

FROM THE EDITOR

As I write this, the sun is shining, the world is mostly at peace, and the Pope has opened the Jubilee Door for the oncoming Millennium. Yet there is a war waging, a commercial war, a war to end what we have known these many centuries as "the book", the codex, the best information storage and retrieval system known to human kind. Prophets among us give us another 20 years, others say that we are doomed right now thanks to the Internet. We have gone from "books to bytes". We are in the world of e-books, and wouldn't you like to read *Alice in Wonderland* on your E-Rocket Book which you can download and annotate, bookmark, underline, etc. All you need is a piece of hardware and your hand and eye. The hell with the touch, the taste, the feel! It has taken a long time for the E-Rocket Book to take off, but how many commuters have you seen on the train or the subway reading their "e-book"? Will it catch on as the cell phone has caught on? I doubt it. Just look at Sean Kernan's *The Secret Books*, which is featured in the Gallery of Colophon Page (<http://colophon.com/gallery>) and you will understand what I am getting at. It is a spiritual voyage through the meaning of "book" as an homage to Borges. Look at the beautiful animated film, read Kernan's introduction, and buy the book from Independent Publishers Group in Chicago. Published by Leetes Island Books, this homage to Borges with 43 tritone photographs, three short stories, several poems and quotations, together with the essay by the artist is a great tribute to the Book and to Borges.

But then there is Helmut Newton's SUMO Book which comes with its own coffee table—the ultimate coffee table book that weighs around 60 pounds and costs \$1,500 today, but who knows what it will cost in April when the rest of the edition will be released? The edition of this 480 page book, by the way from Taschen, is 10,000! How much coffee will be consumed is another question, but the book? Well, I'll leave that to you.

Who would have believed 20 years ago that I would be doing *Umbrella* on a computer, that it would take longer than when I did it on the IBM composer, that all this information flows in so fast that I am on the computer more than I am with anyone else in the world, that I send messages 10 times a day and receive them as frequently and that I read a great deal less than I did 20 years ago! Does that make me

comfortable? Does that make my life easier? Does it save effort and energy? Depends upon what kind you are talking about! Yet what we end up with is more paper and words, so many words. It has brought us back to The Word, to communicating with the tools we have denigrated since we have become a visual society, but we are now back to words which dominate our every minute, hour and day.

I wish for you an easy transition to the year 2000, so that you will not hear about Y2K another moment, and that 2000 will be easy for your computer to comprehend. By the time you receive this issue, you will have survived and the world will be a better place for us all. Remember your fellow men and women who are homeless, sick and bereft. They deserve a cut of the pie as well. This may be a boom time for the USA, but there are those of us who still have not profited from all the "boom". The Arts, for instance, have always played second class citizen to the rest of the culture. Perhaps a new millennium will bring a greater interest in that which enhances our lives and our souls. Sean Kernan's prophetic statement that "I look at this book—words and images, side by side on the table before me—and find myself looking down dark, unfamiliar paths across the plane of the world with a rising sense, both exciting and ominous, that everything is about to change." And so it will!

—jah

Cover: Walter Askin's contribution to *Umbrella: The Anthology* out in January 2000. Walter is an old friend of the editor, a friend who believes that humor makes the world go round even in the art world.

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