

## SYNCHRONICITY & OLD PLACES: on the road with jah

Invited by Philip Smith and the Designer Bookbinders to be a keynote speaker at their International Conference in Oxford in September 1994, I went to Europe in late August to attend the Conference and then go on to London, Paris and Amsterdam, with an eventual stop at the Frankfurt Book Fair, if I could stretch resources until 5 October. The following is an "on the road" journal of my 33 days in Europe--impressions and interpretations.

While waiting for my plane to depart in Los Angeles, I saw Sipowitz from NYPD Blue on television--but I always see someone at the airport--Duke Ellington one time, Ray Charles another--and so it goes. It felt like a good beginning to a long trip.

Having arrived at Heathrow, on a beautiful Sunday morning with sunshine, a rare occurrence for me in all my days in London, I waited for the bus to Oxford with a brisk breeze and blue skies. I just couldn't believe it! Then on the bus, it seems that everyone was reading a book! And since I was going to speak on the future of the book, well, I was delighted! Not a laptop in sight. In Oxford, I noticed that people were shopping--and it was a Sunday--and I was so surprised. Only later did I learn that this Sunday was the first legal day of Sunday shopping in England--and then I saw Haagen Daz, McDonald's, and really did not feel at home. The cloning of America is so perverse--we send our worst films abroad, Disney sends everything abroad, and then all the franchises have invaded the culture of Europe.

My friends picked me up and I stayed in the country in an old farmhouse, with two white horses out in front and a crabapple tree, rose hips and cat. An Elizabeth home next door was being restored as a home, a thatched roof farmhouse completely restored into a deluxe home with swimming pool, and the wide open space was a blessing after Los Angeles. We took a walk to the old church and cemetery, ate a lovely meal at home and had gooseberry cobbler for dessert--with coffee! Yes, coffee has taken root even in England.

The next day, a Monday, was a bank holiday and my hosts scheduled a visit to the chalk Horse, an ancient outline on a hill in chalk, which resembled a white horse. And then we went to Kingston Bagpuize House, a manor house, where the young landlord, Mr. Lonsdale took us around and pointed out antiques, paintings of Hogarth, Constable, Honhorst, etc., the grounds, the Wendy House (a playhouse for children), the 200,000 oak trees which he intends to plant to replace all the elms that have died in that area.

### OXFORD

The weather became more English upon my entrance into Oxford. I had a great reunion with Tim Ely, who was helping the binders set up exhibitions for the Conference. We walked through Oxford, getting a feel for the town. We did notice how polluted the air was in Oxford due to the fumes from large vehicles such as buses and trucks, since England has no restraints on vehicles for pollution. Oxford is fine for horsedrawn carriages, but not so many automobiles. After a fine pub lunch, we visited the Museum of Oxford and the Museum of Modern Art, Oxford which had a Joseph Albers exhibition, which was a knockout! I also visited the Ashmolean on my own, which was undergoing a renovation at the entrance, but was a fine old friend for Tintoretto, coins, pots, and so much more.

The switch to the dormitories at Christ Church College was fine--and the Great Hall was magnificent. Eating breakfast, lunch or dinner with King Henry VIII looking down at you--the founder of the College--as well as W. H. Auden, or Lewis Carroll, who was dean there--well, it was amazing! It is a long and beautiful hall--more magnificent than one can ever imagine, and so much history has gone on in that hall.

It was hard luck that all the libraries at Oxford were closed the week we were there--it was their last chance to have a holiday before school resumed, so no Bodleian visit, no Radcliffe Camera--just the outside of the buildings and not the interiors. The one library that was opened for us was the one at the Christ Church College, with plaster ornamentation by Thomas Roberts of Oxfordshire and it was exquisite three-dimensional sculpture indeed.

### Future of the Book

On 1 September, I gave a talk on Bookworks at the End of the Millennium: The Mitt or the Hand, which covered my thoughts for the past 18 months on whether we will be reading screens and no longer handling books, or will the artist book become the artifacts of the 21st century, and will we all be reading books again with more zest than ever. Speaking to bookbinders was a new experience, and I dedicated the lecture to both Philip Smith who made it possible for me to be in Oxford and to Hedi Kyle, who changed the attitudes of artists in binding books well. Having not found my first sheet of slides which would have set the tone for my talk, feverishly I began to compose a new talk based on the slides I did take with me--and so it was fresh and new and better than ever. I knew it was a good talk--largely because my heart pounded so hard before I began that I thought I would have some kind of attack, but that

means the adrenalin was up, and I needed to feel that way.

I was greeted by Paula Claire, the founder of the Concrete and Visual Poetry Archive in Oxford, and we went to her home to speak for hours about mail art, book art and performance. We shared so many old friends together that I felt as if I had known Paula Claire for decades. I did an interview with her subsequently, which I shall publish in the next issue of *Umbrella*. Her archive is amazing--on the top floor of her house, and it was a wondrous collection indeed.

Oxford afforded good restaurants as well--Nepalese, Indonesian, Indian--it made for great meals and warm friends throughout my stay.

### **Paul Johnson**

Although I did not attend many sessions of the Designer Bookbinders, which was an international conference, I did attend Paul Johnson's session on Pop-up Books, since he is a foremost proponent of involving children in making books, and his forte is pop-up books. He has written several books on his techniques and for teachers in schools, so it was a delight to see this colorful man actually perform his session, enticing all who listened and watched his involvement with children and with making books that are three-dimensional wonders. He is a teacher in Manchester, England, but travels throughout the world.

The weather was glorious--and it was truly one of those days you dream about--I cannot remember seeing so much sunshine and roses in England!

### **Andrew Hoyem**

Andrew Hoyem of Arion Press in San Francisco gave an overview of his book productions, which involved collaboration with many famous artists including Jim Dine, John Baldessari, Ida Applebroog, etc. And then it rained--but I always have an umbrella, don't I? I spent a glorious time at the Pitt Rivers Museum, where collections abound from all over the world--from umbrellas to fans, papermaking to books, tools and tapestries, and so much more. I even found a votive silver umbrella from Gongamma shrine Gundlasi-Gavam, near Kuppam in Kangundi, given to the museum by Lord Balfour in 1917. This is one of the best museums I have ever seen--much like the Museum of Man in Vancouver or the Smithsonian--but more accessible.

### **Paula Claire**

I had a great evening with Paula Claire, and

interviewed her for a future issue of *Umbrella*. She has been in correspondence with visual poets, mail artists, and performance artists from all around the world. Her archive is indeed a treasure and one which deserves great recognition.

Because her husband is a glass artist, some of her glass poems are set in her windows and sunshine illuminated these poems to make a glorious visual experience.

### **Philip & Dorothy Smith**

Philip Smith is one of the great bookbinders, and a visit to his studio as part of the Conference was a great treat! He calls his home the Book House, and with a great feast prepared by Dorothy and a wondrous visit to his studio in back, both body and mind were satiated. It was a great day at the Book House, after which we all dispersed--I to London for a visit to old friends and old places. Upon arrival in London, I noticed immediately the Baker St. Station was completed decorated with tiles with Sherlock Holmes' profile in all dimensions on the tiles--a great tube station, but there were many more to come all thematically and aesthetically created by individual commissioned artists. It certainly made the tube stations exciting!

### **LONDON**

After 11 years, London certainly seemed different--cleaner, glistening, perky with a new pride. Tube stations were clean and whistling, train stations were startlingly gorgeous--full of light, no darkness, no grime--places where one would want to eat, shop and wait with joy. London seemed to be wanting to join Europe on equal terms and with finesse. It was obvious there was a greater influx of Afro-Caribbeans in London. Bookshops still abound on Charing Cross, yet books are more expensive. Used books, however, abound and bookshops are indeed adventures.

If you travel to England, be sure to buy a phone card which will expedite matters in phoning people from telephone booths. Special booths designated for those who are equipped with BritTel phonecards or other cards such as Mercury allow one to use the prepaid phone cards to make calls exclusively. As a result, there are many fewer people waiting for those telephone booths. And if you wish to take advantage of being a tourist, you can buy a Travel Pass in most central London tube stations which will allow you to travel for a three days to a week on buses, subways and certain local trains without doing anything except using that computerized pass. It expedites matters and permits you to avoid hunting for coins and the

using that computerized pass. It expedites matters and permits you to avoid hunting for coins and the right change for any short trip.

At the British Museum, I saw the Elgin marbles again--even the British Museum seemed remarkably restored and renewed in certain galleries--even though the British Library is marked to move in the near future (at least when their new building is finished--and that has been years in the making). At any rate, everything looked much better. The Russian Constructivist bookshow was marvelous--a joy to behold--one could put a headset on and hear the voice of Mayakovsky. The Rodchenko Reading Room was reconstructed again--and the collection was abundant and joyful. It was a rare treat--one which I returned to at least three times when I was in London.

One of the great free opportunities in London is the concert series at 1 p.m. at St. Martin's-in-the-Field Church just across from the National Portrait Gallery. The concerts are of a high calibre, the cost is what your pocketbook can afford, and the respite in such an historic church before you move on to other cultural sites is tremendously inspiring.

### **Ron King**

I had the good fortune to visit the studio of Ron King and Circle Press and being an old friend, it truly was a treat. Ron King is one of the greatest printer-publishers in England and has been for a long time. His work is consummate and his dedication is beyond expectation. He loves what he does and deserves great recognition.

Tea and biscuits allowed me to realize how good "cookies" are in England--they're so good and so inexpensive--bickies, they're called in the vernacular--but their made of natural ingredients and real flavors, not artificial--ginger, cinnamon, etc. Take it from me!

### **Blue Posts Pub**

The epiphany of my trip was an amazing party which was tendered to me by a group of book artists in London, who printed an invitation (one which I had never received), sent to book artists throughout the greater London area, and about 45 people came to honor me at the Blue Posts Pub on Berwick Street, an historic pub on an historic street in Soho. Hosted by John Bently and Stefan Szczelkun, the evening was more than one could ever have expected. Even Clive Phillpot and Beth Houghton, librarian friends, were there to toast me--the beer flowed, the friendships were new and some old such as David Jarvis from Aard Press, with whom I had been corresponding since 1978. He made me a small book, called

Collaardge, with a printed dedication to me and reminiscences in images he created--and many umbrellas. I truly was touched, since mail artists in the network have so many friends in common. There were people like Mark Pawson, John Bentley, Stefan Szczelkun, Natalie d'Arbeloff and so many more. Even Ken Campbell, who had been in New York to dedicate his exhibition at the New York Public Library, sent regrets. What a party--what a wonderful group of people. All the book artists brought something to show me--a kind of show and tell--and then some of them gave me their books. I was so touched, so moved--and when I was asked to present a few words, they just flowed--it truly was an epiphany, and people wonder what is going on in Britain. A book revolution--that is what--an artist book revolution!

### **VISITS TO GALLERIES/ARTISTS**

I had the great pleasure of visiting with Susan Johanknecht in Herne Hill, a suburb of London, where her living room has become the press room and the joy of her being stimulated each day by the tools of her trade right in the center of her lovely home. She collaborates with other artists in creating small gems of books, which are published under the aegis of her Gefin Press. There are oftentimes relief prints, offset or letterpress, and they are consummate works of art with great meaning. One of her books is called *Sarah's Sacrifice*, with Susan's relief prints and Margaret Kaufman's text and of course, all printed by Susan.

We visited Marcus Campbell at St. James Books and saw the energy of this man who has created this Artist's Book Fair in London, the next one being in 1995 at Royal Festival Hall.

A Blake show, **William Blake: Art and Revolution**, at the Tate Gallery was a wondrous thing, if you could behold it. The lights, diminished for conservation purposes, suddenly went on and I rushed to each book just to see it in full light. Certainly such a mistake was well appreciated by this ardent viewer. Dillon's Arts Shop had a glass enclosed case of Artists' Bookworks--something no one had noticed in London except me--but it was there--and one would have to ask them to open it in order to see the works, but they were good books by outstanding English artists.

There was a street performer festival at Covent Garden, which cleared up after a heavy shower, and it was beautiful to see the sunshine return to London. The National Portrait Gallery and the National Gallery's New Wing really were wonderful. The

Micro Gallery at the National Gallery contained a CD-Rom tour of works of art in the Gallery, and one could study them in detail and find out more than you could ever find out sitting in front of the work itself. It is a high-tech innovation which should be appearing at your own museum in the very near future. Robert Venturi's architecture is indeed a great contribution to London's cultural scene.

### **workfortheyetodo**

If you wish to see what a bookstore involved with artist books, visual and concrete poetry, and accessible multiples is all about you must go to the Docklands and visit this remarkable bookstore. Simon Cutts and Erica Van Horn have a shop that has tables and chairs, hands-on opportunities and a stock that is outstanding. Contemporary and vintage are available, and it is truly something to experience. It is also wonderful to take the new Docklands train to the space, since it is state of the art transport and wonderfully efficient. The address is 52 Narrow St., London E14 8BP, England. Tel. 071-537-3219.

### **HARDWARE GALLERY**

Located at 162 Archway Rd., London N6 5BB, this gallery is also a print workshop, but much more than that. Hardware Gallery, directed by Deirdre and Grainne Kelly, promotes artists' books by orchestrating exhibitions not only at the Gallery, but elsewhere. They have organized a major exhibition in Elms Lester Paintings Rooms in London with great acceptance. In addition, they represent contemporary British Artists' Books, such as at the Artists' Book Fair last year. They represent artists such as John Bently, Les Bicknell, Ken Campbell, Simon Cutts, Ian Hamilton Finlay, Erica VanHorn, Ron King, Richard Long, Telfer Stokes, Jake Tilson, Ian Tyson and others. The bright red door welcomes you.

### **BOOK WORKS**

The new location of this amazing press and book center is now 19 Holywell Row, London EC2A 4JB. Located for many years near Southwark Cathedral, hidden under the arches, it is now in a five-story building with character. Near the Liverpool St. Station, an amazing rehabilitated bright wonder, this center has a stunning list of bookworks, as well as some new works by Rex Reason and Joseph Kosuth. Jane Rollo and Rob Hadrill, publisher and printer of Book Works, organize and collaborate on exhibitions in other venues. One of the great events this past year has been "The Reading Room" in which exhibitions have been held at Oxford University, the Freud Museum, etc. It is a catalyst for distribution as well,

since their books are well distributed throughout Europe, thanks to a great effort on their part and cooperation with the publishing house in Gent, imschoot.

To reach Book Works, phone: 071-247-2536 or fax: 247-2540.

### **VICTORIA & ALBERT MUSEUM**

Getting off at the South Ken tube station brought back many memories, since the first "home" I had in London was the chief warder's apartment in the V & A--literally. I was the guest of ARLIS/UK and was afforded this free apartment in order to do research on art libraries in the United Kingdom, in order to assess the potential for founding a new organization in the United States and Canada. As a result, I was in the center of London enjoying the V & A, Brompton Road, Harrods, etc. Some things were the same, and some things had disappeared, but things looked so much better. I was introduced to the Keeper or Head of the National Arts Library, Jan van der Wateren, an amazing man who shares my enthusiasm for artist books and is a delightful, joyful librarian. The V & A is hosting a new fellowship program with Camberwell in Book Arts, as well as developing a large collection of one-of-a-kind bookworks. Although they do not have a real exhibition space and should have the Book Arts Gallery back in order to really exhibit their growing collection, I was shown a large, strong collection of bookworks that would cover the world--Russia, U.S., England, Europe--all housed in the same dull archival boxes, but so it must be. I was especially impressed by the wide range of books, especially those from Eastern Europe.

After being wined and dined at lunch, I was cajoled to stay an extra week in London in order to speak to the V & A staff about artists' books--a bit of my talk in Oxford, a bit of history as far as I have lived it. So, thanks to my hosts, I stayed another week in London and took in everything I could--and loved every moment of it. It gave me more time to spend with artists, with galleries, and with the new London that glistened in the sunshine.

The Pugin exhibition at the V & A was a stunning event--it represented the work of a genius, a Victorian architect, designer, and writer and publisher of books--and the installation was beautiful. I also visited the 20th century galleries with Simon Ford, a librarian who must be appreciated for his critical writing (some of which was recently read in *Afterimage*) and keen thinking about the library of the future and the role of books. The 20th century galleries had cases full of artifacts and books--and seemed to reflect some of my

ideas about the future of the book.

For some of their publications reflecting exhibitions in London, see **Morris Cox and the Gogmagog Press** (16 March - 29 May 1994); **Experimenting with the Book: The Janus Press** (14 September - 27 November 1994); **Walter Strachan: Defender in England of the Livre d'Artiste**; **Liliane Lijn: Poem Machines 1962-68**; **Purgatory Pie Press at the Victoria & Albert Museum** (10 September - 24 November 1991).

I spoke to the staff of the National Art Library on the Day of Atonement--it poured rain, the carousel was chewing my slides, and the tape recorder did not record. But the carousel was changed, and I went on with my talk. It was the first time I have preached to the book converted in a long time, and the talk changed because of the audience. Speaking in the heart of the library, I realized that this talk would probably generate questions, and it did. And I loved talking to my peers.

#### **GLASS UMBRELLA OVER SOUTH BANK**

Richard Rogers Partnership has proposed a glass umbrella to cover the South Bank in London. Rogers team built Centre Pompidou, among other buildings. The attempt to weave together Royal Festival Hall, the Hayward Gallery, the Queen Elizabeth Hall and the Purcell room, public spaces and walkways will be submitted to the authorities. This will be directly next to the Chunnel Station at Waterloo.

#### **THE UMBRELLA COLLECTION**

All during my days away (33 in all), I looked for umbrelliana, and found many postcards, cards, a few rubberstamps, and looked for any artifacts that might resemble parts of or simulate an umbrella. I therefore went to Camden Market, Portobello Road, and looked in every shop, stand, etc. I did find a London T-shirt my first day in London with Snoopy portrayed with an umbrella in London. In fact, the day I went to Camden Market and Portobello, it literally poured! But then the sun shone even brighter--I keep pinching myself wondering how much sun has returned to London, since I lived in London for two months in 1972 and the sun shone only for 4 hours during those two months.

At any rate, I came home with postcards, posters, rubberstamps, a T-shirt, hundreds of photos of umbrellas, jewelry, two coffee mugs. Holland was really mecca, since Art Unlimited is a great publisher of postcards and has a retail outlet where there is even a whole section on umbrellas--and I cleaned up by buying 22 of the 25 postcards they had in that

section. But I have a keen eye, a zoom lens built in for umbrellas, and saw many postcards throughout my trip that appealed to me. So how lucky can you be!

#### **LONDON NEWSPAPERS**

The **Independent** which I read daily is a terrific newspaper. Its photographs are made by artists, and their printing is gorgeous. I have never seen newspaper photographs which are so artful, full-faced and revealing, but dynamically beautiful. The **London Times**, a Murdoch paper, was having a price war so that you could buy a newspaper for 20p or 30p and that is cheap! The papers in England really cover culture as a normal course, and it is enlightening and illuminating information.

Now, when I left the U.S., I wanted so much to forget about baseball hats, the recession, and O.J., and I have to confess I could hardly find a baseball hat around, no one spoke too much about the economy in England (prices are very high), but I knew I could avoid O.J. Not on your life! There, the first day, I found a big billboard with O.J.'s face on it trying to advertise Sky TV, a cable network. The Brits don't even know O.J., don't care about him, nor do they know enough about American football. Anyway, CNN rules the world.

#### **COURTAULT INSTITUTE**

The Library at the Courtauld, directed by Michael Doran, is a great crypt redone with great skill by an architect who really understood the needs of space, atmosphere, and accessibility. There is an extra deck and it is sensitively placed adjacent to the Witt Picture Library.

Its exhibition of Impressionistic Paintings from their collection was a knockout--one of the best shows and collections I have ever seen, and the audience was even better. I love to watch British and French audiences, because they take their art so seriously. I do hope they also get aesthetic experiences from it all, but they intellectualize so much. I was just blown over!

#### **BETHNAL GREEN**

This museum is full of children's toys, games and books, dolls, costumes and so much more. A museum for the child in all of us, Bethnal Green has a wonderful collection of books, some of which are on display upstairs in a temporary exhibition until they finish the second floor reinstallation. As a result, one can journey through the centuries with books of all kinds, and one can see how artists were involved in the making of many of them.

### **LIVERPOOL ST. STATION**

This train station has been encased in an envelope of glass, and has been restored and renewed to gleaming Victorian splendor. But when one vacates the premises, one finds oneself in a late Postmodern world, created by the Union of Swiss Banks. A brown marble series of buildings a block long, it houses public art by Bruce McLean, Barry Flanagan, George Segal, Richard Serra and many more. It is a stunning array of sculptural works, some of which were created well before the building was finished, but has been set in place to illuminate the lives of the many employees in these buildings. But everything seems to work, although the Serra is much too close to the opening in building. It seems as if it were 60 feet tall--and is made of corten steel--and defies gravity--but it is wonderful to see the enhancement of a neighborhood.

### **BOB COBBING & PAUL DUTTON**

A series of reading under the title, *Subvoicive Poetry Readings*, organized originally by Bob Cobbing and now a regular series in an upstairs room over The Three Cups pub in Holborn (London) allowed me to meet finally the renowned poet and writer, Bob Cobbing, publisher of many, many books and a legend in his own time. I also had the pleasure of meeting and listening to Paul Dutton, one of the legendary Four Horsemen of Canada, a voice poet who was on his way to Berlin and Paris for a series of festivals for voice poets. It was a great and pleasurable evening.

### **HAMPSTEAD HEATH & KENMORE HOUSE**

On a rare cloudy morning, I went to the Heath to revisit Hampstead, a lovely little village that has also upgraded itself, although still full of many famous people and their homesteads. Then went to Kenwood House, which had Chippendale, works by the inventor Merton (a clock, wheelchair, rollerskates, etc.), Rembrandt, Vermeer, Robert Adam--just to drop a few names. It was a stunning house with great landscaped grounds which are going to be reinvented by a crew of restorers. I have misgivings, but so do alot of other people. It looks fine to me.

### **BRITISH MUSEUM**

I discovered a very early sculpture (bas-relief) of an umbrella from Sumerian installation in the Museum, while I was walking to see the Russian Constructivist books again, and see Eisenstein's film, *October*, for the umpteenth time, but in context.

### **EAGLE GALLERY**

A stunning contemporary gallery over the Eagle Pub near the Liverpool St. Station is run by Emma Hill, the director of the gallery and the maker of artist books. There, collaborations abound so that bookworks are created with the participation of selected artists who also have exhibitions at the gallery. The collaboration includes a printer, the artist, and sometimes a critic or Emma Hill's words. The editions are small, but sufficient to satisfy the hunger of collectors in the English environment. This gallery is at 159 Farringdon Rd., London EC1. Tel: 071-833-2674/831-4269. Fax: 831-9014.

### **THE CHANNEL & FRANCE**

Too soon for the Chunnel, I took the ferry across the Channel and it was exhilarating. As usual, the trip was uneventful, full of people from all over Europe and all raring to go to the Continent, but everyone knows that the Chunnel will make it all so convenient. As I write this, the first trains have gone back and forth with passengers from Paris to London and London to Paris--and in three hours too! But then a wonderful train ride to Paris--and I was firmly ensconced in a contemporary building made for artists, with three-level lofts, and it was fantastic! Close to one of the two Chinatowns in Paris, I could have wonderful food for little money, and have access to both the Metro and buses. The cost of living seemed cheaper in Paris--and it really was.

### **THE LOUVRE**

I had the pleasure of visiting one of the great boutiques of art, the newly revamped Louvre, which has been dynamically redecorated and restored to a pristine level that one could not have imagined. Of course, I'm talking about the French sections, not the Italian and Spanish sections. But it was good to meet old friends, all the Renaissance paintings which I had studied and seen over the years from the 1950s on, and also saw restorations that were magnificent. So much marble, so many statues, so much light, so much glass--but what to my eyes did appear but a boutique of art and expensive, my dear. The end result was a put-off for me, but perhaps all the entrance fees plus the creation of an Art Mall certainly of the highest calibre--i.e., expensive!

The Museum of Decorative Arts had a wonderful show of African and Asian jewelry. And the galleries around the Bastille and the new Opera House were full of contemporary art. What interested me more was the opening of California artist Chris Burden that afternoon, so I surprised him. And it was a great show indeed!

## **FRENCH ARCHITECTURE**

Bombastic architecture--when did bigger mean better, said Baldessari during a symposium one day. La Defense is terrible, out of scale with any human kind, and the new Ministry of Finance is worse--supposedly the largest office building in Europe, and yet it is terrible! At least, their public art one percent went to a good cause, but not to good art. Ah, well, that's the French for you.

Bercy is the area where the new American Center in Paris is located, and the Frank Gehry building is beautiful, flanking a playground and open space, and once it will be occupied with crowded instead of a half a dozen people, it will be a built environment. There was a beautiful installation of Nam June Park and an outstanding installation by video artist, Bill Viola. It is also the area where the new Bibliotheque Nationale de France is being built, four marble codexes bending to each other above ground, a tribute to Mitterrand, who is a reader and has a big library.

Bercy Station is a huge glass and blue steel construction with grassy sloped contoured sides, which is a venue for rock concerts. Hi tech architecture near the Gare Lyons and on the future subway line, Meteor, the American Center and the future Bibliotheque Nationale de France will certainly be on everybody's tour when visiting Paris, but at the present, Paris, like London, seems to be rebuilding itself. Eurodollars are certainly being spent.

## **CAILLEBOTTE AT THE GRAND PALAIS**

How fortunate I was to be in Paris during the Caillebotte exhibition, full of umbrellas on the streets of Paris. I was deliriously happy, for there were so many paintings with umbrellas--old familiar ones, and some completely new to me. I had a big smile on my face, and was so happy that I bought an umbrella in the States with his famous painting reproduced on the umbrella itself. The drawings were the big surprise--they were beyond belief!

## **ROBERT IRWIN AT PALAIS TOKYO**

All I can say is that this is one artist who understands site specific. If there were any exhibition that is an epiphany, this was the show. Having attended the original exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, it was hard to believe it was the same exhibition--and it really was not, since Irwin attends to every detail of installation and reads his space as if it were a canvas. The entrance on the staircase was an amazing wooden structure, leading to a gateway, and then the scrims seemed to be a natural part of the space, each different, some

light, some dark. A few people were there on this rainy day in Paris, and so I could see how people interacted with the scrims. The magic of perception, the sense of surprise, and the awe mingled into a stunning aesthetic experience--one that will be unforgettable as far as I am concerned.

Joseph Beuys at Pompidou was another great show--curated by Harold Szeeman--and one in which I really said goodbye to the artist who changed all our lives. The show was so beautifully installed and the flow was so moving that the artist's significance really came through.

## **THE CLONING OF AMERICA**

My impressions of Paris are that the young are emulating America, wearing American sloppy--from Timberland shoes (around \$200) to jeans (\$75 minimum), and everyone looks the same--the same Generation X clothes--and there is Baskin Robbins, Haagen Daz, the perennial McDonald's, and many more branches of those wonderful shops you know so well. If the French are worried about their language, they better stop, for it is too late. English seems to permeate every conversation--whether it be airport talk or computer lingo.

There are many more immigrants living in Paris--Africans, Asians and Indians especially--and many of them wear their native clothes. There are many squatters, but others have started to integrate into a normal Parisian life. Yet there is more crime in Paris than in London. I saw an actual theft when a tourist was accosted and his camera, I believe, was taken from him. He shouted out "Achtung" and then ran after the young man, and the neighbors came out and some helped to run with him. It was painful to watch.

The city itself is gorgeous. The Champs Elysée has been renewed and restored to human use, with wider granite sidewalks, trees, and a feeling of impressionistic Paris, as it was in the paintings. It is gorgeous, and something to be enjoyed by all--Parisians and tourists alike.

## **GALERIE DONGUY**

Begun in 1981 by two brothers, the Donguy space is an experimental place, like PS 1 and Western Front in Vancouver, allowing young artists to experiment outside the constraints of the market. Installations, video, performances, experimental music, voice poetry, Fluxus, and so much more have been entertained in the space on rue de la Roquette near the Bastille. They also have a publishing program,

occasionally doing a book (*Quoi? Quoi!* by Jean Dupuy) or a book which commemorates its activities in the 1980s, or a small recording by Henri Chopin accompanied by a bookwork of concrete poetry. Be sure to visit this wonderful space, Galerie Donguy, 57, Paris 75011.

### **PARIS TO AMSTERDAM**

I always believe that trains generate adventures, and after reaching my train in Paris, I found a first class car (I had a Flexipass) and came upon the third compartment and it seemed right: a little lady (She spoke American English), an old man (European) and then a troupe of two men and an old mother came. We helped them up with their suitcases, caught our breaths and then sat down. For some reason, we started talking to each other, and I found out the last troupe was from California. The little lady came from Palm Beach, Florida (a gossip columnist for her local paper), but she was not a little lady but Dame Alma DuPuy, whose husband came from the Phipps family and Eastern Maryland, her family going back to 1600. Her husband had been a French pilot, so she gets discounts in hotels, but she still had to pay \$350 a day for her hotel room in Paris, but her only complaint was that she had to pay 14 francs for her International Herald Tribune in the hotel, whereas the newsstand price is only 9 f.

Then I talked to her about her life. She was on her way to Rosendaal to see her godchild. She just had a carpal tunnel syndrome operation on her hand, and needed help with her luggage. She also had yellow roses in her bag. She has had servants, a chateau, lots of money yet she had lived in Pasadena with her husband years ago. Now the Society Editor for her Palm Beach Mirror, she also has a house in New York City and in Ft. Lauderdale. She never eats fruit with her hand, but uses a fork and knife, yet offered me some coffee and some bread and butter and did it taste good! We had a glorious ride, and my newfound friends from the Bay Area (Walnut Creek) certainly enjoyed her as well.

This little lady, Dame Alma, was really larger than life. Yet she was dressed in a polyester denim patched pantsuit and wore a red cloak as we helped her off the train to the arms of her waiting godchild (at least in her 40s). Dame Alma had been in Singapore and Kuala Lumpur and described the service of Air Singapore.

We agreed that it was the best train ride we had ever taken. Dame Alma gave me her card and I intend to phone her the next time I'm in New York or Florida.

The approach to Amsterdam showed cows and new industrial parks, dynamic architecture with great design, and more Eurodollars being spent. My Amsterdam that I had not visited since 1983 will not be the same, that is for sure.

### **AMSTERDAM**

It was warm in Amsterdam--warmer than Paris, warmer than London. And my first stop was Boekie Woekie, a wondrous bookstore full of artist books by Dieter Roth, Jan Voss, Hetty van Egten, Runa Thorkeisdottir, and lots of postcards (Tu-lips from Amsterdam among others). I was greeted with a cup of coffee, a warm greeting, and embraces. Runa had not yet returned from Greenland and Iceland, but she would arrive the next day.

Boekie Woekie is in the middle of Amsterdam, where tourists from all over the world pass. I heard many languages on their street and watched people come in and buy postcards. Meanwhile, we walked my luggage home on the bicycle and I stayed in a house dated 1613, and it was wonderful! I had my own room under the eaves, and it was romantic. We shared meals, beer (Grolsch) and information for the next week.

### **DEN HAAG: MUSEUM OF THE BOOK**

By chance, this museum was on the schedule but not so soon, but I got a ride to the capitol city where the museum opened for me early so that I could see the exhibition of calligraphy and the permanent collection. The museum is starting to develop an artist book collection and is trying to bring their collections into the late 20th century. In fact, they had an exhibition **Kunstenaarsboeken: Tussen Traditie en Experiment**, curated by Johan Deumens, with an interesting catalog, which included color plates folded into the catalog printed on translucent spider web paper. For more information and the catalog, contact Meermannno Westreenianum, Museum Van Het Boek, Prinsessegracht 30, 2514 AP's-Gravenhage, The Netherlands. Ton Brandenburg is the director and Dr. Tanja de Boer is the chief curator. Originally, this museum was part of the Royal Library, but became independent in 1962. It is a collection developed by one man which creates the foundation for a much more dedicated collection, which will grow if they take over the building next door, which is in the plans.

### **AMSTERDAM AGAIN**

When one is in Amsterdam, the best thing to do is get a map--but learn to get lost and love it. Take a canal



ride to acquaint yourself with the lay of the city and its history. Buy a tram ticket which allows you a limited number of rides on the tram--and all you have to do is get it punched in their little cancellation machines inside.

All the small shops have turned into glitzy designer outlets, boutiques, and restaurants. Amsterdam also has large malls, which read "buy, buy, buy"--whereas if you get off the beaten tourist track, you find delicious little shops where the Dutch shop.

The Flea Markets are wonderful, yet there is so much leather being sold. I learned about the philately market which has been going on for 85 years in the same place. I visited with Harry Ruhe, an old friend and dealer of artists' books and mail art, as well as with my friends in their shop.

Amsterdam being a university town is full of bookshops, antiquarian and current. It is a really wonderful marketplace for books of all denominations. It is also full of galleries, some of which were having shows of old friends Ida Applebroog, Leon Golub, Stephen Willats, and Nicholas Urban among others. At Galerie Apunto, there was a wonderful show by an artist, Patty Struik, who loves to make books and one of them, **Het natuur-weten scheppen** is only 15 guilders, but has marvelous collages from nature, a bit like Max Ernst. Another book, **Ongerepte Namen Noemen** (also 15 guilders) is made up of found photographs and text in Dutch, except for one statement about forgetful snow. The two booklets can be purchased from Galerie Apunto, lijnbaansgracht 316, 1017 wz Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

At the Flower Market, there were black tulips being sold. At St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church, a new organ was being tried out by a large group of tourists--probably all organists--and it was a marvelous free concert. A glass gallery had a marvelous photo exhibition of one of the members of the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, and they worked well together. That night I saw Cable TV for Europe--and found out it costs only \$5.00 a month. It is a welcome change from the standard few channels each country has--from CNN to provincial TV, I could switch dials. Jan could find out about the elections in Germany, and I could hear Jason Rhodes talking about his installation at Gent. Pretty amazing, and the line resolution is so much better as well.

### **THE RESISTANCE MUSEUM**

Amsterdam will never be the same to me, since I lost two great friends, Ulises Carrion and Aart van Barneveld, and their innovative and pioneering efforts

for artist books, rubberstamps, and time based art will long be touted and remembered. I found myself very sad passing by the old shop, the old archive, the old Stempelplaats and so much more. But one must go on, and one must discover new places.

On this Sunday morning, when we had changed the clock to standard time, it was warm and sunny and felt like Los Angeles. We sat on the roof and enjoyed the Gregorian Chant wafting through the canal below, and I could not imagine such a beautiful Amsterdam morning. Then because of the Amsterdam Marathon, I walked for about 3 miles to get to the Resistance Museum, which is housed in the old synagogue built in 1937, which was desanctified in 1985 as a museum. It was an awe-inspiring experience, and three young men walked around the museum ahead of me, learning from all that was presented. It is an interactive museum--nothing as elaborate as the Museum of Tolerance or the Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC, but it is full of videos, audios, and displays that stun the mind as well as the eye. This is not the story of Anne Frank, but the story of all the Jews of Holland and the Dutch who resisted the Nazi takeover. The resistance was pervasive and for the most part, the Dutch people resisted the German occupation and helped the Jews. There were strikes, the Queen's cooperation, underground newspapers and books (and the offset press is there which was bicycle-operated in order that the press not make any noise when producing those pages of books and newspapers), a typical Dutch solution. When I left the museum, I was totally immersed in the experience, so I realized that the sun had disappeared, but it was still warm out.

The address is Lekstraat 63, 1079 EM Amsterdam, and they are open Tuesday through Friday, 10-5 and Saturday and Sunday, 1-5 p.m.

### **RIJKSMUSEUM & STEDELIJK**

It was good to see the Rijksmuseum again, but they do not honor student cards, critics' cards--just Press cards. It is a strange policy, since the Museum is really an extension of any art history classroom, but there just isn't any policy to allow students to get in for less money, and it is not cheap. Vermeer and Rembrandt were old friends--since I had lived in Amsterdam for three months in 1983, and not much has changed.

The Stedelijk had a Best Books of 1993 show, but the collection and its installation do not add too much to my database. For some reason, I find the Stedelijk quite tired. But it was a good way of saying goodbye to Ed Kienholz by visiting "Barney's Beanery" again,

now with a guard at its front. Funny how much your work becomes important after you die!

### **VAN GOGH MUSEUM**

How fortunate I was to see the Self-Portrait show at the Van Gogh Museum. It was astounding--especially since there were 3 actual photographs of the artist, and then all his interpretations of his face. Just amazing exposé of a artist as human being! Walking around the museum outside in the gardens, the red leaves were on the ground and I took a few home to remember my return visit.

As a postscript to my visits to so many museums in Europe and the U.S. too, I want to let you know that I think the administrators of museums must feel that people lose their way too easily, for there is a printed guide to everything in the museum now. It's as if the museums just do not want the visitors to lose their way. It is a new age of nurturing the museum visitor. Signage, or the science of signs, is now the buzz word of the day.

Now the guides are in many languages, usually English, French, German, Spanish (in the U.S.), Italian and Japanese, and includes a map of the galleries, a list of the categories under which they fall and some sample photographs of what they contain. At the Louvre, there are Japanese guides, but some of the labels on the Mona Lisa, etc., are in Japanese. Anyway, be sure not to get lost anywhere except in Amsterdam--it's a wonderful city to come upon a canal, a building, or even a gallery *par hasard* (just by chance). Surprise discoveries are the only way to go at least there. We, who were told one we would be the leisure class and have lots of time to fill, now are busier than ever, work harder than ever, and have less time--and maybe having a map for leisure as well as necessities is the way to go. Perhaps.

### **S-HERTOGENBOSCH**

I decided to visit Hans Waanders, whose bookworks and whose rubberstamp work is so poetic that I had to see how he was and what he was doing. A lovely train ride brought me to the home town of the painter, Bosch. This wonderful medieval town which goes back centuries, but at least has a 13th century building still intact in the Central Square is a quiet, charming town and Hans Waanders, who adorns the cover of this issue of *Umbrella*.

He has a studio in the high-ceilinged ex-cigar factory office. Here is a focused artist, one who uses the Kingfisher (bird) as a launching pad for all his imagery in his books, prints, silkscreens, paintings and postage stamps. He has collected books and

information about kingfishers since he saw his first on 4 October 1982. He creates atlases which map the itineraries of kingfisher birds, he has listened to the sounds of kingfishers and plotted their location through oral mapping. He has cut rubberstamps from erasers to depict kingfishers. It is an obsession and a joy. He has also begun a series of globes, which he paints in all sizes, plotting kingfishers all over the world.

Walking toward my train, I saw these twisted brick columns at the corners of a bridge. S'Hertogenbosch really is charming.

I also realized that since I was in Holland last, the Artist's Guild is no more, but the government does give grants to about 2,000 artists in Holland. The rents for recycled buildings are cheap, and they are rehabilitating old hospitals and cigar factories for the use of artists. It is a much more sympathetic government than the U.S.

### **De MENSEN BOOKSHOP**

Diederick van Kleef is a book artist who has opened a small shop called, De Mensen, which is open on Saturdays from 2 - 6 p.m. It is located at Sarphatipark 127, 1073 cx Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Van Kleef is a printer who decided to help his colleagues get their books out there. The shop window is full of wonderful books, and inside, well, it is a big surprise. The books are printed on his press, the formats are quite experimental, and the variety is inventive. van Kleef has a catalog, *De Boeken (1977-1992)* which is available for 12.50 guilders from the above address. If you are interested in Dutch bookworks, then by all means order this.

Of course, this is an edited version of my 33 days abroad. I met alot more artists, visited their studios, went to every museum and gallery that I could visit, and reminisced about the old days as well. But I was wearing down, and decided to forego the Frankfurt Book Fair for the want to time and money. So, at the end of September, I returned to the States re-energized, rekindled with the passion for artist books and knowing full well that the revolution is continuing!

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