

ARTIST BOOK reviews

Most of the books reviewed in this section are available from Printed Matter, 77 Wooster St., New York, NY 10012 unless otherwise indicated.

A Thousand Years: A Thousand Words (London, The Camberwell Press, in association with the Royal Mail, 1999, £95=\$150) a limited edition book to celebrate the Royal Mail Millennium Stamps project, is a stunning project. To mark the millennium the Royal Mail took the adventurous decision to commission forty eight stamps by some of the U.K.'s leading artists and designers, many of whom trained at one of the London Institute's five art colleges including Howard Hodgkin, Peter Collingwood and Sarah Fanelli, who all trained at Camberwell College of Arts.

The commissions were completed in 1999 with each month having its own tale: The Inventors' Tale, The Travellers' Tale, The Patients' Tale, The Settlers' Tale, The Workers' Tale, The Entertainers' Tale, The Citizens' Tale, The Scientists' Tale, The Farmers' Tale, The Soldiers' Tale, The Christians' Tale and finally The Artists' Tale. Each tale has been told in four parts by stamps which have been designed by a team of artists and designers who have included Craigie Aitchison, David Hockney, Howard Hodgkin, Peter Howson, John Lawrence, Bridget Riley, David Gentleman, George Hardie, Peter Blake, Antony Gormley, Ralph Steadman and Lord Snowdon.

A thousand years A thousand words weaves words and typography together with the stamps themselves to make forty-eight highly attractive and engaging spreads. Each one is a celebration of the ingenuity, events and achievements that have shaped our times. It was launched by Lord Dearing at the British Library on 15 December 1999.

Michael Benson wrote the text which he describes "a scary brief. To sum a millennium in a thousand words. How might such a thing be done? As I should have known the answer lay in the stamps themselves and in the background papers which informed their making. From these sources the words were drawn. Slowly. What I tried to do was to capture the special magic of each of the themes represented by the stamps. Sometimes the words strained to rhyme but in almost all cases this tendency was resisted. The result is a kind of prose which slips quickly from the tongue and, thanks to the extraordinary designs by Trickett and Webb, is a visual treat."

Speaking on behalf of Trickett and Webb, one of London's leading visual design agencies Brian Webb said 'this project was a very exciting project to work on for several reasons. Firstly it allowed for many design and production techniques that aren't usually possible i.e. using real stamps, hand

binding and printing in special colors. And secondly we work regularly for the Royal Mail and we knew that they were producing a number of publications relating to the millennium stamps. In fact we are designing their Millennium Moment publication which is a special limited edition stamp book for the new millennium. Therefore our task was to produce something that would not overlap. For us the stamps themselves were the starting point and we designed the book around them. For example for the stamp which depicted the art of weaving we wove the text around the page...Looking back over the project I now realize that the publication is really an extraordinary celebration of a thousand years of British history.'

The book includes stamps valued at just over £18. The pages measure 135mmx148mm. The hand binding by Rob Shepherd (an ex-Camberwell student) from Shepherds Bookbinders is designed as an envelope wrapping around the text. The absence of sewn sections allows the pages to open as flat spreads through unique combination of a Japanese concertina adapted to traditional European binding. It is printed in a limited edition of 2,000 at a price of £95 each.

For further information please contact Sian Stirling, Marketing Manager, Camberwell College of Arts at 0171 514 6378, e-mail s.stirling@camb.linst.ac.uk

Cirque des Fourmis by Camille Solyagua (Tucson, Nazraeli Press, 1999, \$35) is a delightful accordion-fold book with images of The Public, The Monocyclists, the Juggler, the Acrobats, but of course, if you do not know French, you do not know that this circus is a Flea Circus—and the fleas are hilarious—they perform with precision for you and for me, the reader/viewers. Then there is the Intermission and the anthropomorphized fleas really perform for us in their painted sets, each with a different curtain and stage. This is a wonderful trip to the Flea Circus or a precise facsimile thereof. The book is set into a pink and white striped binding serving as the Big Tent! A joy!

Wild Wood by Helen Douglas (Deuchar Mill, Scotland, Weproductions, 1999, \$35.00 hardbound) is an exquisite meditative walk through various locations in Scotland et al in living color, allowing the reader to meditate and marvel at the seeds allow to grow a wild wood in any valley, not just the one in Yarrow.

Here is a personal venture that allows one to learn more about wild woods and nature, to understand its impact upon the psyche and the soul, and to gravitate into the minds and hearts of the readers and viewers who are allowed to share Helen Douglas' vision. Double page spreads, glorious color, and the intention of movement and motion allow one to take the walk and share the natural phenomena of a border walk.

Aliens and Kitties by Bill Scanga (New York, Djetl and Grimm, 1999, \$20 paper) is a series of juxtaposed color photographs, one of an "alien" doll and the other of a kitten. The combinations are spooky, since the eyes have it—but you can be a judge, especially if you like aliens and/or kittens.

Yeast by David Stairs (1999, \$8.00 paper) is a small bubble-wrap covered book about the fertility of yeast and the fertility of a love partner with text almost as important as the images of both bread and yeast and/or women and men. Chromosomes and fertility are explained through diagrams, words and images. A short study into reproduction of various kinds.

Names & Poems by Helen Mirra (Chicago, White Walls, 1999, \$12.00 hardback) is the result of the artist showing some sculpture, maps and a record and film at the Chicago Project Room in January-February 1999. Instead of having a guest book, she placed her typewriter near the entrance of the gallery and a box of blank cards, asking the visitor to type his/her name and address on one side of a postcard and that the artist would write a small poem for the visitor on the other side and mail it to them. And so the result of that happening is this book.

On the left hand side is the typed name or names, and on the right hand page is the "poem" usually in as many words as the name—short and usually using the letters of the previous name. The language poet has a real sensitivity to the "sound" of words and thus uses her many skills to capture a name in a poetic way, oftentimes characterizing that person probably in a very idiosyncratic manner. A lovely book printed in Pondicherry, India.

Epigraphs from an Unwritten Book by Robert Linsley (Brussels, Yves Gevaert, 1997, \$20.00) is a collection of epigraphs intended for a still unfinished treatise on drugs, art and the self. The epigraphs appear in the order they would have appeared in the original book. In addition, a part of chapter XXVII appears. The authors of the epigraphs range from Walter Benjamin to Baudlaire, Blake, Aldous Huxley, and many more.

Handbook for Girls: A Coloring Book by Sara Greenberger (1999, \$7.00 paper) has a color photograph on the cover and through line drawings shows the ardor and emotions of a young woman, emphasizing hands and fingers.

Island Dog By Rebecca Goodale (Deer Isle, ME, Two Dog Press, 1999, \$17.95 hardcover) is a book without words in gorgeous dripping color, including diecuts and gatefolds.

The spirit of coastal Maine is captured in these magical seascapes. With a debossed cloth binding which includes a four-color tip-in on the cover, vibrant color spreads, and the diecuts and gatefolds, this book is a production with love. A joy for all those who love artist books, as well as dogs! Order from Two Dog Press, P.O. Box 307, Deer Isle, ME 04627.

A Cow A Fish and a Goldturtle by Hilla Lulu Lin (Ra'anana, Israel, Even Hoshen, 1999, \$30) is a cacophony of media and materials: parchment paper which holds the texts in Hebrew, color images from video movies created by the artist from 1994-99 printed on chrome-coat paper, and the whole thing bound in simulated leather with a gold embossed heart on the cover. The fourth in the Sapphire Artists' Book Series, this volume was created during the artist's residency at the artist colony in Herzliya. Black and white photos appear on parchment sheets, color photos from video stills on chrome-coat paper. And the signatures are held together with a metal wire on the upper spine and the lower spine. But I cannot tell you what the book is about—it certainly is a happening!

Occupational Information by Mary Lum and Beth Tauke (Buffalo, Hallwalls, 1999, \$10.00 paper) is the result of an installation at Hallwalls in 1998. As usual, Lum always uses found texts, and this time it involves the obituary headlines of the *New York Times* and the *Buffalo News*, the top line includes the best and worst jobs of the "Jobs Rated Almanac" and line 3 involves daily work logs of a Buffalo business. Additional text (the bottom of each page) comes from *Production Handbook*. In the center of each page is a photograph which goes from high resolution to dissolution. Likewise, Lum evolves a tome from found texts which is greater than its parts. Certainly, there is a great deal of information about jobs in America in this book, yet it is an artist book, created with visual and verbal intentions that are different from books of essays or non-fiction volumes. It has a different take on "essential" information. A fascinating presentation.

Letters to J-C by Marcia Hafif (Bentheim, Kunstverein Graftschaff, 1999, \$12.50) is a book dedicated to Jean-Charles Masséra, with whom the artist must have had a friendship in Paris. The letters are short, running from April to November 1991 after the return of Hafif to New York, having lived in Europe. Her impressions of a New York in 1991 are lucid, particular but right on!

Known for her paintings, Hafif is also a video artist and a photographer, and her autobiographical letters called for photographs which illustrate in clear black and white the stories in the letters. This book was the publication for her exhibition at the Kuunstverein in Bentheim.

Autobiographical correspondence in bookform, revealing an artist's life.

Drawings by Emmanuelle Mafille (Tokyo, Fiction, 1999, \$24.00) is a collection of drawings in various inks on tan or red paper usually of young men and women and their faces. There are also drawings of accessories such as gloves, shoes, but mostly of frontal views of young men and women. And the eyes have a very odd quality—which you must see to believe.

Addiction by A. Kalkin and A. Mik (China? 1999, \$10) is a visual diary of addictions over a period of 1992 - 1998 by people who are teaching ESL in China, but who have strange habits. They have kept a time schedule of all additions and the ledger starts the book and then each of the additions has a drawing and a short text, such as *Woman teaches monkey to speak* or *Man commits suicide by bringing toaster into bathtub* many more, some hilarious, others quite strange. A small paperbound booklet, this visual diary grabs the eye and titillates the mind.

group.sex by Eva Grubinger with contributions by Eri Kawade/James Roberts, Ann Powers, Klaus Theweleit includes remarkable images by Grubinger and lectures on political groups and language, abstract radicalism and art, Red Army Faction, feminism and boheme, social hierarchies and telematic friendship. Published by lucas and sternberg (Berlin-New York), 1999, \$16.00.

Self-Defense by Christophe Boutin (Paris, One-Star Press, 2000, \$20) are stills of a film by Boutin, with the right hand pages made by the first camera, and the left hand pages made by another cameraman. The artist has a baseball bat in his hand, while trying to hit an effigy of himself hanging from the ceiling. The face of the artist is photographed as the face of the stuffed life-size effigy. The book is printed on a kind of newsprint which allows one to flip the book and get a film from the right side or the left side. The artist finally severs the head of the effigy and walks away, leaving the head dangling from the rope.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Dad's Office by Nigel Shafran (London, 1999, \$35) covers the office from December 1996 to November 1998. The "home office" is in a "flat" in London which reflects the ambiance of a minimal venue, with vacuum cleaners, cleaning materials, a radio, a heater, a telephone book and therefore a cord that leads to a "telephone" perhaps, and exquisite light pouring through the drapes, but the venue is unkempt, not ordered, and seemingly temporary.

001 by Esen Karol (Istanbul, 124/3, paper, \$10) is a series of photographs taken of the remnants of smoked cigarettes on the ground, in ashtrays, in saucers, urinals and automobiles, and so much more. After seeing such a book, smokers might stop smoking.

Love in the Stacks by Katie Sirk (New York, 1999, \$3.00 paper) are stills from a film with Clark Gable and Carole Lombard. A fun book for any librarian or booklover! That means you!

Traces & Presence by Tim Maul (Paris, Florence Loewy, 1999, \$20 paper) is an elegant bookwork with a bilingual introduction by the artist, in which he explains that he is a "psychic archeologist" with the camera, which he just points and shoots! And so the haunting nature of these black and white photographs reflects the energy, the events, and the dynamics of a human presence with all its emotions. Accompanied by a psychic, he took these photographs on a Sunday when the streets were quiet, and the emanations of the psychic were strong and effective. These are photographs waiting to be taken, loaded with psychic resonance, mostly negative, but always there.

Documentation of Events that May Not have Taken Place by Jennifer Bornstein (Gent, Imschoot uitgevers, 1999, \$30.00 paper) tells the story of the artist who was hired by a French artist to come to France as her assistant. The French artist was known to follow people and take photographs of their possessions. In like mode, Bornstein took it upon herself to document her "boss's" possession in her home and studio. As a result, she lost her job with that artist although staying in Paris and working for other artists. This work was primarily done as a portfolio to get into the MFA program at UCLA in 1992. It now appears as an artist book and is remarkable for its frankness and its sharp black and white photographs.

Our Man in Tokyo by Johan Markusson (Le Buk, 1999, \$28 paper) is an album of photographs of someone who has traveled from Tokyo to the Bahamas and everywhere in-between with gatefolds, texts, some color but mostly black and white photographs, a journey through pictures.

Suspens/ Details /Temoins by Yves Chadouët (Vienna, 1999, \$20) is a look at the minutiae and small details that surround our lives. Some of the things he hones in on are the small lights which tell us electronic equipment is on, or an appliance, or fax machines or stereos. Isolating these items in small polaroids, the artist creates surrealistic photos which haunt the psyche. Yet while the Surrealists focused on the intrinsic nature of things, Chadouët isolates the

inconspicuous things so that it is up to the viewer to interpret what they are and their details (in black and white), rather than the artist.

In *Details*, the artist shows only segments of the original small photos, thus creating more ambiguity and doubt as to what they really represent. In fact, the artist endows the small details with a magic by isolating them from their frames of reference. The suspension of belief does not create disbelief but awe. The three booklets are joined by a wrapper

War is Swell by William Anthony, subtitled **A Kid's Idiotic Vision of WWII** (Santa Monica, Smart Art Press, 2000, \$25) documents the WWII when Anthony experienced the war from age 7 to 11 as a real "American patriot." Lucky to be untouched by the tragedy of the war, he and his boyhood friends saved its adventure through the letters, the newspapers, and the comic books that reached his quiet Tacoma, Washington suburb. They kept dutifully abreast of wartime strategy and watched the skies faithfully for enemy attack, longing for the chance to contribute to the war effort. "We loved the fighting men and the combat," Anthony writes in the introduction to the book. "We loved weapons and the mayhem they caused. We loved the air raids, the commando raids and the plots to kill Hitler."

War is Swell is a narrative re-enactment of this elaborate and innocent experience of war in Anthony's raw signature style—unfiltered, uncensored, and untempered by political correctness. Its cast of characters includes Hitler ("a paper-hanger who got this job as dictator of Germany"), Admiral Yamamoto (who "liked to put tacks on the chairs used by the other officers to keep them alert"), General Patton, "blonde lady spies who liked to get secrets in return for certain favors," and scores of soldiers, civilians, tanks and planes from all sides.

Anthony's style is a creation of learning the mistakes of his students, while teaching in California. The style is nervous, shaded, creating a classically idiotic figure, but it is idiosyncratic to Bill Anthony, famed for his *Bible Stories*. This cloth covered bookwork is a perfect foil for our peaceful times, where memory is so short that "war" might be construed as Kosovo, rather than the great wars of the 20th century. The bookwork is a memory track and a wry and provocative contribution to the annals of American history as seen from a boy's point of view. Available from your local bookstore or from Smart Art Press, 2525 Michigan Ave., Bldg. C1, Santa Monica, CA 90404. www.track16.com

Memory/Cage Editions

L'Oeil du Tigre by Bernard Voïta accompanied by a text by Friederike Kretzen (Zurich, Memory/Cage Editions, 1999, \$24.95 hardcover) is an exquisitely produced book of double spread photographs with a surreal text in three languages

(German, French and English), so that the reader/viewer indulges oneself in the mysticism and stark reality simultaneously in these black and white emotionally-charged photographs of place and views and landscape. It is an indulgence that produces an experience.

Eine Installation im Kunsthof Zurich by Dominique Lämml (Zurich, Memory/Cage Editions, 1996, \$24.95 paper) is the documentation of an installation involving many white balloons in an enclosed urban space. There is a structure and an intention from the outset, but its actual location is only seen in a photograph at the end. The text is in German.

Wet Rocks Seen from Above by John Berger and Christoph Hänsli (Zurich, Memory/Cage Editions, 1996, \$32.95 hardcover) involves paintings by Hänsli, text by Berger of a room in the Hotel du Printemps in Paris. The text is rhapsodic and amazingly poetic. It adds so much to these realistic paintings of a room in a hotel from various angles, including an emphasis on the wall, or the unmade bed. This is a beautifully produced bookwork, indicative of this elegant publishing house. German-English text.

The Time of Friendship by Paul Bowles with 10 photographs by Vittorio Santoro (Zurich, Memory/Cage Editions, 1995, \$35.00 hardcover) is a collaboration between the writer and the photographer who also designed the volume. The story goes back to 1961, but the photographs are made especially for this volume in 1995 which commemorates the author's 85th birthday.

Other Rooms, Other Voices: Audio Works by Artists, edited by Daniel Kurjakovic and Sebastian Lohse is the result of a radio project curated by Daniel Kurjakovic with Franziska Baetcke for Swiss Radio SR DRS2, with additional text by Roland Barthes (Zurich, Memory/Cage Editions, 1999, includes a CD, \$39.95 hardcover). The audio works are created by Lawrence Weiner, Vittorio Santoro, Julian Opie, Iris Gallarotti, Jos Nöpflin, Silvie Defraoui, Shahryar Nashat, Dara Birnbaum, Ilona Rungg, Robert Wilson, Louise Bourgeois, Marie José Burkl, Sarah Sze, Mitja Tusek and Vito Acconci. Each artist has offered visual work to accompany the audio work on the CD, and in addition there is a conversation entitled "Production, Criticism, Attitude and Existence", between Franziska Baetcke and Daniel Kurjakovic, who has also written here about the theoretical context of this project. Notes on each of these artists appears at the end of the volume.

These artists come from all over Europe and North America, work in various media, and certainly reflect diverse cultures. As a result, this volume is a gem, a

remarkable collection of visual and verbal poetics and philosophies, mingled into audioworks on the CD and visual candy for the eye. A must for all intermedial collections.

8% Architecture by Neimann (New York, One hundred percent, 1999, \$8.00) is a large blue print sheet with 100 drawings about architecture. This large sheet is folded and folded again, but the ideas are drawings reminiscent of Oldenburg, inventions of the mind. This is one of a series of publications called One Hundred Percent, with each issue signed and numbered in an edition of 100.

Cyberspace by Kenward Elmslie & Trevor Winkfield (New York, Granary Books, 2000, \$19.95 paper) is a stunning answer to Y2K by two "confirmed Luddites" who yank the reader into the rabbit-hole and push the reader into a strange-yet-familiar cosmos of absurdity, seriousness, musicality, noise, cartoons, satire and theatricalities.

Winkfield's pop-like full-color collages are illuminated by the scintillating reinvention of the English language of Kenward Elmslie with chapters called "Solo Imbroglia" or "Diddly Squat" What a joyful book. Take me to your Luddite society—I really need to find the madness again.

Also available is a set of 41 full color postcards in an envelope with a poem by Kenward Elmslie published by Granary Books (\$27.50 plus \$3.20 shipping) from 307 Seventh Ave., Suite 1401, New York, NY 10001 or from D.A.P. and also available from Small Press Distribution (www.spdbooks.org)

DESIGN

Show Case by Olaf Nicolai (Nuremberg, Verlag fur Moderne Kunst, 1999, \$28) is a bilingual volume of essays on the Biosphere, Rhizome, and design In eight short chapters, the design of which allows one to read in German or English depending upon the color of the type, the subjects range from clothes to landscape to human relationships. A contemporary design to an illustrated book (color and black and white) which far exceeds the normal book of essays.

1991 by Jasper Sebastian Stürup, Marika Seidler, Thomas Fleron, Per Molgaard and Kaspar Kaum **Bonnén** documents an exhibition in March/April 1999 in drawings and photographs, while when turning the book in reverse 19992 covers a show that was held in April/May 1999 with five different artists. . Published by Space Poetry & fluens forlag (Coopenhagen, 1999, \$10) this volume with its dual purposes accomplishes much through various color pages, drawings and great printing.

CALENDARS

2000 Calendar by Claude Closky (Paris, Editions du Musée du Sourire, 1999, \$20.00 paper) is in fact a calendar of

words, where each day has a statement from some kind of advertising from Hugo Boss or Burger King, Lexus or Nike, Mont Blanc or De Beers and everything else included. Just remember that each day has one line of type attributed to some kind of advertising. The pervasive nature of advertising has certainly invaded the psyche of the artist and of his "readers". "Life is best played without a script" is on 25 July from Guerlain, while on my birthday, 19 May, it says "Even the best can get better" (thanks to Estée Lauder). A wonderful funny calendar—different too.

Songs of Birds Wearing Safety Gear by Bill Burns is a Year 2000 Calendar (Winnipeg, Plug In Editions, 1999, \$7.50) includes a folded up blueprint page with songs of Black-billed Cuckoo, Brown Creeper, Vesper Sparrow, Meadowlark, Canadian Warbler, Whip-oor-will, Winter Wren, Wood Thrush with the music simulating the song of the birds. A poetic-musical calendar like no other!

PERIODICALS

Lost & Found Times 43 (Columbus, OH, 1999, \$6) includes work of Al Ackerman, Vittore Baroni, Robin Crozier, Richard Kostelanetz, Musicmaster, Spencer Selby, W. Mark Sutherland, and hundreds more. Order from Luna Bisonte Prods, 137 Leland Ave., Columbus, OH 43214.

CD-ROM

Developing the Idea of Home by Nancy Buchanan (Los Angeles, 1999, \$10.00 plus \$5.00 postage) is a carefully prepared interactive meditation on the Idea of Home, what is it? As space becomes more "virtual", how do we conceptualize not only personal shelter, but local place? What is the "value" of open space beyond real estate profits? How can new models of home ownership empower low-income people to achieve security in their choice of residence? Will suburbs be endlessly constructed and, if so, where will water be obtained to support continued growth in the Southwest? The CD-ROM is organized in an associative manner, meant to invite perusal. It contains histories, but it is not a history. There is occasion to play here, but this is not a game. Bibliographies are included, but this is not a database. This is not a fiction, nor is it strictly "documentary". There is music, film, photography, animation and much more. Because this work is not linear, it is Nancy Buchanan's hope that the reader/user may discover new ways to think about space, and that most precious of all possessions, "home". A tour de force. Available from Nancy Buchanan, 622 Dimmick Dr., Los Angeles, CA 90065. (323)225-1046