

THE ASSUNTA, IGNAZIO, ADA AND ROMANO PELUSO EXHIBITION GALLERY WAS DEDICATED IN MARCH, 2008. THE LIBRARY IS PROUD TO PRESENT ROTATING EXHIBITIONS OF SELECTED ITEMS FROM ITS COLLECTION AND OTHER MATERIALS OF LITERARY, HISTORIC AND ARTISTIC INTEREST.

NOVEMBER 6, 2008 - MARCH 31, 2009



THE ASSUNTA, IGNAZIO, ADA AND ROMANO PELUSO EXHIBITION GALLERY

# THE NEW YORK SOCIETY LIBRARY

THE NEW YORK SOCIETY LIBRARY PRESENTS

# SHELF LIFE

WORKS IN BRASS BY CHRISTOPHER HEWAT

OPENING RECEPTION THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 2008, FROM 6 - 8 PM



Books are gregarious. They lie on top of one another or flank to flank in bookcases. Pressed together on each tight shelf, they appear a solid undifferentiated object formed of continuous text.

When not in circulation books read each other. No book has been written that does not descend from another book. The relation to others is a book's chief value; its chief pleasure the promiscuous satisfaction of pages which have been imprinted and impressed by the matter and stuff of other books.

Books are formed by the accretion of word upon word, a layered thickening of successive pages. They compose the cultural deposit of the past. A stack of books left for centuries would, like sea sediment, consolidate to stone, and anyone who broke a piece from it might find in his hand a small perplexity of fossilized phrases. Read in cross section, these would reveal an entirely unfamiliar literature.

Books are monuments, first to their author's intentions and labor, then to the reader who is affected by them. The mind of a

reader is a field of monuments in which books appear as emblematic miniatures, markers along the paths of thought and curiosity. Here stands Herodotus, Ovid, Turgenev, Boswell.

Reading is an engagement with a single object in the stillness of solitary concentration. From the pages of that one object fall other objects: a face, a sluggish river, a duel at the edge of a Russian forest, the death of an adulteress. These formed perceptions, arranged in lines of type, glow in the mind with material presence. To this imaginatively tactile experience the physical characteristics of books contribute their part.

Books in a reader's memory acquire the warmth of brass tablets. Engravings on their polished surfaces reflect figures and fragments of the mineral-rich mind. One fragment, from Osip Mandelstam: *Everything seems to me a book. Where is the difference between a book and a thing?*

—Christopher Hewat



## CHRISTOPHER HEWAT

graduated from Sarah Lawrence College in 1972. He has had solo exhibitions at the Victoria Munroe Gallery and W. M. Brady & Co. in New York City, the Drawing Room in East Hampton, and the New Britain Museum of American Art in Connecticut. His work is in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Addison Gallery of American Art, and the Princeton University Art Museum, as well as private and corporate collections.

He lives and works in Salisbury, Connecticut.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANNE DAY

