

FROM BOOK HEAVEN TO THE INFERNO: on the road with jah

If one has to travel to Europe, one could never find a better time than October, when book heaven occurs in Frankfurt at the world's largest book fair. In late autumn, still bathed in sunlight with a tinge of cold, Frankfurt opened its doors to its famous Buchmesse, where miles of books literally were on display and hall after hall (some two levels) have exhibitions of books from 77 countries and 6,000 exhibitors, and as a special treat, there are exhibitions of bookbindings and papermaking, childrens' books, scientific and technical publications (which often are the most fascinating), library and documentation publications, arts and humanities, as well as all the European publishers. There is non-stop wheeling and dealing, some deals excelling one million dollars (e.g. \$1.2 - \$1.7 million for Mick Jagger's biography) to a meager \$2,000 for a title for Bantam.

After being greeted by Suzanne and Hubert Kretschmer, my hosts, I jumped from one booth to another to visit with Audio Arts and Coracle Press from London, Ottenhausen from Aachen, Ecart from Geneva, and then try to take it all in, finding that impossible! Just in Halle 6 downstairs is the output of German-language publishers that could overwhelm anyone, especially one who is not well versed in German but who wants to know what's being published! There was everything from Astrodata (a computerized gimmick for telling your future) to Filmvideoverlag from Stuttgart (where a surfing videotape was being promoted, believe it or not!) and then the alternative presses from Germany made me feel like the ugly American, with extremely vocal presses against the Cruise and Pershing missiles, as well as the women's presses which published abundantly. And then there was Klaus Staeck and his political postcards and posters, and in fact, I finally met Klaus Staeck in person in a private club in Darmstadt that night. The impending march against the Cruise Missiles in every part of Europe was on the minds of many, and as a surprise, there was a moment of silence requested for Peace and Freedom on Sunday during the fair, induced by the Writers' Union and P.E.N. Oddly enough, they announced this moment of silence only in German after the familiar "achtung" —this in one of the largest *international* fairs in the world, and I had to break the silence to find out why everyone had stopped talking!

But the funniest thing that happened on that first day at the fair was about 6:20 p.m. when Kaspar Konig dashed down the long aisle in Halle 6 with a blue and gold Brocabra on (that hat that is an umbrella as well), and I didn't even have my camera out! Ah, well, my eye is the camera!

Halle 8 is full of Art and Religion, both on the same floor upstairs, and the difference was marked. Not just white collars, but the clientele as well. From Dumont to Deuteronomy, with the saving grace of your friends: John Armleder (ecart), Bill Furlong (Audio Arts, Simon Cutts (Coracle Press), Irene Ottenhausen (Ottenhausen Verlag), and John Christie (Circle Press). In Halle 6, Hansjorg Mayer, Uta Brandes and Michael Erlhoff of Zweitschrift who always had tea and cakes or wine and goodies everyday around 5; Armin Hundertmark, an old friend from Cologne and Rainer Verlag, one of the great "new" small art presses from Berlin which has been in existence since 1964, but has

recently surfaced with works by Emmett Williams, Ann Noel, Diter Roth, Ben Vautier, Dorothy Iannone, A. R. Penck, Endre Tot, and so many more.

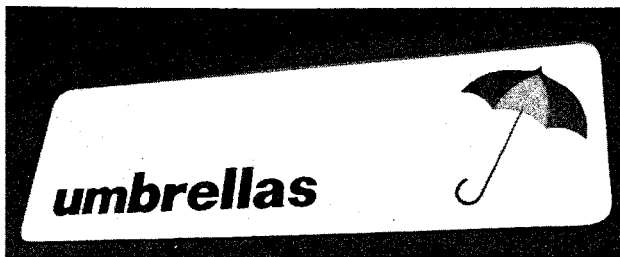
Of course it takes days to see it all: between meeting people, eyeing things that are familiar but really are not and then exploring and excavating, well, it takes days! I found a publisher in Germany who has done a book on "buttons", but only in German—from the history of the button to pop music stars' buttons to political buttons, etc. There is another German publisher who sells slides of alternative architecture, architectural oddities, murals in Mexico, Europe, Germany and the U.S., and much more from Vista Point Verlag in Cologne. Then there is Galeria Estampa that makes beautiful "leporello" books—those wonderful accordion-style books which are collectors' items and of course, Leporello himself, who makes handmade books of lithography, rubberstamps, printing and whimsy in an edition of 100, expensive but oh so beautiful, and he has the joy of bookmaking in Aachen!



Halle 5 is probably the most fascinating great hall you have ever seen, for it's like a meeting of the United Nations. Start at 9 a.m., quietly through the *ÜSSR* and other Eastern European countries with large pavilions representing their national output and huge book displays. The floors are carpeted, the people are quiet, and you proceed quietly. Actually, Halle 5 is ripe for an audiowork—quietly through Eastern Europe, drift into the Middle Eastern Countries where belly dancers should have been rousing you to look at books, but none appeared. Then the Latin American countries whose music is in their language, which you hear constantly, and on to Italy and France, where everyone is either talking or making contact, a bit louder now, with the Mediterranean cultures mingling into musical inflection. The sounds grow louder through Scandinavia where big deals are being sorted out, and then louder still as you approach the UK, Australia and eventual-

ly Canada. But big business makes big noise, and you have arrived at the big sound of the United States with curtained booths and enclosed areas for making "big business" and "big deals"! The crescendo is complete.

Although the Buchmesse serves as the equivalent of the American Booksellers Association (ABA) annual confab, the whole Book Fair is not hard sell, but quiet business between quiet publishers who show new books, review books, and dummy books which expose what they are going to publish in the immediate future. The United Nations of Books—all there in one building. Yes, Virginia, publishing is indeed alive and well and living in Frankfurt, if only but once a year in October! It was book heaven—a bit bizarre, but book heaven indeed.



LONDON

As usual, London was busy—busy shopping, busy doing things, busy rushing in the tube and on buses and in taxis, but the first difference I noted was that there were video and computer shops everywhere, especially on Tottenham Court Road, much more than in the U.S.

Getting a travel card which entitled me to a week's worth of bus and tube traveling to my heart's content was not so difficult, nor was it as expensive as I had imagined, due to the efforts of Ken Livingstone of the GLC (Greater London Council), an extraordinary man who is trying to get everyone to use public transport by keeping the price down. For someone from Los Angeles, the public transportation system with all its faults is wonderful in London, so much better than one's dependence upon the automobile!

Everyday was full of appointments, sometimes four in one day in all directions of London as well, so it was a test of physical and mental endurance. One of my first visits was to see Jane Reese, graduate of Visual Studies Workshop and a bookbinder, handmade paper maker, and a teacher, who allowed me to see her studio and work. She teaches at the London College of Printing and makes extraordinary books on a 1950 Xerox copier, model 1385, where she manipulates color prints from black and white silver prints and color positives. The prints all have at least 4 registrations or more, all done on this "primitive" but remarkable color copying machine, where each color is printed separately. I also interviewed Simon Cutts, the transcription of which will appear in the January issue of *Umbrella*. From there I went to the British Council to get my appointments for the following week from my sponsor for the trip. Then off to the ICA to announce my arrival and pick up any mail

with a stopover at the Craft Council galleries to see an extraordinary show on calligraphy, wood and textiles and recognized Ron King's Alphabet in the show. A long talk with Agatha Sadleir of St. George's Gallery Books made the afternoon complete with shop talk about books in general and art books in particular! Then a slow scan of Bond Street at dusk, a street of excellent taste and aesthetics, with umbrellas in the window of an Italian shoe shop.

If the economy is terrible in England, the tensions that it has aroused have been channeled into special directions of creativity, witness the incredible design talents of the English at the Design Center in Haymarket or at the Chelsea Craft Show where knitwear was the hit of the show in outstanding uses of wool to make wearable art, paintings in wool to be worn.

COVENT GARDEN

The transformation of this old market neighborhood into a series of boutiques, galleries, bookshops, and specialized services is a post-modern feat. The change is immense with rehabilitation of marketplaces for restaurants, vendors, street performers, the Arts Council Shop, among which is Ian Shipley's bookshop, packed full of art books. This little shop will be moving soon, but right now it is a rich resource. Ian introduced me to the best postcard shop I have ever seen, called *The Postcard Gallery*, at 32 Neal Street, with two floors of postcards (6,000 on display out of a stock of 1,000,000) organized by artist and each card available for viewing. Set up as a gallery, the two floors are packed full of visuals organized in such a way that one can find specifically what one wants or browse and discover, at will, the immense production of postcards from all over the world. The price for all the postcards is 30p., and that makes it so simple.

In the same neighborhood is the Art Book Company and Arts Bibliographic is not so far from there, so that I did my book looking and talking before going to see art on Cork Street. There, American art was in full force, with exhibitions by Keith Haring, Judy Rifka, Richard Bosman and well-known English artist Barry Flanagan, as well as Bernard Jacobson's stable including Michael Heindorf's watercolors of Huntington Gardens in Pasadena! Waddington was going to open a show by Saul Steinberg—so this became a very convenient "almost New York" stopover for me.



YORK & BRISTOL

By chance, Jane Reese and her husband were going to York for the Designer Binder's meeting and asked me to come along. It was a beautiful autumnal day and driving through the English countryside made the long trip worthwhile. It was my first visit to York, so I insisted on a quick visit through this medieval walled town and also to the Minster (Cathedral) of York, which has the oldest stained glass windows in Europe and is indeed a monument of the highest quality. (As it happens, John Furnival just sent me a gift for the Umbrella Museum which is a Victorian needle-holder with a magnified image of the York Minster in the eye of the umbrella handle!) At the Designer Binder's meeting, I did get to hear Philip Smith, the famous bookbinder and talk to him about his work.

A second visit to Bristol and Arnolfini, which is a large artists' space including a gallery, restaurant, bookshop, theater, cinema and video library all rolled into one was quite pleasant. Phil Glass' music was wafting through the bookshop, which sells many new music records as well as books. The innovation at Arnolfini is the Video Library, set up in 1981 with financial aid from the Arts Council of Great Britain which now includes a large reference library of videotapes of a non-commercial nature. Independent videos and films transferred to video form an important part of the library, but there is also the opportunity for independent filmmakers and video artists to deposit their work at the library on loan in order to permit viewing by visitors. The tapes remain the property of the artists and may be removed at any time. The Video Library is open from noon to eight everyday. There are large monitors and headsets with Sony Umatic format, either NTSC or PAL, or VHS half-inch. I also met Lizzie de' Becchi, a mail artist and enthusiast for *Umbrella*, and that was a treat as well. There are problems for artists in Great Britain right now, since economic cutbacks have delimited job availabilities for artists in the teaching field, and they find themselves bereft of work in their chosen fields, as it has been pointed out to me everywhere.

London is quite alive, but not so well. One can sense a tension that is a result of the economic policy of the government which is having some problems now surviving as it is under the Thatcher regime. Yet if England is ill prepared for this new industrial revolution we are undergoing, it is hard to explain, since the use of video and computers in England is on a higher percentage than the U.S. per capita. This is not to say that video games are not running riot in the UK, but the serious use of computers in all walks of the economy should make one look more carefully at the British adaptation to the new revolution. Their TV is also of a much higher calibre than our commercial networks, where one night (and that's the only night I had to relax and see telly) I saw a fine play called the Dybbuk, an interview with Borges which was a joy and a revelation, and a preview of the Old Vic theater which has been taken over by David Mirvisch of Toronto and made into a beautiful venue for musicals, etc. All without commercials and in a higher resolution video than in the United States!

Then there were new and old friends in the two weeks I was in England: John Carson, the Irish performance artist

who now lives in London; Mary Kelly, whose new book should be reviewed in the January issue; Ian Breakwell, artist with paintings, books and much more; Nathalie d'Arbeloff, book artist; Ian Tyson, an astute bookmaker who is now forming a group called Artists' Book Collective, which will probably be housed at the Atlantis Gallery in Wapping, where a new show *British Artists' Books* will be held in March. The gallery will be a meeting place for artists who make books, the fine book which was so well exhibited at the Art Ink '83 exhibition area. In fact, this Artists' Book Collective will probably be a force in the English art scene in 1984!

A visit to **Audio Arts** in London founded by Bill Furlong made me realize that audioart is alive and well and in fact living in London, and by remote control around the world. Bill Furlong is celebrating the 10th anniversary of Audio Arts and invited me to see where it all takes place. After ten years of predicting that the world would be wired for sound (pre-Walkman), Bill is now enjoying some fame and little fortune spreading the word around about sound art both at the Hayward Annual as well as throughout the world via his tapes which are now accompanied by news, reviews and advertisements about sound magazines, spaces, etc. For more information, see the Audio Arts section of "News & Notes."

ART INK '83

The fair was opened by a burst of balloons set loose by Tom Phillips, noted book artist from London, at noon on Friday, 28 October. With refreshments and ceremony, the 45 exhibitors showed their publications throughout the whole ICA, which besides having a restaurant, cinema, performance space and gallery exhibition areas, also has a videotheque, which features videotapes of feature films, rock tapes, art documentaries, artists' video, theatre and performance, audio arts and dance and style. The Videothèque is a public access video library, with monitors and headphones in the ICA Cinematheque, open from noon to 5:30 p.m. except on Mondays. (Now, that is the commercial, now for the news).

Located on the Mall in the center of historic London, one would have thought this was going to be a "sterling" event, in more ways than one. But alas, publicity was sparse, and there were no announcements on kiosks or in the tube, and very little in the newspapers, so it was hardpressed to get an audience to visit, look and buy. Some rather gross "book sculptures"—none done by John Latham, who has been using books in his sculptural works for a long time—seemed to portend dire results from the six months' of planning that went into this "international" event, but the array of books was good, going from Dover Books to audio magazines, from videotapes to *Art Monthly*.

Whitechapel Art Gallery, which is closing for 14 months for renovations, has produced 15-20 minute tape/slide programs during their exhibitions and now provides them for sale or rent such as interviews with Terry Atkinson, George Baselitz, Francesco Clemente, Barry Flanagan, Anselm Kiefer, Jannis Kounellis, Bruce McLean, among others. Since you need information to buy them, write to Whitechapel Art Gallery, 80 Whitechapel High St., London E1 7QX. The Design and Art Directors' Association was also showing 21 years of British Graphics and TV commercials on video.

Canadians were well represented by Art Metropole, Parachute, Artexte who showed magazines and exhibition catalogs from around Canada. Postcard producers such as Fotofolio, Art Post, Card-Tel (which represents a new association of independent publishers of postcards and posters from the UK), Debbie Weiss who has a marvelous line of Hollywood postcards, as well as adult humor and wild and wonderful imagery as well as German postcards, and she calls herself Immediate/Confidential; Nicholas Treadwell who produces Superhumanism postcards, Chic Pix with avant-garde imagery and Smersh representing the new postcard designs from John Stalin all were on exhibit, and Artists' Cards, which has been a successful producer and distributor of postcards made by artists including 150 contemporary art postcards available throughout the UK, was also present.

The list of exhibitors included magazines such as *Performance*, *Stills*, *Artscribe*, *Artline Newspaper*, *Camera-work*, but most were from the UK as you see. Several distributors of exhibition catalogs besides Artexte were exhibiting, such as Art Data, Museum of Modern Art (Oxford), and Kettles Yard, as well as the Arts Council of Great Britain, the Third Eye Centre in Glasgow (run by Chris Carell with an amazing list of books and catalogs), 350 Sauchiehall St., Glasgow G2 3JD, Scotland.

If prizes were to be given out for the best booth, however, it would be given to Imprint, a collective of small publishers working in the area of fine artists' books, including Spot Press, Michael Caine, Ian Tyson, John Christie, Kelpra Editions, Ron King, Ace Editions and Natalie d'Arbeloff. The exhibit space was fortuitous, brilliantly utilized, and showed off to good advantage these remarkably beautiful bookworks.

Besides a conversation with Ralph Steadman, who also did a special drawing event for children, there were panel discussions in the course of the last two days of the Book Fair. The first, entitled *Art in Print: Collaboration or Commentary*, chaired by Bill Furlong, included Tom Phillips, Hanjorg Mayer, Peter Townsend (editor of *Art Monthly*), Nikos Stangos of Thames & Hudson, as well as Ingrid Sischy, editor of *Artforum*. The second, entitled *Future Formats in Art Publishing* included William Furlong, Donald McClean (Deputy Chairman of Thorn/EMI Video), Sandy Nairne (ICA Visual Arts Director), the editor of *Umbrella*, and Justin Dukes, Deputy Chief Executive of Channel Four TV as chair.

SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR ART 'INK

For the readers of *Umbrella* who have been interested in being represented at Art Ink '83, first of all, not enough planning went into making this a truly "international" book fair. The timing was too distant from the Frankfurt Book Fair to make it feasible for most exhibitors to be at both fairs, especially if they did not live in Europe. Secondly, the tables were too expensive compared to the prices in Frankfurt (and next year's Frankfurt Book Fair will be held in new halls and may be a very appropriate location for launching a cooperative of book artists in the United States or even in North America, including magazines). Also, there were no bookshelves provided, so that if I had come from the United States with 100 titles from

book artists in the United States, I would not have had time to have built shelves or construct something to support the display of these works. As it was, there was an Individual Titles Display where those artists who could not appear in person sent in money to have ICA exhibit their publications, but nothing was done to exhibit them in a pleasing display. They were just laid on the table in a corner upstairs, and not well presented.

If Art Ink happens again, it should be closer in time to the Frankfurt Book Fair, it should be less expensive, and it should provide all participants with shelving and advertising for weeks ahead of time, even months. Perhaps, in fact, it should include all the arts in order to attract a general public out there to see what really is happening in the art publishing field throughout the world! As it stands, it was basically the United Kingdom with a smattering of foreign influx from Portugal, Switzerland and Canada, and some trade publications from North America. Nicholas Callaway had Callaway Editions fully exhibited, along with Black Sparrow Press, which seems to be another side of the coin. But to really be "international", ICA would have to do more to make it international in feeling as well as in name. For more information, including the catalog for the Fair which should cost around £1 for costs, postage and handling, write to Louise Flesh, ICA, The Mall, London W1.

LONDON AGAIN

While *Time* magazine had **The Tribes of Britain** on their cover, with the punks of King's Road making a name for themselves, either with superglued hair and black leather and spikes or with skinheads, the Sloane Rangers who wear debutante clothes and work in publishing or art galleries also form a tribe, as pointed out by the magazine. Slowly the buildup of anti-nuclear feeling was in the air, people were coming in from all over England for the march on Saturday, 22 October, wending their way through Trafalgar Square to Hyde Park. I started feeling more like the "ugly American" each day. The young people and the old marched, the short and the tall, the black and the white and every color in-between: 200,000 strong. And then when Grenada happened and I had to witness it from abroad, the feeling was even more uneasy, because Mrs. Thatcher was really having a rough time with the Parliament, some of whose members (Labor) asked her to resign because she was siding with her "pal" Reagan. Then a few days later she changed her tune, and mild criticism ended the whole thing. This was seen by millions on telly, and Reagan really looks better on British TV because of the color resolution (they have more lines than we do). Looking at the U.S. from abroad, I started to feel frightened not only for the free world, but for all mankind. I believe there was fear in the hearts of those "tribes of England" as much as anywhere. It was not as easy to go on my merry way after Grenada and the march. It was hard to feel good about life, even though the autumnal beauty of the October sunshine was much appreciated.

Ironically enough, I met **John Stalin** (no relation to Joseph) at Art Ink '83 where he was exhibiting his postcards, but he had already been in my vocabulary because of his fantastic postcards which I had received from a friend. He started on a rampage a few years ago with his postcard art, not full of beautiful travel scenes, or tasteful Warhol re-

productions, but instead, we get pictures of police getting friendly in a police car, or armies of Scot terriers in silhouette against the national flag, with enigmatic captions such as "Beware the Poodles of Doom" or "Forget the Past"—all collectors' items at only 10p in the beginning (15 cents).

He has just completed his third series which is sold throughout Europe and North America, except for France. His real name is not John Stalin, but that is all right too. He is truly an artist of today in an England of yesterdays. He is patriotic, megalomaniacal, working from a secret London headquarters with some 400 files known as the "Archives." His words are as important as his images, and most of the time he has more captions looking for pictures than vice-versa. He makes the combinations work by playing with them. He goes by many names as well: John Churchill or Johnny Bullets when he writes for other music magazines. Some of his new designs (18 in all) are now available in New York and across the United States, as well as the Postcard Gallery in London. His work is being shown at the Watershed Gallery in Bristol, featuring 40 unpublished designs by John Stalin in their show, *Postcard Views*, which opened on 10 November. His energy and innovative efforts to get his art out make him an island in a desert.

JOHN FURNIVAL & ROOKSMOOR HOUSE

I had the great pleasure of spending 31 October, Halloween, all day with John & Astrid Furnival, looking at the great wall with stones from all over the world, visiting a magnificent cemetery (how apt on Halloween), eating and drinking well, and visiting small presses and art collectors. It was a special time for one umbrella enthusiast to meet another after years of correspondence. And since I am a member of Dorothy's Umbrellas Dining Society, I felt doubly honored by the invitation and the opportunity to see John before he and Astrid left for the United States. Their home in Stroud goes back to 1869, occupied by a John Grist way back when. Stroud is the home of an art school where David Hockney got his start as a student. But the area in which they live occupied by writers and artists is inspirational, and during this great autumn day, I could see why one would not opt for London, when one could really thrive and work in the country.



TOM PHILLIPS at opening, London

TOM PHILLIPS'S INFERNO

Learning from Tom at the ICA that his book was finally being launched on 1 November, I decided to stay an extra day and make it my Tom Phillips Day, starting with a visit to his studio, seeing the original *A Humument*, and then talking books for a while before going over to Waddington Gallery on Cork Street for an all-day orgy of art, books and food. A luncheon was served for press and friends, and then we looked—we looked with awe and inspiration at a book that rose like a phoenix from the fire that first destroyed it, and now full-blown surfaced with great soul, so that the ghost of Dante was looking above to us, or down at us, depending upon your viewpoint. If Dante, as indicated by the poet himself, really was delivered to the Inferno, then he must have been smiling at Tom Phillips for honoring him so well. For this tour de force was none other than Tom Phillips as translator, illustrator, designer and publisher of *Dante's Inferno*, one of those great books that occurs seldom, if ever, in one's lifetime.

Phillips includes 139 pictures which, with his translation, make up this present version of the *Inferno*, attempting to provide a visual commentary to Dante's text. They are a bridge and a reference, an integral part of understanding the poet, but the translation is divine, divinely inspired, and divinely executed. Phillips captures the poetry and the significance of the words, making this book a dynamic House of Memory. By the same token, the prints also contain another form of commentary, a parallel text embedded in the images, continuing the tradition of *A Humument*. The prints use silkscreen, etching, blind intaglio, mezzotint, stone lithography, plate lithography, four color offset lithography, letterpress, plus various combinations of all of these with occasional hand additions.

Tom Phillips has called his press the Talfourd Press, because it is located on Talfourd Street. That press and the studio in which he works has been visited by many a collector and devotee of Phillips' work. But what was so interesting about the exhibition was that the artist's notebooks for the translations, diaries, archive copies showing the work step by step—this major tour de force has been documented step by step. And for this I was overjoyed that I had stayed.

These volumes are not anything but artworks in book form, in an edition of 185. The sole distributor is Waddington Graphics, 31 Cork Street, London W1. Every major library should have these volumes, not just for Italian collections but also for contemporary art collections. It is a monument, which the world should appreciate and honor.

On the frontispiece of *The Inferno* is this statement by Phillips:

My stories of a soul's surprise—a soul—which crossed a chasm in whose depths I find—I found myself and nothing more than that. That schoolboy's Virgil—ever open.

Find yourself in these pages, and you will know what I am saying. It was worth waiting for hell, for the *Inferno*, for a consummate work of art. I left London flying in more ways than one.

—jah