

Bill Heine: the Legend, for Real (1929-2012)

Contributed by Jerome Poynton

BILL HEINE (1929-2012)

Bill was a well-known participant in New York's poetry, music and art scene during the time the neighborhood exploded with creative voices shaping the future of film, poetry and art. Officially a painter and musician Bill's reputation was fearsome for his ability and knowledge in the practice of black magic. In the late 90s he discounted this reputation saying he knew very little about black magic but his carrying a book around on the subject garnered his reputation. He went on to explain, in detail, a specific spell he cast in his Lower East Side apartment—calling upon a spirit noted for sexual prowess. The spirit arrived at his door, wearing a leopard print dress, and went into the living room and had animated sex with his housemate, antiquarian art thief Jimmy Porter, before leaving and never being seen again. Bill believed Black Magic was real but dangerous and he refused to practice it as the end result might satisfy your question but not your expectation. Heine was never without his flute and always played drums. He played percussion with Charlie Parker in the early 50s and had vivid recollections of the Jazz greats including Lester Young, Zoot Sims, Lester Moore and Chicago guitarist Ronnie Singer. Heine was acutely aware of how racism impacted the early jazz scene where police and sailors routinely beat-up jazz musicians for sport. In one instance he remembered Navy men slamming the key board cover down on the fingers of a jazz pianist and another occasion where a black musician intervened in a fight with police officers to protect Charles Mingus, taking the blows for him. It was a time when Jazz greats, such as Billie Holiday, died kicking heroin, under police guard, handcuffed to a gurney at Metropolitan Hospital. Heine recalled a Christmas Music review at Riker's Island, where all the inmates renowned in the jazz world played for their fellow inmates. Miles Davis declined to participate. Sharing a taste for drugs, Heine socialized with Parker off stage and recalled entering a den with Charlie Parker in front of him and Hank Williams behind him. Who knew these two American greats met and shared a drug proclivity? In the 50s Bill visited Ezra Pound at St. Elizabeth's hospital, secreting a bottle of wine, which Pound proceeded to open and down immediately without taking a breath of air. In the 60s Bill was credited with introducing Tye Dye to America. He created his paintings by injecting bundled sheets with dye, using a hypodermic needle, and unfolding them to an array of bright color. In "It's All Over Now, Baby Blue," Dylan's lyric "The empty handed painter from your streets/is drawing crazy paintings on your sheets," is a reference to Bill Heine. In 1982 Bill Heine moved with his companion, Anne Spitzer, from East 3rd Street to Kagyu Thubten Choling Monastery, a Tibetan Buddhist Monastery in upstate New York. At night, living in separate buildings, they communicated with each other using flashlights. While living there Bill kicked his heroin habit. The Llama allowed him to visit his milk can of beer hidden in the woods off the monastery property. He wrote daily with Lionel Ziprin and Jimmy Porter, who was then incarcerated for thievery. The letters of Jimmy Porter, sent to Heine in response to his letters, are presently in pre-production for a staged reading in Spring 2013. It is something Bill wanted to see happen but his magic didn't last long enough on this earth. Bill Heine's last New York City show was with tattoo artist Tom Divita, poet Anne Ardolino and Cochise at the Outlaw Art Museum, curated by Clayton Patterson, March 1993. Following a graveside service in the Woodstock cemetery, he was laid to rest alongside his companion Anne Spitzer.

Bill Heine: Burned the Magic out of Magic by Herbert Huncke

Alone—one candle burning in a tall tapering wrought iron holder—a white paraffin candle—Wagner on the phonograph—an overture and Venusberg Music—Tannhäuser—writing—with red ink—my favorite color ink—occasionally pausing—glancing from strange, intriguing scene to another—squares of stained materials—cottons—linens—heavy paper—thin paper—oiled after hand movements—flute blowing—pot—a shot—Charlie Parker—'Hot House'—color applied with light swinging gestures—rubbing a through the wet green or blue—red—violet—ink—Mercurochrome—gentian violet—iodine—patterns becoming visible—universal Gods—Temples—wayside resting places—caverns and caves—animals from another planet—streaming jangles—monkeys—baboons—huge monolithic beasts—intense glowing green—brilliant Persian blue—writhing black—shadow of a lion—tiger—part of the head of an elephant—an eye—eyes. I have seen all this and much more—in one large, square hanging—now folded—or perhaps upon consideration—is spread out near Alex Trocchi—great—also there are bottles bound and wrapped—bright Turkish red silk threads—black—blue—white—squares of soft kid—goatskin—hides and leather thongs—pieces of brass—fountain pens—paint brushes—bits of metal—trinkets—buttons—a large piece of fur—small pelts—many of short fur—materials frequently used to fold around books—held secure with quarter inch wide thongs of rawhide. The reverse side tanned with dyes—symbols worked in black ink—splashes of silver—long thin wavering streaks—winding—across the surface—a smoke like quality—on another fur piece—circular—a star-like geometric pattern—the skins cut into triangles—stained thoroughly with blues and mahogany red—into tones of deep red brown—symbols of silver paint—each triangle edged in silver. All this in front of me—created and made by Bill Heine—whose whole existence—at this point—is a great outpouring of energy—his whole chemical being—activated—tingling—tensed—alert—while each moment his consciousness searches the scene—scanning the area—picking something—a clay idol—a knife—pencils—pens—paper—beads—stones—gems—wire—thread—glue—bleach—material—cloth—wood—bone—shell—every object—a new reality—a thing springing from his fingers—hands—arms—whole body—the ever constant linking together—methedrine—pot—heroin—tranquilizers occasionally—an ever present audio responsiveness—intonations—talking—sounds—set the nerves to vibrating—he looks for danger—usually has been scheming—he is immediately defensive. He becomes irritated easily—is fretful—dogmatic—somehow unaware of how to accept the moment in peace—rather—he grabs each instant—making a challenge of everything—relaxing seldom—never for long—then in restlessness—disturbed slumber—mutterings—once in awhile in a chair—lolling back—eyes closed—now and then fluttering lids—deep breathing—interrupted with a hissing sigh—cry-like sounds—a sort of moan—rolling the head with the rest of the torso slowly in swaying motion. Picking up the flute he stands up—carefully adjusts the mouth to his—blows once—twice—followed by a series of sharp quick flute notes—takes a few steps—meanwhile rippling his fingers over the air holes. Again stops and begins blowing—along with the record of Charlie Parker—Bud Powell—preferably—with any music—or without music—wandering back and forth—never loo

directly toward one—yet seeing every detail—of one's surface conduct—catching hints of what has happened inside one's self. He doesn't spend much time investigating the causes—accepting his own responses as correct—not necessarily completely aware—yet sure of the meaning—without all the details—glossing over the omittance—rather superiorly—sure he has as some p passed through the same experience—nothing can be new—even allowing for personality differences. Â His magic absorbs his spirit—black magic—white magic—Gods and Demons. He practices magic—creating. He reads about the formulas—he know the forces to command—he calls upon the planets—the moon—the animals—the spirits of wood—metal—stone—earth—of all things—watching for signs—letter combinations—numerical values—good omens—bad omens. Hearing him blow the day into radiance—the sunlight out of the morning sky—walking the lower east side streets—the flute sweet—clear and haunting. The shepherd greeting the first faint rays of light washing away the dark—giving thanks—to the world—mountains—rivers—streams—flowers—the trees—the rocks—to all nature. Â Â