

Author's Query

Dr. Roger Lipsey

THOMAS MERTON'S CALLIGRAPHIES

For a book and possible exhibition of Thomas Merton's calligraphy, Dr. Roger Lipsey (author and art critic) would be grateful to receive notice of examples of Merton's art now in private hands or institutional collections. He can be reached at 423 East 84th Street, New York, NY 10028. It would be important to support his effort to study, interpret, and publish this little-known part of Thomas Merton's lifework by calling his attention to examples other than those in the Thomas Merton Study Center, which number well over 400, but vary in quality from finished work to experiments.



Working in the Study Center for a week earlier this summer, Dr. Lipsey has uncovered much unpublished material on the abstract calligraphy written by Thomas Merton, and he has begun to assess the Center's collection of calligraphy. Merton pursued his interest in calligraphy above all in the early 1960's. An exhibition of his work toured various Catholic colleges and centers throughout the United States in 1964-1965. The Introduction that accompanied this exhibition was later published in *Raids on the Unspeakable*, where some of the calligraphy also appears.

Merton took his calligraphic work seriously and wrote of it with a keen ability to suggest its enigmatic nature, no less for himself than for the viewer. He was also willing to poke fun at it: "If you should hear news," he wrote a friend, "of my exhibiting strange blobs of ink in Louisville, ignore the information: it is not worthy of your notice." On the other hand, in his Notebooks he was truer to his actual feelings in writing of calligraphy as "inventions, yes: but also collaborations, summonses, calls to experiment, trials, gifts, fortunate events."

Dr. Lipsey is looking forward to correspondence from current owners of Merton Calligraphy and to receiving useful information on this aspect of Thomas Merton's work.