

Travel notes: CODEX journal May/June 2009

The objective of our visits was to promote the CODEX Book fair and Symposium to the European printing and book arts publishing and collecting community... especially in France and the low countries. A secondary objective was to assess the possibility of CODEX organizing or partnering with a European institution to sponsor a colloquium to interest and encourage European institutions in collecting contemporary book arts on an international scale, and to further encourage first rate European community publishers and printers and artists to come to CODEX.

Thur. May 14.

Our first visit was to Michael Woolworth's studio, Cour Fevrier, 2 Rue de la Roquette near the Place de la Bastille. Michael is an American who moved to Paris 30 + years ago. He is primarily a printmaker/publisher (etching and lithography in studio) who incidentally has made books with invited artists. We saw a book made of Japanese paper and string dipped in wax (wax book), another book made from daily French newspaper pages transfer printed onto heavy arches paper with new photographs introduced. These are books made by artists themselves working with Woolworth in the printmaking studio and are visually arresting and conceptually very interesting... printmaking is the main thrust in the craft... superb photogravures were seen. We invited Michael to CODEX saying that we believed that he would do well there and make contacts as well.



In the late afternoon we met up with Mark Lintott and Judith Rothchild (Verdigris Press in Octon in the South of France) at the **Ephémère**, bookbinders fair in a splendid municipal palace/building across from S.Sulpice. We saw Antoine Coron there (he had recommended the fair to us) and re-affirmed our visit to the Bibliothèque National later in the week.

Ephémère is a fine bindings fair and the binders showing are VERY accomplished and many quite innovative. I can see why people collect bindings! I encouraged a few to have a look at CODEX (no-one had heard about us ... seems CODEX has not made the French bookbinders radar... *something to remedy?*)

Dinner with Mark and Judith at a very lively bistro nearby S. Germaine de Pres where the waitress was acting out as Bridgit Bardot in *God Created Woman*.... VERY entertaining and kisses all around

Friday May 15

We visited **Librairie Nicaise** (145 Bd Sainte-Germain) a very old store that specializes in *livres d'artist*, a Paris institutio and met Pierre Walusinski, 3rd generation proprietor (young and very smart ... interested in typography... he studied punch-cutting under Christian Paput and Nelly Gable at the Imprimerie National) and his shop assistant Michelangelo (a very lovely young man with exquisite manners). This shop is an absolute MUST VISIT ... dedicated to *livres de luxe* and artists books of very high quality. The story must be interesting and an article should be written about them....

Pierre referred to CODEX as "THE FAMOUS CODEX" and heard from more than one source that we had had a "super salon" in California. Susan was thrilled that we are "famous", (not to mention enchanted by the beautiful young Michelangelo). Pierre was busy but said that he would like to carry BOOK ART OBJECT in the store and I soon found it on Amazon Fr for about 90.00 (67 euro) and Amazon UK for equivalent price. He also said that he is anxious to come to CODEX and would like to have a table or 2.

I saw some VERY Interesting books and was intrigued especially by a book called *Séquelle*. I vowed to return as soon as possible...

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We had lunch with Dedier Mutel, the very intense young master printer (etching)... His book ***Dr Jeckell and Mr Hyde*** is an incredible work to behold. We toured his old and recently abandoned atelier, Imprimerie Salmon, just off Rue St.-Jacques ... a VERY old (and presumably famous) Paris atelier where Dedier had begun printing under his master and which has just been closed (because real estate prices in the Latin Quarter are now so high) after 230 years (est. 1793.) It was especially active in the 19th century, and printed the works of Mary Cassatt, Munch, Monet, etc. The city of Paris has decreed it a sort of City treasure...but money is money. Dedier has acquired all the presses and tools (200 year old drying card board, etc.) and is now looking for a new location, hopefully in the city. He is very interested in creating a master printing facility in

Paris. He has written a “manifesto” which I have encouraged him to send to CODE(X)

He came to CODEX 2009 and says that he will come again. He said that he had not done well at the Feb. fair, but he wants to continue coming because he believes that CODEX is very important for the world of books. And “world” is the right word here...he believes that the book market is international now, not just Paris or London. I want to know more about his work and plan to stay in touch with him...



After lunch I traveled North to Pantin (suburb) to visit ZONE OPAQUE with my former student and friend, Jon von Zelowitz, who lives and works in Paris. "ZONE OPAQUE" is a collective of young artists who have type and presses (not book arts) and they are young "mecs" with attitude.... 2 Vincents, Pierre-Marie, and Guillaume.

Pierre-Marie wore black billowy pantaloons and heavy work-boots. Their shop was a disaster of piles. They had just moved and they all smoked furiously and wouldn't give me their last names (a collective working in the "dark zone"). I asked them to show me their books. On the top of the short pile of about 5 books was **SEQUELLE** published by Librairie Nicaise and designed and printed at Zone Opaq. They warmed up a bit when I told them that I had admired the book already that morning chez Nicaise . They seemed impressed by our *book art object*....

They do not sell their own books but are represented by Librairie Nicaise. I immediately encouraged them to come to CODEX and they are no doubt thinking about it. I think that they need to get out and sell... several of them are on “unemployment” and no doubt other social programs.... but I liked them enormously.

Saturday May 16.

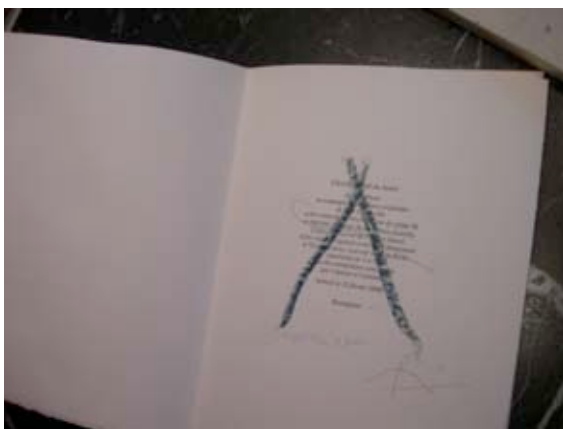
We visited the artist book fair **Livres en mai** in a splendid setting under the arches at the Lycee Henri IV (a posh private school near the Pantheon) with Mark and Judith and saw there some interesting books... and some not all **that** interesting... there were a lot of failed printmakers using book arts as a way to get about... but it was educating and in a few cases quite good. No one there showed high typographic sophistication and there was a fair share of ponsy-foo-foo. No one had heard of CODEX. We again encouraged a few of the better artists to look at our website, and passed out some CODEX cards, etc. I think the French, like the English, are quite insulated by their own traditional approaches and local markets. And they do have quite a few book fairs during the year.



Sunday May 17

Museum day at the Picasso Museum and a few blocks away.... the Cognac Jay Museum of 18th Century art.

In the evening we had a delightful dinner with the poet, writer, and director of the Bibliothèque St.-Genevieve, Yves Peyre and his wife Elisabeth in their home at 47 Rue Henri Barbusse. We discussed (communicated) about THE BOOK and looked at over 20 books of his poems made in collaboration with different painters... and some very eclectic collaborations with a book artist named Dorny.... Susan took some photos. I invited him to write something for CODE(X)+1.... Yves is VERY enthusiastic a true bibliophile and connoisseur. He wrote the book *Painting and Poetry*.



Monday the 18th we visited the most imposing and giant, and ultra modern, Bibliothèque National. We were met by Antoine Coron, Chief of rare books, who led us through a labyrinth of corridors and rooms to the rare book room where we were given a private exhibition by Antoine and Marie-Françoise Quignard, the curator of "*Eros en Secret*", the erotica collection at the BNF wow wee, a

FANTASTIC show!

They had laid out for us:

Valeriano Bolzani, Giovanni Pierio. *Heiroglyphica*, Basle 1556

Paradin, Claude. *Devises Heroiques*, Lyon, 1551

Johann Daniel Mylius. *Anatomia auri*, Frankfurt 1628

Michael Maier. *Atalanta fugiens*, Oppenheim 1618

Venance Fortunat. *Venanti Honorii Clementiani Fortunati* 1603

Hrabanus Maurus. *De laudibus scantae crucis*, Pforzheim 1503

Dôle. *Sylvae, quas vario carminum geneve primarri scholastici collegii* Paris 1582

***** Sonya Delunay....special copy, perfect condition, bright colors with a (unique to this copy) painted leather wallet used to house it.

All really fantastic books and he showed me their Gutenberg Bible printed on Velum..... close up and personal as we say, in pristine condition.... We also saw some highlights of the Eros in Secret show and a few contemporary Artist books. The library is most impressive and when in the bowels of the thing I was reminded of pentagon tunnels under Washington.... extreme security and star-wars like technical devices everywhere.... miles and miles of corridors...



Tuesday May 19 : we took a train to The Hague & met up with Françoise Despalles and Johannes Strugalla at the Museum van het boek, Meermanno Westreenianum, den Haag where we visited with curator Paul van Capelleveen, who works at the Museum one day a week and the rest of the time at the National Library of the Netherlands, and Ricky Tax the former curator and now in charge of the Museum's collections. The museum of the book is really a wonderful place.... Tax showed us some very very cool books. We had a quite friendly visit and they showed great interest in a possible collaboration with CODEX. We spoke about the printing/book scene in Holland (they claim that there are about 300 book artists in the country). Van Cappelleveen would make a very good speaker at CODEX about the museum and the Dutch Netherlands scene. I plan to write a formal invitation. At 5 PM when the museum closed, the two got on their bikes to ride off, but we talked them into going for drinks on a very pretty plaza under the trees.... beer, jenivir and a big plate of deep fried meats they called a Mata Hari.





Wed. May 20. Drove to Amsterdam where we had a hotel for 2 nights. Visited the Johann Deumans Gallery in Haarlem where he was exhibiting the giant woodcut prints of East German artist Christiane Baumgartner (former book artist?). Very impressive work that reflects “modern views (tunnels, traffic, cityscapes, trees, military aircraft, airports) through the raster screen of b&w TV transmission codes. Deumans says “count me in” if we plan a European colloquium. He represents Jacob Samuels books (an American printer in Los Angeles) and seems to be MUCH MORE about the ARTIST than the book. But is a book enthusiast just the same... He has heard about Codex and we will continue to encourage him to come in 2011.



May 21 Thursday. Visited Dutch artists Harry Pattynama / Irma van der Zande

at their Archief Synergie ... 20 minutes outside Amsterdam, situated in artists lofts in some old military barracks. They have mounted an installation (paid by a grant) about “how to display an artist book” looking like an accumulation of various objects in a Japanese library.... some interesting ideas. Very “conceptual”. They are interested in CODEX and said they would write a proposal for a grant to come.



May 22nd Friday. Visited Curator Annie De Coster and Mr. Michel Wittock at the Wittockiana Museum in Brussels. Quite impressive private collection specializing in book bindings. Showed the BAO to Annie, who thought it was fantastic. We were show some very amazing (if busy) bindings. Michel Wittock invited us to have a CODEX rendezvous chez Wittockiana. i.e. gratis use of the facilities. They collect “important” bindings exclusively... it seems. They want more exposure in the public sphere.... possible collaborators....



May 23 Saturday. The Strugallas drove us back to Paris.

In the morning We visited with Jon Von Zelowitz and toured the vegetable and meat marche near his home... and had a great time at a wine bar next to the market with 2 bottles of *vin rouge* and 2 *assiettes*.... *fromages* and *viands froid*

After we met with Nathalie Anae, Director of "Artist Book International", at the Despalles Editions Gallery on the quite charming rue sainte-Anastase in the Marais.... She is definitely interested in a CODEX event at the Artist Book International at the Centre de Pompedieu if we wish.... a lecture or something...

Then across the street to meet Emmanuel Hervé at Florence Loewy bookstore "books by artists" to show him BOOKARTOBJECT. The Loewy people are quite concentrated on the International art scene and only sell books about Andy Warhol, Ed Ruscha, etc..... they will have to decide if they wish to carry the book.

It is now available from Amazon Fr and Amazon UK.

Johanes thinks that if we do a European event it should be in Paris.... for reasons of centrality as well as because of the long traditions of book arts and collecting.

Sunday.... walking/ and a visit the legendary Shakespeare & Co. bookstore... where I purchased Francic Ponge's *Mute Objects of Expression* delightful!



Monday May 25

First we met up with Bruce Whiteman, Kelly Maynard, and Naomie Kremer to visit Michael Caine at his studio near the Place Bastille (31 Rue de la Ceraisaie) He showed his Klebnikov Books—very good typography. I forgot to take his advertising pamphlet. I admired his Rene Crevel book. He has designed and printed over 100 commissions since 1990 in Paris and some of his own books as well. I must get his catalogue. He has a really incredible type collection.... Kis Janson/Syntax/ Michelangelo.... the list goes on...

After: under the direction of Naomie, we visited THE most spectacular LITHOGRAPHY studio I have ever seen.... Formerly the legendary Atelier Murlot Frères at 51 Rue du Montaparnasse (where Bonnard, Bracque, Matisse, Picasso, etc. all worked) now called Item Editions and met the quite friendly proprietor Patrice Forest, who invited me to be a collaborator. He has a basement full of Maurice Darantière's types (Bodoni and Garamond). Darantière Atelier (where Enrico Tallone first worked as a young man) printed the first edition of *Ulysses* for Sylvia Beach among many landmark books in the French tradition. Patrice says that he dreams of making a typographic press, etc.... and I am eager to help him. In any event it is a MUST visit to see the giant early 19th century factory like press with the steam engine apparatus still in place (disconnected). The place deserves a book about it! Intensely crusted with history and yet still actively printing with the likes of Raymond Pettibone, David Lynch, etc...



After lunch Françoise and Johannes joined us and we all visited the Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève where Yves Peyre, the chief librarian gave us a private tour. Bruce (and I) picked up a good idea from Yves about inviting an artist to create an installation among the books in the reading room. After touring the Library we had a refreshing drink in his splendid office.





And finally to dinner on Rue Elzvir (how appropriate) in the Marais chez Kremer ... in their most elegant apartment where we all dined in the dark during a power outage and violent thunderstorm.... most invigorating and the wines and *foi gras* were divine.



We dined with Despalles/Strugalla, Bruce + Kelly (in Paris for research), Susan and I, Charles and Naomie Kremer and a charming young French couple, Franck Leibovici and Marion Naccache... He a poet and she a professor of French modern literature.

Tues the 26th : after a very Parisian lunch with Ethel Strugalla... and family... I visit Librairie Nicaise and pick up 2 copies of *Séquelle* to bring home with us. Pierre and I are now quite familiar and I feel very confident that he will come to CODEX and will represent France (French book arts) in a very strong way.... he says that he will travel a bit in California, before and after, and I will try to connect him with Francophiles and good connections in libraries and depts. of French...

.... and then a few days of vacation in the South....in l'Ayrolle at the old stone

farmhouse/home of Françoise and Johannes.



On Friday the 30th we drove South of l'Ayrolle and visited the village of Octon the home and studios of Mark Lintott and Judith Rothchild.... We shared a very pleasant meal on their shaded veranda (moules, chicken, home made bread, salad, etc...Judith is a very good cook ... I especially remember the refreshing juice from their grapes on a hot afternoon).





In l'Ayrolle there were many discussions over the breakfast and dinner table about book fairs and certain persons and art.

On the whole...there seems to be general agreement among those who have visited us that CODEX is successful (in its way) because, in Paris and elsewhere, the fairs and groups are too often specialized, or too open to mediocrity (bad art), or too small, etc. CODEX is unique because we have been able to attract so many curators and buyers, and a high international presence of distinguished presses.

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Our final stage was 9 days in Venice beginning Sunday May 31st. —Venice! We arrived the week of the Biennale.... and the pace was furious... parties everywhere, and many of our friends were caught up in the frenzy... We participated at a very relaxed pace attending no grand openings but slipping into many exhibitions in interesting *palazzi* and *magazinos de sale* etc...

Monday June 2nd.

We met with Sandro Berra (Tipoteca Italiana), Tobias Lange (CT-L Presse), and Marina Gasparini (writer and scholar) at Donata Grimani's palazzo on the Grand Canal (her family threw us a party there for our CODEX book tour of Venice fund raiser). The discussion centered on possible Venice / European colloquia in connection with the CODEX Foundation. We concluded with the thought that eventually something might be possible but that it will take time and sponsorship to develop. All agreed that Codex will best be served by improving our own fair and symposium and by keeping a very high standard for admission to the fair. Europe seems a bit daunting as a project to try to intervene given their own deep traditional (and bureaucratic) ways of doing things. Every country has its own unique set of problems to overcome when dealing with the "arts". However, we remain confident that we will continue to draw European friends and businesses under the CODEX umbrella.



Our other CODEX-relevant Venetian encounter was with Alessandro Corubolo, scholar/printer from Verona. He laments that the printing scene in Verona has dwindled significantly with the closure of the Stamperia Valdonega Imprint since Martino Mardersteig sold his company.... leaving only one printer, Alessandro Zanella, standing.



Observation:

American Universities are flocking to Venice in the summer and offering book arts classes in studios around the Veneto. The Scuola Grafica had two book arts classes in session when we were there ... Indiana University, Bloomington (Edward Bernstein) and the Maryland Institute of Contemporary Art (MICA). We met both instructors and talked about book arts and how they are FLOURISHING in the US. We have concluded (from observation) that the flower of US book arts is ponsy-foo, or maybe minor types of binding structure, while the difficult arts and craft of typography, book design, and deep content is withering.

Final days at the Biennale: We visited the Main pavilion on opening

weekend....and saw some flying books.... the people watching was superb!!!!



and Finally.... the artist book installation for les homages de Simone Weil exhibition at the Magazin de Sale... Brilliant hanging great hall... Very impressive!





In conclusion:

We believe that CODEX definitely has an audience on the Continent and that our presence is known and growing among concerned individuals.

There was considerable interest in *book art object* and we saw that the book can be a great tool (both educational and as propaganda) if we can just get it into wider distribution (which presents a real challenge). It is now a question if we should have a European/International co-publisher for any future (2011?) version. and a strong advertising campaign.

We were very impressed with the quality of the Museums and collections that we visited and with the friendliness and interest that CODEX generates among the

curators. At Wittockiana and Meermannno, the curators definitely desire an increased recognition of “the book as a work of art” ... and welcomed CODEX as a tangible step in the right direction.

I believe that a select traveling show of American or California books will find an audience and make us more friends and contacts abroad ... as the 13+ show has done for German book arts in the USA.

Finally: I recommend that we plan a trip around Northern Europe, visiting Hamburg, Leipzig, Mainz, Warsaw, Prague, the Netherlands, etc. seeking new artists/printers, museum and library connections etc..... and quite possibly have in hand a small exhibition proposal as an exchange / friendly gesture.

All to be continued.....