Everything is Relevant

Lum, Ken, Scott, Kitty

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Carnegie Library Project

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Vusie L. Hlatshwayo  
Head Librarian  
National Library of Swaziland  
P.O. Box 1461  
Mbabane, Swaziland

Dear Vusie L. Hlatshwayo,

I am writing to ask for your assistance. I am a artist  
invited to participate in this year’s Carnegie International,  
an important art exhibition held every third year in  
Pittsburgh, The United States.

The exhibition is founded by Andrew Carnegie, who was one of the  
richest persons on earth at the turn of this century.  
Carnegie was both a ruthless and ruthless individual. After his  
passing, perhaps his most enduring philanthropic endeavor was  
the founding of some 2811 free public libraries around the  
world. In fact, well over eighty percent of his fortune would  
eventually go for the building of libraries, universities and  
scientific research institutions. He equated his patronage  
with moral duty, and wrote: “the millionaire is intrusted for  
the time being with a great part of the increased wealth of the  
community, because he can administer it for the community far  
better than it could or would have done for itself.”

Interestingly, Carnegie dispensed with much of his wealth that he  
was forced to abandon this self-serving position. From this  
abandonment, Carnegie would establish the basis for the modern  
philanthropic foundation to which most of us are familiar.

I would like to develop my project as a correlative to some of the  
historical conditions of the Carnegie International. By  
expanding upon the relationship between libraries and  
philanthropy, I hope to suggest a new global library system  
which could also function as a kind of “super” philanthropic  
foundation. I hope to suggest a foundation which could  
facilitate the subversion of illiteracy, bolster the rights of  
all to freedom of information and free discussion movement. The  
foundation would also facilitate “the increased wealth of the  
(world) community” to such a degree that want itself might be  
eliminated.

Here is my proposal:

There are eighteen branches to the Carnegie public library  
system in Pittsburgh. I am writing to as many librarians and  
other persons from as many countries from around the world as  
possible. I am requesting in every correspondence that a  
poetry book, either an anthology of national poems or one by a  
poet of national stature in the country I am contacting, be  
mailed to me. I would prefer the books to be in bilingual text  
with English as the second language. Barring this  
possibilities, the books should be in the language of origin.  
The poetry book must be either from or be a copy of an  
identical book which exists within the collection of a public
library in the country of correspondence. In addition to the book, I would need to know the call number, and the name and place of the library.

I require a minimum of eighteen books from eighteen countries. Upon receiving all the books, I would then donate these books for distribution to the various Pittsburgh library branches. The donated books would be adorned with a special tag indicating they form part of a work of art of mine called "Library Project". On the outside jacket, the books would bear two call numbers, one given by the Pittsburgh library system and the other citing the call number, and the name and place of a second library from another country in the world in which the book is part of a collection or originated from. I would gladly recompense for any expenses incurred in support of this project.

The second part to the project would consist of a number of large Poem Paintings, banner-like paintings of poems selected from among the books received. These paintings would be displayed in a foyer of the Carnegie Institute complex adjoining both the Carnegie main library and the Carnegie Museum of Art tying in the different reference points of the work, library, museum, city of Pittsburgh, the world.

Logistically, this is quite a complex work to realize because so much is dependant upon the goodwill of people I may likely never meet. I would be most appreciative of your assistance. I WiMspecifically appreciate any names of persons whom I might be able to contact concerning this project.

With Best Wishes,

Ken Lum
2045 Nelson St., #1102
Vancouver, B.C.
Canada V6G 1N8

Fax to Vusie L. Hlatshwayo, Head Librarian, National Library of Swaziland, 1991
Partial List of Submitted Books

1. A book by Aimé Césaire, Bibliotheque Schoelcher, Fort-de-France, Fort-de-France-Cedex, *Martinique*. Call number 841-2 CES.


6. A book arranged to be sent by Ivo Mesquita, titled *Alberto Alexandre Martins Poemas* from *Brazil*, São Paulo Biblioteca Mario de Andrade, Rua da Consolação 94, 01302 São Paulo, Brazil telephone (0055-11) 239 0396.


14. Book sent from D.S. Proudfoot, Second Secretary, Canadian High Commission, P.O. Box 30481 Nairobi, Kenya: *Poems From East Africa*, edited by David Cook and David Rubadiri (Nairobi: Heinemann, 1971); Macmillan Memorial Library (Nairobi) class number AR 821 C00 or accession number 723680.


18. Randy Spencer sent book from Japan, Randy’s address is Suita-Shi Minami Suita, 1-15-12 Hatada Mansion 303, Osaka, Japan ¥564, Wise Writing of Haiku Poets, edited by Fujimoto Ichiro, Osaka Furitsu Nakanoshimo Toshokan Library. Call number: Cultural Science Department, Poetry 224, call number 226/1175.

19. Sangster’s Book Stores Jamaica: sends Louise Bennett’s Selected Poems and Jamaica Labrish; Jamaica Labrish is in the collection of The Kingston and St. Andrew Parish Library, of collection The Kingston and St. Andrew Parish Library, of 2 Tom Redcam Drive, Kingston 5. The call number is R. 823.

20. Book sent by Alan McEldowny, Director of South Pacific Books Ltd., Box 3533 Auckland, New Zealand, Pacific Voices, an anthology of Maori and Pacific Writing, selected by Bernard Gadd, University of the South Pacific Library. See poetry.


