

BOOK REVIEWS

REFERENCE

Wet: On Painting, Feminism and Art Culture by Mira Schor (Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 1997, \$49.95 cloth, \$16.95 paper) is a collection of essays written over the past 15 years in *Artforum*, *Art Journal*, *Heresies*, and *M/E/A/N/I/N/G*, a journal she co-edited. As an artist and critic, she has challenged the hierarchies of the art world of the 1980s and 1990s and documents the intellectual and artistic development of those years as a feminist and a painter.

She has written about Ida Applebroog, Mary Kelley, and the Guerrilla Girls, as well as on Figure/Ground, an examination of utopian modernism's fear of the "goo" of painting and femininity. She has written about David Salle's depiction of women in "Appropriated Sexuality" as well as the relationship of the house, the home and the body. She writes clearly and directly, and has a gift for being bold and confrontational without anger, only with passion. There are over 20 illustrations. This is a great read and an eye-opener, which is what Mira Schor can do best.

The Lost Steps by André Breton (Omaha, University of Nebraska Press, 1996, \$30.00 cloth) is Breton's first collection of critical and polemical essays. Composed between 1917 and 1923, these pieces trace his evolution during the years when he was emerging as a central figure in French (and European) intellectual life. They chronicle his tumultuous passage through the Dada movement, proclaim his explosive views on Modernism and its heroes, and herald the emergence of Surrealism itself. Along the way, we are given Breton's serious commentaries on his Modernist predecessors, Guillaume Apollinaire and Alfred Jarry, followed by his not-so-serious Dada manifestoes.

There are portraits of Marcel Duchamp, Francis Picabia, and Breton's mysterious friend Jacques Vaché, as well as a crisis-by-crisis account of his dealing with Dada's leader, Tristan Tzara. And there are the first glimpses of Surrealism, the movement that was forever synonymous with Breton's name.

Counterpunch: Making Tye in the Sixteenth Century and Designing Typefaces Now by Fred Smeijers (San Francisco, Chronicle Books, 1997, \$29.95 paper) is informative, historical and nostalgic, showing readers that the old processes reverberate, showing the way for contemporary practice.

With a historical discourse on Western typography which was dominated in the first hundred years of printing by letterforms, the author discusses the processes that lie behind this phenomenon. In addition,

there is a close-up view of the work of sixteenth-century French and Flemish punchcutters, such as Fournier and Henrik van den Keere. The author, a typographic designer himself, outlines fundamental issues in letter and type design. An ample bibliography and index complete this important volume.

Designing Books: Practice & Theory by Jost Hochuli and Robin Kinross (San Francisco, Chronicle Books, 1997, \$40.00 hardcover) focuses on "Book design as a school of thought" by Swiss book designer Jost Hochuli, translated into English for the first time., with guidelines for page proportions, typefaces, paper choices, bindings and book jackets. Divided into three parts, the second section has to do with designing books, while the last section contains Robin Kinross's commentary on 27 of Hochuli's works. This shows how Hochuli has moved away from the more asymmetrical, dogmatic approach to a more open-minded method of design by covering a 30-year span of Hochuli's work.

The book, as one would expect, is beautifully designed, with black and white and red diagrams and examples. This book is a modern-day classic and will reach a large English-speaking audience.

Dimensional Typography by J. Abbott Miller (Princeton, Friends of Gilbert Paper Program, 1996, \$9.95) is one of the most beautiful books I have ever had in my hands in a very long time. I bought the copy I have, and if any of Umbrella readers would like to have an inexpensive but beautiful work of art, buy this book. Distributed by the Princeton Architectural Press, these case studies on the Shape of Letters in Virtual Environments will stagger your imagination.

GENERAL

Installation Art by Nicolas de Oliveira, Nicola Oxley and Michael Petry, with texts by Michael Archer (Washington, DC, Smithsonian Institution, 1997, \$34.95 paper) is a well-researched picture book with a stimulating essay by Michael Archer on the whole history of the phenomenon. This book began its life with research beginning in 1989, and one can tell from the chronology that goes back to 1879 and extends through 1993. In addition, there is a sizable bibliography. But it is the photographs that hold one's attention and it is, in fact, an education in itself, for that which is so ephemeral depends entirely on the documentation left after the fact. This book is quite successful in demonstrating what installation really is and what it means. First published in England by Thames & Hudson, this is a fine example of a contemporary art book that is successful in both text and in photographs.

Nuns as Artists: The Visual Culture of a Medieval Convent by Jeffrey F. Hamburger (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1997, \$55.00 cloth) is in large part due to the discovery by the author of a group of drawings which were made by a cloistered nun for devotion. This led to a study of female monasticism and the importance of visual culture in the convent. The drawings and other visual creations in the cloistered environment assumed a role no less important than reading and in which both modes of experience were related to a wider sphere of pious performance.

In illuminating the patterns and protocols of viewing that governed the nuns' devotional and liturgical life, Hamburger convincingly demonstrates the overwhelming importance of "seeing" in devotional practice, challenging traditional assumptions about the primacy of text over image in monastic piety. This is a new and fundamental contribution to the history of medieval art, and to the history of "seeing" from a feminist point of view.

A Legacy of Excellence: The Story of Villa I Tatti by William Weaver (New York, Abrams, 1997, \$49.50) is the story of a home, the home of two art historians, Bernard and Mary Berenson. In 1901, a year after they moved in, Mary, working with architects Geoffrey Scott and Cecil Pinsent, supervised the rebuilding of the villa and the creation of its elegant gardens. In over 60 years, the Berensons worked and entertained a remarkable group of friends: art historians Kenneth Clark, John Walker, John Pope-Hennessy; writers Edith Wharton, Alberto Moravia; political thinkers Walter Lippman, Gaetano Salvemini; musicians Yehudi Menuhin and countless other visitors from every part of the world.

Upon his death in 1959, Berenson willed the house, its contents, and the gardens to Harvard University as a Center for Renaissance Studies. This is the first published account of life at the villa from the Berensons' early years there until the present day. There are new sumptuous photographs of the villa, its grounds, and its superb art collection. The photos are by David Finn and David Morowitz. This reviewer remembers visiting the Villa while Berenson was still alive, and since the grounds were open to the public during the spring on a particular Saturday, he and Mary had escaped, but the garage doors were open and one could see the myriad maps on the walls of the garage, a kind of map room to the world about them.

Sacred Art of the Earth: Ancient and Contemporary Earthworks by Maureen Korp (New York, Continuum, 1997, \$29.95) places the archaic experience of sacred place within the contemporary work of several internationally prominent artists. Although Native

Americans have also seen the connection between art and religion, this same necessary interrelationship also exists in the world view of many non-Native artists too. They are considered "image-philosophers" and include Charles Ross and Robert Smithson, the Canadian artist Jennifer Dickson who encounters visions and memories in old European gardens. What Korp does is create a new vocabulary about such earthworks, by creating a working conceptual model of form for sacred place. Artists such as Michael Heizer, Walter de Maria, Nancy Holt, James Turrell and others are analyzed. There is an extensive bibliography and index, which makes a case for the sacred art of the last 50 years being one of landscape—one of art created physically and importantly outside any church.

MAIL ART

Rubber Soul: Rubber Stamps and Correspondence Art by Sandra Mizumoto Posey (Jackson, University of Mississippi Press, 1996, \$16.95) deals with the nitty gritty of making mail art with rubberstamps, but with a feeling for history. As a member of the Rubber Amateur Press Society, the author has been an active member as well as one who works for Kat Okamoto, owner of A Stamp in the Hand Company. What is interesting that this is a kind of thesis for the artist/author who presented a proposal for this book as part of the Folk Art and Artists series which her mentor, Michael Owen Jones, edits. From Mesopotamian cylinder seals to the multimillion-dollar industry it has created, rubber stamps have been an instantaneous communication method for mail artists. This book explores the network fostered by such activities, with 27 pages of color plates. Resource list and bibliography are included.

ARCHITECTURE

A Critic Writes: Essays by Reyner Banham, selected by Mary Banham, Paul Barker, Sutherland Lyall, and Cedric Price (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1997, \$39.95 cloth) is a chronological cross-section of essays, polemics, and reviews drawn from more than 30 years of Banham's writings.

This scintillating writer includes discussions of Italian Futurism, the Bauhaus, as well as explorations of contemporary architects Frank Gehry, James Stirling, and Norman Foster. His interests ranged from architecture and the culture of pop art to urban and industrial design. He discusses automobile styling, science fiction films, and the American bias for gadgets, anticipating many studies of contemporary culture. Los Angeles seems to be the star of this book, since Banham touted the city so much in a book and a film.

Eminently readable, provocative and entertaining, this book is a tribute to a man who had the passion and the

skill to popularize architecture—once again ahead of his time.

PHOTOGRAPHY

After the Photo-Secession: American Pictorial Photography, 1910-1955 by Christian A. Peterson (New York, W.W. Norton, 1997, \$45) is a groundbreaking study of what came after Alfred Stieglitz, the major movement of "pictorialism", which was the inspiration for thousands of American photographers, whether amateur or professional. It is more astonishing that when one sees the 90 beautiful monochromes reproduced in full color in this volume, one cannot escape the enduring beauty, originality, and honesty of the movement's best work.

Peterson shows how two generations of pictorialists from 1910 through 1955 moved in many different directions, affecting not only aesthetic but also advertising and other forms of commercial photography. Peterson goes on to show how the home darkroom became a refuge for those stressed out by the Depression, the demands of modern life, and the horrors of World War II, creating a world of splendid calm and controlled reflection. At its height, it was shunned by such luminaries as Ansel Adams, Dorothea Lange and others, but the movement thrived until the 1950s, when new television sets and 35-mm color photography drew hobbyists out of the darkroom. The time is now ripe to respect this movement as a historical phenomenon.

There are biographical sketches of 76 major pictorialists, including Clarence J. White, Imogen Cunningham, Doris Ulmann, William Mortensen, Adolf Fassbender, and Edward Weston. Bibliography and index.

A World on Display: Photographs from the St. Louis World's Fair, 1904 by Eric Bretibart (Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 1997, \$34.95) tells the story of how in the St. Louis World's Fair to commemorate the centennial of the Louisiana Purchase, some 2,000 native peoples were brought to St. Louis to take part in the most extensive anthropological exhibits ever assembled for a world's fair. With 75 photographs of these "living exhibits" by such renowned photographers as Jesse Tarbox Beals and Frances Benjamin Johnston, as well as by the Gerhard sisters: (Mamie and Emme, relatively obscure), the only man Charles Carpenter, as well as two amateurs, Sarah and Elizabeth Metcalme of Worcester Massachusetts, this volume not only reveals that women worked for male editors who wanted pictures which would "sell", but also the fact that women made it easier for their subjects to be photographed, to pose. Mr. Carpenter, working for the Field Museum, could take as much time as he

wanted, while the women had deadlines and had to produce for the marketplace.

As a result of these "native peoples", the fairgoers would start to understand the "meaning of Anthropology". So not only does the book document a particular world's fair; it also demonstrates an entire cultural attitude and world view, at a time when social Darwinism was in vogue and America had a new role as an overseas power. This is a book to explain the power of photographs and their multiple layers of meaning.

Lone Visions, Crowded Frames: Essays on Photography by Max Kozloff (Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 1997, \$34.95 hardback, \$17.95 paper, 12 color plates, 80 halftones) is the third collection of Kozloff's essays on photography, first published in 1994 and now available again, this time concentrating on the human face, not just as actual people portrayed, but on the aesthetics of portraiture. From a psychological perspective, Kozloff has insights that come with looking for a long time, with writing with a technique that has no parallel, based on intelligence and clarity, on critical approaches to photography made by artists who have their own agendas, on disturbances on the erotics of photography as affected by the impact of AIDS, on street photography, and at the end of the millennium, the gathered sense of misfortune and fatality which the image emanates to the viewer.

Kozloff writes about Cecil Beaton, Richard Avedon, Peter Hujar, Nan Goldin, Joseph Koudelka, Gilles Peress, Anselm Kiefer's books, Robert Mapplethorpe, Lee Friedlander, Bill Burke, Rodchenko, Walker Evans, Duane Michals and so many more. This is rich reading and in retrospect probably means more now than when they were written, for they have our own knowledge of the subjects ingrained in our memories and in our cultural history. This is criticism at its best, with titles that are captivating.

Native Nations: Great Plains/Native Nations: Hidden Faces with photographs by Edward C. Curtis and an introduction by Christopher Cardozo (New York, Bulfinch Press, 1997, \$13.95) are two miniature books which showcase Curtis' most striking photographs (he took 40,000 photographs of 80 Native American tribal groups).

Great Plains captures the photographer's most striking images of the Piegan, Sioux, Apsaroke, Cheyenne, Blackfoot, Ogalala, and other Plains peoples, including warriors on horseback, teepee villages, and medicine ceremonies. **Hidden Faces** focuses on the strange and wondrous ceremonial masks and costumes used by certain tribal groups, especially the Navaho peoples of the Southwest and the Kwakiutl of British Columbia. Printed in sepia tone reproduced in

state-of-the-art quadratone, with Curtis' own ethnographic notes on his subjects, these books are affordable and a must for Curtis fans and anyone who loves the American West.

REPRINTS

The Art Book, previously published by Phaidon Press in 1994 was a runaway bestseller, giving people 8 pounds of art history for \$35.00. This new paperback edition is a miniature version of the original, light and portable, looking for new audiences anywhere and everywhere. It lists 500 of the world's greatest painters and sculptors from antiquity to the contemporary in the same easy-to-use alphabetical format. Each artist is again represented by a full-page color plate of a definitive work, accompanied by explanatory and illuminating information on the image and the artist. There are glossaries of artistic movements and technical terms. Published by Phaidon Press, 1997, \$9.95 paper.

Cyclops: Albert Watson with introduction by James Truman (New York, Bulfinch Press, 1997, \$22.50) is a small-format edition of a most astonishing 1994 publication that sold out of its first printing. This collection of photographs, ranging from Tupac Shakur posing with a pistol, Louise Bourgeois with sculpture, Elvis Prsley's Colt 45 to a slew of photographs of Malcolm X, and so much more make this an affordable and accessible photography book of 246 quadratones. What a fine gift for anyone, including yourself.

Perspective as Symbolic Form by Erwin Panofsky (Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, 1997, \$15.00 paper) is the first published translation of this classic essay in English. Known as one of the great works of modern intellectual history, this legendary text has dominated all art historical and philosophical discussions on the topic of perspective in this century. Drawing on a massive body of learning that ranges over antique philosophy, theology, science, and optics as well as the history of art, Panofsky produces a type of "archaeology" of Western representation that far surpasses the usual scope of art historical studies. What Panofsky proves is that our own modernity is inseparable form the concept of the infinite, within a space that is both continuous and homogenous.



Allen Ginsberg Memorial

St. Mark's church
pivot of the East Village
Central vortex of poetry
the place where thought
merges with feeling
Patti Smith/Hank Williams
"I'm so lonesome I could cry."
through the portals
Spring rain outside
the inchoate spirit, molecular
energy, synaptically charged
Lou Reed— the new fire,
the welcoming absence;
Amram – the great spirit
going ahead: "You can do it."
Inverse of "beat" made visible
Whitehaired Corso –
the laurel passed on
everyone knows it –
Silverhaired Orlovsky
in dignified suit
the retinue of the bard
the infinite retinue
surrounding the death bed
honoring the Buddhist ritual
not to touch the body
but to look from a distance
the gathering of insights
the simplicity, the longing
to keep the torch, the true
meaning of candor
to raise the salt
from beneath the feet
into fertile everyday reality
paying homage to time itself
while Kaddish notes
soar through space
the extraordinary solemn
beauty of it all
from the East
Village cathedral
harvest of souls
all ages, spirits given
to the joy of sadness
the historical moment
through the portals, at the gate,
the flood of incense, the intense
fragrance ascending into
the rain: "And behold"
sayeth Meister Eckhart,
"all is one."
the new fire
attends
our resounding silence

– Robert C. Morgan (April 1997)