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VISUAL

An Artist's Favorite Authors Get Some Face Time at the Library

Posted by [Molly Finnegan](#), January 13, 2010

If it's hard to find [much written in English](#) about the Swedish artist Carl Kohler (1919-2006), it probably has something to do with the fact that his work had never left Scandinavia until last year. On a personal quest to bring his father's work to a broader audience, Kohler's son Henry (together with his sister Frida) says he approached galleries in hopes that someone would embrace the work, but didn't have any luck.

So Henry took an alternative approach, bringing a special collection of his father's literature-inspired works to an institution he thought would appreciate them: the library.

In "Beyond the Words: Author Portraits by Carl Kohler" -- curated by Henry Kohler -- there are 27 paintings, collages and wood block prints of artists like James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, Jean Cocteau and a particularly interesting image of Henry Miller "as a demon." Carl had a particular love of French literature, so there are also portraits of Anais Nin, Guillaume Apollinaire and Alfred Jarry.

The show first opened at the [Brooklyn Public Library](#) early last year. On Monday, it opened at the [Robarts Library in Toronto](#).

"When Henry Kohler contacted me and offered the opportunity to send this exhibition to the University of Toronto Libraries," wrote U. of T. organizer Gabriela Bravo in an email, "we didn't hesitate to accept the offer." It's a mutually beneficial situation for Kohler and the library: Bravo says the portraits, with accompanying blurbs on each writer, will hopefully encourage visitors to start reading the works of the authors Kohler depicted.

Henry Kohler says his father, an avid reader and unpublished author, chose his subjects because they were his favorite writers. He was drawn to their personalities, "but also he could get inspired by a face. Some of the authors had really strong personal looks."

Watch a slideshow of works by Carl Kohler:



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