

# BOOK REVIEWS

## REFERENCE

**Notes from Underground: Zines and the Politics of Alternative Culture** by Stephen Duncombe (New York, Verso, 1997, \$19.00 paper) is the first systematic study of zines, small underground publications, and the subterranean bohemia from which they come. This book is frank, upfront, and gutsy. It is critical where it is needed to be critical. The Table of Contents seems to reflect the directness of Duncombe, a Professor of American Studies at SUNY at Old Westbury. Using zines as a case study, *Notes from Underground* poses the question of whether it is possible to rebel culturally in a modern consumer society that feeds on rebellious culture. The chapter titles let you know how analytical and straightforward this radical progressive former musician sees the world of zines: Identity, Community, Work, Consumption, Discovery, Purity and Danger, The Politics of Alternative Culture. Even the look of the book is somewhat "raw"—very gray, very flat, no sharp black and whites, and flat and matte illustrations. There is something personal in the text, one who has lived through the underground and its "zines". No fluff piece this, but a substantial analysis of the impossibility of being a true cultural rebel through zines.

**Interart Poetics: Essays on the Interrelations of the Arts and Media**, edited by Ulla-Britta Lagerroth, Hans Lund, Erik Hedling (Amsterdam-Atlanta, Rodopi, 1997) The subject of intermedia—the mingling of discrete artistic disciplines, especially but not exclusively in a single artwork—figures importantly throughout modern and post-modern art history. (Indeed, it's one of those factors that provides continuity between Modernism and its succession.) A formal rather than subjective rubric, and thus not at the center of the most fashionable current philosophical inquiry. Intermedia has not received the attention it is due historically. But many scholars and critical commentators are concerned with it, especially in Europe but to a growing extent in North America as well. To judge from *Interart Poetics*, a selected compendium of papers given at a conference at Sweden's Lund University in May 1995, Intermedia is attracting the scrutiny of an increasing, and increasingly wide, raft of chroniclers and analysts.

Ranging from straight historiography to the densest semiotic and, yes, post-structuralist theory—and even incorporating the incunabula of linguistic science—this book looks at the multifaceted subject of Intermedia from an appropriately varied bouquet of methodologies. To put it simply, there's something here for everyone. Music, writing, dance, theater, cinema and visual art are all starting points for inquiries into their expansions into

one another. In particular, the material rewards those interested in performance media with essays touching on Guillermo Gomez-Peña and Coco Fusco, Happenings in Stockholm, Cindy Sherman, and in particular impressive essays on "Man, Body Movement and Time" and "The Eternal Network"—the last a study of intermedia from the vantage of Mail Art by Fluxus scholar Eric Vos. Several impressive pieces also deal with historical iconographic issues across media, showing how the interpretation and expression of particular themes helped bring about cross-disciplinary influence. *Interart Poetics* at once sates and whets one's appetite for good history-analysis and good information about intermedia yesterday and today; more must be forthcoming. Dutch fl.50 or \$26.00. Order from orders-queries@rodopi.nl or write to 2015 So. Park Pl. Atlanta, GA 30339 or Keizersgracht 302-304, 1016 EX Amsterdam, Holland.

—Peter Frank

**Modernism since Postmodernism: Essays on Intermedia** by Dick Higgins (San Diego, San Diego State University, 1997, \$15.00 US, \$18.75 Canada, \$115.00 Mexico) is the third part of a critical trilogy that began with *A Dialectic of Centuries: Notes Towards a Theory of the New Arts* and continued with his *Horizons: The Poets and Theory of Intermedia*. Once again, this is a garden of delights. Pick and choose those essays that delight you on initial viewing, and then dig deeper and you can reap even more. Besides discussing Postmodernism and its myths, there is his essays on *Mediocracy, A Book, The Naive and its Function in Meaning*, as well as *Pages from the History of Intermedia* with essays on John Cage, Early Sound Poetry, The Origin of "Happening" as well as Three Considerations of Fluxus, including an essay on the Something Else Press, which he founded and a wonderful "Fluxessay for a Few of my Fluxfriends." As usual, the endnotes are ample, the bibliography full and rich, and the index leads you to where you never thought you wanted to go. Buy this book!

**Los Angeles A to Z: An Encyclopedia of the City and County** by Leonard Pitt and Dale Pitt (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1997, \$34.95) has 600 pages, more than 300 illustrations, a selection of quotes sprinkled through the text, and includes General Topics, briefer and more specific topics, and biographies. Obviously, the encyclopedia is organized alphabetically arranged entries on history, geography, automobile culture, sports, movies, sports, movies, current events, architecture, flora, fauna, scandals, biography, the arts, politics, neighborhoods and ethnic, racial and religious groups. This is an anecdotal encyclopedia written

in pliantalk, accessible and appealing to all readers. A basic reference!

## MONOGRAPHS

**Flaming Creature: Jack Smith, His Amazing Life and Times** (London, Serpent's Tail/ Long Island City, NY, Institute for Contemporary Art, 1997, \$40.00 paper) is an amazing and comprehensive analysis of the life and art (they never were separate) of Jack Smith, a visionary filmmaker, photographer, performer, actor and writer. He reveled in film stills, frame enlargements, photographs, drawings, collages, assemblages, and slide montages, influencing Robert Wilson, denounced by Kenneth Anger, imitated by Andy Warhol. The book is a "trip" so full of images flowing like a visual journal, yet full of critical essays by Ed Leffingwell, editor, Ronald Tavel, Lawrence Rinder, J. Hoberman, Nayland Blake. Homages by Richard Foreman, Stefan Brecht, Jonas Mekas and Susan Sontag begin the book, while postfaces by Penny Arcade and Jerry Tartaglia as well as a chronology and afterword by Alanna Heiss of P.S. 1 complete this joyful book. This exhibition will be traveling through the U.S. and then go to Berlin. This is a must! Outrageous, poignant, funny, moving, this book will change your life!

**Keith Haring** by Elisabeth Sussman with contributions by Jellybean Benitez, Fred Brathwaite, Jeffrey Deitch, David Frankel, Ann Magnuson, Robert Pincus-Witten, Fred Schneider, Robert Farris Thompson and Junior Vasquez (New York, Whitney Museum of American Art with Bulfinch Press, Little, Brown, 1997, \$75.00) is a big book for a physically slight artist who made a mark on society. Sussman carries us through this short life of an artist who "synthesized a street and club art and transformed a unique style of drawing into bold, public, large-scale painting and kitsch decoration; then in his middle period (1984-88) he made large-scale Pop versions of Neo-Expressionism, while making large murals, many of them for children; and the third period were angry paintings, lashing out at what had happened to him, yet they were socially active as well.

Inspired by such figures as Andy Warhol and Brion Gysin, Haring put his "trademark doughboy figures" on everything from sushi chefs' T-shirts to FDR Drive before he succumbed to AIDs at 31. The designer, Richard Pandiscio, incorporated materials ranging from grade school doodles to news clippings, from large paintings on vinyl to murals, from collage books in his early years to his Pop Shop. This is a sumptuous picture book, amplified by the essays by friends and critics who watched him develop. There is more than meets the eye in Keith Haring's book, and this retrospective catalog/monograph serves as a bridge between the public

Keith Haring and the Keith Haring, the serious artist. This is truly a magnificent contribution to a life well spent, although cut down too soon..

**The R. Crumb Coffee Table Art Book** (Crumb's Whole Career, from Shack to Chateau!) by R. Crumb (New York, Little, Brown for Kitchen Sink Press, 1997, \$40.00) is an anthology of Crumb's career, ranging from his earliest published comics in the mid-sixties to work completed in the nineties. Some of the work appears in color for the first time. Even some of his greeting card art is exposed here for the first time, as well as drawings for Harvey Kurtzman's *Help!* in the sixties. Brief commentaries by Crumb are interspersed throughout the book, illuminating his early love for comics, his career, his obsessions with sex and old music, as well as many black and white photographs of the artist's favorite subject, R. Crumb. This is a lavish book for a pioneer in adult cartoons as an art form.

**The Work of Charles and Ray Eames: A Legacy of Devotion** with essays by Donald Albrecht, Beatriz Colomina, Joseph Giovannini, Alan Lightman, Hélène Lipstadt and Philip and Phylis Morrison (New York, Harry N. Abrams, in association with the Library of Congress and the Vitra Design Museum, 1997, \$49.50) documents the creative life of two remarkable American innovators, thinkers and entrepreneurs who with words, drawings and images changes the lives of those who appreciate great design. The twentieth century was changed by Charles and Ray Eames, and this volume attempts to show how the Eameses believed that design could improve people's lives. Some of us while reading this may be sitting on an Eames chair. Besides furniture, they produced toys, buildings, films, graphics, exhibitions and books. The various essays speak of the Eameses' design agenda, a discussion of their early careers, the furniture and how it evolved, the Eameses' fascination with science and how they communicated to a general public through exhibitions, books and films. The Eameses' own house is discussed and illustrated, as well as the four projects they did for the U.S. government. 165 color plates among 235 illustrations firmly illustrate the greatness of this couple.

**Peter Greenaway: Architecture and Allegory** by Bridget Elliott and Anthony Purdy (London, Academy Editions, 1997, \$38.00 paper) is a fully illustrated (mostly in color) study emphasizing Peter Greenaway's use of architecture as a structuring device, a metaphor, and an exploratory vehicle for examining artistic practice in general.

Greenaway, controversial painter, curator, and most notably film maker, has made new statements by meshing the media and making revolutionary statements

about the cultural concerns of our time. Most of his films and exhibitions are presented here by the author, who also attempts to demystify a body of work usually misrepresented by most critics who are interested in promoting certain ideologies rather than understanding the presentation.

The texts are clear and lucid, the photographs are brilliant and show details of many of the films. Even the chapter titles start the juices rising: Baroque Perspectives, Allegory as Architecture, Architecture as Allegory, the Theatre of Power, the Framer Framed, Cosmology, as well as an interview with Greenaway, who is one of the most articulate artists living today. There is a filmography, a list of exhibitions, and a bibliography.

This volume is one of the most lucid presentations of a most complex and intelligent multi-faceted artists living today. Known for his films, those who have traveled have had the pleasure of seeing his large installations and his paintings as well.

## GENERAL

*Getty Trust Publications* include two wonderful gift books, priced at \$14.95, cloth bound, with 40 color illustrations in each volume:

**Nature Illuminated: Flora & Fauna from the Court of Emperor Rudolf II** (1997) combining calligraphy and miniature painting. First employing Georg Bocskay to create a model book of technical wizardry at Ferdinand I's bequest (that's Rudolf's predecessor), then at Rudolf's behest, miniaturist Joris Hoefnagel filled the space on each manuscript page with insects, fruit, flowers, and other botanical imagery. Essays on the mastery of Bocskay and Hoefnagel, an identification of specimens found in the illustrations, as well as an account of the flowering of the art of writing in the Renaissance complete this wonderful book.

**An Abecedarium: Illuminated Alphabets from the Court of Emperor Rudolf II** (1997) are two alphabets. Executed by an unknown hand, the first consists of Roman capital letters, the second of Gothic lower-case letters. These alphabets were embellished by Joris Hoefnagel with masks, animals, plants, obelisks--to convey the power and greatness of the Emperor.

**Inventing Kindergarten** by Norman Brosterman (New York, Abrams, 1997, \$39.95) is the first comprehensive book about the original kindergarten, invented in the 1830s by Friedrich Froebel, which became a familiar institution by the end of the nineteenth century throughout the world. This is a most extraordinary book, created by Brosterman, an architect and artist.

With the help of stunning photographs by Kiyoshi Togashi, this book is less about education and more about how the tools of this educational philosophy changed the course of abstract art and modern architecture, for the diagrams from the long-forgotten kindergarten textbooks are dynamic. The photographs are of the tools of the trade, the tools of the philosophy, the tools of visual literacy. The 20 educational toys, including building blocks, parquet tiles, origami papers, modeling clay, sewing kits, and other design projects, which became wildly popular in the 19th century, changed the course of art for those such as Braque, Mondrian, Klee, Kandinsky, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Le Corbusier.

The source of most of these original materials and design-work come from the personal collection of Brosterman while doing research. His collection was acquired by the Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal in 1989. The book is brilliantly written with accompanying bibliography and index. But it is the freshness of the architectural perspective, Brosterman's concern for teaching aesthetic values, and his passion for the subject matter that allows us to share in this passion and in its analysis for our lives at the end of the twentieth century. Perhaps this analysis into cultural archaeology will help visual literacy into the new millennium. A must!

## PHOTOGRAPHY

**In Focus: Carleton Watkins: Photographs from the J. Paul Getty Museum** (Los Angeles, 1997, \$16.95 paper) represents more than 50 of the 1,464 images that the Getty Museum's collection contains. Commentary on each image is by Peter Palmquist, an independent scholar and writer on Northern California photography. There is also a six-page chronological overview of his life taken from a colloquium on his career including Palmquist, David Featherstone, Tom Fels, Weston Naef, David Robertson, and Amy Rule. An interesting introduction to the photographer best known in the American West and in the Getty's collection.

**Home Altars of Mexico** by Dana Salvo (Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 1997, \$39.95 cloth, \$19.95 paper) is the result of a journal through the central highlands and southern states of Mexico by the artist with his family over a period of more than 10 years. Welcomed into the homes of rural people, including Purépechan, Chamulan, and Zinacantan Indians, Salvo was permitted the rare opportunity to photograph their private and deeply personal environments. Central to each was the *altarcito*, or home altar. These color photographs are dazzling, large-format depicting the altars in all their meticulous detail. Some

are constructed for special holidays such as Christmas and Day of the Dead, while others commemorate beloved family members using photographs, mementoes, and the deceased's favorite foods. Salvo, accompanied by his wife and his then infant daughter Jahna, was overwhelmed by the warmth and generosity of spirit of all those families he visited.

Essays by Ramon A. Gutierrez, Salvatore Scalora, and William H. Beezley, with an afterword by Amalia Mesa-Bains complete this magnificent collection.

**eye to eye: women**, edited by Vanessa Baird (London, Serpent's Tail, 1997, \$29.99/£17.50) showcases some of the best writing by women from Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. There are the famous and less known women whose poignant writing on life and love, work and play, and culture and creativity is enhanced with more than 41 full-page color photographs to make it a joy to look at as well as to read. This is a book that should reach a wide audience, both female and male. It is beautifully designed by Barbara Willi-Halter and is a tribute to all these women writers.

**The Photographic Arts** by John Woods (Iowa City, University of Iowa Press, 1997, \$65.00) should be entitled "Essays in Revision" dealing with historic photographic forms that have essentially been neglected. John Wood directs his attention to filling in critical gaps by illustrating 34 daguerreotypes and autochromes in full color, 24 cyanotypes presented in blue duotone, and 45 halftones. He discusses western American daguerreotypes, contemporary daguerreotypes, the American autochrome, the art of the cyanotype, European pictorialism, and American symbolism in photography. He uses diaries and journals of gold field miners and contrasts reality and mythology manifested in the faces of photographed participants. His "Visions of Spirituality and Desire" lead him to some striking conclusions in the context of American symbolist photography. He has a dissenting opinion of the dynamic influence of Alfred Stieglitz on the pictorialist movement. And with the history of American autochromes, he historicizes the rare and beautiful work of countless artists who are never mentioned in the standard histories of photography. A selective bibliography is included and there are many notes backing up this scholarship. A necessary addition to any photography collection.

**Studio St. Petersburg** by Deborah Turbeville (New York, Bulfinch Press, 1997, \$60.00) is based on repeated trips to St. Petersburg over the last two years, and represents a passionate exploration of the Russian

people and their recent history. Just as the country itself found itself in suspended time, the photographer herself always dealt with suspended time, manipulating and layering pictures and text, juxtaposing present and past. So what a perfect match between the photographer and the Russian culture, which layers and manipulates especially with its poets. So her double spread large photographs are accompanied by the words of the grand Russian poets. The choices are perfectly matched to Turbeville's powerful, tightly cropped close-ups of ballerinas, actors, official sand workers. Akhmatova, Brodsky and Tsvetaeva are the writers for this book. Talk about a match made in heaven. Black and white photographs are interspersed with terracotta pages with red texts tightly designed on the page. This book is not just a book, it is an experience to be absorbed, repeated, and absorbed again and again.

**One More for the Road: The Autobiography of a Friendship 1966-96** is a photo book you leaf through easily, seeing a kind of photo album of years shared between friends, times and places, families and friends. These photos are culled from a 30-year friendship between Richard Gordon and Kenny Raider, a friendship that started at the University of Chicago, led to traveling together to Europe, being roommates in New York before their lives led in different directions. The growth of a friendship also shows changes in physical attributes such as hair, beards, faces with more creases and wisdom as well, but also family celebrations, relationships between parents and children.

This tribute to friend Kenny Raider begins with a quote from Allen Ginsberg about friendship and then with 7 portraits of Raider. We get to know the subject head-on, face first, starting into the camera. And then the main part of the book begins, as we see these young friends at the peak of their youth, smiling, joking, on top of the world. And as we turn pages, we see the transition, away from the East to a West that is less stable, less secure, and separation.

The majority of the images are portraits, and then relationships, usually father and children. The last page is a portrait half in shadow of Kenneth Allen Raider with the opposite page indicating he died on 30 May 1996. Yet this is more than photographic interest, this is a book of a friendship, personal yet universal, a friendship that clearly was a deeply felt relationship that is clear to all us human beings. Here's to the "inexhaustible pleasure" of friendship (San Francisco, Flaneur Bookworks, 1997, available from Wessel & Lieberman Booksellers, 121 First Ave. South, Seattle, W 98104 or from Flaneur Bookworks, 1219 Oxford St., Berkeley, CA 94709.

**Limelight: A Greenwich Village Photography Gallery and Coffeehouse in the Fifties**, a Memoir by Helen Gee (Albuquerque, Univ. of New Mexico Press, 1997, \$50.00 cloth, \$19.95 paper) tells the efforts of Helen Gee to open Limelight, which became the busiest coffeehouse in New York in the late 1950s and the only photography gallery in the country. It also tells of her fight to keep it afloat for seven years. It's a wonderful story which includes Edward Steichen, Robert Frank, W. Eugene Smith, Berenice Abbott, and others who definitely lived through some of the great photographic events of the period, from the opening of *The Family of Man*, the publication of **The Americans**, as well as the bohemian life of the Village. With its 70 shows, Limelight made history when photography was just beginning to come into its own as an art form. This is a great read, and is illustrated with 49 halftones, portraits of great photographers, some posed, some candid. And this is a candid story told by Helen Gee, who lived the history and made it too.

### CHILDREN'S BOOKS

The J. Paul Getty Museum has begun to publish children's books that are a result of their gleaning lessons from the paintings they own: hardcovered, beautifully printed in Singapore in living color, these books are little treasures:

**A is for Artist** is a delightful trip through the alphabet (except for X), which abstracts from famous paintings held at the museum an example of something beginning with each letter. *A is for artist* (from a Jan Steen painting), etc. At the end of the book, the complete paintings are vignettted in complete format for recognition upon a subsequent visit to the museum. *U* is definitely for *Umbrella* (from a wonderful Degas painting *Waiting* (1882), jointly owned by the Getty and the Norton Simon Museum. (Los Angeles, Getty Museum, 1997, \$16.95)

**Where's the Bear? A Look-and-Find Book** has 60 pages, 25 color illustrations and asks the children to find 23 of the animals heading into Noah's Ark, and discover their names in six different languages! The painting is *The Entry of the Animals into Noah's Ark*, created by Jan Brueghel. Each animal is translated into French, German, Italian, Japanese, and Spanish and the pronunciation is indicated. A fold-out of the complete painting containing 51 different animals is tipped in at the end. (Los Angeles, Getty Museum, 1997, \$16.95)

### REPRINTS

**Flashing on the Sixties: Photographs** by Lisa Law, with a foreword by Ram Dass (San Francisco, Chronicle Books, 1997, \$18.95 paper) is a striking new edition of a 1987 book which became an icon in itself. With 162

photographs documenting an uncommon time, new commentary, and intimate portraits of Bob Dylan, the Grateful Dead, the Velvet Underground, the Beatles, the Kingston Trio, Andy Warhol, Janis Joplin, Ravi Shankar, Timothy Leary and more. This is a personal diary, one woman's view of the sixties and the people responsible for creating those early magical moments. If you lived through those years, you'll love this book! If you haven't, you'll learn a great deal from these photos about an era that changed the world.

**Aesop's Fables** by Jacob Lawrence (Seattle, University of Washington Press, 1997, \$18.95 cloth) has been out of print for 20 years. Combining 23 timeless morality tales with striking black ink drawings, the revered artist Jacob Lawrence adds five illustrations he prepared for the original edition but which were not previously included. Completely redesigned and typeset, this wonderful edition of Aesop's fables, accompanied by gold and expressive pen-and-ink illustrations reflect both the charm and the severity of the fables themselves. This is a wonderful gift for adults and children alike.

**War and Peace in the Global Village** by Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore (San Francisco, Hardwired, 1997, \$9.95 paper) has been remastered by Hardwired, since McLuhan's insights have become especially relevant in a world of accelerating technological innovation. The personal computer and the World Wide Web were insightfully predicted by McLuhan in this book. Additional musings by Douglas Coupland and John Naisbitt are contained in the flaps of the bookjacket.

