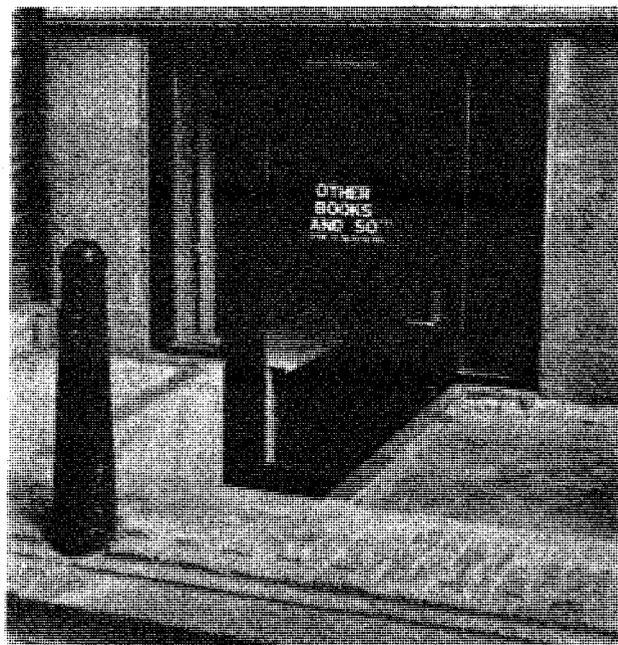


PROFILE: ulises carrion: an end and a beginning

Ulises Carrion first came to Amsterdam as a student on holiday from Paris. Born in a very small town in southern Mexico in 1941, he had studied literature in Mexico City, and then went to Paris on a grant for three years. "I was studying at the Sorbonne in Paris and I came here (to Amsterdam) just to visit the city. I was visiting Europe. And I just fell in love with it. I came several times from Paris to Amsterdam. Then, at a certain moment I really decided I'm going to live in Amsterdam. That's the place where I wanted to be. I didn't know anybody or anything. It was just a feeling. That was in 1970. I was here four years illegally and it was not a trouble for me. After four years Aart (van Barneveld) and I had the vague idea. . . there must be a place for books. . . there must be a place for exchanging artists' books. It was a totally absurd dream because I was illegal here and we had no money at all. I mean it was really impossible. But we were going on the bicycle, through the streets, looking for a space. Every time we saw an empty space, we went to ask the cost. But this was totally absurd.

And then things speeded up. I got a permit. We found a place. And everything happened in some months. When we started Other Books, we had zero. We had nothing. But I never thought of it in terms of "is it really advisable to do such a thing. . . do we have a chance of succeeding?" We just had to do it. There was a space and certain ideas that were very clear. And you had to do it. We decided that. We made a budget that we needed 300 gulden a month. Totally utopic. But anyway, that's what we decided. We needed 300 gulden a month, so let's be sure for six months. That's 1,800 gulden. Let's get this money from friends. We asked everybody who was around us if they could give us 100 gulden. In exchange for that we would give them a diploma, and we would give them discounts. Okay. We were astonished that it was so easy to get those 18 people. Very quickly. Everyone said "Yes, fantastic. Here's 100 gulden." We were surprised. Even our closest friends who had no money were ready to give 100 gulden. And when we got to 1,800 we said, "Stop. We don't want any more because we have enough for six months." (laugh) Anyway, when we opened Other Books there was no money any more because it had all been spent on paper, wood, lamps, everything, of course. But it turned out to be so good. Other Books could pay for itself from the first day. We work by post, that's the thing. Of course the very first days you still don't work by post, but any city of reasonable size has enough local public to support something for the first weeks. And then, of course, a lot of things have to happen.

When I started Other Books I wasn't writing anymore. I insisted on calling myself a writer. . . I was a writer before, in the sense that I was writing, I was using language consciously. I wanted to say things through language. But years before Other Books I stopped doing this. I kept using language but not trying to say something, not using it in a way a writer uses language. I was using language as graphics, or as volume, or as colour. In the sense that a plastic artist would use language. I never write anymore. In fact, now I don't care anymore. I think that there are two things: I don't call myself a writer because I use language, as I say, from a non-linguistic point of view, but, I consider myself a writer in the sense that I think that my work is important for language. I'm absolutely convinced that my work, and that



of many other people, is important for language, as it exists or as it is used, or as it is used in literature. (Now that Other Books & So is changing) I will at least have time again to do my own work. That is important. But the fact is that my own work has taken such strange forms. One of these strange forms is not working with your person as an individual but through an institution. Perhaps the word 'institution' is the wrong word. Through a sort of impersonal thing that has a name. . . it could be a shop, a gallery, you can call it an archive, institute, company, group, whatever. But that means you have a sort of screen, you see. Not to cover you. Not to protect you. But to take a distance from the artist as a person. You are someone who is not acting with your own name but with, for instance, Other Books & So. So one thing I have put into practice with Other Books, without knowing it in the beginning, but it became, through Other Books & So and other experiences, through talking with people and other friends who are involved in the same problems, it became evident to me that it was very important to make your work of art through a social entity. . . that could be a shop or a gallery or whatever. I would say it this way: you cease being a person, I mean an individual, who is doing a certain work only in his name. You become an institution, a social body that works among other social bodies. You're not an artist, but you are a gallery. Or you are as a gallery. Or you are a bookshop. I think that's very interesting. Or a magazine, for instance. Publishing a magazine can be a work of art. But the magazine, the name of the magazine, the physical existence of the magazine is the shield. Of course, you are behind. But people don't get (the idea) "This is the work of such and such." No. "This is the magazine such and such." You see, there is a sort of distance, and you are there, behind.

What I'm going to do now that Other Books & So ceases existing as a shop and as a gallery is the archive. I will start something called Other Books & So Archive. I will keep it (the name) because a very important part of my own work will be part of the archive. And I intend working intensively

with it. I will keep it at home. It may also happen that I will have a studio and use it as the public address for the archive. I will keep examples (from Other Books) of everything that I may keep, because the things are not mine. The archive already exists in the sense that I have collected in the last years, through Other Books & So, quite a large amount of publications. So that's already a beginning. And then with the closing of Other Books there is a lot of material that will become part of the archive. And then, of course, the normal exchange of materials and works with friends, I think the finances for Other Books came from the selling, and for the archive it will come from my personal work, because the archive is my own personal studio. . . it doesn't mean an extra expense for me.

For Other Books & So we have applied, since the beginning by the way, for subsidy. This was because they themselves, from the government, advised us to do it. Because they came and said. . . and this is the nature of the Dutch mentality. . . everyone thought that Aart and I were crazy for not asking for a subsidy first. . . they said "But this is good, this is fantastic, you should ask for it." Okay. Well, let's ask for it. But there was the problem that we were a bookshop and in theory you don't have the right to ask it if you are selling things. You can prove that the sales are so low that it is absolutely impossible to talk of any profit. But anyway, no, this is not possible if you are selling.

Okay. The people that give the subsidies advised us of some ways of turning the law, twisting the law so that we could justify it. We could get subsidies for projects instead of Other Books & So. Well, with all their advice and all their beautiful words, and with all the good praise we had, it was never possible. Then we made a second application and that also didn't work. In the meantime the years went by. And then at a certain moment Aart and I decided to stop with Other Books. We thought it was advisable to go and see these (government) people and tell them "Thank you very much for your help but forget about our applications that are still in study because we are going to close. It's finished." And then, to our surprise, we heard, "oh no. But now it will be very easy to get a subsidy because now you will be an archive. There's no problem anymore with your selling or not selling." And we said, "Oh yes, it is easy?" and they answered, "Oh very easy. And this time you will not only get funding for projects as you had applied for. No, you will get a salary, insurance, everything. On a permanent basis." Well, fantastic. That would be fantastic. But the months went by and we never got anything.

We decided at the beginning of 1978 that we would close in September. They asked us to wait until December. We told them we'd wait until the first of December and not one day more. The last thing we heard was that we had to wait until April. But we won't wait anymore. It may happen in April that we get this bloody subsidy, when we don't exist anymore. But then we'll be an archive. But who knows, they can invent, whatever. Also, perhaps there will be a little obstacle in that at this point, in April, we won't have any space anymore. Now we have a space. All our applications were based on that space. Of course it will be easy to get another space if we get this bloody thing. Perhaps we get it. Perhaps it's possible. But really, now I don't care. Very deep in my heart I don't care. I can see the future. . . a rosy future, without this subsidy. It's again like in the beginning of Other Books,

you know. It was no question. The question of "will it work?" This question was not applicable. We just had to do it because at that moment it was the right thing to do. So if it is with subsidy or without subsidy, in our house or in a building, it's not important. It will work, I am sure that it will work."

Other Books & So closed on 1 December 1978, and with it the long-term project of Ulises Carrion takes a new dimension. Some of us were fortunate enough to have experienced it. Now an American, Karen Kvernes, has taken it over, changed its name to *Art Something* and reopened on 1 February 1979. As she lives in Amsterdam and works in her shop, she writes about her commitment to the cause of artists' books and her growing love for her work. Other Books & So is not a business, it is a process.

(Interview with Ulises Carrion excerpted from the forthcoming book A.I.R. Holland by Jan van Raay. Reprinted with kind permission from Artzien, vol. 1, no. 3, January 1979, edited and published by Michael Gibbs in Amsterdam.

AUSTRALIA: art news

Australia's first National Glass Conference was held in Sydney in December 1978, out of which was born a national organization of artists working in glass (AUSGLAS). Recently the Jam Factory Gallery in Adelaide (169 Payneham Road, St. Peters, South Australia 5069) mounted the first exhibition of studio glasswork, and the loose-leaved catalogue of this exhibition stands as the best guide to the philosophies and backgrounds of Australia artists in this area. The Jam Factory Workshop, to which the Gallery is attached, has been experimenting with hot glass production since the techniques were introduced in 1975, but it has been the Gallery director, Mark Thompson, who has shown the Australian public how to accept glass as an artistic medium.

■ Twenty-two performance and participatory artists were brought together in Canberra for a festival entitled, *Act 1*. The festival included a public discussion, under the chairmanship of Daniel Thomas, of the rationales of performance art. The ritual nature of most of the events were remarked on by reviewers. Performance artists who would like more information about the works which were presented in Canberra can contact the organizer, Ingo Kleinert, at the Canberra School of Art, P.O. Box 1287, Canberra, A.C.T., Australia 2601.

■ A 50-page catalog of the Hinton Collection has been produced by the Visual Arts Board's Regional Development Program, in support of an appeal for building funds for a museum to house the collection in Armidale, NSW. The Howard Hinton Collection comprises more than 1000 works, predominantly Australia art from the 1880s to the 1930s. Hinton, an Englishman who immigrated to Australia when he was 25, consciously built up a collection which would illustrate to students the development of Australia art in his lifetime, and although the collection has some remarkable pieces, it is its value as a composite which is important. The catalog and further details of the collection's contents are available from the New England Regional Art Museum Association in Armidale, NSW, Australia 2350.