

Santiago was pulled down by a group of soldiers and driven off in a truck to be melted down. On October 2 the junta announced that as part of its "clean-up campaign" it intended to "put an end to the black night of Marxist cinema" by importing American films, which will necessitate a tenfold increase in the price of admission to movie theatres, effectively eliminating movies as a recreation for workers. News as to the fate of hundreds of left-wing Chilean artists and intellectuals is still not known. There is, however, enough information to establish a general picture of the situation. Victor Jarra, the singer and innovator in the new folk music, was killed. In one of many mass executions, an entire left-wing ballet troupe was killed. When Pablo Neruda, Nobel prize-winning poet, died of cancer and heart disease a few days after the coup, his house and library were sacked and his books burned. A young American film-maker visiting Chile was arrested and killed. The reign of terror continues, and with it a determination to eliminate all forms of freedom of expression.

NOTES

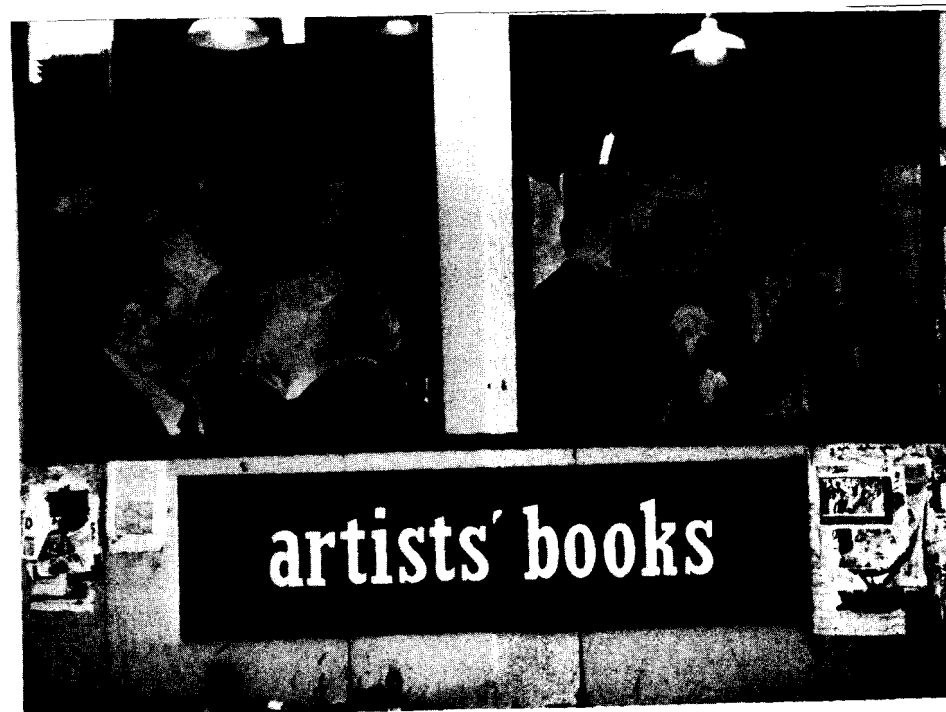
1. *TRA*, San Francisco, no. 4 (1973).
2. *ARTnews* (Summer 1973).

The Artist's Book Goes Public*

The "artist's book" is a product of the 1960s which is already getting its second, and potentially permanent, wind. Neither an art book (collected reproductions of separate artworks) nor a book on art (critical exegeses and/or artists' writings), the artist's book is a work of art on its own, conceived specifically for the book form and often published by the artist him/herself. It can be visual, verbal, or visual/verbal. With few exceptions, it is all of a piece, consisting of one serial work or a series of closely related ideas and/or images—a portable exhibition. But unlike an exhibition, the artist's book reflects no outside opinions and thus permits artists to circumvent the commercial gallery system as well as to avoid misrepresentation by critics and other middlepeople. Usually inexpensive in price, modest in format and ambitious in scope, the artist's book is also a fragile vehicle for a weighty load of hopes and ideals; it is considered by many the easiest way out of the art world and into the heart of a broader audience.

The artist's book is the product of several art and nonart phenomena of the last decade, among them a heightened social consciousness, the immense popularity of paperback books, a new awareness of how art (especially the costly "precious object") can be used as a commodity by a capitalist society, new extra-art subject matter and a rebellion against the increasing elitism of the art world and its planned obsolescence. McLuhan notwithstanding, the book remains the cheapest, most accessible means of conveying ideas—even visual

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Antonio Muntadas, *Wet and Dry Diplomacy*, 1980, Printed Matter Window, New York City. The Printed Matter windows change monthly and are designed as social outreach projects by artists who have books in the store. (Photo: Lucy R. Lippard)

ones. The artist's adaptation of the book format for works of art constitutes a criticism of criticism as well as of art-as-big-business. Its history, however, lies in the realm of literature and *editions de luxe*.

The ancestors of artists' books as we know them now were the products of friendships between avant-garde painters and poets in Europe and later in New York. It was not until the early 1960s, however, that a few artists began to ignore literary sources, forgo the collaborative aspect and make their own books—not illustrations or catalogs or portfolios of prints but books as visually and conceptually whole as paintings or sculptures. Among them were some of the Fluxus artists—George Brecht in particular, who produced curious little publications with roots in games or the Surrealist collage and box.

The new artists' books, however, have disavowed Surrealism's lyrical and romantic heritage and have been deadpan, antiliterary, often almost antiart. Ed Ruscha's *26 Gas Stations* (1962), followed by his *Various Small Fires* (1964), *Some Los Angeles Apartments* (1965), *Every Building on Sunset Strip* (1966) and so forth into the present with *Colored People*, initiated the "cool" approach that dominated the whole conception of artists' books for years. Ruscha's books were a major starting point for the as-yet-unnamed Conceptual Art, a so-called movement (actually a medium, or third stream) which made one of its most vital contributions by validating the book as a legitimate medium for visual art.

By 1966, if you were reading the signs, you noticed that the book was a coming thing. Dan Graham's and Robert Smithson's hybrid magazine articles—neither criticism nor art—were one of the signs; Mel Bochner's "Working Drawings" show at the School of Visual Arts, where drawings that were "not necessarily art" were Xeroxed and exhibited in notebooks, was another. The

point (having to do with a broader definition of art, among other things) was followed up in 1967 by the Museum of Normal Art's show called "Fifteen People Present Their Favorite Book"; the same year, Brian O'Doherty, as editor of a boxed issue of *Aspen Magazine*, included artworks (not reproductions) by Sol LeWitt, Tony Smith, Graham and Böhner; the 0-9 press, one of whose editors was Vito Acconci, then a poet, published single artworks in booklet format by Acconci himself, Rosemary Mayer, Adrian Piper and others; Sol LeWitt published the first of his many books; and in England, the first Art & Language publications appeared, promulgating an extreme and incommunicative use of texts as art.

By 1968, when dealer Seth Siegelau began to publish his artists in lieu of exhibiting them, the art world took notice. Lawrence Weiner and Douglas Huebler had "no-space" shows; Hanne Darboven and the N.E. Thing Co. published their first independent books; *The Xerox Book* presented serial Xerox works by Andre, Barry, Huebler, Kosuth, LeWitt, Morris and Weiner; Siegelau's "Summer 1969" exhibition took place in fragments all over the world and existed as a whole only in its catalog.

Since then, hundreds of artists' books have appeared. Yet they are never reviewed, not even in art magazines, either as books or as exhibitions. So far, artists' books have been dispersed (usually as gifts) to friends and colleagues, then left to languish in warehouses, studios and gallery back rooms. They are published by the artists themselves, by small underground presses or by a few galleries—the latter more often in Europe than in America. Art dealers are more interested in selling "real art," on which they can make a profit, and tend to see artists' books as handy handouts to potential buyers of expensive objects. Even art bookstores make so little profit on artists' books that they neglect them in favor of more elaborate tomes. Artists unaffiliated with galleries have no way to distribute their books widely and rarely recoup printing costs, which, though fairly low, many cannot afford in the first place.

It is difficult to find organizational funding for printing artists' books because the visual-arts sections of the various councils do not give money for publications. Subsidies exist for all the conventional visual arts—film, video, "mixed media" (which covers a multitude of sins, but rarely books)—as well as for plays, fiction and poetry. But the artist's book—a mutation clinging to the verbal underside of the visual-art world—tends to remain an economic pariah even in its own domain. (It is difficult to distinguish an artist's book consisting entirely of text from a book of "poetry," or one consisting of a series of "antiphotographs," whose importance lies in sequence rather than in individual composition, from a conventional photography book.)

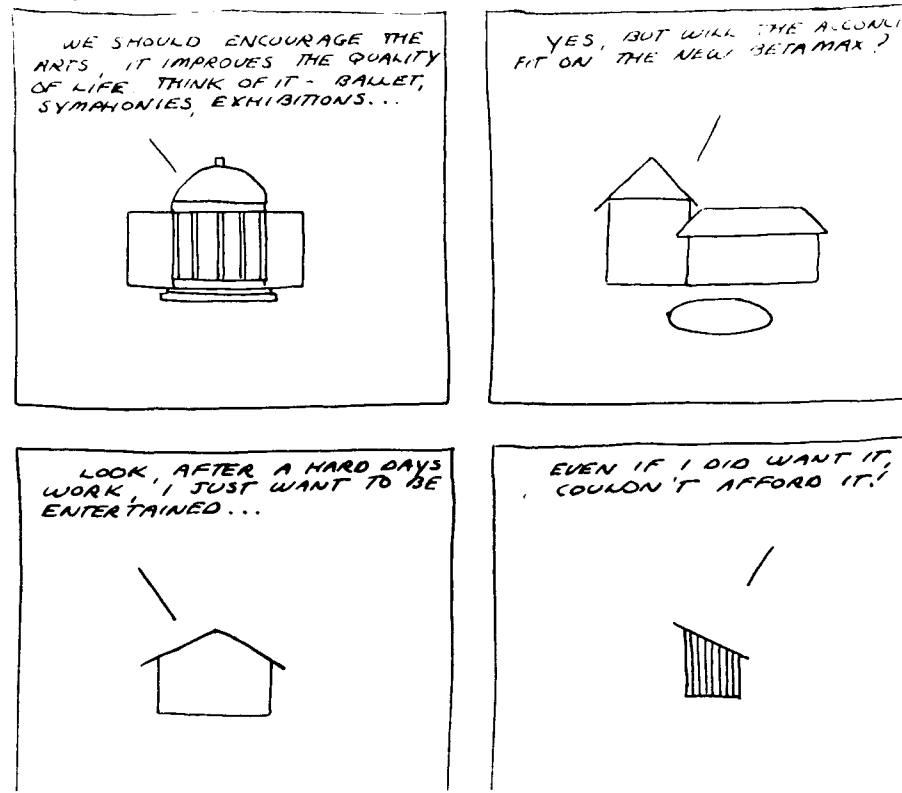
With some luck and a lot of hard work, problems of distribution may be solved by Printed Matter, a New York collective of artists and artworkers which has just been set up both to publish a few books and to distribute and operate a bookstore for all artists' books.¹ This task was taken over from Martha Wilson, an artist whose nonprofit organization, Franklin Furnace, briefly distributed artists' books but now limits itself to an archive and exhibition service for them. Printed Matter hopes to maintain an effective liaison between an international audience and individual artists, galleries and small presses, such as Vipers Tongue, Out of London, and L.A. Women's Graphic Center.

At the moment, the artist's book is defined (and confined) by an art context,

where it still has a valuable function to serve. To an audience which is outside the major art centers and, for better or worse, heavily influenced by reproductions in magazines, the artist's book offers a first-hand experience of new art. For an artist, the book provides a more intimate communication than a conventional art object, and a chance for the viewer to take something home. An artist's book costs far less than any graphic or multiple and, unlike a poster, which may cost as much or more, it contains a whole series of images or ideas. The only danger is that, with an expanding audience and an increased popularity with collectors, the artist's book will fall back into its *édition de luxe* or coffee-table origins, as has already happened in the few cases when such books have been coopted by commercial publishers and transformed into glossy, pricey products.

Needless to say, there are good artists' books and bad ones—from anyone's point of view. They have in common neither style nor content—only medium. (Economically determined strictures, as much as a fairly ubiquitous Minimalist stylistic bent, can be blamed for the tendency toward the white, black or gray cover with stark type that until recently was the trademark of the artist's book.) They are being made everywhere: Printed Matter's first ten books came out of Oregon, Pennsylvania, Illinois, California and Massachusetts, as well as New York. They range from the hilarious to the bizarre, romantic, deadpan, decorative, scholarly and autobiographical; from treatises to comic books. Their po-

Anonymous, from *Red Herring*, January 1977, p. 45.



litical possibilities are just beginning to be recognized too. One of the basic mistakes made by early proponents of Conceptual Art's "democratic" stance (myself included) was a confusion of the characteristics of the medium (cheap, portable, accessible) with those of the actual contents (all too often wildly self-indulgent or so highly specialized that they appeal only to an elite audience). Yet the most important aspect of artists' books is their adaptability as instruments for extension to a far broader public than that currently enjoyed by contemporary art. There is no reason why the increased outlets and popularity of artists' books cannot be used with an enlightenment hitherto foreign to the "high" arts. One day I'd like to see artists' books ensconced in supermarkets, drugstores and airports and, not incidentally, to see artists able to profit economically from broad communication rather than from lack of it.

NOTE

1. Printed Matter is now located at 7 Lispenard Street, New York, N.Y. 10013, 212-925-0325. The 1983 catalog contains over 2,000 items and is available for \$4.00 postpaid.

The Geography of Street Time: A Survey of Streetworks Downtown*

I should say at the outset that my decision to write about streetworks—ideally an ephemeral, rebellious, iconoclastic outreaching and noncommercial medium—reflects my dissatisfaction with the "downtown scene" as it has developed since around 1971, when so-called SoHo (even the name is imitative) hit its carnival stride. The area was once called Hell's Hundred Acres because of its concentration of sweatshops; in its sometimes lively decadence it may re-earn the name.

A good many artists have been living illegally in SoHo lofts since the 1950s. In 1968 the artists' co-op buildings were under way, but Paula Cooper had the only gallery below Houston Street. She opened her new space that November with a handsome Minimal show organized as a benefit for the antiwar movement. Also in 1968, Ten Downtown—artists showing in their own lofts—provided an early example of extracommercial, artist-organized exhibitions; and the next year 55 Mercer Street, founded by members of the Art Workers' Coalition, became the first of a new wave of co-op galleries.

There was at this point a mood of exhilaration, a feeling that control over art was being returned to the artists' community. In opposition to the intellectually demanding, often hostile and cliquish atmosphere of the 1960s avant garde, the end of that decade saw a brief politicization of artists on a model set by Blacks and students. Resentment against the high style of the classy '60s, the domination of big money, the uptown galleries and audiences—all of this contributed to the process of "decentralization" into the downtown area, although in retro-

spect, it is ironic and somewhat cynical to talk about decentralization (presumably epitomized by streetworks) in the heart of the bastion of international art centralization and all the vices inherent therein. Many artists and artworkers around 1969 desired some measure of independence from the system, though it should be said that none of us at any time totally abandoned his or her marketplace for the freedom of open shows, picket lines, and streetwork. There was, however, much talk about such possibilities, culminating in the citywide Art Strike at the time of the murders at Jackson State and Kent State and the U.S. bombing of Cambodia.

The second gallery to move downtown was O. K. Harris. With the legalization of loft living, the beatification of SoHo as a landmark area, and the resultant media attention, an unheard-of degree of commercialism replaced the initial community ideal. By 1971 the political excitement had died down. While the art basked in pluralism, the area slowly settled into a geography of boutiques, bars, and fancy food. When tourists began to appear on Saturdays (and later by the busload even during the week), it was clear that SoHo's fate was no longer in the hands of the original artists' community. Subsequent moves into "SoHo," "Tribeca," Brooklyn or the Flower District have simply expanded the reach of the "downtown scene." In the summer of 1975, a resident noted that the ratio of dogshit per block below Canal Street had doubled.

Since this new scene and the art it sponsored were the products less of esthetic than of political and commercial groupings, there developed a collage of unlikely networks: between artists and other artists, writers, poets, film-makers, and musicians on one hand, and between them and the marketplace and the social superstructure on the other hand. Streetworks should characterize this overall disjunction. They are by definition vignettes—temporary, rootless within the system, free to create their own structures, and experienced usually by a chance audience. The earlier streetworks, as well as works in public interior non-art spaces (subways, courthouses, etc.) constituted a dissatisfaction with what Robert Smithson called "cultural confinement," an attempt to move out of the gallery's enclosed and pristine environment and into the World. SoHo, with its mix of expensive restaurants and truck-clogged and factory-littered side streets, offered a perfect "land of contrasts." Yet most of the art shown in far-out SoHo is conventional painting and sculpture, and despite their possibilities for "novelty," there are amazingly few instances of bona fide streetwork over the last six years, even including those which are gallery-based. The following text does not claim to cover all the downtown streetworks, but I suspect it includes the large majority.

Although in the late 1950s artists like Claes Oldenburg, Jim Dine, Red Grooms and Allen Kaprow went to the Lower East Side gutters for their materials and their subject matter, little actually happened in the public domain. In March 1964, the Fluxus group and its motley affiliates did the first (and only) of what had been planned as a series of Saturday streetworks on Canal Street. There were pieces of Alison Knowles, Dick Higgins, Ben Vautier and others; Robert Rauschenberg's *2 Inches* (a ribbon across the street intended to be cut, which was instead torn by cars) was broken up by the police. In 1968, Anne Healy defied police and permits to rig her first billowing fabric sculpture on the exterior of a West Broadway loft building. It was, however, in March 1969 that Street Works were officially baptized with a series of events organized by poet and critic John Perreault, artist Marjorie Strider, and visual poet Hannah Weiner.

*Reprinted by permission from *SoHo*, Akademie der Künste, Berliner Festwochen (Sept.-Oct. 1976).