of Alan Blackman

Michael and Meredith will coordinate.

Sunday, November 10, 1:00–4:00, San Francisco Main Public Library, Latino/Hispanic Room.

Michael: The date was chosen so Karen Haslag

and Lissa Spitz can attend. Andrea Grimes posted the flyer text on the Library's website. Karen is preparing a slide show. The speaker list is being developed. There will be a table for distributing the last of Alan's art supplies and materials. We are looking for a refreshment table organizer. Dean, Mary Laird, and Carla Tenret are printing a letterpress keepsake of Alan's treasured Tennyson poem. Proposing a printed program/keepsake and the purchase of a book that people can sign; also need to purchase items for refreshments and decorations. Karen Haslag sent a donation for expenses. Moved that the Council allocate additional funds for expenses. Seconded. Unanimous approval.

Sea Scribes & Pacific

Scribes Revisited fostering supportive relationships with Sea Scribes and Pacific Scribes. FOC often offers open spots in our classes to their members at our member rates and they sometimes ask us to announce their classes and workshops to our membership.

New Business

Evelyn will offer FOC assistance in honoring Ward Dunham.

Michael will organize a meeting to discuss FOC outreach to graphic design programs at nearby schools. This could consist of a lecture/demonstration group that could visit classes, working with FOC member teachers associated with Bay Area schools and organizations.

Meredith suggested increasing FOC's outreach with more public calligraphy demonstrations, possibly scribing bookmarks in area libraries, with a budget to purchase the necessary supplies and paper.

Motion to adjourn
Moved and approved.

Adjourned at 2:55 PM.

Edited for Publication



FOC Classes			
Date	Time	Event	Details
Saturdays January 18, 25, February 1, 8	10:00 AM – 12 PM Four Saturday Mornings	Footless Fraktur Judy Detrick	Zoom
Tuesdays · March 25, April 1, 8, 15	6:30 PM – 9 PM Four Nights	Uncial Meredith Klein	In-Person
Tuesdays · June 17, 24, July 1, 8, 15, 29 August 5	6:30 PM – 9 PM Seven Tuesday Nights	English Roundhand Katie Leavens	In-Person Fort Mason
Tuesdays · November 2, 9, 16, 23	6:30 PM – 9 PM Four Nights	Book of Kells Script Meredith Klein	Zoom
Tuesdays · September 9, 16, 23, 30 October 7, 14, 21	6:30 PM – 9 PM Seven Tuesday Nights	Textura Raoul Martinez	In-Person Albany Sr. Ctr
Saturdays · November 1, 8, 15, 22	10:00 AM – 1 PM Four Saturdays	Calligrapher's Process Rick Paulus	Zoom

FOC Calendar of Events			
Date	Time	Event	Details
January 6, 13, 20, 27	9:30 AM – 12:00 PM	Colorful Lettering Compositions with Jurgen Vercaemst	Zoom
Saturday January 11	9:00 AM – 4:00 PM	Trivial Pursuits	In-Person
Wednesday January 15	10:00 AM –12:00 PM	An Artist's Journey Lily Yee-Sloan	Zoom
Sunday January 19	1:00 PM – 4:00 PM	FOC Council Meeting	Zoom
Sunday April 19	1:00 PM – 4:00 PM	FOC Council Meeting	Zoom
Sunday May 18	1:00 PM – 4:00 PM	FOC Annual General Meeting	SF Public Library

Message from Membership Secretary

Gratitude

Members support FOC in many different ways. At this time, we express our gratitude to those who have joined or renewed since the last *Bulletin* as Supporting members:

Darlene Ceremello
Gene Chiro
David Eakle
Kathy McNicholas
Rick Paulus
Toby Salk

New Members!

Friends of Calligraphy extends a warm welcome to our newest members. We're so glad you joined!

Maria Victoria Ahearne
William Blackman
Mary Jane Casper
Darlene Ceremello
Gene Chiro
Brooks Collins
Ellen Gobler
Lauren Hart
Mollie Hunt
Shari Jobst
Bonnie S. Lai
Judy Large
Molly Manewal

Colophon

FOC *Bulletin* #157

Masthead: Risa Gettler

Text: Sumner Stone's Davanti & Appia; Optima for Headings
Adobe InDesign was used for the layout on an iMac.

Proofreading: Kris Nevius

Photos: Laura Bernabei, Katie Leavens and Nancy Noble

Copy Deadline

Deadline for articles for *Bulletin 158*: February 20, 2022. Please submit articles or questions to: Nancy Noble nrnoble@sfsu.edu

To view the *Bulletin* in Color: please visit the FOC web site under Publications.

Address Change

If your contact information changes: address, phone or email, please send the new information to: Membership Secretary: Meredith Klein gkle@sbcglobal.net
707 Spokane Avenue, Albany, CA 94706 · 510.527.0434

FOC Facebook & Instagram

Check out our Facebook and Instagram pages. You do NOT need a Facebook or Instagram account to do so. Our pages are open to all. At the bottom of the FOC Web Page, click either icon: the F in a blue square, or the little red square camera outline.

Mail Crew Autumn Thank You's

Regular Mailing, October 10—Mille Grazie:

Laura Bernabei, including international, PO duty
JoAnn & Gary Brand David Brookes
Linda Kruger Vicki Piovia
Sue Rosenof
Meredith Klein, Czarina labels, international, PO duty

Regular Mailing, November 7—Merci Beaucoup:

Laura Bernabei, including international, PO duty
David Brookes Elena Caruthers
Vicky Lee Iyana Leveque
Raoul Martinez Dean Robino,
International
Meredith Klein, czarina, labels, international, PO duty

Thank you for both mailings to JoAnn Brand, who calls the crews, and to Georgianna and Andy Greenwood, for generously letting us use Georgianna's studio.

Alan Blackman Celebration of Art and Life

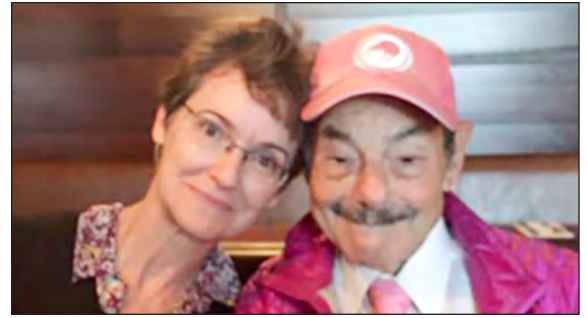
On Sunday, November 10, over 100 people (according to an unofficial count) gathered in the Latino Hispanic Room at San Francisco Public Library to remember Alan Blackman. The room was decorated with balloons, colored streamers, pictures of 19 of Alan's first day cover envelopes, and photos of Alan and friends. People dressed colorfully and some wore Alan's bolo ties. A slide show created by Karen Haslag, with 420 carefully chosen slides, presenting Alan's work and photos of him, played continuously on a large screen at the front of the room. Fine papers, art items (including brushes, day-glo paints and Alan's light box) and rubber ducks from Alan's apartment were made available, along with Alan's Journal issues and copies of Calligraphers Engagement Calendars containing his art. The refreshment table was set with hot pink tablecloths and smiley face confetti; there were smiley face napkins and rubber ducky plates, and a bounteous finger food buffet, overseen by Laura Bernabei, who had baked special smiley face cookies for the occasion and brought rubber duckies and candy hearts and smiley face mementos for people. Michael Starkman, co-coordinator of the event (along with Meredith Klein, for FOC), greeted guests at the door, and his beautifully calligraphed signs encouraged them to sign the book for the event, to make name badges for themselves, and to take a program and keepsake. The program was designed by Michael. The keepsake was created by Dean Robino, Mary Laird, and Carla Tenret: a letterpress printing of "Crossing the Bar" by Tennyson, on paper taken from Alan's apartment after his passing. Alan had recited lines from the poem in his final weeks, seemingly as a kind of mantra.

The program began with a warm welcome from Andrea Grimes, Program Manager of Special Collections for SFPL (and the coordinator for this event on behalf of the Library). She reminisced about Alan, knowing him for years through his interactions with Special Collections, becoming even closer during his exhibition, and in his final years helping out, cleaning up his apartment and securing his calligraphy, and taking him his favorite cookies. Many works by Alan are available in the Harrison Collection and people are welcome to come back to the Library to see them.



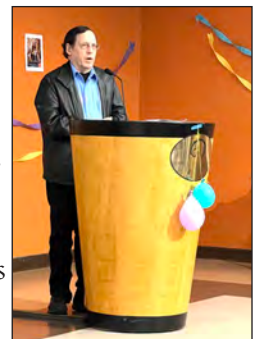
Evelyn Eldridge, FOC president, welcomed everyone on behalf of FOC, and described the various ways Alan was involved with the group from its beginnings, and throughout the years: serving as president, treasurer, secretary, council member and *Journal*

editor, being a valued teacher (and translator for some workshops), and emceeding at holiday parties. All the while inspiring us with his art and innovation.

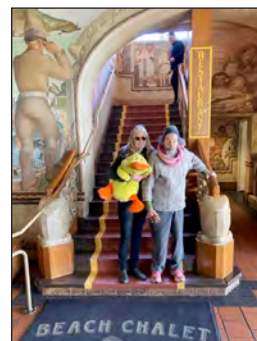


Lissa Spitz, Alan's niece, shared memories of Alan as beloved uncle when she was a child, recalling lots of frogs and Edgar, the one armed elephant. She described how he sent presents he'd wrapped in a crepe paper ball, where each gift appeared as a small surprise, as she unwound the ball. She talked about coming here from Michigan to be with him in the last stages of his life, spending weeks at a time in San Francisco. She brought fresh flowers for his room and made tea for him and his visitors, just hanging out, talking and reminiscing. She gratefully acknowledged the help given to Alan by Mitchell Schoenbrun and Ann Carroll, in particular.

Mitchell Schoenbrun, who lived around the corner from Alan, met him through offering computer assistance some years back. He became Alan's tech helper, but eventually he became a major helper in getting Alan's needs addressed. He called Alan the "bravest person



I ever met," saying Alan was not afraid of death. Mitchell spoke of Alan's eccentricities: his love of photographing certain things, such as memorable license plates and feet (!). And he talked about Alan's love of all creatures, even the tiniest and most irritating ones. Mitchell's wife Elva made a cream pie for Alan's 96th birthday. Mitchell said that knowing Alan had been an inspiration.



Ann Carroll, former SFPL exhibitions designer, came to know Alan very well when she managed his envelope exhibition there in 2015. She lived close by and was continually involved, along with Mitchell, in helping to get

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aid for Alan in his final years. She related a story about being out of town traveling, in the week before Alan died. She had a beeper which sounded when Alan's monitor (for falls or emergencies) went off. Her beeper went off when she was in New Mexico. She called Alan, and he said he was okay. But he set off the beeper again twice during their conversation. As she ended the call, she said, "Stay out of trouble!" and Alan replied, "I can't; it's in my nature." This was the last time she spoke with him. At the celebration, there was a picture on the wall of Ann taking Alan and Alan's giant stuffed duck, Francesco, to a birthday dinner at the Beach Chalet, his favorite restaurant, on his birthday in 2023.



Karen Haslag, one of Alan's oldest friends from the early days in San Francisco, talked about their friendship and briefly described what we were watching in the slide show she'd created, selecting them from an enormous number of images and adding captions. She recalled the early days with Alan, hanging out together, learning from him, being encouraged by him. And then

coming from Missouri in May of this year to spend each day being with him in his apartment. They would sing to each other, watch his favorite movie, or talk, or just be. She also made sure he had fresh flowers. She told how, whenever she (or others) would leave him, Alan would say, "I love you to bits!" She thanked Carl Rohrs, John Prestianni, Ann Carroll, Lissa Spitz, Dean Robino, and Andrea Grimes for their assistance on the slide show.

David Haddick, whose father was the Reverend Donald Haddick, pastor of the Golden Gate Spiritualist Church of San Francisco, related that Alan was a longtime cherished member of the church, and was especially close to his father. David said he loved talking with Alan about calligraphy, which he'd known nothing about. Alan did calligraphy for the church, including a flyer that is reproduced on the back cover of the *Alphabet* issue that honors Alan. It is the church's healing prayer that they say at all their services.

The Singers of the Street were there, and spoke of Alan's participation in and support of SoS. Led by director Ashley Wai'olu Moore, accompanied on a keyboard by James Campbell, they sang Stephen Foster's "Hard Times

Come Again No More," and followed with a rousing encore, Rubber Ducky, which had everyone smiling and laughing.



After a brief intermission, the microphone was opened up to anyone who wanted to share a story or reminiscence about Alan.

Will Blackman, Alan's nephew, who had come from Michigan with other members of Alan's family, talked of seeing Alan on visits and of gifts from a loving uncle, including the delight at unwrapping the crepe paper ball Alan had sent when he and Lissa were children.

Mary Ann Wight told of a recent trip to the dentist, where she had just had Novocaine and was supposed to bite down on the gauze pad for 10 minutes. She'd taken the *Alphabet* with her and was reading through Susan Skarsgard's reminiscence. She came to the description of Alan in bright smiley face pants, crochet hat, earrings and t-shirt, and pink shoes with toes, painted with nail polish. She had trouble keeping her mouth closed. But she read on, to the end, where Susan had asked Alan to pretend to be blind in order to get him into a presentation without credentials, and the lady checking them looked at her in disgust as if to say, "How could you dress your blind father like that?" The effort to keep from laughing was quite impossible at that point.



Tracey Holland, a voice teacher, told of Alan coming to her for voice lessons. They were great friends and music lovers.

Marcia Friedman shared two stories. The first was about a long-ago surprise party for Alan on his birthday. Alan had been told to come to Deanna Nim and Brooks Collins's place, and that they would go out to dinner. But

friends would be hiding there, ready to shout "Surprise"! When Alan didn't show up, Brooks went to Alan's apartment to get him. He returned saying Alan wasn't there, either. No one could understand Alan being late for a meal. But when they went into their kitchen, there sat Alan, smiling and

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saying “Surprise!” The second story, which is in the Alan issue of *Alphabet*, was about Alan wearing a pair of socks, one red with green polka dots, the other green with red polka dots, to a holiday party. When Marcia admired them, he said they’d been a gift and he’d received another identical pair!

Brooks Collins knew Alan from when they lived in the same neighborhood. He said that on his way to San Francisco for the celebration, he had stopped at a place and played one of those claw games where you maneuver the claw to grip the prize you want. He got a rubber duck with a smiley face on its front. He held it up for everyone to see. What are the odds?!

Susan Ovington met Alan in the ‘60s, and they saw each other regularly at a place where a group of them met to discuss literature and art. Over the years she lost touch with him, but then, when he had his show of envelopes in 2015, they reconnected, and she began to see him on a regular basis. They liked to play tiddlywinks and dominos. She said Alan was much more interested in making interesting patterns with the dominos than in winning. When his health began to decline, she would visit and they would talk and play tiddlywinks.



Steve Johnson, an FOC member who was very active in the early years, recalled how Alan could write with a brush on walls or on butcher paper, speaking of one instance where Alan did gorgeous roman caps—beautifully constructed and evenly spaced, written without guidelines, no shaking at all in his hand. It was an inspiration to watch him.

Ling Tsui, an FOC member who moved from the East Bay to Alan’s neighborhood a few years ago, used to see him around, and one day stopped to talk with him as he was having a bowl of soup at a local eatery. She had her children with her, so she couldn’t stay long and they agreed to meet again. But the pandemic struck before they had a chance. In Alan’s final month, she ran into Karen and Meredith in front of Alan’s apartment and was able to connect with Lissa Spitz, and to come see Alan. She brought him fresh flowers and they had a very sweet visit.

Janet Martorello, an FOC member who lives in Southern California, talked about early workshops with Alan and how she loved his classic roman caps written with a brush, how inspiring he was, and his impact on her.

Gabriel Diamond, Sandy Diamond’s son, talked about how his mom, an early and active member of FOC, used to hang out with Alan and how she had a crush on him. Gabriel has

many great memories of being around Alan while he was growing up, before they moved from the Bay Area.

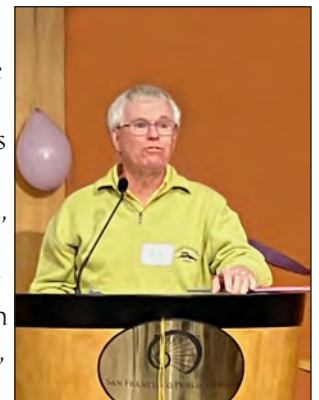


Carl Rohrs recalled how he had been on Sutter Street in San Francisco and saw incredible signs in the windows of Flax Art. Upon inquiring, he was introduced to Alan. As they talked, Alan told him to join Friends of

Calligraphy. Carl also spoke of Alan’s generosity. After he told Alan he was interested in Ludwig Hohlwein posters, soon thereafter, Alan sent him a book of Hohlwein’s posters. Carl has been on the lookout for a work by Alan with two mounds of letters shaped like a pair of pink Hostess Sno Balls. He said if anyone has any knowledge of the piece, he would like to see and photograph it.

Georgianna Greenwood shared that Alan had been influential in her decision to take on the role of first president of FOC.

Rick Skehen, who had come from Manteca with his wife for the celebration, talked of how he met Alan at the 2015 envelope exhibit. Rick loved the envelopes and came to see the exhibit several times. He contacted Alan, and Alan finally agreed to go around the show with him. They became friends and emailed each other regularly, with jokes, music, and other common interests.



When Alan began to decline, Rick decided to combine many of his photographs of Alan’s envelopes into a book, one of the books you compose using the internet. He had a copy made for Alan, who was overwhelmed and loved it. In his final months, Alan would direct visitors to take the book from the dresser and look through it.

Sherrie Lovler read the poem, reprinted in *Alphabet*, that Alan had sent to her and others following Susie Taylor’s passing: “Lament,” by Patrick Bridgwater. It is a poem Alan sent out after the passing of his son, and to mark other passings. It seemed fitting for Sherrie to read it for Alan, and she read it beautifully.

Mimi Mueller described how, at an event, Alan had done a demo on butcher paper, writing out an alphabet sentence in his beautiful lettering. When he finished, someone pointed out that he had missed a letter. Alan, unflappable, said, “No praise, no blame!” A few years later, Alan agreed to do some

lettering on Mimi's dining room wall. In gorgeous roman caps, he wrote "NO PRAISE, NO BLAME." The wall has been repainted since that time, but the square area with Alan's lettering has remained untouched to this day.



Robin Lewis, a neighbor and friend of Alan's, read a poem by Rumi:

On the day I die, when I'm being
 carried toward the grave, don't weep.
 Don't say, 'He's gone! He's gone!'
 Death has nothing to do with going away.
 The sun sets and the moon sets,
 but they're not gone. Death
 is a coming together.
 The tomb looks like a prison,
 but it's really release
 into Union.
 The human seed goes down in the ground
 like a bucket into the well where Joseph is.
 It grows and comes up full
 of some unimagined beauty.
 Your mouth closes here
 and immediately opens
 with a shout of joy there.

Meredith Klein related how, though she'd seen Alan at events, she didn't really get to know him until they were at Retreat, when they spent an evening together going through the book of first day cover envelopes he'd brought. Their friendship developed over the years, and they went sometimes to the Library to look at calligraphy together. On one such occasion, leaving the Library to go next door to the café at the Asian Art Museum for lunch, Alan began to sing "O, Waly Waly." It being a ballad of many verses, they stopped between the buildings while Alan proceeded to finish the entire song, all from memory, in his beautiful baritone. Alan had a remarkable memory, a quick wit, and was an articulate speaker. He is remembered with love and gratitude.

Elizabeth Nisperos, the final speaker of the day, recalled taking classes with Alan in the Fort Mason class series, telling him, "You're my favorite teacher!" and he replying, "And you're my favorite student!" She spoke of how he encouraged her, and also about what an excellent writer he was; that the articles he wrote for *Alphabet* came alive for her.

After the sharing of memories and stories, people had a little more time to visit. Everyone seemed happy to take a memento of Alan, and the table where his ephemera were displayed was nearly empty by the end. Even his well-worn lightbox, on which so much incredible art had been produced over the years, was taken (by his voice teacher, Tracey). It was an afternoon of laughter, music, some tears, lots of rubber duckies and smiley faces, remembering a friend who will live on in our hearts and memories.

Friends of Alan Wearing his Bolo Ties



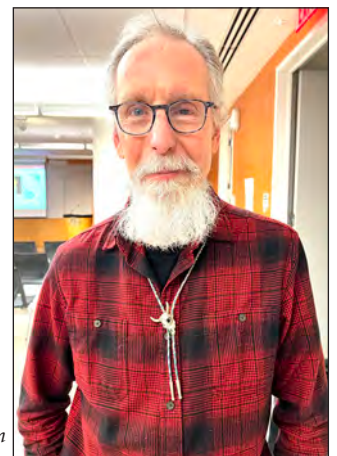
Meredith Klein and Carl Rohrs



Karen Haskag



Raoul Martinez



Michael Starkman

*Delicious Cookies
& Alan Ephemera*



Photos on pages 1, 5, and 9 – 13 by: JoAnn Brand, Elena Caruthers, Karen Haslag, Katie Leavens, Dean Robino, and Mary Ann Wight.

