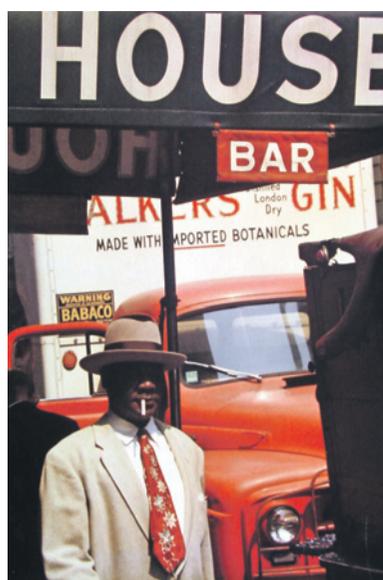




Lumiere's books have been acquired by more than 150 museums. LEFT, BELOW: SAUL LEITER FOUNDATION, COURTESY HOWARD GREENBERG GALLERY, NYC



PUBLISHING AT LUMIERE PRESS

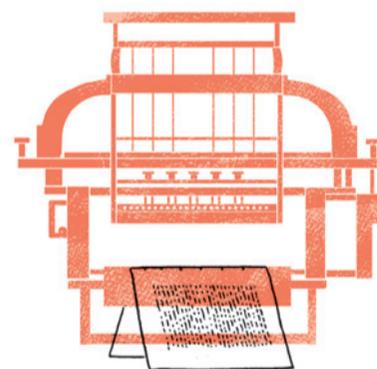


STEP 1: SELECT AND ARRANGE TYPE
Typeface design is the DNA of a book. The text type is cast on a complex machine that injects molten lead into brass molds, called "matrixes," producing three-dimensional sculptural type.



STEP 2: INK THE TYPE AND LETTERPRESS PRINT SHEETS

Lead type is configured on the bed of the printing press to create pages. Ink is distributed over the face of the type and pressed into the fibres of the hand-fed paper.



STEP 3: STITCH THE SIGNATURES

Printed sheets are folded into clusters of pages called "signatures," which are sewn together in a sewing machine. After the spine of the book is glued, the "book block" is trimmed.



STEP 4: PASTE UP COVER AND ASSEMBLE

The book block is inserted into a hardcover, the endpapers are glued, and the book is placed into an iron book press until the glue dries.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY MARIEL ASHLINN KELLY

One for the books

Toronto's Lumiere Press, headed by Michael Torosian, specializes in painstakingly crafted reminders that sometimes nothing beats the physical page

BRAD WHEELER

APPLAUSE, PLEASE

"I drew my line in the sand when I was very young," explains Michael Torosian, a writer and maker of fine books on photography. "I decided I wanted a life of the mind and a life in the arts, and if that meant making sacrifices, in terms of materialism, it was a sacrifice I was willing to make."

Torosian's Lumiere Press has just published a new book; Gutenberg does not roll over in his grave, but winks instead.

The book is *The Ballad of Soames Bantry*, an elegant celebration of the late American photographer Saul Leiter.

It's an exquisite thing – hard-bound and hand-crafted. Torosian wrote it

and, with the help of an apprentice or two, painstakingly made it. Took him three years to create a couple of hundred copies.

How much does the book go for? Chapters Indigo does not know. Consult the Lumiere Press website to see if they have one in stock, and plan on spending at least eight bills.

I'm sitting with Torosian, 65, in what he smilingly calls his "industrial facility." It's a workshop (with a press, a 1950s typesetting machine and vintage sewing machine) sitting behind his house in Toronto's Parkdale neighborhood.

Since 1986, Torosian's Lumiere Press has been putting out artful, limited-edition books on photography, covering biographical retrospectives on photographers Gordon Parkes, Dave Heath, Aaron Siskind and others.

The first was *Edward Weston: Dedi-*

cated to Simplicity, which was only published after the photographer and one-man-band Torosian spent a decade of obsessive self-education on typography, design, book-binding, press work and the history of books.

Torosian lugged 25 of the books on Edward Weston to a dealer, who told him he was underselling his product. "You don't know what you've made here," he said to Torosian.

If he didn't know what he'd made then, he does now. He just heard from a collector in Ireland who had bought a copy of the Weston book in New York for US\$1,000.

"These are marketed as works of arts," says Torosian, the son of Fort Erie, Ont., welder. "Everything is bespoke. Nothing is off the rack."

The Lumiere books have been acquired by more than 150 museum collections the world over. The Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library in Toronto recently acquired the Lumiere archives, consisting of manuscripts, galleys, prototype designs and correspondence with artists.

In an age where the book form has been digitized, a reverence for the physical object has redoubled. "I work like crazy, but you cannot strategize good fortune when it comes to timing," Torosian says. "I seem to have hit the point where there is a renaissance in the consciousness about fine printing."

But what about the limited-edition nature of his books?

Torosian and his interns, for example, spent an eternity transcribing tapes of interviews and lectures by Saul Leiter into 130,000 words distilled into an autobiographical soliloquy found in *The Ballad of Soames Bantry*. Doesn't Torosian want to spread the word on his beloved photographers in a more accessible form?

"It's my pleasure to do it this way," the writer says, noting that his books are in libraries.

"I wouldn't want to deprive myself of the enormous satisfaction of making books in this unique way, just to simply broker a book and get it out into the world. I think there is a real significant merit in my life to do it the way I do it."

Know of an unsung arts and culture hero who deserves wider acclaim? Send suggestions to bwheeler@globeandmail.com.

Founder Michael Torosian just heard from a collector in Ireland who had bought a copy of one of his works in New York for US\$1,000. MICHAEL TOROSIAN

