

This being the inaugural edition of *The Journal of Artists' Books*, it is appropriate to offer a statement of purpose. Artists' books have come of age. This is increasingly evidenced in the number of mature artists whose primary medium is artists' books, the many public and private collections, exhibitions, college level classes, and texts about artists' books. *JAB* will be a forum for serious and lively debate about artists' books and the contents within them. Buy more artists' books. ~~They're cheap.~~

ARTISTS' BOOKS / BOOK-LIKE OBJECTS

by Brad Freeman

Does democracy need true fables?

Adolescent George Washington, testosterone brimming to overflow, chopped down the cherry tree, was found out by his father who squeezed young George until he fessed up. He was man enough to be honest once he was caught and take the consequences for his misdeed. Because of this and a few other moral and manly qualities George went on to become one of our founding fathers and the first President of the United States. Every school boy knows this. But, guess what? It's all a fable created by a liar. In 1806 Mason Weems wrote a biography of Washington as a scheme to make money. In order to add authority to his tale and put God on his side Weems attached "parson" in front of his name and invented a non-existent parish.

Janet Zweig's kinetic sculpture *Invention and Revision* (1991) elegantly comments on this tale. On the wall, framed in cherry wood branches, is the famous text by "parson" Weems. Directly in front of this is a dot matrix printer which prints out the tale at a constant and loud rate. The paper is pulled simultaneously to a paper shredder a couple of yards away and silently

contd., column 1 page 2

REVIEWING THE SUBWAY AS A BOOK

by Joe Elliot

THE WHALE
PUT JONAH
DOWN THE HATCH
BUT COUGHED HIM UP
BECAUSE HE SCRATCHED.
BURMA SHAVE

Burma-Vita, the company that from 1927-1963 brought us roadside verses singing the praises of Burma-Shave, a brushless cream, found that a jingle broken down into a sequence of signs produced a greater stir than that jingle could on a single sign. Like turning a page, the space between signs allowed the viewer room to think, anticipate, seek, and find, and the sequence made each partial verse, each sign, each page necessary to look at.

Gallery/Distributor: Metropolitan Transit Authority, L train between Lorimer Street and Union Square, New York City

Artist: Unknown

Medium: (offset) Printed Subway ads & environs

Title of work: Unknown

Size of Edition: One. Maybe more. Maybe none. Very limited.

Duration of exhibit: Until it is noticed

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guaranteed to change your consciousness

contd., column 2 page 2

shredded into a growing heap. The printer and shredder are both mounted on cherry wood logs. Zweig's piece was first exhibited at PS 1 in Brooklyn.

In this smart and witty rejection of the patriarchal myth of the founding fathers Zweig has created a book-like object that really works. On a conceptual level *Invention and Revision* traverses nearly two centuries by exposing the way in which nineteenth century authority (after discovering that it had stumbled upon a lucky bit of propaganda) perpetuated itself on lies all the way to the present era -- with the shredding of information belonging to the public and potentially harmful to the careers of public servants doing the deed. Nixon, North, and other flag lovers.

On a formal level how is this a book-like object? Between 1975 and 1989 Zweig made seven editioned artist's books: *Heinz and Judy, a play, Sheherezade, This Book is Extremely Receptive*, etc., two of which are collaborations with the writer Holly Anderson. These are real books; they have paper pages that turn, they're bound in covers, they're small and portable, they have text and images... Since that time she hasn't, "thought in terms of books". Instead, Zweig made a series of static sculptures constructed of books which explored different ways of reading. One of these, *Self Reference* (1990) is a 3 1/2' high cube. An opening in the top allows the viewer to see inside which contains four shelves of books facing one another. These books, spines rigidly toward one another and shut off from the outside world, are a deadpan joke on artwork that refers to itself. This gentle indictment brings to mind books used as props by artists who think the fetishized object itself will bring with it some of the presumed knowledge, prestige, and aura contained in the original. Think of window displays in chic boutiques or a tv interview of some expert authority in front of her/his bookshelf.

Artists' books came about in the 60's and 70's as relatively inexpensive publications in an effort to circumvent the gallery system and get artists' work into circulation. Since that time many artists have been exploring the possibilities of joining the form of the book with the content in an effort to realize the full potential of the medium. Keith Smith has spent more than twenty years doing just that. Starting with the traditional western

NEW YORK LOTTERY RESULT LINE. 24 hours a day. Instant updates. 976-2020. \$\$\$\$ 35 cents per call from any phone. 1993 Fonawin Corp.

WHEN YOU'RE READY TO GET OFF YOUR HIGH HORSE GIVE US A CALL.

Betty Owens says better qualified means better qualified jobs. Three full programs and short, single courses. Licensed by the New York and New Jersey State Education Department. **Travel / Tourism.** It's the third largest industry in the U.S. and offers a variety of career opportunities. **Word processing specialist.** Keep up with the changes in office technology. **Paralegal (Legal assistant).** Prepare for a rewarding career in this interesting, fast-growing field. Call today, toll free. 1 800 772 OWEN.

Inserted into the lower left hand corner of the frame far above the ad is one 8 x 10 high school yearbook photograph. Mottled blue studio background. Weird angelic lighting. Corner torn. Curly hair. Warm smile. No words. Looking out with anticipation. Life.

AS SEEN ON TV. Jonathan Zizmor your Dermatologist. Beautiful clear skin with a chemical peel. Great for complexion, acne. Discoloration, dark spots. Looking younger. Improving the way you look. We treat all skin and hair problems. Jonathan Zizmor, MD. Board certified dermatologist. 5th Avenue at 61st Street. (212) 594 SKIN. Hours Monday-Friday 8-7. Open Sundays. Mastercard Visa.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Were the other passengers on the train part of the audience or part of the work of art?

When the other passengers on the train stare in front of them or at their newspapers or books or at their feet and become lost in their thoughts, they are part of the work of art. Even when they look at the works of art put up by the MTA for their edification and diversion they are still part of the work of art. However, when they look at another person with interest, or when they notice the photograph in question and become interested in that, they become part of the audience looking at the art. No longer things. Their interest in art brings them to life.

Who put the photograph there? Why?

We don't know. Perhaps the high school student himself put it there among the ads as an act of self-assertion at this crucial transition his life. A stubborn sunniness among the dreariness of the obvious. The future he wants to want but does not look forward to.

Perhaps he put it there as a way of throwing it away, losing it among the semiotic complex of money, selfhood, and symbols. Fuck it.

Perhaps his lover put it up there out of pride. Look at him, isn't he hot!

Perhaps it is a few years later and his mother no longer knows where he is and she is worried about him and put his old picture there out of the desperate hope that he will see it and remember to go home.



codex and going through the entire history of book forms Smith has dissected every facet of book construction and created many book objects that highlight these various characteristics. He has made one-of-a-kind and editioned books that emphasize the sound of the turning pages, make use of the transparency of different kinds of imaging material, books that explore sequential imagery, text/image interplay, etc. Smith has produced a "how-to" binding book, *Non Adhesive Binding*, as well as a theoretical book that delves deeply into the meaning of the book, *Structure of the Visual Book*. He makes books every day of his life.

During a slide lecture about his books, methods, and ideas at the University of Rochester, Smith was questioned by a perplexed librarian. The librarian stated that Smith's books didn't fit into his, the librarian's, definition of a book. Smith was clearly delighted by this remark because it illustrated perfectly the point he was making, namely, that he was trying to expand the definition of the book.

Now, let's go back to *Invention and Revision*. What is it about this machine that makes it book-like? In fact, what does "book-like" mean and why should we be concerned? Partly because there is an ongoing debate out here in Book Art World about what is and is not a book. Most of the sculpture that purports to be book-like merely refers vaguely to the form of the book without actually having any of the time tested qualities of a book. Merely mimetic devices, they refuse to evolve into viable new forms. They are static one-liner sculpture gags in the shape of books. On the other hand, the meaning within a book is revealed through space and time as the pages are turned. Zweig's hybrid invention dynamically moves paper electromechanically and is programmed to print (!) on paper an appropriated text which is then turned inside out, exposed and deposed. This subversive device has opened new doors in the definition of book-like.

The only problem with *Invention and Revision* is that I can't go to my bookshelf, pull it out, hold it in my hands and read it as with Zweig's books.

Bring Ollie North back for another round

Invention and Revision was the first in a series of computer driven kinetic sculptures (CDKS) created by Zweig. The second was

Why didn't the person leave his or her name behind?

Because it's illegal to tamper with subway ads.

Because one of the reasons the artist affixed this photograph among these signs was that he or she was sickened by words and colors and designs trying to persuade, indicate, argue, unload, win, offer, reform, eradicate, chide, and therefore felt that any indication beyond the image would mar.

Perhaps the photograph is not by or for anything or anyone. Perhaps it is a vital piece of reality in and of itself. Perhaps being is more important than doing.

What about "Poetry-in-Motion", the MTA's official poetry on buses and subways program? Is that book art? Why don't you write about that?

See answers 1 and 3.

Poetry-in-Motion is an admirable piece of public relations by the MTA. But is a business card a piece of art? How about a press release? Do they turn their panels over to artists and let the artist do whatever they want? Why does the MTA have to put their name on it?

Are there other forms of found books?

I don't know. You'd have to find them. Rent space on the lower left hand corner of every storefront window on a street. The pedestrian walks down the street and reads your book. The words on the bathing caps of synchronized swimmers in whatever order you glimpse them. The panels of the sidewalk. Caption a police line up.

In the first panel, why is 'homeowners' one word and 'apartment renters' two?

Homeowners are more real than apartment renters.

What are the other panels doing there?

Because you do not think you can walk on water you enter the system. When you enter the system the signs in the system say it's a good thing to enter and be part of and prosper in the system. The signs are completely silent about even the possibility of walking on water.

What has happened to the high school student?

The high school student was struck down by a bullet.

He's married now and has three kids.

He's going to school at night in preparation for his career as a corporate artist.

He is riding the subway and reading the sports page like other workers on their way to work. Because he does not look up he does not see a picture of himself from a few years ago. If he did look up would he recognize it?

What do the panels want to do with all their colors?

The colors on the panels want you to look. And so they are bright and the lettering is bold. But nothing could be duller and more timid.

Yet look at the photograph of the high school student.

Where is it?

You almost don't notice it. No colors telling you to eat here. In a sense, then, a found book is most found the moment it is being found by one person. After that, the more other people find it and talk about it, the more the found book lapses into art.

Why is Dr. Zizmor smiling? Why is Betty Owen smiling? What is the difference between Betty Owen's and Dr. Zizmor's smile? Why is the high school student smiling?

Dr. Zizmor is smiling because he is board certified. He is smiling because he can treat all your skin and hair problems. He is smiling because if he showed his other face you might not want him to treat all your skin and hair problems.

Dr. Zizmor is smiling because it would be more expensive to have a model or an actor, someone who is more attractive than Dr. Zizmor, stand in for him. Dr. Zizmor is smiling in the ad because if someone else were in the ad, it wouldn't look as genuine and authentic. But here he is in person. Sort of.

Betty Owens is smiling for all the same reasons Dr. Zizmor is smiling, only she doesn't want to treat your skin and hair problems. She wants you to take her classes in office skills. She is smiling a peppy, professional smile because that is the kind of person her courses will teach you to be.

We can only guess at the reasons for the high school student's smile. Perhaps it's simply a matter of the photographer at the studio asking him to. Perhaps he just did well on a test or someone he's attracted to just told him she wants to go to bed with him.

Why do they try to shame people into getting off drugs and alcohol?

Because they think that if they stand over a person who was beaten up with a stick and lying on the ground and threaten to beat him up with a stick if he does not get up and walk, then he'll get up and walk.

Why are all the panels the same size?

See above. Because it's easier that way.

Why are the panels in the sequence they are in?

While there is no discernible reason for the panels order, there is for the disorder. That is, the panels can't cooperate because they are pitted against each other, vying for the audience's attention. Every attempt at difference and distinction produces more of the same sadness. The unhappy viewer hits mute at the break. There's no reason to look.

BURMA SHAVE

SHAVERS GROW

LET THE LITTLE

TAKE IT SLOW

SCHOOLHOUSES

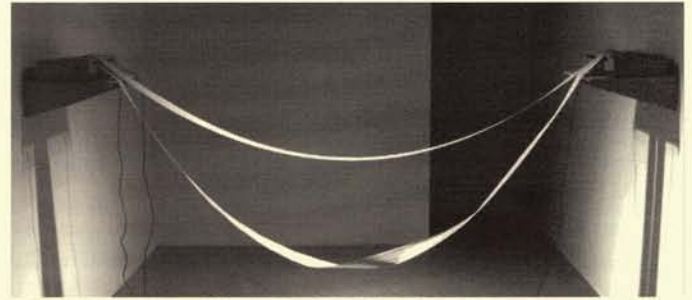
PAST

The Liar Paradox (Oliver North Mobius), also completed in 1991. A liar paradox is one of the earliest classic Greek logic paradoxes. It goes something like this, "I am now lying." How can this make sense? If a person says she/he is lying then are they telling the truth that they are lying? It is a circular self contradiction which goes round and round and nowhere. Recurrent structures are very appealing to Zweig and become a central motif in this next phase of her creative output. For *The Liar Paradox* (Oliver North Mobius) she took questions and answers from the 1986 Iran/contra senate testimony of Lt. Col. North and put them into a computer macro program. The program has the ability to continually randomize the questions and answers. The computer was then connected to two dot matrix printers with a continuous loop of paper between them. The program tells the first printer to print a random question then tells the second printer to print a random answer. Eventually every question falls with every answer on the paper and the Mobius almost turns black with overprinting the longer the program runs. It almost destroys itself. But not quite. It is a perfect metaphor on the way no intervention was made into the real power of the Reagan administration. The constant flow of red herrings, obfuscation, evasions, and irrelevant counter charges keeps the "enemy" (a.k.a. US citizens) from knowing the truth.

In 1992 Zweig made one CDKS, *Making Progress*, which pokes fun at the notion of progress as a forward moving concept. Shaped like a spinning wheel, it prints out a random progress report that turns a wheel going round and round and nowhere.

Burden of Personal Relations - three works

Zweig's creative output exploded in 1993 with five works two of which are CDKS, *Her Recursive Apology* and *Solid Facts* are linked in their gendered opposition to one another. The latter used computers in its construction but not in the final installation of the piece. With a feminist overlay, *Her Recursive Apology* is made of thirty apologies (*I'm sorry, I'm sorry I keep saying I'm sorry, etc.*) which were put into a randomizing algorithm in the program TrueBasic written by Hugh Hone of the Massachusetts College of Art. Zweig then rented four computers and four printers and had them apologizing and then apologizing for the apologies for seven days and nights. This recurrent babbling, after being printed out on paper, was formed into the structure of a spiral. *Solid Facts* is the mute male counterpart of *Her Recursive Apology*. It consists of a seven foot high stack of paper held together by a metal rod. The text (if there is one) on the paper cannot be seen. *Thanks a Million* is the end piece of a



The Liar Paradox (Oliver North Mobius)

roll of paper from a mill with "thanks" printed out in the smallest dot matrix type size. This is mounted in a wheelbarrow.

The Prisoner's Dilemma (1993, CDKS) is another logic paradox and consists of making statements and asking questions in a futile penning down effort, as follows;

- I'm not saying yes.*
- Are you saying no?*
- I'm not saying no.*
- Are you saying maybe?*
- I'm not saying maybe.*
- Are you saying it depends?*
- I'm not saying it depends.*
- Are you saying definitely not?*
- etc.,*

Two computers have been given one hundred of these type of phrases with *yes, no, maybe,...* put randomly into the sentences. The dialogue plays out on one piece of continuous form computer paper which is shared by two printers. Each printer is mounted on casters and as the verbal jockeying for position goes on they are pulled toward one another. The common property (paper) is eventually used up and the printers literally bump into each other.

For *Mind Over Matter* (1993, CDKS) Zweig took three famous statements that deal with ontology, existentialist position, and individual will and put them in a randomizing program.

- I think therefore I am. - Descartes*
- I am what I am. - Popeye*
- I think I can. - the little engine that could*

The program takes the three statements and makes combinations of different sentences. The original quotes are essentially positive in their outlook, or, as in the case of Popeye, at least accepting of who he is. However, and what is really surprising, is that many of the thousands of re-combined sentences contain doubt as to the condition of the speaker, i.e., *I think I can think*, as if the computer program has humanized them.

Zweig challenges and delights the viewer while exploring the possibilities of artificial intelligence in an expanding array of subjects and forms.

I am therefore I can I am.

I am I can think therefore I am I am.

I am what I am what I can think.

I think what.

I can think what I can think I am.

I can think what I can think.

I think I can think therefore I think I can think.

I think therefore I am I think.

I can think what I think what I can.

I think therefore I can think.

I think I am what I am I can think.

I am therefore I can think what I am.

I can I can therefore I think therefore I am.

I am I am therefore I think therefore I am.

I think I am therefore I am I am.

I think I can think therefore I can think I can

I think therefore I think what.

I am I think.

I am.

I can think what I can think I can.

I think therefore I can think I can.

In conclusion let me offer a few other points. In November of 1989 the DIA Art Foundation and Printed Matter Bookstore sponsored the Symposium on Artists' Books which featured some of the big names and driving forces in the field. One of the issues to be discussed was, *What is an artist's book?* Clive Phillpot, Director of the Library at MOMA, started the day off by announcing the death by AIDS of Ulises Carrion. Carrion had produced many of his own artist's books, written extensively about the subject, and had created one of world's largest archives of artists' books in Amsterdam. Phillpot remembered a blank book created by Carrion as a beautiful complete book in which every poem searches for silence. I was stunned by the news of Carrion's death. In 1987 I had the pleasure of working with and printing a book for Ulises at the Visual Studies Workshop Press. He was a short, wiry guy always full of energy, ideas, bright eyes and smiles.

Phillpot went on to note the absence of critical writing about artists' books, and how discussion around the medium had been taken over by craft considerations. Production value had come to mean more than content as the "traces of glitz" came on. He has consistently advocated the production of printed non-precious artists' books and stated that the unique (one-of-a-kind) book is a contradiction in terms.

There was a diverse array of speakers that day. Jo Anne Paschall and Michael Goodman gave a presentation about the goals and accomplishments of publishing and printing artists' books at Nexus Press in Atlanta.

A lot of artists made comments and from my notes we have the following: Edgar Heap of Birds, Adrian Piper, Felipe Ehrenberg, Lawrence Weiner, AA Bronson of General Idea, Richard Prince, Dan Graham, and Raymond Foye.

Even though most of these people aren't book artists as such (yet their work is often best known through books), they raise issues about books that I hope will be explored in future *JABs*. In the meantime, a few observations are offered about the term *artists' books* being a ghettoizing concept, or a self imposed marginalization. As a printer, photographer, writer, computer artist, graphic designer, publisher, and (I hope) empathic observer of the world around, I find using the book doesn't lock me into a ghetto. Rather, it's taking advantage of the most convenient and efficient method of getting my message out - a method that I have developed skills in over time. Dick Higgins used the term *intermedia* in his 1969 book *FOEW&OMBWHNW* to describe art activity that falls between media. It seems that a book can become the site within which various media combine to form just that. Eh?

Adrian Piper

attacks racism

wants to go through society as upper middle class white male

work is unified by concept not media

tries to work at indexical present (personal level)

Felipe Ehrenberg

cultural hybridism in Mexico
conquerors change social values of native
anything that departs from monoculture is destroyed

artist must be eclectic

no real infrastructure for artists in Mexico

make books out of necessity
no one will collect the books (even accidentally)
no funding, no theory, no future
artists' books keep being made though

in Mexico nothing exists out of context

began to teach about artists' books
1-2 week classes, use duplicator, make inks
(must be artists' books)

Richard Prince

I'm not feeling too well because I had a big opening last night and the party went on for quite a while.

I didn't know I was supposed to speak today anyway.

In 1977 I used books as a supplement to the stuff I was showing at the time. The books could be held in the hand and taken home.

I don't have any ideas about extending the form of the book.

The stuff in my books are all previously published. It's just another way to present the type of work I do.

The problem with artists' books is interesting.

I don't think the kind of things - like catalogues - as being an extension of the book form.

I like the way it looks. That's why I do it.



Edgar Heap of Birds

WORK MUST DEAL WITH THE PUBLIC
responsibility to the public (tribal members)
protection for the public
renewal for the public

JARUTAM
We don't want Indians
just their names
mascots
machines
cities
products
buildings
Living people?

Dan Graham

publish work in magazines to get out of gallery scene
to get out of "art as commodity"
find a forum where artwork would be without being
in a short term container like a magazine

Lawrence Weiner

content in search of a context - reason to make books
make art because you aren't happy with the world
want to change world
pay for your own books rather than waiting for subsidy
if you pick it up and read it, it's a book
it walks like a duck, looks like a duck, must be a duck
artist is not involved in history

AA Bronson, GENERAL IDEA

FILE magazine, 1972, (parody of *LIFE* magazine)
create a context; people would accept it because of its familiarity
wanted an audience
developed a distribution system - Art Metropole, '74
artists' books, video tapes, audio works, publishing
distribution of books doesn't really exist
museum shops won't carry books
artists' books have a particular audience
looking for ways to infiltrate society at lower levels
AIDS poster on NY subway
artist is involved in history

no attribution

DEFINITION OF ARTIST BOOKS

all artist publications are hybrids
everything is a hybrid
hand held object

catalogues

exhibitions can't exist without catalogues
a book as catalogue and vice versa
extension of the exhibition
should be dispersed as widely as possible

Paul Zelevansky

Panelists haven't addressed issue of making books

panelists

making books is a side issue

*Bookmaking - claim of genre status -
self imposed marginalization*

artist book maker - not to be stuck with the form
must not replace the other forms artists
should use to get their message out

talking about visual literature

means of expression

artist books- artist has control over the contents;
confusion about what a book can do at end of 20th century
you can do video, performance, artist book as catalogue;

what will happen to artists' books?

redefine value

time of pluralism in art

less we try to define the activity

but defining helps

intentionality very important

Raymond Foye

Stan Brackage, "To appreciate a work of art should
be as difficult as making the work."

every reader / viewer is a collaboration

artist book is a ghettoizing term

BUT- in main stream publishing you'll get
knocked down quick

artist books gives you time to work on a project

fine books / cheaper books

either / or situation isn't good

activity of creating the work is the thing

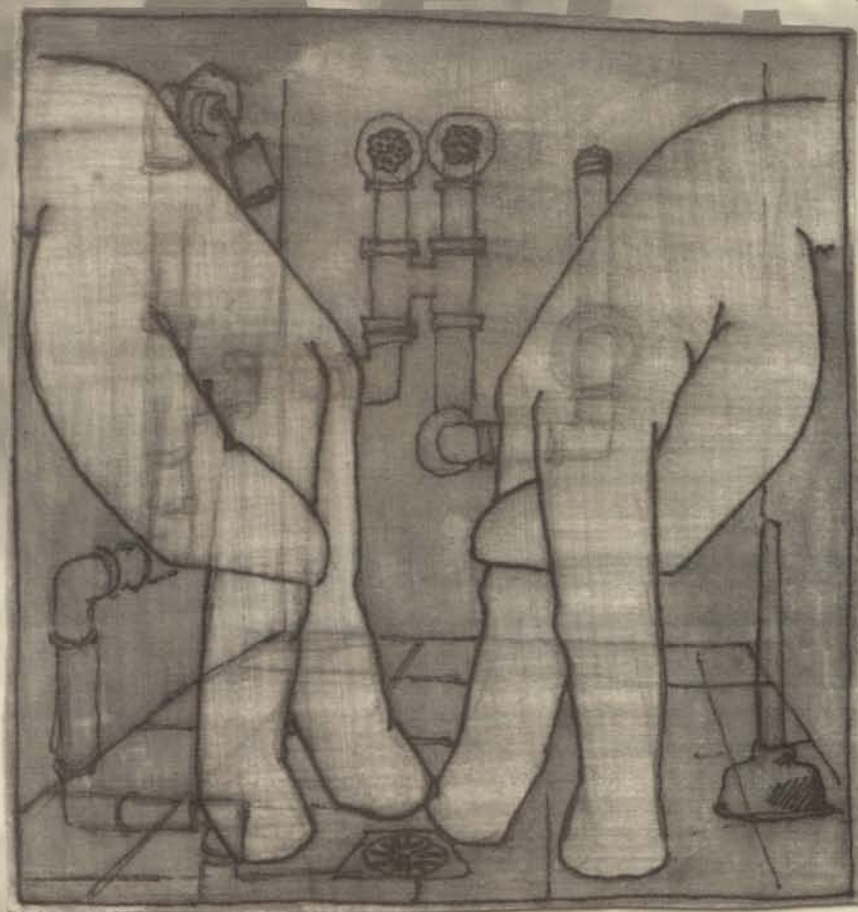
form being content - ass backwards

ART.
BE ALL YOU CAN BE.

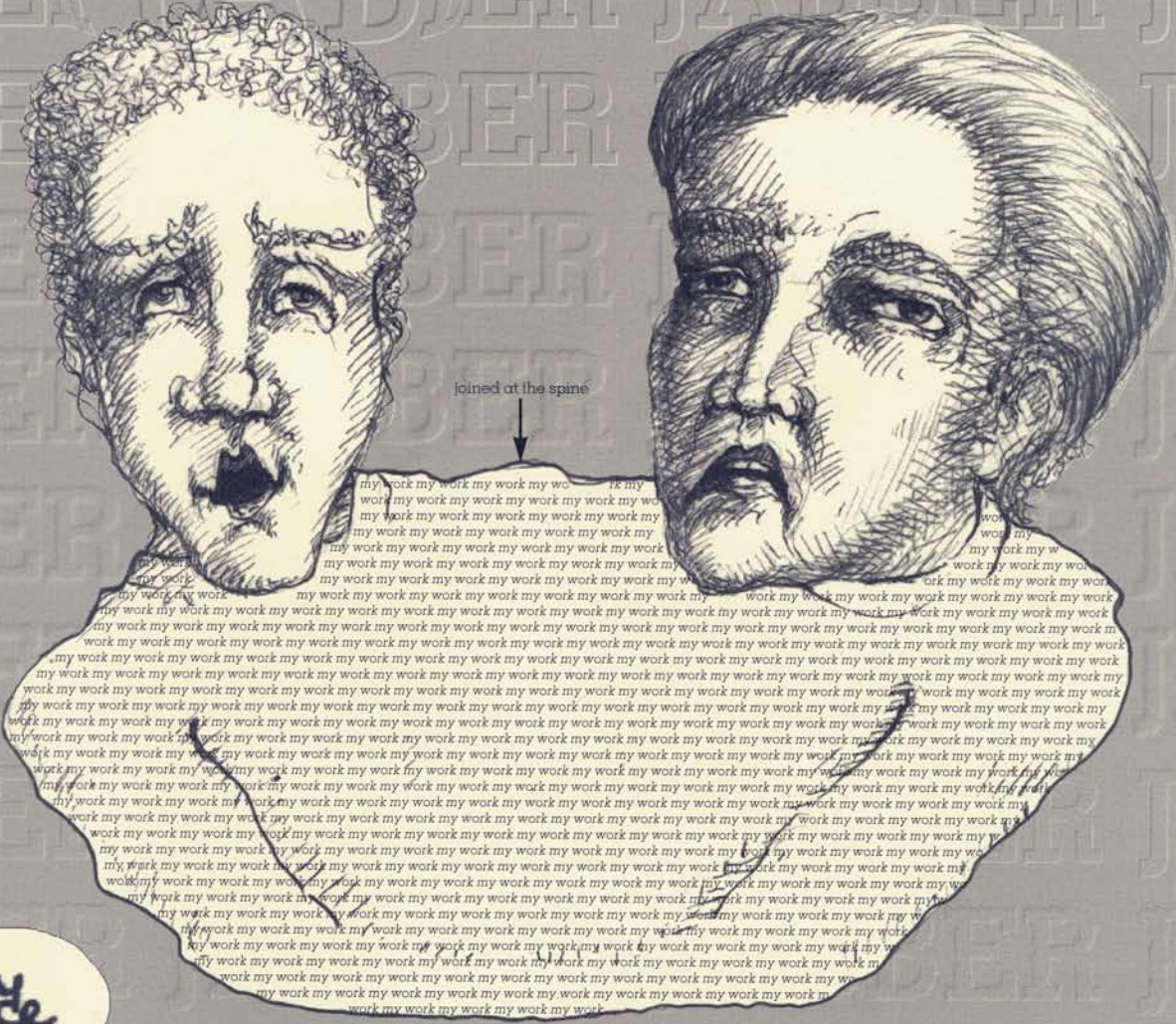
FIRE

I am what I am I think.

ESCAPE'S



B & B*



Ice



↑
SPROUTS



↑
(Dixie) MALEVICH

It strikes me that in the general array of work which passes in the visual arts world for "language-art" - that the tendency to emphasize materiality is often at the expense of any investment in the symbolic function - and historical & social specificity - of language. Which is to say, there is an apparent historical amnesia about the ways in which the use of materiality as a theoretical proposition has raised issues about sociality, the individual, the production of subjectivity within sociality in the history of modernism - as if the investigation of materiality had begun with Barbara Kruger, Jenny...

I am I am what I can think.

I think I am therefore I can think I can think.

I can think what I think.
I think what I can think what I can think.

I am therefore I can think therefore I can.

I can think what I can think I can therefore I think I think.

I can

I can think I think what I am.

I can therefore I can therefore I can.

I am what I can think what I can think.

I am I think I can think what I can I can think.

I am what I am what.

I think I am therefore I can think I think.

I am what I think

I can

I am I think what I

I can think there

I think therefore

I am.

I can

I am therefore I can think

I think I can

I am therefore I can think

I think I am what

I can think there

I can think.

I can therefore.

With the strength of many supple limbs the tree grows tall. We envision JAB to be a collective enterprise. It will be published on an irregular basis depending on finances, submissions, enthusiasm, scheduling of other projects, day jobs, etc. We encourage potential contributors to submit texts and / or images to the editorial board with the following strict guidelines; SASE with Mac disk, Microsoft Word and / or hard copy, black and white images (up to 8.5" x 11"). Utmost care will be taken with all materials but we are not responsible for any damage or loss.

If you would like to receive more copies of this issue of JAB (vol. 1, no. 1) and / or the next issue (due Fall '94 probably) send \$2.00 for each copy plus 75¢ handling to the address below. Special promo copies are available upon request.

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USA
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**ART.
BE ALL YOU CAN BE.**