

THE PUBLIC LIFE OF ARTISTS' BOOKS:  
QUESTIONS OF IDENTITY

Johanna Drucker

If panels are any indication, artists' books are starting to have a high public profile. Just this spring I was audience and/or participant in three such events in less than six months. The range of tones and venues indicates that there is as much of the same old same old as there is of new and interesting stuff. Each panel took place in a different kind of site — an artists' run gallery in Soho, an established book arts organization in the upper midwest, and MoMA in midtown Manhattan — which just goes to show how versatile the whole idea of the artist's book is just now. One of the most interesting aspects of all this activity was the way it reflects on the basic issue of the identity of the artist's book: Can it be Art? Should it be Literature? And in the course of being rescued from the Craft of the Book, will it become some Conceptual Art category void of content and all symbolic form? I, for one, would like to see artists' books continue to have some relation to their literary legacy — which isn't to say they all have to be works with words, but that they should be concerned with some of the things which *JAB* is trying to address: what are the characteristic features of a book and what kind of meta-critical discussion can develop around artists' books to engage theoretically with their specific qualities? My report on these panels, therefore, will be framed in terms of the working questions about the evolving identity of artists' books. It's clear that the form will engage with audiences and practitioners from three main fields — the book arts/crafts, the art world, and the literary sphere. As the locations shift so do the priorities and concerns, where these domains touch on each other, the conversation seems to get most interesting. As a consequence, for instance, the Minnesota Center for the Book Arts sponsored weekend was richer by far than either of the artworld panels, and not only because of its greater duration. But let me proceed to specifics.

The first panel took place (on a proverbial "dark and rainy night") at the Fulcrum Gallery in Soho, NYC, on December 10, 1993. Organized by an artist named Leon Golomb, it consisted of: Steve Clay (Granary Books, Director), Doug Beube (Book Artist), Clive Phillpot (MoMA Library Director), Max Schumann (Printed Matter Bookstore, Acting Director), Richard Minsky (Founder/Director of Center for Book Arts), and Louise Neaderland (Founder/Director of the

contd., page 2

## CALENDAR-ART

Scenes from the Life of Raja Ravi Varma  
M. Kasper

*The south Indian aristocrat Raja Varma (1848-1906) was a mythological painter, in both senses. That is, he painted oils illustrating puranic episodes and also his life was emblematic.*

*He was the most celebrated among a number of late nineteenth century artists whose particular adaptations of western techniques - using European perspective and figure-modeling, with the Hindu and nationalist imagery - evolved into India's ubiquitous, gaudy, glossy printed pictures of gods and goddesses, called "calendar-art".*

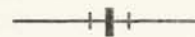
*They play a big part in ordinary life. TV footage from a recent Maharashtra earthquake, for instance, showed scraps of god-pictures sticking out of every rubble heap.*

*They've played this part for decades, as devotional objects (and agents in the amalgamation of variant Hinduisms), as advertising agents (mounted on calendars that businesses give away, hence their name), and as sex stereotypes.*

*For decades, dozens of ultra-modern litho presses have turned out lakhs of god-pictures worth crores of rupees. And all of it - hybrid art plus its mechanical reproduction - goes back to one person above all! Raja Ravi Varma.*



photomontage by change your consciousness



At home and at work, people hang calendar-pictures, and ring them with flowers, for they are murti - holy likeness - which gives darshan. Without form, how can the divine be worshipped? Without form,

contd., page 3



International Society of Copier Artists), with myself as moderator. (Let me note that being a moderator is a horrible, thankless job, not recommended to anyone who has anything at all to say or is at all invested in the topic under discussion. All the moderating jobs I have had in the last year were exercises in frustration of one variety or another — after all, what one wants to do is to TALK, not try and steer a line between politeness and policing of panelists, many with miniscule pea-brained ideas, monster egos, and motormouth tendencies.)

This Fulcrum panel represented the mainstream of established New York artists' books activity — Printed Matter Bookstore, Center for Book Arts, MoMA's library, and various artists and gallerists whose identity is exclusively defined in relation to artists' books. But the commonality of the group only extends that far — beyond that, there is much diversity among these panelists even with respect to how they would define the term artist's book. (I should add that the one area this panel excluded was the very upscale Books by Famous Artists category of work which is a kind of subsidiary artworld industry, one which produces work which often has little to do with books or artists' books in any legitimate conceptual sense and has, to my mind, mainly to do with making money by producing an "affordable line" of work by big name artists. The other missing element was any representative of the what little there is of academic/critical work being done in the field — though if I had been a panelist instead of a moderator, I would have been happy to point to the work in that area by people like Nancy Princenthal, Betty Bright, Buzz Spector, Renée Hubert, Susan Compton and others).

The Soho setting was crammed to the gills in a long room with folding chairs, a too small and highly inadequate set-up for slides and speakers which made viewing impossible beyond the third row, insufficient ventilation and so forth — in other words, there was a solid "margins of the art world" tone to the event. Everybody more or less knows each other or "who" each other is in this realm, but nobody is an artworld Star (even if some people would like to think/act like they are). The format was the usual deadly panel routine, each person doing their presentation with slides in the dark. The audience seemed to mix the initiated and the curious — those who have made or would like to make artists' books. Even more telling, however, is that there was a vocal segment of the audience concerned with how to distribute and/or market their books — I mean, LOTS is going on out there, though not a lot of it is being shown, written about, or sold. In fact, the economics of artist's book production turned out to be the thematic repressed which kept wanting to return in all of these panels.

Now, the issue which emerged as contentious in this setting was whether or not artists' books are or can be a democratic artform. This now familiar question is posed in many ways — from the symbolic to the economic, the ideological to the aesthetic. It is a topic of longstanding debate among members of the artists' books community, with much misunderstanding and obfuscation about the economics of production factoring in. The basic myth is that the multiple is a cheap form,

can be inexpensively produced, and therefore widely distributed. Anybody who makes books knows that there are all kinds of paradoxes involved: offset, the mode which makes the lowest per unit cost in a large run, is capital intensive (you need a bunch of upfront cash to print) while letterpress and xerox can require low capital investments, but with the irony that letterpress goes upscale quickly as a Fine Object and xerox will never never have that status in a million years. Also, distribution for any of these products is an iffy business at best. The participants in this panel ranged along a spectrum of positions on this issue. Beube, for instance, is simply, unequivocally, bidding for a place in the artworld; he makes sculptural works, often unique, which are more Art than Book (he poses his practice as a theoretical investigation of symbolic aspects of the Book). What this means, unfortunately, is that for the artworld, the book is reduced to a referent — it is the Idea of the Book rather than real book qualities which show up in these works. This is work which bids for a place in galleries and museums — NOT their bookstores or libraries and is anathema to the democratic-myth orientation of low-budget producers who feel they are more politically correct. Clive Phillpot, for instance, won't let limited, signed editions, or unique works into the MoMA Library no matter what they cost to produce or what their market value is. Phillpot's position is that artists' books should be affordable multiples, as per the above myth. But I cannot understand how he continues to ignore the paradoxes in this formula. [Ed. note: In conversation with CP he does acknowledge these paradoxes.]

To continue on the economic theme here for a minute, the rest of the panelists show up variously the curious relations (repressed and or unconscious) between money and the myth of the artist's book as the democratic multiple: Neaderland's organization exists largely to distribute work among its members or into the world at cost or below without expectation of profit — and don't worry, none is forthcoming. (And I hate to say it because I don't like to disparage any serious, committed artist, but I find that xerox stuff hopelessly dreary). Clay produces a contemporary form of *livre d'artiste* — limited, expensive, deluxe editions, but he isn't exactly living on Park Avenue or in the Hamptons. Schumann works for Printed Matter and knows all too well how many volumes sit around unsold, unsellable, and what the impossibilities of the economics are — what sells are books by artists with name recognition (and Printed Matter itself is struggling to keep afloat). And Minsky (whom everybody likes to trash but who was the clearest and most politically insightful speaker of the evening) took the discussion into a critique of the book itself as a cultural form — pointing out that books have to be seen as signs of privilege, if not elitism and hegemony, and that artists' books are by their general inaccessibility, their artworld located sphere of activity, and self-conscious concern with formal, conceptual or personal issues necessarily elitist. To pretend that by making them cheap they lose that identity was, he insisted, simply untrue. Minsky also pointed out some of the other evident paradoxes — that a unique book he produced maxed out on exposure by being prominently



## THIS IS NOT

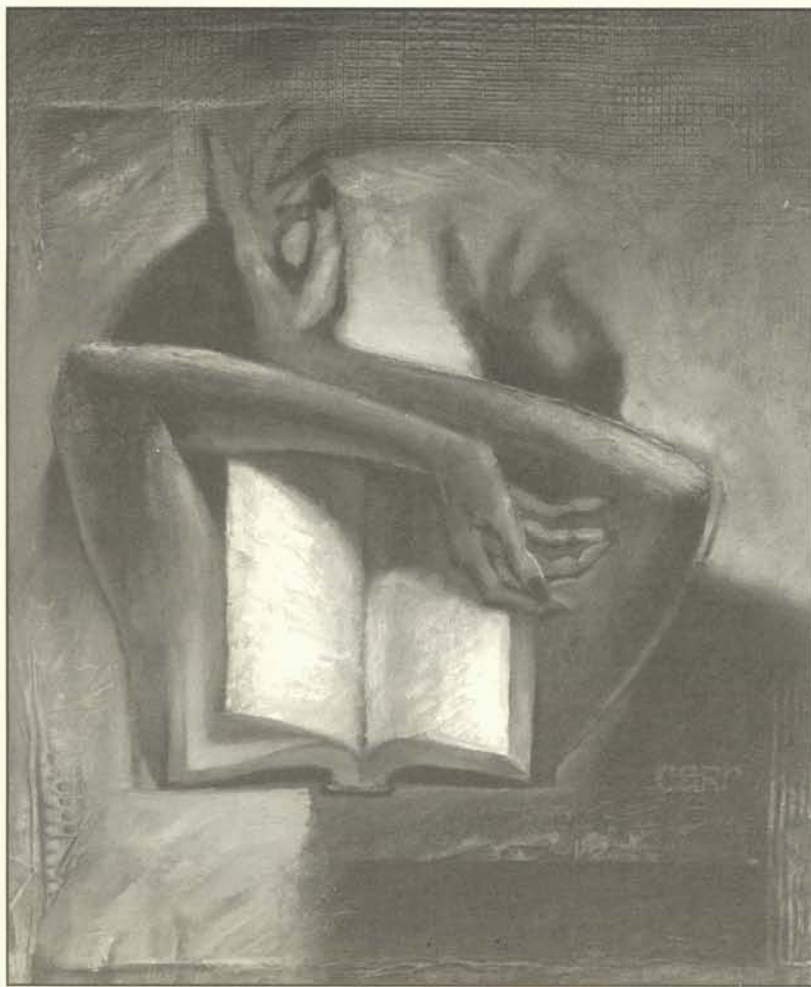
This *JAB*

*ADDENDUM* is necessary because I messed up some of the prepress and some of the printing (some fault could be placed on too tight scheduling, not having my darkroom set up yet and thus having to rely on "PhotoRush", and maybe the service bureau, but...ultimately...). My apologies go to Michael Kasper for the really bad color on pages 8 & 9; to Keith, Scott and Alan for the really bad printing of their stuff. Maybe it's better in this addendum...

Also, the text on pages 14 & 15 (HAITI PHILATELY) was unreadable. It is repeated here with some additions since now there's more room.

### PRODUCTION NOTES, ETC.

As this is the second issue of *JAB* it's appropriate to briefly examine how the first was distributed and received, with some discussion of production costs and future plans. There were about 400 copies in the first issue - of these about 200 were mailed out free to people and institutions on the Interplanetary Productions mail list or circumstantially given away to people who might be interested. About 70 were given to the participants and audience of the



Alan Carr

MCBA conference mentioned in Drucker's article, 20 each were given to Janet Zweig, Tony Zwicker, and Steve Clay, 5 were given to Printed Matter

Bookstore, and about 60 were offered and taken within 4 days at a **FREE - TAKE ONE**

# PAGE

box at the counter of Soho Service, Greene St., NYC. All that, plus imagesetting the film, paper, and mailing cost about \$700. *JAB* staff did all production work without monetary compensation and Soho Services generously provided the press and collating machine.

*The results* - approximately 30 subscriptions for future issues were paid for based on seeing the first issue or responding to ads in *Umbrella* and *The Book Arts Quarterly (Page Two)*. (approximately 8% response) Some subscriptions were by individuals, some by institutions. *CLIO ART* bibliographies and the San Francisco Art Institute Library were the only to respond to an offer of a free copy from the review in *Umbrella*.

There was some positive verbal and written response, like; *it's time we got something like this; good job, etc.* All very gratifying. Thanks.

*Then there was the wag from Philadelphia* who sent a postcard saying that receiving the free *JAB* along with the subscription offer was like getting a flower from a Hare Krishna in an airport who then hits you up for money. At that time the offer for the next issue of *JAB* was \$2.00 plus \$.75 shipping - probably less than it costs to park at the airport. The same person went on to say that it was a good thing that book-like objects were being written about because he was thinking about making book-like objects. *Will the world be a better place if that remains the extent of his book making labors?*





## THIS

Anyone in attendance (or not) at the panels mentioned in Drucker's article who might have a different perception, clarification or furtherance of those events is invited to offer a submission for publication.

*We want to create a dialogue.*

• **For submissions** • please send the following to the address below: hard copy plus Mac disk, Microsoft Word, and/or b&w images (up to 8.5" x 11") with SASE.

Utmost care will be taken with all materials but we are not responsible for loss or damage.

BRAD FREEMAN - JAB

324 YALE AVE.

NEW HAVEN, CT 06515

Michael Kasper, the author of *Calendar Art, Ravi Varma* is a book artist who has written for *Art Papers*.

Johanna Drucker, editorial board member of JAB, has two new books out: *The Visible Word: Experimental Typography and Modern Art 1909-1923* (University of Chicago Press) and *Theorizing Modernism: Visual Art and the Critical Tradition* (Columbia University Press). The first especially is recommended to JAB readers as it deals with issues of typography and theory.

This issue of JAB was printed at Nexus Press in Atlanta, Aug., '94 by Chad Latz & myself. Thanks to Jo Anne Paschall for her generous use of the Heidelberg and facilities. The paper is from various kinds of Mohawk Superfine I've had lying around and it seemed like an economical way of getting rid of it.

The addendum was printed at Center for Editions, SUNY Purchase, Sept., '94 by Phil Zimmermann & myself.

-BF

sprinkling of the marginally insane participating: our reporter read in horror of rare editions treated to "cleansing" (purging? purifying?) by use of such techniques as physical abrasives (try that in the Internet), Fantastik, dipping in wax or bleach, and other spells and incantations. All this stuff that's been going on clandestinely for generations now has a place to speak up and be heard (about). Chills down all our spines.....

Tanya Peixoto, an English artist/scholar/critic of book arts is planning a publication with co-editors Stefan Szczelkun, John Bently, and Stephanie Brown: *Artist's Book Yearbook* to be published in Spring 1995. Interested? Magpie Press, 1 Hermitage Cottage, Clamp Hill, Stanmore, Middx HA7 3JW, England. Price is about \$10 pre-publication and more later, and there is an option for a deluxe version with bound-in artist's pages. The book will focus on work done in Britain, but not exclusively. Those of us lucky enough to be acquainted with Tanya's earlier, unpublished writing in this area, look forward with special anticipation to the book (really).

Books received: A strong favorite this year: Tom Trusky's catalogue of the ZINE exhibition he put together. I never have seen all those zines and had no idea how diverse — graphically, visually, and of course idiolectically — the field was. Inquiries should go to: Tom Trusky, Hemingway Western Studies Center, Boise State University, 1910 University Drive, Boise, ID 83725

Visitors received: Soho Services employees, Anne Noonan and Joe Elliot, were the first to JAB's new Connecticut facility. Many thanks for bringing the paper this is printed on!

Send us your books, we will review them/note them/ignore them — even return them if you include SASE — or else put them into the JAB archive.

Send us your reviews, notes, news, gossip and etc. :

**Write for JAB and JAB will write back!**

-JD

## NEWS & NOTES

*Rumors • Overheard Bits & Pieces • Self-Promotions*

A report from the Internet, not witnessed first hand, came from one of our favorite younger scholars of Bibliographology, Marisa Januzzi. Apparently a heated discussion of the Book is being bantered about on at least one electronic BB as if to reassure the screen addicted mavens that they can ground their banal communications in some legacy of Literacy and its ancient Forms. Oh, but the details escape memory. No save function performed. (One third of the editorial board thinks this item is too vague to print.)

Another item from the electronic world was a report (by the same brave voyager into the boundless space) of an exchange between conservationists of various persuasions (including Terry Bellanger, who was trying to normalize the wackos). Sounded like a cross between talk radio and a cooking show, with a fair

page

# 3





where will the mind take hold? With nothing to attach to, the mind glides out of meditation, or into slumber.

clever ploy.

It used to be as common for a buyer to seek a seller as it was for a seller to seek a buyer. Then came the Industrial Revolution whereby goods could be manufactured on a grand scale, which brought in its wake new problems: it became imperative for producers to persuade the public to make purchases.

In India, advertising rose up late in the nineteenth century. It's a fact that, while advertising gained currency, the reputation of practitioners was sullied by the fact (another fact!) that large numbers were masquerading as publicists who were really nothing better than fixers and lobbyists, operating with the most dubious of methods. But that's another story.

As for calendar-art, it was legit and innovative in helping products pick up sacramental value, which was and remains one

From about 1905 to 1910, for photo-litho

transfers, The Ravi Varma Picture Depot relied on Phalke's Engraving & Printing (later Laxmi Art Printing), whose proprietor, Dhendiraj Govind Phalke, was after a few years to become dadasaheb of Indian cinema, Chitrapat Maharishi.

One of his pioneering epic films was *Kaliya Mardan* (young Krishna breaks free from coils of weakness and subdues the demon-snake), with its daring opening sequence in which the lead performer, played by Phalke's daughter, applies her

make-up on camera. It's an intriguing twist on the gender ambiguity already

familiar to Phalke from the Ravi Varma icons he'd worked on.



Reproduced from the monochromatic reproduction in K.P. Padmanbhan Tampy's 1934 monograph on Ravi Varma.

Ravi Varma died of diabetes, at Kilimanoor,



reproduced in a venue (sorry, I forget the details but it was something like the USIA journal) where it was seen by tons of people while the inexpensive versions of other works he had done went languishing in obscurity. This prompted Douglas Beube to remind us all (modestly) (again) that he had had his work featured in a *US Air Magazine* article (where it got so much exposure even the microbes in the air system went literate in self-defense while those inspired to place orders for the works were no doubt disappointed to find there were no lines for them on the preprinted forms of the Air Boutique portion of the publication), a demonstration of his commitment to democratizing the activity of artists' books.

Anxieties about the identity of artists' books in this setting are bound to questions of its economic viability — though people often pose this issue in the guise of aesthetic concerns because for some reason artists still don't like to talk publicly about their existence as economic beings — this in spite of wanting to act like they are politically aware, sophisticated, etc. So when are we going to cut the crap here? How can you even begin to talk about politics without acknowledging the economic factors, hierarchies, class issues, commodity status of what we make and sell and so forth? The democratic multiple myth seems largely to condemn artists' books to competition with trade books produced by publishers for whom there is the possibility of profit owing to the really large run, and to keep alive the idea that artists' books are about communication rather than commodification. It's certainly a nice myth, and not completely untrue (after all, most of us who make artists' books would and do do it whether or not there is much money in it). But, as Laurence Weiner pointed out in one of his more cogent remarks in Panel #3 (to be discussed below), artists have to buy the time to produce art by doing work which pays for them to live and if a work can produce that income so that another work can be produced from it, so much the better. I have to agree, and anyone starting out to make artists' books in order to make money should just buy lottery tickets, it's a better bet.

Artists' books are marginal in the Soho scene — but established — I mean, they have a guaranteed and well-recognized place on the margins, if that isn't a contradiction, and the term comfortably stretches in that locale to include the deluxe edition, the low-end multiple, and the unique object. In Book Arts organizations, on the other hand, the definition of the artist's book still struggles to come out from under the weight of craft concerns. I attribute this in part to the fact that the classes offered in these places are organized around the techniques of production — paper making, binding, sometimes letterpress printing — which tends to foreground these activities independent of their relation to book content or concept. I'm not trying to bash the value of craft or production skills here, but there is a clear need to recognize that craft alone is not terribly interesting. I know it's blasphemy in some circles, but I could care less about fine bindings especially of bad or vapid books — and it sometimes seems there's an inverse proportional ratio between production value and content value (big pages + wide margins + heavy

paper = safe, dull text). [Ed. note: or well known classics with guaranteed sales to less adventurous bibliophiles.]

Charles Alexander, the new director of the Minnesota Center for the Book Arts, is particularly tuned in to the problem of shifting the focus of this major facility away from its earlier craft-of-the-book orientation and towards a more synthetic concept of the artist's book. Alexander has the right background for this since he came to books through a combination of poetry and printing, with Walter Hamady training combined with a more adventurous material imagination than one usually finds in either the Fine Print or Small Press world, and a more literary (and literate) idea of the Book than one finds in the Book Arts world. Alexander ran his own press, Chax Press, in Tucson, Arizona for years (where he was both publisher and printer of an ambitious list of works from the local and national communities of contemporary writers) before moving into the MCBA post in Spring '93. A writer himself (*Hopeful Buildings* is his most recent title, I think), Alexander is actively committed to bringing the literary and book arts worlds together. I should add that Cynthia Miller, his wife, is a painter and visual artist whose contributions to Chax Press publications has often added a striking graphic component, thus filling out the visual potential of the books.

The conference organized at MCBA on the weekend of April 9-11, by Alexander was an effort to bring together a broad cross-section of activity in the world of books (not just artists' books). By inviting poets as well as established book artists, book arts administrators, and educator/critics, Alexander made the daring move of breaking through the provincial boundaries of the book arts as craft in order to pull in people interested in content and in the book as a literary and ideological form. The original conception for the conference, (initiated a couple years ago by then Acting Director of MCBA, Betty Bright) was to try to generate new approaches to criticism for this emerging art-form. Though some of that did get done in the MCBA conference, there was a lot more show and tell than there was think-tank theorizing. (Next time, maybe? I want to spend a whole session talking about margins, one about openings, one about sequence, etc. Is this crazy?) In this context, books are our business, our main concern, and everybody knows what they are and how they are produced as well as all the frustrations involved in trying to make them function in the world. Nobody in the Book Arts world is getting rich off of books, nobody expects to, and generally the sense of community is strong enough to transcend careerism or competitive grandstanding. Sure, there are egos around, but there's enough mitigating influences and camaraderie that the main message that there really aren't any stakes here gets through even to those who would like to pose as stars.

The MCBA symposium, titled *Art and Language: Re-Reading the Boundless Book*, included an opening night talk by Dick Higgins on the rise, history, philosophy and demise of Something Else Press and a performance of a book work as human object by Fluxus artist Alison Knowles (with the assistance of Inge Bruggeman). The next day there were four panels, two



the family fief in Travancore, in October 1906, during the *dasa* of the planet owning the *navamsa* occupied by the lord of the fourth house of the *lagna*.

Kerala Varma, his elder son, who'd belied early promise and turned profligate, was absent. So the obsequies were overseen by Rama, the good but younger son, which of course occasioned a longer period of impurity.

At the end of the period, Rama became pure by touching, first, the forelock of a horse, which was *vahanam* of Shasta, the ancestral deity, then the trunk of the elephant given to his father in 1885 by the Maharaja of Mysore, then a wheel of the Daimler that the Prince of Wales had presented the previous October.

Later on Rama had often to defend his father's reputation against critics - nationalists as well as traditionalists - who called him unimaginative and un-Indian. Rama Varma lived until 1967 (The Grand Old Man of Kerala's Art) through years of ethnic and religious violence. He knew well how murderousness lurks in pretensions to purity.

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By 1901 there was fame aplenty but not much fortune for Ravi Varma.

Those were tough times all throughout Maharashtra. That was when Lokamanya Tilak himself turned radical. "For years," he wrote, "we have been shouting hoarse, desiring that the Government should hear us. But our shouting has no more affected Government than the sound of a gnat." From London the *Daily Mail* retorted, "By their newspapers, by their secret messengers and signs, Tilak and his Brahmins are endeavouring to stir up revolt against the British power!"

Ravi Varma's oleograph portrait of Tilak was a best seller, though for the most part plague and hunger-driven plagiarism ate away profits at his Picture Depot in Malavli. So he sold the business along with rights to 89 images to one of his German technicians for Rs. 25,000. That was 8,000 less than he'd borrowed three years before when buying out a bothersome partner and moving from Bombay where overhead was high.

He'd tried to make a go, devoting long hours, hardly traveling home to Travancore,

except for a few months for ayurvedic treatments for rejuvenation. Nothing worked.

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In the sumptuous studio paid for by the Maharaja of Travancore they say Ravi Varma kept a life like fine wood statue of a full-bodied woman which could be adjusted into as many different poses as the artist pleased.

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Thisaway and that they went, Ravi Varma and his younger brother C. Raja Raja Varma (who painted a lot of the backgrounds), in 1888 and again in 1894, on a tour around Bharat in search of landscapes and figures with which and with whom to signify All-India.

On their return from the second tour Ravi Varma painted a batch of pictures especially for reproduction at his new press the Picture Depot. He simplified his busy patrician orientalism, made it a little more folkish or at least more bourgeois, more iconic, and more marketable as in his image of *Kaliya-Mardanam*, with its upscale Continental confection of a cherub who is even transported across cultures some of the crises of sex and sexual identity often seen in European nudes back then.

After the earlier tours, according to one of his biographers E.M.J. Venniyoor, "Ravi Varma wondered for a long time as to what the best dress would be to drape his heroines in, and finally he fixed upon the sari. It is a tribute to his aesthetic sense that it was the charm of his heroines draped in sari that persuaded, to a great extent, the young womanhood of India to take to this costume as their national dress."

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It happened the Ravi Varma attended a session of the Bombay High Court presided over by the Honorable Mr. Justices Jardine and Ranade. Just then there was a case of an interesting nature. A distributor of obscene German oleographs of nude women was appealing his conviction by the City Magistrate of Poona. The judges ruled that to be legally acceptable pictures of nudes must depict classical subjects, such subjects having ideals, but the pictures in question, by including modern silk umbrellas, had divested themselves



in the morning, two in the afternoon, followed by a poetry reading. Charles Bernstein (one of the foremost Language poets, scholar and critic, and Grey Professor of Poetics at SUNY Buffalo, author of several dozen books of poetry and two books of critical writing, *Content's Dream* and *A Poetics*) and Susan Bee (a painter, editor and founder of *M/E/A/N/I/N/G*, a feminist art journal based in New York City) talked about their collaborative works, including the exquisitely funny *Nude Formalism*, a book full of visual and verbal plays on book and literary conventions. Amos Paul Kennedy (an African-American printer living in Chicago) spoke passionately about the political possibilities for book arts, especially his ongoing project dedicated to promoting public awareness of violence against children. Kennedy quoted striking statistics about death by violent means. Kennedy's call to conscience and conscientious activity is important for its advocacy of direct, rather than oblique, intervention — a point he made again in discussing a program he is involved with to teach book arts in the schools. Katherine Kuehn did a performance-like piece (though she might not describe it that way) based on her response to an early 20th century encyclopedia, it was funny and clever and a demonstration of the recycling of old material for its quaint clichés and prejudices. This worked great as a live piece, and fortunately, wasn't a book. I have to say I am sick of so-called artist's books that just appropriate some found material and think that that makes a statement of some kind — you all know what I mean, it's a map with a few old photos and a couple quotes, it's sixteen pages, has a pretentious title, and says on the promo blurb that it's "about power, sexuality, violence and the totalizing coercive force of linguistic hegemony in the formation of individual identity." But in fact, these books are just a few recycled pages...

Jo Anne Paschall described the publishing activities of Nexus Press in Atlanta, a major book arts organization with an ambitious publishing agenda. She is currently the director, and starting work on an upcoming project with the Olympic Committee which will involve publishing a book with an artist from every continent in the 1996 Games. Karen Wirth (a Minneapolis based book artist and teacher) talked about critical issues and pedagogy, making a dramatic contrast between the trade and limited edition versions of *Aunt Sallie's Lament*. This was a graphic demonstration of the impact of specific material choices on the effect of a book — showing the extent to which form is content, though I have never thought the content value of ASL was terribly high. Linda Reinfeld and Toshiko Ishihara (both established poets and scholars of poetics) discussed a form of traditional Japanese book which consists of a set of cards. For generations these have been used in teaching, and when laid out in a grid, they form a complex visual and conceptual whole. The rhymes, poems, texts on these cards were apparently so well known from their extensive (almost universal) use as a teaching tool that they have been the Mother Goose or Sesame Street of Japan for hundreds of years. In the course of their work together translating these poems, however, Reinfeld and Ishihara found that the book is falling out of favor — younger Japanese students were not always familiar with the poems — or with the moral tales and precepts they contained. Steve

Clay described Granary's recent publications and projects in much the same manner as in his presentation at Fulcrum Gallery in Soho — and had he been able to see into the future he could have described the forthcoming publication of a book by Susan Bee, a peculiar postmodern mystery full of sexual tension, knowing children, and psychic conflicts. Byron Clercx (an artist who makes book-like objects) described his ground-paper and glued together books many of which are only available to the reader through perforations. For some reason he has gotten it into his head that putting nails through a copy of Janson's *The History of Art* is an act of theoretical complexity. I don't get it, but his Freud baseball bat piece is quite a stunner. It remains to be seen how far he can go with this paper mache stuff before it becomes a total one-liner. But as the "book sculptors" have made clear, one-liners are the way to go for success in the Artworld. Anything else is just too complex, one of the reasons artists' books can't make it as Art — they have too much in them. I mean, really, try comparing a Telfer Stokes/Helen Douglas book to an Anthony Caro sculpture..... Colette Gaiter (a computer artist who teaches in Minneapolis) did a very cameo appearance to discuss her computer work in hypertext, including *The Two Willies*, but she seemed to think she was doing everybody a huge favor to show up for twenty minutes and talk. As a way to bring computer stuff into the book arts world, this was not convincing. At the end of the day Charles Bernstein came back and discussed the economics of small press publishing with a highly graphic and mathematically correct example, tracing the costs of a book from beginning to end through every phase of production from xeroxing the manuscript to typesetting, paste-up, printing, publicity, and distribution. Big surprise — it turns out you can't make money publishing poetry! [Ed. note: Brad Freeman introduced *JAB* to the world, reading from his article on Janet Zweig's *Computer Driven Kinetic Sculptures*, while his beautiful assistant passed out 70 free copies to the audience.]

Nothing got contentious — I think the good manners of the upper midwest kept some of us from acting out as much as we would have liked to at certain moments — but the subtext of the conference was that the literary world and the book arts world have been far apart indeed. But judging from the audience for the conference, that will probably continue for awhile — it appeared that little of the usual MCBA classes or program attendees showed up for this event — and the attempt to reach that broader community with an injection of critical or conceptual information probably failed. It's possible that the publication coming out of the event will have more long-term impact in this regard. By staging the first night's events at the Walker Art Center (Higgins/Knowles), Alexander was clearly making an attempt to pull an audience into orbit of all three spheres — the art/books/literary worlds — and see them as related. But there again it was clear that the audience was the same as the one for the next day's events and that the Walker venue didn't bring the art minded into the book realm. In some ways these worlds are almost hostile to each other. Think of it this way — literature has no cultural capital. It can't be sold, not



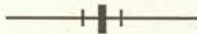
of idealism, and therefore seemed indeed designed merely to excite the sexual appetites of spectators.

When next Ravi Varma painted a sexy picture he titled it *Santanu and Ganga*, from the Mahabharata. It still hangs in Baroda. King Santanu, the seducer, has a suave Rajput look; Ganga, the bare-breasted river maiden, peeps out at us, large-eyed and coyly, or pleading.



Ravi Varma tended to be rather patronizing. He seems to have convinced himself that reproductions of his paintings could introduce millions of ignorant people to High Art, to their benefit. He always thought he knew best.

One time he and his brother were attending a Kathakali show (they were lifelong enthusiasts). It was Potuval's version of *Kaliyamardanam*. During the purappad, Ravi Varma noticed that the dancer missed a beat. No one else noticed, but Ravi Varma called a halt, exclaiming, "Hold it! He made a mistake right here!" The dancer said, "You're right, Lord, I did make a mistake. Usually my audience is less discriminating. How fortunate I am to receive your art criticism!" Then he left.



When the pictures of Ravi Varma first became available in reproduction many in the new middle class clamored for copies because they carried such an aura of upper class luxury. Among those who had commissioned oil paintings were trend setting colonial administrators including Lord Curzon, the Viceroy, the Duke of Buckingham, Governor of Madras, and his successor, Lord Ampthill, Sir James Fergusson, Governor of Bombay, and the Portuguese Governor of Goa, as well as Indian princes like the Gaekwad of Baroda, the Bala Saheb of Aundh, the Nizam of Hyderabad, and the Maharaja of Mysore. And of course the Royal House of Travancore, Ravi Varma's home country, an erstwhile "native" state, in the southern-most corner of the subcontinent.

Relations between the painter and his Travancore patrons, however, were not always smooth. Ayialyam Tirunaal, Maharaja until 1880, was genuinely supportive, but his brother and successor Visakam was not. He thought

Ravi Varma too big for his britches. He was especially miffed once when Ravi Varma happened to get an Imperial citation made out to *Raja* Ravi Varma, an honorific which the Maharaja felt the artist wasn't entitled to. Ravi Varma was bothered in turn, and thereafter he took to using the title openly, just to get the old ruler's goat. It might be noted that the only gift for which Visakam is thanked today is introducing tapioca to Kerala.



In 1893 Swami Vivekananda brought his guru Ramakrishna's Parable of the Chameleon, with its great lesson on how the same God reveals itself to different peoples in different ways, to the World Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Within India the lesson had been intended to dissolve local cults into new, nationwide alliances of supernaturals; on the international stage it was an early, significant (and typically vexed) gesture of modern cross-culturalism.

To that same World Columbian Exposition Ravi Varma sent his series of paintings of Indian women, and was awarded two medals.

He and Vivekananda were only slightly friendly to one another though a student of Ravi Varma, Aswati Tiruunal, took one of the earliest known photos of the Swami.



Legend has it that once when Ravi Varma was in Bombay a European lady invited him over for dinner. He, who was always curious and never minded forbidden food, accepted. At evening's end the lady suggested he borrow an umbrella since it was raining and pointed to one leaning against the anteroom wall. He reached for it only to find it was a photograph of an umbrella.

Subsequently, Ravi Varma had the lady to lunch at his place. After chit-chat he graciously gestured toward the dining room door, which she proceeded to crash into, as it wasn't a doorway at all, rather a trompe l'oeil mural he had painted.

Ravi Varma had begun using photographs to paint from. But this was really just carrying bamboo to Bareilly, for his mind was already a fine camera fitted with a powerful lens, loaded



with first-rate speed-plates, and operated by a master illusionist.

According to Svetasvetara Upanishad, it's a Master Illusionist who traps what we call the Soul - this Atman, this Other - within a world He forms from This-ness. All Nature is Illusion, it says.

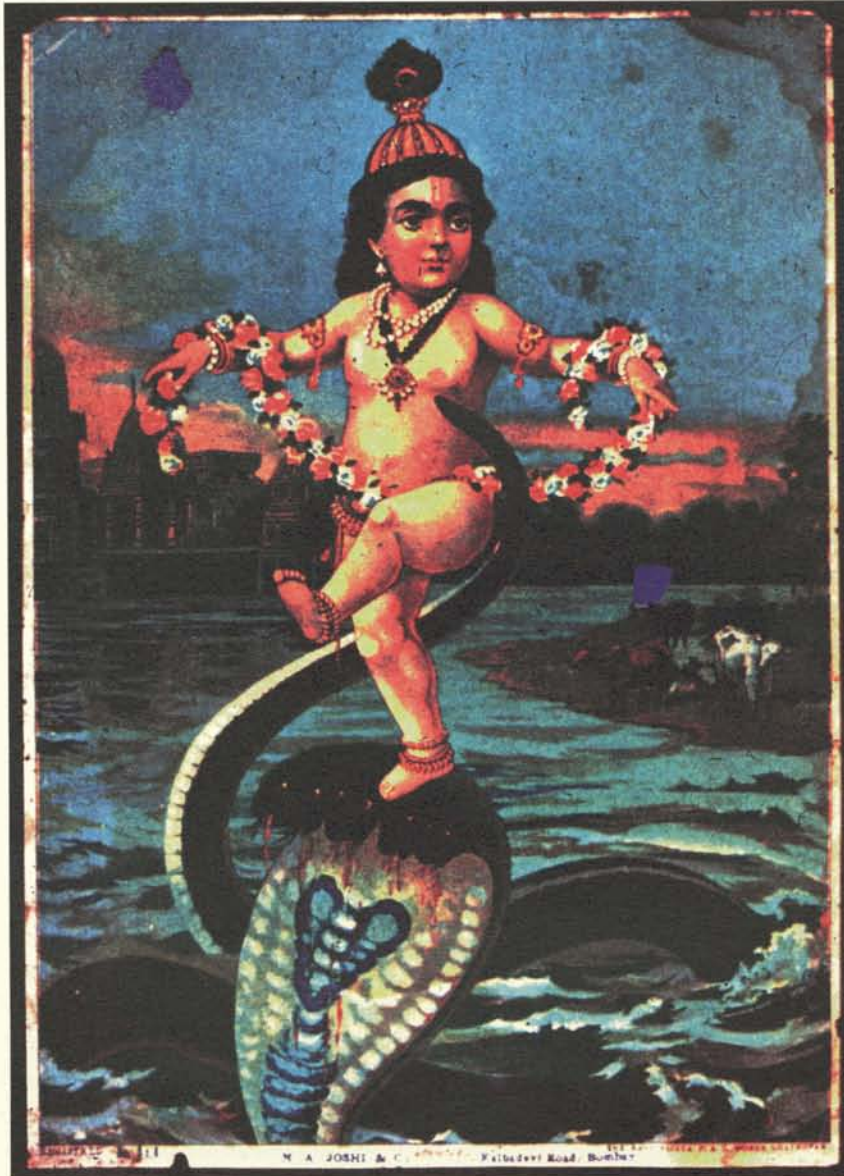
The big middle-period paintings are path-breaking mythologicals which "indigenize" western academic allegorical art. However, even as Ravi Varma's soul fills out with Victorian bombast and bathos, his line is only sometimes subtle. It is subtle, certainly, in the pseudo-medieval crown and well modeled pose that Rama assumes in *Sita Bhoopravesam* (1880). Rama is shown begging his wife to reconsider her decision to return to her mother's bosom.

In the portraits which were the stuff of Ravi Varma's early career the oils and imported representational conventions are applied skillfully, but the drafting is frequently clumsy. *The Kizhakke Palat Krishna Menon Family* (1870), for example, shows two parents, frontal, prosperous, and rigid, flanking their three young children; ten eyes gaze out from the picture, each in a slightly different direction.

And look at that little boy's thigh! How badly drawn!

Such "imperfections", though, aren't surprising, not in exploratory work like this.

Ravi Varma finally develops a welcome looseness and fluidity in his rendering only in the later images, the ones for mass distribution, where everything is reduced in scale and elaborate narrative compositions are abandoned.



An image from one of Ravi Varma's star pupils, M.A. Joshi (circa 1910 ?), published by Ravi Vijaya Print Works of Bombay, reproduced from the slide set compiled by Robert Del Bonta for the American Committee for South Asian Art.

Ravi Varma stood at his easel, ready to start. A lizard paused on the window sill mildew. Outside, giant palm fronds flapped in the monsoon. His mind roamed through the jungle to the sea. Later, when the downpour stopped, hornbills squawked in the distance, and a lion-tailed macaque swung across the courtyard. He painted the eyes first. When we see, we see All, and we obtain All.

Kerala was a prosperous land, long acquainted with small-scale agriculture and craft manufactures, plus overseas trade. As was traditional in the Kshatriya society Ravi Varma was born into, his father, a Nambudiri Brahman named Ezhumavil Neelakantan Bhatta Tiripad, wasn't often present during his growing up. It



was at the pleasure of Ravi Varma's mother, Uma Amba Bai Tampuratty, a noted poet and choreographer to allow the father time with the child. Additionally, things being matrilineal, Ravi Varma was destined not to inherit his father's property, so he naturally tried to avail himself of the opportunities afforded by British rule to go out and make both the ends meet.



One tale relates how, as a child, Ravi Varma was wont to draw on walls and floors with chalk, which endeared him not to the servants. But his mother's brother, Raja Raja Varma took notice, and became his first teacher. Raja Raja Varma's teacher had been Alagiri Naidu, a Tanjore Company-Painter.

The uncle taught the nephew the six limbs of painting: the differentiation of forms, proportion, tone, the synthesis of beauty, likeness, and color harmony. He also taught him how to do background clouds in water color, which British rulers had foisted on local Moochy painters and migrant Golconda miniaturists in Tanjore.

In private, Ravi Varma pored through European albums, studying Guido's puttis and Bouguereau's story-telling.

A jealous rival denied him knowledge of oil-painting techniques, so he watched closely while Jensen, an itinerant Dutchman, did portraits on

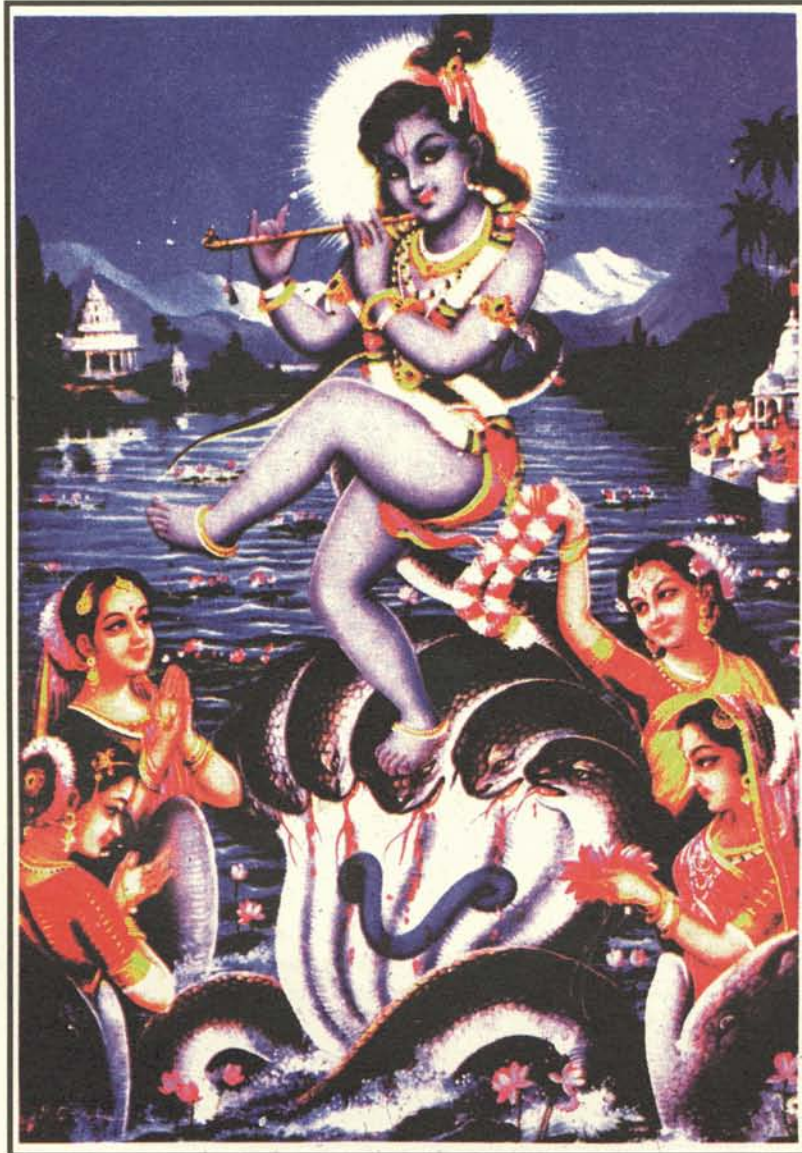
canvas during a stay in Travancore. And then at last he got his own paintbox sent from Madras.

It was apparent to all that Ravi Varma had extraordinary talents. What he learned in a day, no one else could learn in a month. What he learned in a month, no one else could learn in a year. The other young court painters were aston-

ished. "We don't see him sketching," they said. "We don't see him mixing colors. We only see finished paintings. He must be an avatar!"



*Nowadays in India, calendar-art often pops up in the visuals surrounding the new purity-wallahs, the intolerant Hindutva thugs. How ironic! For Ravi Varma, calendar-art's progenitor, was a remarkable incarnation of the impure nature of colonial India, personally situated at so many of its unsettled and unsettling intersections of "east" and "west". Creative acts at such sites can communicate a lot, among other things about the value of bearing in mind the ironies.*



*Krishna and the Serpent, image produced by Sharma Picture Publications, Bombay, after a painting (circa 1950 ?) by B.G. Sharma.*

Thanks to Alan Babb, Paula Bacchetta, Georgana Foster, Don Milliken, Andy Parker, and Kannall Jagannathan for advice and encouragement.



really, not poetry. But Art is definitely a high ticket commodity. It's actually possible that Poetry will lower the value of an Art object. And a Book's value relies upon its craft terms, at least in its initial appearance as a for sale item (as far as the tradition goes). So the idea of pulling all of these things together is actually radical.

Finally, there was the MoMA panel. Ostensibly organized around the event of MoMA's acquisition of the Franklin Furnace Archive, the panel included Clive Phillpot (this was his swansong, his resignation accepted and departure imminent), Martha Wilson (FF's director of some twenty (?) years), Lawrence Weiner (conceptual artist), Adrian Piper (artist, academic), and, eventually, Bob Stein (late-as-usual director of Voyager Press, a CDROM electronic publishing company), and was moderated by the eminently civil and articulate Nancy Princenthal (a freelance critic who has written steadily and insightfully about artist's books). This was a major Event, especially for the world of artists' books — I mean, it is MoMA, after all, and no matter what we think about that hidebound institution, its nod to the existence of books as art is significant. (Ed. note; we can thank Phillpot's enthusiastic efforts for this) (We are still waiting, remember, for some museum to do a real show on the history of this quintessentially late 20th century artform — not some tiny showcase filler in an administrative hallway or library entry.) [Ed. note: That's the problem — books aren't really meant to be viewed in Artworld museums, displayed, unless as book-like objects or overproduced craft objects, in which case they work well because they don't have to be read or looked-through.]

The cafeteria at MoMA was jammed with everybody you can think of from the NY area who is even remotely connected to artists' books — from the SUNY Purchase crew (Phil Zimmerman, Margot Lovejoy, Clifton Meador, Warren Lehrer) to the Printed Matter set (David Dean, Anne Kugler) to the artists represented by Granary (Tennessee Rice Dixon, myself) and Tony Zwicker and MJS Graphics and most of the *JAB* editorial board and so on. Given the focus of the evening, it made sense that Martha Wilson opened, giving an overview of activities at Franklin Furnace, emphasizing its role in providing a base from which many artists launched into the mainstream. This was brief and cursory and it would have been entertaining and informative to hear more. But what was clear was that for Wilson books are an accessory/adjunct of an alternative scene — not so much significant in their own right but as an aspect of a larger innovative field of activity (they also happen, not incidentally, to be its most commodifiable by-product). This attitude, unfortunately, also disposes Wilson to ignore the work of those artists who remained with the book as their form and were not "big name" people later on whom she could claim to have sponsored early in their careers. This oversight was pointed out to me by Paul Zelevansky, who had been involved with the Furnace and its activities as participant. His response to her presentation was to indicate (privately) all the things in the slides which she didn't mention (such as Zelevansky himself) because they were the things which had not got the star aura around them. Of course the irony of this is that if

artists' books had the recognition and historical perspective they deserve, then these people would be stars as well. In all fairness to Wilson, however, she has made the Furnace one of the few institutional sites with a longstanding commitment to artists' books.

Clive Phillpot described his activities in the library and the place he had made there for artists' books over the years of his tenure, restating his own position in terms of his institutional role. The rationale for collecting the inexpensive multiples had a clearly strategic sense here since it meant he was not competing (or appearing to compete) with those curatorial departments which collect such objects as *livres d'artistes*, etc. (Which collection, by the way, will be the subject of a major exhibition as the parting shot from retiring curator Riva Castleman, never a partisan of the experimental, innovative, or obscure, as far as we can tell.) Phillpot's departure from the MoMA Library could mean the end of support in that quarter for the work which he has so conscientiously and articulately championed, since it has never been an official aspect of MoMA's agenda.

Lawrence Weiner and Adrian Piper both indulged in being Art Stars — Weiner's presentation wandered around incoherently, with occasional statements of remarkable clarity and insight and an equal amount of bungle-brained confused talk. The positive points he made (the negs were too murky to stick in my head) were that all this discussion about what constitutes an artist's book is bunk: if an artist makes it and it's a book it's an artist's book. The second point which I very much appreciated was that he was the only one willing to talk straight about money; artists have to live in order to make work, they have a right to live off their work (even if it rarely happens) and to make money from it. This kind of bubble popping commonsense was unfortunately not much in evidence in the rest of the panel — for some reason, again, people on public panels about art seem to think that mentioning money is crude or gauche, as if we're all supposed to be above such paltry considerations since after all making art is such a pleasure in itself blah blah blah.

Piper talked about her own work, early and late, prefacing her remarks with one interesting statement — that she had made books because they were suited to the combination of ambition and shyness which characterized her early years. She could make them privately, send them out (to a mailing list acquired from a gallery job) and not have to deal with people in direct interactions. She then went on to read exhaustively from a recent work, going on easily twice as long as anyone else on the panel. This kind of rudeness does not endear artists to audiences, and by the time she finished all the enthusiastic energy seemed to have been drained from the room. This caused Bob Stein, the electronic publisher, to say it was too late to show the interactive piece he had brought to demonstrate. He then set about describing it verbally instead until protests from the audience forced him to turn on the machine and actually show us a little of Jim Petrillo's electronic book, *Cinema Volta*. Stein's presence was used to raise a favorite recent question: whether or not CDROM works are books or merely so-called interactive television or video. At the heart of this is the issue of whether or not a



book is defined as a Concept or an Object. Weiner was interesting on this point: "It's not a book," he said bluntly. "It's t.v.." I have to agree.

As the discussion ensued it was clear that there were many in the audience interested in the details and logistics of the Franklin Furnace sale of its artists' book collection to MoMA — for instance, how much money was involved? This was an issue everyone official wanted to duck for some reason — why? Phillpot and Wilson talked history and policy but wouldn't reveal details or hard facts (maybe they were told not to?). But after all, over the years many of us donated work to the Furnace archive — if that archive is sold to MoMA now, it means, for one thing, that MoMA won't be going back to individual artists to buy the work from them. Now you could say this is a petty point, but where is the money from the sale going? To support the Furnace, one supposes, but then why was Wilson crying poor at every turn? Again, my point here is not so much to press Wilson or Phillpot to the wall for info as to insist on the fact that artists' books, like everything else in capitalist culture, can't be separated from the economics of their production and consumption, and that to pretend they happen in some pristine aesthetic vacuum is both untrue and hypocritical (and I am certain that both of these individuals, on their own, unofficially, would be among the first to admit this.)

The worst aspect of the MoMA panel, however, was the way the two artists on the panel talked to each other. Piper's tongue seemed to be stuck on the two syllables "LAR—RY" which she bleated out over and over as interruption, but nothing followed the pause she created. Between the two of them, Weiner and Piper took up a lot of time just baiting each other and not talking at all about artist's books. In the MoMA context, evidently, having the identity of an Artist gives permission to upstage all other agendas, and the sense that the audience was concerned with books was sacrificed to the conviction that having a Name is permission to be utterly banal, boring, and inconsiderate. This is the ArtWorld, not the world of artists' books. This is the world where if you are an Art Star and you make a Book it has a certain stature which is outside of the networks, institutions, and domains in which artists' books struggle for identity and critical recognition. At (MoMA) the Art Star's identity is more important than the book's — except in the library, where other criteria apply.

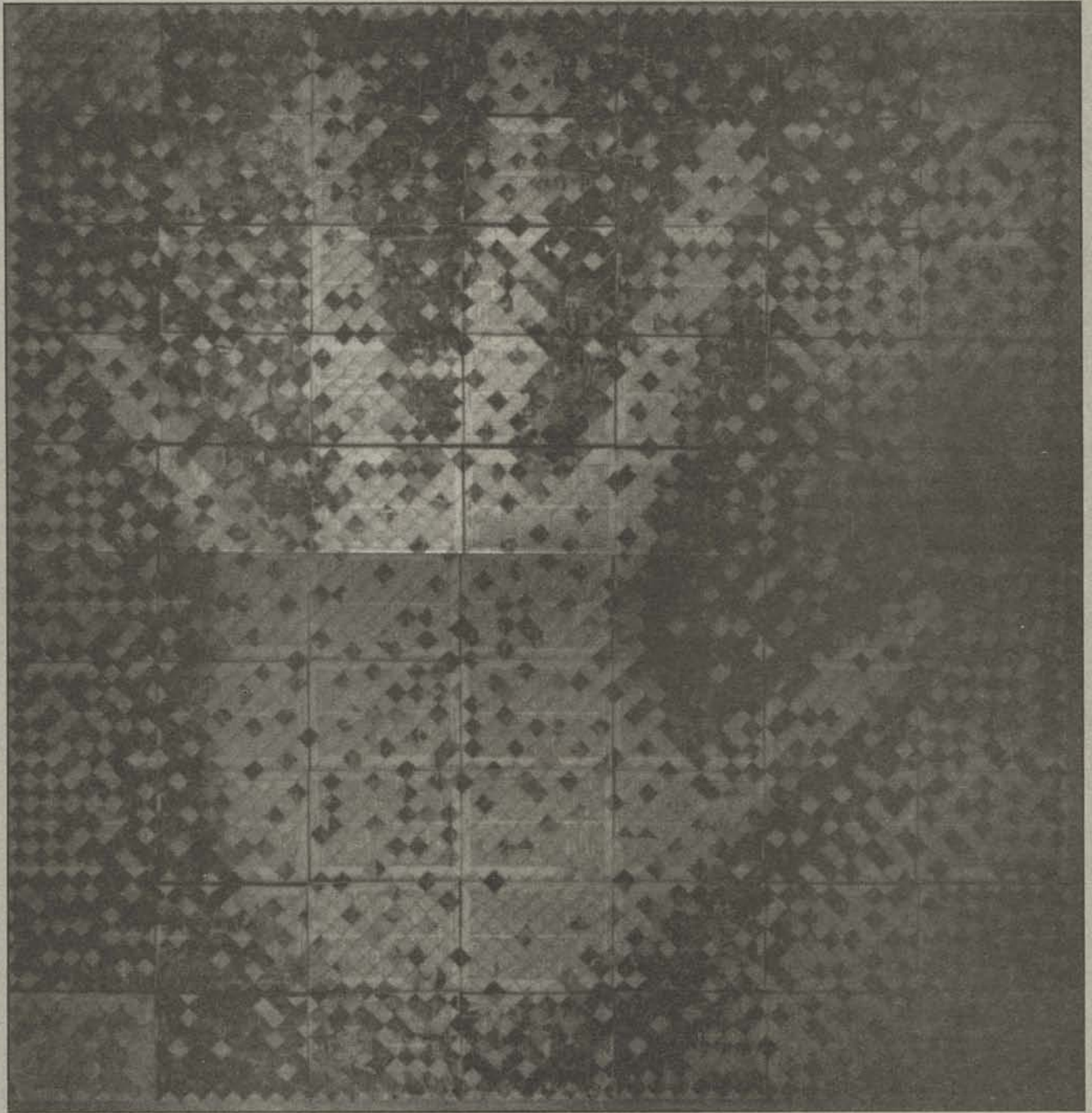
As I sum up, then, I want to reiterate that what strikes me about these three panels is the difference in identity which the artist's book has in these three contexts. At the Fulcrum Gallery in Soho it is recognized as marginal, mythic, and granted authenticity through that old cliché, the aesthetics/politics of poverty, which is somehow still being construed as a guarantor of purity. At MCBA, there is an attempt at a hybrid, intermedia form which garners support from a small, but dedicated network, but the struggle there is to free the book as a concept from the book as a craft object. And at MoMA a certain genre of artists' books are welcome in the library, but ghettoized within the museum hierarchy. If a work approaches the condition of Art, sculpture, or carries etchings, lithos, or monoprints by a Big Name Artist, it can be Art. The lesson here is: be an Artist first

and then make a Book. But this still excludes an awful lot of the more interesting work which constitutes the field of artists' books — since the two places at MoMA for artists' books are the low-end library or the *livre d'artiste* traditional work of the Prints and Illustrated Books division. All of this seems typical of MoMA, with its inability to reconfigure itself to cope with the facts of history when they don't coincide with the conceptual framework of the Old Modern, but that does leave room for some other more creative institution to move into the void.

It's not so much that I want to see artists' books canonized as that I want to see this complex historical development — and the major individual artists within it — recognized and appreciated as a late 20th century artform. Developing rapidly since mid-century, with solid precedents in the early 20th century avant-garde, the artist's book has become a form in its own right, fully developed, varied, complex, with as many possibilities and actualities as any other medium. To speak of artists' books is to suggest just as wide a spectrum of activities as to use the term Painting or Sculpture to describe those fields. Nonetheless, its identity seems to be elusive and context sensitive to an extraordinary degree, except among the many practitioners who, like specialists in any field attuned to distinguish the finches from the sparrows of their domain, know perfectly well the difference between a small press publication, a fine print edition and an artist's book. While the economics of production don't determine an artist's book's identity, or explain the work, they do account for the often invisible or concealed conditions in which a work acquires a particular status — cult, fine, or correct as the case may be. But in the realm of artists' books, as in so many other areas of cultural activity, there is a continual effort to act as if the identity of a work were simply, completely a result of its inherent properties — rather than its relation to a set of conditions, constraints, and circumstances — *all* of which contribute to its status.

I don't think artists' books can come into their own unless there is a concerted effort to do more in the way of exhibitions and critical writing, and attempts to show the whole field in its rich history, diversity, and current complexity. In each of these panels, the identity of the artist's book was different, but in each case it depended upon some kind of exclusion — of types of work or workers, contexts or networks. The risk, of course, is that as the artist's book comes of age the politics surrounding its recognition will fragment the field even more instead of promoting informed understanding of its range. The amount of interesting work which has been and is being done is amazing. It would be great to have better access to that history and the current scene. It would also be good, I think, to get beyond the initial show and tell mode of exchange and into a more developed level of analysis and discussion. Because the Book is a loaded ideological and cultural symbol, it plays into many possibilities for interpretive and productive strategies. But just saying that is nothing — the challenge is in finding particular means to discuss specific works and thus to expand — critically — the field of artists' books as a whole.





INDEX to the Encyclopedia McCarney: the Portland Project by Scott McCarney

For the editioned version, scans were made from the index volume of a 1960 edition of the Encyclopedia Americana and electronically merged with images from the main body of the encyclopedia proper.

The unique object, reproduced here, consists of the cut-up and rearranged Encyclopedia.



Keith Smith

one binding

from a hundred  
bindings

based on a theme

Rochester, NY

July, '94





# HAITI PHILATELICALY

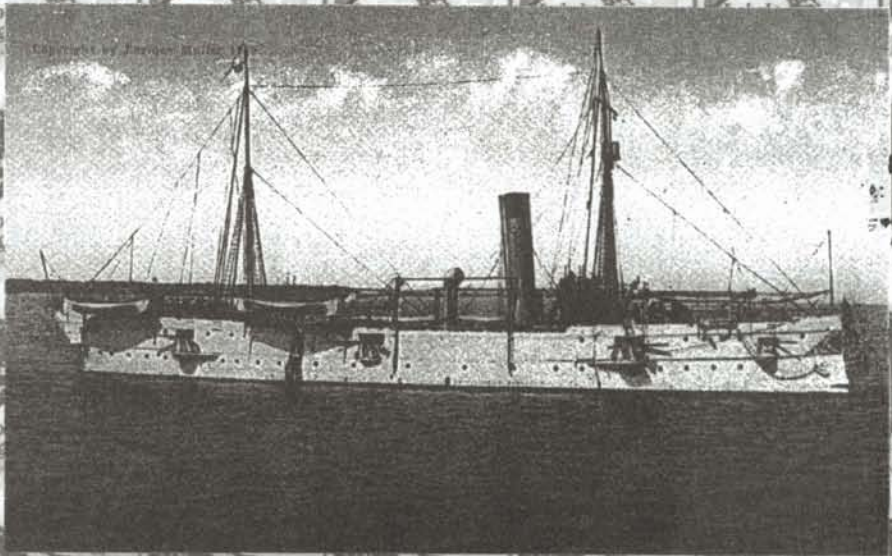


BUY MORE ARTISTS' BOOKS! THEY'RE CHEAP!

## PRODUCTION NOTES, ETC.

As this is the second issue of *JAB* it's appropriate to briefly examine how the first was distributed and received, with some discussion of production costs and future plans. About 400 copies of the first issue were printed - of these about 200 were mailed out free to people and institutions on the Interplanetary Productions mail list or circumstantially given away to people who might be interested. About 70 were given to the participants and audience of the MCBA conference mentioned in Drucker's article, 20 each were given to Janet Zweig, Tony Zwicker, and Steve Clay for distribution, 5 were given to Printed Matter Bookstore, and about 60 were offered (and taken within 4 days) at a FREE - TAKE ONE box at the counter of Soho Service, Greene St., NYC. Approximately 24 subscriptions for future issues were paid for based on seeing the first issue. Some subscriptions were by individuals, some by institutions. *CLIO ART* bibliographies and the San Francisco Art Institute Library were the only to respond

...ed by Philately  
to an offer of a free copy from a review in *Umbrella*.  
There was some positive verbal and written response; like, if  
... time we got something like this, good job, etc. All very gratifying. One  
... wag from Philadelphia sent a postcard saying that receiving the free  
... *JAB* along with the subscription offer was like getting a flower from a  
... Hare Krishna in an airport who then hits you up for money. At that  
... time the offer for the next issue of *JAB* was \$2.00 plus \$.75 shipping -  
... probably less than it costs to park your car at an airport. The same  
... person went on to say that it was a good thing that book-like objects  
... were being written about because he was thinking about making  
... the book-like objects. Will the world be a better place if that remains the  
... extent of his book making labors?



## An updated list of U.S. Slavery



Harris 4c offset press (scrap) on flat bed truck, Spring St. & Varick, NYC, '94, photo BF



## JAB ADDENDUM

## JAB ADDENDUM



## IMAGES RE-RASTERIZED &amp; BRIEFLY ON NEW WORK

One of Keith Smith's current projects involves making as many variations as possible of one type of binding.

the kind of obsession that leads to breakthroughs

He stopped at one hundred.

The picture doesn't give a clue to the real thing but...

The thread is orange waxed linen sewn round & round & round the boards and itself and off the surface of the boards about 3/8". Like a creepy wet wormlike growth entangling the book.

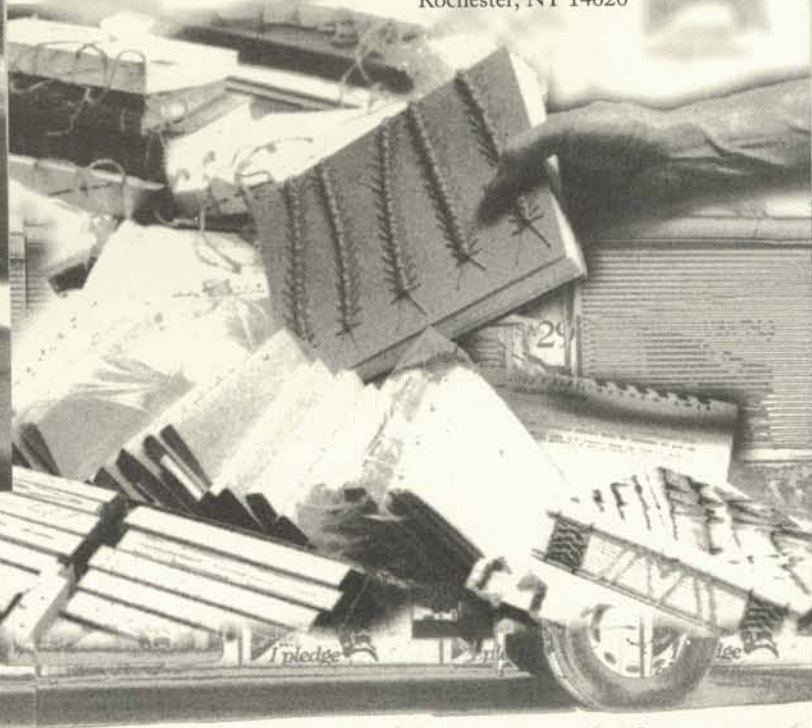
I found it utterly appealing.

Scott McCarney spent a couple of months at the University of South Maine working on a two part project the results of which are a printed book, *INDEX* (edition 1,000) and a one of a kind sculpture titled *The Encyclopedia*. From the afterword of the book McCarney writes,

*This book, though a work unto itself, functions as the index to "The Encyclopedia", a sculptural bookwork installed in the Portland Campus Library of the University of Southern Maine. Both Works were created through an exhaustive "reading" of a thirty volume set of the "Encyclopedia Americana", the 1960 edition that I grew up with. This reading began with Volume 1(A - Annuals) and continued through Volume 29 (Wasps - Zymotic disease), turning each page, reading articles of interest, and removing all illustrative material: pictures, maps, drawings and diagrams. These materials were filed alphabetically in folders corresponding to the volume from which they were removed. This first act familiarized me with the images of the encyclopedia and abstracted them from their relationship to the text. I had in mind Diderot's "Encyclopedia" which, due to the technology of its day, was issued in separate volumes of text and illustrative plates.*

*The text now became a physical mass to be dealt with as a work of sculpture...*

If you want more information about these or other work by Smith and/or McCarney write them: 22 Cayuga St.  
Rochester, NY 14620





# JAB ADDENDUM JAB ADDENDUM

Buy more artists' books. ~~They're cheap.~~

## JAB - THE INTERVIEWS

The next issue of *JAB* will have interviews with Jo Anne Paschall and Skuta Helgason. Paschall is the director of Nexus Press and gives a history and philosophy of that active artist run press in Atlanta. Helgason is a co-owner of Stop Over Press (Berlin, Reykjavik, New York). He just recently exhibited about a hundred artists' books at Granary Books, NYC, from the consortium of European publishers that make up *United Untied*.

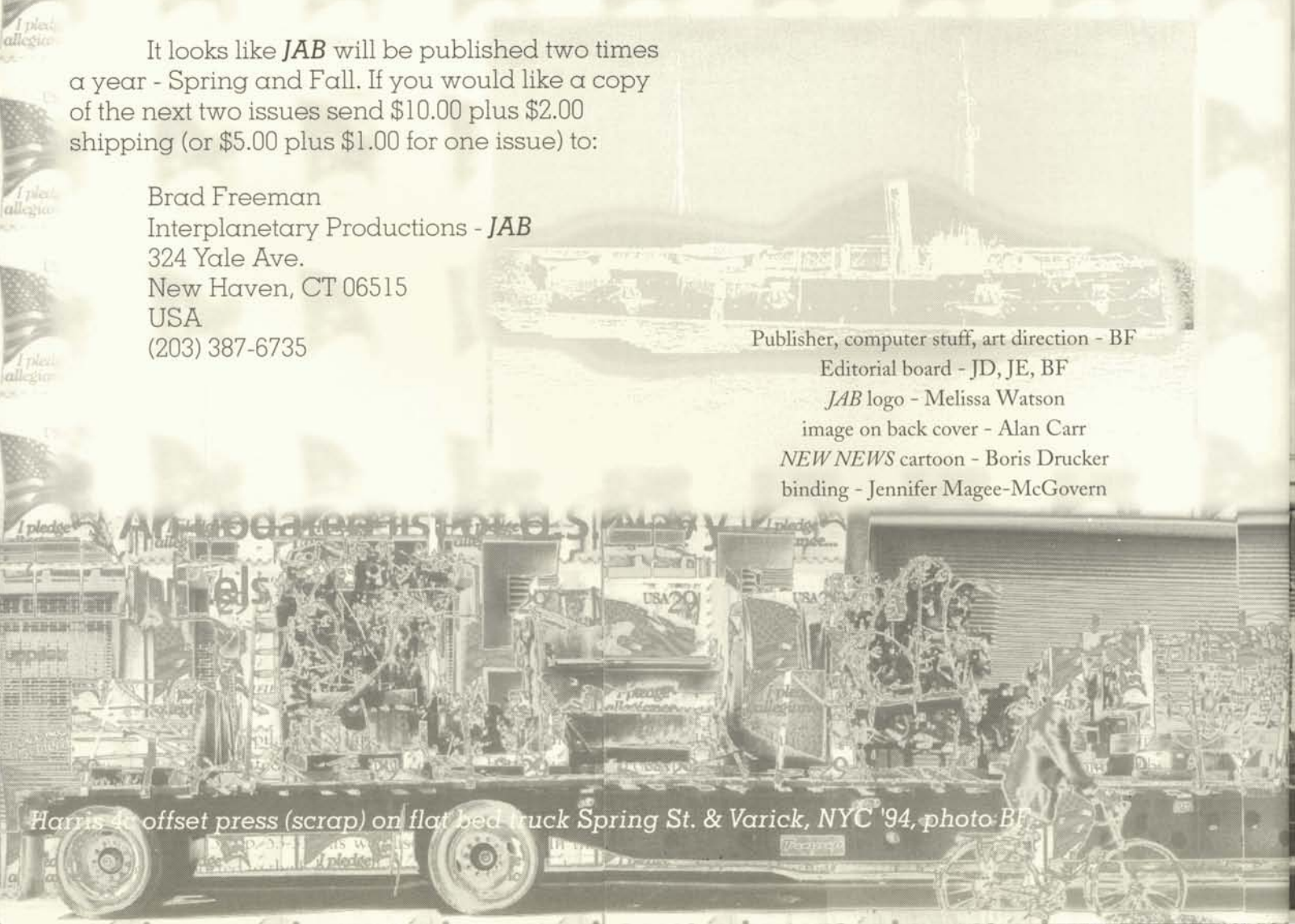
Future issues of *JAB* will have interviews with some of the people who influenced these and other contemporary book artists.

## DON'T MISS OUT - SUBSCRIBE NOW!

It looks like *JAB* will be published two times a year - Spring and Fall. If you would like a copy of the next two issues send \$10.00 plus \$2.00 shipping (or \$5.00 plus \$1.00 for one issue) to:

Brad Freeman  
Interplanetary Productions - *JAB*  
324 Yale Ave.  
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Editorial board - JD, JE, BF  
*JAB* logo - Melissa Watson  
image on back cover - Alan Carr  
*NEW NEWS* cartoon - Boris Drucker  
binding - Jennifer Magee-McGovern



Harris 4 offset press (scrap) on flat bed truck Spring St. & Varick, NYC '94, photo-BF



Anyone who attended the panels mentioned in JD's article who might have a different perception or clarification or furtherance of those events is invited to offer a submission for publication. We want to create a dialogue. Submissions for any articles please send to the address below: hard copy plus Mac disk, Microsoft Word, b&w images (up to 8.5" x 11") with SASE. Utmost care will be taken with all materials but we are not responsible for any damage or loss.

Michael Kasper, the author of *Calendar Art*, Ravi Varma, is a book artist who has written for *Art Papers*.

My sincere apologies to Keith Smith & Scott McCarney for not writing about the work they shared with me - time constraints prevented a proper treatment of the work.



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*Drucker*

This issue of *JAB* was printed (I hope) at Nexus Press in Atlanta, August, '94, by Chad Latz and myself. Thanks to Jo Anne Paschall for her generous use of the Heidelberg and facilities. The paper is from a bunch of various kinds of Mohawk Superfine that I've had lying around and it seemed like an economical way of getting rid of it.

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