

ARTISTS' BOOKS: news and reviews

NEWS

The Center for Book Arts will be holding a "Book Arts Day" in the garden of the Cooper-Hewitt Museum in New York City on 29 September. Many of the rare hand crafts of book arts will be demonstrated, including hand bookbinding, decorative paper marbling, hand papermaking, printing, calligraphy, illumination, and wood-engraving. An exhibit of some of the hand-bound books and printed matter made by members and friends of the Center will also be on display at the museum.

● The Institut fuer Kunstgeschichte at the University of Freiburg in West Germany is planning an exhibition of artists' books in the summer of 1980. They need information concerning each artist's participation. If you wish to produce an object during their exhibition in a workshop, please let them know. They need to know what materials you need, what kinds of rooms, if you would bring these materials to Freiburg or would you prefer to use material available. Please write to Thomas Wessel, Institut fuer Kunstgeschichte, Universitaet Freiburg, D 78 Freiburg, WerthmannPlatz 3, West Germany.

● Ecart-Gallery & Ecart Books has moved to 14 rue d'Italie, in Geneva, Switzerland. They are open from 2:30 p.m. until 7 p.m. everyday, except Saturday when they close at 5 p.m. They are located next to the Centre d'Art Contemporain at this new address.

Ecart invites all artists and publishers to exhibit their works at the Gallery and Shop by writing to Ecart, C.P. 253, CH 1211, Geneva 1, Switzerland.

The Ecart archives and the printshop remain at the former address, rue plantamour 6.

● Bruce Schnabel, hand bookbinder/book artist, has received a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, Services to the Field category, to continue work at his Meadow Bindery's **Artist's Book Consulting Service**. The aim of the service is to encourage artists working in book format to obtain advice on technique and materials to insure the production of mechanically sound books as works of art.

For information, please contact Bruce Schnabel, The Meadow Bindery, 114 West 27th Street, New York, NY 10001. (212) 989-9887.

● The Alternative Press is celebrating 10 years of art, poetry and melodrama with an exhibition of their work from 17 September through 5 October at the Center for Creative Studies, 245 E. Kirby, Detroit, MI.

● According to *The New Art Examiner* in Chicago, "Laren Wilks, Book Buyer and Assistant Director of the Art Institute of Chicago Museum Store, has resigned in protest to the new management of the bookstore. Robert Telfer was appointed Executive Director of Marketing, Museum Store and Publications, commencing 1 January 1979. Telfer had worked for 32 years previously at Walgreen's with a background in retailing and pharmacy. Shortly after his arrival at the museum, certain books were pulled from the store shelves (such as *Nude 1920's* and *Gay Semiotics* by Hal Fischer) under the

pretext of making returns of overstock. Complaints were made about the obscene content of Pop Art books. The question of censorship arises here but more importantly is that aesthetic decisions are being made by someone without any art background. These choices affect what is available to the public." Just thought book artists should know about this.

● According to Jim Melchert, Visual Arts Division, National Endowment for the Arts, artists who make books should submit their books (not slides) when they make a proposal for grants to the Endowment in any category, such as Conceptual/Performance, Drawing, etc. The book will be returned, but the actual book must be submitted with the proposal. He told the editor of *Umbrella* that artists do get grants if they make books, but it is still premature to create a separate category for artists who make books at the present time.

● *Washington Review* for August - September 1979 features an article, "Art Off the Press" by Robert St. John, which highlights the Writers Center at Glen Echo Park, where such publications as *Sun & Moon*, *Wordworks*, etc.) come off their presses. The Bookworks manager, Kevin Osborn, wants to provoke interest in visual works in general and visual books in particular.

The exploration of the book as a medium will be the jist of the campaign that the Center will be making to attract artists to the Bookworks. For more information, write to Kevin Osborn, The Writers Center, Glen Echo Park, Glen Echo, MD 20768.

● Dick Higgins begins a history of The Something Else Press (notes for a history to be written some day) in *New Lazarus Review*, Volume 2, no. 1, which will be completed in Volume 3. Included in this handsome journal are roughly 40 pages of visual poetry, a collaborative photo piece called Lot 13, as well as poems, etc. Single copies are \$5.00; 6 issues cost \$18.00 subscription to individuals and \$22.00 to institutions.

● Vainline Publications announces a new project of interest to artists of all persuasions. Vainline will be printing and distributing a catalog of small-scale publications by artists interested in circulating their ideas and works to artists and friends around the world. The catalog will list books, pamphlets, articles, etc. of poetry, music scores, plays, drawings, non-fiction, etc. produced in Xerox, offset, silkscreen, type-written, hand-lettered, etc. that are available through Vainline. It will be sent free to anyone requesting a copy, and updated as new works become available. Publications will be variously free, sold for printing cost, or sold for cost, according to artist's request. Vainline receives no profit. All interested in contributing to the project or receiving a catalog can write to Vainline Publications, 810 Ida St., New Orleans, LA 70119.

All artists' books reviewed in these columns are available from ARTWORKS, 66 Windward Ave., Venice, CA 90291.

REVIEWS

More than Meat Joy: Complete Performance Works & Selected Writings by Carolee Schneemann, published by Documentext (GPO Box 2012, New York, NY 10001). 288p. \$20.00 ISBN 0-914232-16-9

More than Meat Joy is a book of greater significance than could be demonstrated through art or literary criticism. It is a first, and so unique. It is the first complete compilation of the work of one of the original performance artists, herself perhaps the most complete. *More than Meat Joy* provides documentation by photograph and text of all of Schneemann's performance pieces and some of her writings which link performances in conceptual sequence and set out an ideological framework for specific equations which surface in the performances.

Viewed as a whole, the book is informative and thought-provoking without being in the least aggrandizing (a failure of other artists' documentary retrospectives). It presents Schneemann's art (and life) with a clarity and energy much like that found in the work itself. While each discrete performance may be seen as the staging (or restaging, through the evidence) of a specific, relative event or situation which often demonstrates evolutionary formal concerns, taken together the works follow and build upon each other to create an image of the artist as a-specific and empirical, working with myth and "mystery". There are too many connections, even though the book is structured to downplay the universal theme; still Schneemann takes an heroic image somewhere between Olympia and Ishtar, more by impulse than by design.

More than Meat Joy is important politically and historically in that it outlines the conceptual structure of Performance Art in general, and the chronological development of Performance Art in microcosm. Historically, Performance Art has had a checkered past; now in, now out, now serious, now frivolous. Performance Art shares a parallel evolution with minimal and conceptual art. It has been compared and contrasted to these according to style and fashion. Deriving from impulses similar to conceptual art, Performance Art first differentiated itself from mainstream conceptual art by the former's insistence on the presentation form being as theatrical as was demanded by the immediacy of the concept. This is a divergence from the early conceptual line which was basically Greenbergian in notion—where content was immaterial compared to the fact that the content was completely isolated as an event. This insistence that media must be used, and not avoided, was nowhere stronger than in Schneemann's early works and to a degree presaged post-modernism (with that movement's association with concept through "formal" technique).

If the Post-Modernists are the heirs of the "conceptual mantle", they acknowledge their debt to Schneemann and the other originals by seeing performance and tableaux as basic elements in their palette, to be used as situation (read "culture") dictates. Minimalism and Performance Art together serve to demonstrate esthetic "non-convergence". An attempt on one hand to seize and on the other hand to reproduce the infinitely reducible led to unity or polarity depending upon the artist. This peculiar relationship is perhaps founded on the fact that Formal Minimalism (in the



light of recent occurrences) can be seen to have been one of the most pointless hoaxes ever perpetrated on the art world in this century. And it was practiced both by artists aware of its absurdity (and so demonstrating it) and by artists convinced of its sanctity (and so obscuring it). The former deal with the same general concerns as performance artists, but do it in the negative, while the performance artist does it in the positive. A good example might be Robert Morris as compared to Schneemann.

The other type of minimal artist for the most part has demeaned Performance Art and let it be known that he was too concerned with the imperceptible to give it must attention. Today this argument is usually heard by the language artists, whose reasoning and superficial political frosting have led them to attempt to dismiss performance art as being "self-obsessed, non-critical, mystical. . ." or some embodiment of a Summer of Love Mentality which they learned from the post-Modernists to disapprove of. Thus the title, *More than Meat Joy* means not only more than that one crucial work, but more than the idea of hedonistic pop-psych.

As one goes from work to work, from sketch to photo to essay to photo-collage, one sees how Schneemann dealt with contemporary avant-garde questions throughout her career, and how she deals with them now. This sense of currency is very important, as it allows a reader unfamiliar with the development of performance art to see immediately how Schneemann was dealing with ideas at every stage of her career and apply that perspective to works whose tradition the reader is more familiar with. For instance, Schneemann's early work shows a "proto-feminism" where through self-display and self-control she completely destroys the distinction between artist-subject and woman-object, thus clearing the way for new and previously unacceptable interpretations. Or in her middle period, Schneemann's identification of talismans, life-symbols within her creative (read "absolute") environment, such as her late familiar Kitch, in some ways allowed for the resurgence of narrative. It might even be said that this allowed for a lyricism which found its expression in patterning.

In some ways *More than Meat Joy* is merely a road-map with dates written in to show what path was taken when and the date or dates when a certain point was occupied or passed through. If this is so, then suffice it to say that Carolee Schneemann has been at the right place at the right time with amazing consistency. This, too, is important since the development of Performance Art is just now beginning to be documented, but unfortunately by people with more concern for marketing "this year's model" than with the history of art and ideas. Well, if some people can consistently break ground, then perhaps others will find it difficult to stand up. *More than Meat Joy* is in all ways a model of the novel, and vice versa.

—Peter "Blackhawk" von Brandenburg

Left, a meditation on left-handedness, by Kate Delos is a beautiful color Xerox interpretation of old X-rays, which are collaged with stitching of an actual outlined left hand. The three-dimensionality of the superimposed collage makes this book a remarkable application of the copy machine. \$20.00

X-Ray Me is a polaroid collaged to X-ray, then Xeroxed to make a haunting kind of instructional-poetic book about parts of the body and almost dance-like quality to the interpretation of the X-ray by polaroid photos. \$24.00

This is the Zoo/6 Collages is an interpretation of a children's book by color Xerox, with additions in child-like handwriting of numbers, letters, etc. Bernard Fischer uses the Xerox machine in a most creative manner. \$20.00

Snapshots, a facsimile of a snapshot album from Salt Lake City, with trading stamps, fold-out postcards, old advertisements for dandruff, an old clipping about Larry Parks, a Mother's Day Western Union message all stashed as facsimiles into the facsimile cover. A tour de force! \$20.00

Echoes by Edda Renouf, an oversize, handsomely printed book coming from Scotland, shows the making of the book in sketch form on two pages, and then produces sympathetically and elegantly the minimal art which is the signpost of this artist, chalk trials with incised lines, that are intentionally calculated to direct the eye in different ways over the large pages. Shades of gray, many shades. \$12.00 from Artworks.

70 Instructions on How to Make Certain Drawings by Irene Siegel is one in the Artist's Book Series of the Visual Studies Workshop. After a photo of the tools of the artist's drawing trade, we take a voyage with the pen through various constructs of drawing, printing, philosophy such as "Make the Fertile Crescent" to "The peril in everyday life"; from Draw Pieces to "Intellect is to the Soul what Sight is to the Body." A slow, deliberate voyage through pen-thoughts and pen-practices. \$8.50

Little Mysteries, poems by Ken Mikowloski and drawings by Ann Mikowloski, is a marvelous little book that sets up mysteries such as "ten in the dining room one falls in the soup, poisoned, you are the host—what do you do" illustrated with as much mystery as the text. Printed in an edition

of 800, using Poliphilus & Blado types on handmade mulberry paper by Toothpaste Press in West Branch, Iowa, the book celebrates ten years of the Alternative Press in Grindstone City, Michigan. \$3.00 for this beautiful contribution.

The New York Hat Line by Robert Kushner, text by Ed Friedman, photography & design by Katherine Landman. The book is an outgrowth of a 1975 performance by Robert Kushner at the Clocktower in New York City, which has since been performed internationally now culminating in this fascinating execution of humorous text, marvelous photographs and a total concept which comes off with the right combination of all the intentions, noble and otherwise, of the author and the other contributors. Hilariously conceived for \$6.00.

The Argument by Sandra Rowe is an original photographic book printed on photographic paper telling the saga of a woman who has an argument with a lover and deals with the repercussions, the feelings, and the intentions of that argument. A conceptual book made concrete with real photographs and real feelings. \$15.00

A Short Story, II by Linda Nishio is an illustrated story of Jane and John, using wooden model dolls as photographic illustrations. Words within the text are italicized and defined on each page, as if this were a reading primer, but instead it is a sexual-erotic fairy tale that leaves one coyly smiling. Edition of 500, available for \$5.00.

Los Angeles Landmarks, a long rectangular book by Bruce Levenstein, documents lesser known buildings in Los Angeles with architectural credits, including the original Hollywood sign, the Griffith Observatory, the Helms Bakery, Pigs' Paradise, the Pan Pacific Auditorium, the Brown Derby, and more. The format really dictates the quality of these fascinating photographs in this well-produced book. A steal at \$5.00.

Preservations by Wayne Levin is a photographic expose of natural history museum-viewing, planetarium-visiting, and methods we used to "preserve" and "conserve" our history, environment, and cultural and historical events. Published by the San Francisco Art Institute Student Body and printed at the West Coast Print Center, the book deals with superimposition, cultural interpretation, and sociological commentary. \$6.00 The book is a difficult one to decipher, an example of several artists' books being made these days with such personal interpretations that oftentimes the artist must be present for a clear explanation.

ABRAMS' ARTISTS BOOK SERIES

Harry N. Abrams, Inc. has issued a series of books called "Art Books by Artists", whereby the artist designs his own book and it is thereupon published by Abrams. The first three in the series are reviewed here:

Geometric Figures & Color by Sol LeWitt, an exploration of Circle, Square, Triangle, Rectangle, Trapezoid and Parallelogram in red, yellow and blue on red, yellow and blue—lushly

printed—is available for \$12.50 hardcover and \$6.00 paper. Here we have six different forms subjected to a total of 36 permutations using the three primary colors. The visual experience is intense and luxurious and much different than his other explorations with color.

Christo: Wrapped Walk Ways is instead, less an artist's book and more documentation, a description of an event that occurred outside of the book experience. Instead, we have photographic documentation of the wrapped walk ways in Kansas City, Missouri in a park last fall. The experience seemed to be much easier for Christo than the Running Fence, since he had the full cooperation of the city Parks Commission, the Contemporary Art Society of the Nelson Gallery, and the citizenry. Instead of the heavy political and sociological aspects of the art event, we have a less complex situation, which allows the book to emphasize the preparation, execution and completion of this spectacle with the saffron-colored cloth rippling through the walks and lanes of this beautifully executed park. Included is a piece of the material used, but the documentation itself shows the growth and development of the project from previous conception to the scintillating color photographs. The text is straightforward and extremely readable done by Ellen Goheen, Curator at the Nelson-Atkins Museum. \$20.00 hardcover, \$12.50 paper.

The Mechanism of Meaning: Work in Progress (1963-1971, 1978) based on the method of Arakawa by Arakawa and Madeline H. Gins (\$20.00, \$12.50 paper) is the third in the series by Abrams, and by far the most complex. Words and images juxtaposed blend into a highly complex system of how things mean—an exploration of nomenclature, definition, purpose—not as dictionary meanings, which have been done by others in philosophy or science, but which extend beyond actual constructs to include the lacunae, holes in logic which imply that the reader must fill these in. In the introduction, Arakawa and Gins say that “Meaning might be thought of as the desire to think something—anything—through; the will to make sense out of the ever-present fog of not-quite-knowing; the recognition of non-sense.” The book is therefore a dense, uplifting, very beautiful definition of “meaning” which necessitates a two-way relationship between the viewer and the viewed. A very pithy, oftentimes humorous artist's book.



This publication is supported by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts in Washington, D.C., a Federal agency.

ELECTROWORKS TO PREMIER 9 NOVEMBER AT GEORGE EASTMAN HOUSE, ROCHESTER

A major exhibition featuring more than 250 pieces of art produced with the common office copying machine will premiere in Rochester 9 November at the International Museum of Photography at George Eastman House.

Entitled *Electroworks*, it is the first comprehensive exhibit to explore and examine the prints, limited edition books, and three-dimensional items produced by artists using office copying equipment developed in the past 25 years.

Electroworks is being underwritten by Xerox Corporation, which developed the xerographic process used in copying and marketed the first plain paper office copier.

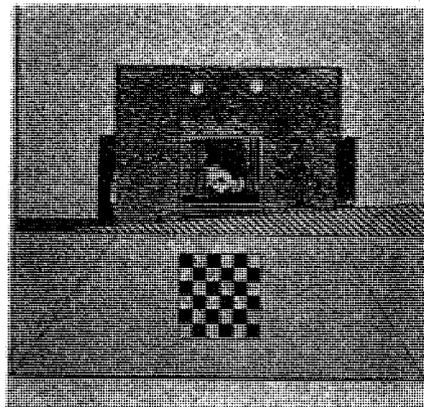
In March 1980, after the Eastman House showing, *Electroworks* will travel to a number of cities in the United States and Canada, including New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Houston and Toronto.

The works in the exhibit, many of them in color, have been chosen for their unique appearance and the way in which they depart from conventional photographic aesthetics. Art objects created on the early Haloid/Xerox copier and the more recent copying machines made by such companies as Xerox, 3M and IBM are featured in the exhibition. Many of these reflect development in the technology of office copying machines.

The pieces selected for *Electroworks*, curated by Marilyn McCray, illustrate the ingenuity of the artists and the capabilities of the copying systems. The choice of machine, process and subject matter are contributing factors to the artist's style. McCray says the exhibition expands the typical “art show” format by providing information about the

technical aspects of the imaging processes and the aesthetic concepts of this new photographic media...from exceedingly delicate prints and portraits to colorful quilts and other three-dimensional objects. Artists such as Sonia Sheridan, one of the best-known innovators in the field, and Bruno Munari, whose works are in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art and other major museums throughout the world, are represented in the exhibition.

A Symposium to address the many questions raised by this recently developed art form will take place 10 and 11 November at Eastman House. Among the participants will be Douglas Davis, critic/contributor to *Newsweek* and *Artforum*, and A.D. Coleman, critic/contributor to the *New York Times* and author of *Light Readings*. Registration is \$35.00 from Eastman House, 900 East Avenue, Rochester, NY 14607.



John Eric Broadus from *The Sorcerer*, 1978
Kodak Ektaprint Copier-Duplicator