35th Anniversary Exhibit: Greetings by Marta Legeckis at Opening Reception

A few days ago, a group of us were standing in this gallery surrounded by anonymous looking brown paper wrapped parcels. We really did not have a clear idea of what kind of artwork was in these packages. The task of hanging the show seemed a bit daunting. Then we began unpacking. Suddenly, it was as if we were surrounded by colorful gifts--calligraphy pieces in all shapes and sizes and just glowing with color!

35 years ago, a small group of students were urged and encouraged by their instructor, Sheila Waters, to organize a calligraphic group. This idea blossomed into what is now the Washington Calligraphers Guild. Sheila Waters became the first president and the calligraphic community in the Washington, DC area grew. Over the years, the guild has offered numerous workshops and has hosted quite a number of distinguished speakers and instructors not only from the US, but also from abroad. We have held three Lettering Arts conferences known as Letterforum, and through the generosity of Prof. Hermann Zapf have established the Hermann Zapf Scholarship Fund to further promote the study of calligraphy.

I was a bit of a latecomer when I joined the guild some five years after it was founded. My first workshop bulletin arrived and I quickly signed up for a one week class with Ieuan Rees. Ignorance is truly bliss! What I didn’t realize was that the class was filled with the founding members of the guild all of whom had already studied with the likes of Sheila Waters and Donald Jackson. In that class, I found out that I knew almost nothing about calligraphy--not even the fact that dip pens were used! But with the encouragement of Ieuan Rees and the other students, I went on to many years of study up to the present day. It’s a wonderful feeling to know that as you take each workshop, there is another goal in sight, another level to reach for. When you are taking your first calligraphic workshops and struggling over the foundational and the Romans, you can compare this to learning how to cook. In the beginning, we follow the recipes very faithfully. We get decent results; but they can be a bit bland. Then we discover the use of herbs and spices, and our efforts begin to produce ambrosia. That’s the way it is with calligraphy. You have to keep on studying in order to accumulate the knowledge of the various calligraphic hands and techniques which we can then combine to produce something uniquely personal.

In this gallery, we are surrounded by inspiration and by the inspired. So, go for it! Through our studies and the pieces that we create, we can begin to realize how fortunate we are in the discovery that there is always something new to reach for and to achieve. With this understanding, we get a better grasp on what calligraphy is all about and then we can, hopefully, pass our enthusiasm on to the public.

Happy Anniversary, Washington Calligraphers Guild!