

**Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections  
Northwestern University Library • Evanston, Illinois**

Victor Hammer Private Press Collection, 1931-1993  
Manuscript Series 137  
Box 1

**Biography:** Victor Hammer (1882-1967), born in Vienna, was a trained architect with a particular interest in calligraphy and printing. From 1898-1908 he was a student at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna. After exhibiting his various works in the years leading up to World War I, he spent four months in combat as a soldier with the Fourth Austrian Infantry Regiment. The remainder of the war he spent as a war artist in the Urals and in Constantinople. In 1919 he returned to his studio in Vienna and began his printing career, publishing Milton's *Samson Agonistes* in 1931. Hammer remained in Vienna until 1939. After the outbreak of World War II, he immigrated to the United States, and secured a teaching position in the art department at Wells College. Here he established both the Hammer Press and the Wells College Press, cut his third type-face (known as American Uncial), and continued to paint portraits. In 1948 Hammer accepted a position at Transylvania University in Lexington, Kentucky. He continued his work there until his death in 1967.

Hammer is best known for his typeface designs, engravings, and woodcuts, though he is also known as a portraitist and a painter of religious or allegorical images. Hammer's typefaces are unique, as he would create types through cutting his own punches, instead of drawing letters and relying on others to cut them.

There are four presses that are identified with the work of Victor Hammer: the Stamperia del Santuccio (established in Florence, 1929), The Hammer Press, The Wells College Press (Aurora, New York), and The Anvil Press (Lexington, Kentucky).

**Scope and Content:** Articles, publications, contact sheets, print proofs, and printed keepsakes of or relating to Victor Hammer, compiled by his wife Carolyn Hammer.

Proofs of prints in folder 6 were done by Carolyn Hammer, and include "Hölderlin", "Hagia Sophia and the Young Boy Christ", "Hammer Chapel/Kolbsheim/Alsace", "Jeanne d'Arc", "Lao-Tzu", "Tasso", "Die Zwölf Apostel", "Plant and Crystal", "Ionnes Aquilæ Volantis Impetv/ Cœlvn Verbi Maiestate Penetravit./John with flying eagle's onset entered/heaven with the majesty of the word", along with several Hammer devices, an alphabet, and two hands holding a looped piece of cord. Names and descriptions for most of these proofs come from Carolyn Hammer's list of proofs & prints in folder 5. For specific descriptions of the proofs in folder 6, see attached document.

Hammer-produced publications in this collection are of the Anvil Press, Lexington, Kentucky, or were done at Wells College, Aurora, New York.

**Provenance:** Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Bruce Beck, 2002.

**Restrictions:** There are no restrictions on use of the materials in the department for research; all patrons must comply with federal copyright regulations.

**Processor:** Karen Kushner, September 2003. Revised by Benn Joseph, July 2009.

**Container List:**

**Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections  
Northwestern University Library • Evanston, Illinois**

Victor Hammer Private Press Collection, 1931-1993  
Manuscript Series 137  
Box 1

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Description of contents</u>	<u>Date</u>
1	1	Contact sheets of Carolyn Hammer at press (for FPM article)	1986
	2	Issue of <i>Coranto</i> , Journal of the Friends of the Libraries, Univ. of Southern California, vol. 5:2	1968
	3	Article, John Dreyfus, "Printing as Industry and Craft: Victor Hammer's Example", from the <i>Kentucky Review</i>	1984
	4	Catalog, Hammer exhibition for Renaissance Society at Univ. of Chicago	1948
	5	Notes and descriptions of Hammer proofs I-XXXVI	n.d.
	6	Hammer proof prints (17), proofed by Carolyn Hammer	n.d.
	7	Lao Tzu print and Tao Te Ching poem, in wrapper: "Victor Hammer's Engravings and Woodcuts", by Carolyn Hammer	1979, 1993
	8	Keepsake, "A Dialogue on the Uncial Between a Paleographer and a Printer...", printed for the Society of Typographic Arts	1946
	9	Book, "Those Visible Marks...", by Victor Hammer, printed by Carolyn Hammer and Paul Holbrook	1988
	10	Book, "Ravens Creek", Harriet MacDonald Holladay	1960
	11	Prospectus, "Poems by Li Po"	1983-1984
	12	<i>The Private Library</i> , vol. 9:3	1986
	13	<i>The Private Library</i> , vol. 9:4	1986
	14	<i>The Private Library</i> , vol. 10:1	1987
	15	Card, with "Plant and Crystal" print pasted in	n.d.
	16	Book, "Victor Hammer and the Wells College Press"	1993
	17	Prospectus, "Victor Hammer: Artist and Printer"	1981

**Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections  
Northwestern University Library • Evanston, Illinois**

Victor Hammer Private Press Collection, 1931-1993  
Manuscript Series 137  
Box 1

Folder 6: Hammer Proofs of Prints, proofed by Carolyn R. Hammer

[17 total plus the cover sheet. Where the proof was unidentified, an attempt was made to match it with a title and description from Carolyn R. Hammer's list from Folder 5.]

1. "Hölderlin" [in red]; on proof list, more specifically: "I. Johann Christian Friedrich Hölderlin—Engraving on brass plate/1945/For the frontispiece of "Gedichte.../" Lexington/Stamperia del Santuccio/1949 (Opus XI). The poet is in the Seer's dress and attitude as he depicts himself in the early hymn "Wie wenn am Feiertage." This likeness of Hölderlin was taken from F.C. Hiemer's pastel of 1792." (7 ¼" X 10 ½")
2. unidentified [in black & white]; on proof list, possibly "III. Hagia Sopia and the Young Boy/Christ—Woodcut (unfinished)/1962/For the frontispiece of Thomas Merton: "Hagia Sophia" (not used). These figures appear in a triptych painting by Victor Hammer." (6" X 8")
3. unidentified [in red]; on proof list, possibly "VII. Hammer Chapel/Kolbsheim/Alsace : Diagram of Measurements & Auxiliary Lines of the Front Wall—Engraving on copper plate/1956/for the frontispiece of Victor Hammer: "Memory...Four Dialogues/" Lexington/Stamperia del Santuccio/1956 (Opus XIII)." (7" X 7 ½")
4. unidentified [in red]; on proof list, possibly "IX. Hammer Cahpel/Kolbsheim/Alsace—Woodcut/1957/For page iv (and wrapper) of Victor Hammer: "Memory...Four Dialogues/" printed in Lexington for George Wittenborn (New York)/1957." (9 ½" X 9 ½" when unfolded)
5. "Hammer Chapel, Alsace" [in red]; on proof list, more specifically: "X. Hammer Chapel/Kolbsheim/Alsace—Line-cut reduced from print of woodcut (Plate IX) for cover (printed blind) of Transylvania University Exhibition Catalogue of Hammer Drawings/1970." (5 3/8" X 8")
6. "Jeanne d'Arc" [in red]; on proof list, more specifically: "XI. Jeanne d'Arc—Engraving on brass plate/1942/For the title-page of Charles Peguy: "Le Mystère de la charité de Jeanne d'Arc/" printed in Aurora/New York/For Pantheon Books (New York)/1943. This presentation of Jeanne d'Arc is based on a rough sketch made by a clerk of the Parliament of Paris in the margin of a record of 1429 which mentions the lifting of the siege of Orleans." (6 ½" X 10 ½")
7. "Lao-Tzu" [colored]; on proof list, more specifically: "XII. Lao-Tzu—Line-cut from drawing/1958/by Victor Hammer for Bertolt Brecht: "Zu Taoteking/" Lexington/The Anvil Press/1959. The sketch is derived from a painting of the Sung Dynasty." (5 ¼" X 6 5/8")
8. "Tasso" [in red]; on proof list, more specifically: "XIII. Torquato Tasso—Engraving on brass plate, 1958/For the title-page of Tasso: "Ventiquattro Sonnetti/" Vienna/Stamperia del Santuccio/1939 (Opus X); printed here from line-cut made from original print (brass plate lost)." (7 3/16" X 10 5/8")
9. unidentified [in black & white]; on proof list, possibly: "XIX. Die Zwölf Apostel—Woodcut/1938/made for Otto Reicher: "Tauernreise" (not used in the 1938 edition as planned);

**Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections  
Northwestern University Library • Evanston, Illinois**

Victor Hammer Private Press Collection, 1931-1993  
Manuscript Series 137  
Box 1

printed in "The Twelve Apostles/" Lexington/Stamperia del Santuccio/1965 (Broadside IV). The figures for this cut were derived from those on a small ivory casket in the Kaiser-Friedrich Museum/Berlin." (5  $\frac{3}{4}$ " X 7  $\frac{1}{2}$ " )

10. unidentified [in black & white]; on proof list, possibly: "XXI. Plant (Daphne) & Crystal—Woodcut/1938/For the title-page of Otto Reicher: "Tauernreise/" Grundlsee/Austria/Stamperia del Santuccio/1938." (6  $\frac{1}{2}$ " X 9  $\frac{1}{2}$ " )

11. "Plant and Crystal" [colored]; probably another version of "XXI. Plant (Daphne) & Crystal." This proof reads: "The will within a seed determines the outer form of the plant; a crystal possesses an intellect that creates its ordered geometric shapes. Man too must will form and order/and with eye and hand try to re-create these two truths in his work. —V.H." (5  $\frac{5}{8}$ " X 8  $\frac{3}{4}$ " )

12. "Iones Aquilæ Volantis Impetv/ Cœlvn Verbi Maiestate Penetravit./John with flying eagle's onset entered/heaven with the majesty of the word." [in black & white] on proof list, more specifically: "XXXI. Eagle/Symbol of S. Jhon—[two of] Eight woodcuts/1954//For the four volumes of Tyndale's version of the "Gospells/" Lexington/The Anvil Press/1954-55; used also in Sedulius: "De Quatuor Evangelistis/" The Anvil Press/1955. The figures are derived from drawings in the Holkham Bible." (10  $\frac{7}{8}$  X 7  $\frac{11}{16}$ " )

13. & 14. both unidentified [in black & white]; on proof list, either could be "XXXIV. Hammer Device with Figure—Woodcut/1946/For the title-page of Janet Lewis: "The Earth-Bound/" Aurora/New York/The Wells College Press/1946. or XXXV. Hammer Device with Figure—Woodcut/1946/For the title-page of Janet Lewis: "The Earth-Bound" (not used-replaced by cut/Plate XXXIV)." 13. (8  $\frac{1}{16}$ " X 5  $\frac{1}{2}$ " ) & 14. (7  $\frac{15}{16}$ " X 5  $\frac{1}{4}$ " )

15. unidentified [in black & white]; on proof list, possibly: "XXXVI. Hammer Device—Cut from brass and mounted on wood block; used as printer's device in John Milton: "Samson Agonistes/" Florence/Stamperia del Santuccio/1931 (Opus I). This device/as symbol/has no specific reference though its lines suggest a crystal with defined internal structure and external form shown on a plane: the positive lines of the upper half are negative below/and so too in reverse. Several of the early Hammer portraits are signed by the use of this mark; it is the seal of the ring he engraved and served as the water-mark for the paper made in Pescia at the Magnani Mills for his press/Stamperia del Santuccio." (3  $\frac{3}{8}$ " X 5  $\frac{1}{2}$ " )

16. unidentified [alphabet, in red] (5  $\frac{3}{4}$ " X 7  $\frac{1}{2}$ " )

17. unidentified [two hands holding a looped piece of cord, in black & white] (9  $\frac{5}{8}$ " X 7  $\frac{3}{8}$ " )