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THE GREAT EAST RIVER BRIDGE/1883-1983 at the Brooklyn Museum (March 19-September 4, 1983) was extraordinary, satisfying, complex, fun, and, to use the oldest buzz-word of our field, interdisciplinary. Indeed, it approached American society from as many different angles of attack as are represented at a good ASA convention. As artists have known since the bridge was a-building, the great artifact studied carefully can tell all about us, who we are, how we dream and how we analyze, where we see and where we're blind. It can tell all this if we ask it the right questions—"Always the beautiful answer who asks a more beautiful question": this great show asked great questions.

Museologists worry about trying to do too much; they are afraid of making viewers read long cards or labels. The creators of many art shows for which I have consulted have concluded that it's best to stress just one strong idea. Too much labeling, too much recorded lecturing and, they fear, people will fail to "see." But the Brooklyn Bridge is an extraordinary document of a number of different things, and the designers of this exhibition bravely decided not to shy away from telling more than one story. They showed technical documents, explained construction techniques, put out the tools for visitors to see, included architects' renditions, photos, paintings, sculpture, literature; we saw the bridge in many stages and from many spatial and conceptual perspectives. The viewer who spent time in the show came away with a sense of the bridge as an important landmark in American urban history, in national self-consciousness and in the sense of manifest destiny; a sense, too, of the bridge and the human spirit, of self-confidence; of the somewhat more familiar, but still moving story of the Roeblings themselves; of the interface between social and technological history. The show tells who built the bridge and how it was done, who got killed and whose lives depended on the work the bridge provided, whose were changed by the link it provided between cities. When one sees artists' fascination with the way those famous cables fractionate reality and make force and tension visible, one

almost concludes that the Brooklyn Bridge caused analytical cubism, the "force lines" in 20th-century American painters, even abstraction itself. The show is admirable for not talking down to its audience. Neither does the book (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1983, \$35.00), which earnestly tries to brief us on what condition the mighty bridge is in, and whether it can be maintained (Good; and, You bet!); the construction history, the Roeblings, the history of transportation in the area, urban design, films which use the bridge, what it has meant to artists. It's splendid stuff, and keeps the show in mind: engineering drawings, tools, diagrams, photos, paintings, sculpture, power and gaiety—such as Red Grooms' preposterous 1976 warped enormous bright distorted sculpture "Brooklyn Bridge," with its toothpaste-tube-squished oriental freighter sailing beneath warped-grid cables, and this mad cat, over-sized, careening down the deck on his blue bicycle. Like the very successful and ambitious show, the book richly rewarded every additional ten minutes one spent with it. One wishes the show were as permanent.

J. Bunker Clark says that AMERICAN MUSIC RECORDINGS: A Discography of 20th-Century U.S. Composers, edited by Carol J. Oja (Institute for Studies in American Music, Brooklyn College, CUNY, 1982, \$60.00), is a valuable reference source for those incorporating American music in their courses. It deals with "art" music by some 1300 (!) composers such as Bernstein, Carter, Gershwin, Ives. The foreword by composer William Schuman points out the dismal record of commercial companies in issuing new music—even worse in keeping the little they do issue in print.

Lillian Schlissel just loves COVERED WAGON WOMEN: Diaries & Letters from the Western Trails, 1840-1890 (Volume 1, 1840-1849. Edited by Kenneth L. Holmes. Glendale, California: Arthur H. Clark, 1983. \$25.00). She writes, "It is rare to find emotion in scholarly writing but the affection that shines through this text must bring pleasure to readers who have even once felt a