

Gallery 1134 - a study in hubris

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ABSTRACT

Similar institutions around the world have come and gone, but have not succumbed to a fate as sinister as this one's. A history of one woman's journey from curator of a kooky, off-the-beaten track avant-garde art gallery to the director of a museum of holography with the claim of the world's largest collection of holograms and her downfall at the hands of international confidence artists is told from the recollections of some of her first employees, contemporaneous news sources, and from recent excavation of the site.

Keywords: Gallery 1134, Loren Billings, Museum of Holography/Chicago, Fine Arts Research and Holographic Center, GnXpert.

1. INTRODUCTION

To the living we owe respect, but to the dead we owe only the truth. Voltaire

1.1 The original owner and builder

The Free Methodist Publishing House at 1134 West Washington Boulevard "was formally dedicated to the service of the Lord on Thursday afternoon, October 14, 1909, amid great rejoicing of the people assembled on the happy occasion." The building was designed to take the punishment of all the presses which "will be the source of holiness literature and wholesome and helpful literary productions of many kinds." Their initials, FMP, are immortalized in the tile of the entranceway of the building on Washington Boulevard. They were undoubtedly unaware of the numerological significance of their street number, not having pocket calculators to view those digits upside down.

1.2 The second occupant

There must not have been much money in holiness literature as the Rudolph Casket Company took possession of the address before World War II, and as late as the 1990's one could see their sign painted on the side of the building. Items from this concern were found on the site as late as the 2015 excavation!

1.3 The third occupant

The Chicago Daily News of November 2nd, 1977, verifies that Bob and Loren Billings are indeed "Urban Pioneers on West Side" of our fair city, having bought the building for \$80,000. The article also states that Bob was the public relations director for the Teamsters Union Central States Pension Fund, which had been undergoing an investigation by the Federal government for its ties to organized crime.

The neighborhood had declined since the FMP had been erected in an industrial center, having devolved into a decadence that would undoubtedly make a Methodist shudder, as it was now being known as Chicago's Skid Row. Bob served as its precinct captain, a street soldier in city politics, getting out the vote.

2. GALLERY 1134

2.1 The School of the Art Institute of Chicago

Loren enrolled at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) in the Fall of 1974. Her main interest was ceramics, but she was also interested in new art forms, like performance and multi-media. She enlisted fellow classmates Victor Heredia, Kevin Houtari, and Tom Cvetkovich to clean up the left behind casket stuff to start an off-the beaten track art gallery, christening it Gallery 1134, in the tradition of naming art galleries with the street number.

2.2 Opening the doors

The GALLERY 1134 INAUGURAL EXHIBITION, opened on January 23rd, 1976. Faculty (Steve Waldeck, Joe Cavalier Iola Rigacci, and Tony Phillips) and students (Loren Billings and Al Ornelas) from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago were well represented, but the show was not well received by Bob Billings' favorite colleague from the City News Bureau days, Mike Royko, who mocked the show in a column entitled "Nutty as in Fruitcake". They eventually kissed and made up, as they later commissioned Lee Lacey to record a Multiplex hologram of Chicago's grouchiest columnist.

2.3 Spumoni Village

Several shows followed, but Cosmo Campoli's "SPUMONI VILLAGE: Your Portrait in Vegetable" also created quite a sensation similar to the above, with critics praising and panning it, with the most virulent being Alan Artner's review in the Chicago Tribune, titled "Spumoni has a pathetic taste", "It is altogether appropriate that Cosmo Campoli's "Spumoni Village" is taking place at Gallery 1134, for the building used to display caskets and what we now see is close to artistic suicide."

2.4 Introduction to holography

Loren and Victor Heredia, amongst others at the School of the Art Institute and catch the holography bug after witnessing a lecture by holography's ace #1 proselytizer, Dr. Tung Jeong. It must have struck a resonant frequency in her, as she started planning to bring holograms to the gallery-going public.

Invitations for participation in her International Holography Exhibition were sent out around the world in February of, 1977, and the show ran from May 20 through July 3. "Holography is more than a new dimension; it is a new sense" breathlessly pronounced the press release.

2.5 Reaction to the exhibition

"Holy photography, that's holography!" exclaims a review in the Chicago Sun-Times by Franz Schulze (of the Lake Forest College Art Department, wherein he gives a shout out to Tung Jeong of the same school) of the International Exhibition of Holography. This one is not unlike the extremely controversial Hilton Kramer pan of a holography show at the International Center of Photography, with lines like "A more relevant observation is that, engineering aside there is virtually nothing on view worth the name of art." A couple of other reviewers John Forwalter in The Herald of June 6th and Alan Artner in the Chicago Tribune Arts & Fun section of June 12, 1977 share similar sentiments..

3. FINE ARTS RESEARCH AND HOLOGRAPHIC CENTER

3.1 The origin of the name

At first Loren planned on dubbing her gallery a Museum of Holography, but Rosemary "Posy" Jackson had that quashed with a cease and desist order, even if Loren had suffixed /Chicago to that phrase. So the now the former casket showroom became an exclusively holography gallery, dubbed the Museum of The Fine Arts Research and Holographic Center, an umbrella organization which also included a School, and a commercial concern, Holographic Design Systems.

3.2 Ed Wesley's first encounters

The first time the author went there was shortly after witnessing Tung Jeong make two holograms in front of a group of photo teachers at an SPE convention, the day that changed his life, in the fall of 1978. I was shown around by Kevin Houtari, who was one of the original SAIC students who volunteered to help clean out the building, and had appeared as an instructor on their course catalog. But never got to his wish for teaching, as he later had a nervous breakdown due to Bob Billing's badgering.

I started taking classes there in the summer of 1979, under the tutelage of John Hoffmann, and helped them set up an exhibit at Navy Pier during an annual city celebration called ChicagoFest. I got to see one of my favorite bands there, Sun Ra and his Arkestra, and even sold them a hologram of their home planet, Saturn.

I took all their classes, Holo, I, II, and III, and volunteered to work the summer after leaving my day job, teaching at a Catholic grade school, hoping to put in enough of a positive vibe to get me a job working there full-time. But there was a string attached.

3.3 The CETA scam

The Cooperative Education and Training Act of 1975 was to empower the under-employed by teaching new skills. The Billings set up a program in order to pay their employees, without having to pay them out of their own pockets. At first the lucky three were Victor, his brother Richard, and Kevin Huotari. But with her plans for expansion, Loren needed more workers, so the program snowballed into over a dozen employees, some of them being holographers planted there by the Billings.

For there were certain guidelines to be fulfilled in order to qualify for the CETA program, insofar as to annual income, education, and residency requirements. Some local and out of state holographers falsified information to apply for the grant, with one even assuming his cousin's identity when they went out of the country to go to school for a year. Names withheld as the statutes of limitations on defrauding the government and repaying that salary have not expired.

One employee did get caught doing this same scheme, but he was not a part of the scam. Larry Z., whose stained glass business was a little flat at the time, these being the Carter recession years, had been steered to the CETA program by his ex-wife social worker. She told him that they were just giving these jobs away except for this one little catch, one had to live in Cook County but not in the City of Chicago, meaning the suburbs. So he adopted the address and phone number of one of his friends, and when the CETA office called Larry at his "home" his unknowing friend's father didn't play along and so Larry got called down to the office to do some explaining. He got off the hook, but at his hearing he saw on his official forms all kinds of bogus classes which he had supposedly taken while there but didn't, but Gallery 1134 had undoubtedly profited from his enrollment.

3.4 3 or 4 die as a result of Loren's inaction

Along with the holographic plants in the CETA crew, there was an intake of recruits that had applied to the program and were sincere about learning some new skills, even holography, for if one were to believe Loren's propaganda, this was a medium raring to blast off and the sky's the limit! But mixed amongst them were some, how shall we say, sleazy street people, who would rather do nothing than anything, minimizing their work for pay.

And John Hoffmann, Victor Heredia, and myself found out that one of them was dealing some kind of powder to the rest of the employees, and we presented a united front to Loren telling her to get rid of him, as he was a bad influence, but she wouldn't, as she claimed she needed a certain amount of warm bodies in the place so she could collect a manager's salary. She didn't care even if they accomplished anything during the day, just as long as they signed in, and got a paycheck and she got hers.

So the sales continued. One of the workers decided to buy some powdered recreation for the weekend, but decided to kick it off early, on the way home from work. He and a friend split the stuff, and he passed out, but his friend was still somewhat awake so he took the wheel of the Thunderbird, but he was not awake enough to prevent an accident on the expressway which threw Ron out the car window, and broke his neck, killing him instantly. Since he was sleeping he died never knowing what hit him.

Loren led us all to the wake. It was held in a black funeral home just west of Gallery 1134 and we walked over. We were the only white people there amidst Ron's friends and family, including his mother. Since the mother of the victim's kids knew exactly what had transpired, the hate rays going from her eyes to the pusher were clearly visible to all in the room. But he had a look on his face like, "Hell, I sold him the stuff, and I'm sorry, but I didn't tell him to take it and get in a car."

And I blame Loren, too, even more so, for this person's demise. There were enough warning signs that the pusher was a bad influence on the place, plus he was counterproductive. He would rather do nothing than anything. As soon as any authority figures were out of the room, he would put down whatever he was doing and start clowning around. But since Loren had to keep her quota of CETA workers to continue receiving a manager's salary, she kept him anyway.

Even in spite of another worker's complaints of the pusher harassing him when they were working. He complained to Loren, who wouldn't get rid of the bad egg since she needed his body for that critical number of employees to allow her to collect the manager's pay. She shifted the productive one's schedule so that he worked his five days over the weekend and just a few weekdays, but still he had to endure the insults 2 or 3 days a week. He even complained to the CETA

office, but headstrong Loren still wouldn't relieve the one of his position and so the good soul did the most logical self-preserving thing, he quit. When he started running low on money, he tried to get some from his sister's husband, who wouldn't or couldn't pay, so Joe blew him away with a handgun and then blew his own brains out. All because he couldn't find decent working conditions because Loren wouldn't fire his nemesis, because she "had to get money into this institution anyway she could!" So this guy was the second person to go who worked there, and his relative gets the "(or four)" epithet which I referred to in the beginning of this section, as he never set foot in the place.

The third Gallery 1134 person to go was Al Ornelas. He was one of the founders of the place, along with Bob and Loren. He had met Loren at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, both of them bonding over being older students, (in their 40's and 50's at that time amongst the usual college aged students) and had fallen in love with her. He would go to work at his day job, designing patches to be sewed onto uniforms, etc., worked the afternoon at 1134, then left to finish the rest of his 8 hours at the patch factory. He designed their logos and helped in the renovating of the building, but when I left, they were at war for some reason, only leaving notes on each others' desks to communicate.

I found out about his passing after touching base with a friend who still worked there, after I had returned from my epic Motorcycle Trip of the Summer of 1981 celebrating my escape from 1134. Victor Heredia and I visited the widow Ornelas, who said that he had died of a heart attack on the way to the Seven Eleven to get some groceries on the first day of his vacation from his normal job and Gallery 1134. Henpecked to death by Loren was her estimation of the calamity, and she said that he had kept a diary of it all, with poetry, some of it shocking to her, but understandable.

So three or four poor souls could have still been alive, if it were not for the evil brewing in the depths of Gallery 1134. These are all I know about, there may even be more than that.

3.5 A brush with greatness

There was an OSA meeting held in Chicago in the Fall of 1980, when I first started working at Gallery 1134, and it was decided for me to put on my suit (as I was the only one of the holographers that had one, thanks to my teaching gig) and invite the optical scientists to come to the Gallery.

John and Victor cleaned the joint up - so well, that every piece of optics was taken from the all tables. John had so many secrets that he couldn't afford to have these guys see his new and novel approaches. So the 9' x 16' L-shaped table under the stairwell to the basement was completely devoid of anything, which prompted Benton to remark to Jean-Marc Fournier, as they looked at the thing, "Gee, everyone should have one of these in their basement!"

The tour wound up in the office in the basement at the front of the building. I remember standing with my friends, John and Victor, watching little Loren wagging her finger in front of whole head and a half taller Benton's nose, telling him that she has such a genius there, he has so many great ideas and he can make holograms bigger and brighter than you and he'll be so famous, so Benton just took it all in, and then walked into the room where we standing in shocked disbelief.

With a tone as surly as Bob Billings's, Benton surveyed us all and then stared at John and said, "OK, who's the master holographer?" John's voice cracked as he slipped out "Me." Benton just turned around in disgust and walked out the room.

3.6 Betraying friends

Larry and Peggy Lieberman moved from Columbus, Ohio to take advantage of the opportunities afforded by Gallery 1134 as described by Dr. Jeong in 1980. They returned to Gallery 1134 after a trip to their hometown for the 4th of July holiday, and told Loren that they are leaving her employ on the advice of their attorney for a variety of reasons. While they are out to lunch, Loren tells me to take pictures of Larry's printer. I did so under so much duress, the images are blurry because I was shaking so, betraying a friend, but if I didn't, Loren would make my life much more miserable. My resolution was to take the pictures, but I never gave her any copies. Luckily the machine had been disassembled in the morning, so there was not much to photograph anyway.

On the plus side of working there, I did learn some skills, like carpentry from Victor, using rub-off letter sets and graphic arts tape from Al, which came in handy in writing classroom handouts, which were used by teachers after me,

until the last class. They sent me to a grant-writing workshop, but Bob would edit my grant proposals into nonsense. And he and his wife showed me how dysfunctional human being can be.

3.7 Ed escapes with his life

Seeing how things were going with Victor who was in charge of the CETA crew Loren was getting upset with Victor for not driving them hard and fast enough, but it's difficult to do with a crew who puts all their energy into doing as little as possible. John Hoffmann put the final nail in that coffin by telling Loren that Victor had bought some weed from Steve LaserSmith, even though John was smoking it the night before and that didn't seem to bother him.

I showed John the project I was working on, a controller for a 70mm camera back film transport, and explained that I was stumped on how to get one of the timing relays to talk to the other. He told me not to worry, I would eventually figure it out, but I told him someone else will have to figure that out, as this was my last day.

We went in to see Loren in her office, and I gave her my list of gripes, which she of course could not bear to hear, and flew into a frenzy, slapping John's desk with her hand, telling me that "this institution will succeed in spite of me!" I had heard Bob coming down the steps, but when he figured out what was going on, he high-tailed it back up them, as I was going to let him have it both barrels. But I missed my chance that time.

Taking a 6 week, 5,000 mile motorcycle trip after leaving 1134 ending up at the MOH in New York convinced me that there was enough good in the medium to pursue it, even though I was committed to Cicero School District 99 for the Fall. Which turned out to be a year almost as bad as this one!

3.8 The break with TJ

A year had passed since I had left Gallery 1134, and got in contact with Dr. Tung Jeong regarding the upcoming First International Symposium on Display Holography at Lake Forest College. TJ asked me if I wanted to work as a lab assistant for his Workshops prior to that in exchange for the conference fee. I thanked him and answered in the affirmative, but asked why was he asking me to do so, and he replied that Loren thought I was an excellent teacher!

On the Saturday after the workshop had ended and we were preparing for the conference, TJ went down to Gallery 1134 to retrieve some of his holograms, which included a box of Russian holograms, the same ones that he had showed at that wonderful lecture demonstration at the photo teachers' convention that started it all for me in 1978. He brought the box back to LFC, and I was there when he opened up the box for the first time in many years to take the holograms out and saw that the top one was fine, but the next two were cracked! Shock filled the room, and once TJ got his composure back, he called Loren, who told him over the phone it must have happened while he had it and they must have broken while traveling back to Lake Forest in his big Oldsmobile Vista Cruiser boat of a station wagon. I made a phone call, and Victor Heredia confirmed what I had suspected, he was a witness to Loren dropping them. (He got his conference fee deferred for that.)

Just before the opening speech I was sitting in the front row of the auditorium, talking with Posy Jackson of the NY MOH, and I saw two familiar figures sneak in the back door and sit in the very last row. It was Loren and John, and they were late because they were trying to snow TJ's secretary, Mrs. Crist into believing that it was OK with TJ to let them in for free because he was a trusted advisor of their place, not realizing that Mrs. Crist was there also when TJ opened the box of holograms and made the call to Loren when she denied responsibility. Loren had met her match!

Anyhow Mrs. Crist let them in to hear Emmett's lecture and would discuss the matter with TJ, after a few moments I saw Loren leave, as probably as their eyes grew accustomed to the dark they started to recognize people in the room, like Larry Lieberman, Victor Heredia, myself, plus the worst one of them all, Steve Smith, up by the stage taking photos. But John stayed the whole week trying to blend in and defend himself.,

4. THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

4.1 Enthusiastic holophiles

A community of students enthralled by holography gathered around 1134, taking classes, showing up for openings, organizing legendary events like a Halloween party, with Loren dressed as a witch, Bob as a gangster, and John Hoffmann was so real in drag no one recognized him at the Holo-Ween event on November 1st, 1985! Approximately 200 students overall passed through the classes according to records in Victor Heredia's possession.

In addition to the usual Holo I, II and III curriculum, a special treat was in store in with Hans Bjelkhagen teaching a class in Holographic Interferometry, and another, the first in the world, Pulsed Laser Holography, using a small pulsed ruby laser at Northwestern University, with the final project hologram being of a mouse in a student's hand. But Hans lost his tenure with Loren when she found out Ed Wesley was his assistant at first FermiLab and then at Northwestern University, so he was deposed from his post as Director of Education and his name was stricken from the advisor's list in the next edition of the class catalog.

The Alumni Association even wrote a how-to book, "Holography for Photographers", to raise money to buy equipment for a lab of their own to be located in 1134, and inside it read "Dedicated to Loren Billings, founder and guiding light of the FARHC, whose clear, coherent vision continues to give the world new depth and meaning." Unfortunately for them, Loren found out that one of their recent off-campus events was a field trip to the lab of the LaserSmith, mortal enemy #1, and that ended the dream of the lab that Loren had promised them.

5. MUSEUM OF HOLOGRAPHY/CHICAGO

5.1 A re-christening

Although the Museum of Holography in New York City would not be dead and sold at auction until 1992, Loren started calling her institution just that, with a /Chicago suffix, starting in 1988. Michael Jackson's visited there in May of that year, and was visibly impressed, according to the Chicago Tribune, even noting that Boy George "looks like a girl" in Edwina Orr's hologram of him. Surprisingly Loren referred a commission from the "Gloved One" to make holograms for his Neverland Ranch to Nancy Gorglione and Greg Cherry, probably because her master holographer, John Hoffmann, was undoubtedly way too busy with much more important stuff.

When Nancy Gorglione had her "Equus/Underwater" show at Gallery 1134, she told Loren Billings that she would be happy if the local holographers were invited to her opening, and Loren replied "anyone except for Steve Smith and Ed Wesley!" Not a good club to be a member of!

I had attempted to visit the Gallery 1134 several times since I had left there, usually the door wouldn't open, but once Loren did answer and told me that she didn't appreciate what I had been writing about her institution. But it was thanks to the intercession of Nancy G. that I was allowed back into the hallowed halls of Gallery 1134.

My wife at the time, Georgette, and I arrived, she resplendent in her Op Art mini skirt, digging the artwork, meeting and greeting old and new friends. She and I were hanging out by the trinket desk, and I noticed Bob was leering at her, wondering who was that gorgeous dish with Wesley. (For all her schizophrenic faults, she was gorgeous.)

I told her, in a stage whisper, "See that guy checking you out over there? That's that Bob idiot I told you about, and now he's even uglier without his beard!" He high-tailed it out of the room. I had been waiting almost 10 years to see him on the street so I could give him the finger, but this was more delicious.

6. TECHNOLOGY AND FACILITIES

6.1 Laboratories

There were a total of 10 tables in the building. In the Introductory Lab on the second floor there were five 3 foot by 4 foot sandboxes, each equipped with a 5 milliWatt Helium-Neon laser, the preferred brand being Spectra-Physics. Each table had a storage compartment below it, with the laser's power supply, and a rack that held the optics mounted on PVC pipes in the classical sandbox manner, which included beamsplitters, beamsplitters, mirrors, and a Gossen Luna Pro light meter in a recess lovingly routed in the rack by Victor Heredia.

On the first floor, behind the casket showroom now hologram gallery was a classroom for lectures, and outside of that the Intermediate Lab, housing a pair of 4 foot by 8 foot poured concrete tables side by side, plus another of 4 foot by 10 foot dimensions at the foot of those two. The tables looked like serious optical laboratory grade devices, not like sidewalk, thanks to black pigment having been mixed into the concrete.

Each one was equipped with a Spectra-Physics Model 124 15 mW Helium Neon Laser, 3 Newport Model 900 Spatial Filters, Newport Variable Beamsplitting Disc, and homemade mirror mounts. Because the tables were not steel, gravity bases were used, with Loren buying the first one from Newport, then having a sand casting made of that one, and several dozen counterfeits made from it.

In the basement, under a stairwell, was an L-shaped table that made the best use of the space for the experimental lab, 9 feet on the bottom, 16 feet on the long edge. The remains of their stereogram equipment were found in there, with a Commodore Pet computer running the device.

In another basement room was the "Blue Lab", built for Larry Lieberman when he joined the 1134 fold. It was dubbed that because Loren insisted on blue tile to cover the floor and part of the wall, with the cast concrete table topped by blue painted particle board. Larry set up his Multiplex style printer in here, but then it became the photo-resist shooting table, with a large frame Krypton laser being implemented for its one Watt deep blue 413 nm output.

They had bought the Multiplex printer from Lee Lacey's short-lived Holographic Arts Company in suburban Niles, and although there are some examples of custom holograms shot in that format found in the excavation, there is reasonable doubt if they printed them in house, more than likely had Multiplex in San Francisco print them.

There was a room that had a tripod for a 35mm movie camera that could travel on a rail, or be pointed at a rotating stage for recording integral holograms of any format, with very diffuse illumination from plenty of homemade light boxes.

On the floor in the part of the basement that I knew as a woodworking shop was a set up to shoot stereogram masters, with an approximately 1 meter square backlit groundglass projection screen in it. The optics were mounted on bases made of particle board and filled with sand. There were some huge, almost 2 meter tall cylindrical lenses made of Plexiglas and filled with mineral oil in this collection, but it is rather doubtful if they were of diffraction-limited performance. This set up may have worked, but no examples of its fruit have surfaced.

Each lab area had its own darkroom, complete with stainless steel sinks. There was also a quasi-clean room used for spinning photo resist plates for embossed jobs outside the Blue Lab. They often claimed that they did all the steps of embossing in-house, but there was no evidence to support that claim during the excavation of 2014-15. The Diffraction Company of Maryland seemed to be their go-to embosser.

They did adapt to the digital age, even having a web site with John Hoffmann as the webmaster, and enjoying the fruits of e-mail early on, with Loren's e-address being hologram@aol.com

7. BODY OF WORK

One of the first stock images that they offered for sale in the classic 4" by 5" reflection hologram format was of Chicago's Picasso, but not much else. They sold lots of Lon Moore's Saturn, etc., in the halcyon days of that format.

About 3 dozen examples of their embossed jobs have been found, some for stock images, some for commercial clients. Some are quite well done multi-color work, but even those have some aberration that "rolls" the image plane. They were able to combine some stereogram imagery with real objects, and could get a decent white drop-in.

John Hoffmann's (who claimed to be the reincarnation of Marcel duChamp), greatest holographic art hit was a hologram of a wall socket, into which its replay light was seemingly plugged into. He even collaborated with Professor Dan Sandin of the University of Illinois Chicago Circle campus with some computer imagery turned into holographic stereograms. But you will find nothing of his in any of the major holographic art exhibition catalogs.

Loren's contributions to the art were sculptural installations involving mannequins, reflective foils on walls and laser beams, with a major Christmas tree every year. Her *magnum opus* was a series of stereograms of children from around the world.

8. THE DEMISE OF BOB

Robert W. Billings "Goes like Wind" when he left this world on August 27th, 1998, succumbing to the one thing more vile and stronger than he, cancer.. Loren set up a trust in his name, for music education, but a couple years later John Hoffmann and their accountant, Pepito "Pete" Gunto loot it, with Hoffmann taking Loren's car to boot. But Lui (Bob's bedroom name for her) pressed on, even though she had lost his wind in her sails.

9. THE GNXPERS ENTER

9.1 Enter Igor, Vitaliy, and Maria

It is not clear exactly when these 3 Russians met up with Loren, the earliest document in his excavating that the author has found about them is in an email from David Wender, (who got his start in holography at the legendary Conductron), to Loren in June 2001, starting with "I have tried to make sense of Igor's paper and it is a task for Hercules. It would be much better for them to write this in Russian and I'll have Lucy (his Polish-born wife) translate it. The underlying physics is poorly developed-perhaps by intention." Unfortunately he was conned himself, as a few paragraphs later in his letter, "I have no doubt they are fine, sincere people and full of ideas." As it turns out they were full of clever schemes.

Wender bowed out of a directorship the GnXperts offered him due to his full-time commitment to Abbott Labs, and there are no more communiqués found from him. Which worked to their advantage, as now there was no one on the outside to naysay anything. And they could seduce Loren into mortgaging her building to invest one million dollars in their business.

9.2 The Loan

If David Wender's words of advice were not enough, certainly Loren should have woken up by Broadway Bank's vice president and senior loan officer, Alexi Giannoulis. He warned her to watch her step in a letter, "It is Broadway Banks opinion that you seek the guidance of counsel" and "there is concern on the bank's part due to the past credit history of the other three co-borrowers. All three of them had significant problems in the past with their finances, and none of them currently has satisfactory credit. In addition, we have discovered that two of the borrowers, Mr. Anatsko and Ms Chychula, have been reported for suspected fraudulent activity on the 'Fraud Finder Alert' supplied by Chex Systems.". So she re-applied for the loan without their names, came to the closing without legal counsel, and it was granted.

One has to wonder why a person 82 years old is taking out a loan on her home and place of business? Was she convinced that she would reap a really great return on the investment? And why didn't her family stop her? Because they did not know she did it, discovering it only by accident in 2005, when one of her nieces found a late payment notice from the bank on the fax machine.

The day after the loan went though, Loren doled out checks totaling more than \$600,000.

9.3 John Hoffmann's role

If David Wender raised his eyebrows about the Russians' science, what about Loren's boy wonder, John F. Hoffmann, her beloved Director of Research, the master holographer who Loren was sure was smarter than Benton? Who would always gainsay me when I was his student and later colleague about something I tried and how well it worked, but he would always say he had tried that, but came up with something better, but he couldn't say what it was because he was either applying for a patent on it or writing a paper on it.

When I read the Reader article, Losing her Museum, I was wondering what John was doing about debunking the GnXperts. If there was anyone who Loren could trust, it was he. Terry had told Victor and I that Hoffmann had left in a huff in 2002 with his mom's BMW, so I had calculated wrongly that there was no overlap.

But during my days of holo-excavating I came across a mailing tube from John Perry's Holographics North, addressed to John Hoffmann, c/o GnXperts, 1134 West etc. Inside was an approximately 50 by 60 cm rainbow holographic stereogram of Thomas Miner, whose business, Thomas Miner & Associates, listed one of the GnXperts as his treasurer, and was undoubtedly one of the victims falling prey to them. Curiously another Chicago Reader article details how Mr. Miner was a front for the CIA in the 1970's.

So Hoffmann had definitely worked with them! Was he the one who introduced them to Loren? Did he prep them on exactly what to say to her? And how did he and they link up? Confirmation of his involvement with them came in a telephone conversation he had with Robert Hess, of Point Source Productions, noted collector of lasers and holograms, when he stated that the Russians really had the science figured out, and if only Loren had taken out a second mortgage on the property for \$1.6 million then they could have realized their goal. (He also told Bob that he couldn't meet him for lunch, as he was on his way to LA to rewrite some new Twilight Zone episodes for CBS Streaming.)

It would seem more likely that the goal of the GnXperts was to promise the sky for money invested with huge returns but it was all a hoax. It is not against the law to take investment money for promises unfulfilled, but take the money and claim that the returns are in the mail is. Loren was duped into believing that the GnXperts had paid off their commitment to her loan, as evidenced in a note she left her son.

9.4 Justice almost served

The State of Illinois and the United States attorneys took an interest in the GnXperts when others beside Loren complained to them. Indictments were served, but Maria is the only one serving time for her part in the swindle. Vitaliy Tweeted in Russian as recently as 2011, and Igor posts on Facebook, also in Russian.

9.5 A surprisingly happy reunion

Completely oblivious to the above developments, Hans Bjelkhagen and Ed Wesley spring a surprise visit on Loren in the summer of 2008. She immediately recognized the author, and told us she knew a Hans Bjelkhagen once upon a time, while Hans insisted he was the one and the same! The gallery looked the same as we remembered it. Loren couldn't get enough farewell hugs from me.

10. FORECLOSURE

10.1 A secret revealed

The family did not know of the loan until a niece of Loren's discovered a late payment notice on her fax machine in 2005. Terry Kasprzak, Loren's son, took out a loan for \$1.6 million to pay off the \$1 million debt, expecting to sell the building quickly. Unfortunately that did not happen, so the building was short sold by the Signature Bank.

Hans Bjelkhagen requested Ed Wesley to deliver a paper on the status of the museum for the Holography Working Group at Photonics West meeting for 2011. Ed made contact with Terry, and he and Victor met up with him and toured the building in January, the first time Victor had returned to the site that he had sunk so much of his youthful energy into since 1981! Loren never returned any of his calls in all those years. We learned from Terry that she was in a nursing home. Ed's presentation had the Holography Working Group laughing out loud.

Jonathan Ross had come to Chicago to document the Gallery 1134 collection for Teit Ritzau, (Terry telling Loren Jonathan was from the insurance company) and later in 2011, Teit requested that Ed Wesley help Terry pack some holograms that were to be shipped to Singapore for a show he was organizing. Terry never got back to me, but the holograms, the pick of the 1134 litter, were sent and still remain in the Far East. Terry also took anything else that was valuable like holograms, or incriminating, like files and hard drives at that time, as well as he should, as he was Loren's only blood relative.

11. FLIPPING

11.1 Ed encounters the 4th owner

In the late summer of 2013, Ed Wesly, riding his motorcycle past 1134 West Washington on his way to work, finds signs posted on its front door, investigates, and discovers a new owner of the building and introduces himself to Hayden Connor, proprietor of Gamble Music, who purchased the building on a short sale from Signature Bank, and is promised a "Cook's Tour" later on.

In April of 2014 Ed makes contact with Hayden regarding the upcoming visit from Bob Hess, noted laser historian, who would like to purchase the collectible lasers from him, so he, along with Ed Wesly, plus Victor Heredia bring a truck downtown and load up an interesting collection of stuff. In August, Hayden Connor enlists Ed Wesly to organize the 1134 junk, as he has sold the building to Shawn Uldridge, who wants to turn the building into a bed & breakfast plus a restaurant and other commercial spaces.

11.2 Enter Moshe Tamssot

When returning to 1134 in August, Hayden informed me that there was a new player in the game, a neighbor who wanted to reconstruct the museum. Moshe Tamssot described being impressed when meeting Loren sometime in the 1990's, but his interest in the Museum was not piqued again until 2014, when he read that the building was sold. He adopted the preservation of the museum and Loren's memory as his own *cause celebre*, yet he had let about 20 years go by before re-entering the building, not ever visiting the museum even on a yearly basis in the interim. Who knows, if he had gotten involved back then, he could have used his scary public relations skills to have kept it afloat.

He got off on the wrong foot with Hayden Connor by claiming credit for finding his lost dog, when Hayden knew it was found by some other dog-walking friends. He gave Moshe a tour of the building with Shawn Uldridge, who had just bought it from Hayden. Unbeknownst to Hayden, Moshe was videotaping him with his phone, and posted it on-line without telling Hayden. Then Hayden banned Moshe from entering the building. And banned me from talking to Moshe if I were to continue excavating. Which sounded like the typical bill of fare for that address.

11.3 The Great Excavation

It started in August of 2014, and it was a daunting mess. Hayden said that when he was shown the place in 2012 it was as tidy as if someone had left for lunch but had never come back. But before Hayden closed the deal, Terry Kaszprzak had taken what he wanted, abandoning the rest. Plus Hayden mixed in all his business items that were not currently in use in the basement, and it was like a bomb had exploded inside.

The basic rule of thumb of sorting was Hayden got all the household items, his Mexican workers were to get the hardware and tools, and when I told him I could save him the cost of EPA friendly disposal of the chemical stores, he told me that I could take whatever I could use. So I applied that maxim liberally, one day taking out 105 pounds of lab stands and other hardware, and loading it on my motorcycle.

11.4 Holo-Rescue

Although Moshe was not allowed to enter 1134, he still wanted to save the museum. He told Hayden that in order to find a benefactor to buy the holography museum stuff, he should show off what there is if he were to attract someone from the likes of the Lucas museum, which was trying to get its foothold into the Chicago lakefront at that time.

Hayden agreed, and I curated the last remaining holograms that were framed and gallery ready, and set up a pop up gallery for a weekend, while Moshe put out a call for viewers in the newspapers and social media. A couple hundred people showed up, all too eager to eat and drink and drool at holograms. But no one there enquired about purchasing the lot.

11.5 Enter Jon Seymour

But a person who belatedly read the invitation in the Chicago Reader did enquire about the lot the following week. Dr. Jon Seymour, a medical software guru, had a dream about setting up his own Museum of Light and Dimension, populated with a high class holographic art gallery, a lounge, and labs, which dove-tailed with Moshe's aspirations.

He was put in contact with Hayden Connor, but was warned that any deal would be off if he learned that Jon was involved with Moshe. So Jon bought what was left of the holographic museum's stuff for \$12k.

11.6 Holo-Rescue almost 2.0

Because Jon wanted to find more partners to spread the risk around on his museum, Moshe arranged for another show of the holograms from Loren's collection at the Chicago chapter of the international chain of Soho Houses. But Jon and Moshe had a parting of the ways over showing Rudie Berkhout holograms along with what was left of Loren's collection, unless they were copies of the exact ones that Loren had on exhibit but were now off-shore. Plus Moshe denied Jon's family admission to the event, saying his volunteers who helped hang the show took precedence on the guest list over the benefactor's family in the Soho House's controlled capacity. Jon called Soho House, found out that there was no quota on guests, and cancelled that gig. He then talked to Shawn Uldridge, now in possession of 1134, who banned Moshe from entering its hallowed halls while Jon still had his possessions in there.

11.7 Exit the leftover holograms

Moving day finally arrived, and Jon had arranged for "Two Men and a Truck" movers to move his collection to Victor Heredia's apartment building, as Jon had not rented a large enough storage space, just a small one for the more valuable pieces. Moshe sat in his Honda Element across the street, videotaping the loading, then following the truck to Victor's building, and videotaping the unloading.

11.8 Moshe crowns himself

Convinced that he was gypped out of "his" collection, Moshe reinstated the lapsed not for profit status of the Fine Arts Research and Holographic Center simply by paying the retro-active registration fees to the Secretary of State's office, and sent those who had removed artifacts from 1134 a threatening letter. "As acting President of the MoH, I am hereby authorized to request the immediate return of our Corporation's assets, removed on August 14, 2015 from 1134 W. Washington Boulevard, the former home of the Museum of Holography." But one cannot reinstate a lapsed Not For Profit without having previously being a board member, so what Moshe had done was illegal, and therefore null and void. Actions such as these reached the holographic social media, and he got himself banned from the two major Facebook holography pages.

12. CURRENT DISPOSITION OF THE COLLECTION

12.1 Terry Kaszprzak's legacy

Terry had sent about 40 holograms to Teit Ritzau's exhibition; the rest of the pieces catalogued by Jonathan Ross at Terry's request remain with him, and are available for purchase.

12.2 Jon Seymour's Stash

Jon took my word that his stuff would be safe at Victor's place, even though Moshe characterized it "being in a bad neighborhood" when he posted the videos he had taken of the loading and unloading of the truck. Poetic justice after all, as he had built most of the displays, etc., but was denied the fruits of his labor decades previous. So Jon checked out his stash there once or twice after that in the summer of 2015, but he didn't return to Victor's for over a year, not until the fall of 2016, and was wondering where all his stuff was as he surveyed Victor's woodshop. Victor, being a working artist and rehabbing landlord, needs his workshop on a 24/7 basis, and to not to have it cluttered by a bunch of junk for which he was being paid no rent. He had moved much of it to a vacant apartment, and tossed out much junk. "Where are all the books?!" Jon thundered, and I could see that they were in plain sight on the shelves in front of him, having been absorbed into Bibliotheca Heredia. And who could not argue, rightfully so?

So Jon stormed out, upset with Victor, upset with me for steering his stuff there and not keeping an eye on it, but he never did accept any of my invites to visit Victor with me when I made a friendly call. He did later confess to me that he realized that he should be most upset with himself for dropping the ball. And after Jon left Victor's, I hung out for a few more beers with my Gallery 1134 colleague, and Victor reminded me he knew all about his landlord's rights with respect to abandoned property. Jon has not made any moves to reclaiming his stuff as of this date.

12.3 The Holo-Poet benefacts Moshe

In March of 2018 Eduardo Kac, who identifies himself as the father of Holo-Poetry and Transgenetic Art, benefacted Moshe with what was left of the School of the Art Institute's Holography Department's equipment. The old Holography Studio, which I helped set up in that space, had been flooded by a winter burst water pipe, destroying the Newport tables whose insides were made of particle board. The equipment was packed away in 2009 and stored off-campus until 2018.

Moshe is now faced with having one of the most deluxe Lionel toy train sets, complete with accessories, but without having the proverbial 4' by 8' piece of plywood to set it up on, much less a room to put it in! Perhaps we can have an update on his Mosheum of Holography at the next ISDH.

12.4 The fate of the address

The building itself has been thoroughly rehabbed, the upper floors where Loren and Bob lived, becoming "The Publishing House Bed and Breakfast". Its entrance is on May Street, so their address does not contain the 1134 number. The mighty L-shaped concrete table Stephen Benton once admired is now buried under concrete in the in-building, off-street handicapped parking.

The first floor, where first the caskets then the holograms were displayed, is now the Solo Salon not for art or orations like in Bob and Loren's Bohemian days, but for nails and hair. The basement where the offices and workshops were located is now a wine bar called the Press Room, complementing the B&B theme naming. In there hang photographs of the building's heritage, placed there by Moshe Tamssot, some of which he downloaded from this author's web site! Be sure to visit these establishments for a piece of holo-history whenever in the Windy City.

13. CONCLUSION

13.1 Movie rights?

There are still many gaps to be filled in and questions answered, but it is an intriguing enough story along with an amusing cast of characters, good enough to be made into a television mini-series! Maybe even starring my son as the young me, and myself as Bob Billings!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost are the many discussions I had with Victor Heredia, who survived Gallery 1134 like me, but never got to make a hologram there even though he built most of the equipment. Sometimes we fantasize about what our lives could have been like if we had served our time and had retired from there!

Others who have also given clues and encouragement to the story above include Terry Kaszprzak, Hans Bjelkhagen, Jonathan Ross, Jason Sapan, Rick Bruck, Bob Hess, Larry Zgoda, and Alan Frohlichstein. Even Jon Seymour and Moshe Tamssot are to be recognized for their roles in making legendary escapades.

REFERENCES

All the numerous newspaper and magazine articles alluded to above and a lot more are archived at the author's web site on the page dedicated to the memory of Gallery 1134, <http://edweslystudio.com/1134TimeLine/TimeLineIndex.html>