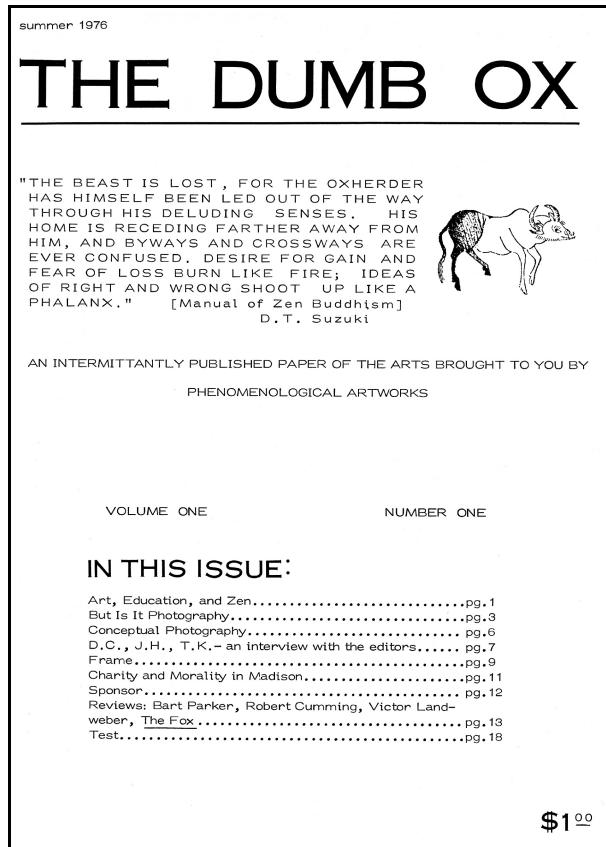


## A CONVERSATION

This is an excerpt from an interview with James Hugunin, one of the two founding editors of Los Angeles-based *The Dumb Ox* (1976 - 80) that took place at his home in Oak Park, Illinois on July 13, 2012 with Stephen Perkins, Curator of Art for the Lawton Gallery, University of Wisconsin, Green Bay.

**Stephen Perkins:** Despite the rather self-deprecating title of the periodical and its connection to Thomas Aquinas's nickname, it's quite a smart magazine, even a little cocky I would say!

**Jim Hugunin:** We really did think of the title and the logo over a long period of time before we arrived at that title. What it referred to was, of course, theologian Thomas Aquinas's deprecating nickname given him at university; he was a lumbering, large man who fellow students chided as 'a dumb ox'. But, Aquinas's teacher, Albertus Magnus, admonished them: "You call him the 'Dumb Ox', but I say, he will one day revolutionize philosophy."



The logo of the little prancing ox that's on the cover is taken from a series of Zen drawings relating to man taming his bestial nature. Since my co-editor and founder, Theron Kelley, was coming from an Eastern, more intuitive, position in his thinking and I was coming from a more Western rationalist one, we thought that the combination of the two references would represent our divergent points of view. I thought that what made *The Dumb Ox* interesting was in fact that very aspect to tension between our two positions.



Theron Kelley (1976)

Terry and I met in artist Carol Caroompas's studio class at California State University, Northridge in 1973. From that day onward, we were constantly in dialogue over issues concerning art and politics, rationalism and intuition.

Often those debates worked themselves out in those early issues. Our first three issues were printed in tabloid format and that was when Terry (Theron Kelley) was the most influential on the publication's direction.

**SP:** Why tabloid, why that choice?

**JH:** Well, it was inexpensive to do; it could be printed on rotary presses that run those things off in quantity and very inexpensively. Later I met Barry Singer, a recent California Institute of the Arts MFA grad, who had started up his own little press business named Graphics Artists Press. Now at the time I was working at Litton Industries in their print operation doing all the graphic arts camera work with a very large in-the-wall process camera, so I was able to do all the stats, half-tones, line negs and everything for my publication. I would schlep them over to Barry's business, which was only about three blocks away from where I was working at Litton at the time, and he would print *Dumb Ox*. That's when we converted to book format, which now became affordable because I'd do all of the prep-work — half-tones, line negs, even burning plates and cleaning his press. So the production costs actually came down below what we were paying for the tabloid format.

**SP:** What were the production runs for the tabloids versus the book format?

**JH:** If I remember correctly, in both instances, we were running 1500 copies.

**SP:** That's a fairly substantial run, presumably you still didn't make any money, or did you?

**JH:** Well, let us say that by the time we were four or five issues in, we began to get increasing subscriptions, which helped out. We were surprised we got subscriptions from not only in the States but also Europe, even a few in South Asia. What was interesting was that we got more subscriptions from out of state than from in state, and in state, more subscriptions from Northern California than from Southern; we were pretty much ignored at first in Southern California by the art-powers-that-be there.

**SP:** And yet the subject matter of many of the issues, as far as I can see, really focused on Los Angeles and that area, so it's kind of ironic that you have more interest out of state. Were you threatening to the hierarchy at that time, or were you seen as an 'other' or an alternative?

**JH:** Yes, I think our San Fernando Valley, bedroom community address was a turn-off as, well as the intellectual thrust of the publication. If you're really serious, you were supposed to be working downtown in the area near Japan Town where all the artist studios were and well as the Temporary Contemporary Museum then housing current art prior to the new museum structure then under construction. So, yes there was a kind of 'place-ism' and 'othering' at work in the LA art world at that time which marginalized us. Art historian Damon Willick of LA's Loyola Marymount University is now curating a show of art produced out of the San Fernando Valley during the 1970s. *Dumb Ox* will be featured in that show to be held, fittingly, at Cal State University, Northridge.

**SP:** Interesting that your little logo is very much situated within a religious context, and obviously once you know who the 'Dumb Ox' is, it's like this is totally Christian stuff, it's kind of interesting to put your chips down on something almost as specific as that; now I don't think one would want to have any kind of association with religion. I understand the Zen thing, but the Christian element ...

**JH:** Well, more through the rational, because of course what Aquinas did was to formulate what became the 'Schoolmen,' the rational approach to something esoteric. In a way that sort of mimics art; art is this sort of mysterious thing and you are trying to rationalize and create a critical discourse about it in the same way that he's taking this amorphous thing called God or whatever, and trying to rationalize and provide proofs. So in my mind there was an analogy going on there. Remember, I was raised by a strict Catholic father.

**SP:** But it also definitely fits in with your scientific background and your scientific approach to art making and research.

**JH:** Well, I was brought up in a very strict Catholic home, which I vehemently rebelled against by age twelve. I realized I did not fit the mold, but my father was very authoritarian and used religion as a further stick to, so to speak, beat me with every day.

**SP:** So the *Dumb Ox* was pay back?

**JH:** Yes, in a way it was pay back, and I'm still kind of involved in that. If you look at things from a psychoanalytic perspective, that's a strong element in all of what I've been doing since.

**SP:** Did you play with other names for the magazine?

**JH:** Well, I think one that came up was 'Prolepsis,' which was my toss-in, which my co-editor groaned at, it was a little bit too esoteric.

**SP:** I don't know the association.

**JH:** It means 'looking forward.' So in a novel, for instance, you have a 'flash-forward' to propel the narrative, to create anticipation.

**SP:** The masthead of the *Dumb Ox* states that it's a quarterly art journal. An 'art journal' suggests something for a small professional group, was that a considered use of a term or it was just what people were calling their publications at that time, as preferred to 'artists' magazine' or 'artists' periodical'?

**JH:** That's interesting. I don't know. I've always liked the word journal for some reason. Maybe I was thinking of the publication as a sort of personal journal, logging the progress of my intellectual growth over time.

**SP:** There's some authority to it.

**JH:** Yes, it suggests something that you are keeping, like I keep a journal, so there was definitely a kind of disguised autobiographical element that runs through it; for instance, at this time Robert Cumming was teaching at Cal Arts and at UCLA. This was when he was doing his photographic work, using a large 8 x 10-inch view camera and producing his first artist books. I just flipped over his work. I gave him a document that said something to the effect that from here on I would relinquish doing my art and allow him to do his art, because his work was exactly what I

would like to do. My new role would be to write about it! Of course, this was a bit tongue-in-cheek.

**SP:** And he agreed to that?

**JH:** Yes, and he signed it. Somewhere in my archives that thing must be around. It constituted a conceptual piece in its own right, in my mind.

**SP:** Oh, that's priceless.

**JH:** Yes, it was funny and I reviewed almost every one of his artist books in *Dumb Ox*. So there's a sense in which our journal was able to realize certain ideas and visions that I had and which I perceived in other people's work and bring them together under one place. It was a way of extending myself and my ideas with other people's, creating a particular kind of resonance among them.

**SP:** Yes, it's a very eclectic selection of reviews, documentation, pages as page-art, and then writings, and it's got quite a broad spread. So when you developed the idea with Theron Kelley for the publication, were you specific about what you wanted to cover, what you didn't want to cover or was it just let's see what comes in?

**JH:** In the first couple of issues I was very interested in looking at conceptual photography. At the time Baldessari and Doug Heubler's work were very influential on me and I noticed that Los Angeles's art community was pretty much ignoring that work. Both were hot in Europe at the time but not within the art photography community. At that time there was a very marked separation between conceptual artist-based use of photography versus the fine arts, which I totally rebelled against. I chided the mainstream photographic community no end over this issue, which did not endear them to me.

**SP:** And presumably you didn't get much support from that community?

**JH:** Not much at all, no.

**SP:** It was too radical?

**JH:** They were just saying, "Oh, you're dealing with language here and these dumb snapshots and that's not photography." There would be reviewers who would write: "Oh, it's art but is it photography?" That was commonplace; now today it seems silly and when I tell my students about this they scratch their heads in amazement. But I try to give them a sense of that very rigid mind-set. So we were very much rebelling

against that narrow Szarkowskian ideal of pure photography. My idea was to promote artists' work that was being ignored in this regard. We also took a strong view on promoting some interesting emerging artists. I still do.

**SP:** For me one thing that distinguishes *Dumb Ox* from the other artists' periodicals of that period is this concentration on conceptual photography, it seems like a very early West Coast publication that really takes a look at that. And then, of course, you've got Lew Thomas up in San Francisco, but he wasn't doing periodicals aside from contributing to them — he was doing those books of his ...

**JH:** Yes, the wonderful books by his Not For Sale Press & Camerawork Press. [*Photography and Language* (1976) Camerawork Press, *Eros and Photography* (1977) Camerawork/NFS Press, and *Structural(ism) and Photography* (1978), NFS Press]. They also were under-reported in the art press at the time.

**SP:** That's an incredible series...

**JH:** That first book *Photography and Language*, was connected to a show up in San Francisco at La Mamelle Gallery (it later became Camerawork Gallery). I was in that show, as well as contributing an introductory essay to that book. Lew and I were very *simpatico* in our thinking and he involved me in the scene up there. I made more contacts in that area thanks to him.

**SP:** Are you still in contact with him?

**JH:** Yes, I kind of lost touch with him for a while. He was in Houston involved with a publication and organization there, and then went to New Orleans to run a gallery there for somebody and now I think he's back in the Bay Area. He is probably one of the most unrecognized, under-appreciated individuals in terms of his contribution to photography at that time. I haven't read a photo-history that mentions the guy, I mean he's just been written out of it and I think he got pissed off about that. He's really a remarkable figure. Somebody should really give him more due in terms of his historical contribution as artist and catalyst for language-oriented photography.

**SP:** Have people really looked at conceptual photography from that period? I can't think of any particular books.

**JH:** Again, the more traditional photo-history books, like Jonathan Green's book *American Photography: A*

*Critical History 1945 to Present*, (1984), ignore most of such production; it hasn't been well covered by others either. Another area that has been marginalized by photo-historians is the photo-sculpture movement. Jonathan Green just writes most of that experimentalism off as a lot of hooey; nobody has really followed up this rich area exemplified by the artworks of Bob Heinecken, Joyce Neimanas, Jerry McMillan, and others. You'd think there would be a monograph out there focusing on this work by now.

**SP:** So *Dumb Ox* comes just after you finish your MFA?

**JH:** Yes, I got my MFA in 1975, the journal started in 1976..

**SP:** What was your concentration at UCLA?

**JH:** It was fine photography within a three-year program which I completed in two years as I was doing an enormous amount of work thanks to a job at night at Litton Industries' graphics arts and photo lab where I worked solo. If I got all the required work done, I could spend the rest of the time using all their fabulous facilities to do my own artwork that I shot during the daylight hours.

Anyway, I was cranking out artwork and artist books, plus doing video on half- and quarter-inch video machines. So productive was I that the school offered me a proposition and said "We are getting overwrought here with students and we'll let you go in two years if you complete these specific independent studies." One of my independent studies was on Minimal, Post-Minimal, and Conceptual Art, a substantial written thesis, a study of this art from the point of view of knowledge theory. By the way, I just today I found a copy in my archives. I had forgotten about it. Upon looking at it again, it really surprised me at how well it was done given my tyro status in theory the time; there's a lot of interesting material there.

I have a very strong philosophical background in knowledge theory thanks to a marvelous course at California State University, Northridge, with professor Narayan Champawat who taught Analytic Philosophy. And so I've always been able to draw on this experience. All of my work, if you really want the key, the Rosetta stone that unlocks it, is rooted in my perennial interest in epistemology, in how we come to know our world. Or simply put: how does S (the subject) know that P (a proposition)?

**SP:** Do you think that philosophical slant was something that turned people off from *Dumb Ox*?

**JH:** It might have, you know LA is a La-La Land- Sun-and-Surf type of place. There was always a kind of negative response to theory there. For instance, while I was living there I offered to teach a night extension course at UCLA, a theory course, and every time it was offered there was only one person who signed up for it. I suspect that it was the same person! But when I relocated to Chicago in 1985, what I found was an incredible interest in theory. As my reputation with the *Dumb Ox* had preceded me thanks to book artist Buzz Spector who was very familiar with my publications and promoted them at the School of the Art Institute, the School Gallery honored me with an exhibition of all issues of *Dumb Ox* when I first arrived. You know the old adage 'You're never a hero in your hometown,' kind of thing, so Chicago turned out to be a welcoming context.

**SP:** I can understand that it would be more appreciated on the East coast and Europe and certainly England was into theory at that time.

**JH:** We were well distributed in New York and Britain, so there was a lot of interest there. In New York, Howardena Pindell wrote articles mentioning the *Dumb Ox*.

**SP:** In her history of artists' periodicals?

**JH:** Yeah.

**SP:** I just mentioned earlier the number of publications appearing in LA in that decade, I wonder if you felt you were part of a community of publications?

**JH:** Yes, the way that I was stimulated to do *Dumb Ox* was there was a publication put out by a friend of my co-editor, Terry, called *Straight Turkey* (1974). Terry had assisted him with it and so it was natural Terry and I began to envision our own publication.

**SP:** I've never come across that mag, it starts in 1974 and runs for just one year.

**JH:** I have one issue in which my sister, Leslie, had a really interesting literary piece published. And from that we got excited and said, "Hey, we should do something ourselves" and that's how things got going. Leslie offered to help proof it. There was a sense that there was all this energy going on and, of course, now we look back and use the term 'postmodern', but at that point we didn't have that term. We just knew that we were interested in doing something different and breaking away from the way things were. As the Cynic Philosopher, Diogenes, put it, we were all about "Defacing the currency." Which I take as a double-

*entendre*: messing with both the art market and the then current scene of traditional art photography.

**SP:** Why a periodical rather than say a gallery?

**JH:** Well, finances for one thing. Also I just liked the idea of something going out there into who knows where, like messages in a bottle floating who knows where. You never knew who was, what's the old adage, something about "for every issue passed around, three or four people get to look at it." So it's interesting that we created this, well today we would use the term a rhizome, in which these texts were out there being passed from hand to hand, and god knows where they would end up. For instance, recently I saw a book dealer in Amsterdam was selling the whole set for one thousand Euros.

**SP:** I think that's a really interesting analogy, bottles in the ocean.

**JH:** We had in fact, surprisingly enough, got a letter from some obscure place in mid-continent India and this guy in flowery language wrote, "Please sir, I would love to have a subscription, somebody from Britain came through and showed me your magazine, but your subscription price [which was \$10 per year] would feed my family for two weeks, could I get a free subscription?" Of course, we sent him one. We were involved in that organization called PEN for prisoners, so we'd give free subscriptions to prisoners upon request. There was a political element to this, which later showed up in my book on the representation of prisons and prisoners published in 1999. We editors felt that artists' publications could subvert the whole art commodity structure. We firmly believed in the dematerialization of the artwork as a means of thumbing noses at the art market.

**SP:** What do you think about that now?

**JH:** Well, it was a bit naive! But you know we believed in it. Idealism. I didn't charge more than \$5 for my own artist books — art for anyone's sake. Recently, I did an online project documenting my "Gratuitous Giving," gifts of twenty to one hundred dollars handed out in envelopes globally under the auspices of "Art in the service of the People." It can be found at this url: [www.uturn.org/cadeau](http://www.uturn.org/cadeau).

**SP:** Did you ever get together with other editors; were there any kind of meetings?

**JH:** At this time there were a lot of conferences involving art publishers, I think there was something in San Jose ("Art Publishers' Convention, Book Fair,

and Exhibition," Union Gallery, San Jose State University, October 8 - 9, 1977) and Terry and I went up and we presented a lecture on the *Dumb Ox*. It was very exciting because there were all these people involved in this activity and we felt this tremendous energy coursing through it. It had a lot of idealism simmering therein.

**SP:** How would you characterize the function of this periodical and here I'm talking about it as a site of discourse, but it's also a site of documentation, it's also a site of reviews and then there's these artists' pages, and the pages become a primary site for artwork. Do you have any thoughts about how the publication functioned in that larger role as a platform, as a site?

**JH:** I was very heavily behind the idea of supporting emerging artists, so we wanted to give them a venue in which they could present their original work. By the way that was one of the reasons we originally wanted to go with the larger tabloid format since the full page center spread was a space a large piece could be displayed. People told us they cut it out, framed it. So that was important that it become both a kind of gallery space in print form, as well as a place where new artwork could be reviewed, and a venue for theory.

**SP:** And there's at least one issue I have where you have actually inserted real art.

**JH:** Yes, in the double issue #6/7 (Fall 1997/ Spring 1978).

**SP:** And there was a kind of cut-out that was folded into the middle. Was that the only one where you had real objects?

**JH:** Yes, I think so; that was an incredible issue, because when we put all that stuff in we had volunteers who came over, provided them with pizza and beer to motivate them and they helped assemble it all. Took hours.

**SP:** Did that center-fold piece come already cut-out or ...

**JH:** My printer had that pickup truck image illustrating an installation piece by Gary Lloyd sent out to a place that die cut it. It was put in during the print shop's collation and stapling process. It was very exciting to be able to do that, this particular issue #6/7, with the pasted-in cut-out, all focused on LA artists, like Gary Lloyd. At that particular time, there was a great deal of interest in his work. He eventually moved to New

Mexico —he has returned to Los Angeles since — but he and his wife at the time were making a living by doing what they called 'Sky Art,' a business making huge paintings of various types of sky scenes for backdrops in the commercial film industry. They had a studio down near the First Street bridge in Los Angeles in the artists' loft area at that time.

**SP:** So this was a collaboration with Gary Lloyd, and he does the drawing and ...

**JH:** This is all based upon an installation project; he actually had a pickup truck where he carried all this gear in the back which then all came out and was configured into an exhibit based on refunctioning auto exhaust pollution to turn this huge wing that blew air about, making an ecological statement.

**SP:** Talking of cars I came across somewhere on either your site or one of the publications that you had a gallery in your garage?

**JH:** Oh, you are referring to The Garage Gallery in the Mount Washington area of LA. It was literally a garage built into the side of a mountain, serving a home above where over a period of years artists would live, given a reduced rent if they modified the space in a creative way. It had been used a performance space for early feminist performances. When I moved in, it had a hardwood floor, lead art glass windows, a curving staircase and was heated by a fireplace built by a sculptor out of the hood of a 1957 Chevy; the ceiling had been completely removed and replaced by Plexiglas so you could look upward into trees and sky. What I added to the space was a loft space for my bed so I could recline and literally touch the Plexiglas ceiling as I looked up at the stars at night.

Anyway we were given very cheap rent to produce the magazine there. It gave the guy who owned the property and lived above me on the hill 'juice' in the art community and justified the space with the provisions of his arrangement with HUD. The landlord was a connected Black guy who had an in with HUD (US Department of Housing and Urban Development) and was getting federal funds to run various organizations in Los Angeles geared toward artists. Part of this arrangement was that he was getting funded to allow this space to be improved and used by artists who were then given low rent in turn. It was a great arrangement for me — the money that I saved on rent, I poured back into the publication.

**SP:** When *High Performance* started up in 1978, it covered some of the things you were covering; was that an issue, or the more the better out there, or ...

**JH:** It was really only that last issue where we covered performance art in depth (#10/11, 1980) and that was guest-edited by Alan Kaprow and Paul McCarthy, so there wasn't really much overlap between us and *High Performance*, which I really enjoyed by the way. No, I didn't feel at all that we were competitors, co-conspirators more like! I don't know how other people felt, but I never saw anything as competitors. I saw us as all joining into this enormous dialogue that needed to happen to break the ice of the establishment and document the tremendous energy of the art community at that time.

**SP:** And that's one of the threads when I look at the issues is that issue of dialogue, and it is very much about dialogue in all its expanded and multi-faceted terms, and it really feels like the publication is a dialogue/discourse type of publication.

**JH:** I didn't know about Mikhail Bakhtin when I was doing this; but later I could look back and say that this sort of Bakhtinian dialogism was fully operative, we were trying to break through that monologue of the established art community and stir things up.

**SP:** I really get the sense of two young studs out of MFA programs wanting to really stir things up and the periodical served as vehicle for a whole number of things as well as situating your presence within that art community, so I see it as an interesting statement on a lot of different levels.

**JH:** I made a decision at a certain point that I was going to focus on criticism because the type of artwork I had been doing also had a critical element within it. I'm a passionate obsessive autodidact. When I was in the Air Force for instance I 'cleaned up' the library, I went through all the literature, art history, philosophy books housed there. When I was discharged, I had to get signed off at the library that all my borrowed books had been returned. I went in to do that and as I was walking out the library staff lined up in two rows and they clapped because I had gone through all their books in those disciplines — a first, they claimed. When I returned to college, I was the best read student in class. So, I was very steeped in theory and philosophy and when I decided to become a critic what I realized, unlike with a Ph.D. where you tend to focus on a narrow topic, as a critic one was best educated across disciplines. Confronting new work, one needed to make interdisciplinary associations.

On one hand I'm reading and gaining all that theoretical knowledge but I also needed to have practical knowledge of what's going on out there in the

art scene. The magazine gave me an open door to artists that normally would just say "shove off," or whatever, but now I'm the editor of this publication and I'm going to come in and see your work and I'm going to talk about it. So, it was like having a crash course in what was going on in West Coast art at the time. I learned so much from doing that.

**SP:** Writing criticism really forces you to understand what's happening around you in a very profound way.

**JH:** The writing was a way of taking all that stuff, focusing it; it was the way I learned. I can only thank all the artists that were so generous with their time for me, they were my professors.

**SP:** When you look at the issues, it's obvious it's a critical/discourse site with all these things getting worked out.

**JH:** That's also why we felt it very important that we could offer the space to people as guest-editors. So it wasn't just always our ideas. We wanted to encourage new ideas and approaches.

**SP:** There are about three numbers that were guest-edited; was that hard to give up?

**JH:** No, not at all, I was really excited about that.

**SP:** I think it's a very smart strategy, because it opens it up to all sorts of stuff.

**JH:** You increase your audience base, of course,, and you increase your subscriptions to people who would be interested in those guest editors. But primarily. I found the material that they brought into *Dumb Ox* great.

**SP:** How did you come across Ken Friedman (*Dumb Ox*, guest-editor of #8, 1979)?

**JH:** I can't remember who I met him through, oh, maybe Gary Lloyd, but he was very interested in meeting me and I was introduced me to him and we hit it right off.

**SP:** Because he was probably running his Fluxus West, since he came from LA.

**JH:** There was so much happening at that time, it's kind of blurry in my memory now. All I remember is a tremendous amount of energy and interesting people. At the time Terry (Theron Kelley) was renting space from a guy who owned a huge ranch house with a gigantic pool, a room with a pool table and every-

thing; it was out in the San Fernando Valley, in Tarzana to be precise. There we would hold *Dumb Ox* meetings and we would take a dip in the pool, come back and chat some more. Often Terry had a large pot of soup simmering for a late dinner. As his wife at that time got home from work around midnight, and I got off at Litton a half-hour later, we'd eat and chat.

That house was also perfect for our parties. When every issue came out we would have a huge Ox party to celebrate and promote the issue. We'd invite the LA art community, particularly sending invitations to subscribers and contributors. People were saying, "Who are these weirdos publishing this thing?" and showed up to find out. Or, "Let's meet the contributors to the issue," and came. On one occasion, the main course was delivered on a plank: a gigantic fifty-foot-long submarine sandwich pre-cut to serve multitudes. At these events the pool and pool table were the most popular sites of conversation. Interesting people showed up and it just went on for hours and it was great. I got to meet artists who then might contribute to the next issue. Yes, the journal functioned as an incredible social hub.

**SP:** Creating a network, a community and all the good things that happen with that.

**JH:** Yes, because people could meet people and that sort of thing. But the funny thing too is that we are doing this in the San Fernando Valley. See that's part of it too, forcing folks to make the drive over the pass from downtown L.A. Making a statement about the San Fernando Valley as production site, too often written off by curators and gallery owners, of significant artistic production.

When we started this effort we were flying by the seat of our pants. I didn't have a lot of experience in the area. Things became more sophisticated and conscious when the publication eventually 'went south' due to financial troubles, I had a two-year break from publishing until I started up something else with a different set of editorial staff titled *U-Turn* (1982 - present). Us editors — myself, Grigoris Daskalogrigorakis, Emily Hicks, and Janice Tieken — brought in artist Felice Mataré as graphic designer and she changed the format to horizontal with fewer pages to economize. When I was doing the *Dumb Ox*, it was just like "Let's see what happens" as we provide a service for emerging artists. I thought there were a lot of people out there that the established community and galleries were ignoring, and I wanted to give them an opportunity to have their works exposed. By contrast, in *U-Turn*, the issues were themed, often dealing with current topics pertinent to art community.

**SP:** Why did *Dumb Ox* come to an end?

**JH:** Well, the last issue was guest-edited by Alan Kaprow and Paul McCarthy to whom we gave carte blanche to do what they wanted.

**SP:** Because they were well-respected people?

**JH:** Well-respected people, yes. And very pleasant, at first. In our discussions with them they said they wanted to have complete control over what was in there and with design issues.

**SP:** And that was OK with you giving them complete control?

**JH:** Sure, because basically we trusted them and were familiar with their work. We didn't blink a minute about it, so thrilled were we to have them involved. Paul was put in charge of going out and periodically watching over its production and signing off on all that stuff. But when the issue finally came out — and it was supposed to be out in time for a major performance art gathering and colloquium in Los Angeles for which we had printed extra copies to sell there — we got a very irate phone call from Kaprow saying that he really disliked the production values and he didn't want to be associated with it. He said that if we tried to sell it or even leave it out at the conference, he would ruin our careers — what little careers we had!

Of course, we feared such retribution, so we respected his desires. We didn't want to piss anybody off, and we certainly wanted to respect their sensibilities, even though the problem was not in the quality of Barry Singer's printing, but in the quality of artwork we received through Kaprow. Barry says to Kaprow, "Look" and pulls out all the artwork that they'd sent us, and the stuff was really bad, and he says, "You are always going to lose a little in the translation from the original artwork in the printing process to some extent, but the stuff I got from your contributors was basically shit. Shit in, shit out. If I was putting an issue together that's not how I would submit the work, and if I got that work from people like that I would tell them to send me something else." All to no avail.

So, we weren't able to sell that issue and we lost all this revenue that we thought was coming in and we had this big printing bill we had to pay off, and at that point basically we had to cease publishing. We couldn't afford to continue. End of story.

**SP:** So in other words you had all the copies printed and you couldn't do anything?

**JH:** Yes, we had printed 2000 total, an extra 500 copies which we had anticipated to sell at the performance art conference.

**SP:** So what did you do with them?

**JH:** Well, we just sat on them because Kaprow said, "If I see these things out there I'm going to raise holy hell." Eventually, over a period of time, I was able to get some of them out and around, but I still have tons of these things left because of that. I tend to give them out as gifts to people because I'm sitting on so many of them.

**SP:** So you're still carrying them around after all these years?

**JH:** Yep. Later Kaprow apologized, saying he was in the throes of a divorce from his first wife at that time and not playing with a full deck.

**SP:** This is worth a fortune, it's the 'repressed issue,' and of course Kaprow's dead anyway!

**JH:** I did forgive him. You know when you go through a divorce you are pushed to your emotional limits and you tend to over react to things, but it did kill us. But then, it did lead me into doing *U-Turn* with another group of very talented people. One door closes, another opens.

**SP:** With Paul McCarthy it's a very sexy issue, it's a very cool issue and it's a real time piece.

In terms of historic periodicals were there any from the last century that were influential for you, that stood out somehow, these could be little reviews or artists' magazines?

**JH:** In photography I was influenced by the photo-books from the WPA period, Robert Frank's *The Americans*, Ed Ruscha's photobooks, and so forth. *Aspen*, *Avalanche*, *The Fox*, and *Art and Language* for periodicals. In terms of literature the *Unmuzzled Ox* (1971), which by the way was part of the stimulus for the *Dumb Ox*'s title, someone said "Have you heard of the *Unmuzzled Ox*?", and someone sent us a copy. Gwen Allen mentions it in her book (*Artists' Magazines*, MIT Press, 2011). I can't remember precisely if we got turned onto that story after we named it, or somebody brought it to our attention, or whether I saw it previously. I have a little dyslexic problem: when anything is in opposition, I get a little unsure of the priorities of things. By the way, it's the reason I couldn't pursue my career in science; I flunked quantitative analysis. Much later, going over

lab notebooks, I saw I flipped numbers all over the place.

**SP:** So that steered you towards an art career?

**JH:** Yeah.

**SP:** I think that's pretty much about it.

**JH:** Oh, one possible thing that might interest you. We published a special issue *Dumb Ox* #9 (Summer 1979) as a way to honor our subscribers (and encourage other to subscribe) and we followed that issue's publication up with a big pool party. It was, of course, printed as a joke issue, giving a dunking to LA's new hip, slick commercial venue, *Wet* magazine.

**SP:** The *Wet* issue?



**JH:** *Wet* (1976 - 81) was a publication that came out of Los Angeles and it had a very sexy design, and was kind of surfacey. Artists Rachel Youdelman and her boyfriend did a clever parody of it. So we put that out as a special guest issue — just for our subscribers.

**SP:** Then you also had one issue where it was just with artists who were working in educational institutions in the LA area.

**JH:** Yes, that was issue #6/7 (1977/78) mentioned previously, featuring artists were teaching at UCLA or other local universities. The one with the paste-ins.

**SP:** It's a very interesting theme, a very complete little project. Did that endear you to the art gang at that time?

**JH:** By then we had established a kind of reputation and there were people who were positively disposed to us, so they were excited and eager to get into the publication. It had opened doors for us by that point. An issue that preceded it (#4, 1977) was the issue on artists' books. People really liked that. And then we did the photography and ideology issue (#5, 1977) guest-edited by Lew Thomas. That one went over quite well too and, of course, changing to the book format with slicker paper and everything helped. So when we came around to do this double-issue (#6/7, 1977/1978) people were eager to contribute to it.

**SP:** The artists' book issue was that associated with an exhibit or anything?

**JH:** No. It grew from my passion with such books.

**SP:** I think that's it in terms of the questions I had, is there anything that I've missed that was a key element in terms of the publication?

**JH:** I just remember the enormous amount of fun we would have in our editorial meetings, hashing things out. Later we brought onto the editorial board Kenon Breazeale, an art historian at California State University, Northridge, a young prof then. As a woman, a lesbian, she was able to bring a new perspective that we thought was valuable, because it was just us guys up to then — needed to take the publication away from that guys' thing. She had interesting contacts as well, brought some in to write for us. She's always said, "I thought that by doing this and getting all these things published that it would help my career," but then she realized what the publications her superiors wanted were articles in staid academic journals rather than our oddball venture. Of course, now it's ironic because our product is getting increasing celebrated in just those circles.

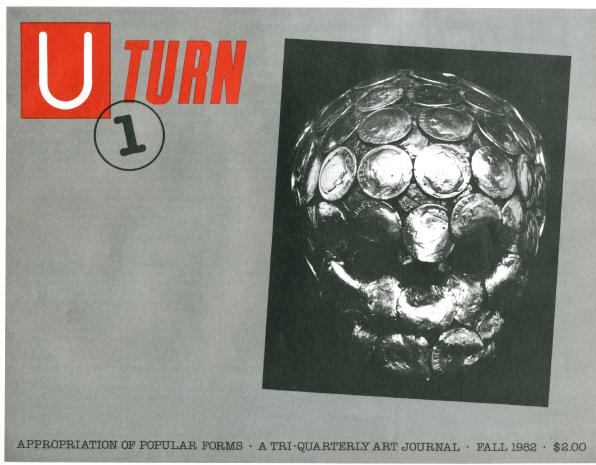
Kenon was a fabulous addition to the staff, and we had some really interesting discussions over material contributed. For instance, In that last issue edited by Kaprow and McCarthy, there was a provocative Carolee Schneemann piece; it has been listed by Kristine Stiles in her book *Correspondence Course: An Epistolary History of Carolee Schneemann and Her Circle*, Duke University Press (2010).

In the piece, Schneemann talks about women's bodies, how she was really pissed off about how many female performance artists were showing off their firm and sexy bodies in the art magazines and on the gallery walls. But the irony of all this is that in her piece, in the original artwork she sent us, you could see that she'd penciled over and done things on the photographs to cut off inches off her belly and so forth. The final reproduction wouldn't show it, of course, but it showed on the originals she had sent us and then in her statement she's like taking a position against this kind practice. My co-editor got very upset about this and we had some really heated discussions over whether we were going to accept this piece or not. Eventually got in though as Kaprow was adamant about his control over the issue. It was a rather fascinating editorial dilemma we were caught up in, between Kenon and I and us between Kaprow. I was happy the piece got in. Kenon not.

**SP:** That's actually quite a powerful piece by Schneemann.

**JH:** After Kenon bowed out, I think over this conflict, Janice Tieken joined to our staff. I met her during the publication's stint at The Garage Gallery through my landlord who recommended her. A savvy wordsmith and a strong feminist artist, her input to *Dumb Ox*, and later *U-Turn*, was invaluable. She's still producing very interesting photographic work out of Ventura, California.

As for *U-Turn's* reincarnation in Chicago in electronic form under the editorship of myself, artist Jno Cook, and critic Claire Wolf Krantz . . . when the internet arrived that publication went electronic — that's what I would have done if that technology had been available when I was doing *Dumb Ox*. Instantly, we'd have had global coverage back then. Plus, for me as



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(1998 - 1999)

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CD-ROM Cover for *U-Turn* # 1, 2, 3 (1998 - 1999 ) showing (left to right): Claire Wolf Krantz, Jno Cook, and James Hugunin

an editor, it would have been fantastic to put together an issue, as I was later able to do, merely utilizing hyperlinks to different texts/images already existing on the web; people wouldn't have to send you material, they could just put it up online and I put a hyperlink to it.

*U-Turn* still exists as an art e-zine. I'm still feeding work into it, reviews and projects. Initially, though, I compiled that zine into three distinct issues available online, but which were also distributed on CD-ROM (they're now archived in the Joan Flasch Artist Book Collection at The School of the Art Institute along with all my other publications).

After that I became busier with additional teaching commitments at Roosevelt University, I had to cut back on my zine time. I took over the sole editorship of *U-Turn* and just began to solicit people to contribute. They would send prepared material to put online; moreover, the e-zine increasingly became a venue to put my own visual, critical, and fiction works out to a global viewership. So it's still going strong at the url: [www.uturn.org](http://www.uturn.org).

The End