

DANIEL DE BRUIN

The artist's own view

People often ask me why I specialise in such a specific small area as the modern heraldic bookplate. But for me the heraldic exlibris is an authentic form of European decorative art. It creates a pictorial language in which all social aspects are brought to the fore, both symbolic and realistic. Besides the inexhaustible stock of heraldic motifs, it also offers the opportunity of working on a fascinating graphic design with naturalistic and abstract forms.

Born on 23 September 1950 in Krimpen aan den IJssel in the Netherlands, my fascination with small, colourful images was already latent in my early childhood and manifested itself through my collecting football badges. Of course, I was not yet aware that this was one of the many sportive applications of heraldic design.

I discovered my facility for graphics when I was 20 years old and this led me to teach myself calligraphy and letter design and also to become familiar with heraldry. In 1973 I began collecting heraldic manuscripts and literature, both antiquarian and modern, with an emphasis on heraldic design. With my growing library I had bookplates made by well-known engravers such as Prof. Mark Severin, Wim Zwiers, Lou Strik, Pieter Wetselaar and Pam Rueter. The combination of graphic techniques, the art of bookplates, typography and heraldry, led inevitably in 1981 to me designing my first armorial plate.

In order to find my way towards a balanced heraldic bookplate, a thorough study of the graphic bookplate was essential. My years as a collector brought me into contact with the best

that Europe had to offer and Paul Boesch, Pam Georg Rueter and Tranquillo Marangoni especially gave me a good idea of solid line technique and perfect black/white relationship in their works. In later designs I was influenced by the functional way in which Pieter Wetselaar, the Dutch typographer, calligrapher and engraver gave form to the bookplate.

Besides graphic bookplates, the study of the heraldic bookplates was even more important to me and I was privileged to acquire my own collection of all the modern heraldic masters from 1880 to the present. Among the English traditional masters, I highly rate the powerful draughtsmanship of G. W. Eve, Edward Kruger Gray and John Vinycomb and in the Scottish tradition, masters like Graham Johnston, Alfred George Law Samson and John Robert Sutherland. On the continent we see German heraldry, with Adolf Matthias Hildebrandt, Emil Doepler and Prof. Otto Hupp being the best-known artists. Finally there is the Swiss school, in which Paul Boesch stands at the top alongside the equally excellent Carl Roschet. Among these great names, the Austrian Hugo Gerard Ströhl should certainly not go unmentioned, and he can be regarded as the best heraldic artist of them all.

As I said, after various stylistic explorations, I was able to design my opus 1 for Willem de Kovel in 1981, strongly influenced by Paul Boesch. I continued to use the solid line technique and expressive designs with changing success until the 1990s. Several of these examples were illustrated in an earlier article in this series of the "Encyclopaedia" (volume 7 in 1988).

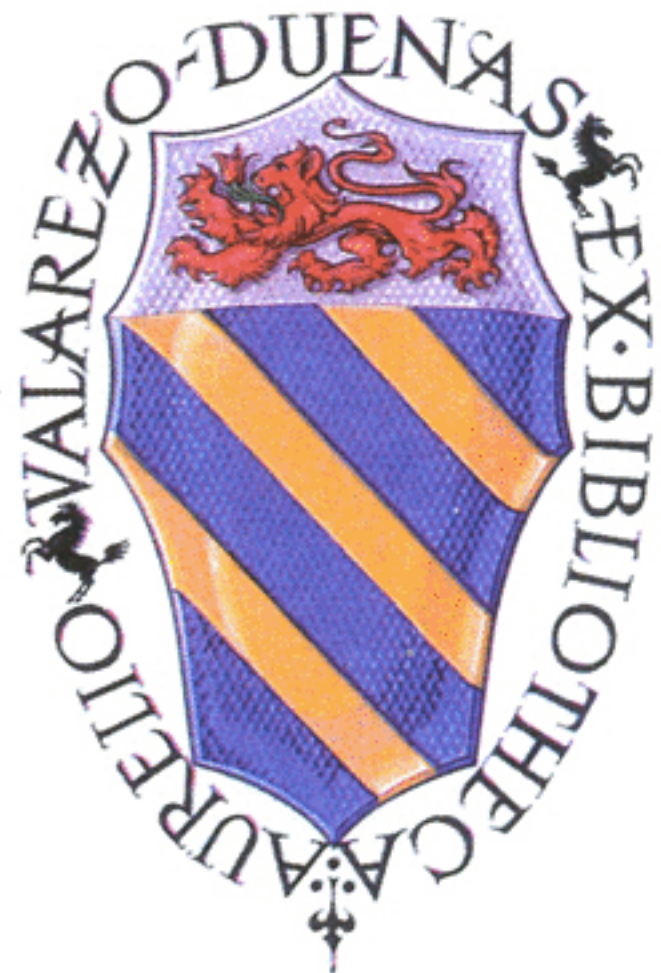
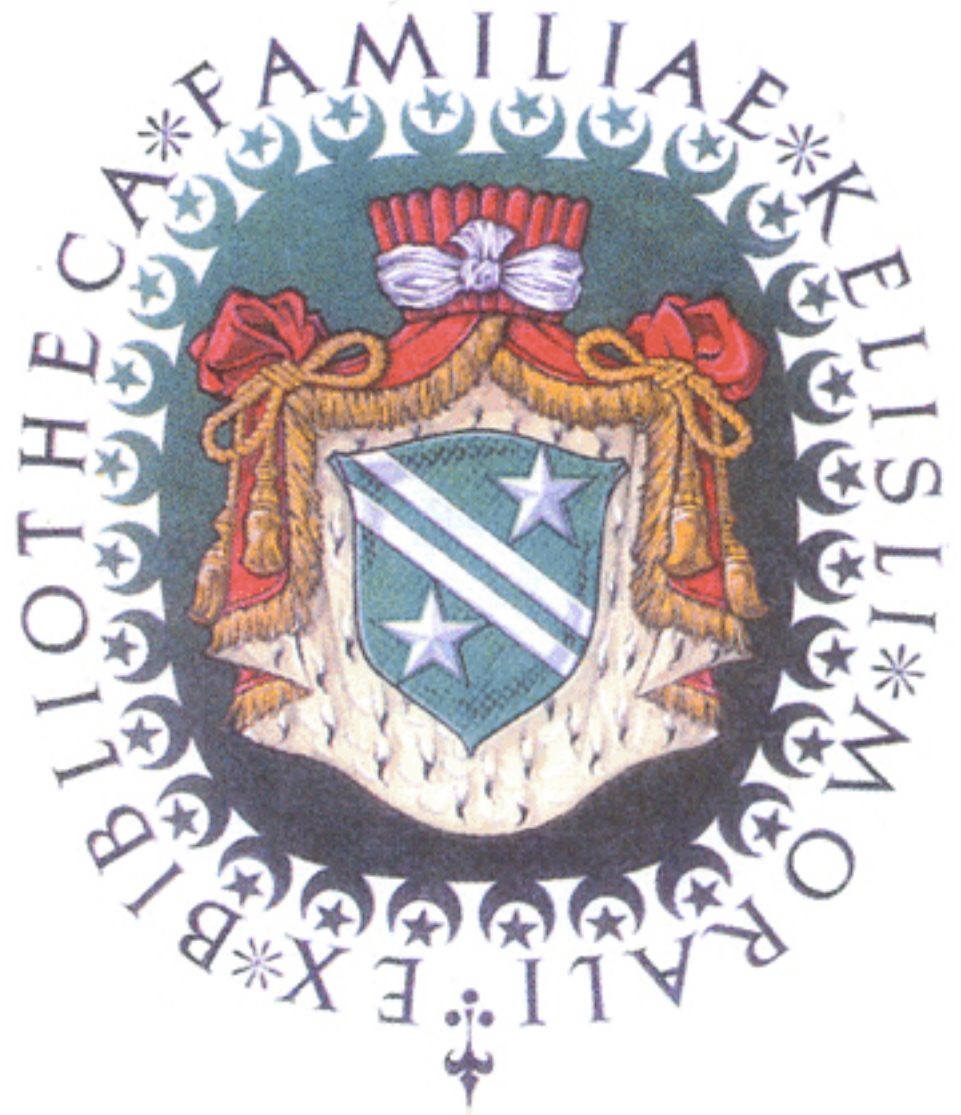
In the 1990s I worked on several commissions in a slightly more conventional style and developed a different line technique. The Internet revolution in the middle of the 1990s offered me enormous access to unknown heraldic sources and at the same time all the advantages of unlimited and swift communication. My many years of experience in the IT industry gave me the advantage of being able to factor in these developments early on and make maximum use of them.

As early as 1996 an American friend, built a website which included a cross-section of my armorial work and I was able to set up a worldwide heraldic network. This gave me the opportunity to acquaint myself with more heraldic culture. In the same period, I was selected as a craft member of the Society of Heraldic Arts in England and obtained greater access to the English speaking world and its fabulous heraldic heritage. This was a great step in my development, also powered by choosing new technology in colour-printing.

There follows a selection of my recent armorials especially for this article, with background information about 15 international heraldic traditions through which you can see the old and the new. This shows the vitality of heraldry and its many potential applications as the centuries go by.

One of the most curious commissions I was permitted to work on, was for an American with Turkish and Egyptian ancestors, **Hassan Sheriff Kamel-Kelisli-Morali**, a descendant of a Turkish Bey from a time when the Ottomans still had power and influence deep in the Balkans.

A typical example of Italian heraldry is the coat of arms for **Aurelio Valarezo-Duenas** whose forefather Luigi Valaresso fought as a Venetian knight against the French in the battle of Fornovo (1495).





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The design for a client with Polish ancestors, **Darius von Guttner Sporzynski** (2002) from Australia, shows the connection between old and new fatherlands. The kangaroo's paw points significantly to the horseshoe, a rather common Polish heraldic image.

Spanish heraldry is shown in the bookplate for the Mexican **David Alejandro de Olvera-Ayes**, whose forefather, Diego de Olvera, was an officer in Cortés army (the Conquistadores) during his first expedition in 1519 in Mexico.

The bookplate for **Johan Deboutte** is suffused with a Flemish spirit. It is a simple and clear coat of arms, which is so characteristic of the Low Countries, also shown in recent heraldry for **Arnold Vredembregt** from the Netherlands.

For a member of the Cromartie branch of the Urquhart clan living in Florida, **Robert Allen Cromartie**, I made a bookplate based on the Letter Patent published by the Lyon Court in Scotland in 2005. The horse's head as crest was chosen as a link to his profession as a racehorse breeder. In my search for new compositional forms, the diamond shape,



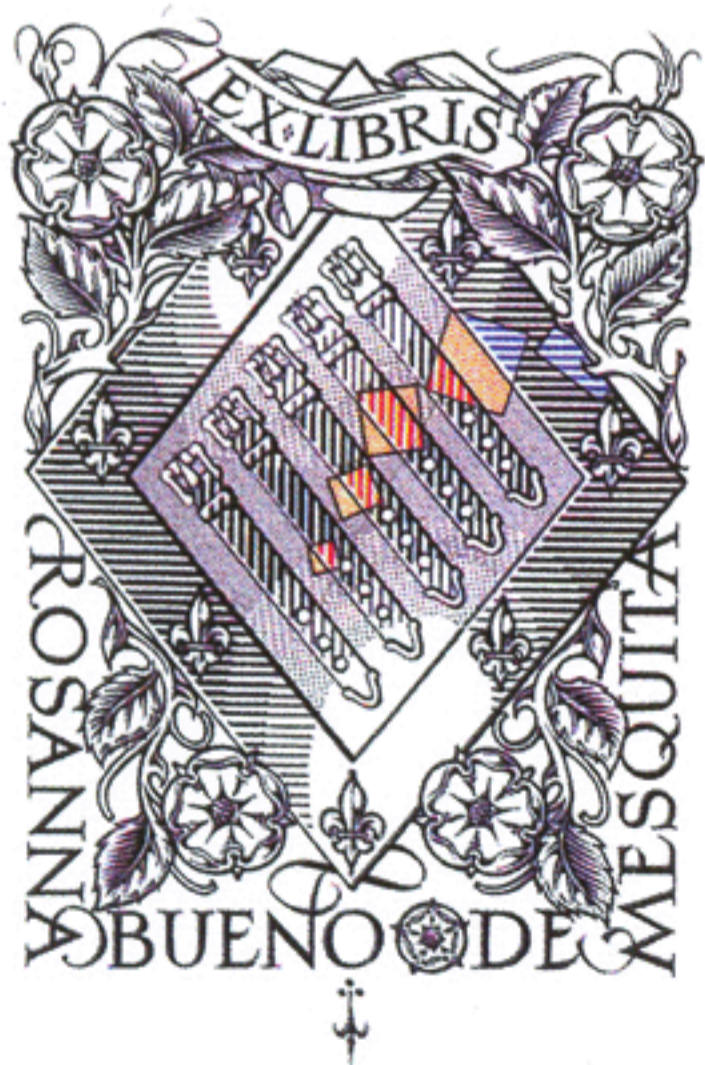
within which a heraldic image can be placed, was highly suitable. This form is used a great deal for funeral and armorial panels in old Dutch churches to commemorate the armigerous dead.

In 2002 I produced a similar composition for Dr. John J. FitzPatrick Kennedy. The coat of arms was registered in 1961 with the Ulster



King of Arms, the Chief Herald of Ireland, and is based on the old blazon of the Irish O'Kennedys. The owner also wanted his Maltese Order on the shield. Professor Sir John Hamilton Baker of Cambridge University also wished a similar composition with his family coat of arms from the beginning of the 16th century.

One of the most enjoyable challenges for armorials is designing for a woman. The arms in the bookplate for Rosanna Bueno de



Mesquita go back to an old Portuguese family, de Mesquita, and has a typical lozenge shield for a unmarried woman.

Another notable bookplate from the melting pot of American society was made for **Nicholas Milissis**. The red thread in his ancestry represented the sacrifices which his family made in the Greek struggle for freedom from Turkish rule. In addition, on the coat of arms a Greek revolutionary warrior (from 1820–1830) was also included as a supporter.

A design with a more or less recognisable and recent American heraldic signature was made for **Carl Pritchett** from Texas, U. S. A.

On the occasion of his becoming a knight of the German Johanniter-Orden, **Martin Kinkel**, whose family was ennobled in 1751, asked for a heraldic bookplate adding his cross of the Knights of Honour to the arms.





A unique example of Catholic heraldry is the plate for **Father Peter Walters** who leads a charitable organisation for street children in Colombia.

The exlibris for **Karl Johann Vessler**, with Swiss roots, is based in a modern way on traditional heraldic paintings and miniatures from 15th and 16th century grants of arms.

For **Claude Philippe d'Estrees**, a descendant of an old French noble family, I designed a traditional bookplate covered by a crown of a French "*Duc*" surrounded by delicate calligraphy.

Besides the previous examples, I have also designed bookplates for clients in other European heraldic traditions, from countries including Sweden, Lithuania, Austria, Hungary, Finland, Luxembourg, Montenegro and Wales.

Surprisingly, despite the marginal position of this genre (and even when my work was still small-scale), there has been no shortage of interest in my work. In 1982, my Opus 1 had already appeared in the Yearbook of the Deutsche Exlibris Gesellschaft. In 1985 there followed a limited edition publication through Exlibristen, Klaus Rödel's publishing house in Denmark. A set of plates was included in "*De Kleine Prentkunst in Nederland in de 20ste Eeuw*" (1986). After this (in 1987), a set made it into "*The Art of Heraldry*", an important standard work by the well-known heraldic author Carl Alexander von Volborth, followed by the article in this "Encyclopaedia" in 1988.

Since the 1990s my bookplates have also appeared in publications from the international bookplate biennales and also in a large number of catalogues of bookplate exhibitions and well-known contests such as Malbork, Sint-Niklaas, Barcelona, Ankara and Chrudim.

Various of my heraldic drawings have appeared in heraldic periodicals and books in the Netherlands, Belgium, England, the United States and others countries. One of these publications was Stephen Slater's beautiful "*The Complete Book of Heraldry*" in 2002. In 2006 a main article with many illustrations was published in the Bookplate Journal of the English Bookplate Society, under the title "*Constructing modern armorials*".

As a clear statement about the heraldic bookplate, I have abided by the motto "*Dare To Be Different*" for years and have striven to explore the boundaries of the armorial, with its firmly fixed rules. The personal direction I took is symbolically represented by the choice of the ermine and the signing of my work with the ermine spot. The story goes that this animal, at a crossroads in flight from approaching danger, chose fire rather dirtying its white paws in mud.

All my bookplate work is drawn by hand and reproduced in modern offset technologies. These modern methods give me none of the limitations traditional graphic arts in colourprinting. Remarkably, all my clients are more interested in the heraldic message in a modern state-of-the-art printing, than in a graphic art object. They put the utilitarian function of the bookplate in first place and do not want to get involved in any exchange or collector activity.

Based on my many years' experience I can say that in a visually-focused society and in the midst of an advancing mass culture, the heraldic pictorial language is still meaningful. My modest mission is to depict contemporary forms in this glittering, almost lost, pictorial language – the heraldic bookplate.

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	<u>List of illustrations</u>	<u>Lives in</u>	<u>Heraldic tradition</u>
2002	Dr. John J. Fitzpatrick Kennedy	Canada	Irish
	Darius von Guttner Sporzynski	Australia	Polish
	Nicholas Milissis	U. S. A.	Greek
	Johan Deboutte	Belgium	Flemish
2003	Familiae Kelisli Morali	U. S. A.	Turkish
2004	Rosanna Bueno de Mesquita	England	Portuguese
2005	David Alejandro de Olvera – Ayes	Mexico	Spanish
	Mr. Aurelio Valarezo – Duenas	U. S. A.	Italian
	Robert Allen Cromartie, Baron of Urquhart	U. S. A.	Scottish
2006	Karl Johann Vessler	Germany	Swiss
	Reverend Father Peter Walters	Colombia	English
2007	Claude Philippe, Duc et Comte d'Estrees	U. S. A.	French
	Prof. Sir John Baker	England	English
	Carl Pritchett	U. S. A.	American
	Martin Kinkel	Germany	German
	Drs. Arnoldus Hendrik Matthijs Vredenbregt	Netherlands	Dutch