

on the road with jah

After a whirlwind few hours in New York City to see the Japanese artists' book exhibit at Franklin Furance which was to close while we were in Boston, we drove to Boston and arrived in time for the opening of BETWEEN THE COVERS, an exhibit of handmade artists' books at Massachusetts College of Art Thompson Gallery. It was meeting and greeting, besides getting to look at all the books. Ulises Carrion had arrived, as did the other members of this wonderful community of book artists. At this, the fifth National Conference of Artists' Books, we had finally become a family, a community of artists, printers, critics, curators, art historians and all students of bookworks.

Organized by the staff at the Photographic Resource Center at Boston University in Massachusetts, the conference opened with a performance of segments of FRENCH FRIES, the latest bookwork by Warren Lehrer and Dennis Bernstein, a quick service circus of culinary discourse, after which we were treated to a "radioactive guest lecture" by Lehrer.

Friday evening was reunion time for the members of the "family", and a good time was had by all.

While the Book Fair opened, there were simultaneous sessions ongoing, which proved to be a detriment to many of the conferees. The "community" is not big enough to cover the many issues in simultaneous sessions. This is one of the problems that confronted veteran attendees. While a panel was discussing how to get the work out, Gail Harrison-Roman was talking about Russian Avant-Garde Book Design, and Rebecca Michaels was discussing her own offset work. That was built-in frustration for me. A National Conference with less than 200 people should not have to confront the problem of "playing favorites". This is not College Art.

So while some were eating lunch, others listened to a lecture re: The Future of the Book. Important lectures by Frances Butler and Jaroslav Andel were countered with panel discussions on preservation or teaching bookworks. One of the highlights of Saturday after-

noon was the tandem lecture by Telfer Stokes and Helen Douglas, guests from Scotland, who spoke intimately and lucidly about the books they have done singly, and the one they did together.

The evening produced the most provocative "internal memo" I have ever heard about bookworks, presented by Clive Phillpot, librarian at the Museum of Modern Art and longtime writer on bookworks. The lecture was called "The Success & Failure of Books by Artists". It was the first time I had ever seen book artists dialogue for any length of time after a talk. But since, as stated above, it was an internal memorandum, I shall not divulge its substance. Let it suffice that the tenets upon which book artists have been doing their thing these many years were challenged by Phillpot in his comments. I will leave it to David Trend in AFTER-IMAGE

BOOK FAIR: The Book Fair was not well advertised in the local media, so that Boston did not turn out in droves to buy new artists' books. As a result, some of the exhibitors were buying books from each other. Meanwhile, the new books which the Photographic Resource Center had funded were being discussed by the artists: Janet Zweig's HEINZ and JUDY: A PLAY; Irene Shwachman's WE GREW UP IN MANHATTAN; and Bonnie Donohue with Warner Wada's BELFAST:CONTROL ZONE. While each of the artists explained how the book was created, a panel of critics was discussing issues of contemporary criticism of bookworks, including Don Russell, Ulises Carrion, Shelley Rice, and Barbara Tannenbaum.

The Conference closed with more attendance at the Book Fair, and the exhibition opening of "Offset: A Survey of Artists' Books" curated by Gary Richman, which was held at the Project Arts Center in Cambridge.

Thanks to Jean Caslin and Katie Conway of the PRC for bringing us all together and making Boston alive with bookworks, if only for 19-21 April!

