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A BOOKMAN'S HOLIDAY: on the road with jah

WASHINGTON, DC

Leaving the endless summer in Southern California, I had an inkling of what I was going to see, but never in such splendor for autumn had arrived in the East, and Washington, Virginia and Maryland were just donning their golden robes, mingled with crimson, orange, and bright reds.

One of the first stops was 7th Street in Washington, DC, where Al Nodal started a revolution, a convergence of art spaces all along the street, with the Washington Project for the Arts putting its act together not only with neon works all over town, but also fixing up a theater that will seat 200 and getting ready to open an artists' bookshop, which is mentioned in another part of this Newsletter. 7th Street in the District of Columbia is truly the heart of the matter, and I urge all my readers to make a trip. The bookshop is full of light and space, and knowing Don Russell and the area artists, it will boast of an international array of bookworks. The window also will be a showcase for individual artists who are featured each month.

And yet Washington was not truthful, for it was quite warm while the trees showed amber, golds, oranges and told me it was October, indicating some kind of change which hinted of pumpkins and cider and warm fireplaces. And I knew this trip was going to be a series of connections, as you will see.

At the Renwick Gallery, besides seeing Venini glass, I saw a show called the Beehive Show, which was everything you ever wanted to know about beehives, since the beehive is the symbol of the state of Utah. Included in this show was a mail art exhibition with contributions from many of the network which I recognized. At the Corcoran Gallery, there were photographs by Michael A. Smith, an artist-photographer whom I had met at the Book Conference in Rochester in 1979.

Near the Hirschhorn Museum, I met Terry Braunstein, book artist extraordinaire, who shared with me some of her latest productions. She is a collage artist who shapes her collages on pages which then go into a looseleaf notebook as a unique book. We talked books for a long time, and then I was picked up by the Kevin Osborns, Kevin being the coordinator of the Writer's Center in Glen Echo Park, Maryland, and a bookmaker in his own right. We talked books over an Ethiopian dinner (Washington has a vast array of ethnic restaurants), and then they gave me a party where all printers and bookmakers in the area were invited to come and visit with me. It was splendid meeting some of my correspondents live, in person! There were even old friends from Los Angeles—some more connections.



SHAKER SEED HOUSE, Tyngham, MA

PHILADELPHIA

Philadelphia has changed since I left it in 1969. It has been humanized with a multiplicity of good restaurants, galleries, and cultural events. No longer under the shadow of New York, Philadelphia has begun to make its own statement—and its creative people reflect that new energy.

From the outset, we talked books, since I was staying with Michael Kostiuik, the coordinator of the Bookworks Conference in Philadelphia next October. In addition, Sandra Lerner and Suzanne Horvitz, directors of the Nexus Gallery, and bookmakers in their own right, talked books with me for a very long time. We brainstormed on the conference plans, but also had a chance to explore the city's art shows and galleries. Found out that Judy Stein now runs the Morris Gallery as part of the Philadelphia Academy of Fine Arts and also has a radio program about the visual arts on NPR in Philadelphia.

I then did a lecture tour of the Philadelphia art schools, speaking at the home of the first documented artists' book show in the 1970s, the Moore College of Art where I met Harry Anderson, Bilge Friedlaender and Jerry Crimmons. At the Philadelphia College of Art, Andrew Keating of Seattle was sitting in the audience, a big surprise, and some old subscribers of Umbrella, Audrey Sabol, Jean Arader, and book-artist and designer, Claire Owen.

I found many new card shops in Philadelphia and picked up several umbrella cards, after I stopped by the Print Club,



The next day talked to Nan Becker, who was having an opening that night at Franklin Furnace for her new book *Sterilization/Elimination*. Also met Nancy Angelo, performance artist from Los Angeles, while she was walking on 53rd Street. Had lunch with Clive Phillpot, librarian at the Museum of Modern Art, talked about more artists' books, and then went gallery-hopping, especially the great work of Vernon Fisher at Barbara Gladstone Gallery, Stephanie Brody Lederman's books at Kathryn Markel...and much, much more. That night, dinner with three bookmakers, Claire Owen of Philadelphia, Donna Sylvester of New York, and Nat Dean of San Francisco. We ate at new place called Wise Maria's and in walked David Hockney and Henry Geldzahler.

In between all of this, I watched the birth of a new publication, *The Art Economist*, edited by Ken Friedman and Holly O'Grady.

The next day I stood in line in the Post Office with Claes Oldenburg, and we talked about umbrellas, his large sculpture in Des Moines, and then his new button sculpture on the University of Pennsylvania campus. Some of the best shows I saw after that were Gilbert Rohde's furniture from the 20s and 30s at the Washburn Gallery uptown, the great Max Beckmann show at Grace Borgenicht's Gallery, Agnes Martin at the Pace, and the best show in New York City through 3 January, *Writing and Reading*, a must see show of pens, pencils, paper, printing press, bindings, title pages, children's books, alphabets, pop-ups as well as primers, samplers, blocks and everything from stone books to the latest developments in typography and computers. Nothing has been missed, and this exhibition, having taken two years to coordinate, is a once-in-a-lifetime experience. If you are interested in book-making, forms of writing, typography, bookbinding, you must taken in this show. It is encyclopedic in scope, and alas, it has no documentation. That means, there is no catalog, but if you are within the vicinity of New York, there is absolutely no excuse to avoid this show. If you are a bookmaker, run, do not walk to the Cooper-Hewitt Museum, part of the Smithsonian Institution. It is open until 3 January.

Later in the week, met George Quasha of Open Studio, talked books with Ann Rosen and Michael Kostiuk in the City, saw glorious Xerox work by Howard Goldstein of the Franklin Furnace staff, talked with Martha Wilson, director of the Franklin Furnace, met by chance Paul Zelevansky at Ron Feldman's gallery downtown, saw the innovative work of Gerard Charrière, a bookbinder who has used those traditional tools to make beautiful original visual works at Key

Gallery, met by chance Toma Fichter who is curator of the gallery space at Inroads, a new gallery at 150 Mercer Street, he being an old artist friend from the bookshow at LAICA. Then by chance while I was viewing Terence La Noue's gorgeous paintings at Nancy Hoffman's, met Don Nice whom I haven't seen in 25 years—the last time being in Florence, Italy. By this time, it was almost too much, but more connections were in the offing with Mary Anna Shoen, Kate Delos and Nat Dean, Tim Eaton right around the corner at Jaap Rietman's, and then I learned that my friend, Sharon Chickanzeff, librarian at the San Francisco Art Institute, had just left Jaap's for the airport and home. Yet, it didn't end here. At an opening at Anna Nosei's gallery, there was Michael Smith, the performance artist, waiting outside for Barbara Krueger, and then Richard Prince came by, as well as Mike Glier, Julian Schnabel, Jim Wines, and later at a party at Douglas Davis' and Jane Bell's, there was finally Pittore Euforico, the mail artist whom I have never met but with whom I have been corresponding for years, as well as many more artists.

Met Kathy Weldon, director of the Center for Book Arts, on the subway, Nicholas Spill from New Zealand, then later at openings I saw Karen Shaw, Cynthia Navaretta, Barbara Wilson, Robin White, Edit de Ak, and later that night after attending the great Halloween parade in Greenwich Village, we went to the annual ritual that Mary Beth Edelson performs at AIR Gallery every year. I could go on, but I also needed a rest.

TYRINGHAM, MASSACHUSETTS

So I took off for the Shaker Seed House known as the Jean Brown Archive, to savor the richness of the collection and the hospitality of this great lady. Through the woods of Connecticut to Massachusetts, I wondered why I had ever left New England, the place which had given me a sense of history, a sense of roots. And there I was firmly esconced in the Shaker House which the Browns bought after it had been moved to that location. George Maciunas had designed the cabinetry in the archive, and there was so much to see, from artists' books to one-of-a-kinds, from visual and concrete poetry to manuscripts and correspondence. The Shaker Seed House is a place of peace and contemplation, a resting place for all those ephemeral materials that artists seem to create by a whim and very few people get to see. Here, we have a permanent study collection, and I urge all my readers to call or write for an appointment whenever you are in the vicinity of Tyingham. Jean Brown is a gracious hostess, and you will not forget the experience.

Returning back to the hustle and bustle of New York City, I decided to take in some Sufi dancing, and it was a great experience. Met Los Angeles people right on the street in Little Italy, also bumped into Miriam Schapiro and Paul Brach. Saw Carol Huebner, who is curating a show of artists' books at Rutgers University in January-February. So we talked more books. And in the round of openings on November 3 (there were 11, I believe, if Peter Frank is counting), we encountered Henry Korn at a party for Robert Delford Brown, whose major retrospective was being celebrated by friends. Even

saw Ed Moses, who has transferred to New York City after so many years in Los Angeles.

My final day was full of appointments with bookmakers, especially Paul Zelevansky and Barbara Rosenthal. And after that I ambled into Printed Matter, where Carol Conde and Karl Beveridge were installing a window piece, and where Clive Robertson had just visited (just missed him). John Hogan of Bookspace was there, and told me that Bookspace in Chicago has closed, but that Miles de Coster has taken over the visual books. A new address will be divulged soon, or at least where artists can write to find out about their books in Chicago.

And so back to my reality on November 4, leaving a New York full of energy and full of bad painting. I never got to see (or hear) the Soundings show, which is at SUNY Purchase, nor the Romare Bearden show in Brooklyn. Life is too full and rich. So back to the Umbrella Loft, to think about all the connections, to think about how small the art world really is, to know that even without the great financial support of the NEA, art will survive, will endure, and will communicate to the spirit and uplift the soul. And what is life about if not about connections?

—jah

ART & TEXT

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FROM THE EDITOR

As of 1 January, Astro Artz will no longer be the publisher of *Umbrella*. We have enjoyed a very good year with Astro Artz and are very grateful that *Umbrella* could survive for another year, thanks to the gracious support of this publishing house which generates **High Performance** and a great many artists' books about performance artists. Luckily, we have found a way to survive. We're going to give 1982 a chance. It can only be better than 1981.

What we are asking all our printers, binders and bookmakers to think about is this. I am dedicating up to four pages each issue in 1982 to technical pages generated by those who know; in others words, printers or bookmakers may have four pages to produce themselves and submit to my printer for inclusion in each issue of 1982. In January, Kevin Osborn will demonstrate some of his experimental offset techniques. A statement about the technique or process must accompany the work. For more details or to reserve some pages for a future issue, please contact me as soon as you get the urge.

We will also be getting reviews of Chicago artists' books from Barbara Tannenbaum. We also want to do some in-depth reviews and interviews of bookmakers, so if you have some ideas, please let me know. The intent for *Umbrella* in 1982 is to be a Small Art Press Review, with emphasis on those who make the books. This will be your vehicle, your voice, your forum. So, if you know about a new outlet for sales, a new technique for demonstration, a new bookmaker who needs exposure, anyone who will be visiting Los Angeles and wants an interview, please let me know. I will be reviewing trade books only to the extent that they deal with photography or reference tools important to the artist or art researcher. If you know of any books you think should be mentioned, let me know. And we want you, the readers, to make this a forum for your ideas. What with the Bookworks Conference coming up next October in Philadelphia, we want you all to have dialogue before October, to help plan the Conference, and to bring your ideas out into the open through the pages of *Umbrella*.

On the eve of the electronic age, I still believe that the book will survive and that the artist's book will be a portable museum, an intimate aesthetic experience in the confines of everyone's electronic environment. We will spirit the books away as a respite from the cathode ray tube. So with that, I bid you a Good Year, a Better Year, one full of good books, good friends, and good health.

—jah

P.S. Thank you all so much who have sent me umbrellas for the *Umbrella* Archive. You have been so generous, and I am taking this opportunity to thank you all.

