

some **CONTENTS**

This issue of *JAB* contains a few artists' statements which deal with the conceptual and practical issues around the making of books: Helen Douglas and Telfer Stokes have used the artist book as their primary medium since the early '70s, and Susan Bee, known mostly as a painter and editor of *M/E/A/N/I/N/I/G*, recently had her book *Talespin* published by Granary Books. In an interview with the director of Nexus Press, Jo Anne Paschall, we get insights into the workings and history of one of the premier artist book presses. Etc.

**JAB JOURNEYS BEFORE THE GLUE FACTORY  
THEORIZING PRODUCTION**

Brad Freeman

Last spring Nexus Press in Atlanta lost its printer and the work was piling up. Jo Anne Paschall, the director, called to ask if I knew anyone with the skills and temperament to print and produce offset artists' books. Offset printing is an exceedingly difficult thing to do. I know because I've been doing it for almost twenty years and it can be a most frustrating and humbling activity - cry for me. But it's kept the rent paid, food in the fridge, car on the road, and allowed me to print my own books and *JAB*. There are lots of highly technical and precise steps in offset that are generally handled at each stage by a specialist who has perfected her/his skills at the craft over a number of years. And in small print shops like Nexus each individual is expected to do more than one job. They are required to have a number of skills. One isn't just a press operator or just a camera person or stripper, etc. The workers are expected to learn as many stages of printing production as possible. And, in fact, the worker's life becomes more varied and interesting if they do learn a number of skills. At least it lessens the possibility of repetitive stress syndrome. (And the worker must beware of becoming overly exploited by the boss as she/he becomes more valuable.)

Printing is a series of problems to be solved - how can a certain piece

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guaranteed to change your consciousness

**THE DUNGEON OF THE TEMPLE**

Clifton Meador

The dish was served in the darkened drawing room, which was illuminated by smoldering lamps, on a table of the finest woods, covered with the most exquisite damask, on hand-painted plates wrought of silver and gold, surrounded by silken flowers. It was a quivering mousse of the finest sickening fats, gelatinously imbedded in a meringue of whipped hummingbird egg whites, slathered in caviar oil. It was the merest wisp of a thing, over-produced and overpresented. I faced it with some queasiness. This was the dessert to a tedious banquet, a meal that had put every single participant to sleep. A troubled sleep, fitful and restless. They were all still at the table, collapsed on their plates. The waiters shuffled among them, shoving the desserts onto the table wherever they could. I burped dyspeptically. What could be the point to this torture, I wondered. Like many of the participants, I had not, strictly speaking, been invited to this meal. I wandered in, from some other place and found myself at the table with people I hardly knew.\*

At last, a serious show about artists books, a show in the temple itself, the Museum of Modern Art (NY). The exhibition, titled *A Century of Artists Books*, was curated by MoMA's own Riva Castleman. My expectations ranged from hope for a truly comprehensive show to fear of another exhausting show of Picasso's livre d'artiste commercial swill. The show was something of both: gigantic and somehow hollow.

If we take the term Artists Books to mean books wholly conceived and produced by artists, then most of what was actually in this show was not artists books, but something I would call livres d'artistes, which is simply French for artists books but carries connotations of luxury, conspicuous consumption, fin-de-siècle boredom, and expensive production. A livre d'artiste is commissioned by a

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of machinery be manipulated to achieve a desired effect? It's also a custom business. In other words, if someone requires a letterhead or brochure describing their business they can't go to the K-Mart Kwik Print Shop and find their personal logo, address, or description of their business on the shelf. Each job has to be created from scratch. (This being said, nowadays one can select a generic logo from a group of five offered at the local strip mall quick print shop. Or choose from the clip art on their computer.) Even in small jobs like a business card or letterhead there are lots of little but necessary details to keep in mind - the kind of paper, color(s) of ink, quantity, typesetting, when does the customer want the job, etc.

Usually the difficulties and problems in producing an artist's book are exponentially greater than printing a simple two-sided brochure. Everything is multiplied - more pages, more images, more typesetting, complicated binding, complex stripping, and of course the occasional egocentric yet sensitive artist. Confidence, patience, and a sense of humor are three of the prerequisites for this printing job. Conversely, the rewards of printing artists' books are a lot greater. The work is more interesting than standard job printing, the customers (artists) are usually smart, nice, eager, and fun to be around. After all the book is their personal vision and something they've been working on for a long time and here it is, coming to life.

Eventually Paschall hired Chad Latz, a book artist and recent graduate of Alfred College in New York who has lots of pre-press computer experience and some press experience. Everybody knows this new generation is hard wired with their computers. He's enthusiastic, mechanically minded (works on his truck), and wanted to be in a community of artists - a good match for Nexus Press. He had some experience running a Heidelberg K-line press like the one at Nexus and I agreed to come down and give him a two week crash course. Chad turned out to be a very fast learner and we worked out some of the bugs while



Nexus Ghost

JoAnne Paschall

printing the second issue of JAB. The press had been idle for six months and needed a more thorough tune-up than I was capable of and we eventually had to call in Robert Faulkner (is that a great Southern name or what?) the Heidelberg repair man. Unfortunately that cost \$120 an hour but he's good and it was necessary and the press was happier.

Nexus Press is a site where a community of artists gathers. Johanna Drucker and I spent a month there in 1992 working on our book *OTHERSPACE: Martian Ty/opography*. During that time we observed the constant traffic of interns, former interns, former employees, and local artists who came by to work, visit, and hang out. I reckon it's a combination of Southern hospitality, the legacy of past Nexus Press workers, and Jo Anne Paschall's personality that maintains the palpable artistic energy of the place. The only difficulty I could see in this was that the production schedule was sometimes sacrificed to the spontaneity of the moment. But that's just my obsession with wanting to get things done combined with a tendency to become narrowly focused on the job at hand during work hours.

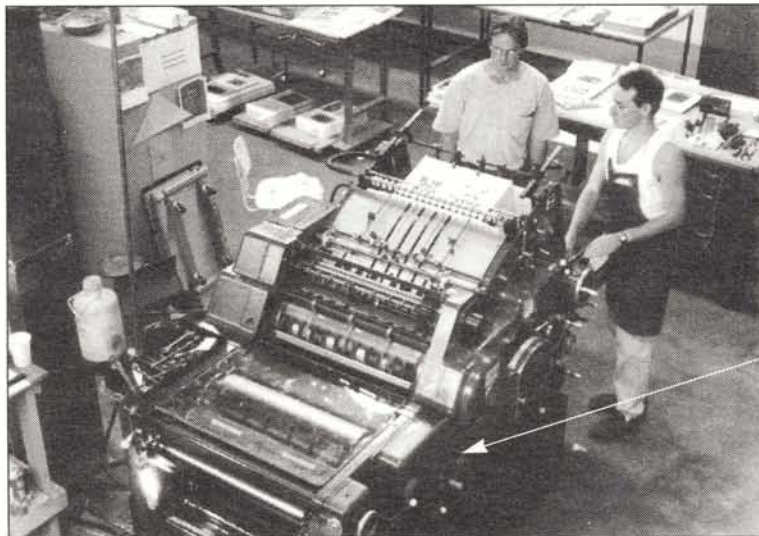
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*The following interview with Jo Anne Paschall, director of Nexus Press in Atlanta, took place in September, 1994.*

BF: Jo Anne, the first time I met you was 1986. It was your first week at Nexus Press. Nexus was housed in a former high school at that time. And Susan King was there, working on her book *Lessons From The South*, and Clifton Meador was the director and printer. The Heidelberg was just getting installed, and it was running backwards... (laughter)

**Jo Anne Paschall:** I had forgotten about that.

BF: Tell me how you got interested in artists' books and what your background was up to that point.  
 JP: I was very enthusiastic about being there and it was Susan's last few days. So actually I came as



Brad, Chad, & the Heidelberg - Nexus Press - Atlanta - 9/94

publisher, who might typically bring together a writer and an artist to produce a book. The vision of the book is the publisher's and the success of the work of the writer and artist is partially the success of the publisher. Such books rarely achieve the intensity or depth of books that are the work of an artist acting as publisher. There are, of course, more examples of bad artists books than good artists books, just as there are many more bad livres d'artiste than good ones, but a good artists book is more interesting and illuminating than a good livre d'artiste.

A Century of Artists Books contains some wonderful, incredible things. The Sonia Delaunay-Blaise Cendrars *La Prose du Transsibérien et de la petite Jehanne de France*, A. R. Penck's *Standarts*, Tullio D'Albisola and Fillipo Marinetti's *Parole in libertà futuriste, tattlintermiche olfattive*, Diter Rot's *Daily Mirror*, Marcel Broodthaers' *Un Coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard*, Duchamps' *La Mariée mise a nu par ses célibataires meme (The Green Box)*, and many of the books published by Iliaszd are exciting. It is, of course, frustrating to see these books and not be able to touch them. The videotapes of turning pages of some of the books go some way toward solving this problem but do not satisfy.

The real problem with this show is a failure on the part of the curator to distinguish good books from books that contain pictures by good artists. A good book is more than a collection of nice (or even great) pictures. A good book is good because it is considered as a book, not as a gallery for illustrations, but as a time-based medium that has a unique intimate relationship with its audience. The bulk of the works in the show seem to be wise purchases from an investment sense, but uninteresting from the viewpoint of a reader. Castleman seems to be largely uninterested in the sense of the book as a unique experience in art. Her division of the show into Artists with Authors, Artists as Authors, Artists for Authors, and Artists without Authors perpetuates the idea of an artists book as vehicle for text and images, where both are discrete, independent entities. In the most interesting work in this show (and elsewhere) the book is conceived as a unified work, not easily separated into text and image. The idea that the meaning of a text is something easily separated from its expression is a fallacy. What an audience hears depends on how the message is delivered. An understanding of this principle is evident in the most exciting books in this show.

Criticisms of this show aside, there is one obvious question that needs to be answered: Why did Riva Castleman curate this show and not Clive Phillpot?

Clive Phillpot was the librarian at MoMA for seventeen years. During that time he not only built an extremely important collection of artists books (concentrating on books by currently practicing artists, as opposed to Riva Castleman's focus on works by dead or so-blue-chip-as-to-be-deathly artists), but he also helped focus critical attention on the field of books by artists, through his nearly ubiquitous participation in conferences, lectures, and workshops. Clive Phillpot attended, lectured or participated on panels at every single "book arts" conference I went to from 1980 to 1994. He did as much as anybody to promote and advance books by artists as a serious artistic endeavor. In early 1994 he negotiated the purchase of the Franklin Furnace Archive, a large collection of artists books and ephemera, making the MoMA library collection of artists books one of the very largest collections (if not in fact the largest) in the world. Riva Castleman, although no doubt a worthy Curator of Prints and Illustrated Books, is not in the same league as Mr. Phillpot when it comes to consideration of artists books as a distinct medium in art. This exhibition is a perfect demonstration of her limitations in that regard. Why then Riva Castleman and not Clive Phillpot?

Which leads me to another question: was Clive Phillpot's resignation as director of the library somehow connected to the museum's decision to let Riva Castleman curate what is one of the most seriously attempted shows on artists books in this country? And all this fast on the heels of Phillpot's acquisition of the Franklin Furnace Archive for the MoMA library. Phillpot himself never even suggested that there might be some reason for his resignation other than a desire to pursue other interests, but I cannot help but wonder. The timing for one thing, seems correct.

End

\*Apologies to Huysmann and Eric Siry.



her book was completely finished. That's another story - there's interesting stories behind all the books and our relationships with all the artists but back to your question. I have a BFA and MFA in printmaking. I fell in love with printmaking for a couple of reasons. One is the process and the other is the camaraderie of the printshop. I didn't realize it at the time, during school, that that was so important but looking back, I see that working with and around other people was and is important. The collaborative nature of people working closely together and making... So, I did etching, woodcuts, and at the graduate level strictly stone lithography. But it was the process... and not so much to diminish the ideas of the work itself, but I just liked making a print.



JoAnne Paschall ruling up a printed sheet for the bindery. 9/94

**BF:** What did you do after graduating from the University of Georgia?

**JP:** I taught for a couple of years at a university in rural Alabama in the mid '70s and came to realize that it wasn't necessarily the job that makes you happy but the people you're around. And I also realized that I was a city girl for the first time. There wasn't a strong enough community there. So I left and moved to Atlanta to wait tables. I guess of all the decisions I've made since in terms of career, that was the hardest one.

At that time there were a lot of artist organizations in Atlanta - Art Workers Coalition, the Women's Collective...

**BF:** Had *Art Papers* started then?

**JP:** *Art Papers* grew out of the Art Workers Coalition. It was a group of artists that met monthly and had a newsletter. And literally *Art Papers* grew out of that. The first week I moved to Atlanta, I went to the Forrest Avenue Consortium. It was an old pre-World War I elementary school that had been abandoned for years, boarded up, all of the wiring ripped out - nothing. Prior to the Consortium, which was a combination of several groups or collectives, it was called the Nexus Photography Cooperative.

The Consortium was a number of groups - performance, dance, video - you know, grass roots organizations that all came together in this building and shared the building but all had separate administrations. The Nexus Photography Cooperative was founded by a group of students from Georgia State University. There was supposed to be this exhibition at the university gallery, but there was some censorship and the show was cancelled. So they rented a

storefront and opened up their own gallery and took turns sitting when the show was up to keep it open. You know, there's these magical times, sometimes in university art departments, there will be a period of three or four years that are charmed. All the right students are there, with the right teachers and it's just a dynamic that

doesn't happen very often. I think that was one of those times. The cooperative grew out of that experience.

The press started because of the frustration they had when they tried to publish their first exhibition catalog for the travelling show of seven photographers. Michael Goodman had been a student at Georgia State and had gone off to the Chicago Art Institute to grad school. He'd gotten his Master's degree and come back. The period he was in Chicago was another one of those charmed periods. Conrad Gleber was in school up there. [editor's note - Conrad Gleber, currently residing in Tallahassee, Florida, started Chicago Books and published a lot of artists' books with that imprint. He is now traveling with an ongoing exhibition he co-curated with Gail Rubini entitled *The Future of the Book of the Future*.] There were a number of book artists up there back then. And that's when Michael got in touch with the idea of the flow of images from Nathan Lyons. The sequential... the narrative that flows from photograph to photograph and how that works within the format of the book. Sort of a real phenomenon back then, you know? Michael came

back and joined back up with the cooperative and they started the press. And they found this huge space, the school, on Forrest Avenue.

I came to Atlanta that first week... the grand opening of Nexus was that week. So, I was in Atlanta about a year. I had a good gallery. And a good commission and that kept tiding me over financially. I even got to stop waiting tables, which was real wonderful. But the gallery owner introduced me to Gary Sipe who was the director of the Atlanta College of Art Library. And eventually Gary hired me.

The very first day I was at the library he said, "Do you want to see something really cool?" I said, "Yeah." And he handed me the most wonderful book. It was an accordion fold. The paper was rich, with this gorgeous pale brown screen line behind it. The lines just varied from fold to fold. And in letterpress across that said "COMPARISON". And it changed my life. All of a sudden I realized that that's why I'm here. And Gary showed me these flat files with all these artists' books in them. He had been collecting from Art Metropole who were dealing a lot of European books.

So, after a year, I went back to school to get my second master's. And they offered me the job as the Trustee Librarian. And I worked there for eight years. By the time I left there was well over 1,000 artists' books in the collection. But there was very little interest on the part of the faculty with the exception of a few people. I was collecting the books by press.

And zines. I got very interested in Joseph Beuys early on and bought everything I could find of his.

**BF:** When did you start working at Nexus Press?

**JP:** Before I started working here the reputation of Nexus Press was already very good. I was getting phone calls from other librarians who had maybe seen the books but couldn't get a hold of any of them. They had placed orders but never received any books. I was having the same problem and the library was only ten blocks away from Nexus! They worked real hard but they couldn't make that second major step to marketing and distribution.

So, I got a call one day and there was an opening at Nexus. They needed an artist who could work in production but they also needed someone who could handle the administrative end of the press. And who could work with the marketing and the sale of the books. Keep all those records. And quite frankly, who could fill out orders.

The stars kind of all lined up. I got pregnant a month later. Poor Clifton, he was so attentive to that.

He had hired me to help out in production and I couldn't be around press chemistry. But we had a phenomenal year. We did a lot of work, including the Bill Burke book. [ed. note - *I Want To Take Picture*]

**BF:** How about a history of the actual offset printing presses at Nexus. They started with a little Hamada then eventually got the Heidelberg. How did that happen? How long did it take to raise the funds for the Heidelberg?

**JP:** That was incredible. It was a fund raising event that happened a month or two before I came over to Nexus. The Hamada as you know is really a duplicator. And to get four color work off that kind of press is extremely difficult. So much so that the Hamada Company had given the press these certificates of excellence. They were sort of floored at some of the books that were being produced. But over the years it was beginning to literally throw parts... it would sling them across the room.

At the same time some of the original grass roots organizations that had formed the original consortium had run their course. So some came together and formed Nexus Contemporary Art Center. They took the name because of the reputation of the Press - name recognition. And the press began to think, maybe we'd run our course. And maybe this is one way of knowing. We cannot afford the equipment. It seemed like it was harder and harder to do the same thing financially. And the word got out into the artist community in Atlanta that Nexus Press was considering folding because of lack of proper equipment. And the artists of Atlanta, and this is the truth, banded together, organized the auction and donated the work. It was the auction that bought the Heidelberg for the Press. I think it cost \$40,000. So, it happened in a night.

So that's how the press was purchased. It was a used press obviously. But for the most part we've had very little trouble with it. It took a while, like you said, it was running backwards, there were some electrical (laughs) problems at first. It was wild until it was up and running.

**BF:** How long had Clifton been at Nexus?

**JP:** Let's see, a little more history... Michael Goodman was the founder of the press and director for I don't know how many years, maybe six or eight. Clifton graduated from RISD, was a Southerner and knew about Nexus and came here first as an intern. He got a job in a commercial print shop then there was an opening for an assistant director, he slid into it at that level. Then, Michael

went on to open his freelance business and Clifton moved up to director. We worked together for two years, '86 to '88. And in '89 the city sold the building we were in to some developers and they leveled it and now it's a vacant lot with some rubble and weeds in it. If you can believe it.

**BF:** (laughs) No, I can believe it.

**JP:** So, the decision was sort of one that Nexus Press had faced a few years earlier. Have we run our course? But the board voted to make the move to these buildings. These buildings were the first industrial park of Atlanta - built after the city was burned to the ground during the War of Northern Aggression. When we moved, this building that the Press is in was the only one remotely inhabitable. All the rest were shells. But they made a full-scale commitment to the existing programs of Nexus Contemporary Art Center, which at that time and still is, Nexus Press, the Nexus Gallery, subsidized studio space and a performance/dance program. The buildings were bought outright. All the capital improvements have been made as we could make them. Nexus Press moved into this building but the rest of the programs had to rent other spaces around town until we could fix up the other buildings here. This area really was skid row - unfortunately, the abandoned buildings were the homes for the homeless. After we moved in and started to fix the place up, more city artists started to move in the area and then the developers followed. But other art organizations are buying into the area and artists' studios are developing in the other warehouses.

So, we paid \$2,000 to get the Heidelberg and everything else in the Press moved and there was a big celebration. And Michael came back as director. He chose to come back.

**BF:** Could you talk about funding. How does it happen?

**JP:** OK. There's a lot of times that people question why we're still affiliated with Nexus Contemporary Art Center. You know, why aren't we off by ourselves, and autonomous. Quite frankly, it would be very difficult with the size of the press staff we have and the amount of work that we do. We do our best to promote the market and sell the books but by no stretch of the imagination does it ever make money. We're truly non-profit. We're dependent on funding. The administrative staff at Nexus Contemporary Art Center does all the fund raising. I send them descriptive reports about the projects we do and they write the grants. They know how to write. They know the jargon.

We have four government agencies giving us money; federal with the NEA, the Georgia Council for the Arts, the County Arts Commission and the city of Atlanta.

**BF:** Is there no private funding at all?

**JP:** It was very difficult to get corporations interested in the first building, I mean with the scene there. The space here is a lot more swank. It's definitely changed. We've graduated into a full blown institution. The space is beautiful. The gallery space is wonderful. And it's much more palatable to a different audience. The corporations and individuals are interested in the gallery and educational programs. But they just don't connect to the books we do. They can connect with a gallery exhibition.

But as the government funding pie gets thinner and thinner the administrative staff is trying to get more corporate and individual giving. More memberships. There are between 15 and 18 hundred members. They go mostly to the gallery and openings. The Press is in production and it's disruptive for us to stop what we're doing and, "Hello, let me show you Nexus Press."

**BF:** Could you talk a little bit about how you advertise the books?

**JP:** When we're printing a book we always make a postcard about the book. The same colors are used, the same paper stock. We use some of the same images, text - it's kind of like a page of the book. When people get it in the mail it's like holding a page of the book. They get a sense of it.

But what wasn't in place for me was a viable mailing list. I've been working on it for nine years. It's truly that window to the world. That's how the Nexus Press reputation has been developed, because for nine years people have been getting these kinds of things in the mail. It's been harder to do these big mailings because postage is more expensive. When an artist comes on, first thing I ask them for, talking to them on the phone, is, "When you come down here, bring your mail list." Because the first sales are to the artist's friends. Another phase of marketing is to have some kind of event, a book signing, if at all possible. And a big mass mailing. So, for a period of three to five months, we get the majority of response on the book. And, in theory, we should do a catalogue at least biannually. But it's very difficult to do that much work and be making books at the same time.

**BF:** You have some very good interns here. Alan Carr was here, now he's up in New York working as an illustrator, Berwin Hung is doing some interest-

ing books. How do you advertise for the internship program?

**JP:** Word of mouth and reputation. I don't advertise my internship program at all. The interns come from all over. Some are artists but mostly it's students. The students in our area can get credit for their time here. The majority of my interns come from Atlanta College of Art, Georgia State, Emory, the University of Georgia, both graduate and undergraduate programs.

They need to be self motivated. I train them to assist us in a number of areas - the darkroom, the press area, mailing books out, doing binding, stripping. They are assigned areas to keep clean. We all help with the cleaning. I clean the commode as well as everyone else. We all share the same activities. They don't run the press, but they assist the printer on the press. They get a strong sense of what's happening. And how you can treat that big hunk of metal as an artistic tool. We try to get them to see that offset can be a printmaking medium. As a discipline. And for graphic designers it's good seeing it in action because it gives them a stronger sense of what they're designing for.

**BF:** The openness of Nexus Press is one thing that really strikes me. You let people come in here and try new things. And your enthusiasm for the books is so great and you have a wide range of things that you approach here.

**JP:** I'll accept a lot. I love to be shocked, you know? I feel that part of our mission here at Nexus Press is that this is a place where an artist can fail. I really believe that and I don't want to lose touch with that.

**BF:** When you say fail, you want them to examine the process? Explore the medium of offset artist books?

**JP:** Push it. Absolutely push the margin. I don't really enjoy some artists coming in and plopping down some camera ready art and expecting us to reproduce something or print something. I like for every step to be a primary step. And you use a word that is right on the money; de-mystify... to de-mystify these processes for the artist in order to enable them. To give them that kind of awareness so that when they leave Nexus they have more than just a book that's been published. I want them to go out and take that experience, and make a great book.

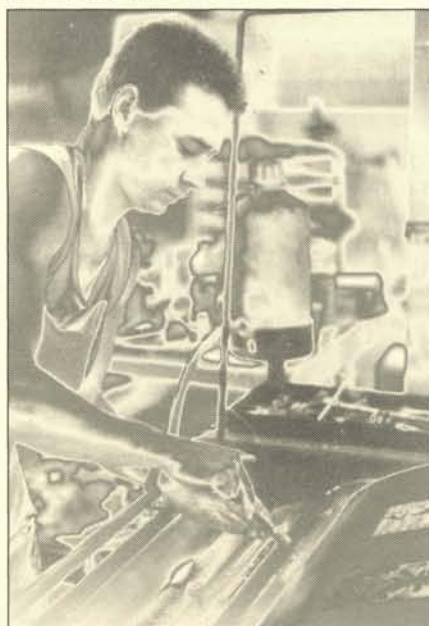
I have artists that come in here, and they immediately start calculating in their head, how much money they could make. And I tell them, "Get over that one. You're setting yourself up for failure. If you

think in terms of money you're coming to the wrong place."

The fact that you're getting to make a book is an incredible thing and it's a living thing. And it will spread all over the world. It will always live every time it's opened up. That's why I set up the standing order program with my friends in the libraries, to know that the books were going to be placed in collections where they could live for a long time and have access to larger audiences. And it's preserved in the public memory.

*End*

Chad Latz changing a plate on the Heidelberg - Nexus Press



## ARTISTS' STATEMENTS

Helen Douglas and Telfer Stokes have been making books individually and in collaboration with one another under the imprint of Weproductions since 1971. They generally do most of their own book production, including printing on a Multi-Lith offset press, at their home in Scotland. *Real Fiction* was co-published with Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester. *Desire* was co-published with Nexus Press, Atlanta.

### THE TWO I'S WITHIN THE WE

Why and How I Make Books

by Helen Douglas

I first became interested in books as a visual medium while at university. Studying Art History largely through reproductions alerted me to print, the page, and the book. These became part of my experience in looking, and in disseminating visual ideas. Simultaneously I became aware of artists using journals and books in a primary way to make art. In notebook form I began to investigate word as mark, paper, and pagination.

*Waverly Superfine* made in the Autumn in 1971 is an example of this. I liked the compact, intimate quality of a book and the fact that I could contain a visual idea within its pages. The one off books I made at university were silent and private, shared with a close friend Martin Attwood, who later put together the British Council Artists' Bookworks exhibition in 1975. Through Martin I learnt of Telfer's work and his making of *Passage*; through Martin, Telfer also learnt of my ideas.

It was not until after university in 1974 that I first published. *Threads* made public the intense privacy and silence I had found in the book. In common with the ear-

lier one off books was the use of flat book scale objects contained within (and through) the page which provided the means of exploring with printing aspects of book form. I saw *Threads* as minimal; someone described it as virginal.

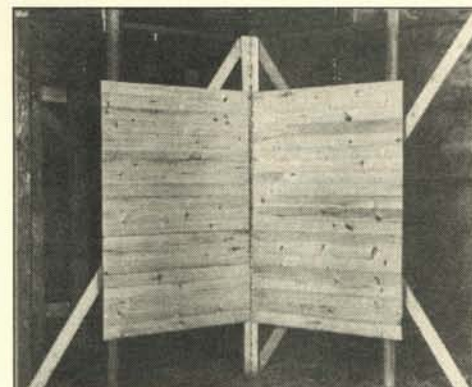
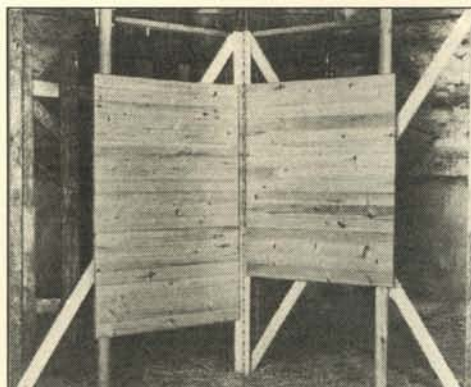
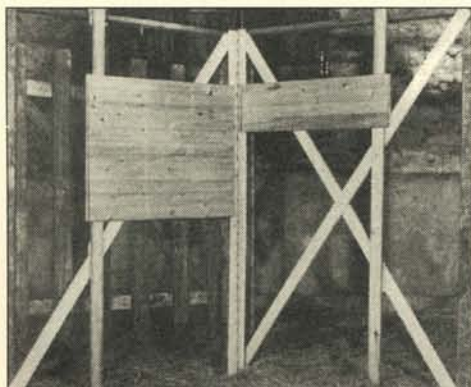
Telfer and I met in the book. As printer's cliché we mirrored and played on each other's ideas. There seemed an inevitability that we would collaborate. To join Weproductions was to accept unlimited edition publishing, the paper back format, offset printing and working with sequence and combining sequences (the train/thread of thought). To be open within the tightly defined format to different levels in making and interpretation of books was a principal. It meant working with the camera — which I had — and thinking in tone and dimension rather than line and flatness.

In the early collaborations we relied heavily on word and pictographs of pages to communicate and link our ideas. We would script the entire book, make sets with the page proportion and book structure in mind and then shoot from the eye using two cameras, one taking the left page, the other the right. As female and male we used objects and the binary structure of the book to cross over and explore each other and our own animus/anima. All the collaborations, and indeed some of the non collaborative work has involved us in this process. At times this way of working has got quite out of hand. I have felt plundered and Telfer has felt robbed.

*Loophole*, our first collaboration, was an investigation of the three levels of mind, body and spirit; through, in, on, and over. The animation of objects explored in conjunction with the movement of the camera, word, and the table of contents — all elements already established in Telfer's previous books — were the means by which we developed the narrative thread. Following on, *Chinese Whispers* conceived as a country book devel-

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The following are six sequential turns from *Chinese Whispers*, 1976. Weproductions, (Telfer Stokes & Helen Douglas)





oped further this theme of levels in narrative. Wedged within cupboard — built to the proportions of the open book, as metaphor for the tree of life — were the three levels of underground on the ground and over; each was explored through objects with a spiralling loop of the camera and the use of vignettes in colour.

The one idea nature of **Stells** and **Clinkscale** spelled the end of our first phase of collaborative work. Telfer in his own way rejected this type of book. I for my part had felt confined by the format and compelling but relentless nature of the narrative sequences in the paper back series; **Stells** — worked into the same format as **Threads** — was made to recapture the stillness I had originally found in book. At this time I had also begun to print fabrics using halftone. I had a need to make something less in the head, more in the body, something more sensual and directly tactile. **Clinkscale**, in its physical objectness, colour and rhythmic breathing reflects this mood for change.

**Mim**, stemming from the second phase of our collaborative book making, drew on the experience I had gained from working with textiles as well as my teaching in Design History. The use of a text - already introduced by Telfer into the **Mill Board** series - freed up the visual sequence, and became in its relationship to image an interesting part of book form that I felt drawn to working with. A discursive text, stories, photo shots of pattern in displayed clothing and urban frontage became the book set up, spliced together with surgical knife. The physicality of paper, its levels of surface, opacity and transparency rather than the concept of paper became integral to the meaning and the perception of **Mim**, as also the quality of print surface itself. The mechanical, "no hands" quality of offset printing, a principal of the earlier paper back series, had by this time been superseded by an awareness for ink and print through both

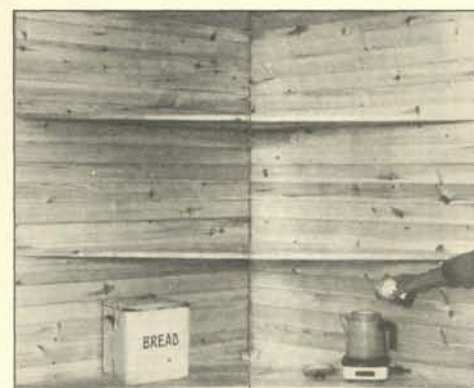
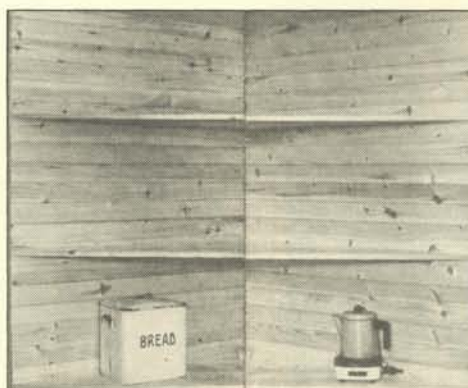
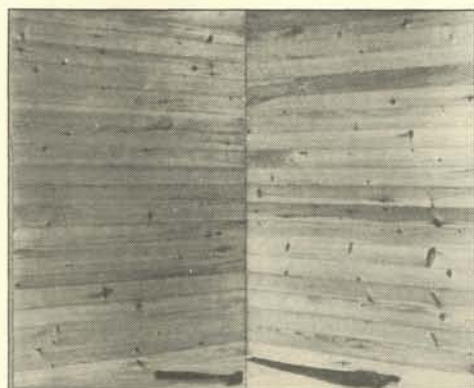
our involvements with printing and the setting up of the press.

While in the 70's photographs were taken with the page proportion and book space and structure in mind, by the 80's photographs were taken also with an understanding of what could be achieved with the process camera/negging and the printing press. Photographs were taken with the printed page in mind.

The second phase of collaborative work also saw a different way of working together. Whereas in the early books we relied heavily on words and sketches to script our ideas in **Mim** and **Real Fiction** the books evolved as we made them. We both gathered material and pooled our resources. In **Real Fiction**, the need to re-encapsulate bookness as a constructed place meant once more working with sets. Book places emerged in the making, one page and place leading to another. Neither of us made many working notes for this book. The birth of our son Laurie and my reading of eighteenth century picturesque theory — to gain theoretical understanding of the aesthetic of texture and broken form as distinct from a classical aesthetic of ideal beauty — enabled me in the grotto sequence to find in the movement between inside and outside a metaphor for my own body. Holding the open book became for me a mirror of my creative expression, folding in and containing while also opening and projecting outwards through the published form.

**Yarrow Cooks**, marking the third phase of collaboration, was in its origins conceived as a fund raiser for the school Laurie attended. To pull together and acknowledge in bookmaking the precarious, fragmentary nature of my life at that time, as mother, sometime wife (Mrs. Stokes)/sometime collaborator, maker, and lecturer (Helen Douglas), soon became part of my intention. Making **Yarrow Cooks** enabled me to explore further my interest in still life begun in fabrics and make public the domestic

contd., page 10



Helen Douglas, contd., from page 9

domestic interior space of motherhood, wifeliness, kitchen, and cooking as feminine space within the gendered cookbook genre. Norman Bryson's essay "Still Life and 'Feminine' Space" in *Looking at the Overlooked* provided considerable inspiration, and a determination that this book should not be overlooked and should be considered by our public as an Artists' Book. Most of the objects I chose for the children to draw I have a close affinity with. Some date back to my own childhood and were borrowed from my mother, others appeared in the corner cupboard of *Chinese Whispers*, many are imbedded in our daily life at the Mill. Struck by the line drawings Laurie made of objects in the kitchen, often while I was cooking, I immediately saw the potential for a visual book, printed in line (rather than halftone), when the idea of a cookbook came up at the Yarrow PTA. Encouraging children to look at and draw in line the familiar kitchen and culinary objects they would also have encountered in their own homes, resulted in an animated, tangible directness of drawing which Telfer responded to and we then transposed into the book with as much immediacy and upfrontness as possible. The drawings rarely sit back in the page and as visual images tend to dominate, as we intended, over the recipes in the book.

The experience of working with children and a rediscovery of the clear simplicity of line drawing and printing provided the necessary spark to set old unresolved ideas for *Water on the Border* in motion once more. To conceive of and then to go to China, and experience Chinese culture in Hangzhou, gave the much needed inspiration for an unconscious, lurking dream to surface and take form in the book. The physical flow of water taking over from where the 70's train of thought left off continues the fluid-

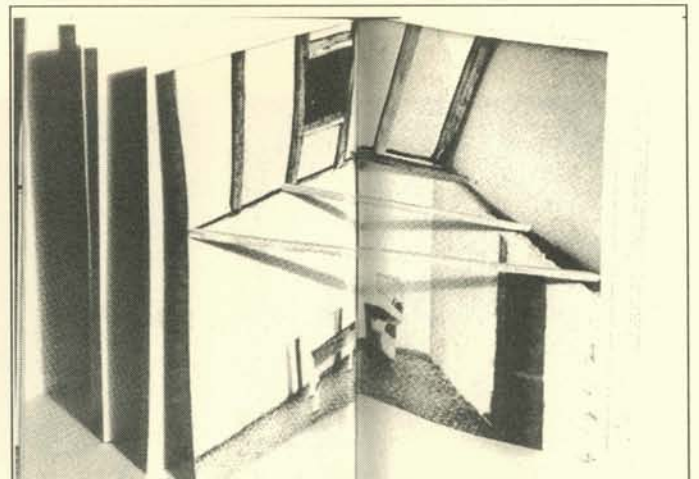
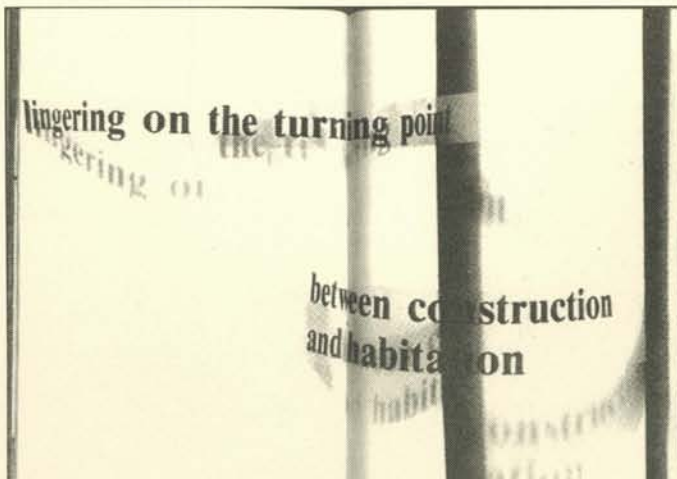
ity of movement from inside to outside, unconscious to conscious, that I have experienced in making books and more recently in dance. Through dance — by this I mean authentic movement — I have found a way of using the camera as an extension of my inner self. Feeling with my body using the projection and aperture of the lens, I have been able to touch and draw, tracing images into the body of the camera itself and the book beyond.

As images of plants and trees — rendered in ink and crayon — developed in the drawing classes, so too did the images of water, both in part, in response to each other. It remained to find a device of linking these and a text successfully together to achieve a confluence between them all and the sense of flow across pages and through the book. Chinese books and bamboo construction provided the inspiration for this device, which in its metered rhythm recreates in book form our experience of Su Causeway on West Lake, Hangzhou.

Book making forms a central part of my life, although I don't always make books, and at times other work of a more academic nature assumes more prominence. I make books not out of habit, but because I think and feel book. I am always astonished how the book form continues to lend and re-invent itself for the different expressive needs that I have. When ideas and feeling, which lie dormant or spring to consciousness in a disparate way suddenly well up and pull together inside, in relation to outside me and the book, then there is no escape; a book gets made. I never take books for granted, nor do I take for granted Telfer's own complete dedication to books which has kept the form open to me in the three phases of our collaboration.

End

The following are four sequential turns from *Real Fiction*, 1986, Weproductions (Telfer Stokes & Helen Douglas) & Visual Studies Workshop



## The Why & The How I Make Books by Telfer Stokes

The first book came about as a result of a visit that Martin Attwood and I made to New York in 1971. He suggested that we do a book together about the trip. This was not the first time the idea of making a book had come up in a conversation. On this particular occasion instead of letting the idea slip I started to put a book together. Everything was new to me. I had hardly used a camera before. What I found thrilling was the discovery that I could "get there straight away" that by doing a book you could capture a moment, a nuance, the thing that was in the air at the time. I wanted to say -- this is where it is -- right now .

The fact that it didn't turn out quite like that was because all sorts of other things came into play that had to be taken into consideration and I will list with short explanations the things that have been gone into on previous occasions and I will attempt to define other concerns that have not had an airing.

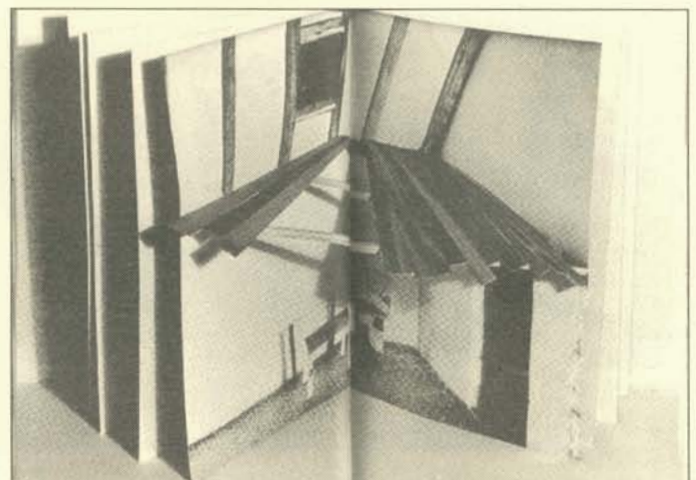
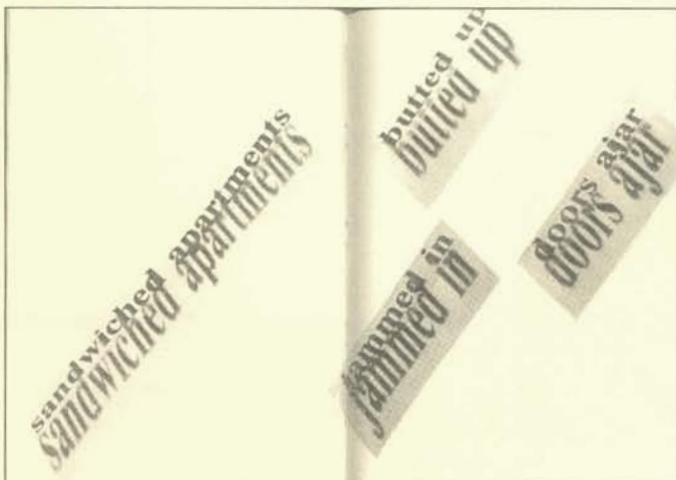
Briefly my approach to book in the beginning was defined by "Book form". Because the open book is divided down the middle by the spine every aspect of book is informed by this binary structure. The next step was defining the illusionary depth of the page with the photograph. I established the idea of the water mark as being "In the page" (a watermark was photographed and lined up to print front and back on the same sheet of paper). "On the page", a photo as it were lying on the page of the book, and "Over the page" where the bled photo included not only what was supposed to be

established as "the page" but also all the props and everything that was not supposed to be seen.

Because the incentive was so structural the actual content was for the most part what was to hand, tools in the studio or objects on the kitchen table. Because of the way a book works with its sequence of pages, the objects would make their appearance and become animated as the viewer turned the pages. I was very concerned that a book should attempt "the whole picture", that it should contain "levels" as already defined by the paper example but also levels of interpretation, that a book could be looked at different times and interpreted differently. For that reason I reckoned that a book should be a certain length otherwise there was not enough room to develop an idea or to take that idea as far as even to destroy it. I have considered at various junctures over the last 22 years, would I not "get there quicker" with video or film and this still remains a consideration to replace the camera. I still want to end up with the book object that can be handled, transported, and viewed in as many different circumstances and locations as possible with no further reliance on anything that you plug in other than the viewer's mind and senses.

Until the collaboration with Helen began, the reference to ideas was made in various note books, with another person "to speak ideas to", this procedure changed, I saw the collaboration as another aspect of the binary nature of book making. I remember being convinced that this collaboration had the makings of something quite exceptional, when I explained that I had this thing about a wheelbarrow which I wanted to wheel into a book (**Loophole**) that I saw the barrow like

contd., next page



the mind on a wheel. This didn't seem ridiculous to Helen, we shared a common sympathy for objects although this didn't necessarily mean that our interpretations were identical, in fact the combination of sympathy and different interpretations has kept us interested and fascinated in what one of us is going to come up with next and what the other one is going to do with it, for a very long time.

The introduction of a text to what were primarily visual books was a development which released the visual sequence -- it was possible to fill in the awkward gaps where a series of visual connections had been made with words. But there were much more basic things that could be done. Both **Spin Off** and **Young Masters and Misses** begin with sounds which have to be "sounded". In fact the reading of **Spin Off** relies on the words and sounds being read aloud.

The basis of the relationship of text to image in our books is one of "antagonistic synthesis". This refers to the relationship between photograph and caption as seen say in a newspaper. If the photograph is looked at and read before the caption, your reading of that enactment is different from the caption that sits underneath it. Yet inevitably there is some sort of connection between them, whether intentional or not. This was the model that we used initially when a text was first introduced.

Both **Mim** and **Real Fiction** were "constructed" as were the earlier books particularly **Loophole** and **Chinese Whispers**. Large scale sets were made up and what in a sense happened on the stage was photographed. With **Chinese Whispers** the actual construction of the set is shown in its stages on the way to making a corner cupboard. This is photographed so that it is located exactly in the spine of the book and the height and length of the cupboard was built to correspond with the paperback proportions 7" x 4".

The first time a wedge shaped construction occurs is in the first book **Passage** (the rebuilding of the corner of an existing room photographed in stages to the end

when it was knocked down). Everything on that occasion was built to the proportions of the camera frame. The construction that takes place within the pages of **Real Fiction** is in a sense happening to the actual pages of the book that the viewer is looking at, there was no script or choreography for this "set up".

The model for **Mim** was a manikin, we took it to a friend's house and dressed it with whatever clothes that person could provide. It then became a search for clothes, the environments of the clothes shops provided clues for what became the backgrounds. Whether the clothing informed the mind and the eye for a background or the background inspired the search for clothes is very hard to say. The point was that all the photography became "the material" and with a text and different textured papers the book was "put together". This procedure of "putting together a book" came about initially from actually keeping the separate elements that made up the book apart (**Young Masters and Misses**) until the moment for "putting it together" was arrived at.

Often a device has been used. The fencing wire in **Desire** holds the overlaid colours, text, and images which are stacked on each other. The scaffolding in **Water on the Border** pulls together the drawings and the photos but also gives the page more space by creating "the border".

With **Spin Off** the controlled formal conditions set up by the windscreen wipers limit what can be seen and predict a collision and chaos. This is eventually ordered again and control re-asserts itself by the end. The setting up of formal conditions which are then broken with is a theme that goes under different guises and developments through the books.

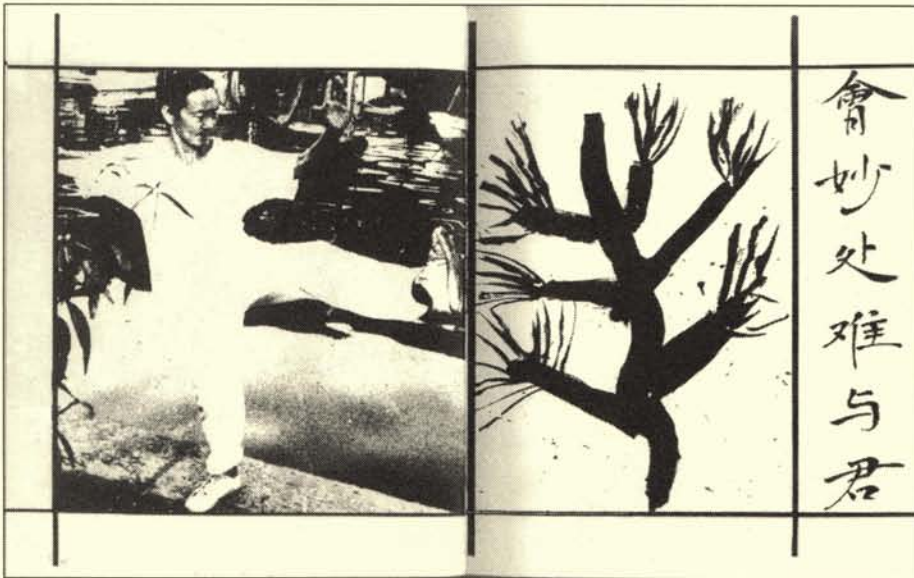
As a maker, I think the extremes should be present -- that you should dally on the brink in some way or another. The final outcome, the book, has to be an opportunity taken, not missed.

End

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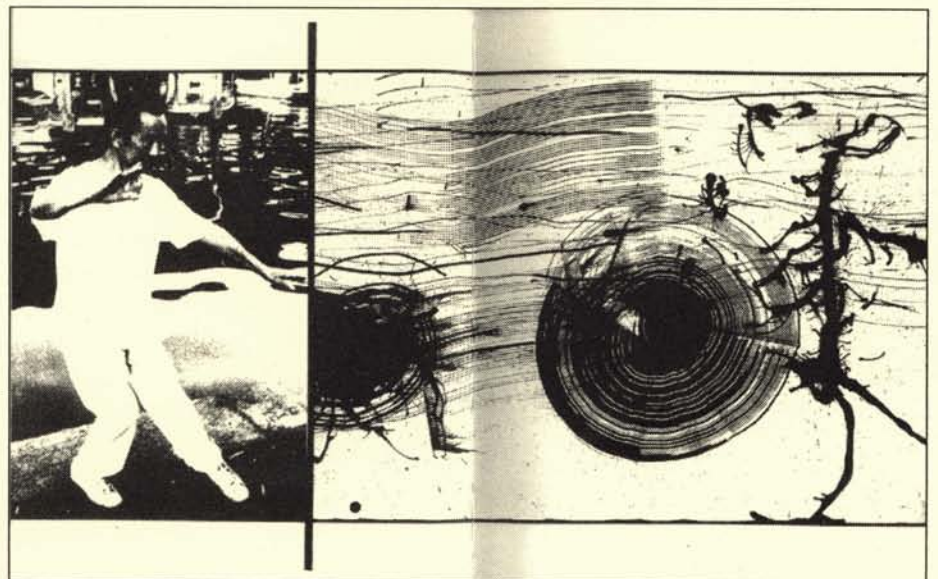
The images on the next page are a three page sequence from **WATER ON THE BORDER**, 1994, Weproductions (Telfer Stokes & Helen Douglas)

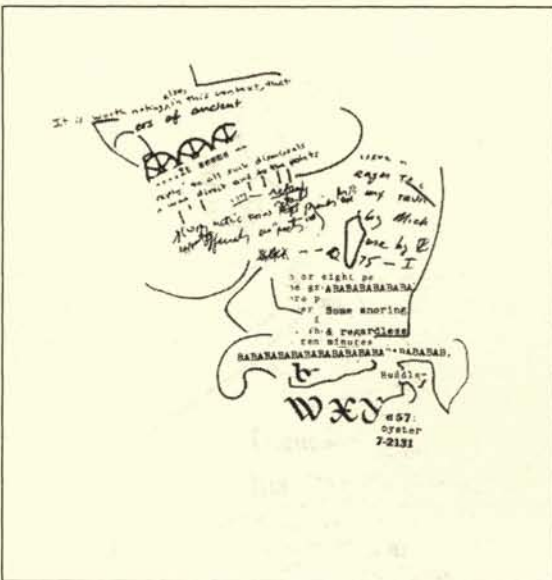
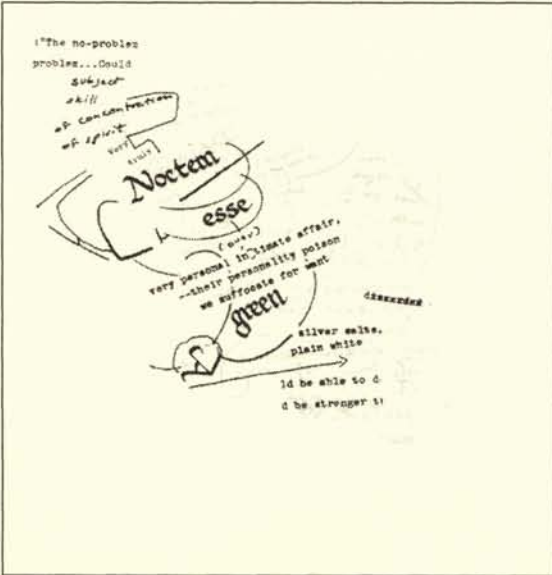
Drawings are by Scottish & Chinese primary school children, with translations of six Chinese poems into Scots by Brian Holton.



會  
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<p style="text-align: center;">BOUZIN MA LANE ANEATH THE MUNE</p> <p>amang the flouers wi a pig o whisky bouzin ma lane wi ne'er a frein A lift ma gless ti cry the mune in ma sheddae, the mune, an me maks thrie the mune's nae great bouzer, tho an ma sheddae juist follaes uis about an inconstant cronic, a mune-sheddae</p>	<p>but speers in springtime they maun be! gin A sing, the mune shoogles back an forrit gin A dance, ma sheddae stotters aa about whan we're whiskified we're blithe thegither but gin we sober up we'll hae ti pairt sae we'll rant an ramble on forever gallivantin thegither the galaxie owre!</p>
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## WHY A BOOK IS NOT A PAINTING

Susan Bee

*For thousands of years... we have told ourselves tales and stories, and these were always analogies and metaphors, parables and allegories, they were elusive and equivocal; they hinted and alluded, they shadowed forth in a glass darkly. — Doris Lessing*

I made my first artist's book in 1978. *Photogram* was self-published and consisted of 6 full-page black and white offset reproductions of abstract photograms. From that humble beginning to 1995, when Granary Books published *Talespin*, I have been involved in a number of other artist's book projects, but mainly I've been painting paintings not making books. (That is, aside from working at numerous commercial design and editing jobs, raising two children and a husband, and editing, designing, and publishing *M/E/A/N/I/N/G*.)

Painting is a very different kettle of fish from a book. First of all, my paintings are one of a kind. They involve single-minded concentration, and focused work, on the surface and image of the canvas, with the gradual emergence over time of the final form of the painting. While the process is labor and time intensive, it was little preparation for the arduous exercise of hand coloring the edition of 40 books for Steve Clay's Granary Books.

In working on *Talespin*, the first question was the form of the book. I decided that I didn't want to do a collaborative work with a poet (which I had done several times in the past); I wanted to do my own book. During 1993-94 I had been doing a series of mixed-media works on paper that incorporated 19th century engravings. These were published as a little color Xerox book called *Liquid Perceptions*. For Granary, however, I wanted to do something different and more elaborate. I started out by making a series of 22 spreads in black and white suggesting different narrative scenes. These collages used images from 19th century ladies' magazines, 19th and early 20th century children's books, clip art, and other sources. The collaged elements were combined with ink and wash drawings and paintings on heavyweight watercolor paper. As I worked on each image, another one would occur to me, each image leading spontaneously to the next. There was no preplanning. Within the format given by the size of the page and with the stipulation of black and white—all else fell into place. After I finished the lengthy process of creating the 22 original drawings, I then worked out an order for the images

that created a fragmented, evocative, poetic narrative.

I was inspired by the melodramas and mysteries, with their wonderfully detailed engravings, published by the popular monthly magazines of the 1880's. I'm also fascinated with the plaintive and nostalgia-laden innocence put forward by illustrators of books for children. These images of childhood contrasted in my collages with the unexpected dangers and pitfalls of adulthood. The theme that emerged from this stream of associations was a Blakean loss of innocence and gaining of experience with a healthy dose of feminism and postmodern irony thrown in. This is embodied early in the book in the image of a hand with a gun shooting a rocking horse, while a child and his mother play with blocks. Behind them is a window framing the city skyline and beyond them the moon shines. [see page 19] The subthemes of the book are violence, desire, romance, procreation, sex, birth, death—expressionism leavened with grains of humor and fantasy. As I proceeded with the collages, I started to view the book as a *bildungsroman*—a spiritual, educational journey for the characters with new twists and turns on every page.

Woven throughout the book are collaged excerpts of verses from turn of the century and early 20th century children's books, instructions from drawing manuals for artists, poems by Christina Rosseti and Robert Louis Stevenson, and captions from children's activity books. These excerpts, though not present on each page, form the written text of the book. I was interested in the lyrical, rhyming, punning, utopian innocence of the verses for children. The underside of this is the didactic, moralizing, threatening aspect of both the verses for children and the parallel universe of the drawing manual instructions for budding artists. Both come complete with their hierarchy of do's and don't's and their implied punishments for stepping out of line.

This set of images was titled *Talespin* and so a title page, a cover image, and a colophon page were also created. We then decided, after much head scratching, to print these images offset on Rives BFK paper so they could be hand-colored with watercolor and gouache. This was in keeping with other books that Granary had published but it was a new approach for me. In the past my books had all been offset, Xerox, or letterpress with no additional hand-work from me. I had not been used to doing much work with watercolor—I've been working mostly with oil paints.

After the pages were printed, they arrived—or were dragged in many boxes and packages from SoHo Services on Greene Street in New York City to my stu-

dio a few blocks south in Tribeca. The images had altered considerably during the printing process. They were shrunken down to fit the paper size, the bumps of the collage, of course, had flattened out, and the overall effect was somewhat grayer than the original drawings. I then started to color the first few offset pages to create a prototype artist's proof. After many failed attempts to get anything resembling the colored dummy copy I had made with a Xerox of the original pages, I found myself at Pearl Paint buying new sorts of watercolors and trying out different types of paint. The offset inked paper absorbed the watercolor in novel ways and I had to become a kind of mad scientist to counteract these weird tendencies. After a lot of trial and error I came up with a set of proofs that pleased me fairly well. Since that point I have been engaged in making the first 20 copies of the edition. Because my hand coloring is so elaborate this has proved to be a time consuming and exacting task. I've never painted the same image over and over again in assembly line fashion. But this has proved to be the best way to proceed. So with the radio blasting away for company—I've been working my way through this labor intensive and decisively non-automated, non-technologically advanced project. I am attempting to make each page the same (though this goes against my anarchistic impulses) and I've been trying not to be too free-wheeling with the paint. All in all this has been a very educational experience and it's been quite a different way to spend the winter months. I've now got the first copy in hand. It has been beautifully bound by Daniel E. Kelm of the Wide Awake Garage in such a way that all the spreads can open out and lay flat. And someday I hope to finish the edition and get back to painting again.

End



## BACK TO BASICS: 3 Primers from Granary Books

Joe Elliot

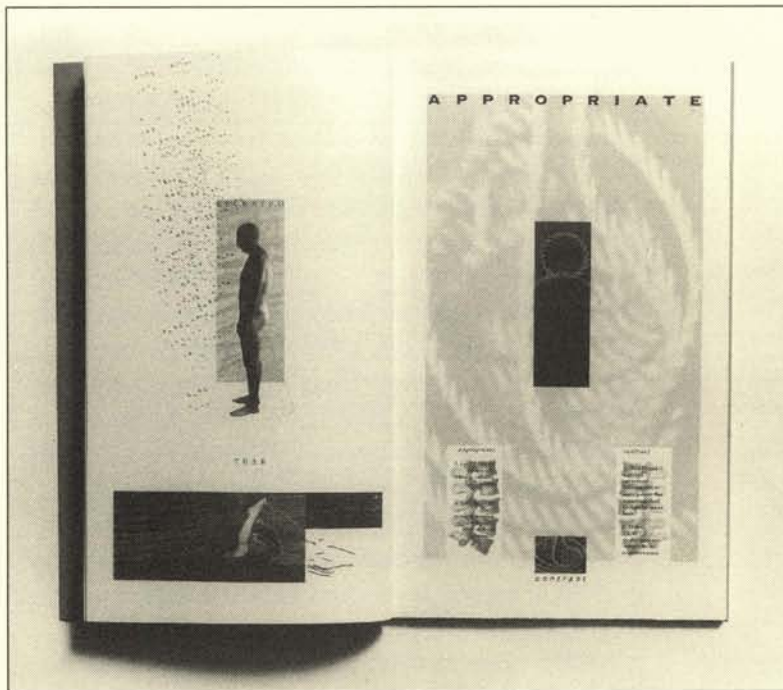
Talespin by Susan Bee

Abstract Refuse by Ed Epping

A Passage by Buzz Spector

primer 1. An elementary textbook. 2. A book that covers the basics of any subject.

primer 1. A cap or tube containing a small amount of explosive used to detonate the main explosive charge of a firearm or mine. 2. An undercoat of paint or size applied to prepare a surface, as for a painting.



Abstract Refuse, Ed Epping

Ed Epping's *Abstract Refuse* is subtitled *A Heteronymic Primer*. Like any good primer, Epping's covers its subject; it collects examples, postulates rules, and provides plenty of illustrations. And like any good primer, the modest, linguistic charge provided by focusing on this special group of words is used to ignite more ambitious, metaphysical pleasures.

Taking his cue from Duchamp, Epping sees his book as the first in a series seeking "prime words" which are "divisible only by themselves and by unity" and which he hopes "answer the conditions of a new language"<sup>1</sup>. Within this overall aim, the volume under review is structured according to "six stages of constituent and cultural memory" with images that offer a way of examining the "mechanics of remembering and forgetting"<sup>2</sup>. Heady stuff, indeed! Yet, Epping's treatment of these ideas always

seems natural and clear.

The first page introduces the book's scope and technique. Centered in a field of grey hatchings reminiscent of aerial maps or force fields, sits the heteronym, "cave". Above and below this word are its two glosses "beware" and "habitat". To the left of these, an upside-down man descends, standing on (hanging from) a disc. Curves and lines intersect and form boundries. The number "3" rests inside the top of a helix. At the bottom of the page, one hand points to the word "mother", another points to the word "father". Between the two lies the phrase "The Constituent Memory". Here, the heteronym serves as a talisman, bringing us back to our origins as persons and species: we are both in an actual cave and in the metaphorical cave of the womb. Just as two persons make a third, the doubling up of words creates a space for memory to exist in, and out of this memory spirals a new element, the number "3". Meanwhile, the heteronym's flipside is both commenting on the proverbially huge role fear plays in this primary, cave-dwelling stage, and warning us that this journey back and down, this descent of man, may not be undertaken without risk.

This interest in revisiting primal scenes via prime words is shored up by much of the book's primal scenery. As far as "concrete" images go, the list is short: vertebrae, rope, flint, axes, arms, hands, pencils, wood, tools, and a recurring everyman figure. This simplicity is complemented by the book's more "abstract" elements. Basic geometric figures: squares, rectangles, lines, grids, curves, spheres, circles, cones, helixes, etc; the graph paper endsheets framing the book; and the strange fields of maps or proto-markings, just about exhaust the contents. This pared-down roster of elements calls to mind the list of basic symbols at the back of another primer, Freud's *Introductory Lectures*.

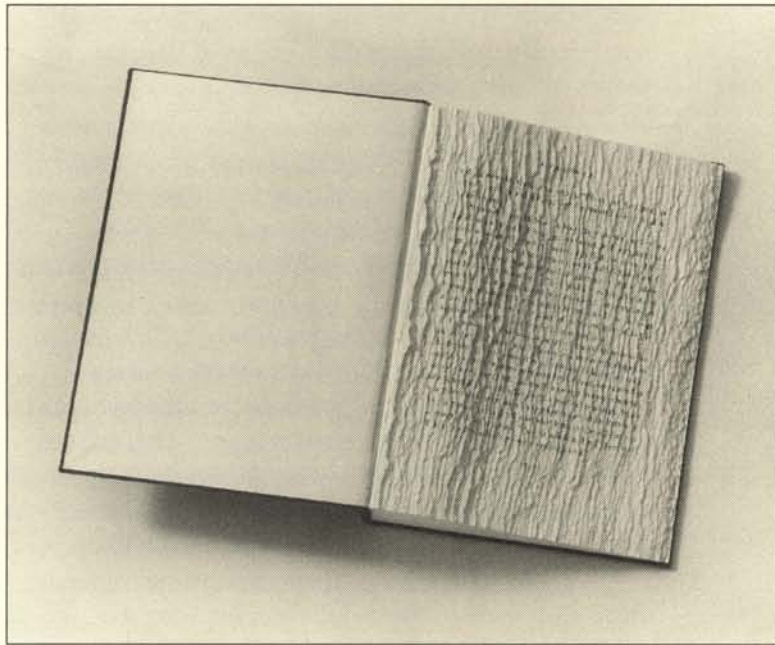
Like the world of folktales and dreams, where key elements unlock the subconscious, in Epping's world, memory is "a gate attached to the space it opens", and heteronyms, with their multiple coordinates, operate this gate and make travel on the book's grid possible. This kinship between dreams and memory is embodied in the book's "I". The eyes of this balding, naked and slightly-stooped everyman figure are always closed in a subdued, self-contained, attitude, as if he were dreaming up the cosmic field of markings he is both floating in and unconscious of. In this way, the book underscores the delicious distance between the mundane ground, the "as is", the here of memory, and the heavenly space, the "as if", the there it takes one to.

Clearly, Epping's is a poetics that believes in the ele-



mental power of words, and this power brings joy. In this respect, he's in good company. One is reminded of Allen Ginsberg's delight when, early in his career, he made the technical discovery that, if he took two words that were usually far apart, gutted connectives, and put them side by side, a bang would result. The greater the original distance, the greater the explosion. Or again, of poets like Robert Duncan or Gerrit Lansing, whose poems draw much of their strength from a devotion to the lore stored in the roots of words.

Finally, while one might expect a lot of costly hand-work in a book that takes this kind of etymological trip back to genesis, the conditions surrounding its production are not only post-lapsarian but absolutely up-to-date. Designed on a Power Macintosh 7100/66, printed on a Hewlett Packard 12000C/PS, and editioned open-endedly, **Abstract Refuse** has a desk-top-democratic and available feel that is entirely apt for a primer.



**A Passage**, Buzz Spector

passage 1. The process of elapsing. 2. A journey by land or water. 3. Obsolete. Death. 4. The right to travel on a ship. 5. The price paid for this. 6. A segment of literary or musical work. 7. A path, channel or duct. 8. An exchange of arguments or vows.

**A Passage**, Buzz Spector's latest in an ongoing series of book alterations, is also a primer. Yet, since the subject it

covers is books, Spector is faced with the dilemma of how a hand grasps itself. That is, a book as a vessel for the transfer of content doesn't work when the content is the (non)transfer of content. You might get an idea "about it", but because you're "in it" you can't "get it".

Spector's solution is drastically fundamental: harm the book. Wound it. Damage it so thoroughly that the reader can no longer step inside. Keep the viewer on the outside so that the viewer, not the book, is "about" the book, so that the book can be the book.

So what is a book?

To begin with, **A Passage**, like the found texts Spector altered in the past, presents itself as a representative artifact. The title itself is generic, suggesting that, had this one not been chosen, another passage would've sufficed as well. And its binding and typography, so unobtrusive and anonymous, would make it hard to pick out on a library shelf. Clearly, **A Passage** is everybook; yet as much as these production values efface themselves, this artifact aggressively confronts us with its disappearance from our culture.

By tearing pages in lessening widths, Spector produces a wedge-shaped cross-section of text that is tantalizingly illegible. Describing this process Spector writes, "The vestiges of letterforms revealed through the tearing were like the fragments of an unknown language whose forms were still visible but whose narration was hopelessly lost."<sup>3</sup> The book's traditional role as a repository for meaning has eroded. Here, Spector's joke is that, for many, looking at his wounded book is essentially the same experience as looking at one that appears whole. Both are unreadable.

What happened? One explanation looks to immediate factors. Our accelerated culture has created a proliferation of competing printed matter and media. Assaulted on a daily basis by television, propaganda, political double-speak, advertising, tabloids, computers, virtual reality, CDs, cellular phones, etc., the book is traumatized, has gone into shock, won't speak.<sup>4</sup>

Another focuses on the book's long-term decline. That the book's passage mentions a Rabbi is hardly incidental. One cultural guarantee for the value of words is religion. Creation is logos-centered and scripture backed up by God. It better have meaning or else! In **A Passage**, the Rabbi's story of the Talmud scholar who knows the precise location of every letter on every page, is shrugged off by Spector who says, "I'm no scholar then. These books only show what I've forgotten."<sup>5</sup> Such a faithful immersion in the world of books is no longer possible. Instead of the masterful accrual of knowledge in a given field, this experience is characterized by a gradual, ineluctable draining away.

Another bulwark was the Enlightenment. The philosophers' program of dividing the world into areas of knowledge that could be subdued and rationalized stamped books with an imprimatur. Knowledge was power; books altered our destiny. Yet, a century and a half later, atrocity and scientific uncertainties had thrown this doctrine of progress into question. In *Nausea*, Sartre's Autodidact, a kind of absurd descendant of Voltaire, sits in a library making his way through each volume in alphabetical order. Here, the pursuit of knowledge has become insanely ineffectual. Similarly, in an earlier piece, Spector alters an encyclopedia, tearing its pages and laying a long stone at its center, as if to illustrate the dumb weight that pins down the pages and prevents them from speaking. In light of the atavism to which the West succumbed, its no wonder its tongue turned to stone.

This progresslessness operates in other ways as well. To begin with, we're always on the same page, reading the same passage. The page number itself, 181, a kind of palindrome, two simple lines on either side of an eternity sign on its side, gives the reader the sense that it doesn't matter if he goes forwards or backwards, and that, in a sense, in the world of language, no matter where you are, you're forever on page 181.

Moreover, the way the passage begins in the middle of a sentence with a partial reference to Edmond Jabes foregrounds the idea that, in terms of books and language, we cannot get the complete picture, but are always "in medias res". On the literal level, when reading we are always learning the letter directly in front of us and unlearning the letter that came before. Books happen in time. Hence, there is "a passage" but no departure or arrival, no real beginning or end, just a field of words and books we are travelling through.

On the level of "meaning", there is a passage we must pay for this passage, and its amount is suggested by both the book's physical wounds and its allusion to Jabes: "Mark the first page of a book with a red ribbon, for the wound is inscribed at its beginning."<sup>6</sup> Reference leads to reference leads to reference and so on, so that all boundaries, all starting and stopping points are false, arbitrarily cutting the chain, leaving the first and last ones dangling, incomplete, bleeding, slowly draining the "whole" body of the text.

A few parting ruminations on the book's shape and use. Cuneiform, the letters used in ancient Sumerian, Akkadian, Assyrian, and Babylonian writing, means wedge-shaped. Wedges are used to drive things that go together apart; they upset the apple cart. A colter is a wedge-shaped blade on a plow that cuts the soil; if it were cutting into and turning over words it could be called culture. An axe wounds.

spin 1. To draw out and twist fibers into thread. 2. To relate imaginatively. 3. A state of mental confusion 4. The flight condition of of an aircraft in a spiralling, stalled descent.

Susan Bee's new book, *Talespin*, consists of collaged images taken in part from popular magazines of the 1880's and texts taken mainly from children's books and drawing manuals. These materials were printed offset in black and then hand-colored to produce a series of melodramatic tableaux which twist into a "bildungsroman - a spiritual, educational journey . . ." <sup>7</sup> This journey is a bleak one: loss of innocence and nature, submission of joy to labor, deepening isolation and anger, domestic violence, enslavement, death, all covered over by decorum, seems the norm for this coming-of-age story. That characters swoon, appear agitated and confused; that prosperous and proper lives seem plunged into a nosedive; that the book focuses a feminist light on the domestic arena, all serve to make its title more fitting.

Yet, despite the dark spin put on its subject, the book has a buoyant feel. To begin with, the bright watercolors that wash over the book's black structure foregrounds the artist's freedom over her material. Although many of the book's characters lose the ability to play, the book does not. Secondly, the book delights in appropriating juicy images and texts and exploding the narratives implied by these materials. A bildungsroman about bildungsromans, a primer about primers, *Talespin* is as much about unmasking the stories, arguments, and mixed messages which cloak experience as about experience itself. In short, growing up is the messy process of decoding stories about growing up.

The book's methods of decoding are basic. Each tableau is designed as facing pages, and often these two pages challenge each other. For example, on the right hand, a mother and son sit before a window playing with alphabet blocks. Through the window is a beautiful skyline. This conventional image of happy childhood is undercut by the one on the left of a hand-held, larger-than-life sixshooter pointing at a hobby-horse. Perhaps the message here is simply that peaceful, "family" activities are being threatened by a society obsessed with violence. Or perhaps it's not only that the image of the toddler and mother at play, protected from an outside world that figures only as idealized skyline, is threatened by the gun, but that the gun is the means by which the home is controlled, owned and protected from other guns. The ABC's of civilization learned at gunpoint. Play as compulsory acculturation. Childhood as hard labor in service of the system.

Another tactic is to let images turn an otherwise inno-

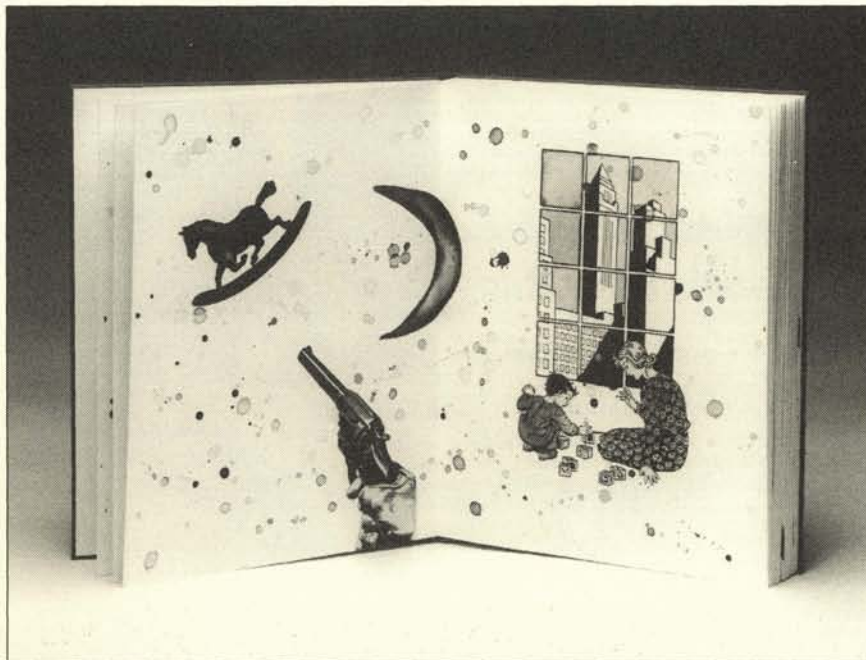
cent text into something problematic or sinister. Thus, on one page a children's poem talks about going for a long walk to a cool stream in a green meadow where everyone can drink their fill. A visual stream of freedom flows from this text, meandering across the page, only to run into a woman painting at her easel, copying but removed from the landscape, and a child sitting in a sofa, the place where she presumably heard the jingle. She has her outdoor experiences indoors, in a controlled environment. Moreover, as if the girl were mother of the woman, the woman's painting, since its portrayal is smaller in scale and less central on the page, derives from the girl's dolls and rhymes. Here, the message is Janus-faced: while preserving the dream of freedom and fulfillment, culture may actually serve to deepen a person's bondage and diminishment. Is this a true flowering or has this vital force become mere ornament, something to be cut and put in a vase.

That the issue for Bee is about control over these cultural stories is made clear on the page where a boy sits before a wondrous assemblage of cogs and wheels. Underneath is the following jingle:

Oh! where are the merry, merry Little Men  
 To join us in our play?  
 And where are the busy, busy Little Men  
 To help us work to-day?

Opposite this piece of socializing propaganda is an ambiguous silhouette: are the two children dancing or is one whipping the other? Below this scene, three puns are illustrated: a diamond ring rings; a penpoint points; and a dish mop mops. The initial joy in the silliness of the verbal play gives way to the sad realization that in all three cases, this joy is being used in the service of "productivity". Ringing calls to mind alarm clocks and church bells. Pointing is usually an act of management and control. Mopping, of course, is a domestic chore. Thus, all stories or words, no matter how ebullient and wondrous their origins, can be put to work. The question then is always, for whom?

The book's visual echos can be complex. On the first page a woman stands inside a rectangle floating out in space, several planets removed from the sun. A huge hummingbird with a long, sword-like beak, seems to be closing in on her. This picture of utter isolation and vulnerability is refigured to make a tactical observation about power struggles. Later in the book, two women are fighting in a rectangular area while, on the opposite page, quite unnoticed by the two women, a beekeeper makes off with the



Talespin, Susan Bee

hive and its honey. He is wearing such thoroughgoing armor that he appears faceless. Perhaps the visual metaphor here is that, while isolating victims from each other is excellent protection for the oppressor, the best is putting them together and having them fight.

When juxtaposing or refiguring won't do, Bee denatures a known image so we can see it anew. Near the book's end, the tableau of a mother and her three children sitting together is made strange by the brightly colored, highly-stylized, non-western images surrounding it. The rusting, industrial northeast mutates into rain forest. Here, the abstract flora crowning the mother's head, calling to mind the flower growing out of the girl's head on the title page, is what is "on her mind", what she is explaining to her children. Perhaps this is *Talespin's* aim: that, grim as much of the book's material is, the process of exposing these deadly, official versions of growing up creates room for more vital ones. In light of this, the earlier image of the mother urging her daughter to light a match to the sugary images of a boy and a girl signifies not the loss of innocence but freedom from stultification.

#### Notes:

1. Granary's press release for Epping's book
2. *ibid*
3. Maria Porges, Buzz Spector, Newport Harbor Art Museum, 1990. (A pamphlet giving an overview of Spector's work for his show in the New California Artist series.)
4. *ibid*
5. Buzz Spector, *A Passage*, Granary Books, 1994.
6. *ibid*
7. Susan Bee, Why A Book is Not a Painting, *The Journal of Artists' Books*, spring 1995.

"All the News  
That's Fit to Print"

# The New York Times

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NEW YORK, SUNDAY, AUGUST 21, 1994

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## Making Nuclear Arms Is Easier Than It Looks, New Study Says

### Stricter Limits to Guard Plutonium Are Urged

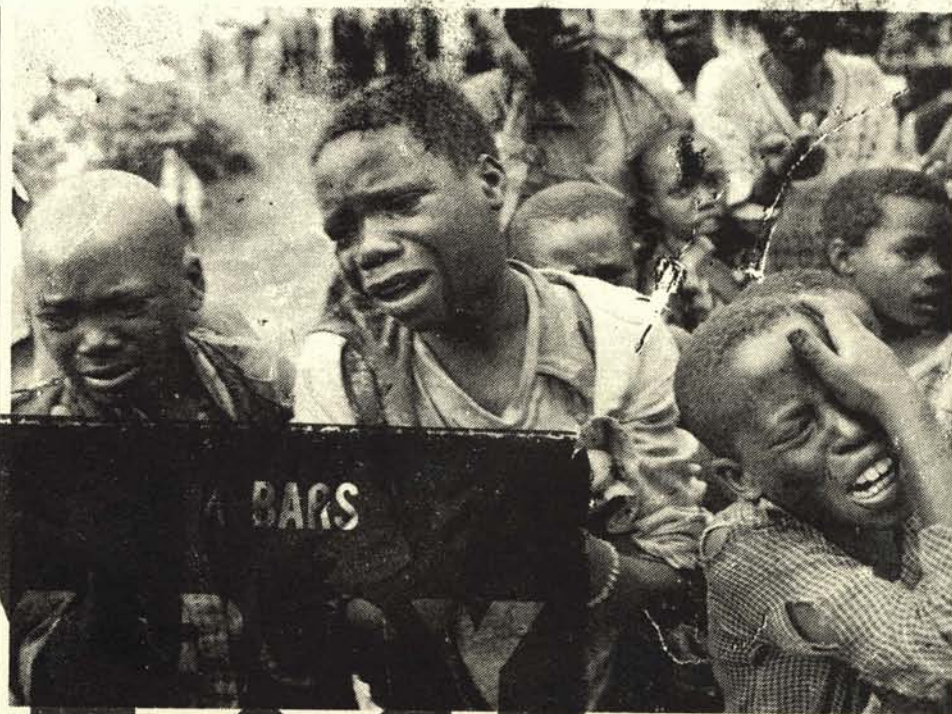
By WILLIAM J. BROAD

Building a nuclear bomb takes so much less plutonium or uranium than generally believed that new safeguards must be adopted as part of a global tightening of defenses against the criminal diversion of atomic materials, private experts argue in a new proposal.

For plutonium, the experts say the

Council and a co-author of the report, said, "The criteria now in use are out of date, technically erroneous and clearly dangerous in light of the recent seizures."

Resistance to the proposals is likely, however, because enhanced safeguards could be costly to enforce and might hamper or cripple some use of



Associated Press

...rote the Federal Government...  
...United Nations last week to...  
...uch downward revisions. At a...  
...conference tomorrow in Wash...  
...the group is to make those...  
...public along with a report ar...

...new proposal...  
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...ve ultimately involved four kilo...

**Zaire Closes Border With Rwanda**  
...ing with Zairian soldiers to let them pass...  
...its border with Rwanda there. Page 14.

**To Charge or Not to Charge?**  
**Mexicans Are Young to Pay**

**House Nearing An Agreement On a Crime Bill**

By KATHARINE Q. SEELYE  
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Aug. 20 — After a marathon bargaining session, Democratic leaders in the House tonight appeared close to agreement with a group of moderate Republicans on a \$30 billion crime bill, but they faced a sudden, separate challenge from another bipartisan coalition.

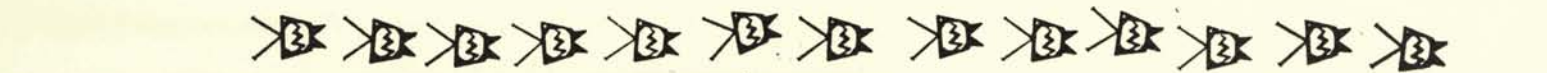
In talks that lasted all Friday night and into this evening, the Democratic leadership agreed to make deeper cuts in preventive social programs, which are fr... President



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Much closer to home, the Adler Nuclear Facility is under attack by — HEY — WHAT WAS THAT?!

LIZARDS! GIANT LIZARDS!! THEY'RE INVADING THE NEWSROOM!

LOOK OUT! IT'S COMING RIGHT FOR US!!

Really —  
I had no idea

~~Odysseus eye but which~~  
Odysseus eye

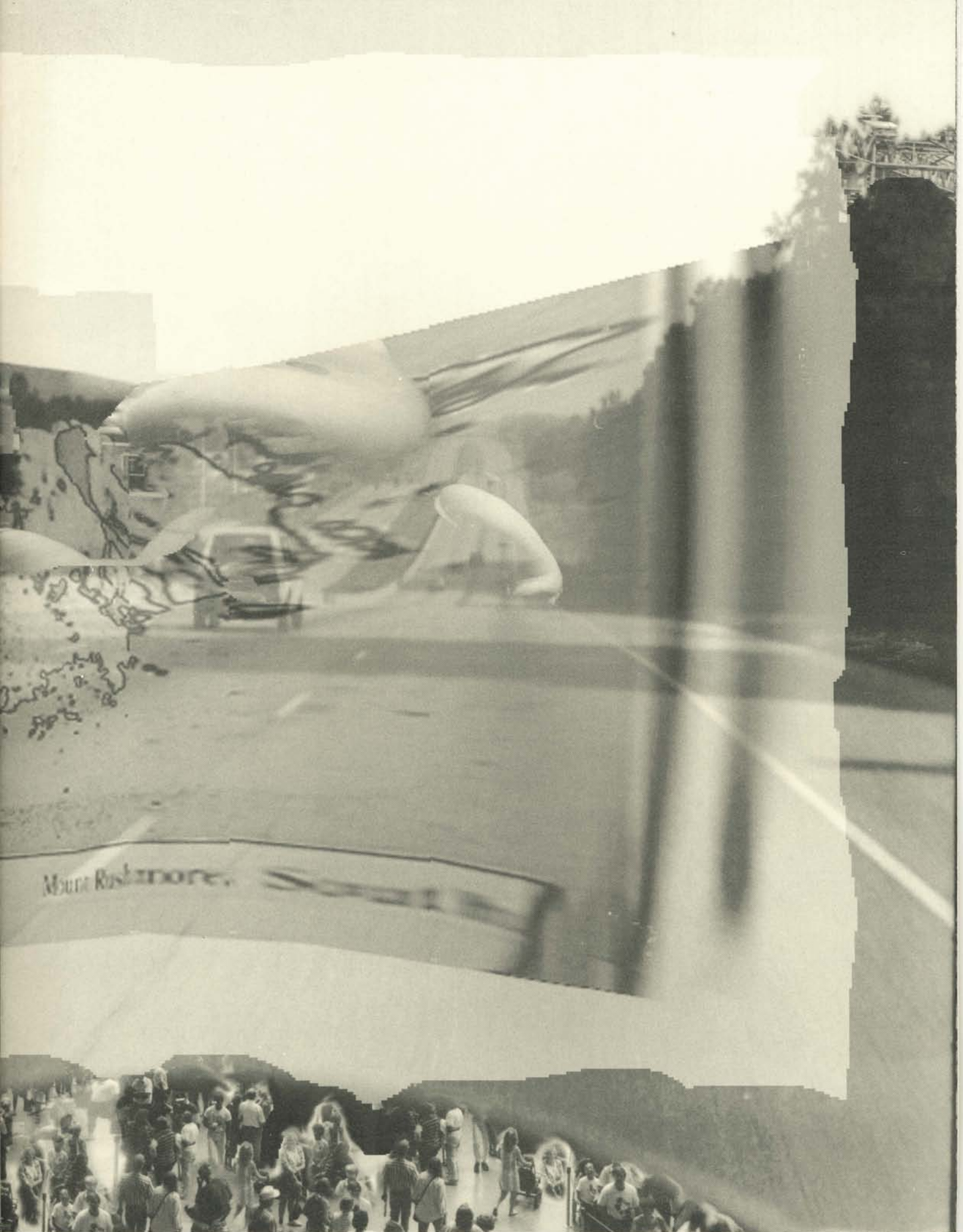
RESIDENT MOVES  
FOR PUNISH CASTRO  
OR CUBAN EXODUS  
SH TO RELATIVES ENDS  
cy Responding to the Tide  
Refugees May Increase  
the Misery of





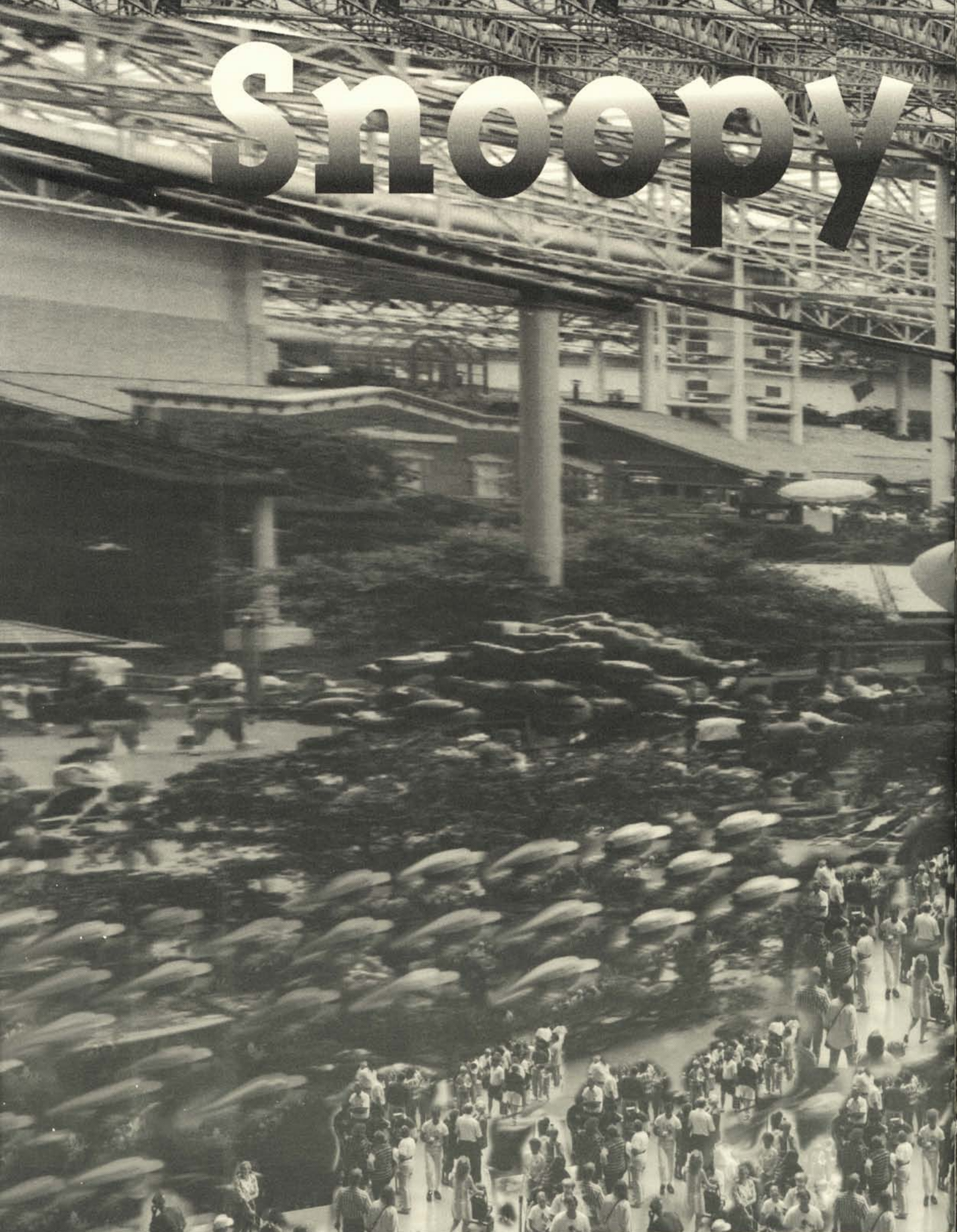
*Ford Explores America at Mall of America*





Mount Rushmore.

# Snoopy





# MOLOGH





**“Poetry, fettered, fetters the human race. Nations are destroyed, or flourish, in proportion as their poetry, painting, and music are destroyed or flourish!”**

That from our old buddy William Blake, who, by the way, was accused of the capital crime of sedition in merry olde England but fortunately for him (and us) was acquitted.

During the past month or so JD and I have been looking at a lot of artists' books in various collections including; three at Yale, the New York Public Library, Printed Matter Bookstore, Riva Castleman's (not) artists' books show at MoMA, the National Museum of Women in the Arts, Bookworks at Washington Project for the Arts, a couple of private galleries in New York City, and our own collections. A few thoughts occurred to me while looking at the burgeoning field. But first, the Blake quote; it comes from the copy of his book *Jerusalem, The Emanation of the Great Albion*, 1804, at the Yale Center for British Art in New Haven. It seems appropriate in relation to the goings on of Gingrich and his gougers in DC who would remove the paltry sums allocated to the arts while continuing to fund with huge sums of our money big corporations researching the possibilities of increased kill ratios with new and expensive military hardware. We are a great nation. The tax breaks and subsidies for the rich and the corporations are paid from the dwindling paychecks of the myopic middle class staring transfixed at the legerdemain of tv commercials. We believe. And even if we don't believe, we can probably get enough credit to own a part

of it, briefly. I am convinced that if more people knew that they could tap their own creative potential the world would be a better place. ART. BE ALL YOU CAN BE. Take from the military industrial complex and give to the arts. Write your representatives and senators and let them know that you don't want funding to be cut from the arts but you do want funding cut from the military.

The burgeoning field of artists' books, indeed. There probably are more artists producing more artists' books right now than at any time in history. More collectors, public and private, are buying books. Even so, you can still go to Printed Matter Bookstore and buy seminal but relatively unknown works for the same price they were selling for in the '70s and '80s. Sales of books have gone up but, ironically what's really helping Printed Matter are the sales of boxed portfolios of photographs by blue chip SoHo artists.

### **BOUTIQUE BOOKS**

#### **Old genres re-packaged for a new market**

We noticed a rather disturbing trend in the field toward well crafted but uninteresting books. Often clever, usually with some unassailable sentiment, and at worst cute, boutique books are an insidious growth industry within the field of artists' books. Just because a book is well crafted doesn't mean it's a good book. More and more people are taking workshops and getting college degrees in book arts and the most popular classes are turning out to be craft oriented. At the extreme level some of the classes tend to

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spill over into advanced origami... Some of the books, with textured book cloth wrapped around boards, often come in a very sturdy, well made, snug fitting box. They have the ponderous weight and look of authority but with very little to say. I see the point that books need to be protected from the elements, but, frankly, these books appear to be embalmed. The soul is gone and we're left with the beautiful carapace.

Robert Fichter gave my undergraduate photo class the following assignment - "If you had one picture left to make for the rest of your life, what would it be?" In other words, make a statement about your world view. I took this to be a rather brutal but effective way of getting at a value system that I could say was mine - in the sense that we can say that anything is our own. I mean, we are our environment, social and biological, right? We perceive all this stuff out there, filter it through our brains, and make statements that we then claim as our own. I can't recall the photos I came up with for the "Last picture" and they certainly didn't change the world, but the assignment did help to change the way I looked at the world. It was another sign that the brief time we spend here is important and we should have some thoughts as to what our values are. And if we ever make something that is a carrier of ideas then those ideas should come from a personal and informed point of view.

Increase is increase, I reckon. It means the bad increases along with the good. After much observation, the ratio I've come up with is about 75% bad and 25% good. That

goes for just about all human activity - artistic creations included. So, if we're lucky a quarter of the stuff we do is good and three quarters is either maintenance, repetition, or just plain bad. Then sometimes I think, "What the hell are you thinking about? Any creative activity is better than none." And, so what if more people are making cute little Hallmark style artists' books? Like I said a couple of paragraphs back - if more people were making art and thinking about what they were doing in that making, then maybe this would be a better place. But don't take my word for it - go out and look at a bunch of books, think about them, compare them, and then write something for JAB. You might as well buy the ones you really like. They won't get any cheaper and the next time you see them they just might cost more, or be unavailable.

- BF

**BUY MORE ARTISTS' BOOKS. THEY'RE CHEAP.**

**Notes from JAB International Roving Reporter,  
Johanna Drucker, in Paris at  
"The First Artistbook [sic] International"  
or  
"1er Salon International du Livre d'Artiste,"  
December 4, 1994**

Okay so it's true I've never checked into the Hotel Intercontinental in Paris as a guest. (There is no way in this lifetime short of a lucky lottery ticket that I ever will be able to. Maybe my resentment of that fact could have colored my feelings about the The First Artistbook International (FAB) which I experienced in its elegantly lit and overstatedly luxurious surroundings.) Being mere mortals we the viewing public were admitted only to rooms on the first floors, and not, certainly, allowed to tromp through the domains of the completely rich and absolutely powerful, those upper suites in which gold runs from the tap in a liquid stream and the refracted light of jewels is no doubt softened only by the rub of cashmere, endangered animal furs, and damask hangings. Or so I imagine.

But the FAB was billed as an Artist's Book event. Oh dear. And since I just happened to be there anyway in the fabulous old French capital (we do rove around on our fabulous JAB budget...) I decided to screw up my courage and take my proletarian self through the glittering doors just like it was a casual everyday thing to do. (Since I despise and excoriate The Rich as a politically incorrect category I am not sure why I let them or their environs intimidate me — but there it is, the Phenomenology of Power has got to be linked to the Show of Material Force).

I paid my entry fee - which wasn't much considering the plush carpet was getting use and had no doubt to be shampooed after we book hordes came through - and started into the various **chambres** which dealers, publishers, editors and (well, only a very few) artists had rented for the three day event. As I had arrived in the last hours of the last day of the FAB the big headliner speaker was about to commence. With consummate continental politesse the ushers motioned me toward the auditorium (tiny puff-seated chairs, mirrored panelling - not Marriott). As the top of the bill was the MoMA grande dame des illustrated books I forbore further torture and went for the book displays.

Deluxe, De-Lirious, De-Bilitating as Cole Porter might have said. Big stuff. Awesome tombs. I mean tomes. A hush (no doubt produced by the plush). Rumor has it the cost of rental was more than a grand per diem (and you weren't allowed to sleep there, either). Anyway, no point dwelling on banal details. I tried to relax and act like I enjoyed the overproduced stuff, but I don't, and dutifully looked at Everything. I will get to the good part in a minute, but along the way I saw many European fine press and **livre d'artiste** productions which should not have filled me with despair (factor in jetlag and the strange city syndrome) but did. But then, lo and behold, there were some discoveries of a more positive variety.

Who, for instance, is this person — Didier Mathieu — who does Sixtus/Éditions from Limoges? I could not absorb it all, but he had a table of what, at first, looked like more or less uniform editions, small in scale and neither flashy nor gimmicky nor

cute. On closer examination each turned out to be curiously interesting, a real artist's book, an actual engagement with The Book as an artform. Would that I had had the stamina to really make sense of these — and hopefully in a future JAB there will be a chance to do some kind of interview (by mail?). Anyone who knows much of this work might send a line and give more description than I can.

Another amazing treat was the huge trunk of goodies brought to the FAB by Florence Loewy. Her father, M.Loewy, had been a book dealer in the days of Iliazd (Iliia Zdanevich, aka Iliazd, 1894-1976) so I knew the name and figured her for the new generation. The collection of small, real artists' books she has for sale is staggering and wonderful — I wanted to take the entire trunk home. Imagine — a large (bigger than a coffin) box with several dozen archival boxes inside it each containing greatest hits artists' books. Just to be in the presence of a curated collection of this sort was a treat — I kept thinking how nice it would look in a really modern museum exhibition.....

And in the last room I went into I found Bookworks (from London), Coracle (Simon Cutts and Erica Van Horn, Norfolk), Imschoot uitgevers (Gent), and Centre Genevois de Gravure Contemporaine (Geneve). Details are fuzzy, but here at last was some life and energy in contrast to the general necrophilia of the rest. There were familiar books and new interesting things by Chris Newman, Brian Catling, Pavel Büchler, and Cornelia Parker from Bookworks and an impressive list from Coracle with works by Stephen Willats, Colin Sackett, Yoko Terauchi (**Ebb & Flow**, one of Coracle's few high-ticket items, is a handpainted concertina which was truly breathtaking — which isn't meant to undermine any of the rest of their publications, just to say that sometimes an expensive book is justified), and others including of course Cutts and Horn's own work. I mean — how can you go wrong with titles like **Chewing Gum and Spaghetti** (Cutts, 1988), **A New Kind of Tie**, (Cutts, 1972, Tarasque Press), **Pails of Weather** (Cutts with Stuart Mills, 1981) and **Homage to Homage to Seurat** (Cutts, 1986) or **Jewels I Have Loved** (Van Horn, 1990), **Black Dog White Bark** (Van Horn 1987), **Boy Bell's Book of Envelope Interiors** (Van Horn, 1994), and **Scraps of an Aborted Collaboration** (Van Horn, 1994)? Plus, they offered me a glass of wine, thus rescuing me from the depths of fatigue and disorientation.

So, I left the rich interior, with its real oil paintings, its fabulous furnishings, its very high ceilings with real gilded moldings, huge double windows set deep into bays looking out on the spectacularly picturesque city. I left feeling bouyed by the existence of some smart funny people doing interesting work and persisting persisting to make a range of editions which it would be great to get to know better and report on in more depth.

A few bits of info for anyone wanting to follow up: Biennale du livre d'artiste (apparently far more vital than the poor Foire); Sophie Dessus, Pays-Paysage, La Besse, 19140 Uzerche, France; Florence Loewy, 46, Avenue René Coty, 75014, Paris, France; Bookworks, 19 Holywell Row, London, EC2A 2536, England; Sixtus Editions, 5, Rue Labordere, F-87100 Limoges; Coracle, Docking, Norfolk, England, PE318LQ.

End

# 1st Artistbook International

## 1er Salon International du Livre d'Artiste

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*Date*

2, 3 & 4 Décembre, 1994

*Heures d'ouverture*

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- 1063 Exposition des Livres Illustrés de Henri Matisse
  - 2060 Arentson, Paris - 257 b.2
  - 2063 Arion, San Francisco
  - 1039 Aul Zeit Galerie, Berlin *Thomas Brinkhoff - Die 1000er Die 1000er*
  - 2052 Book Works, London *Sch. in Japan*
  - 2064 Boza Editor, Barcelona *Alternativa magazine*
  - 1041 Michèle Broutta éditeur, Paris *Vis à Vis* *Parcels de biens - art 1955*
  - 2052 Centre Genevois de Gravure Contemporaine, Genève
  - 2052 Coracle Press, Norfolk
  - 2064 Maurizio Corraini, Mantova
  - 1064 C.T.L. Presse, Hamburg - Venezia *[S. de ...]*
  - 2109 Brenda Edelson, Baltimore *B. Naum & A. A. 1970* *Multimedia*
  - 2109 Grenfell Press, New York *Robert Tuttle Ltd*
  - 2050 Hine Editions / Limestone Press, San Francisco
  - 1042 Imprimerie nationale, Paris *Michel Butor - Corackin*
  - 2052 Jmschoot uitgevers, Gent
  - 1109 Kaldewey Press, New York
  - 2056 Bernd Klüser, München *[...]* *[...]*
  - 1052 Yvon Lambert, Paris
  - 2059 Florence Loewy, Paris *[...]* *[...]*
  - 2050 Maximilian Verlag, München
  - 2064 Mutel Art Books, Paris
  - 1036 Osiris, New York
  - 1064 Picaron Editions, Amsterdam - Paris
  - 1064 Petersburg Press, New York
  - 2065 Camille von Scholz, Brussel
  - 2064 Sixtus Editions, Limoges *[...]*
  - 1036 StellaR Graphics, Paris *[...]*
  - 1065 Edicions T., Barcelona *[...]*
  - 2109 Library Fellows of the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York
  - 1067 Michael Woolworth Publications, Paris *[...]* *[...]*
- José María Scullin 1994*  
*1994 - Luz Plegada*  
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*Renseignements*

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## **JAB: AN IDENTITY CRISIS**

### **Douglas Beube, Artist/Curator**

As Johanna Drucker suggests in her article, *The Public Life of Artists' Books: A Question of Identity*, in the last issue of *JAB*, artists' books are indeed going through something of an identity crisis. The philosophical controversy and dialogue surrounding emerging forms is the process through which artists explore new possibilities. Ms. Drucker is entitled to her apparent predisposition toward the "sacred artists' book," that is, books with pages, words or pictures. However, the highly personal, patronizing and dogmatic tone of her article inhibits any exchange of ideas and impedes growth. Ms. Drucker serves to limit the potential of this exciting emerging field.

Drucker takes exception to artists' books that depart from a "literary legacy." Bookworks that incorporate, reference or call into question the format of a bound book automatically fall into the pejorative category of "art-y," that is, conceptually weak, critically unworthy, morally suspect, and worst of all, undemocratic.

I find it somewhat ironic that Johanna Drucker, a tenured professor at Yale, believes she can set the standards for democratizing the medium of the artists' book while ignoring the privileged status of her own position. As a professor at one of the country's most exclusive institutions, Ms. Drucker must surely appreciate that it is not the size of the audience nor popularity of the medium that determines the validity of the work.

Drucker takes the stance that "sculptural works... which are more art than book" are open to criticism because they "bid for a place in galleries and museums, NOT their bookstores or libraries." This high toned dismissal of "book objects" as the exclusive domain of "art stars" totally misses the point of a huge body of work created by numerous artists, some of whom have indeed exhibited work in "democratic" contexts, (libraries and bookstores) as well as "art" contexts (galleries and museums).

As one of the participants on the Artists Talk On Art Panel at the Fulcrum Gallery, (to whom Drucker referred in her article as "panelists with minuscule pea-brained ideas, monster egos and motormouth tendencies,") I addressed just such issues of context. More specifically I discussed *CONTEXT*, an exhibition of fourteen book artists which I am curating. Some of these artists include Byron Clercx, Ann Hamilton, Scott McCarney, Maria Porges, Buzz Spector, Janet Zweig, and, yes, myself. Anyone reading her article who wasn't present for the talk might be incorrectly led to assume that I discussed this work in the interest of self

promotion. That was not the case then and it's not the case now. Rather, I discussed the show at the gallery panel to convey two central themes: one, that books have evolved not only as a paper or a paginated medium for the sequential expression of images and words but as physical containers, "binding" or holding their contents together in a three dimensional sculptural form; and two, these artists in particular have often burned, compressed, folded, torn, wrapped or otherwise taken creative actions upon the bound text form.

Drucker apparently does not know what to make of these books that defy the traditional "artists' book." In her discussion of the symposium at the MCBA in Minneapolis she singles out the work of Byron Clercx and then proceeds to generalize about the form. First she views the work with blinders, then gives the impression that when you've seen one piece, you've seen them all. My question is, if a reviewer finds fault with a single piece, is that ever a reason to dismiss an entire medium? This seems to be Drucker's agenda. Her caustic criticism that Mr. Clercx and book artists like him and myself are motivated to make sculptural works because, "one-liner's [sic] are the way to go for success in the Artworld," is a gross over-simplification of why book artists are compelled to work.

Johanna Drucker and the *Journal of Artists' Books* might embrace a more professional, inclusive, and, to borrow her word, "democratic" viewpoint, especially at this moment of increased attention in artists' books and bookworks. An exclusive posture is clearly not in the best interest of the medium, as artists begin to use book objects as metaphor, rather than strictly as formats for moveable type.

Just as other artists are concerned with deconstructing the presentation of reality in photography, painting and installation, artists making bookworks are challenging the traditional notions of the paginated book as the bearer of truth. This undertaking coincides with the unprecedented shift away from "the book" to computers, which represents, to some, a threat to literacy.

Alfred Stieglitz once said, "Don't ask whether photography is art or not, ask how it has affected our perceptions." In the same manner, I suggest that we resist carving definitions on tablets of whether it's "art or book." Rather, we need to remain open to the different categories of artists' books and see how bookworks have expanded our understanding of this medium, contributing to the Book Arts movement as a whole.

Book Arts is no longer a marginalized art, practiced by a fringe group for an exclusive and limited audience. Over the last thirty years artists' books have taken a variety of forms, some immediately accessible, others

needing more explanation. But that diversity is a sign of creative growth and exposes the need for a much more open-minded discourse.

### Johanna Drucker responds

Douglas Beube feels his work was misrepresented in the last issue of *JAB*. In fact, he's mistaken. If you recall, I didn't actually talk about his work at all (I did hint at some possible reception of the work -- and I admit, it was a little mean to make those remarks about the microbes). But since he has taken up a few issues he wants to defend we are printing his letter in its entirety. My response contains a few points of agreement and disagreement and one (more) factual error correction.

Mr. Beube is right. I don't get it. Why does he want to call these works books? They are sculptures. To say that they bid for a place in galleries and museums, not libraries and bookstores, was hardly a "high-toned dismissal". Just a fact. Is he saying it isn't true? Does he really want to have his work in the bookstore?!?

No, you're wrong. I don't dislike all of these works, though I do think a lot of them (like a lot of artist's books and also contemporary artworks of all genres) are one-liners. To set the record straight, I think Byron Clercx's baseball bat made from Freud's work is a stroke of genius. Not all book-like objects seem quite at that level to me. As for what succeeds and doesn't succeed in the artworld...

I'm not repressing anything that I noticed (did I shut down an exhibition in my sleep? mount a book-like object bonfire? tie somebody's hand or tongue so they couldn't work?). Just expressing myself, opinions and all.

Somebody else can write about this other work, at least for now, and with real appreciation. Tom Vogler's essay in the *Books as Objects* (Comus Gallery, Portland, 1994) is about as intelligent and informed a piece as I've read, for instance. Without having to act like these works are the best thing since mass produced paper was invented (and I guess now forgotten as "sacred"), Vogler makes clear that these are non-books whose reference to book form gives them a certain iconic identity and a kick to their signification, but he is also clear to distinguish them from books altogether. What I resent is the idea that these works are claiming to be so hot, so experimental, and so whatever that they want to act like artist's books are staid, uninteresting and conservative by contrast (as if they are what books really can be). I'm trying to make a platform in which what is really experimental, exciting, and innovative about artist's books can finally be articulated critically and insightfully. Why does Mr. Beube want to limit the potential of this exciting

emerging field?

I'm not sure what my teaching at Yale has to do with anything at all. But let's get it straight: I'm an untenured Associate Professor, not a tenured Professor (I'll keep Mr. Beube posted though, since he was kind enough to call attention to credentials which I was too modest to mention).<sup>\*</sup> Though being a student at Yale might be construed in some cases as evidence of a privileged position, teaching at Yale is a result of hard work, accomplishment, and recognition in a field, NOT simply a gift of privilege.)

Finally, this "truth" business. I know Mr. Beube is aware that since the days of pre-Socratic skeptics -- all the way through Cartesian doubt, Nietzschean nihilism and then the French variety of deconstruction that "truth" is hardly an unquestioned feature of the codex text -- and hey, they didn't seem to need to singe the edges of the pages to make that point. But if you like the effect, go for it....

And yes, I do think sites and audiences are a major issue in thinking about what and how a work of art functions. I'll be blunt. I think that putting work into *US Air Magazine* is at odds with bidding for serious critical attention. I think one has to be aware of how one is positioning oneself. I don't publish in the *Sears and Roebuck* catalogue though that might be a democratic site. I don't think its readers would be interested in my work. Not that I think books are elitist, just that most artist's books are — mine included. I've never thought there were more than a few dozen people who would be interested in what I do. I'm amazed there are that many. When I began making books more than twenty years (and twenty-some editions) ago, I did them to explore the relations between writing and book structures in a form I later called *typopoesis*. Audience has often been secondary to me — but I don't make any claims to the contrary. I don't think there's any greater value in making work that is complex, polyvalent, takes time to read and digest and process, it's just that that's how my work comes out. As an historian and critic I'm interested in lots of things that are totally different from my own work. But not everything. I like to leave something for other people to write about too.

Thoughts? Let us know. Please include e-mail or phone number so we can contact you about excerpting or editing letters to the editor.

<sup>\*</sup> I've also taught at U.C. Berkeley, S.F. State, Harvard, Columbia, University of Texas, had a Fulbright, a Mellon, and a Getty grant, among others, and have my work in almost every major library, university, and other artists' book collection you can think of. I have several academic books in print and a couple more in press and would be happy to supply details. Please include SASE.

**FUTURE STUFF, SPECIAL THANKS, & REGRETS**

There wasn't enough room in this issue for a number of articles and I hope they can appear in future issues - Skuta Helgason's interview, review of Pat Kavanagh's BARK, Tennessee Rice Dixon's word/image submission, etc.

The next issue of JAB will have an interview with Joan Lyons, founder of Visual Studies Workshop Press and a lot more. Each issue of JAB gets bigger than the last - more is more.

Thanks to Seara Biondolillo for            pages 20 & 21. BF made the images on pages 22-27 based on his photos. There were some problems with the imagesetting on pages 30-31...

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