Pop-Up Books On Exhibit At University Of New Hampshire Museum

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DURHAM, N.H. – An expansive collection of pop-up books is now on display at the University of New Hampshire Museum. The Carel Chapman Movable Book Collection will be on exhibit until Dec. 16, 2011.

An open reception with collection donor Carel Chapman and Movable Book Society director Ann Montanaro will take place Thursday, Oct. 13, 9-10 a.m. Montanaro will give a brief talk on pop-up books. The museum is located on level one in the Dimond Library.

Chapman, a New Hampshire resident, has donated nearly 2,000 pop-up books to the museum. She bought her first movable book more than 20 years ago and has since amassed a collection that includes books with pop-up shoes and baseball stadiums and Star Wars characters and sailing ships and children’s nursery rhyme figures.

The notion of pop-up books dates back to the 13th century when Majorcan writer and philosopher Ramon Llull took pieces of paper inscribed with letters and symbols and laid them out in a circle on top of a circle to demonstrate his theories.

Later, the medical profession began adopted the concept in books on anatomy, using movable flaps to reveal parts of the human body. During the 18th century, pop-up books were made for entertainment.

“This is a new direction for us,” said Bill Ross, Special Collections librarian for the UNH Museum. “When Carel first approached us, I had to kind of think for a minute about the fit. But the great thing is that it is a new direction. It opens us up to a broader audience.”

“People tend to think of pop-up books as being for kids but this collection has a quite a range of subjects, from politics to shoes to ballparks,” Ross continued. “There’s wide appeal.”

That appeal has driven prices up, Chapman says. A book she paid $50 for now sells for $600; a copy of the Andy Warhol book that she bought for $100 is selling online for $1,500. And yet, instead of selling her collection, Chapman chose to donate it to the UNH Museum because, she says, a university is where the books belong.

“I want other people to be able to enjoy them,” Chapman says. “In my heart what I love best is that every single one is handmade. That’s what really appeals to me. In this day, in these times, when everything is mass-produced, I love that every single book has to be done by hand.”

The Carel Chapman Movable Book Collection is on exhibit at the UNH Museum through Dec. 16. The museum is open Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., and Saturday noon to 4 p.m.

The University of New Hampshire, founded in 1866, is a world-class public research university with the feel of a New England liberal arts college. A land, sea, and space-grant university, UNH is the state’s flagship public institution, enrolling 12,200 undergraduate and 2,300 graduate students.

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