

The Museum of Modern Art

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LUCAS SAMARAS - BOOK

Lucas Samaras' Book, a complex arrangement of texts, images and constructions, will be on view at The Museum of Modern Art from August 4 through September 1, 1969. The exhibition, directed and installed in the Museum's Paul J. Sachs Galleries by Riva Castleman, Assistant Curator of Prints and Illustrated Books, includes 42 works documenting various stages in the book's development.

An unusual artistic venture, Book utilizes commercial silkscreen, half-tone and die-cutting processes. Selected from Samaras' recent gift to the Museum of some 103 items used in the production of the volume, the exhibition features a copy of the finished work as well as a complete maquette. Preparatory sketches for the book's illustrations and its format, color systems for pages, experimental dot patterns, silkscreen separations, and printed proofs are also part of the exhibition.

Recently published by the Pace Gallery in a deluxe limited edition, Book is a curious amalgam of the childlike and the sinister. The ten heavy, colorful pages replete with fold-out hands playing peek-a-boo, and wildly shaped cut-out designs, are reminiscent of the indestructible first books of childhood which invited participation in a gaily innocent world of fantasy. However, the discovery of Samaras' eight stories, all menacing and scatological, tucked away in tiny inserts, changes enchantment to fear, and suddenly the volume's very intricacy of construction contributes to a sense of anxiety.

As Miss Castleman comments: "The text clears the clouded recollection and exposes the anxieties we all share. In the lisping double-talk of nursery rhyme, Samaras splats out the first of several taboo-laden sadisms. Suddenly, we recall primitive fears of the unknown, and 'blowing-out-the-match' is now reconstructed into an early act of terror. The dots throughout the book are the disordered components of the seemingly perfect structure of striped candy cane. It is a warning. Samaras forces the reader to beware of nostalgia."

(more)

An American artist born in Greece in 1936, Samaras studied at Columbia University under Meyer Schapiro. His recent work has centered upon a series of ornate decorated boxes housing various exotic objects. The construction and destruction of one complex of boxes figure in the film "Self", written and directed by Samaras. Scheduled for screening in The Museum of Modern Art's Auditorium noon, August 13, "Self" is a sensual investigation of one day's details, colors, and textures, as experienced by the artist. The film runs 22 minutes, and will be shown in three consecutive screenings during the noon hour.

Photographs and additional information available from Elizabeth Shaw, Director, and Maeve Kinhead, Assistant, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019. 956-7501, 7294.