Rosenthal Library UnCOVERS Its Dormant Treasures

Shiryn Ghermezian
Staff Writer

"Oh look, Marlon Brando," said Rachel Mahgerefteh, sophomore, as she looked at photos of the actor in The Rosenthal Library's new exhibit "Treasures from Our Shelves.

Presented by Rosenthal Library's department of special collections and archives, the exhibit highlights items from the archives and various collections and acquisitions throughout the years. By taking the time to stop and look, students can look in awe of the unique and rarely displayed items usually locked up among other works in the libraries and collections.

Aside from photos, displayed items include books, pamphlets and even menus. Students can see FBI documents acquired from the Library of James Forman in the 1960s when the FBI spied on civil rights and other domestic political groups. Forman was an influential leader of the Civil Rights Movement and portions from his private FBI file illustrate how the FBI watched Forman even after the suspension of FBI's Counter Intelligence Program in 1971.

Students can also see some recognizable faces and names among the selections shown in the exhibit. Selections from the Performing Arts Collection include a 1945 photo of singer/actor Fred Astaire and a newspaper cover with a photo of Lucille Ball from her days on Broadway.

One of the exhibit's curators, Annie Tummino, who also assisted in the exhibit as a graduate student herself, describes the Department as a "very high quality environment."

"The exhibit is a showcase of all the different holdings in the Special Collections and Archives," said Natalie Milbrodt, a library science graduate student who also assisted in the exhibit.

Milbrodt also said that each item came with a brief description so that "people can read and understand the object's significance to the collection."

The exhibit is offered as a somewhat tour guide leading one into the hidden materials of the archives and various collections that some students are unaware of. Students will also pass by other interesting collections from the exhibit as they enter or exit the main lobby that will to persuade them to stop and look.

"I love 'A Street Car Named Desire,'" said Mahgerefteh, junior who is a fan of the film and enjoyed seeing original publicity photos from the film.

The exhibit also includes intriguing objects such as pencils that each have a different word from a poem written on them. Buzz Spector, now an art professor at Cornell University, created a piece in 1976 entitled "Memories." Spector said it allows one to rearrange the words "in any way which appeal to [one's] own sensibilities." Each pencil has a different phrase like "without stopping," "nothing to do," "the same conversation" and the title of the work, "memories." Another case in the exhibit holds small scrolls in the shape of cigarettes that, when unraveled, reveal a short story printed inside. Not many places can people go to see pencils and cigarettes that would draw attention in such creative ways.

Putting pencils and cigarettes aside, "Treasures from Our Shelves" also highlights various menus from New York's restaurants. The Queens College Menu Project records and collects menus from some of New York's iconic restaurants such as "The River Café" and other eateries that changed New York City and its surrounding areas.

The Menu Collection displays take-out and in-store menus from the 1950s to the present in various sizes and illustrates an "historical and cultural survey" based on the development of New York eateries. It began in 1641 with the building now known as the "City Tavern."