

## Arca Artium

### *Introduction*

Arca Artium, “Ark of the Arts”, developed from the working collection and inspirational habitat of Frank Kacmarcik Obl.S.B. (1920-2004), teacher, liturgical designer, graphic artist, typographer, and calligrapher. Beyond the significant contributions he made to these areas of endeavor during a career spanning more than sixty years, Frank Kacmarcik carefully shaped his personal collection to become a resource for others. For many years a close associate of Saint John’s as faculty member, consultant, and frequent visitor, Br. Frank became a cloistered oblate of Saint John’s Abbey in 1989 and formally donated his collection to Saint John’s University in 1995.

### *Contents*

Arca Artium’s areas of interest are the book arts, graphic art, liturgical art, monasticism, and architecture. The rare book holdings number more than 4,000 and fine art holdings have more than 6,000 original prints and works of art and form the anchors of the collection.

Volumes in the rare book library provide excellent examples of the manuscript tradition, the transition to printing with movable type and the history of fine printing houses, ancient through contemporary. The collection contains hundreds of books by significant historic printers such as Froben, Aldus, Colines, Estienne, Plantin, Barbou, Didot, Baskerville, Bodoni, as well as from modern private presses such as Chiswick, Doves, Nonesuch, Golden Cockerell, and books designed by Eric Gill and printed by H.D.C. Pepler at Ditchling; books designed by Bruce Rogers, Rudolf Koch, Stanley Morison, Frank Kacmarcik, and many others.

Arca Artium’s graphic art holdings grew out of and in relation to his interests reflected in the rare books. There was an intimate relationship between printed text and graphic illustration before the invention of photography. The collection is particularly strong in woodcuts, engravings, etchings, and lithographs, processes used to illustrate books since printing was invented and, in fact, many of the prints in the collection were once incorporated into books, or were printed as part of a book project. The large selection of 20th-century prints exhibits a wide range of themes and printing methods employed by Eastern and Western artists.

Arca Artium also contains significant holdings of three-dimensional art objects and significant furnishings originally acquired for Frank Kacmarcik’s Marcel Breuer-designed home in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Arca Artium holds a reference library of some 20,000 volumes as well as the Frank Kacmarcik archives containing his papers, artwork, book and architectural designs. The collection continues to grow through an endowment established by the donor and by gifts both monetary and in-kind.

### *Access*

With the generous support of the Andrew W. Mellon and Henry Luce Foundations, Arca Artium’s holdings have been cataloged. Researchers desiring onsite access to the collection may contact the curator: [arcaartium@csbsju.edu](mailto:arcaartium@csbsju.edu). At this time access to the art collection is very limited.