

# BOOK REVIEWS

Edited by Amy Navratil

## REFERENCE

*Gadney's Guide to 1800 International Contests, Festivals & Grants in Film & Video, Photography, TV-Radio Broadcasting, Writing, Poetry, Playwriting & Journalism.* Glendale, California, Festival Publications (P.O. Box 10180, Glendale, CA 91209), 1979. 580p., indices. \$15.95 paper, \$21.95 hardcover ISBN 0-930828-00-3

The emphasis of this reference tool is the availability of cash prizes and grants in the fields cited above. Basic entries include current addresses, dates and deadlines, complete entry requirements—eligibility and fee information—awards and how judged—purpose, theme sponsors, recent statistics, where held and an historical overview of the competition. Alphabetical index as well as Subject/Category index makes quick access. The only problem is the layout, where text runs down to the bottom of the page, and gutters are limited.

Marzio, Peter. *The Democratic Art: Pictures for a 19th Century America.* Boston, David R. Godine, 1979. 368p., illus. (108 color, 28 b & w plates, 44 illus.), bibliog. ISBN 0-87923-290-0 \$39.95 until 31 December (\$50.00 afterwards)

Names such as Currier & Ives, Louis Prang, P.S. Duval and Stobridge are not household words today, but a hundred years ago these names stirred delight and joy in every household that could own chromolithographs, reproductions of actual art printed for the millions in up to 20 colors, decking the walls of the chromo-civilization.

This is the first full-scale study of the chromo phenomenon, done by a talented scholar who details the materials and machines used in production, profiles the leading lithographers, and describes the ways chromos were distributed. Although disparaged by art historians in general, the reproductions of art brought beauty and enrichment to the lives of many in an age that was starved for fine art. Not only did the artist become popular because of the chromolithograph, but advertising used this medium as its principal color technique.

Illustrated in late 20th century technology, this volume can never live up to the shimmering chromolithographs themselves, but does add to an understanding of 19th-century America and its growing democratic, pluralistic society with its insatiable hunger for art. Marzio has created a landmark in social and printing history. The bibliography is exemplary as well, and a vital contribution to scholarship in this field.

Ruhe, Harry. *Fluxus, the most radical and experimental art movement of the sixties.* Amsterdam, Gallery A, 1979. 320p., illus., bibliogs. \$26.00 (f46)

This encyclopedia of the Fluxus movement must now be regarded as the definitive book on "a fusion of Spike Jones, gags, games, vaudeville, Cage and Duchamp" (Maciunas). To those of us who lived through this period but did not experience the Fluxus activities, we must turn to this book to understand the street events, the Fluxshop with its Fluxfilms, Fluxgames, Fluxholes, Fluxclothes, etc., and to understand how art history is only now catching up with Fluxus, via the Happenings and Fluxus 1970 Cologne show, and more re-

cently with the *Flash Art* October 1978 issue which devoted most of its pages to Fluxus.

Here we have a bio- and bibliographical dictionary of nearly 80 artists, including photos, lists and publications, productions and editions that George Maciunas issued. There are personal accounts of involvement with Fluxus, offered by some artists. But the book as a whole (loose-leaf and intended hopefully for continuous additions) is a *tour de force*, largely because the movement was so ephemeral and international. Thus Ruhe should be praised for his intentions and his execution, an important landmark in documenting a movement which wanted so much to remain fleeting. Every library and contemporary art collection should have this volume. Order from Gallery A, Leisekruisstraat 10, Amsterdam, Holland.

Tannock, Michael. *Portuguese 20th Century Artists: A Biographical Dictionary.* West Sussex, England, Phillimore & Co. Ltd., 1978 (dist. by Hilmarton Manor Press, 25 Van Zant St., Norwalk, CT 06855). ISBN 0-95033-312-1 \$95. \$110 (Canada).

Tannock, an art dealer in Portugal, has compiled this dictionary of over 2,100 artists to "assist in the disclosure, elucidation and propagation of contemporary Portuguese Art." It covers those artists working from 1900-1974 (the year of the revolution), and includes many 19th century artists who worked into the twentieth century. Included are painters, sculptors, graphic and design artists, ceramicists, and caricaturists. There is a brief, awkwardly-written historical introduction by Jose-Augusto França, which unfortunately does little to advance one's interest in these artists. The problem seems to be primarily one of translation.

The body of the book is the entries, arranged alphabetically, with liberal cross-references. Included in each entry are place and date of birth and death; principal working media; exhibition history; prizes and awards; and inclusion in museum and foundation collections. The exhibition history, in particular, is a disappointment. The only data given is that of the place and date of the exhibition; there is no mention of either sponsoring institution, title of the show (for multi-artist exhibitions), or the existence of a catalogue. The lack of any other bibliography is also most regrettable.

The volume concludes with a list of annual national awards and a list of Portuguese museums, but there is no indication of their holdings, address, or any other information. Finally, there are 381 plates, 94 in color, of quite good quality. The captions list only the artist's name, a title, date if known, and the collection; neither size or medium are given.

Overall, this is an important work in an area heretofore overlooked. However, the omissions cited above sadly detract from what otherwise could have been an even more important and useful tool. \$95 is a very stiff price, particularly in light of ever-shrinking budgets, and one which unfortunately only the larger libraries will most likely be able to afford.

## MONOGRAPHS

Coke, Van Deren. *Andrew Dasburg.* Albuquerque, University of New Mexico, 1979. 141p., 69 figs., 16 plates, chronology, index ISBN 0-8263-0516-4 \$24.95

In this energetic account of the life and work of "the greatest draughtsman of landscape since Van Gogh", we learn how this student at New York's Art Students League educated the art establishment in making Cubism and other radical art styles acceptable in this country. A prominent member of Woodstock art colony, he flitted between there and the art colony at Taos, making acquaintances with Marsden Hartley, Alfred Stieglitz, John Reed, D. H. Lawrence, and especially the art patroness Mabel Dodge Luhan. Before his death at the age of 92, he had liberated his style of drawing to combine "the world of the spirit with the world of Euclid and Einstein." Coke establishes Dasburg as a figure of great importance as an innovator in American art. This work contains a chronology and a list of works in public collections (excluding prints).

Hendricks, Gordon. *The Life and Work of Winslow Homer*. New York, Harry N. Abrams, 1979. 345p., 440 illus. (68 in color) bibliog., index ISBN 0-8109-1063-2 \$45.00

During his lifetime, Winslow Homer was called the greatest American artist, but time has placed him among the greatest and best loved artists of the nineteenth century. He began his artistic life early but his career began as an illustrator, recording the Civil War for *Harper's Weekly*. Turning to painting, he developed his own unique style that sent him all over New England, from the seacoasts of Massachusetts and Maine to the mountains of New Hampshire to the tropical landscapes of Florida, Nassau and Bermuda. From sketches, oils, and watercolors, Homer explored with strength and skill human nature pitted against nature of the wilderness and the sea. Herein lies his greatest achievements as an artist and elevates him to a place along side other great artists.

Many books have been published since Homer's death in 1910, but this is the first systematic catalogue of Homer's vast *oeuvre*. Presented in a very readable style, this physically attractive, chronological presentation contains many unknown facts about the artist and his work. Hendricks draws on correspondence between Homer and his family, the artist and various dealers, contemporary critical reviews and documentary photographs. From the vastness of Homer's work and material written about him, the author still manages to give a fascinatingly vivid yet intimate picture of this genius. Included in this volume are a number of previously unpublished examples of his work, a checklist of Homer's works in United States public collections, and a complete checklist of published graphics. A chronology, extensive bibliography and index serve to make the book an outstanding contribution to understanding nineteenth century American art.

Roethel, Hans K. (in collab. with Jean K. Benjamin) *Kandinsky*. New York, Hudson Hills Press (dist. by Simon & Schuster), 1979. 172p., illus (48 color plates), bibliog., chronology, index \$35.00 ISBN 0-933920-00-8

This is the second book to be published by this new publishing house, tracing the life of the founder of abstract art, focusing especially on the cross-fertilization between art and philosophy. All of Kandinsky's key works are reproduced in full-color plates, individually tipped-in, ran-

ging from early landscapes and Art Nouveau works, through expressionistic abstractions and later geometric and biomorphic abstractions. Included are rarely reproduced works from Soviet collections, as well as works found in notable American collections. The author, the leading expert on Kandinsky, is now working on a catalogue raisonné of the artist's paintings, watercolors and drawings.

Also included are an illustrated biographical outline, a bibliography, and a list of the artist's exhibitions. A well-made, beautifully produced addition to the Kandinsky literature, one to remain a reference tool for some time to come.

#### PHOTOGRAPHY

Campbell, Bryn. *Exploring Photography*. New York, Hudson Hills Press (dist. by Simon & Schuster), 1979. 144p., 200 illus. (36 color) ISBN 0-933920-6 (hardback), ISBN 0-933920-02-4 (paper) \$20.00 hardcover; \$9.95 paper

A book to accompany a BBC series, the popularization of photography becomes slick, glossy, and bleeding all the way to the gutters. When gutters do exist, they are very narrow. But not to criticize the intent of the book, this is a good popular approach to more than 100 photographers' work, covering Portrait, Landscape, Movement, Social Documentary, Urban Landscape, and the Image. The author explores the creative act among more than 100 photographers, and the mystery of this creativity should be read by teachers and students alike.

Colombo, Attilio. *Fantastic Photographs*. New York, Pantheon, 1979. unpagged, mostly illus. ISBN 0-394-50733-9 \$17.95 (also comes in paper)

This book accompanies an exhibition supported by Canon Photo Gallery in Amsterdam, which is touring Europe and the United States. In the introduction, the use of the camera to probe the subliminal recesses of the mind to create a new visual reality is explored historically from Dadaism and the Bauhaus to today. The images shown in this photo album include sexual fantasy, human hopes and fears, and imagined situations which resemble daydreams. They are products of a group of young photographers from all over the world. Included is a short bibliography. An interesting contribution to the photographic library.

National Archives Trust Fund Board. *The American Image: Photographs from the National Archives, 1860 - 1960*. New York, Pantheon Books, 1979. 191p., mostly illus. ISBN 0-394-50798-3 \$10.00 paper (\$20.00 cloth)

Reading these photographs is like reading America, for they are a repository of memories, of photographs done in the line of duty rather than for aesthetic or artistic reasons, and in fact filed in "record groups" and not even by photographer. The endless hours to cull these images from "our" National Archives makes this even a greater contribution to the social fabric of American culture. The book is exciting, opening up new realms to many who think William Henry Jackson, Russell Lee, Lewis Hines and Anonymous made

photos just for the love of them. Instead, these were done for government agencies and have another quality all their own.

An exciting essay by Alan Trachtenberg gives insight into the myriad photographs in the National Archives' holdings and their importance. A good buy (and you can own prints of many of these, with instructions inside).

*Photography: Venice '79.* New York, Rizzoli, 1979. 404p., 362 illus. (51 color), biogs., bibliog. ISBN 0-8478-0250-7 \$30.00

Celebrating a three-month international congress in Venice, Italy, sponsored jointly by UNESCO and the Municipality of Venice along with the International Center of Photography in New York as artistic organizer, this volume records the major (read largest) exhibition ever held in the 140-year history of photography, including exhibitions, lectures and master workshops.

The volume illustrates significant photographic exhibitions drawn from institutional and private collections throughout the world, reflecting the theme "Trends and Masters of the Twentieth Century" in 25 separate exhibitions, thus 25 chapters. Each chapter includes a brief biography of the photographer or a summary of the purpose of the exhibition, an analysis of the meaning and direction of the photographer's work, a bibliography, and selections from the best photographs shown in Venice. Among the artists represented are Atget, Arbus, Frank, Hine, Smith, Capa, Stieglitz, Weston, Cartier-Bresson, as well as the Wagstaff Collection, Polaroid collection, Latin American avant-garde photography, American, European and Italian photography. A good survey of today's photography.

Prinz, Phyllis and Saia, Stephanie. *Private Moments in Public Places.* Sagaponack, New York, The Permanent Press, 1979. unpagged, mostly illus. ISBN 0-932966-04-7 \$7.95

Shared habits, eccentricities and experiences can also lead to unique approaches, and so Stephanie Saia has explored individuality that we maintain in public places, especially doing what comes naturally in washrooms. Personalities are never lost in the private act we execute in those public places, which the authors capture in this beautifully printed book. Views are from the knees down, of course! Great bathroom "reading."

#### GENERAL INTEREST

Anton, Ferdinand. *Art of the Maya.* New York, Thames & Hudson, 1979. 344p., 365 illus. (37 in color) bibliog., index ISBN 0-500-23129X \$29.95

From the second century A.D. to its sudden disappearance around 900 A.D. and re-emergence in the eleventh century to its decline in the early sixteenth century, the ancient Mayans from Central American and south-eastern Mexico evolved into a highly developed civilization. Buried and choked by vegetation, the Mayan culture remained lost for centuries. In this scholarly investigation, Anton has infused his knowledge and understanding of Mayan art and literature into a beautifully produced study of the great Mayan sites.

Through magnificent photographs, this European photographer has taken great pains to vividly reveal Mayan buildings, statues, figurines, paintings and ceramics. Translated from German, this book is an excellent introduction to the Mayan civilization, and can only generate more enthusiasm and study of its art and culture.

Moore, Barbara and Honor Holland. *The Art of Postage Stamps.* New York, Walker & Co., 1979. 96p., 151 illus. (32 in color) ISBN 0-8027-0635-5 \$14.95 cloth (\$8.95 paper)

Of the more than 250,000 postage stamps designed since 1840, 275 are presented in this volume, tracing the stamp as a social and historical document, as well as presenting the beauty and diversity of design from all over the world. Some are collectors' items, others just are beautiful in concept. Mail artists can be inspired; designers can also learn. An interesting contribution.

Sekka, Kanzaka. *A Flight of Butterflies.* New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art and Thames & Hudson, 1979. 54p., mostly illus. ISBN 0-87099-206-6 \$16.95

This is a facsimile edition of a rare Japanese wood-block printed book now in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Unfolding to become a 31-foot long tapestry of graceful, fanciful butterflies in every color and shape, the book represents the transformation of a dream 75 years ago of brightly clad dancing girls into their traditional Japanese representation as beautiful butterflies.

Printed in six colors, including gold and silver, by Dai Nippon in Japan, the book is handbound between cloth-covered boards and slipcased. Nothing can match this as the gift book of the year—and can be categorized as an artist's book in facsimile too. A must for anyone who loves good bookmaking and aesthetically exciting imagery!

