

MAKING BOOK IN PHILADELPHIA: BOOKWORKS/82

After 18 months of preparation, Bookworks:82, the international conference on books and publications made by artists, opened on 1 October in Philadelphia at the Moore College of Art. Hosted by the Foundation for Today's Art and coordinated ably by Michael Kostiuik, Bookworks:82 proved to be a continuation of that spirit which was generated in Rochester two years ago at the Visual Studies Workshop. That spirit of cooperation, communication and continuity.

You couldn't have asked for a better place for a conference, a city that really put out the red carpet for books and bookmakers not only with Indian summer weather, but with no less than 27 exhibitions of bookworks throughout the city, from Alison Knowles' *The Book of Bean*, a walk-in book whose pages were 8 feet tall to Suzanne Horvitz's *Thou Hast Ravished my Heart* and *For Sick of Love Am I*, a miniature dual volume of Xeroxed color images. There were exhibitions of William Morris' books at the Rosenbach Foundation, Bruce Schnabel's handsomely bound books at the Helen Drutt Gallery, a remarkable exhibition of one-of-a-kind books at Jeffrey Fuller's Gallery including some mysterious "closet" book artists, and so much more. Alas, the conference was so rich and full that many participants could not see all the exhibitions that were available, except within walking distance at lunch hours. But those who came early and those who stayed after the Sunday closing of the conference did get to see many books, more than anyone could absorb in one "sitting".

The more than 250 conferees enjoyed a full program from morning to night, including a significant session on "Books and Freedom," chaired by Martha Rosler and with the participation of Felipe Ehrenberg telling about setting up more than 50 presses in the rural areas of Mexico, funded by the Mexican government, where villagers learned how to put together a newspaper or a magazine to communicate among themselves with a press, many examples of which were on display on the 13th floor of the Philadelphia College of Art over the weekend. This was a testimonial to a democratic system of freedom of the press, taught by one who should know about that, the founder of the Beau Geste Press. In contrast, the Gerlovins, Valerie and Rimma, spoke about the problems of being artists in Russia and the necessity of printing underground books. It was a powerful beginning to a wealth of information for the next three days.

Shelly Rice analyzed the structure of a few of her favorite books, such as Kevin Osborn's *Real Lush* and Paul Zelevansky's *Case for the Burial of Ancestors*. There was also an interesting dialogue of artists and writers who produce vinyl disks and audiotapes as an extension of their visual or written works with Peter Frank as Moderator and Jackie Apple,

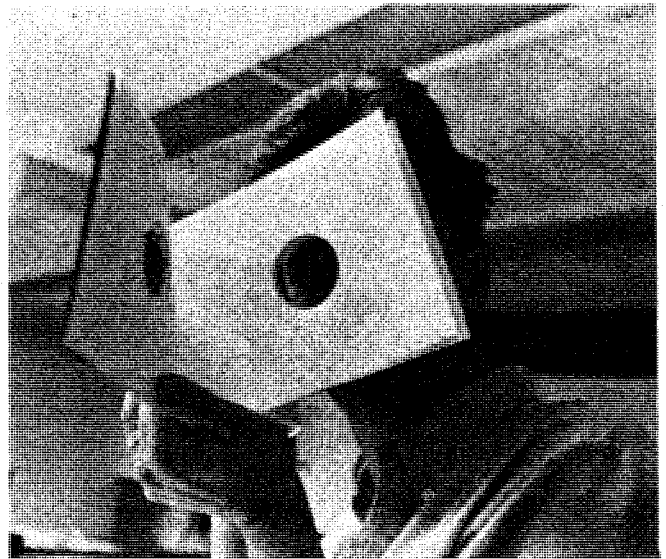


PHOTO: Nathalie Magnan

Jeff Gordon and Charlie Morrow on the panel.

The offset printers presented a fascinating explanation of their methodology and techniques on Saturday morning with Kevin Osborn as moderator, and Conrad Gleber, Michael Goodman, Philip Zimmermann and Janet Zweig participating.

INTERNATIONAL PARTICIPATION

The international nature of the conference showed representation not only from Mexico and Canada, but also from Holland, Finland and Poland (via Amsterdam). The Dutch representatives were the owners of Void Distributors, including bookmaker Hettie Huisman and her partner, as well as Outi Heiskanen from Helsinki, Henryk Gajewski, a Polish artist who found temporary haven in Amsterdam. He gave a presentation on *Other Child Book*, the exhibition of one-of-a-kind artists' books which artists from all over the world sent to a show which opened in 1979 in Warsaw and has been seen in Mexico City, Australia and now in Philadelphia. His presentation not only gave his philosophy of teaching contemporary art to children via bookworks but also exhibited a film which he had made about the books and the interaction by children with them.

Art librarians were also given a chance to voice some of their opinions about the importance of the acquisition and preservation of these bookworks in a panel chaired by the

editor of *Umbrella*. The major interest of all these art librarians was to keep the lines of communication open to their students and their clientele to these works of art. Besides sessions on collections and archives, innovative approaches to bookmaking and publishing management, there was a fine exhibition of Philadelphia book artists at the Moore College of Art gallery, as well as an adjunct book exhibition of more than 400 bookworks sent in by artists from all over the world, all to be savored by the conferees. There was also a performance-lecture by Betsy Davids and James Petrillo on William Blake's art and aesthetic.

Distribution, however, was on the minds of all those who attended, and although a session on Sunday morning was devoted to the problem, it was mentioned time and again throughout the conference. Paul Zelevansky, in a panel discussion on "Making Book" put it well by urging artists to do more to push their books beyond the realm of the art world. "It's not enough to make pretty things; we must infiltrate with the right words and images. As big publishing drifts further into corporate style, we may still have amateur status, but the ball is in our court." This was amplified in the Sunday morning session where several of the panelists cited the problems of limited audience, lack of outlets, the reluctance even on the part of museum shops to take the bookworks on. In fact, Leta Stathacos, coordinator of marketing services for the Albright-Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo, gave the artists "hell" for using non-commercial tactics in trying to further the dissemination of their products. She felt that indifference to sales was the earmark of some of the artists at the conference and would not lead to success at all, especially since the energy going into the creation of the books far exceeded the search for a broader audience.

Openings of book shows, receptions and encounters with "old friends" allowed this conference to open up new lines of communication for many of the conferees. Due to a newspaper strike in Philadelphia, attendance at a public Book Fair held in conjunction with the Conference did not bring in the large audiences anticipated, but those who came enjoyed the books and publications of more than 60 exhibitors, and it was well organized and produced some interesting sales.

For a more detailed review of the conference, read a future issue of *Afterimage*, the publication of the Visual Studies Workshop, which will also be distributing the audiotaped sessions of the conference. On 17 October, Grace Glueck also reported on the conference in the Arts & Leisure Section of the *New York Times* in an article, "When Books Become Visual Literature." Keep reading *Umbrella* and *Afterimage* for more information on the documentation of this conference.

It will be hard to beat Philadelphia's red-carpet treatment and adequate funding and generosity to make a conference as well coordinated. Many thanks go to Michael Kostiuk, Suzanne Horvitz and Sandra Lerner for a remarkable success! A list of conferees will be made available to those who attended and to those who are interested for a small donation of \$5.00, made payable to Umbrella Associates. Please indicate whether you want the list on adhesive address labels or on Xerox bond. As soon as the list is ready sometime in December, it will be mailed out.

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JUDITH A. HOFFBERG, Editor & Publisher

BILL GAGLIONE, Contributing Editor, Mail Art

LON SPIEGELMAN, Contributing Editor, Mail Art

FROM THE EDITOR

I have now finished five years as editor and publisher of this review, and ten years as an editor of a communications network. It is hard to believe that we have survived. But I would like to make *Umbrella* a better service to artists who publish magazines, books and other printed devices. I am offering the back inside page as a Classified Ad device for services, outlets, new books and new magazines. For 25 cents a word prepaid, you can advertise in *Umbrella* each issue of 1983 with a 10% discount if you pay for five issues by 30 December 1982. All classified ads would signify a mini-directory for book artists and magazine publishers, bookstores, book distributors, printers and other services that would aid collectors, librarians, book artists, and so many others who read *Umbrella* to use it each issue as a guide, a directory of services, and it would justify the continuation of *Umbrella* as a service to the book art community, especially in the field of multiples. You would also help *Umbrella* survive for another year, and I am being selfish.

Each issue becomes a harder task, because there is so much information to cull, without the aid of a computer or a word processor. Perhaps some of you realize how much work goes into each issue, but there is so much mail now—literally sacks each day, and I find it difficult to answer it all. If you do not hear from me, it is because I have only 20 hours a day and now I find that that is not enough. After the recent international Conference in Philadelphia, *Bookworks:82*, I think it was obvious to all conferees that some kind of communication device is necessary to keep all book artists abreast of new developments, intercommunication, cooperative projects and much more. So I am offering the pages of *Umbrella* as this communication device, but space costs, and I really need your minimal financial help to keep this going. First of all, if you receive a renewal notice in the mail, answer it when it arrives and save *Umbrella* postage for a second notice. Renew and *Umbrella* will prove to be a very useful tool to you in 1983. There will be many more interviews with book artists, as much news as can be culled from the mail and primary sources too, and hopefully a series of advertisements to serve as a directory of facilities in the field of artists' books.

So remember that 25 cents a word for artists, prepaid, and 10% discount on top of that if you pay by 30 December for inclusion in the next 5 issues of *Umbrella* for 1983. That is my gift to you for the coming year, and I hope the next year will be full of peace for the world and financial progress for most of us who are finding it hard to make it in the art world in the 1980s.