

Report from The Third International Artists' Book Triennial Vilnius 2003

I received a grant from The Durfee Foundation in Santa Monica, California to travel to Vilnius, Lithuania to install my work and make a short performance, which I only half completed because of a steady rain at the reception. I was able, with the help of Inga Darguzyte, my Lithuanian assistant, to pass out Chinese funereal papers to many who attended the reception. And thanks to the chamber quartet who provided musical accompaniment.

What I found upon my arrival was a charming city and one of the most interesting book shows in which I have participated. Most artist book exhibitions are chocked full of small objects in cases (or books that can be handled), usually installed in over-crowded spaces, yet always one can anticipate an intimate experience with book objects in these venues.

The Triennial at the Contemporary Arts Centre in Vilnius was no exception, and was expertly curated by Kestutis Vasiliunas, an artist and professor at the Art Academy in Vilnius, and beautifully designed by Saulius Valius, another artist from Vilnius.

The book show was one of four exhibitions at the Centre, titled *Lietuvos Grafika '03*, consisting of exhibitions of printmaking, papermaking, and illustration by Lithuanian artists. Mr. Valius expertly installed each exhibition in large gallery spaces.

The exhibition hall for The Triennial consisted of a group of low tables configured in a grid format. Several book/book objects were grouped together in elegant vitrines. Other pieces were either wall-mounted or hung from the ceiling.

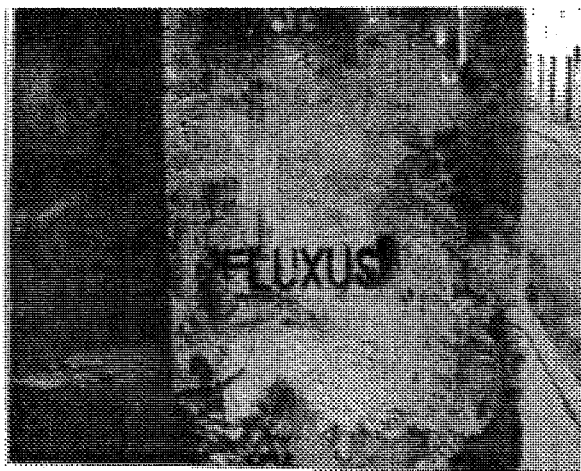
In the introductory essay by Mr. Vasiliunas, he writes "The creator of the Artist Book can be an ordinary human being from any neighborhood without any education or this can be a very intellectual child who has just started to hold a pencil or scissors."

"This can also be an artist familiar with the structure of a classical book or a person totally unfamiliar with it for that matter. This creator can be a totally unknown individual."

This is exactly the inherent democratic value of the artist book: from the inexpensive offset books made by the conceptualists of the 1960's to the projects now made by artists (and nonartists) for the internet.

This project was not totally democratic, though. Mr. Vasiliunas was interested in quality as well as quantity: he picked 119 artists from 44 countries out of 262 submitted entries responding to the show's title *23 Sins*.

Most notable were Ausra Andziulyte's *Card Index*, made of glass and ink; Maj-Britt Beck's *23 Sins Hidden in an Encyclopedia*, odd little gummed paper objects in an old suitcase; Carles S. Cave's *23 Absolved Sins*; Isabelle



Francis' lovely book made with peach pits; Sabina Hoffman's cardboard hands with text; Doerte Meyer's altered photos; Roman Mineav's large figure made of etching fragments; Brody Neuenschwander's *Lover's Book*; Diana Radaviciute's book of faces, including bits of eyes, noses, etc.; Maria Salmaso's monochromatic book objects, hung on the wall; Dalia Marija Saulauskaite's *Peccatum mortale II*, a hermetic object of bound paper in leather.

Other works in this exhibition range from Mohamed Abouelnaga's beautiful, untitled abstract collage book to Herve Constant's offset book titled *Murdering*, a tome on living with violence in contemporary society; Josif Stefan Tasi's glass jars containing liquid sins, titled *The Flavor of Words*; Ana Theil's *The Sleep of Reason* is a mysterious red book with what looks like a wound on the cover; James Thurman's *Lust*, a plate made from pornographic magazines that from one angle looks like a bowling ball. And last, but not least, Eef Zipper's *Don't Protect Your Sins*, a book object made from an umbrella, which hung from the ceiling.

This exhibition will travel to Galerie Gravicel in Lille, France and to the Frankfurt Art Faire in Germany in 2004. The excellent illustrated catalog, hand-bound, is available for 25 Euros from Kestutis Vasiliunas, contact: vasiliunask@arts.lt

—Sam Erenberg,
Santa Monica, California
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Sam Erenberg is an artist, curator and writer. He was born in Los Angeles and is a painter, installation artist and maker of book objects. He is represented by the Craig Krull Gallery in Santa Monica, California. He has been exhibiting in artist book exhibitions for over twenty-five years.