

FROM THE EDITOR

There have been some interesting comments about exhibitions of artists' books in which the exhibition has inhibited appreciation of the bookworks, largely because they are encased in vitrines or glass cases, offering up either two pages, or a cover, and never to be handled as a book. One critic said, "I had to guess the issue they addressed or even why they'd been included in the show. Many of the works remain "closed" both literally and figuratively; there's now way to see beyond the little bit visible in the case....this problem has nothing to do with the artwork and everything to do with the display.

Just imagine going to an exhibition where 90 percent of the art was covered up--that's about how many bookshows, where glass cases are the best vehicle the "library" or artspace can offer, and books remain locked in the cases. This inaccessibility becomes a very frustrating factor when most of the books have messages which must be "read" with the eye and the hand.

Another example was Norman Colp's exhibition at the National Art Library of the Victoria & Albert Museum. Cathy Courtney who has been reviewing artists' books for many years for *Art Monthly* was also critical of the installation, while praising the V&A for giving shows to book artists, she feels "it is a great pity that the area available to them is so restricted. Colp's accordion books suffer twice over by being laid out in glass cabinets." First, the problem lies with inadequate lighting, and the second is that with Colp's books, the punchline comes at the end as a surprise, and that force is lost "by seeing them fully spread out. By limiting his texts to a word per page, Colp can control the pace at which his compact statements are discovered, building them step by step as the accordion is unfolded." But alas, when spread out the whole story is there, and no surprises for the reader.

After curating bookshows for over 15 years, the solution lies with the institution and its liability. If they are willing to have readers/viewers use white gloves, then the book can be experienced as best it can without the sense of feel. But with the new technology, videotapes of someone turning the pages of the books that must be protected can be shown in order to give someone the feel of how the anticipated elements of time and space coalesce by "reading" the work. Or, if anyone else has suggestions, by all means send them in. Let's start a dialogue about this. Of course, there is the problem of insurance liability, and so it goes.

Warning: Over 100 subscribers have not renewed as of this printing. Umbrella cannot continue without your support. Continuation of publication is dependent upon subscribers. If those 100+ subscribers do not renew, I will have to make a decision to continue publication for 1993 or not. I am sorry, but times are tough everywhere. If you haven't renewed, please send in your renewal now, or forfeit receipt of 1992 issues!

Umbrella is an occasional newsletter, focusing on artists' publications and twentieth-century art documentation including books by artists, as well as artists' periodicals with news and reviews. *Umbrella* is published by Umbrella Associates, P.O. Box 3692, Glendale, CA 91221. The Editor is Judith A. Hoffberg, P.O. Box 40100, Pasadena, CA 91114. Phone for Editorial Office is: (818)797-0514. Fax: (818)794-5445. Subscriptions are available for the calendar year only, payable in American currency. ©1992 by Umbrella Associates.

CLASSIFIED

By popular request, The Artists' Calendar listing the birthdates and birthplaces of artists living and working in the United States is going to be published once again. All artists wishing to be included are urged to forward their names, birthdates, and birthplaces to:

The Artists' Calendar
c/o Walter Askin
P.O. Box 50381
Pasadena, CA 91115-0381

THE VISUAL HUMOR PROJECT was created three years ago to assist in making the work of artists more widely visible and more extensively appreciated. We are now in the process of developing a Slide Registry for use in presentations to curators and associations. Talks have already been given at the annual meeting of the College Art Association of America, the National Art Education Association, the Four Corners Art Conference, the Summer Arts Program of the California State University and other meetings. There will be a representing at the annual meeting of the International Society of Humor Studies under the auspices of CORHUM (Association francaise pour le developpement des recherches sur le COMique, le Rire et l'HUMour) in Paris this coming July. We would appreciate having representative slides (from 4 to 6 maximum) to use in these presentations sent by artists who use humor as an essential ingredient in their work to:

The Visual Humor Project
P.O. Box 50381
Pasadena, CA 91115-0381
USA.

ART ADDICTS ANONYMOUS.
If you're hooked on art and don't know where to turn, just dial 1-800-AAA-HELP. We'll help you get clean in 12 steps!

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