

Local publishing venture marries text to image

By Robert Reid, Record staff

WATERLOO — The solitary artist toiling away in a garret is an enduring romantic image.

A significant part of the creative process is solitary, whether it involves a painter in front of an easel, a writer at a computer keyboard or a composer at a piano.

Nonetheless, much of the creative process is collaborative. And this applies to more than such performance arts as theatre, film and dance.

Book production is inherently collaborative, beginning with the writer, and moving along through the editor, designer, printer and publicist. Books are created through a partnership between writers and publishers.

Judith Miller, an associate professor and director of English programming at Renison College at the University of Waterloo, acknowledges her boutique publishing venture is collaborative to its creative core.

"It's the result of a remarkable set of coincidences, correspondences and connections," she says.

A powerful advocate of local creative activity in all forms, Miller started Stonegarden Studio publications last spring.

"I've always had a deep interest in the arts of this area," she says.

Although the idea was to publish four books annually, the small, independent publisher released five titles. Another two titles are in the works.

"So many wonderful things presented themselves."

Miller, who is a writer and visual artist as well as an academic, has long been fascinated by "the intersection of word and image."

She isn't referring to pictures as illustrations for text, but a sympathetic, complemen-



This is a Love Song, sort of



i am here now



Object and Emblem

tary relationship between narrative and image.

"In the books we publish art doesn't illustrate text," she explains. "Rather, a third level of meaning arises from the combination of text and image."

When most people think about literature nowadays, they think about novels.

In contrast, Miller has always been interested in literary forms "that have been hard to find a place," whether poems, short fiction, personal essays or meditative notes.

These are the forms celebrated in Stonegarden Studio books, all of which are designed by Karl Griffiths-Fulton, a local photographer and book designer, and printed by Pandora Press, one of Waterloo Region's premium printers.

Miller stresses that the creative collab-



glimmerings



Broken - but Still Standing

oration is not a co-operative or a collective, but rather "a coming together of creative skills and opportunities that make wonderful things happen."

The goal of Stonegarden Studio, Miller adds, is to "give attention to artists" and "to make permanent what otherwise would be ephemeral."

"It is a celebration of the book as an art form."

In terms of business model, Miller's aim is to break even.

"We are a non-profit publishing venture," she says. "Our focus is sharing the art of the book with as many readers as possible."