
SHADOWED
ELLEN ROTHENBERG

For Daniel and Jesse Jae Hoon Eisenberg

the third strand makes the braid …

and for SMR and MMR, who are evevrywhere in this book

SHADOWED

PREFACE

Shadowed! examines Ellen Rothenberg's solo 2015 show *elsetime*. Borrowing its name from a pulp novel from Bertolt Brecht's library, this book explores connections among Germany in the thirties and nineties, Woodstock in the sixties, and Chicago in the exhibition's present, particularly as these threads have influenced Rothenberg's creative life, surfacing periodically in the photographs, records, and sculptures on view at Sector 2337 from May 9–July 3, 2015. Caught in what Shawn Michelle Smith describes as "the flash of memory," *Shadowed!* captures the divergent and glancing experiences that the *elsetime* exhibition affords. Each entry is personal, each dissonant in parts and resonant in others, and the resulting compilation presents a vertiginous account showing what the afterimage of an exhibition can do.

This book includes exhibition documentation, a working archive of documents that inspired the show, four essayistic encounters the exhibition produced, five performative responses, and, lastly, the transcript of a public conversation that took place about and within the same show. These materials are collected here, starting with Hannah B Higgins's study of a photograph depicting Bertolt Brecht's well-worn armchair. Rothenberg included a photograph of the armrest, showing not only how worn in it is, but also how the batting had been repaired multiple times. "There is a slight shimmer," Higgins writes, "an oily sheen, the ghost of a decades-long intimate encounter." Not only does this book look at the influence of individual human lives, it also looks at the relationship between human life and the objects that populate it. An essay I wrote explores that intersection as follows: "Everything conceals a multitude of histories, inherited logics and designs that manipulate and inspire … appearing in dislocated instants like the flashing bursts of a strobe light." Jeffrey Skoller's essay begins in a movie theater where he watched *Woodstock* for the first time, describing the way the film's music, youth, and cinematography captivated his whole being. "I watch a new nation of youth that I was too young to be part of, yet I am of it, shaped by the image of that moment. I am never there, but I've never left." These essays don't simply provide critical

expositions of Rothenberg's work, they reveal the personal impact aesthetic experiences can have, resonating on deeply subjective frequencies. "The photograph calls our attention to the presentness of the past," Smith writes, "making this time and that coterminous." It might seem strange to suggest that a book swirls—books seem like such static objects after all—and yet the one you hold, *Shadowed!*, does just that. Authors layer their accounts of an exhibition upon its documentation which itself is pressed against the artists' working archive. These strata flip between a flexing, multilayered platform and a cohesive printed object.

If Bertolt Brecht is one landmark, Simone Forti is another, and she appears multiple times in the documents that *elsetime* was inspired by. This same archive, reproduced in the fourth section of *Shadowed!*, was also used by the eight artists who were invited to create new performances within *elsetime*'s physical and conceptual architecture. Texts provided by those artists are included in this book as well, offering additional moments of reflection and documentation. "I make a line with chairs," Dao Nguyen writes. "It's an assembly line, a protest line, a parade line. I march up and down the line, using the seats of chairs like stepping stones." These texts further entwine past and present as the fragments of figures like Simone Forti and Stefan Brecht are recognized, picked up, and transformed into new public actions. The last text in this book, a public transcript, offers another demonstration of movement and collusion, tracking how people gather inside an exhibition, teasing out its nuance together. One gets a feel for what the community surrounding Rothenberg looks like, and further, what the enduring impact individual aesthetic gestures can have. It's fitting, therefore, that Josh Rios, an artist, friend, and member of the audience, would ask a question that has since become central to our editorial concerns. "Of course, we are all here to discuss responses we've participated in or seen," he said, illustrating the point at which the authority of the panel started to dissolve into the interactivity of the group. "I was wondering if anyone would be willing to address the way your exhibition continues to evolve. The idea that the images here give us not only a window into another time … but that it continues to be made according to these performative responses." As Rios points out, the works continue to unfold into the future—engaging, changing, and influencing. They thus include what he described as "another potential time." So often one sees a past revolution as a finite event—the single cathartic moment preceding the end of a play or historic moment. Yet instants like objects endure, echoing and mutating through the present, imposing upon our bodies and minds; we are changed with the memory of action.

—Caroline Picard

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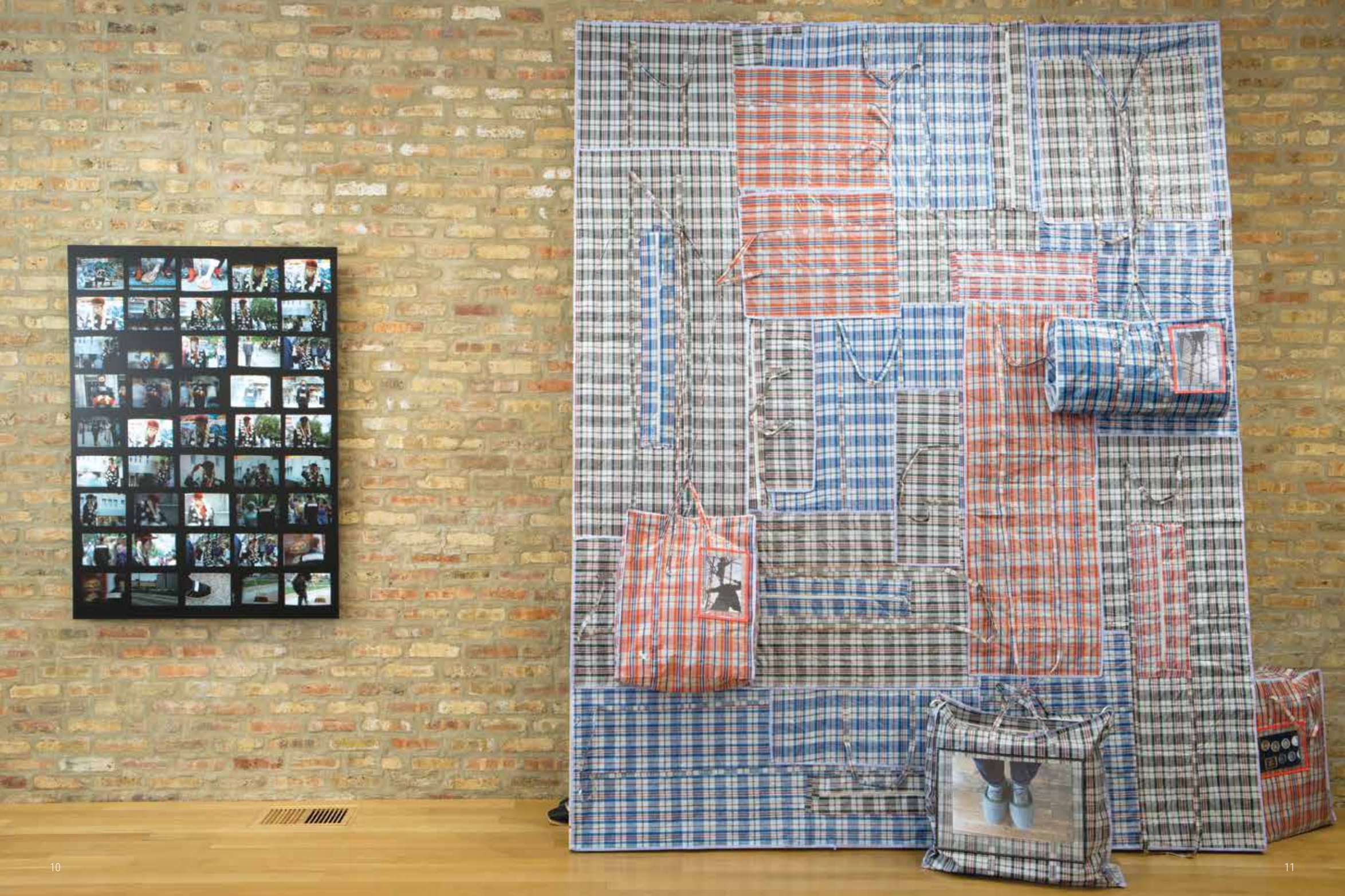
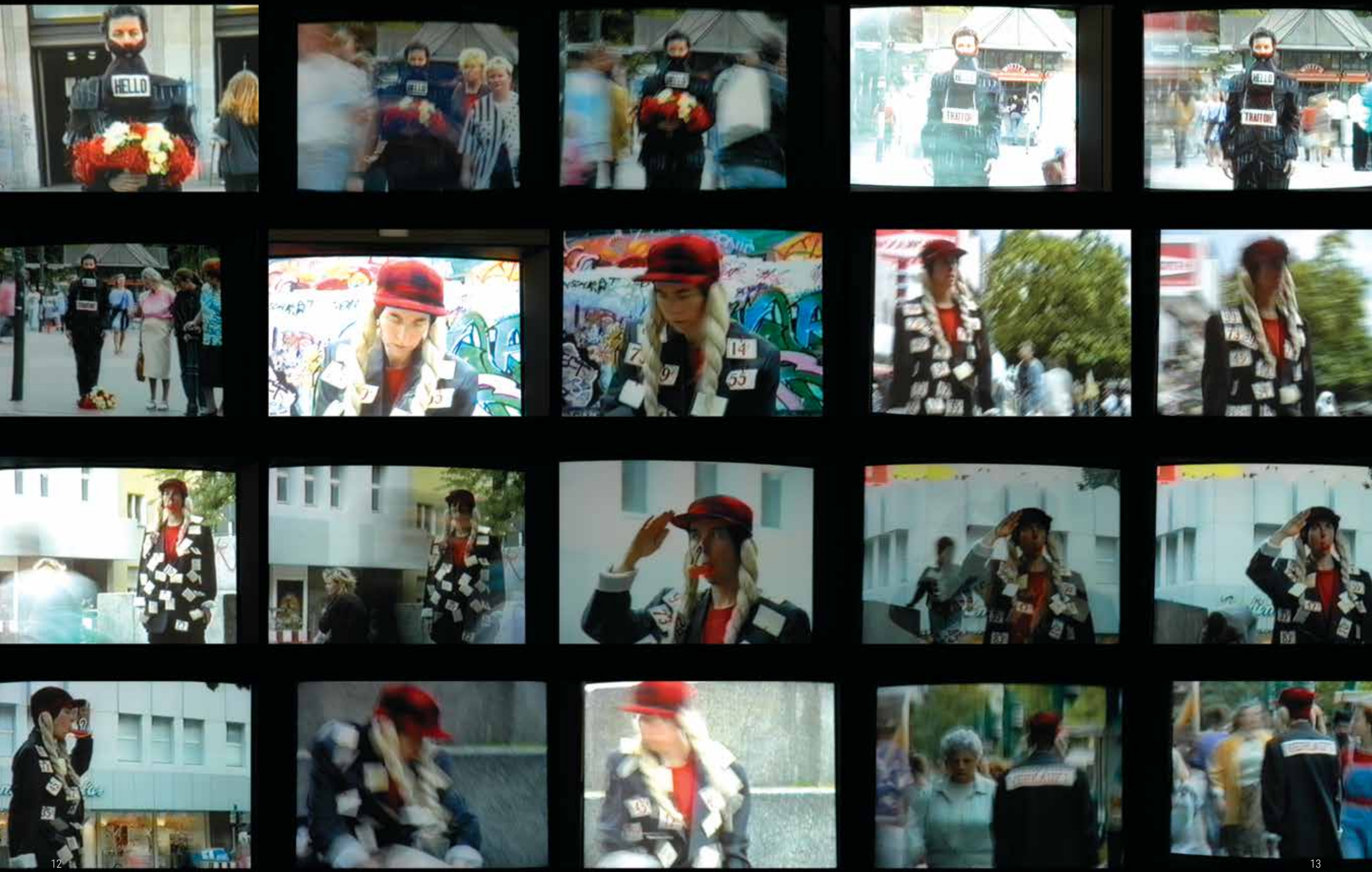
elsetime




HELLO
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HELLO
TRAITOR


HELLO
TRAITOR!


VORWÄRTS


LOCK
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FREEDOM
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Numark
LIVE
RAVI SHANKAR AT THE MONTEREY INTERNATIONAL POP FESTIVAL
Ravi Shankar
MOUNTAIN
CLIMBING!
LESLIE WEST
FELIX PAPPALARDI














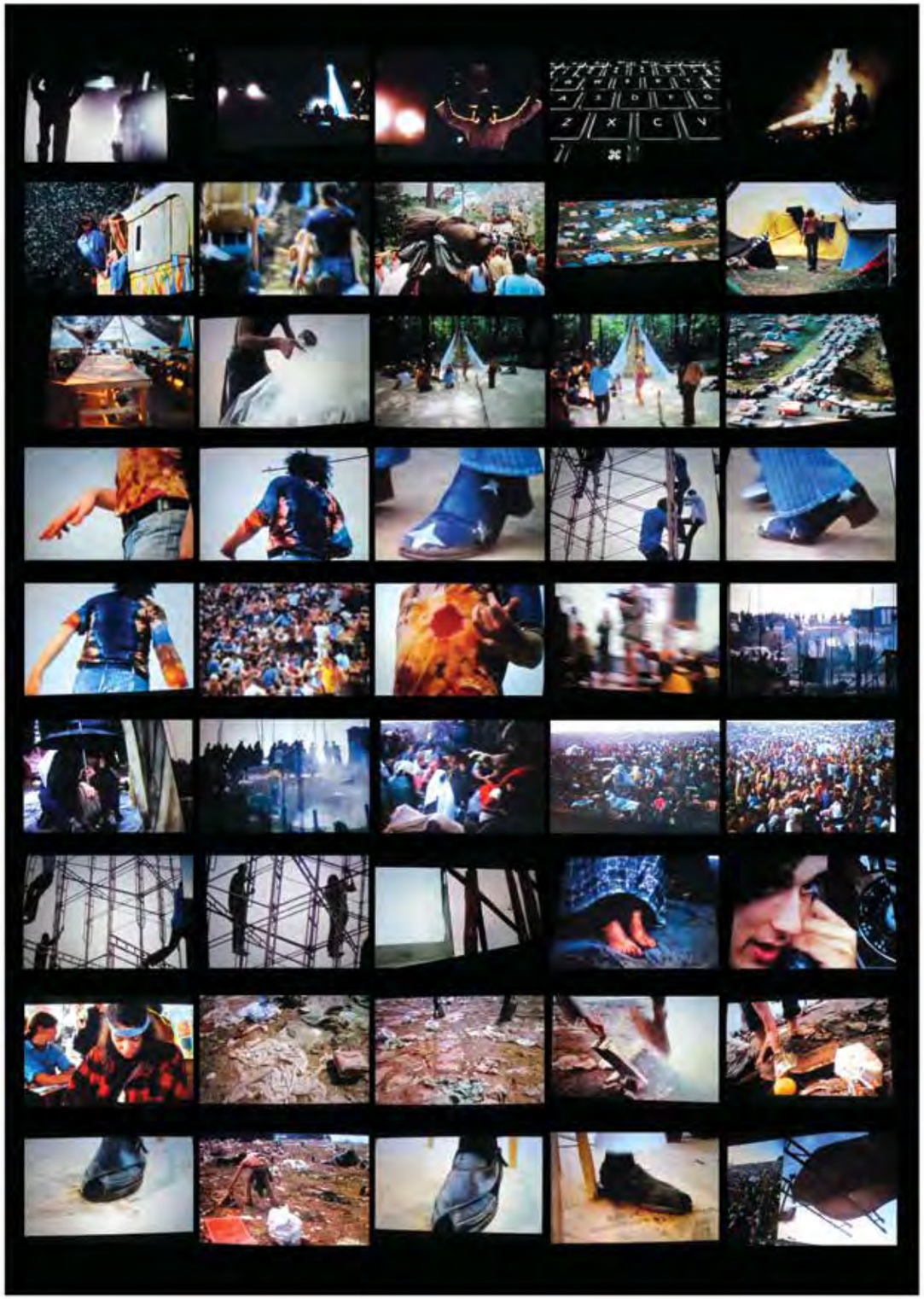










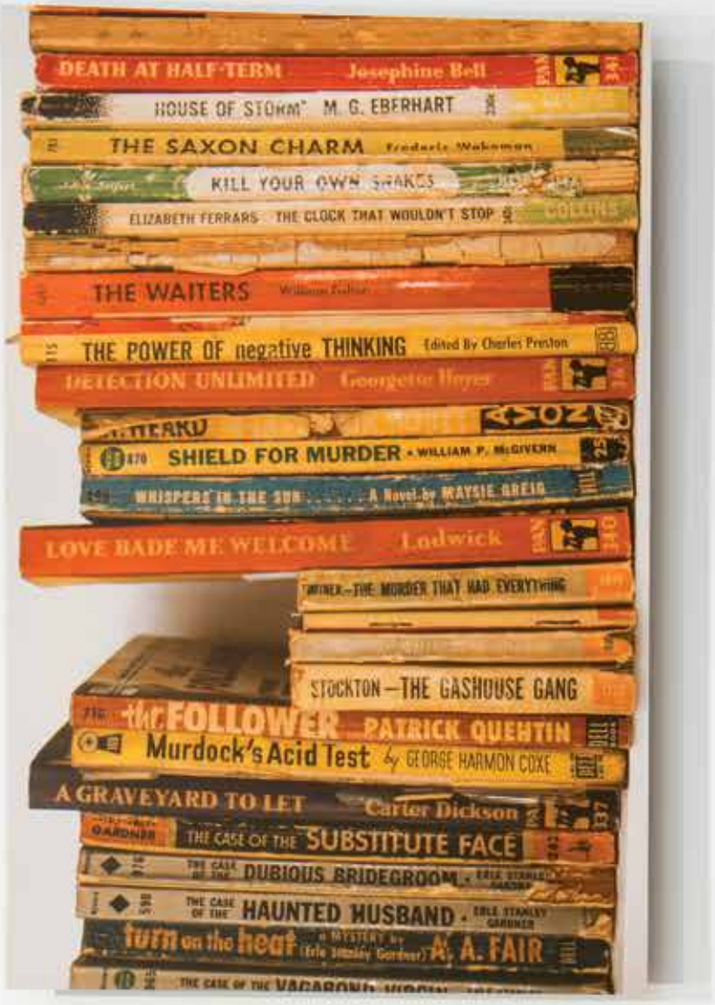
DEATH AT HALF-TERM Josephine Bell
HOUSE OF STORM M. G. EBERHART
THE SAXON CHARM
KILL YOUR OWN SNAKES
ELIZABETH FERRARS THE CLOCK THAT WOULDN'T STOP
THE WAITERS
THE POWER OF negative THINKING Edited By Charles Preston
DETECTION UNLIMITED
SHIELD FOR MURDER • WILLIAM P. McGIVERN
WHISPERS IN THE SUN . . . . . A Novel by MAYSIE GREIG
LOVE BADE ME WELCOME Ladwick
STOCKTON—THE GASHOUSE GANG
the FOLLOWER PATRICK QUENTIN
Murdock's Acid Test by GEORGE HARMON COXE
A GRAVEYARD TO LET Carter Dickson
THE CASE OF THE SUBSTITUTE FACE
THE CASE OF THE DUBIOUS BRIDEGROOM
THE CASE OF THE HAUNTED HUSBAND
turn on the heat A. A. FAIR


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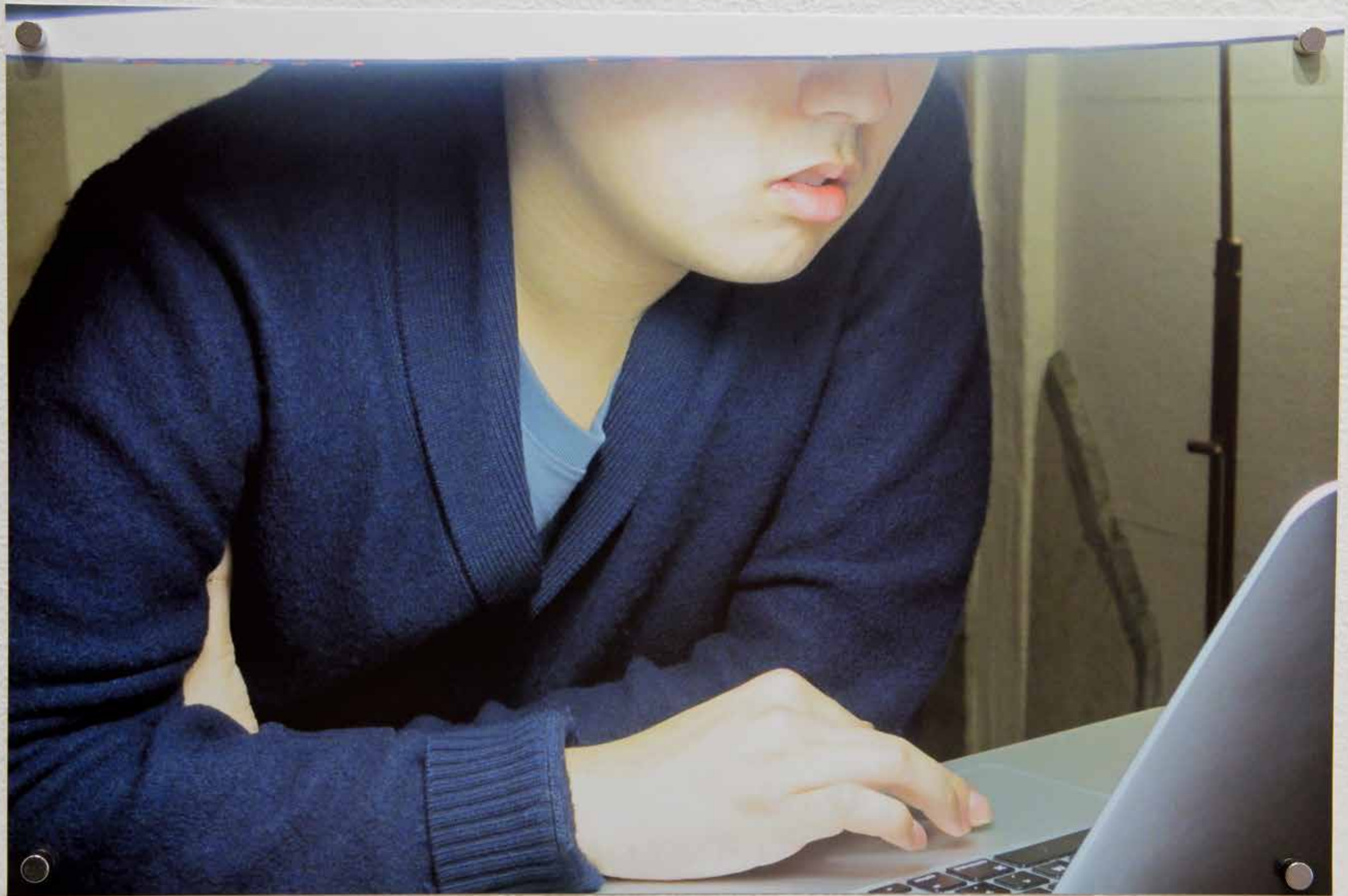
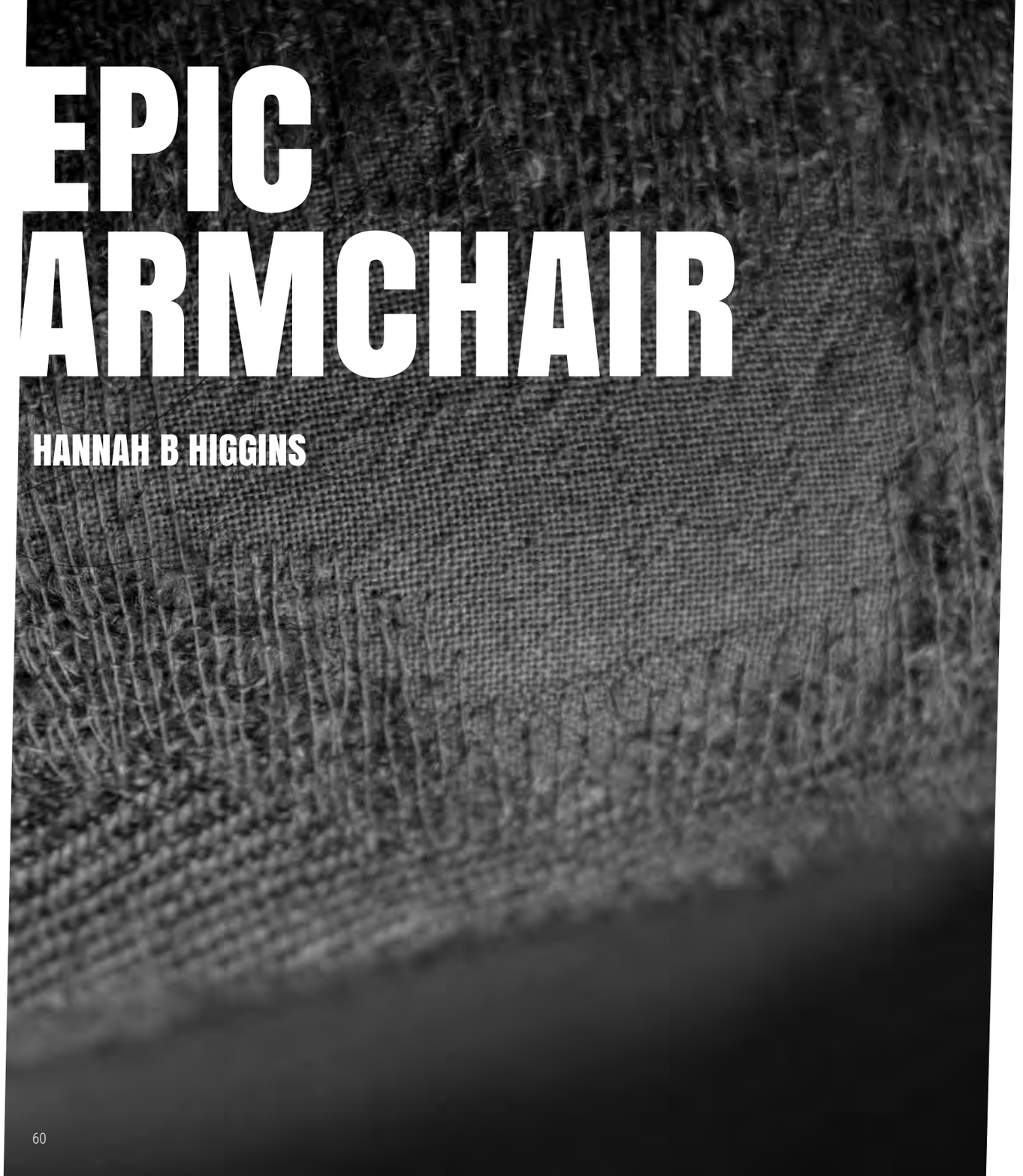
THE CASE OF THE HAUNTED HUSBAND • ERLE STANLEY GARDNER
turn on the heat a MYSTERY by (Erle Stanley Gardner) A. A. FAIR




25 Volt

ACCOUNTS



EPIC ARMCHAIR

HANNAH B HIGGINS

A photograph of an armchair hangs slightly above waist level. Actually it's the arm of the armchair, a photographic cropping of its eponymous part. The finest threads are pale blue in the precise grid of manufactured cloth. At the edges, a plump tweed of uneven ovals in brown and beige form a nubby rim of pebbles around this curved plane. The chunkier bits are the original surface, the flat blue grid slowly emerging with time. Threads. A second layer. A substrate. Between the scale of fine thread and plump tweed is a medium-gauge hard twine, whose almost regular, lengthy stiches run mostly vertically up the left side of the image. A repair. A good one—the hand imitating the machine as best as it can. None of the batting comes through.

There is a slight shimmer—an oily sheen, the ghost of a decades-long intimate encounter. The elbow at rest as the sitter's hand holds a chin, a book, a drink, a pen, a cigar (which is really just a cigar), a piece of thread picked from the chair. Then, sometimes, the arm is relaxed below the elbow at rest. Flat. Limp. There are other, slight marks. Perhaps the hand was grimy from fixing the typewriter tape, the hand of the author leaving a slight smudge as he rose from and settled into his favorite chair. The perimeter recedes in a misty soft focus. Even as it lacks the simpering sweetness of the German bourgeois home, this is an image of relaxed comfort and care.

We would expect as much from the revolutionary writer Bertolt Brecht. The chair fails to produce a homogenizing beauty even as it offers a totalizing system of fabric. Its appeal is local, or rather my interest is local. I work hard to figure out what's what in the thread, the yarn, the twine—each serving a total system. It is right that Brecht kept to the same chair. Repairing it, or having it repaired by a careful craftsman. The

photograph is an image of labor. Labor laid bare through the visible repair. Theirs and his. I feel myself yearning to touch the threads that bore witness to thousands of hours in the presence of the revolutionary author. I imagine him grappling over the better lines of his later works and reading work by younger authors. The chair demands progress. It is situated in time. It embodies a functionalist aesthetic.

Among modernists, critique long ago replaced emotional identification with characters or the carefully choreographed swoon of a good plot. Getting lost in the story means never being found in the world, never acting on the experience. In the intervening decades of modern and postmodern writing, narrative catharsis has been excised from serious writing, replaced with the liberation of radical self-alienation—the *Verfremdungseffekt* of collage, film in the tradition of Eisenstein, punk rock, language, epic theater. Estrangement engenders disgust. Disgust generates rage. Rage liberates the inner revolutionary. Despite the appearance of a broken fourth wall, the meta-character actor, the broken storyline, and the many personal transformations we might hope for in such a transformation, the right reaction is compulsory. There is one right reaction. This is the Epic's magic. It is also its tragedy.

But Brecht wasn't so pure. The bookshelf offers a smorgasbord, a groaning board, of pulp. *The Haunted Husband, The Dubious Bridegroom, The Vagabond Virgin*. Erle Stanley Gardner's titles form a character trio of modern types not so different from Duchamp's bachelors and brides or the types that populate realism of almost any stripe. Is it really a coincidence that Georgette Heyer's *Detection Unlimited* is next to Charles Preston's *Power of Negative Thinking* cartoons? Cheap humor, vaudevillian gags, and corny archetypal characters are as important for pulp as for Brecht's writing, albeit with opposing outcomes.

I feel a certain nostalgia for the clarity of my first exposure to the epic armchair. Perhaps my plastic armrest has tinged my awareness: its fake leather made to look like it's made of something but not trying hard enough, made by some rural-peasant-turned-urban-proletariat in China or Singapore. It will break and I will throw it away, creating a heady mixture of landfills here and jobs elsewhere and elsewhen. My life is full of such junk, but I'd like to avoid being a simple snob. A little kitsch is fine. The bookshelf is as much part of Brecht's life as the armchair and typewriter. To borrow from W. J. T. Mitchell's latest book, I need a tuning fork:

> We are stuck with the language of Modernity, Capital and Spectacle as the "idols of the mind" we have inherited. I propose, then, that we treat these as "eternal" idols in the Nietzschean sense, as icons that can be sounded but not smashed with the hammer—or better, the tuning fork of critical reflection … In my view we must sound the images of the spectacle, not dream of smashing them.[1]

In the chair, the books, and the floorboards, modernity, capital, and the spectacle rotate around each other in an entangling rotation. True, I feel a sense of loss as I think about the clarity of Brecht's "Epic Theater" as I first encountered it, but I feel no remorse.

To my far right is a pair of wing-tipped, white shoes. These are Ellen Rothenberg's shoes. They are by equal measure, very cool, very out of fashion on Fifth Avenue, and very in fashion in Brooklyn or parts of Berlin, depending on when she bought them and where she wears them.

Like a Jackson Pollock painting that moved from floor to wall, the image of the floor of Brecht's office has been moved to the wall and hung. But the rectangle is cut down into unevenly sized panes in a fractured window, a spectral image of the past. Instead of skeins of paint, I see the hand-hewn pine planks and hammer-formed iron nails of Brecht's postwar office at Chausseestrasse 125 in Berlin-Mitte—the middle of town in what was once East Berlin. Rothenberg has rotated the floor in each image. Brecht once wrote, "Space needs to be brought to life in the vertical plane."[2] He was writing about stage sets, which may be what we are looking at.

Two shoes, one shoe, two again, none.

The floorboards are vertical on the right, horizontal on the left, and depicted at different distances. These make the planks, already irregular since they predate industrial manufacture, wider and thinner or thinner and wider. It depends on where you start the rotation. She has understood the problem of perspective

1 W. J. T. Mitchell, *Image Science: Iconology, Visual Culture, and Media Aesthetics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 213.

2 Bertolt Brecht, undated and unpublished note, *Brecht on Theater: The Development of an Aesthetic*, ed. John Willet (New York: Hill and Wang, 1957), 233.

and proximity over time. Elsewhen. Elsewhere. They pose a challenge to my first, nostalgic impulse.

One shoe, two again, none, two shoes.

We know that Brecht struggled with his politics in later years. Or seemed to. He refused to help Carola Neher escape the Gulag, which is deeply ironic since he wrote

the role of Polly Peachum in *The Threepenny Opera* for her and she was the one character whose inner nature changes in the play. The day before he returned to Europe on October 31, 1947, and moved into this apartment, he gave an interview to the House Un-American Activities Committee and denied he had been a Marxist.

Two again, none, two shoes, one.

He was, after all, a writer and not a soldier or a character in one of his own plays, so he may be forgiven. In any case, the episode is largely forgotten, an eclipsed hole in the fabric of history that gives us an eternal and ideal Brecht. Returning home to a newly divided Berlin, the elder Brecht sided with the DDR, winning the Stalin Peace Prize in 1954. Perhaps he was being rewarded for supporting the state against the East German Uprising in 1953.

None, two, one, two.

By the time he died in 1956, his perspective had shifted again, or his true feeling permitted a public unveiling. “The Lament” appeared a few years after his death in the West German paper *Die Welt* in 1959:

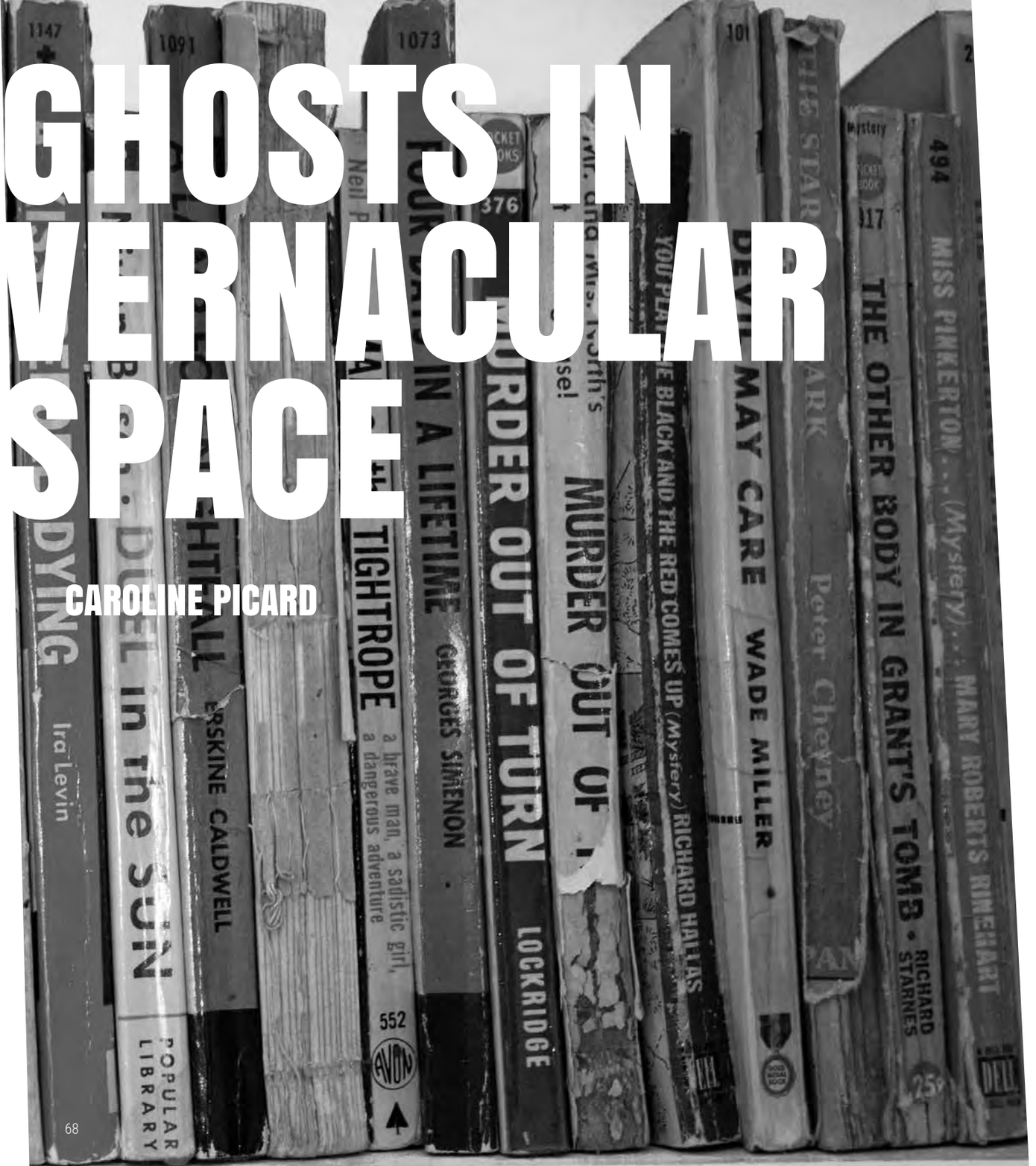
> Would it not be easier
> In that case for the government
> To dissolve the people
> And elect another?[3]

“To dissolve the people / And elect another?” Of course there is no foot, no feet—just the floorboards. Perhaps the writer, the artist, or this writer has taken a book from the end of the shelf we cannot see and settled down into the epic armchair for a good long read. To reimagine the epic of our time. To write it anew. To tune it to our contemporary circumstances. To establish itself among new media technologies. To assess and shape new sensory habits, new dances, newly joyful forms of embodied resistance to the vise-grip of our devices and vices. To prompt newly vivid imaginations. To generate newly open socialities. To care. To love. One. Two.

3 *Bertolt Brecht: Poems 1913–1956*, eds. John Willett and Ralph Manheim (London: Methuen, 1998), 440.

GHOSTS IN VERNACULAR SPACE

CAROLINE PICARD



> What goes around may come around, but it never ends up in exactly the same place, you ever notice? Like a record on a turntable, all it takes is one groove's difference and the universe can be on into a whole 'nother song.
> —Thomas Pynchon, *Inherent Vice*

1.

Some essays in this book begin with the aerial photograph of Ellen Rothenberg's wingtips walking around the floor of Bertolt Brecht's studio; I start at another point, with *Shadowed!* (2015): an adjacent image of twenty-six of Brecht's pulp novels, standing upright on one tight shelf, each well worn, as though having been read multiple times. Still, I mention Rothenberg's shoes in the hope that you might hear the sound of her stride creaking along the floor of this essay—perhaps throughout the entire book—while you and I stand still, studying the shelf in question. The paperbacks bear compelling and slightly ridiculous titles—*The Haunted Husband, A Graveyard to Let, The Dubious Bridegroom*. Unable to extract a book from the photo and flip through its pages, one wonders about the story each contains: Who is killed? And by what criminals? Without providing tangible details, the photograph of these books conjures bodies and their nefarious causes, generating the specter of murder, espionage, immorality, and ruptures in our social contract. Suddenly, the intersecting elements of Rothenberg's exhibition have great stakes even if we cannot access their full, forensic detail. This photograph, *Shadowed!*—a namesake of the book you now hold in your hands—encourages visitors to interrogate the

whole *elsetime* installation, exploring a complex web of motives, politics, and material histories that echo through our surrounding landscape.

The photograph of Brecht's bookshelf is relatively quiet in comparison to other objects in the show. *elsetime* includes fifteen works that draw protest, performance, documentation, migration, and the various materials that support their conveyance into one orbit. Pulled together, they play through the gallery like motifs in a multitemporal suite, undermining the stability of linear, chronological experience. Even from our steadfast position in front of the bookshelf, characters within Rothenberg's historic tableau become suspect: Brecht, for example, working in an East German studio after the war, a flagship member of the Communist Party, at once recognized for his individual brilliance and the complex relationships he had with women.[1] Or the hippies, valiantly protesting consumerism and war, suspicious of the status quo, endearingly strident and sloppy by turns—how many detective genre stories, from those written by Raymond Carver or Thomas Pynchon to *Dragnet*, reference their New Age community in order to evoke the darkness of psychological confusion? Keeping within the noir genre, the specter of World War II emerges in *elsetime* as well—perhaps as everyone's ultimate cause for terror, an original violence whose perversities continue to emanate through our cultural imagination, influencing high and low alike, from *Indiana Jones* to *2666*, as well as bygone educational systems like Black Mountain College or the more sinister counterintelligence strategies that sprung up in earnest after the war's end. Rothenberg juxtaposes those echoes alongside more contemporary upheavals of migrant populations forced to leave their countries of origin and face another refusing refuge. The way these themes commiserate sets a perfect stage: the stuff of John Le Carré or Jakob Arjouni's contemporary Turkish immigrant detective, Kayankaya. This is our world. Our present is an elsetime.

And yet the cultural and historical motifs these objects present don't quite cohere, imposing upon the viewer a sense of impotence and urgency. Despite lacking the proper tools, we nevertheless desire to slow down the spin of these factors as they ricochet against one another with often disastrous consequences; if only we could stop time—just for a moment!— to dig up, separate, define, and regulate. After all, who can tell what is authentic these days? How do you distinguish what you have seen before from what is new, whether we are paranoid or astute, and, most importantly, what to do about it all? What is next? Perhaps you can feel the space between us growing tense. Because you see how, as the reader and the writer, we should be fixed points in this sequence. The text streams between us in such a sensible fashion, it's no wonder we feel this way: calm, collected, and in control, preferring to occupy the presumption of stability lest we grow aware of our own velocity, spinning on a groove.

1 Monika Krause, "Practicing Authorship: The Case of Brecht's Plays," in *Practicing Culture*, eds. Craig Calhoun and Richard Sennett (Oxford: Routledge, 2007), 2.

2.

> In the mid-60s a protest movement began on American campuses. One of the students' main targets was corporate America. They accused the corporations of brainwashing the American public. Consumerism was not just a way of making money. It had become the means of keeping the masses docile while allowing the government to pursue a violent and illegal war in Vietnam.[2]

Positioned on a bench in front of the gallery door is a record player. Records made by almost every band that played at Woodstock sit in a pile, inviting visitors to select and play what they wish. With this interactive invitation, Rothenberg signals the ways in which interpretations of the past encroach upon the present. Most of these songs are instantly recognizable, and yet who remembers the first time you heard them? Joan Baez, Carlos Santana, the Incredible String Band, the Grateful Dead—music so fully entrenched in cultural consciousness that its motives and function, deflecting through time and use, are unclear. Even the technology is suspect—the record player itself is not an original object, but rather something portable, purchased recently at Urban Outfitters for minimal expense.

Woodstock Contact Sheet (2015) hangs just behind the record player. The 40¼" x 56" photo includes forty-five still frames from Michael Wadleigh's 1970 *Woodstock* documentary: screen captures from performances, ad-hoc living quarters used by festival attendees, stagehands hanging off the scaffolds they built, crowds, bell-bottoms, tie-dye, more shoes of the sixties era, a pair of dirty bare

2 Adam Curtis, *The Century of the Self*, (2002; BBC) YouTube video posted by David Lessig, July 9, 2015. 2:07:45. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eJ3RzGoQC4s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feet, a woman—perhaps the owner of said feet—speaking into the mouthpiece of a rotary telephone. This highly curated collection of images reads like an archive of still shots. But their temporal location is disrupted with one frame of the contact sheet: an image of a contemporary laptop keyboard with its delineated alphabet glowing in the dark. It effectively breaks any reverie of the past. Like a clue, the image demands that we negotiate how the entire contact sheet is choreographed and mediated. We are thrown into Rothenberg's point of view; we see her perspective, like someone looking for something—the keyboard thus torques any autonostalgic reaction that flanking frames in the photo induce, calling attention to the various translations the film underwent before appearing in this context. From 35 mm film to video to streaming online, where it was subsequently edited on the artist's laptop and restored to a new context: a now-static, digital image hanging like a portrait on the gallery wall. Parallel, perhaps, to when a documentary filmmaker includes herself in an interview, Rothenberg includes the technology she used to produce the contact sheet.

And the keyboard is so iconic, as immediate and visceral as a Coke can. Crisp illuminated letters recede into a frame of perspectival darkness. The typeface, their pale glow, the shape and colors of the keys—this computer is so ubiquitous as to feel banal—it *is* banal, and yet its design titillates nevertheless, suggesting an expansive universe organized around language, technology, and advancement. It may as well be an advertisement for Apple. But situated within a sea of nostalgic and similarly iconic youth imagery, Apple and Flower Power collide, skipping to another groove, off-message. Apple, the corporation, may be the very thing those youths were doggedly opposed to, yet the espoused principles of each urge individuals to look inward, connect, innovate, create, enhance, and transform—impulses that have certainly played out in our world as a vision of Western progress.

Adam Curtis's documentary *The Century the of Self* (2002) shows a reciprocal and coevolutionary relationship between the fields of psychoanalysis and advertising. His chapter on sixties youth culture highlights the way this new generation violently rejected consumerist culture. The new student left set out to attack this system of control. It was summed up in the slogan: "There is a policeman inside all of our heads. He must be destroyed."[3] And when the state proved too strong against more militant student outbursts, that same generation turned inward. "If it is impossible to

get the policeman out of one's head by overthrowing the state, instead one should find a way of getting inside one's own mind and removing the controls placed there by the state and corporations. Out of this would come a new self and therefore a new society."[4] In this light, the Internet itself seems like the strange realization of the collective unconscious, an alternative and very nearly telepathic space; if so, this single web-mind seems to suffer the same inner policeman hippies struggled to escape.

Rothenberg's contact sheet comes to an end with another series of images that further break any reverie of sixties youth culture. Each of the remaining stills depicts the trash that Woodstock left in its wake. The images of this section of the nonverbal storyboard look more like the aftermath of some environmental catastrophe than a music festival dedicated to countercultural utopias. As such, Rothenberg's resulting portrait focuses not only on the political fervor of the era but also the mess of it.

3 Curtis, *The Century of the Self*, 2:08:35–2:09:40.

4 Curtis, *The Century of the Self*, 2:11:34–2:11:41.

3.

Twinned by virtue of its format, a second photo matches *Woodstock Contact Sheet*. *Hello Traitor! Contact Sheet* (2015) hangs halfway down an opposing wall of the gallery. It includes forty-five stills from a performance Rothenberg presented in 1993. The original performance took place in three Berlin locations, including a pedestrian shopping mall in Charlottenburg; Wittenbergplatz, the commercial center of the former West Berlin; and Marzahn, an East Berlin neighborhood that was a center of neo-Nazi activity in the early nineties. Although specific details of the original performance are not readily accessible in *elsetime*, one feels the charge of German history and Rothenberg's ability to disturb it via public, performative action. Here, another theme of the show emerges: how the individual intrudes upon the architecture of the past and, by way of small gestures, disrupts its trajectory. *Hello Traitor!* features the artist making herself bread shoes in front of a thoroughly graffitied backdrop. The crowd in these frames is attentive and sometimes laughing. Rothenberg wears a blazer adorned with small price tags, an elaborate wig of thick cartoon-yellow braids, and a hunting cap. In some frames, she pushes a broom down a road. What does it mean that *Hello Traitor!* corresponds to a collection of frames taken from a Woodstock documentary? In both instances, Rothenberg offers a highly mediated experience of footage that originally attempted to document an artistic and political event. In *Hello Traitor!*, however, that event is both personal to the artist (as something that occurred in her life) and intrinsic to her work (as an original photographic object based on another original work that the artist produced).

The same shoes Rothenberg wears in her 1993 performance appear in the exhibition like "real" evidence tucked behind a sculptural lean-to and waiting to be discovered. As with the Woodstock records, these simple wooden shoes enter three-dimensional space. They seem more accessible than the books on Brecht's bookshelf. Yet any relief of finding something tangible, an object forthcoming in space, is immediately troubled by uncertainty, for the shoes remain difficult to place. They look like they could be one hundred years old or made last year. While they remain common in Germany today, they are almost exactly like shoes issued to prisoners in Nazi concentration camps. In *elsetime,* small engraved brackets sit on the top of each: *Vorwärts*, says the right shoe. *Rückwärts*, says the left. Backwards and forwards. One step forward, two steps back, troubling a clear sense of progress. One feels the aura of the shoes' original use, but they appear more domestic somehow, left behind as though the artist might suddenly slip them on before running across

the street to get milk. Because these shoes glitch between multiple temporal registers, one feels how residual energies inform the present materials we share. The way these objects smuggle their own histories into public space is uncanny.

In murder mystery novels, there is a point at which the detective discovers a larger, systemic problem. As such it isn't simply a culprit we need, but rather an understanding of the mechanistic networks we inhabit. We can at least identify the way histories layer and obscure one another with such promiscuity as to blow out into an indecipherable mess. The detective doesn't fix the whole system, she only negotiates some part of it in order to achieve a modest and proportional justice.

Rothenberg's clogs sit under *Backwards/Forwards Lean-to* (2015), the largest single artwork in the entire exhibit; the object leans against the wall at an angle, disrupting any sense of vertical stability. Surveying the piece before the opening, Rothenberg remarked, "This is the closest I'll ever come to making a painting." It's true, there is an undeniably formal, and perhaps even modernist, quality to the work: an 8' x 12' wooden frame covered with a flat hide of mass-produced blue and red plaid plastic tote bags. Additional bags cluster around the surface: one hangs off the side with a clear plastic sleeve in which another Woodstock scaffolding photograph appears. Additional bags, full of who knows what, rest around the lean-to's base. Another of these is pinned with a photograph of Brecht's typewriter.

You've seen these bags—like music from the sixties, they are ubiquitous. Durable, but temporary and common among migrants. In 2014, the pattern cropped up on high-fashion runways where it was dubbed "Chinatown chic." The pattern has a remarkable history of its own that, while not immediately accessible, extends beyond (or underneath) a momentary trend:

> Manufactured in China and sold for as little as a dollar each, their cheap price tag and their high durability make them popular carryalls for poor migrants around the world. In China, they're colloquially referred to as "mingong" bags, named after the migrant workers who tote the shiny, bright carryalls on their long journeys between home and work. In Germany, they're called "Türkenkoffer" or Turkish suitcases, while in Trinidad they're known as "Guyanese Samsonite." In Nigeria, Ghana, and across West Africa, the same bags are called "Ghana Must Go bags," a moniker rooted in the mid 1980s when the 1983 Expulsion Order in Nigeria gave Ghanaian immigrants fourteen days to flee with whatever belongings they could carry. In England, they're simply "Bangladeshi bags" or "refugee bags," and in South Africa, where they're most strongly associated with internal migrants, the bags are known as either "Unomgcana" (literally, the one with lines) in Xhosa or "China bag" in English.[5]

Despite the pattern's current and identifiable association with displaced populations seeking refuge, this signature plaid has a centuries-long life of its own, originating from "the fashionable culture of Indonesian public life where it has been produced, consumed, traded, and sold for centuries."[6] The plaid was so admired as to be adopted and propagated by British colonialists to such an extent that plaids were thereafter conflated with the British Empire.[7] In *elsetime*, the pattern carries that original history embedded within it, incorporating its associations and hierarchies but also a strange and peculiar identity—the plaid itself—a pattern that remains constant in each and every articulation, even if we cannot fully exhaust and possess its whatness.

A second lean-to, *Community* (2015), is slightly smaller and clad with cardboard instead of plastic fabric. Out of everything in the show, *Community* reads the most like a wall of temporary housing, in part due to the spray-mounted images of black plastic IKEA chairs that pepper the surface like wheat-pasted advertisements or punk interventions on a boarded-up brownstone. The chairs depicted are the standard seats used at Sector 2337's gallery events. They were the cheap and simple option, but, likely because of their cheapness, do not stack easily—a design flaw the Sector staff negotiates constantly. They have developed a stagger-stack strategy that works well enough, except that it is not intuitive to any uninitiated volunteers who offer to help stack chairs at the end of an evening. In learning the strategy, the uninitiated become working members of the art space. The chairs, in their cumbersome piles, are vernacular to Sector's mechanics, just as the wooden clogs are vernacular to German life, and the bags an international signifier of transition.

5 Minh-Ha T. Pham, "Fashion's Cultural-Appropriation Debate: Pointless," *The Atlantic*, May 15, 2014, http://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2014/05/cultural-appropriation-in-fashion-stop-talking-about-it/370826/.

6 Ibid.

7 "The plaid pattern is thought to originate in the Taklamakan area in Xinjiang Uyghur in China perhaps between 100–700 BC and certainly by the 3rd century." Pham, "Fashion's Cultural-Appropriation Debate."

At some point, I went on a walk with a friend who said Derrida—or maybe it wasn't Derrida but some other French philosopher—loved murder mysteries because one always has to deal with the body, and in the material of the body one encounters a strange and gruesome portrait of consequence. The body is a metaphysical problem representing absence in material form. The person you knew—your mother, friend, lover, or neighbor—is gone, but their body remains. In those remains one brushes up against what is most disturbing and profound about life: something appears to have vanished, but what? And where? *The Haunted Husband, The Graveyard Lot*, and *The Dubious Bridegroom* call a body to mind, heinous perhaps precisely because it is generic. The clogs recall the atrocities of war even if they have remained in circulation for practical reasons. The plaid contains all the difficulty of colonial appropriation, dissemination, artistic production, while remaining decidedly formal—like an aesthetic gesture that has accumulated more and more barnacles over the course of its circulation, to such an extent that while some original plaid-thing endures, permeating each manifestation, it can never be apprehended objectively, instead appearing bound to sites, times, and politics. And the music—the sixties so easily ring like a high point in American history; its melodies continue to ricochet through the world, drawn into the orbit of mainstream consumerist culture. Think of Jack Kerouac wearing khakis in a 1990s advertisement for the Gap. But there is no body to look at. Rather only absence—the shoes without the feet. The sound of the music without the bodies that made it. In reaching for a familiar and concrete object, our hand is unable to fully grasp the thing we so desire: a grounded, comprehensive connection—certainty. But objects don't give over so easily; they withhold something of themselves. Overlooked for their presumed domestication, they nevertheless conceal a multitude of histories, inherited logics, and designs that manipulate and inspire, appearing in dislocated instants like the flashing bursts from a strobe light.

We are overwhelmed with images, recordings, and reproductions, each iconic in their own way, drawing attention to their mass proliferation—what does it even mean to say you dislike the Beatles? Rather we see these threads woven in one web, implicating us. You and me. Everything is reciprocally bound.

Numark
PT-01 USB
PORTABLE TURNTABLE
POWER
RPM
PITCH
TONE
33 45 78
WP-1442

4.

In a side corridor behind the gallery, black-and-white copies from the artist's archive hang in clear plastic job files mounted to the wall. These include scanned pages from books by Simone Forti, Stefan Brecht, Angela Davis, Allen Ginsberg, and others, conjuring new characters into *elsetime*'s pantheon. Stefan Brecht was a performance artist, a revolutionary, and a poet. Unlike his parents, he preferred to stay in the US after World War II, but remained conscious of his father's legacy, pursuing a parallel interest in nonliterary theater.

This archive is presented in such a way as to remind viewers of the scanner bed—another self-conscious technology translating book objects into flat paper surfaces—while also becoming resources for artists to make new performances. For the duration of *elsetime,* the Green Lantern Press produced a weekly performance series, *Not to be Taken*, its title borrowed from another of Brecht's pulp novels. Through those interventions, younger living artists impose their own bodies upon the exhibition, teasing out certain themes endemic to it. As a result, *elsetime* becomes a dominant and focused architecture that fosters the independent actions of other artists. From *Woodstock*, *elsetime*; from *elsetime, Not to be Taken.*

Artist, curator, and educator Alexandria Eregbu used a scan from Rothenberg's archive to restage Simone Forti's *Huddle*. Tim Kinsella, a musician and writer, built a fort out of IKEA chairs, covered it in dashikis, and read an autobiographical story about how his ex-wife gave her wardrobe to his later girlfriend. Performance artist Dao Nguyen produced a series of actions with gallery chairs using the same five minutes of Janis Joplin's "Me and Bobby McGee"; each time the song began again, Nguyen arranged the chairs in a new configuration. It was like watching someone mull over a problem the song inspired. Instead of numeric values on a page, Nguyen used chairs as though the chairs let her access something Joplin, or the time of Joplin, had left unresolved. Mark Booth and Becky Grajeda installed multiple cassette tape players around the gallery. Booth took off his shoes; Grajeda described Rothenberg's photographs as she looked at them, producing a live translation. They rehearsed a Joni Mitchell song backwards and finally turned on the cassette tapes, turning on a sculpture of sound that the audience inhabited. In the final event in the series, Anne Elizabeth Moore and Terri Kapsalis collaborated with a visiting friend, Tim Schwartz, who read a noir story out loud. Moore and Kapsalis listened to music on headphones, singing loudly without accompaniment. "Take another little piece of my heart now, baby." While wildly different in aesthetic and approach, all of these performances articulated an absence: a feeling that something was missing, even if we were all reaching for it.

In the spring of 2016, I had the opportunity to see the Block Museum's Charlotte Moorman retrospective, *Feast of Astonishments: Charlotte Moorman and the Avant-Garde 1960s–1980s*. While the exhibition included original works by Moorman, it seemed most powerful in its ability to capture context—specifically the ways in which Moorman organized and intersected with other artists working at that time including Yoko Ono, John Cage, Alison Knowles, Dick Higgins, (a very young) Ellen Rothenberg, as well as collaborators like Nam June Paik and Joseph Beuys. Moorman's tenure at the helm of New York avant-garde festivals dovetails with Rothenberg's own artistic coming of age in Boston. From what I can tell, that generation of artists saved everything: posters, cans, paintings, shopping lists, old props, yo-yos, sculptures, hasty flyers, bars of soap, photographs, etc. Their archive is thus indiscriminately comprised by the chance encounters of mundane objects and more precious, or handmade, art works.

Rothenberg's archive of fragmented photocopies conveys a different feel of the past. It admits that we cannot know the whole story—the scanned copies are selected in much the same way as the full-color images in her contact sheets. Similarly, the archive acknowledges how we cannot escape the awareness of the computer screen, the glass box of the copy machine, the frame bounding the image, the plastic screen of the job sleeve, the sound of technology.

That same spring, I sat next to Rothenberg at Northwestern University. We went to see Simone Forti talk, after which students performed *Huddle* before a live audience. After seeing Eregbu's performance of the same piece, I was curious to see what another variation would look like. In the moment, I was struck by the constantly refracting energy of the past, the way its lives and conversations bend through us, even as we are trained on the future. There is something lean about Forti's presentation of where she has been. In a short film, she was dressed in loose clothes and utilitarian ankle boots, crawling across the ice by Lake Michigan. I thought about the body as an archive—her body specifically—how she shook a little with age when still, but when in motion resumed the grace of one who has practiced a long life of embodiment.

I visited Rothenberg's studio before installing the exhibition. She showed me a scale model of the *elsetime* gallery with her proposed installation. It was the first time that I'd seen *elsetime* works in progress; up until that point my sense of the final show came primarily through conversation, select test photographs, and material swatches. It was strange to encounter the show first at such a small scale. *Backwards/Forwards Lean-to* was as big as my thumb. There was a push-and-pull feeling: on the one hand the disembodied experience of looking, like a giant, into a space that I inhabit daily. How small my concerns looked from that vantage. My sense of reality flexed. These multitextural materials present images of poorly stacked chairs, different kinds of shoes, hippies, computer keyboards, protests, scaffolds, pulp novels—all represented within shifting planes, geographies, and times. Material and temporal textures are as significant as the visual elements they comprise. *elsetime* is not a retrospective, but it looks back by degrees, capturing the artist's gaze as she takes stock of past influences, places visited, and times missed as projections that both encumber and fuel the present. An entire ecology for action and individuation has sprung up around its ambiguous constraints. Generations of the plaid pattern echoing in history; Kinsella, the ex-husband, seeing his girlfriend in a dress his wife used to wear; Janis Joplin on repeat; the ghost of Brecht stuck in his armchair reading the same books while his son meticulously documents New York avant-garde theater. 2015 Rothenberg working on *elsetime* looking at Rothenberg the artist in 1993: together they negotiate the war, responding to the structures that history supplies while building more structures that in turn construct new conflicts. We hear the creaking sound of her feet on the floor and wonder about all of the bodies inside of impenetrable, once-popular books.

I have heard that some cultures conceive of the future as something going on behind you, at your back, because one can never see it. In fact, what is in front of one's nose is what has already transpired.


COLUMBIA
JANIS JOPLIN
I GOT DEM OL'
KOZMIC BLUES
AGAIN MAMA!
KCS 9913
SIDE 2
XSM 150683
1. TO LOVE SOMEBODY -B. Gibb - R. Gibb-
2. KOZMIC BLUES -J. Joplin - G. Mekler-
3. LITTLE GIRL BLUE -L. Hart - R. Rodgers-
4. WORK ME, LORD -N. Gravenites-
"360 SOUND" STEREO
"COLUMBIA"

UNLIVED HISTORIES AND LIFE LONGINGS

JEFFREY SKOLLER

MR. WEINGLASS: Will you please identify yourself for the record?[1]

THE WITNESS: My name is Abbie. I am an orphan of America.

MR. WEINGLASS: Where do you reside?

THE WITNESS: I live in Woodstock Nation.

MR. WEINGLASS: Will you tell the Court and jury where it is?

THE WITNESS: Yes. It is a nation of alienated young people. We carry it around with us as a state of mind in the same way as the Sioux Indians carried the Sioux Nation around with them. It is a nation dedicated to cooperation versus competition, to the idea that people should have better means of exchange than property or money, that there should be some other basis for human interaction. It is a nation dedicated to—

THE COURT: Just where it is, that is all.

THE WITNESS: It is in my mind and in the minds of my brothers and sisters. It does not consist of property or material but, rather, of ideas and certain values. We believe in a society—

THE COURT: No, we want the place of residence, if he has one, place of doing business, if you have a business. Nothing about philosophy or India, sir. Just where you live, if you have a place to live. Now you said Woodstock. In what state is Woodstock?

THE WITNESS: It is in the state of mind, in the mind of myself and my brothers and sisters. It is a conspiracy. Presently, the nation is held captive in the penitentiaries of the institutions of a decaying system.

MR. WEINGLASS: Can you tell the Court and jury your present age?

THE WITNESS: My age is 33. I am a child of the ’60s.

1 Testimony of Abbie Hoffman, “Chicago 8” Conspiracy Trial, December 1969.

It was the drums that changed everything for me. Too young to have been there. But at age twelve, I became a child of the sixties in a movie theater watching the film *Woodstock* (Michael Wadleigh, 1970). The sequence of the performance by the band Santana is what did it. It begins with a close-up of one pair of hands clapping then pans to a sea of 400,000 hands clapping together. The phalanx of drummers starts—congas, timbales, maracas, trap drums. The world opens up beyond the 4/4 time of rock and roll. Suddenly there are full-color polyrhythms that are multiracial: white, black, and Latino players, and Carlos Santana at the center with his screaming guitar. His earnestness and intensity, his grimacing passion, overwhelms my twelve-year-old self sitting in the theater, watching the screen. At once in it and far, far away; the scene hits me hard. Everyone moving together: me in my seat, they on the screen, the film through the projector. Onscreen, the endless crowd filled with long-haired young women gyrating wildly to the music as naked young men pound on soda cans to the beat of the young musicians, themselves locked into the groove of their own music. I watch a new nation of youth that I am too young to be part of, yet I am of it, shaped by the image of that moment. I am never there, but I've never left.

The entire film was an awakening to the expressiveness of cinema as a medium through which to experience the world. The freedom of the handheld camera, bobbing and weaving around the musicians in an attempt to make an image as dynamic as the music, rather than simply documenting the performance. Swish pans, oblique angles, abstract color and movement as the image loses focus. Montage as movement. The filmmakers fragment the image by breaking the single screen into multiple and overlapping images—at times the image is square and at other times rectangular as they move in and out of each other sometimes overlapping to create a composite image. Like the drum's polyrhythms, the screen becomes a diptych, then triptych. The images cut to the beat of the music first, then as counterpoint to the beat—*visual music* as filmmaker Oskar Fischinger called it in the 1920s when filmmakers were looking for film language in music rather than in theater.[2] The image is fragmented as the screen splits into multiple screens, each containing a different angle or shot. There are screens inside of screens, often creating abstract superimpositions of several images into each other—all combining to create a kaleidoscopic sense of the event. The image itself becomes a montage of surface, pattern and repetition, velocity; it is a photographic index of collective energy as much as a document of the historic event. I was drawn to the film—with its

2 For a helpful introduction into the history and concepts of visual music see Aimee Mollaghan, *The Visual Music Film* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

rhythm, color, movement, and sound—as if I were heeding a call I had known forever. I would discover only later that this film contained elements of everything that I would soon find in its purest form in the cinema of the avant-garde where I have since spent most of my creative life.

I am startled to find this long-ago cinematic experience rise to the surface of my mind as I encounter Ellen Rothenberg's 2015 site-specific installation, *elsetime*, at Sector 2337 in Chicago. On one wall by the front door, I come upon a series of still film frames that I instantly recognize from *Woodstock*. It's not an image of Santana in this case but rather the iconic tie-dyed shirt Joe Cocker wore during his spasmodic performance of "A Little Help From My Friends." These stills are laid out in a series as if on a giant, now anachronistic, analog photographic contact sheet; I'm drawn to Cocker's star-painted boots and bell-bottomed jeans in several frames and Richie Havens's sandals in other frames. Their shoes, their clothes, and their hair of the period so strongly imprinted in my mind; I recognize them instantly. I am staggered by how this film—which for many epitomizes the naive utopianism of 1960s indulgence, narcissism, and pleasure—nevertheless contains the structuring influences of my own worldview and the variety of aspirations that attend it. How deep the footprint! Shoes, feet, walking are a recurring theme throughout *elsetime*—movement across time and space, a cognitive mapping of the artist's creative life.

Rothenberg's *elsetime* is an archive of such footprints. An index of mid-twentieth-century counterculture and avant-garde art movements. It's at once so familiar and far away. I wonder: Whose history is this archive? Is it my own history? The artist's? Or is it the history we wished for but never happened? Walking through *elsetime* raises these questions: What does it mean to be shaped by a history never experienced, haunted by a world never actualized? To have longed for a past never lived? What happens when you arrive too late? When historical events are only reverberations, screen images once seen, books or their passages once read and not actual memories?

Rothenberg's *elsetime* is a work of fragments: a sculptural montage of objects, photographs, texts, and allusions to history enigmatically encountered as a series of possible relationships between them. As one wanders through the gallery, relationships between images and objects are not immediately obvious. Some are never to be understood. Often the relationships between elements seem highly personal and idiosyncratic. But others seem immediately accessible when

connections are made as one's own life experience is added to the mixture. Unlike cinema—in which the viewer is static as images move around them, forced to adapt to the rhythms of the film's movement—the viewer moves undirected through the gallery, free to explore *elsetime* at a self-determined speed. Montage becomes an embodied experience of movement and juxtaposition, inviting seemingly unstructured, nonlinear readings that can only be idiosyncratic. This kind of embodied montage highlights the relationship between legibility and opacity as one moves through this space littered with objects and texts that only promise clues to their significance—if valiantly pursued with homemade interpretation.

Vorwärts/ Rückwärts – Forward/Backward

On a bench across from the *Woodstock* contact sheet, a portable phonograph sits beside a pile of LP records mostly from the 1960s and seventies. The colorful record sleeves are well worn and all too familiar to those who had record collections from the Woodstock Nation. Hanging on the opposite wall is another large contact sheet of photographs from Rothenberg's Berlin street performance *Hello, Traitor* (1994), in which she is wearing shoes inscribed with the words *forward* and *backward* in German—echoing the movement of walking through the gallery itself. The shoes themselves sit on the floor to the right of the photo, partially hidden.

Deeper into the gallery on another wall is a series of photographs of white wingtip shoes on a wooden floor. The floor in the images echo the floor of the gallery I am standing on in the present. These photographs were made during the artist's visit to the Brecht-Weigel Gedenkstätte. The final residence—now a museum—of playwright Bertolt Brecht and his wife, actress Helene Weigel, in Berlin. Rothenberg has photographed her own wing-tipped feet on the rough-hewn floorboards of Brecht's workroom/writing room. For her, its significance is as a place of artistic production—a writing studio. In her description of Brecht's workroom, it is a large, open space. There are multiple places to write—with two typewriters on separate desks and a table with assorted chairs for collaborative projects and discussion. On the gallery wall, we see other photographs from the study: a close-up of the threadbare arm of Brecht's chair, a brass desk lamp, and, in another, a shelf of English pulp-fiction paperbacks. This is the stuff of a workplace: the floorboards, the threads of the chair, the worn paper of the books appear to be Rothenberg's personal landmarks of the artist as producer. Rothenberg in Brecht's study is an intersection of lives and aspiration. *Forward and backward in time and space.* Does the aspiration of art as a means of social and political transformation, as embodied by Brecht's work, carry with it the naïveté of the Woodstock Nation? Is Brecht, like his threadbare reading chair, a remnant? *Inspiration, misinterpretation, nostalgia*?

elsetime traces a history of the artist—her past work, her aesthetic and cultural concerns. The show suggests an accounting, tracking the emergence of her artistic sensibility and the cultural position it yields. Perhaps a kind of memoir. How to trace one's own formation? Not simply life experiences—what happened, but through books read, bags carried, and internalizing the work of others. Like the development of an artist or a mind or a vision, it can only be encountered as fragments, superimpositions, and jagged cuts, through which one might see aspiration and longing and connections. Like the rock and roll of the short-lived Woodstock Nation, in *elsetime*, we see other remnants of twentieth-century radical cultural aspiration. In an adjacent corridor, the evidence is tacked to a wall in a series of twelve transparent glassine envelopes each containing a photocopied book page. Exhibit A in the Rothenberg archive of stranded ideas includes: Elisabeth Hauptmann's *Notes on Brecht's Work* from 1926, "Notes for a Theory of Sixties Style" from the long out-of-print *Faber Book of Pop*, Allen Ginsberg's recipe for how to make an antiwar March/Spectacle from 1966, an image from choreographer Simone Forti's *Huddle* from 1961, and a page from Communist revolutionary Angela Davis's *Autobiography*. This series of photocopies is located behind a wall separating them from the rest of the exhibition, creating at once a private annex away from the other objects in the installation and a reminder of the site-specificity of the installation. The very architecture of the gallery is also structuring the relationships among seeing, thinking, and moving.

Each of these figures from Brecht and Forti to Ginsberg and Davis and their work are synonymous with the vanguard of the political, cultural, and artistic transformations that took place in the second half of the twentieth century. Each embodies a different aspect of the Romantic Modernist project of transforming the present by creating new forms of performance. But what does it mean to contemplate such transformation from this present moment? Have these names become "brand" names, merely anachronisms that formed the language of modern aspiration for revolution that is no longer recognizable? Now stored in glassine envelopes like specimens collected in a forensic investigation of a crime that never actually occurred, are these photocopies of copies—so much cultural baggage, exhausted—now merely nostalgic impediments to our critical rethinking of the past and original reimagining of the future?

> I'll never waste my dreams by falling asleep. Never again.
> —Eugène Ionesco, *Man With Bags*

There is an air of portability in *elsetime*. Little sense of permanence. Everything seems designed to be easily packed up and moved on a moment's notice, packed away for another moment in time or fading away into the past. While the installation itself is largely static (except for the turntable, endlessly playing the records throughout the period of the exhibition), *elsetime* is filled with suggestions of people in movement. We see large plastic tote bags sitting on the floor, photographs of folding and stackable carry chairs, and photocopied book pages. A portable phonograph. Many of the images and artifacts are mounted on wooden lean-to structures that look hastily and cheaply assembled and lean against the walls of the gallery—perhaps a temporary gallery within the gallery. They also suggest the short-term "hippie" architecture built at Woodstock for the festival or, more gravely, evoke transient structures built in refugee camps or the improvised structures of migrants as they try to keep dry while moving across borders. Along with all of the images of shoes, the plaid patterned plastic tote bags are particularly evocative of the crisis of contemporary global transience. Mass-produced in China out of almost indestructible plastic, the bags are known variously as the "Ghana must-go bag," the "Turkish suitcase," the "Bangladeshi bag," the "refugee bag," etc. We see them in images carried by migrants and refugees, moving across the globe with all their possessions stuffed in them. In one world, the bags are used to carry things to a weekend rock concert out in the country; in another, they recall the horrors of contemporary mass migration. In *elsetime*, some of the bags are stuffed full and

sit on the floor, while others have been cut apart and reassembled in a patchwork collage stretched and mounted like a painting on a wooden frame and leaned against the gallery wall. As fine art, they recall modernist abstract pattern painting, so popular in the postminimalist period. As collage, they are also found, recycled, discarded, and appropriated objects; revived as aesthetic object in the gallery. One thinks of El Anatsui, the Ghanaian sculptor, and his large-scale assemblages of bottle caps and other detritus. In this way, objects in the installation suggest the flux of meaning and imagination as things transform from one state to another—from tote bag to art object. From object to image.

elsetime is also a measure of Rothenberg's aesthetic process and a glimpse into the way she causes the materiality of objects—their tactility—to ferment into ideas. We see the raw materials of the artist's process in action. This is the nature of the artist to take what can be seen, held, felt, and transformed into ideas. Throughout the installation, the form of each piece is structured by the medium through which it exists. In *elsetime*, the medium is not simply the message; it is History. Like the plastic tote bags into art, the medium becomes aesthetic object: there's the phonograph, the LP, the photographic contact sheet, the book, the photocopy, the plastic and glassine bags, stackable chairs, pairs of shoes. *elsetime* pays homage to the ways meanings of objects and images become multiple and hollowed-out as they trace across time. There is a powerful sense of an archeological after-the-factness about these objects and images that gives the installation a sense of melancholy. The idle documents of a once-dynamic culture and its political moments (or perhaps of the artist's youth?) create a sense of lost knowledge or, worse, unreadable knowledge. *elsetime* leaves a sense of yearning or longing for the moment when these artifacts were in play, generative of the present. I recognize the exhibition's artifacts, like the film *Woodstock*, as my own without being sure if I have ever experienced them directly. Who remembers?

There is a feeling of pastness in *elsetime*. Perhaps it is seeing these objects and images hanging in a pristine and empty gallery so far away from the contexts they come from. For example, Max Yasgur's farm in Woodstock, New York, with thousands of people on the hillside, or Brecht's theater in Berlin where audiences flocked to see his work. There is a sense of loss that permeates *elsetime.* But to see it as simply nostalgic or as a form of left-wing melancholy—the holding onto and idealizing past political attachments, in the present, even when they're no

longer relevant to the present context—would also be too simple.[3] Perhaps *elsetime* is a yearning for something that was never had or experienced but is nevertheless formative of an aspiration or a life.

Sehnsucht

Looking for something larger and more nuanced than nostalgia, I find the German concept of *Sehnsucht*. It is a German word for which there is no real English equivalent. From an article by three European and American research psychologists, "Toward a Developmental Psychology of *Sehnsucht* (life longings): The Optimal Utopian Life," the word describes a deep emotional state that is translated as "longing," "pining," "yearning," "craving," or, in a wider sense, a type of "intensely missing."[4] In the German dictionary, Sehnsucht is defined as "a high degree of intense, (recurring), and often painful desire for something, particularly if there is no hope to attain the desired or when its attainment is uncertain, still far away."[5] Although it's related to nostalgia, Sehnsucht is not so much about the loss of something or an experience that once was had, but rather, the loss of something that was never had.

In its exploration of Sehnsucht as a psychological condition, the essay defines it as *life longing*.[6] Here the authors Scheibe, Freund, and Baltes attempt a more complex sense of longing for lost experience that not only connects Sehnsucht to nostalgia and a sensation of unrecoverable loss but also connects it to the generative possibilities of longing. In the tradition of German Romanticism, Sehnsucht has a utopian aspect as a yearning for ideal alternative experiences. What was never had but yearned for—however unattainable.

Scheibe, Freund, and Baltes defined some of the characteristics at the dynamic core of Sehnsucht as "thoughts, desires, and emotions associated with personal utopias

3 As Walter Benjamin wrote, "The left-wing melancholic withdraws from the 'time of the now' to what is left … the empty spaces wherein, dusty heart-shaped velvet trays, the feeling—nature and love, enthusiasm and humanity once rested." Walter Benjamin, "Left-Wing Melancholy," in *Selected Writings Vol. 2 1927–1934*, ed. Michael Jennings (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1999).

4 Susanne Scheibe, Alexandra M. Freund, and Paul B. Baltes, "Toward a Developmental Psychology of Sehnsucht (life longings): The Optimal Utopian Life," *Developmental Psychology* 43, no. 3 (2007): 778–95.

5 Ibid., 778.

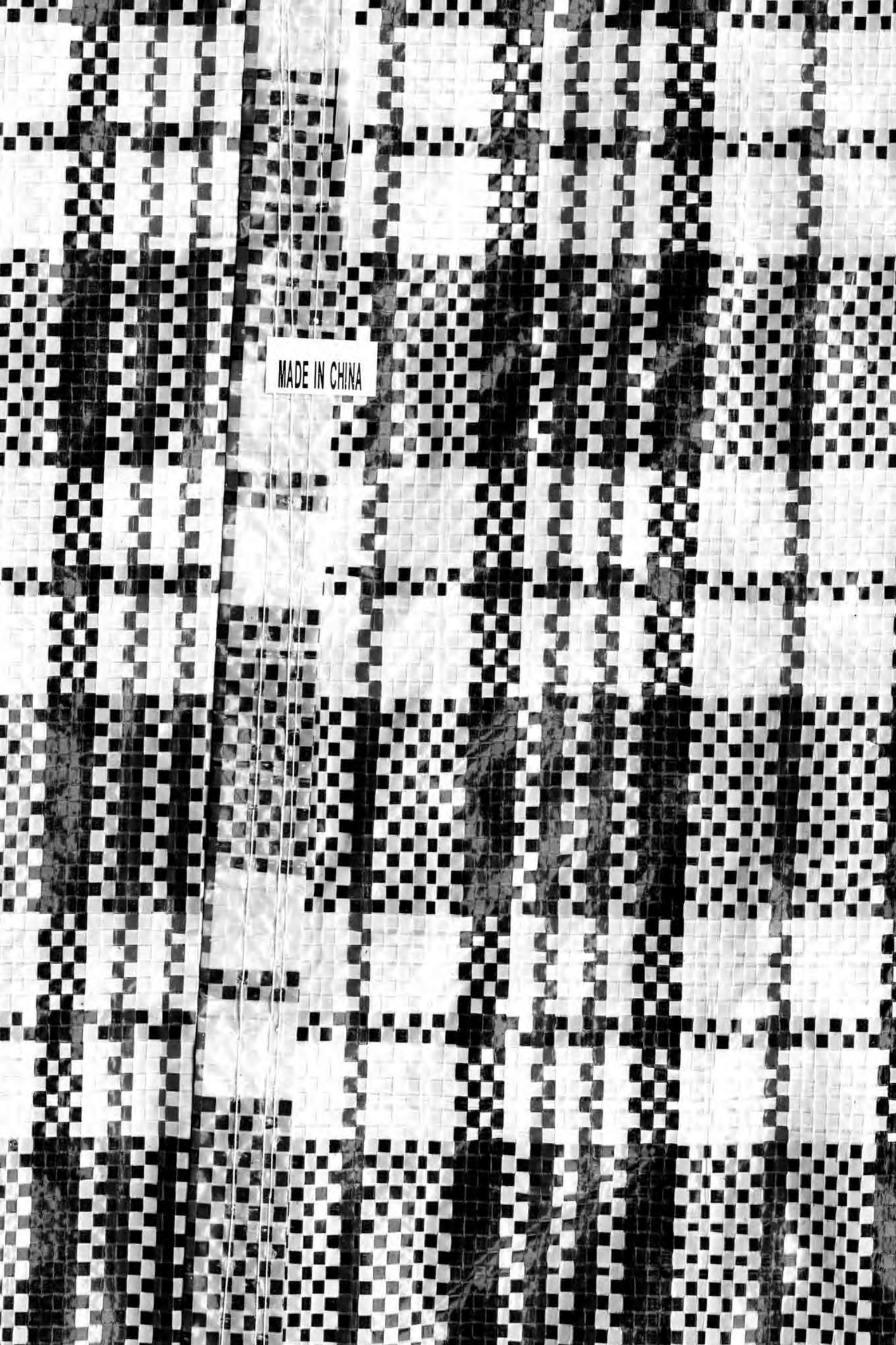
6 Ibid., 779.

or the search for an optimal life and the accompanying sense of incompleteness and imperfection." They write, "incompleteness and imperfection go hand in hand, and reflect the notion that development is the process that strives toward optimality, that in human reality is never completed and perfect." As the authors have it, longed-for objects or states are more than mere wishes, "they are deeply enclosed in the search for a meaningful life and complete life"—simultaneously aspects of the past, present, and future.[7]

I return to the four photographs of the floor of Brecht's study, portraits of Rothenberg's feet standing on the very floorboards on which Brecht stood. In a confluence of different moments in time, these past and present artists finally cross the same path. The white-pine floorboards in the photo bleed into the floorboards of the gallery, connecting the two locations—the Brecht museum and the space of this Chicago installation—another intersection. With this, *elsetime* opens a virtual space between Berlin and Chicago, the past of Brecht's accomplishments and the present of Rothenberg's. Perhaps that virtuality is the future: who is yet to walk on the gallery floor, thus broadening these spatial and temporal circuits?

Sehnsucht is the overwhelming affect that permeates *elsetime*. At once "incomplete and imperfect," the piece creates yearning for the promise of the fulfillment of a particular cultural moment in which social and cultural change seemed inevitable, a moment wherein its vanguard would be a catalyst for such change. At the same time, *elsetime* is a memoir and archive that suggests the intellectual and aesthetic formation of the artist, offering a glimpse into the enigmas of her process of making art: transforming preexisting materials in our world into the phantasmagoria of a new world. Like the Woodstock Nation—longtime gone—that never existed yet is still longed for and life-structuring for some of us. All that remains in *elsetime* are specters—an image from a film, a copy of a book page, a plastic bag, a threadbare armchair, a pair of shoes. *elsetime* is that far-off country never reached. For it is something that exists as an image of something imagined, incomplete, imperfect, and indispensable.

7 Ibid., 780.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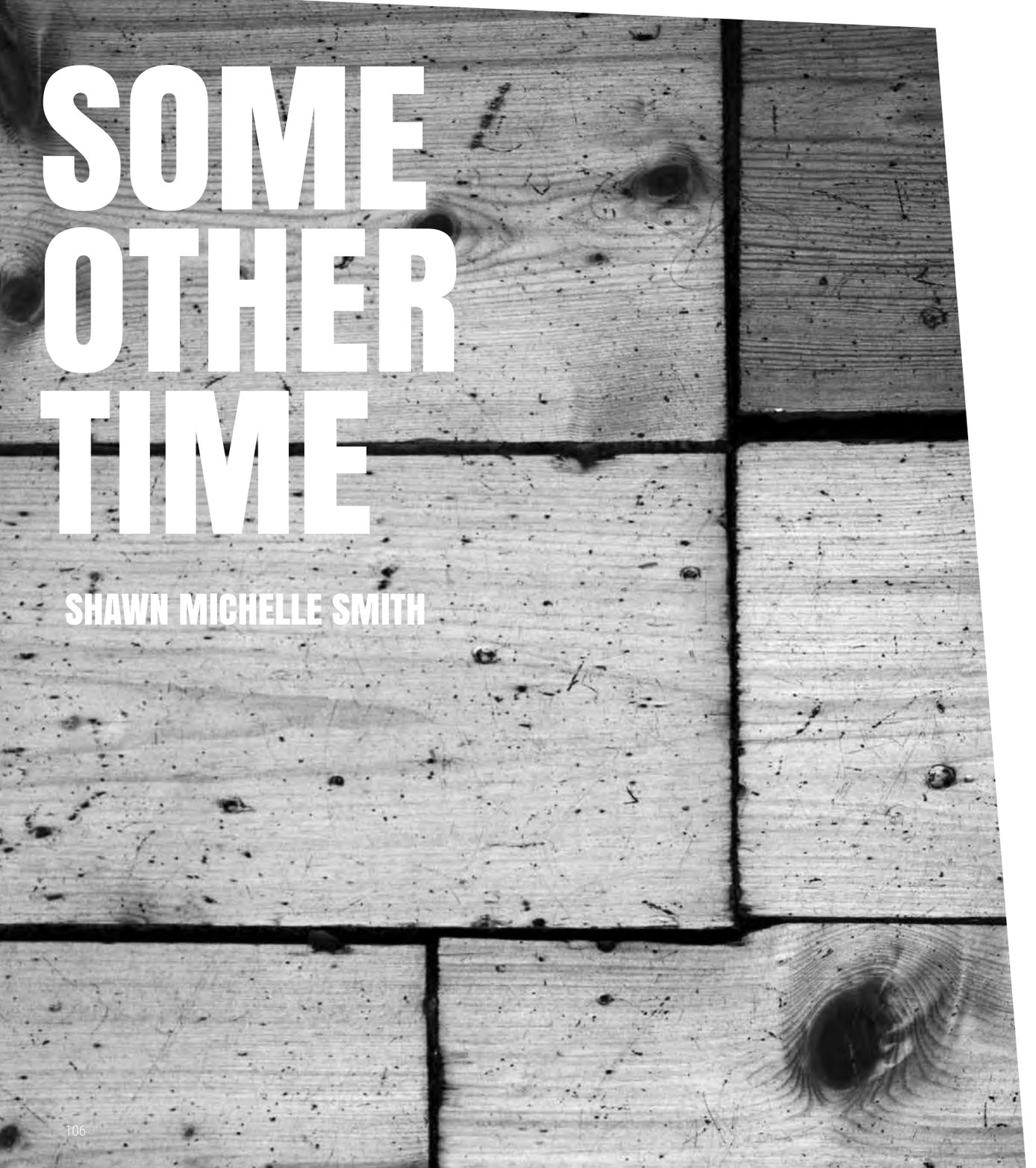


SOME OTHER TIME

SHAWN MICHELLE SMITH

When exactly is elsetime?

When I began to write about the exhibition after a pause of several months, I found myself returning to that day in the gallery and to a conversation I had with Ellen Rothenberg, Hannah B Higgins, and Caroline Picard. Snippets of stories that Ellen told us returned as fragments, and I've tried to catch some of them as they flash in and out of my memory, joining the time and space of my writing to the day we spent together in the gallery.

If we take elsewhere as a spatial template for the time of else, we would suppose that elsetime is "some other time." It is not the time of now. But, like elsewhere, elsetime only makes sense relatively. It is another time, recalled, evoked, or conjured as it is differentiated from the time of now.

It is another time that can only be conceived in the present.

Photography has a special claim on elsetime.

The photograph records a moment always already past, which viewers are invited to consider in the present.

The photograph distinguishes the moment of viewing from the moment the image was made, even as it also seems to collapse the two, pressing them together, reanimating the past in the present.

The photograph calls our attention to the presentness of the past, making this time and that coterminous.

Roland Barthes was stricken by the elsetime of photography. He marveled at the photograph's collapse of time:

> The Photograph … becomes a bizarre medium, a new form of hallucination: false on the level of perception, true on the level of time: a temporal hallucination, so to speak, a modest, shared hallucination (on the one hand "it is not there," on the other "but it has indeed been"): a mad image, chafed by reality.[1]

The photograph is a temporal hallucination in which the past becomes present, not simply alluded to or remembered, but here and now.

I was, of course, drawn to the photographs in the show. Although Ellen works in multiple mediums, *elsetime* feels photographic. Photographs are mounted directly to the walls, without frames, as well as onto twelve-foot-tall lean-tos, which Ellen describes as "temporary architectures." In other instances, she displays large contact sheets of composited still frames of performances and documentary film. In one group of four photographs, *Walking the Boards* (2015), silver shoes walk a rough wooden floor. Two knots in the planks are like eyes looking back at me. Three of the images are pressed flat against the wall, but the fourth, slightly smaller, pushes into the space of the gallery and casts a shadow. This errant image reminds me that all of the photographs are objects.

1 Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 115.

Ellen photographed herself walking the floors of Brecht's Berlin studio. Back in Chicago, she mounted the prints low on the wall, drawing attention to the gallery's wooden floors. Standing in the gallery, looking at the photographs, I saw Ellen's shoes on Brecht's wooden floor and then my own shoes on Sector 2337's wooden floor.

(Is it possible I wore my silver shoes that day? Or am I getting lost in the relay?)

Hannah was mesmerized by a photograph of Brecht's chair and reached out as if to touch its worn arm. Ellen's work asks us to inhabit this place and that, this time and then. The 1950s of Brecht's Berlin brushes up against the soles of Ellen's shoes, and photographs project both into the space of Sector 2337 in Chicago.

One image in the group of shoes pops off the wall, calling attention to the space it shares with us as an object in the gallery. It reminds us that the photograph is not a window we see through but a thing that inhabits space.

The photograph pops off the wall and shatters the window of illusion.

The three images clustered with this eccentric photograph remain pressed flat against the wall, encouraging us to attend to their support.

Inside this wall, Caroline says, run all of the utility pipes for the building.

The partition demarcates two spaces. One can walk around it. On its other side, Ellen has tacked up a row of clear plastic envelopes that hold photocopied pages from books. The gallery wall joins image to text, front to back. The pages are samples from Ellen's working archive: a kind of conceptual ballast for the exhibition.

I didn't have time to read the texts the day I saw them in the gallery. Only later, in the space of my own working archive, did I incorporate them into my text and sometimes *as* my text. Caroline had asked me to think about how my own work might intersect with Ellen's, and there were many points of correspondence as well as lots of new ideas raised by the exhibit. But—

instead of writing something about Brecht, something
which I cannot at the moment do, I have selected from
my old working notes a few passages.[2]

My thoughts remain turned to the photograph's temporal collapse.

I shuffle Ellen's texts with my own.

Temporalities collide in *elsetime*.

2015 Chicago.

1969 Woodstock.

Ellen, Hannah, Caroline, and I walk towards the gallery door to look at film stills of the famous gathering. Ellen has collected them in a single large contact sheet.

Star-spangled boots.

The startling dandyism of the newly emancipated young.[3]

2 Elisabeth Hauptmann, "Notes on Brecht's Work," 1926, epigraph 1957. From Ellen Rothenberg's "Working Archive."

3 *The Faber Book of Pop*, "1967: Notes for a Theory of Sixties Style," 316. From Ellen Rothenberg's "Working Archive."

Ellen tells us she was almost there in 1969. She was headed in that direction but took a turn to see a friend. In the end she didn't really miss it because Woodstock was more than a concert.

In the stills everything looks muddy.

It is difficult to describe the environment in which half a
million people tripping together find themselves.[4]

Debris is scattered across the ground. As I look at the images of Woodstock, they begin to morph under the pressure of current scenes.

The referent bends.

Is this the aftermath of a festival or a forced migration?

As I write this, four million refugees are fleeing Syria.

Photography is not the only medium that has a hold on elsetime. Performance makes another kind of claim. As the scholar Diana Taylor tells us, performance is defined by the repertoire, a form of embodied knowledge passed on and reactivated as it is put into motion.

> The repertoire … enacts embodied memory: performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing–in short, all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, nonreproducible knowledge. …The repertoire requires presence: people participate in the production and reproduction of knowledge by "being there," being a part of the transmission. As opposed to the supposedly stable objects in the archive, the actions that are the repertoire do not remain the same. The repertoire both keeps and transforms choreographies of meaning.[5]

4 Text from Ellen Rothenberg's "Working Archive," 16.

5 Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 20.

Performance enacts meaning, embodies meaning, changes meaning.

The audience participates by "being there."

The duration should be adequate for the viewers …
Ten minutes is good.[6]

The photographic documentation of a performance is a kind of trace of the repertoire in the archive. Ellen has heightened the sense of trace further by photographing the aftermath of performances, offering up traces of traces of the repertoire. A cardboard lean-to propped against the brick wall of the gallery presents photographs of stacked chairs. In the images, the chairs appear to be waiting. They refuse to stack properly; errant legs reach for the floor as if antsy. The chairs call forth bodies once present, now absent, replaced by the viewers of photographs. The photographs are stacked too, one image partially covering another. This is neither an archive nor a repertoire but the remnants of before and after.

Taylor proposes that the repertoire is mutable while the archive is more stable, or "supposedly" so. But the archive's own choreographies of meaning are never fixed. Images resonate and resound in unpredictable ways.

As Elizabeth Edwards has written, the photographic archive is a "place of potential." In the photographic archive, "meanings come in and out of focus, double back on themselves, adhere silently."[7]

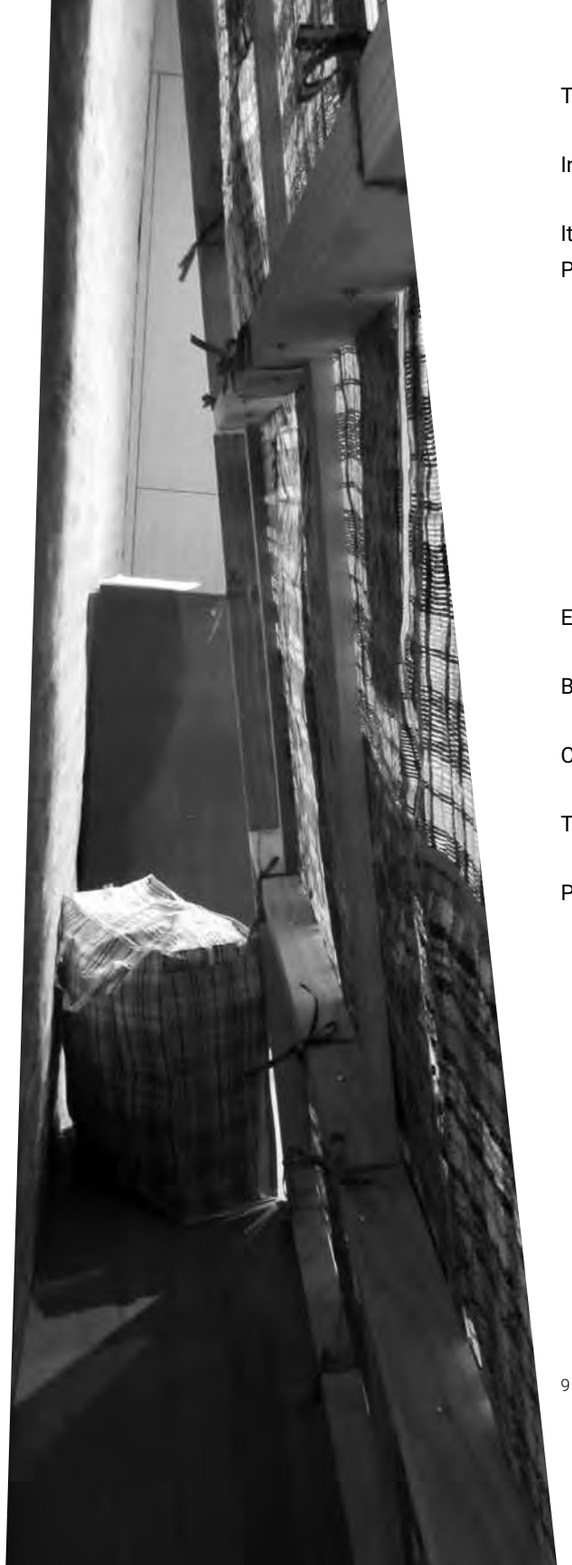
In part, the archive is disrupted by the temporal play of the photograph. And it is not only the past but also the future that comes into view.

Ulrich Baer encourages us to consider the way "each photograph opens onto a future that, from *within* the image, is still radically undecided."[8]

6 Simone Forti, "Huddle: Another Dance Construction." From Ellen Rothenberg's "Working Archive."

7 Elizabeth Edwards, *Raw Histories: Photographs, Anthropology and Museums* (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 4.

8 Ulrich Baer, *Spectral Evidence: The Photography of Trauma* (Cambridge, MA.: The MIT Press, 2002), 181.



The photograph offers a glimpse of the past as well as a possible future.

In the present, we determine whether that future's time has come.

It bears repeating, Walter Benjamin also saw the future in his "Little History of Photography":

> No matter how artful the photographer, no matter how carefully posed his subject, the beholder feels an irresistible urge to search such a picture for the tiny spark of contingency, of the here and now, with which reality has (so to speak) seared the subject, to find the inconspicuous spot where in the immediacy of that long-forgotten moment the future nests so eloquently that we, looking back, may rediscover it.[9]

Ellen's shoes on the wooden floor.

Berlin then.

Chicago now.

The eyes in the floor stare back at me.

Photographs propel us into elsetime.

9 Walter Benjamin, "Little History of Photography," in *Selected Writings*, eds. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith, trans. Rodney Livingstone et al, vol. 2, part 2 (Cambridge, MA.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 510.

ARCHIVE

Judges and landlords, who commonly face only
brought up short" by the presence of "well-dre
who appeared for the defense.
eled trhough Mobilization cut down the frequ
ry," Evans feels. "We've made those landlords dow
He gleefully noted that several landlords' attorney
for the rent strikes. They said their practices have
w militancy.' (S. Goodman, *Weather, Power Struggle*
Voice, November 5 '64.)

7. The Hippies. Allen Ginsberg, *Berkeley Vietnam Days.*[15]
n: Liberation, January, 1966.

1. How To Make a March/Spectacle

If imaginative, pragmatic, fun, gay, happy, *secure* Propaganda is issued to mass media in advance (and pragmatic leaflets handed out days in advance giving marchers instructions)

The parade can be made into an exemplary spectacle on how to handle situations of anxiety and fear/threat (such as Spectre of Hells Angels or Spectre of Communism)

To manifest by concrete example, namely the parade itself, how to change war psychology and surpass, go over, the habit image-reduction of fear/violence.

That is, the parade can embody an example of peaceable health which is the reverse of fighting back blindly.

Announce in advance it is a safe march, bring your grandmother and babies, bring your family and friends. Open declarations, 'We aren't coming out to fight and we simply will not fight.'

We have to use our *imagination*. A spectacle can be made, an unmistakable statement OUTSIDE the war psychology which is leading nowhere. Such statement would be heard around the world with relief.

The following suggestions manifest or embody what I believe to be the conscious psychology of latent understanding of the majority of the youth and many elders who come out to march.

And once clearly enunciated by the leaders of the march will be clearly understood and acted upon by them. Necessity to TRUST the communal sanity of the marchers who already demonstrated that community when they first SAT DOWN.

Needed. An example of health which will paralyze the Angels and also manifest itself thru mass media reportage.

N.B. A negative physcology of becoming scared by threats, adrenalin running in neck, uprush of blood to head, blind resentment, self-righteousness, fear, anger and active return of violence is exactly what the Angels 'power structure' press and fuzz THRIVE ON

what the young people who come march don't want and are dragged by
what will decrease the number who come and discourage the great many on the fence who wd come to a good scene.

THE FOLLOWING are specific suggestions for organizing march and turning marches on to their roles in the Demonstration.

1. Masses of flowers – a visual spectacle – especially concentrated in the front

15. Copyright, Allen Ginsberg 1966.

Note for the Stage

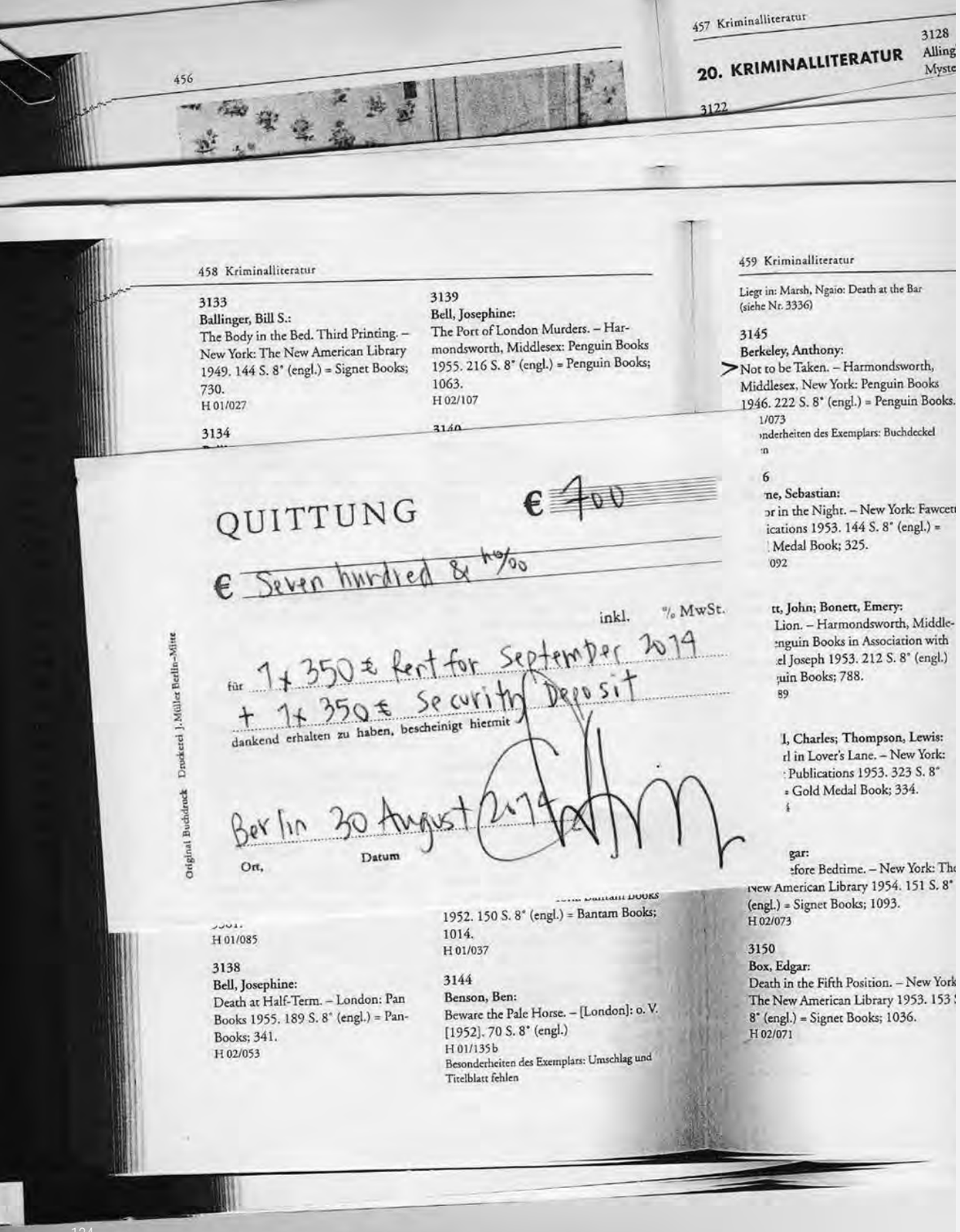
At Caspar Neher's suggestion this play was performed in Munich with the following scenery. Pasteboard screens some six feet high represented the walls of the rooms, with the big city painted in childish style behind them. Every time Kragler appeared the moon glowed red a few seconds beforehand. Sounds were thinly hinted. In the last act the Marseillaise was performed on a gramophone. The third act can be left out if it fails to work fluently and musically and to liven up the tempo. It is a good idea to put up one or two posters in the auditorium bearing phrases such as "Stop that romantic gaping."

[GW *Stücke*, p. 70. In all previous editions the words "At Caspar Neher's suggestion" were absent and a second phrase "Everybody is best off in his own skin" included at the end.]

Note to the Script of the Berlin Production (1922)

A small stage, consisting of wood and pasteboard. Thin flats, only partly painted. Doors, windows, walls all have a makeshift air. Similarly although the great revolutionary operation steadily grows in power offstage it makes only a thin, ghostlike effect in the auditorium. The persons nevertheless must be extremely real and the acting naïve. The auditorium contains posters with phrases from the play such as "Everybody is best off in his own skin" and "The Lord's eye maketh the cattle fat" and "Stop that romantic gaping."

[Unpublished. Brecht-Archive typescript no. 2122 and 1569. This production was in December 1922.]



456

457 Kriminalliteratur

20. KRIMINALLITERATUR

3122

3128
Alling
Myste

458 Kriminalliteratur

3133
Ballinger, Bill S.:
The Body in the Bed. Third Printing. – New York: The New American Library 1949. 144 S. 8° (engl.) = Signet Books; 730.
H 01/027

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Bell, Josephine:
Death at Half-Term. – London: Pan Books 1955. 189 S. 8° (engl.) = Pan-Books; 341.
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Beware the Pale Horse. – [London]: o. V. [1952]. 70 S. 8° (engl.)
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459 Kriminalliteratur

Liegt in: Marsh, Ngaio: Death at the Bar (siehe Nr. 3336)

3145
Berkeley, Anthony:
Not to be Taken. – Harmondsworth, Middlesex, New York: Penguin Books 1946. 222 S. 8° (engl.) = Penguin Books.
1/073
nderheiten des Exemplars: Buchdeckel
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6
ne, Sebastian:
or in the Night. – New York: Fawcett
ications 1953. 144 S. 8° (engl.) =
Medal Book; 325.
092

tt, John; Bonett, Emery:
Lion. – Harmondsworth, Middle-
nguin Books in Association with
el Joseph 1953. 212 S. 8° (engl.)
uin Books; 788.
89

l, Charles; Thompson, Lewis:
rl in Lover's Lane. – New York:
Publications 1953. 323 S. 8°
= Gold Medal Book; 334.

gar:
efore Bedtime. – New York: The
New American Library 1954. 151 S. 8°
(engl.) = Signet Books; 1093.
H 02/073

3150
Box, Edgar:
Death in the Fifth Position. – New York
The New American Library 1953. 153
8° (engl.) = Signet Books; 1036.
H 02/071

Elisabeth Hauptmann
Notes on Brecht's Work

1926

Instead of writing something about Brecht, something which I cannot at the moment do, I have selected from my old working notes a few passages. These passages may expose the inexperience of the writer, and other of her weaknesses, but also show her determination at that early date to take seriously, as seriously as these efforts deserved, Brecht's efforts toward a new theatre and his plays for this new theatre.

E. H. 1957

3. 1. 26

Plan for a comedy: *Inflation (Mentscher)*, a play about post-war youth. Schoolboys in the suburbs trade with motorcycles and with the copper which they collect from piles of old military telephones. The boys are old for their age, full of wise sayings and advice, and drive the girls too into dangerous experiments. — During Christmas B. has done some new work on *Charles the Bold*. His wretched end in the frozen-over dirty puddle, face downwards. None of those victorious with him recognises him. They really do not recognise him, so unrecognisable has he become.

18. 1. 26

For "Szene" magazine the "model" of Baal has been written up in the form of a newspaper report. The model for Baal, an "asocial element", is an Augsburg fitter. For *Jungle* too Brecht has written a "newspaper report"; it helps him to clarify the plot.

Re-writing the play for the production in the Junge Bühne

has given rise to a "dramatical biography". Brecht declared impatiently to a representative of the "Literarische Welt" magazine: "In the old theatre we are simply out of place, in the same way as Jack Dempsey could not show, in a bar-room brawl, what he can do. Somebody would simply bash him over the head with a chair and he would be k.o. . . ."

7. 2. 26
Short visit to *Baal* rehearsal . . . Café scene. B. makes an effort to bring a little action to the "lifeless" table on the right . . . Death in the forest: the woodcutters should not treat Baal like a raw egg; Baal sees to this himself . . . When B. is not satisfied with something he has done, then he immediately sets to work and alters it . . . He says that Shakespeare was certainly his own best audience, somebody who mainly wrote things which entertained him and his friends.

29. 4. 26
Conversation about the importance of good beginnings for stories and plays. I am enchanted by the beginning of a story by B., *Too Much Luck is No Luck.* The first sentence runs: "We sat in cane chairs at Havanna and forgot the world." I find it wonderful, and I can also remember it. After an opening like that everything between heaven and earth can happen in a story. (Quotability!) Brecht draws attention to the opening scene of *Man is Man*, and wants me to acknowledge that it is a classic. I acknowledge it: I know it (almost) by heart. Thereupon Brecht declares that *Man is Man* is altogether a classic comedy.

30. 4. 26
Man is Man reconstructed again. (I believe for the seventh time, some scenes even more often.) And this from viewpoints which don't affect the theatrical effect. As long as the stage is not in sight, Brecht has little interest in this, but rather in the incomparably more difficult other points concerning human society and conduct.

22. *Frankenstein.*
The Creature.

22

23. *Frankenstein.*
The Legend of Buddha.

24. *Frankenstein.*
The cross of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

25. *Frankenstein.*
The Creature frees itself.

The singing broke into full blast. Perhaps the police felt affronted by the words of "Freedom Is a Constant Struggle" and "I Woke Up This Morning with My Mind Staid On Freedom" because they abruptly interrupted with a voice projected through a loudspeaker. "The Los Angeles Police Department has declared this an illegal assembly. If you do not move out, you will be subject to arrest. You have exactly three minutes to disperse."

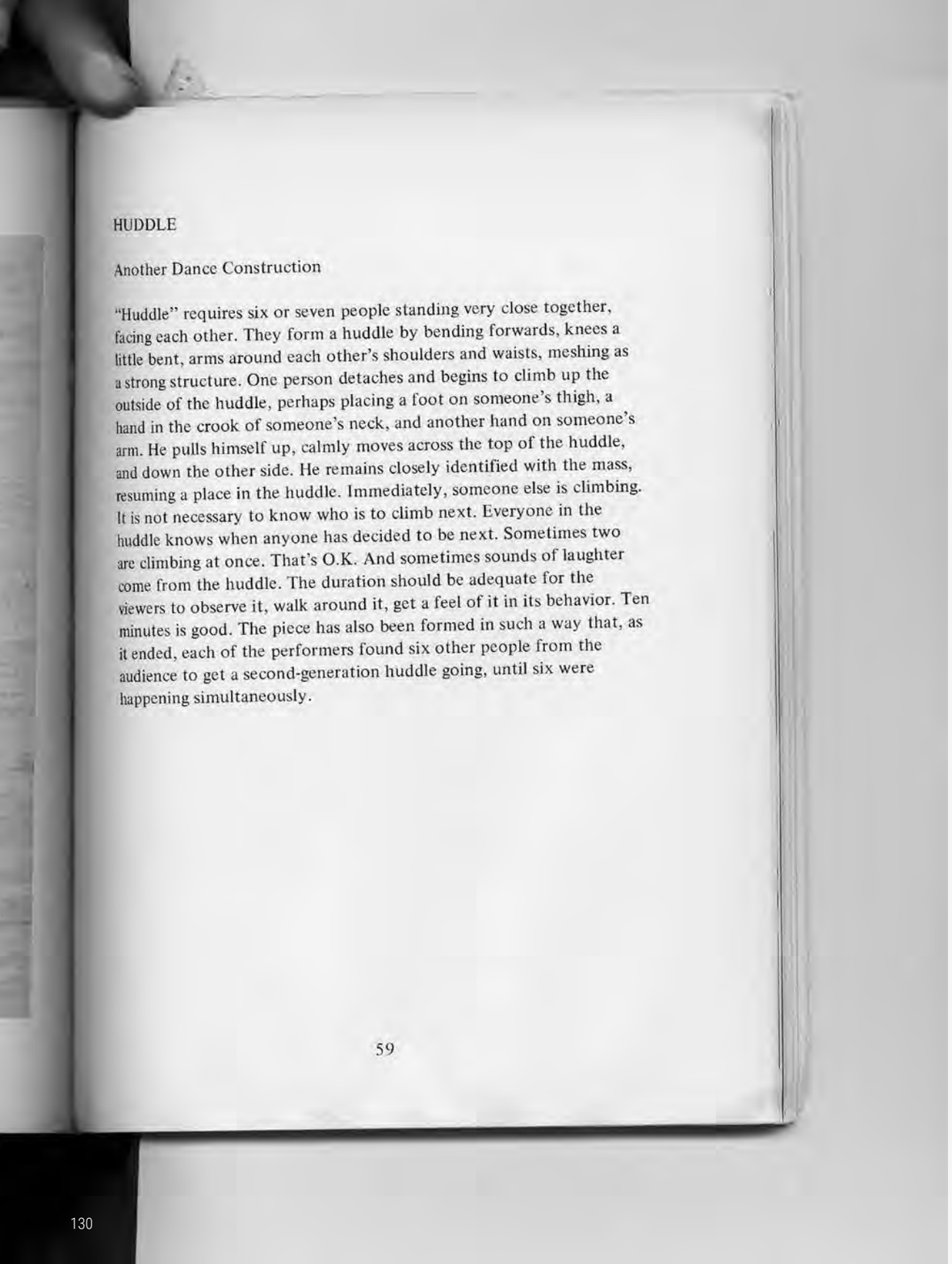
Even if we had tried, we could not have dispersed in three minutes. We decided immediately not to disperse, but rather to form ourselves into a moving picket line. As long as we kept moving, we would not be an "assembly" and would theoretically have the right to remain. Senator Mervyn Dymally, a Black state senator, decided that he was going to speak to the policeman in charge, thinking he could calm them down.

The line stretched from the corner where the group had been singing, well past the office, which was near the next corner.

I moved toward the end nearest the Panther office. It was dark and difficult to determine exactly what was happening at the other corner. Suddenly there was a dash of the crowd. Thinking that this had been precipitated by nothing more serious than a show of force at the other end, I turned to caution everybody and tell them not to run. But at that moment, I saw a swarm of the black-suited cops who had executed the attack on the office the day before. They were already beating people further down, and some of them were about to converge on me.

I had been facing the crowd. I turned quickly, but before I could break into a run, I was knocked to the ground. I hit my head on the pavement and was momentarily stunned. During those seconds of semiconsciousness, I felt feet trampling on my head and body and it flashed through my mind that this was a terrible way to die.

A brother screamed, "Hey, that's Angela down there!" Immediately, hands were pulling me up. I could see the [illegible] clubs smashing into these brothers' heads. Someone [illegible]



HUDDLE

Another Dance Construction

"Huddle" requires six or seven people standing very close together, facing each other. They form a huddle by bending forwards, knees a little bent, arms around each other's shoulders and waists, meshing as a strong structure. One person detaches and begins to climb up the outside of the huddle, perhaps placing a foot on someone's thigh, a hand in the crook of someone's neck, and another hand on someone's arm. He pulls himself up, calmly moves across the top of the huddle, and down the other side. He remains closely identified with the mass, resuming a place in the huddle. Immediately, someone else is climbing. It is not necessary to know who is to climb next. Everyone in the huddle knows when anyone has decided to be next. Sometimes two are climbing at once. That's O.K. And sometimes sounds of laughter come from the huddle. The duration should be adequate for the viewers to observe it, walk around it, get a feel of it in its behavior. Ten minutes is good. The piece has also been formed in such a way that, as it ended, each of the performers found six other people from the audience to get a second-generation huddle going, until six were happening simultaneously.

59

The Garden

I went to the Woodstock Festival. It was the late summer of 1969. Everywhere there were people playing music together. Many were strangers to one another, many knew each other but hadn't seen one another for a long time, and everywhere there was a sense of a gathering of the tribes. I wandered around from music to music, participating where it felt natural.

There were tents everywhere, people going about their business setting up camp, comforting crying kids, playing music together, wandering. I had come with friends, and I was stoned the whole time, as we all were, half a million people stoned on hash and grass and acid for four days and nights. We all looked into one another's faces as previously I had looked only into the face of someone I was falling in love with. The kind of look that I've often wondered about, and which I associate with what psychologists call imprinting. And now we were all gazing with absolute openness, with absolute multidirectional vulnerability to imprinting, with absolute lack of fear of uniting.

I was running and dancing up and down the field, approaching different musics that I would hear more loudly as other musics faded into the distance and still others became closer. The different musics were already somewhat integrated because they were within earshot of each other. If you were in one small group you'd mainly hear your own music. But you'd also hear the music coming from down the hill, or from across a small canyon. And as I danced, my body was enough on some kind of automatic pilot that all these musics came together, somehow merged into a patter that included them all in a dynamic, rolling kind of falling together.

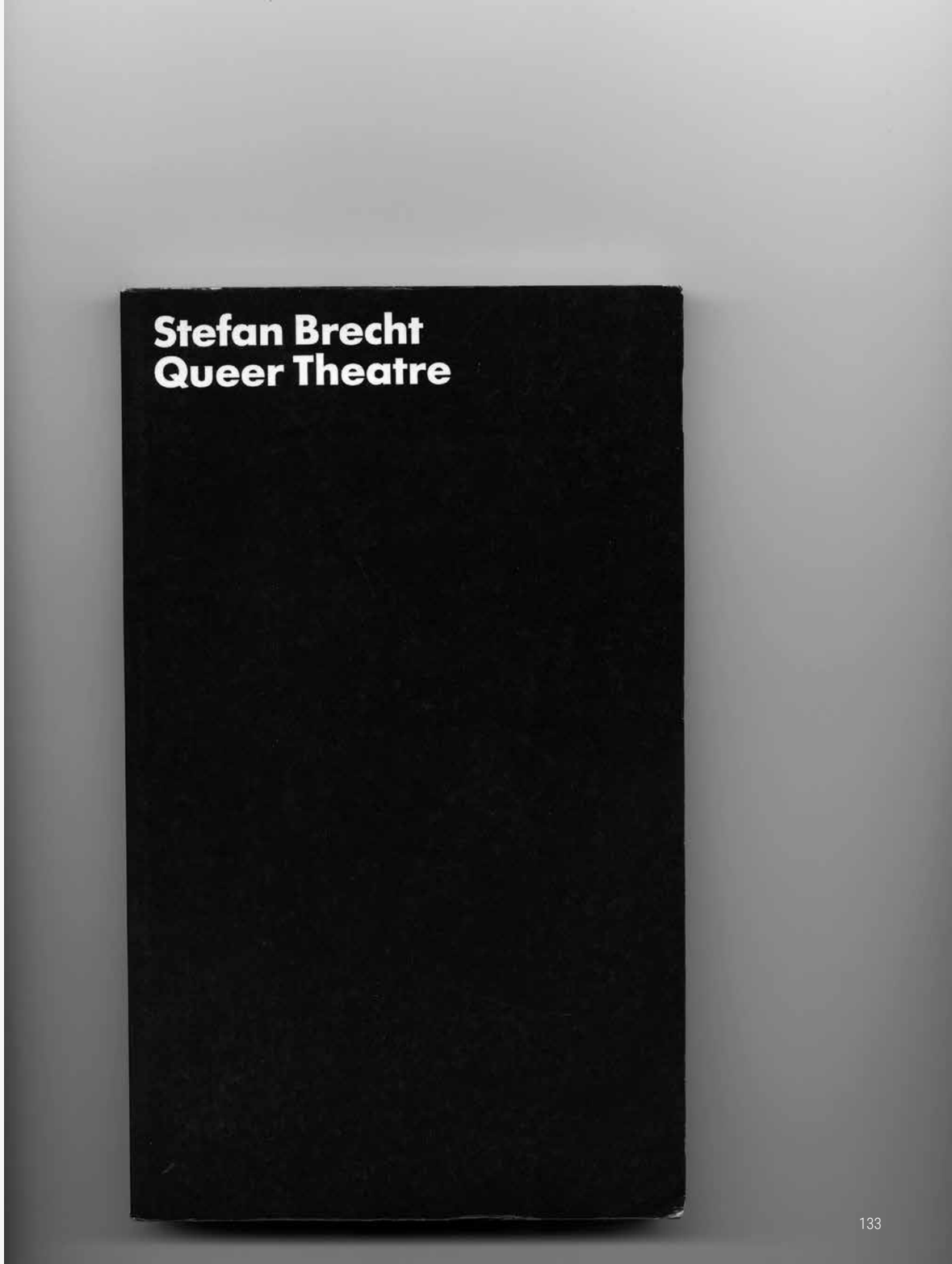
You'd follow whatever interested you, regardless of day and night. And when you were tired you'd sleep. I was up in the night at one point, wandering by myself, stoned among stoned people. I wandered over to where I heard drums, and there was a fire. It was near the free stage that the Hog Farm had set up. A lot of the people were naked. Right in front of the fire a black man was moving on and on. The drums kept going, and he was doing a bouncing kind of stomping, left, right, left, right, left, right, his spine tilting from side to

side. It seemed like a tuning, a finding of certain forces, an overlapping of the body into a certain bouncingness which matter can get into. Sometimes I think back on him in terms of laser light, which is so powerful not because there's so much light involved but because the light is bounced back and forth until it is tuned. As sound can become tuned. And really, it looked like after a night of doing that movement he could run a very great distance.

The hillside facing the main stage was very crowded. Many were listening to the music lying down, many were sleeping. Everyone was relaxed. To get from one place to another you had to walk right among them. No one shifted or moved to make room, you could always find a place just big enough for your foot. And you would step right down, you didn't have to nod and demonstrate that you weren't going to step on someone's hand. Everyone knew you weren't going to step on their hand. And what made it easier not to is that they wouldn't suddenly move when they saw you approaching. They'd leave their hand just as it was, you'd put your foot in the available space and go on to your next step.

It is difficult to describe the environment in which half a million people tripping together find themselves. But I perceived a set of mores regarding the sharing of space and fate which seemed to form a whole integrated way. I fell in love with that way, and remained with it for a year.

16



1967: Notes for a Theory of Sixties Style

Velvet is back, skin anti-skin, mimic nakedness. Like leather and suede, only more subtly, velvet simulates the flesh it conceals, a profoundly tactile fabric. Last winter's satin invited the stroke, a slithering touch, this winter's velvet invites a more sinuous caress. But the women who buy little brown velvet dresses will probably do so in a state of unknowing, unaware they're dressing up for parts in our daily theatre of fact; unaware, too, how mysterious that theatre is.

For the nature of apparel is very complex. Clothes are so many things at once. Our social shells; the system of signals with which we broadcast our intentions; often the projections of our fantasy selves (a fat old woman in a bikini); the formal uniform of our life roles (the businessman's suit, the teacher's tweed jackets with leather patches and ritual accessory of pipe in breast pocket); sometimes simple economic announcements of income or wealth (real jewellery – especially inherited real jewellery, which throws in a bonus of class as well – or mink). Clothes are our weapons, our challenges, our visible insults.

And more. For we think our dress expresses ourselves but in fact it expresses our environment and, like advertising, pop music, pulp fiction and second-feature films, it does so almost at a subliminal, emotionally charged, instinctual, non-intellectual level. The businessmen, the fashion writers, the designers and models, the shopkeepers, the buyers, the window dressers live in the same cloud of unknowing as us all; they think they mould the public taste but really they're blind puppets of a capricious goddess, goddess of mirrors, weather-cocks and barometers, whom the Elizabethans called Mutability. She is inscrutable but logical.

The inscrutable but imperative logic of change has forced fashion in the sixties through the barriers of space and time. Clothes today sometimes seem arbitrary and bizarre; nevertheless, the startling dandyism of the newly emancipated young reveals a kind of logic of whizzing entropy. Mutability is having a field day.

Let us take the following example. A young girl, invited to a party, left to herself (no mother to guide her), might well select the following ensemble: a Mexican cotton wedding dress (though she's not a bride, probably no virgin, either – thus at one swoop turning a garment which in its original environment is an infinitely potent symbol into a piece of decoration); her grandmother's button boots (once designed to show off the small feet and moneyed leisure of an Edwardian middle class who didn't need to work and rarely had

I was just wondering.

Booming over the various musics the loudspeakers suddenly were on with a “testing, testing,” and everyone stopped playing. All the circles were polarized towards the platform, and everyone waited through a good half hour of crackling and popping and “testing, testing.” Then finally a group played for us as we all listened. And they sang the news of a tragedy at Johnson’s Pastures, where a barn had burned down with three of our friends inside.

I wasn’t around the day the cops told us the busses had to go and the tents come down. As I heard the story, first the busses left and then the cops. I think we could have gotten away with leaving the tents up. After all, we were performing a function for the town, and the cops knew it. We were a free and orderly campground just outside of Woodstock, and people passing through were told about us. It was just a matter of keeping us down to size. But we were an anarchy, and some had taken it upon themselves to see that the cops’ orders were carried out to the letter.

The night after the tents came down I was sitting by the campfire, no idea what I would do next. Everyone was heading out in different directions and it struck me that I hoped to God that I wasn’t pregnant. Then Martha came up to me, and told me a story. She had been lying in the grass a few yards from the fire. She had felt like turning around, putting her feet to the uphill side, just to feel more comfortable. Two minutes later a car had driven onto the field and run over her foot. Two minutes earlier it would have been her head. Again the spirits were helping us. We were being told that it was time to leave. Our territory had lost definition to the extent that a car could drive right by our fire.

In my bag I had some keys that La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela had given me. The keys to their loft in New York. And that was our next stop.

La Monte was studying singing ragas with the Indian master, Pandit Pran Nath. He introduced me to his teacher as the Italian folksinger he’d told him

about, and had me sing him a song. It was decided that I, too, should have at least a taste of studying with Pran Nath, and so I showed up for my first appointment of any kind in more than a year. I had about eight lessons, which I loved very much. Guruji, as a master is affectionately called, thought my pitch was precise “like a pin,” and he advised me to go to India to study singing in an ashram, where I would lead “a very pure life.” Pran Nath said the tamboura would be a sword in my hand.

I didn’t know what to make of it all. I loved the singing, but my elbows were pulling in at my sides, my chin was pulling into my neck, my eyes were pulling down to the ground, and my palms were pulling together. My natural gravity directed me to Los Angeles for my periodic visit to my parents. Once there, I felt, perhaps I would know what to do.

The evening before my departure, I was studying with new-found friends in front of the Roma Cafe in Manhattan’s Little Italy. A motorcycle pulled up, and a helmetted Charlotte Moorman stepped down. We exchanged greetings, and, on hearing that I was going West, she asked me if I knew that many of my old friends were there, teaching at the new California Institute of the Arts. I did not. She gave me Alison Knowles’ phone number, and Allan Kaprow’s.

The next day I boarded a plane for Los Angeles.

Alison was living in a big house in the Hollywood Hills. There were others living there, too, all of them related to the new art college. There was room for me there in the big house, and they wanted me among them. I could see it and feel it.

The college was offering Tai Chi, a Chinese martial art, which very much interested me. Allan arranged that I could take all the classes I wished, in exchange for substituting for him from time to time. The money my parents had given me was running out, and suddenly I realized that I had just about enough margin on which to pull myself together. I kept thinking about that sword in my hand, and I returned to dancing as a self-conscious art as to an old friend.

A couple of months later I was at the Woodstock Festival, fully believing that I had forever abandoned the sheath of surface tension that seemed to separate my identity from the rest of the universe of flux in time and space.

In retrospect, I've come to think that the strangest part of my Woodstock experience is that I had no sense of how it was based on conditions of economic privilege. We thought we were surfing the rainbow flow to a golden, all-inclusive, continuing orgasm. But we were flowing through channels of national economic surplus. Riding on checks from home, on gifts, scavenging and finding a wealth of refuse. It was beautiful, and it left us free to explore many ways. But it wasn't the messianic vision I took it to be. I could have found my way from a psychedelic commune to a working commune. But I didn't. When I've referred to David Bradshaw's dynamite piece it seems I'm pointing a finger at him. That's ironic. It's David who told me about hunting, and about how still you have to become in the woods before you are part of its motion and can see and judge what to do. And I trust he knew what he was doing. And it's David, not I, who made a real move to disengage himself from the centralized system, living and working with his friends and family in the mountains of Vermont.

When I got to California I had returned from far away. What I brought with me was a longing to be an intimate witness to the graphics of dynamic equilibrium, and a longing to look into the eyes.

A real change had taken place in me. I was seeking a teaching job, but I refused to pull out my old credentials, i.e. the name I had once made for myself. In certain ways, the whole question of being an artist was still suspect. It's hard for me to remember, because my thinking continues to change. But I must try to remember. There was a time, in New York, when I felt in competition with other dancers, with other artists, and had a competitive sense of identity. And dancing functioned, to a great extent, defined within that way of sensing identity. One aspect of my work was that it invented ground. In fact, part of my grid of requirements was to invent ground. Was to invent … how can I say it? … people know it, but, even so, it's better if I can say it. Was to invent a relationship of need to mind, to manifestation. To invent a new house, a new structure of relationships of those things.

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NOT TO BE TAKEN

PERFORMANCE SERIES

MATERIALS FOR USE

Records
Working Archive Texts
Chairs (1-2 Green Folding Chairs + 12 Stackable Chairs)

PERFORMANCE DIRECTIVES

This action, or series of actions, should occupy a full 30 minutes. The beginning and end of the action will be indicated by the addition and removal of the chairs from the main gallery space.

1. Give the chairs presence in the space. Be attentive to movement, pattern, arrangement, and the ways in which they inhabit the installation.
2. Consider the chairs as mobile units.
3. The records are available for you to use on the designated turntable as sonic elements in your action if you are so inclined.
4. Bring in additional records to use if you like.
5. Printouts of a selection of textual fragments (original source material for the exhibition) are available to use in any way you like. These are additionally available in advance in PDF form, and hang in folders in the gallery corridor.
6. Bring additional texts to share or respond to if you like.

DUET KCOTSDOOW (For Bodies, Stackable Chairs, Tape Recorders, Cassette Tapes, Voices, and Instrument)

Becky Grajeda and Mark Booth

Back to the garden
And we've got to get ourselves
Caught in the devil's bargain
We are golden
Billion year old carbon
We are stardust

Above our nation
And they were turning into butterflies
Riding shotgun in the sky
And I dreamed I saw the bombers
And everywhere there was song and celebration
We were half a million strong
By the time we got to Woodstock

Back to the garden
And we've got to get ourselves
We are golden
We are stardust

But you know life is for learning
I don't know who I am
Or maybe it's the time of man
Well maybe it is just the time of year
And I feel to be a cog in something turning
I have come here to lose the smog
Then can I walk beside you

Back to the garden
And we've got to get ourselves
We are golden
We are stardust

I'm going to try an' get my soul free
I'm going to camp out on the land
I'm going to join in a rock 'n' roll band
I'm going on down to Yasgur's farm
And this he told me
And I asked him, where are you going
He was walking along the road
I came upon a child of God

Order of items removed from gallery space:

Chairs
Amplifier and Guitar
Music stand with texts
Tape players with tapes inside
Tape recorder with tape inside
Performers

NEGOTIATING, INSERTING, AND REVISING PAST AND FUTURE SELVES IN THE PRESENT NOW

Alexandria Eregbu

Elsetime is the material culmination of the artist negotiating, inserting, and revising past and future selves in the present now.

"How can plans for a future protest affect the furniture of the past?"

Sometimes artmaking isn't so much about the process of making art as it is a reminder for us to consider presence. It's the materials at hand demanding attention, the way we engage objects and the stuff they are made of (however familiar or unfamiliar) connecting the present we inhabit to the past/future.

What I love about performance is that it serves as a perfect conduit for realizing presence and dismantling conditioned behaviors that we might otherwise consider "normative" or socially "polite." I remember the beads of sweat and spectrum of scents floating throughout the room as we performed *Huddle*, emphasizing the bodies at work. I remember the furrowed brows of determination and the levitation of soles traversing the room, across the group's backs, over the wooden floor. The joint sighs of exhaustion and relief.

Sometimes, I think about my own doubts of executing a seemingly impossible task among a group of strangers that afternoon. Can a group of people really come together and decide to use artmaking as a tool for radically changing collective pasts and present-futures?

NOT TO BE TAKEN: A RESPONSE IN SIX ACTS

Dao Nguyen

NOTES ON CHOREOGRAPHING A RESPONSE TO ELSETIME

- Simone Forti's *Handbook in Motion*
- Twelve molded-plastic office chairs
- Two metal folding chairs
- Photocopy of a fragment of Elisabeth Hauptmann's *Notes on Brecht*
- Hands waving wildly in the spaces between furniture

(Chairs stacked to one side; a timer—the kind used in team-building exercises in a nondescript conference room—on a metal folding chair; an iPad displaying title cards propped next to the timer; an iPhone and a Bluetooth speaker on a record player. In each of the six acts, a machine voice reads a fragment of text and the iPhone repeats Janis Joplin's "Me and Bobby McGee" as the soundtrack to movement. Old music broadcasts through new bodies. The timer defines an abstract and seemingly arbitrary structure.)

I place chairs on a field. This one is on its side. This one is upright.
This one is on its back. This one is face down. This one leans.
This one sits next to another. This one holds another.

Today's public secret is that everyone is anxious. Anxiety has spread from its previous localised locations (such as sexuality) to the whole of the social field. All forms of intensity, self-expression, emotional connection, immediacy, and enjoyment are now laced with anxiety. It has become the linchpin of subordination.

—Institute for Precarious Consciousness

I make a line with chairs. It's an assembly line, a protest line, a parade line. I march up and down the line, using the seats of chairs like stepping stones. I carry chairs from one end of the room to the other. Sometimes over my head. Sometimes balanced around my neck. The chairs underfoot are unsteady. They weren't designed to take weight concentrated in the surface area of a foot.

I make a body with chairs. Each chair is laid facedown and nested. They don't stack as easily as some chairs, though they seem to be designed to stack. I place my body into the body, and we move as a body across the floor.

I make a mound with chairs. They stack awkwardly. Thin legs balance on plastic bodies. I find a place for my body. It feels like the mound could slip and fall or collapse, but it supports me for a moment.

For the last task, I clear the space. At some point, the limit has been reached, and the timer goes off with a buzz. Chairs remain in the room. A moment of uncertainty as to what will happen. It's also the moment in the performance when I realize I have been dreaming and must do something to wake myself. I continue to remove chairs from the room.

SING THE EVIDENCE

Tim Kinsella

This is Swami Satchidananda. I like that the aggression of what we call the sixties but what was really just like eighteen months in 1968, I like that this social rupture was always tempered with ancient wisdom.

I looked at this show exactly twenty-four hours before the beginning of this performance and I lived with it for twenty-four hours.
In that time, I got a tattoo of Frankenstein with a halo

and then I reread all the source materials that went into this show
Predetermined Magic Hour
The performance creates its own stage
Remember Flowers

I thought about this show and May 1968
And myself as a twenty-year-old obsessed with the general uprisings
in Paris and Prague and I no longer remember where else

Nirvana was twenty-four years ago and Woodstock twenty-two years before that

This relationship of nine months that ended yesterday was never able to develop
because of my relationship of three months that ended a year ago now

Richard Brautigan wrote that story fifty years ago about
his childhood almost forty years before that

How can I embody Angela Davis?

In the gallery, I set the chairs up in stacks and hang clothes
from them: specifically, my ex-wife's dashikis.
It's in performance that we can be most honest—the shields allow it.

TWELVE FOR TAKE IT
Terri Kapsalis

1- PROFESSIONAL THIEF EXCERPT (TIM).

The professional thief is one who steals professionally. This means, first, that he makes a regular business of stealing. Second, every act is carefully planned. The selection of spots, securing of the property, making a getaway, disposing of the stolen property, and fixing cases in which he may be pinched are all carefully planned. Third, the professional thief has technical skills and a method. The thief depends on his approach, front, wits, and, in many instances, his talking ability.

2 - AEM SHARES A GOOD BEGINNING, TK SHARES ONE TOO.

3 - ONE NIGHT WITH NORA (TK AND TIM).

4 - AEM SINGS A SONG "WHEN SHE'S HARDLY AWARE SHE'S SINGING."

5 - PROFESSIONAL THIEF EXCERPT (TIM).

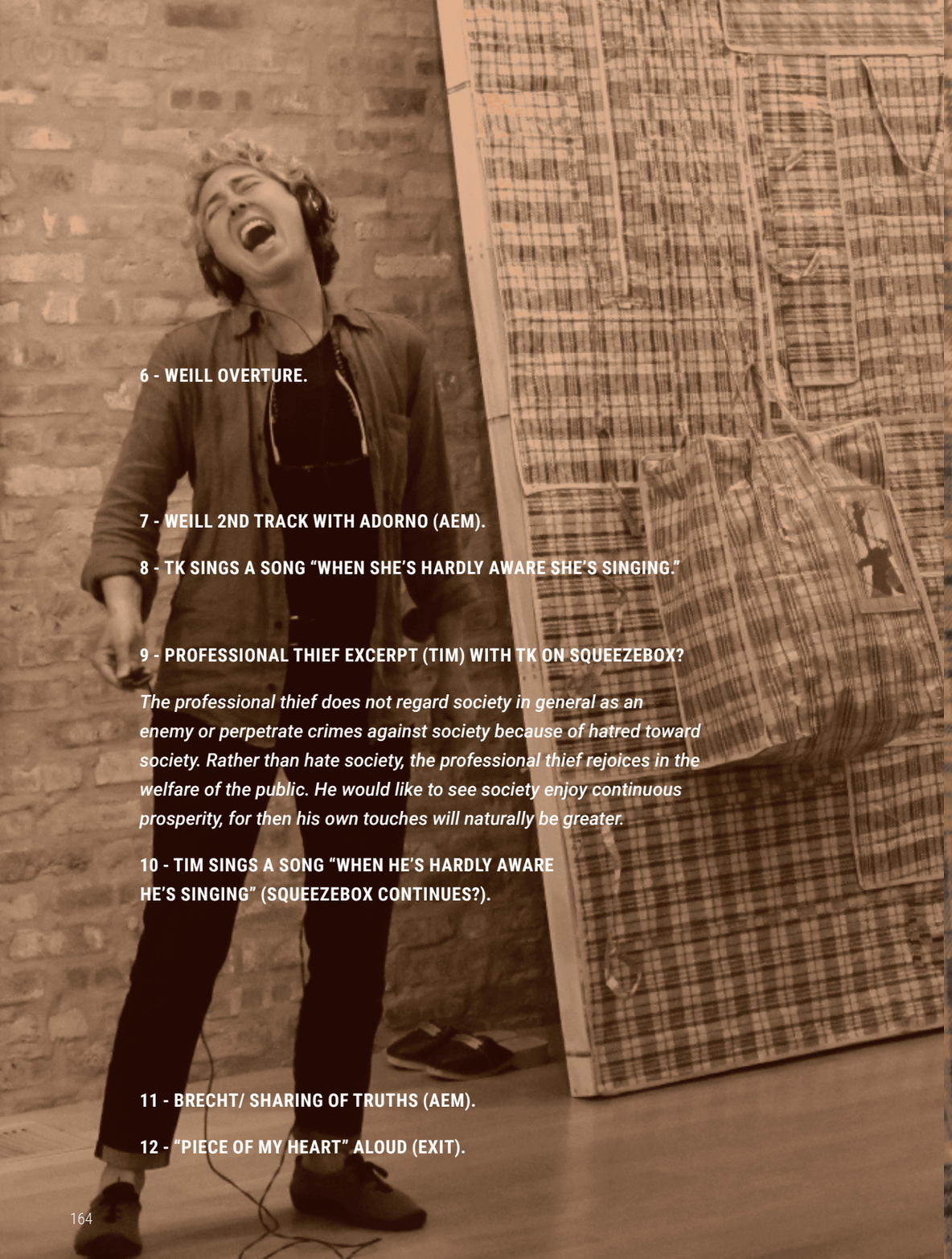
Sometimes a professional thief is greatly embarrassed when he appears in public with an amateur. A professional thief reported the following instance:

I was eating supper in a cafeteria with an occasional thief who was a student in a law school. Two coppers were sitting at another table nearby. My friend said loud enough so the coppers could hear, "Did you hear what Jerry Myers got?" I knew alright that Jerry got four years, but I had to hush the youngster up. So I said, "I understand the doctor said he got tonsillitis."

+TAKE IT
Anne Elizabeth Moore

Terri Kapsalis and I decided to step outside of our comfort zones to work intuitively from a very loose script inspired by elements in the exhibition. We were drawn to the use of music in the space; Terri is a trained concert violinist and does sound-based work, and I am a former music writer. When Terri suggested we incorporate singing into the performance, I felt immediate terror.

An idea is good when your gut is seized by it, and the precise prompt Terri located—to sing as if you're hardly aware you're singing—felt appropriate to a performance of intuitive response. We selected a song that we both felt was difficult to hear *without* singing—in fact, to be played for performers through headphones.



6 - WEILL OVERTURE.

7 - WEILL 2ND TRACK WITH ADORNO (AEM).

8 - TK SINGS A SONG "WHEN SHE'S HARDLY AWARE SHE'S SINGING."

9 - PROFESSIONAL THIEF EXCERPT (TIM) WITH TK ON SQUEEZEBOX?

The professional thief does not regard society in general as an enemy or perpetrate crimes against society because of hatred toward society. Rather than hate society, the professional thief rejoices in the welfare of the public. He would like to see society enjoy continuous prosperity, for then his own touches will naturally be greater.

10 - TIM SINGS A SONG "WHEN HE'S HARDLY AWARE HE'S SINGING" (SQUEEZEBOX CONTINUES?).

11 - BRECHT/ SHARING OF TRUTHS (AEM).

12 - "PIECE OF MY HEART" ALOUD (EXIT).

The audience heard it echoed three times: thoughtfully hummed along to by Terri; mumbled by LA-based artist Tim Schwartz, who joined us in the performance; and belted out, off-key, by myself, because however many times I hear it, I always forget until a certain crescendo that it is a *very* good song.

The piece ended with the song, played directly for the audience, Janis Joplin voicing a metaphor for a performance of and about offering yourself up to others:

Come on, come on, come on, come on and take it!
Take another little piece of my heart now, baby.
Oh, oh, break it!
Break another little bit of my heart now, darling, yeah,
Oh, oh, have a!
Have another little piece of my heart now, baby,
You know you got it, if it makes you feel good.

TRANSCRIPT

A PUBLIC CONVERSATION
05.30.15

HANNAH B HIGGINS: Can you talk for a minute, Ellen, about the show and how you came to it? Not everyone has seen it.

ELLEN ROTHENBERG: Last fall, I was on sabbatical in Berlin, where it felt necessary to waste time, to wander, and to explore in order to figure out what to do for this show. I ended up in Bertolt Brecht's last residence, which is currently an archive, library, and museum. His writing room feels contemporary—the kind of studio or study that we, as makers, imagine inhabiting. The curator and director of the museum let me spend time there on a number of occasions independently and the location became one thread of research.

HBH: But there are others?

ER: Another thread was my personal history in Berlin; I've visited the city regularly since the late eighties. That photograph [*points to photograph on opposite wall*] the *Hello, Traitor! Contact Sheet* behind [Anne Elizabeth Moore] contains a series of images from my performance at three different sites in Berlin in the early nineties: a pedestrian mall in Charlottenburg where we lived; Wittenbergplatz, the former center of West Berlin where KaDeWe is located; and Marzahn, in an eastern area of the city which, at that time, was a neo-Nazi stronghold.

CAROLINE PICARD: Did Sector 2337 influence the way you considered Berlin for this show?

ER: There were certain things that I knew about Sector 2337 before leaving for Germany. You [Caroline] and Devin had just moved in, and the gallery was empty except for the chairs—stacks of chairs—the ones that everyone is sitting on now; they were surrogates, placeholders for the imagined communities that were going to come together around the different Green Lantern Press activities at Sector: publishing, readings, performances, exhibitions, and residencies. The space hadn't opened yet, so I was very aware of its potential future. My thinking about the exhibition began with the architectural space of the gallery and the imagined future communities which were going to gather here.

CP: And Woodstock?

ER: That's another thread. There is also that contact sheet in the front of the gallery [*points towards the gallery door*], that's from the film *Woodstock*, which I also saw this last fall.

SHAWN MICHELLE SMITH: Could you talk about what's right behind us, too? In the hallway?

ER: There's a mini archive behind us, fragments of materials from my Berlin research and the materials I was investigating this winter when I returned to the States.

SMS: When we were thinking about how to have this conversation, we really liked the idea that Ellen offers a working archive, sharing texts that she was thinking about when developing *elsetime*, and we thought that we could all talk a bit about our own archives. As someone who works on photography, I'm especially interested in the presentness of the past. A lot of people have talked about photography as a trace of the past, but I think we also find those traces in different kinds of remains and residues of events that register past moments in the present. I think that different pasts are very present in this exhibition.

CP: What do you mean?

SMS: Something that I've been trying to think about in my own work are the different futures that might become available in those pasts. So I'm thinking not only about the past as a stable moment that we can access in the present through remains and photographs but also the way in which different futures might be made available and embedded in those past residues. It makes me think of Walter Benjamin's "Little History of Photography," a 1931 text that he wrote five years before the more famous artwork essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility." In this slightly earlier text, Benjamin's thoughts about photography are a bit less ideologically coherent or driven. But he also has really interesting things to say about what we might think of as the temporal instability of the photograph. I'm just going to read a little passage here:

> No matter how artful the photographer, no matter how carefully posed his subject, the beholder feels an irresistible urge to search such a picture for the tiny spark of contingency, of the here and now, with which reality has (so to speak) seared the subject, to find the inconspicuous spot where in the immediacy of that long-forgotten moment the future nests so eloquently that we, looking back, may rediscover it.[1]

There's so much backward and forward movement in that single sentence! [*Laughs*.] We, as the beholders looking back at images, may actually find not only a past, but some anticipated future that has been waiting for us to recognize it. Perhaps we can only recognize that future at this precise moment, as though it wasn't previously available. That backward and forward dynamic—looking to the past in order to imagine different possible futures from where we stand in the present—operates in Ellen's work as well.

HBH: The works in *elsetime* seem loaded with a desire for some different future. They have a certain utopianism, in the sense of both the place and film of Woodstock. Woodstock was loaded with provisional architecture: tents, lean-tos, sleeping bags, etc. You talk a lot about provisional architecture as something that is really important to you, Ellen. These chairs that don't stack become provisional piles; you photographed them and mounted the images of these clustered chairs on the lean-to.

Even the pasts that you mine are pasts that have a lot of provisionality to them. *Workplace*, for me, is a wonderful photograph. I could look at this photograph for a very long time. This is the armchair at Brecht's desk—the chair where he's imagining futurity and critiquing where things are going. As he's thinking, he wears down the material stuff in his life. And the chair is darned. It's darned imprecisely; you can see the act of repair. For me, that's an interesting hinge. In *elsetime*, the capacity for Brecht's Berlin of the

1 Walter Benjamin, "Little History of Photography," in *Selected Writings*, eds. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith, trans. Rodney Livingstone et al, vol. 2, part 2 (Cambridge, MA.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 510.

past to reinvent itself at that time—in the 1920s—is matched against Woodstock in a kind of Brechtian analysis and desire for a different future. I can absolutely see what you're talking about, Shawn, both at the level of the image and also the subject matter.

CP: Does that tie into the stack of records on display on the bench by the door? I guess I want to bring in the presence of sound, which also seems quite significant to this show. People are always playing records, and the records themselves are stacked but not always tidily … Is that another provisional architecture?

HBH: Can we put a record on for thirty seconds? We'll listen to one song, okay? These are records from all the performers at Woodstock, is that right?

ER: Right. And a few others from the same time period. [*Music plays* (song: "Wild Thing"), *laughter*.] You make everything groovy! [*Laughter*.] That's fine. [*Music ends*.]

HBH: That's a recording from the past, a sort of photographic image of sound. It makes me want to bring up the Catholic philosopher Walter Ong. In one section of *Orality and Literacy*, he writes:

> Sight isolates, sound incorporates. Whereas sight situates the observer outside what he views, at a distance, sound pours into the hearer. Vision dissects, as Merleau-Ponty has observed (1961). Vision comes to a human being from one direction at a time: to look at a room or a landscape, I must move my eyes around from one part to another. When I hear, however, I gather sound simultaneously from every direction at once; I am at the center of my auditory world, which envelopes me, establishing me at a kind of core of sensation and existence … You can immerse yourself in hearing, in sound. There is no way to immerse yourself similarly in sight.

> By contrast with vision, the dissecting sense, sound is thus a unifying sense. A typical visual ideal is clarity and distinctness, a taking apart. The auditory ideal, by contrast, is harmony, a putting together.
>
> Interiority and harmony are characteristics of human consciousness. The consciousness of each human person is totally interiorized, known to the person from the inside and inaccessible to any other person directly from the inside. Everyone who says "I" means something different by it from what every other person means. What is "I" to me is only "you" to you …
>
> In a primarily oral culture, where the word has its existence only in sound, the phenomenology of sound enters deeply into human beings' feel for existence, as processed by the spoken word. For the way in which the word is experienced is always momentous in psychic life.[2]

For me, *elsetime* is affected by the presence of sound. When I first came to see the show with Shawn, no music played from the record player. Today I came to Dao Nguyen's performance and Janis Joplin's "[Me and] Bobby McGee" played over and over again, which is sort of an anthem in my life. After her performance, I left thinking, "I'll see you in an hour after I go 'encounter myself'" [*laughs*]. That's what music can do. When the sound was playing over there just now, a lot of you folks were nodding your heads, closing your eyes, being introspective while listening. Sound evokes so differently than the pictures, which is why the records are such an intrinsic part of this show—it's difficult to talk about, of course, because in order to do so we have to turn the music off.

SMS: Ong seems to suggest that sound is inescapable. It pours into the hearer and envelops her; by contrast, vision is dissecting and distancing. Perhaps there's more choice in what you look at than in what you hear.

2 Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy* (London: Routledge, 1982), 72.

HBH: We can't blink our ears; they don't come with lids.

SMS: And if we're hearing subjects, then also the way that sound is shared is really interesting. You were talking a lot about interiority—is sound a way of sharing a kind of interiorized space in a nonisolating way?

HBH: I think it pushes both ways. Folks who are singing or performing tend to close their eyes. So, it's a sharing, but in the production of it, you close off and open up, or maybe you just lose that isolating sense of the "I."

ER: But immersion in an image is something artists all do in different ways. It may not be possible to have that kind of social experience except in a cinematic format, but …

SMS: So, when you watched the Woodstock film, was that shared and social?

ER: It was everything! We were in residence at the American Academy in Berlin and they had an unusual DVD collection in the library including *Woodstock*. I hadn't seen the film in a long time—watching it again was like time-traveling. The performances were mesmerizing, but when we got back to the States, other tangents of the film came into focus. Images of crowds of people gathering and traveling to the event resonated with the current news imagery of the global refugee crisis: people on the move, temporary settlements, and improvised architecture. Other aspects—like the fields of garbage in the event's aftermath—became more significant. I wanted the works in *elsetime* to continually shift and rotate somehow, to destabilize your experience as you encountered them.

SMS: Could you say more about the temporary structures? I remember you said something about how little it takes to make a space.

ER: I was looking at the temporary hippie architecture of Woodstock—repurposed school buses, tepees, geodesic domes, and improvised tents—and considering how simple it is to create a space that suggests habitation. I wanted an architectural presence in this show as both a kind of disruption and invitation. The lean-tos suggest the possibility of habitation. Something as simple as a draped fabric can create a space for you to insert yourself behind or to sleep in. As urban dwellers, we're acutely aware of the temporary structures of homelessness or of a refugee situation. Those shelters often involve the most minimal gesture or materials. Even the choice to use cardboard—this is really *nice* cardboard—but still the reference of cardboard is a kind of homeless register when thinking about temporary architecture and shelters.

Q ANNE WILSON: I'm interested in the relationship between physical materiality—the very real and tangible presence of materials—and the document of the record in the photograph or the sound. What does material presence do?

ER: Within the photographic images, there is a material presence. Whether it's the close-up of the worn and mended fabric on the chair's arm in Brecht's workroom, or in *Mirror*, a photograph of a piece of reflective plastic that I picked up off the street to brighten the walls of my Berlin studio. Moments of physical presence that materials embody and suggest is something I very much wanted in the show.

Q JOSHUA RIOS: Just to turn away from the thing before us, there are all these public responses—formal or accidental—to your exhibition. It is also made up of the responses you've asked people to perform. Of course, we are all here to discuss responses we've participated in or seen. So I was wondering if anyone would be willing to address the way your exhibition continues to evolve. The idea that the images here give us not only a window into another time—like looking at a video of the nineties in the year 2020—but that it [the exhibition] continues to be made according to these performative responses.

HBH: Music has always been that way—there's always been a score. And music is played and nobody has heard every performance of a Bach, or of anything, so I think when you deal with performativity

or musicality there's always this issue of re-performance—though I don't really like that phrase because it's always been built-in. Performance has always been iterative.

This is true of visual work as well, but I think it's less obvious. There are a lot of things I don't notice the first time I look at something that I might notice the second time I look at it. When Dao was performing earlier today, she produced a discrete set of movements in the main gallery and then, between scenes, you could hear her walk through Ellen's archive hallway. You could really hear her feet march on the floor and I kept wondering about what she was noticing as she passed by the corridor's mounted photocopies. Does she continue to read a little bit more of the same text each time she walks through the hall? Or is she actually just reading the top line of a different facsimile? Or maybe she isn't reading any text at all? It's sort of internal to the structure of art-viewing that it's never complete, but that incompleteness is somehow more obvious in *elsetime*. [*Turns to Ellen*.] Have you seen everything that's happened in the gallery?

ER: I was away for one.

HBH: See? [*Laughs*.]

Q BLAKE STIMSON: What are these pictures of over here? [*Points to* Vienna/Kobani *1-4 (2015)*.]

ER: Those are images from a demonstration in Vienna of Kurdish people who were protesting the sealing of the Turkish border with Syria while Kobani was under siege by ISIS in October, 2014. During my stay in Europe, I began using the camera as a notational device, a practice I had initiated several years earlier when traveling for other projects. I have a simple camera, which is easy to carry and unobtrusive. In Vienna, a demonstration suddenly erupted in front of us; I reached for my camera and began shooting. The bottom image in the stack of four photographs of the demonstration was the first image of the sequence. The demonstration was moving fast and the camera was also moving. Later when I looked at the images, the blur best conveyed that movement. Subsequently, the other three images have been manipulated to put them out of focus also. Within the context of the exhibition, I didn't want these images to only be specific to the current situation in Kobani, but rather wanted them to reflect the notion of social protest more broadly, bringing other historical moments into correspondence: Berlin in the thirties, Woodstock in the sixties, and this event in 2014.

BS: We haven't talked much about the mediation of images … maybe that's a red herring, but is there a concern about authenticity, for example? And if these images are nostalgic, are they tied to melancholy as well?

ER: There's definitely a consistent manipulation or mediation of the images throughout. The *Hello Traitor! Contact Sheet* images are from a street performance in Berlin in the early nineties originally documented on ¾-inch video tape. I shot the photographic images off a video monitor, so the edges of each individual image have the roundness of the TV tube, and several are interrupted by horizontal-scan-line artifacts that suggest a specific moment technologically. The *Woodstock Contact Sheet* images were shot off my computer (the image of the keyboard is the clue) and they have their own kind of multiple temporal referencing. The working archive is comprised of scanned books pages pressed against the glass of the scanner printed in black and white; they reference predigital copy technology.

The blurring of the demonstration images is a sort of kinesthetic experience, in terms of looking. Unrelated to the show, we had been talking about vertigo—the physical experience—and the body in relation to image or to experience. It doesn't suggest melancholy; the images have a lot of color; it's very painterly—and I don't think I have that kind of relationship with history.

SMS: I want to underscore that. This show doesn't strike me as melancholic in that overwrought Barthesian way, despite all the presentness of

the past.[3] That's what also made me feel there were future potentials here; it isn't about being stuck in the past or making past moments precious, which for me is the effect of nostalgia. *elsetime* struck me as being about the past, but not being nostalgic. That's exciting.

HBH: Heidegger says something to the effect that we always have to revisit the past because we imagine the future as different than what we actually get. The present doesn't behave; it doesn't yield the future we think it will.[4] We think things are going to go one way but they go a different way, so we have to rewrite. That's kind of how I see it that *elestime's* multiple past moments of utopian desire and protest. We need to revisit them because, in doing so, different futures emerge. Brecht's armchair for me doesn't go to armchair politics, although I understand the referent. Rather it goes to the sort of tactility of the past, that actually we can still touch it … we can go to *that* chair and touch *it* and it's real. Maybe the referent here is a Bergsonian durée, it's got all the world-shimmering in it that brought it to be at just this moment.[5] People need to somehow always revisit the past as a reality, not an abstraction. No matter how much utopian feeling we bring to it.

CP: That seems to go back to Anne's question about materiality and how the fiber of the chair is present in the documentary photograph …

SMS: I mean, I love this, unabashedly. I want to go there and touch that chair.

ER: The only transgressive thing I did in the Brecht house, and I'm swearing you all to secrecy, is that I sat in his chair. [*Laughs*.] See? I got a little too comfortable in there and I had to sit down, and then of course I was caught.

HBH: Now we are getting somewhere.

3 Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981).

4 Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 424–55.

5 Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. Arthur Mitchell (Mineola, NY: Dover Press, 1998).

Q: Do you think of yourself as a documentarian, Ellen? After these scheduled and past performances, we will have all of these responses that are going to exist behind all of the objects in this exhibit, objects that will then become loaded in the future—

ER: I don't think I position myself in relation to any of these histories as a documentarian.

HBH: By that do you mean you don't try to either be objective or argue the main points linearly—is that what you mean?

To that point, Ellen, you move very elegantly back and forth across that line: the backwards forwards clogs are next to the plaid plastic bags. Those very strong, very cheap bags depict migration and movement and the actual shoes appear again in the *Hello Traitor! Contact Sheet*: you're wearing the shoes in that image. The photo behind me also has pictures of shoes on the floor, and then you come around to Woodstock and you see bare feet on the ground. Some of the images are flat against the wall, but then this photograph right here, [*points to* Shadowed!] is mounted. Even though you can't see the mount, the piece registers as a thing stepped off from the wall, as opposed to being so flat that it reads as this flatness of photography.

ER: Brecht's workroom was similar to the studio or study: spaces we occupy for production whether it's writing, music, art, or whatever. The sense of writing and collaboration was still present in the room, and I was interested in the space as a place of production. I'm not a documentarian, so I ended up taking oblique off-center views, like this one [*points to* Shadowed!]. I mentioned to Hannah and Shawn that Brecht's vices for working were cigars and pulp crime novels, English crime novels. This was one of the "Ah-ha!" moments—to photograph his bookshelf of crime novels. The language of the titles is vivid, funny, and I also love noir and pulp. Afterwards, on other occasions I began photographing the inside of the desk lamp light bulb and other tangential views or details.

HBH: What if we need melancholy and a kind of nostalgic view of the past in order to use it? I know we're not supposed to want these things. But I know when I look at these things, the sixties especially, I am yearning for something; I want to find that thing and pull it forward. Doing so requires me to bracket my own criticality. I'm not saying it's a melancholic exhibition, but I'm wondering if there's a positive way to use the past if we don't make an attempt to love it?

SMS: I love that question, Hannah—it offers a different way to think about melancholia. Some scholars have written about melancholia as a way of remaining open to the past.[6] In Freud's differentiation between grief, or mourning, and melancholia, mourning is a healthy way of dealing with loss because you get over it. Melancholia, for Freud, is unhealthy because you don't get over it, you refuse to let go of the lost object, you incorporate it.[7] To me there's something poetic and beautiful and interesting about that kind of openness to the past—that refusing to get over it—that I think can be generative. Going back to Josh Rios's comment earlier, I think Ellen has developed a generous way to make work and share it and allow it to be generative for other people.

ER: For me, as far as notions of melancholy and art exhibitions go, it's when they're up and complete. That moment of resolve is melancholy. I'm more interested in a social and discursive kind of situation and the possibility of other people's interpretation, or reinterpretation, and the possibility of using the work as a springboard for producing new work.

Q CLAIRE PENTECOST: The thing I keep thinking about is a passage from Adorno, in *Minima Moralia*. The house is past and the home is past, and now it is the intellectual's moral responsibility to be homeless in the world. That was a very serious charge, and he might have articulated something that took possession of thinking people after the Holocaust. This exhibition is a kind of examination of that, of all those things that try to rupture a comfort in the past, but also the present that it had become. Brecht was all about ruptures. The protests, and Woodstock, and even your performance are about putting yourself in uncomfortable places. What does it mean to be so disrupted by history?

ER: Well, I think we travel a lot. Right? We're on the move.

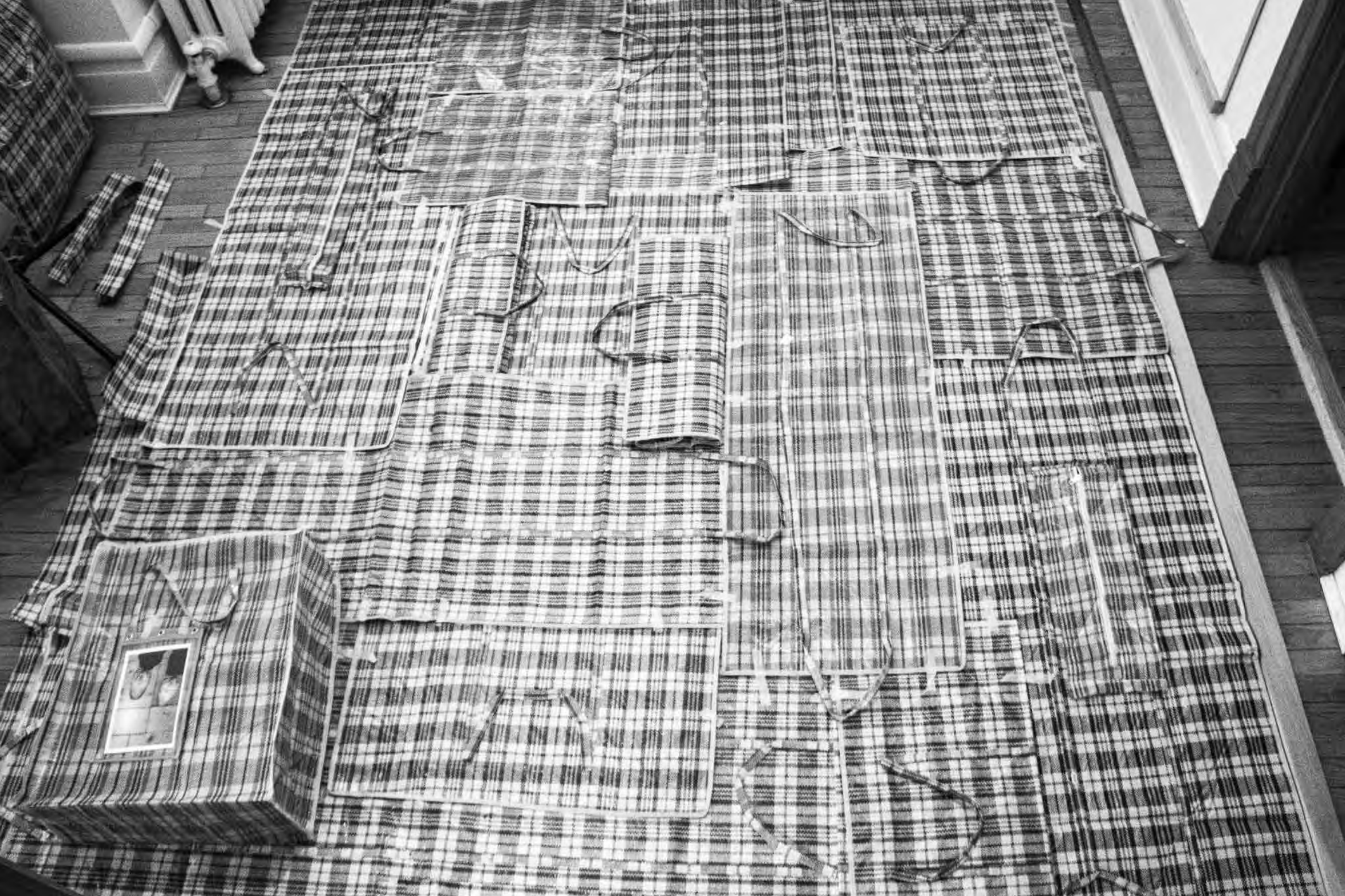
Q: What does the work mean for the present time? And for Berlin now?

ER: Berlin is an archaeological site, and as a visitor you encounter an intentional display of its multiple histories. Berlin is a city that constantly changes and reinvents itself: renaming streets, pulling down statues and putting up new ones. It's now the culture capital of Europe. Berlin models multiple temporalities but it lives clearly in the present, no, I think it has multiple presents.

Ultimately, I'm interested in the intersections of past and present. It offers possibilities for notions of how the past functions. It also reminds you of the things in those moments that were exciting and it proposes that those possibilities and that excitement might resurface to exist in the present.

6 David L. Eng and David Kazanjian, "Introduction: Mourning Remains," in *Loss: The Poetics of Mourning*, eds. Eng and Kazanjian (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 1-25.

7 "Mourning and Melancholia," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. and ed. James Strachey, vol. 14, 1914–1916 (London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1986), 243–58.



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1. *Woodstock Contact Sheet*, 2015.
   Inkjet print, 40 ¼" x 56"

2. *Listening Station*, 2015.
   Record collection, turntable, bench. Dimensions variable

3. *Mirror*, 2015.
   Mounted inkjet print, 14 ½" x 22"

4. *Desk Lamp*, 2015.
   Inkjet print, 32" x 56 ½"

5. *Walking the Boards*, 2015.
   Set of 4: 3 inkjet prints 20" x 30"; 1 mounted inkjet print, 16 ½" x 21 ½"

6. *Shadowed!*, 2015.
   Mounted inkjet print, 24" x 16"

7. *Workplace*, 2015.
   Inkjet print, 33 ½" x 22 ½"

8. *Vienna/Kobani 1-4*, 2015.
   Series of 4 inkjet prints, 24" x 36"

9. *Device Bastard*, 2015.
   Inkjet print, 8" x 12"

10. *Lightbulb*, 2015.
    Inkjet print, 38 ¼" x 56 ½"

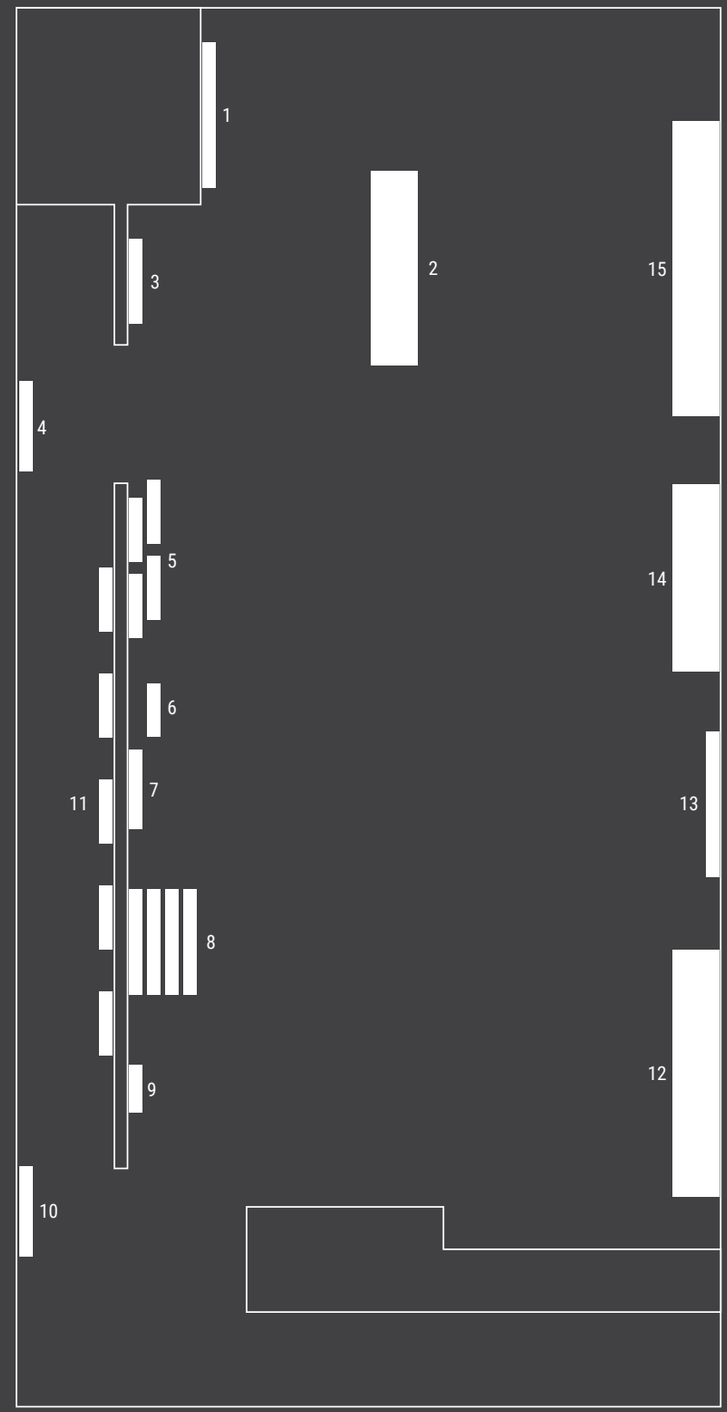
11. (Corridor) *Working Archive: Not to be Taken*, 2015.
    Notes, documents, plastic folders, 16' 9" x 19 ½"

12. *Backwards/Forwards: Lean-to*, 2015.
    4 photographic prints, bags, shoes, 8' x 12' x 36"

13. *Hello Traitor! Contact Sheet*, 2015.
    Mounted inkjet print, 40" x 54"

14. *Buchholz: Linen Lean-to*, 2015.
    Linen, photographic print, 6' x 5' 6 ½" x 43 ½"

15. *Community Lean-to*, 2015.
    Laser prints, honeycomb cardboard, hardware, 8' x 12' x 35 ½"



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8–9 ***Community Lean-to***, detail, photo: Adam Liam Rose

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15 ***Hello Traitor! Contact Sheet***, detail

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120–121 **The Hippies, Allen Ginsberg, Berkeley Vietnam Days**
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139 "Huddle" (Image)
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152–153 Alexandria Eregbu, *NEGOTIATING, INSERTING, AND REVISING PAST AND FUTURE SELVES IN THE PRESENT NOW*,
photo: Deanna Ledezma

154 Institute for Precarious Consciousness, "Six Theses on Anxiety and Why It is Effectively Preventing Militancy, and One Possible Strategy for Overcoming It,"
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photo: Caroline Picard

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photo: Ellen Rothenberg

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DUET KCOTSDOOW,
Becky Grajeda and Mark Booth
Performance detail,
photo: Jesse Jae Hoon Eisenberg

BIOS

MARK BOOTH

Mark Booth is an interdisciplinary artist and educator. His work in language, image, and sound explores the tension between imagination, observation, description, documentation, invention, and the generative possibilities of error. Booth teaches creative writing and sound at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

ALEXANDRIA EREGBU

Alexandria Eregbu is a conceptual artist and disciplinary deviant. Her practice often takes shape in the form of maker, educator, curator, performer, and programmer. Alexandria's concerns frequently address visibility, ontology, family, locality, and mobility. Her work tends to insert itself at the axis of personal experience and myth—usually reliant upon the collection of artifacts, material culture, and an attentiveness to current and historical events. Alexandria has been featured in a range of exhibitions including Weinberg/Newton Gallery, the Arts Incubator in Washington Park, Hyde Park Art Center, Woman Made Gallery, Nightingale Cinema, Roots & Culture, and The Franklin Outdoor in Chicago, IL; The Luminary in St. Louis; Milwaukee Art Museum in Milwaukee, WI; Distillery Gallery in Boston, MA; and Pioneer Works in Brooklyn, NY. She was a recipient of the Propeller Fund Grant (2013) and an Individual Artist Grant from Chicago's Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (2015). She has received fellowships as Resident Curator with HATCH Projects (2013-14); Public Studio Artist-in-Residence at the Chicago Cultural Center (2015); Resident Artist and Curatorial Fellow with ACRE; and Resident Artist at the Stony Island Arts Bank (2016). Most recently, Alexandria was highlighted in *Time Out Chicago* (2016) and listed in *Newcity's* "Breakout Artists: Chicago's Next Generation of Image Makers" (2015). She received her BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

SIMONE FORTI

Simone Forti is a dancer, artist, and writer based in Los Angeles. She came of age artistically in the 1960s, a time of rich dialogue among poets, musicians, dancers, and visual artists. Her early *Dance Constructions* were influential to the reinventing of dance in New York that happened in the sixties and seventies. Forti has collaborated extensively with musicians Peter Van Riper and Charlemagne Palestine, basing her dancing on studies of animal movements and on the dynamics of circling. Since the early 1980s, Forti has been doing *News Animations*, improvisational moving and speaking speculations on world events. Forti's book *Handbook in Motion* was published in 1974 by the Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (distributed by Contact Editions www.contactquarterly.com). Her book *Oh, Tongue* was edited and published by Fred Dewey for Beyond Baroque Books in 2003. Forti has performed internationally at venues including the Louvre Museum in Paris and the Museum of Modern Art in New York, which also features some of her work in its permanent collection. Forti is proud that in 2011 she received the Yoko Ono Lennon Courage Award for the Arts. She is represented by The Box LA Gallery.

BECKY GRAJEDA

Becky Grajeda is a sound artist and designer based in Chicago. Her works of sound assemblage, multichannel installation, and performance frequently include field recordings of the sounds of machinations and/or involve abstracting vocal inflection, intonation, and intended meaning in speech. She has exhibited and performed her sound work in Chicago, Paris, the UK, Finland, and the Czech Republic and has worked in theatrical sound design for productions in Los Angeles, Chicago, and Florence, Italy. In 2014, she received a grant from the City of Chicago's Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events to document three of her performative sound works.

HANNAH B HIGGINS

Hannah B Higgins has been a professor in the Department of Art History at UIC since 1994. She is sole author of dozens of articles on the history of the avant-garde, multimodal artistic experiences, Fluxus, performance art, and art and technology. This work appears in scholarly journals as well as *Fluxus Experience* (University of California Press, 2002) and *The Grid Book* (MIT Press, 2009). Higgins is coeditor with Douglas Kahn of *Mainframe Experimentalism: Early Computing and the Foundations of Digital Art* (University of California Press, 2012). She is also coexecutor of the Estate of Dick Higgins and the Something Else Press. For more information and samples of her scholarship, visit www.hannahbhiggins.com.

TERRI KAPSALIS

Terri Kapsalis is the author of *Jane Addams' Travel Medicine Kit* (Hull-House Museum), *The Hysterical Alphabet* (WhiteWalls), and *Public Privates: Performing Gynecology from Both Ends of the Speculum* (Duke University Press). Along with John Corbett and Anthony Elms, she coedited *Traveling the Spaceways: Sun Ra, the Astro Black and Other Solar Myths* (WhiteWalls) and *Pathways to Unknown Worlds: Sun Ra, El Saturn, and Chicago's Afro-futurist Underground* (WhiteWalls) and cocurated the touring exhibition *Pathways to Unknown Worlds.* Her writings have appeared in such publications as *Short Fiction, Denver Quarterly, Parakeet, The Baffler, New Formations*, and *Public*. She is a founding member of Theater Oobleck and serves on its artistic board. Since 1991 she has been a collective member and health worker at Chicago Women's Health Center. She teaches at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

TIM KINSELLA

Tim Kinsella is the author of two novels, *Let Go and Go On and On* (2014, Curbside Splendor) and *The Karaoke Singer's Guide to Self-Defense* (2011, Featherproof Books) and one book of nonfiction *All Over and Over* (2015, Joyful Noise/Featherproof Books). In 2014 he became the publisher and editor at Featherproof Books. Since 1996 his band Joan of Arc and its related projects have released dozens of albums, and they continue to tour internationally on a regular basis. In 2015 he was both the Artist-in-Residence at Joyful Noise Records and the Visiting Writer at Roosevelt University as well as serving on the programming committee at Chicago Filmmakers. His life and creative work are the subjects of the Viceland feature documentary *Your War (I'm One of You)* which premiered in fall 2016.

ANNE ELIZABETH MOORE

Anne Elizabeth Moore was born in Winner, SD. She is an internationally lauded cultural critic and the author of *Unmarketable* (Best Book, *Mother Jones*) and *Cambodian Grrrl* (Best Book, Lowell Thomas Travel Journalism Award) among several other titles. The two-time Fulbright Scholar is the former editor of *Punk Planet, The Comics Journal, LA Review of Books'* comics section, and the Best American Comics series from Houghton Mifflin. She has written for *The Baffler, New Inquiry, Jacobin, Tin House, Salon, Al Jazeera,* and *Truthout*. She has exhibited work in the Whitney Biennial in NYC; in Leipzig, Phnom Penh, Berlin, Tbilisi, and Vienna; and in a solo exhibition at the MCA in Chicago. She has recently conducted experimental workshops on censorship and investigative journalism with ArtCenter, Machine Project, and the International Center of Photography. She was recently awarded the third house in Detroit, MI's unique Write A House program. Her recent book *Threadbare: Clothes, Sex & Trafficking*, is a work of investigative comics journalism on connections between the global garment and sex trades. *Body Horror*, essays on women's experience of capitalism, came out in April 2017.

DAO NGUYEN

Dao Nguyen is a Chicago-based interdisciplinary artist. She choreographs thought experiments, play apparatuses, obstacle courses, and transformation rituals. A score becomes a map is a situation where objects, actions, and bodies encounter philosophical questions concerning representation, systems, and relations. Her name is a homophone for the Vietnamese word for knife. She is the compact, red Leatherman multitool your aunt gave you for Christmas ten years ago. On sale at Marshalls. Versatility and hidden strength in a small package at a discount. Stealthy enough to pass through security checkpoints on three continents on four separate occasions. She can cut, screw, file, saw, and open your beer. Bonus applications include carving miniature graphite figurines, picking locks, and sculpting tofu. She has exhibited and performed in backyards, bathrooms, churches, stairwells, highways, and gallery spaces including Defibrillator, the MCA, Hyde Park Art Center, Sullivan Galleries, Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery, Brea Art Gallery, The Foundry Arts Centre, and Irvine Fine Arts Center. She received an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and was Artist-in-Residence at ACRE, Vermont Studio Center, Ragdale, and Elsewhere: A Living Museum.

CAROLINE PICARD

Caroline Picard is a writer, publisher, and curator. Her writing has appeared in *Artslant, ArtForum* (critics picks), *Flash Art International*, and *Paper Monument*, among others. She is the Executive Director of the Green Lantern Press—a nonprofit publishing house and art producer in operation since 2005—and the Codirector of Sector 2337, a hybrid artspace/bar/bookstore in Chicago. www.cocopicard.com.

ELLEN ROTHENBERG

Since the early eighties, Ellen Rothenberg's work has been concerned with the politics of everyday life and the formation of communities through collaborative practices. Influenced by the social and political actions of the sixties—the civil rights, antiwar, and feminist movements—she began locating her work outside conventional institutional venues, shifting her performances and sculpture to the street, city parks, subway platforms and other public spaces, broadening the audience for her work. At the same moment, Rothenberg began to immerse herself in research, particularly feminist histories of labor and social action. Partnering with historians, forensic scientists, research librarians and archivists, she developed a practice that includes and recognizes intellectual workers and material fabricators in a nonhierarchical approach.

From her 1970s performances to her 1980s installations, to her collaborative approach in the 1990s, Rothenberg has probed formal boundaries for what they can *produce*, designing responsive structures that encourage participation. This strategy continues to drive her work, and can be seen as an aesthetic, political, and social force. Inclusive, generative, collaborative, open … these are essential characteristics of her ongoing work. Expanding this approach internationally in the 1990s Rothenberg produced a hybrid pedagogy in her teaching as well. Working with established communities and forming new ones has become an essential part of her working process.

Investigating through multiple permutations: graphics and publication, sculptural objects, performance, installation, moving images, and public events, Rothenberg rejects a singular approach to material and concept, while retaining taut attention to detail and materiality in her work.

Rothenberg's work has been presented in North America and Europe at The Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; The Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston; The Museum of London, Ontario; The Contemporary Jewish Museum, San Francisco; The Neues Museum Weserburg, Bremen; Royal Festival Hall, London; The Brukenthal National Museum, Sibiu, Romania; among others. Awards include NEA Fellowships, The Bunting Institute Fellowship, Radcliffe College Harvard University, Illinois Arts Council Fellowships, The Massachusetts Artist Foundation Fellowships, and grants from CEC Artslink, The Charles Engelhard Foundation, The LEF Foundation, and NEA Artists Projects. She has worked in collaboration with the Chicago Torture Justice Memorial Project, Future Force Geo Speculators, and Chelen Amenca, Romania. Rothenberg teaches at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

JEFFREY SKOLLER

Jeffrey Skoller is a writer and filmmaker. His films, video, and photography have been exhibited internationally. Screenings and exhibitions include: The Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley; Museum of the Moving Image, NY; JP Getty Museum, Los Angeles, CA; Whitney Museum, NY; P.S. 1, NY; Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, CA; Flaherty Film Seminar, NY; Arsenal Kino, Berlin; Mannheim Film Festival, Germany; The Latin American Film Festival, Havana; National Film Theatre, London. His essays and articles on experimental film and video have appeared in numerous books, artist catalogues, and in journals including *Film Quarterly, Discourse, Representations, Afterimage, Animation: An Interdisciplinary Journal, Cinematograph*, among others. He is the author of two books: *Shadows, Specters, Shards: Making History in Avant-Garde Film* (University of Minnesota Press) and *POSTWAR: The Films of Daniel Eisenberg* (Blackdog Press). Skoller currently teaches in the Department of Film & Media at UC Berkeley.

SHAWN MICHELLE SMITH

Shawn Michelle Smith is a professor of Visual and Critical Studies at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago where she has taught for the past ten years. She writes about the history and theory of photography and gender and race in U.S. visual culture, and she maintains a photo-based visual art practice. She has published five books, including most recently *At the Edge of Sight: Photography and the Unseen* (Duke University Press, 2013), which won the 2014 Lawrence W. Levine Award for best book in American cultural history from the Organization of American Historians and the 2014 Jean Goldman Book Prize from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The American Academy in Berlin

School of the Art Institute of Chicago

Brecht-Weigel-Gedenkstätte, Berlin
Elke Pfeil, Leiterin des Fachbereichs
Benutzerservice/Gedenkstätten Akademie der Künste, Archiv

Nova Scotia College of Art and Design for originally publishing Simone Forti's *Handbook in Motion* in 1974

Individual Artists Program Grant, City of Chicago
Department of Cultural Affairs & Special Events

Odile Compagnon, Architecture and Exhibition Design Consultant

Mark Simon, Camera

Ingo Kratisch, Camera

Bridget Erin Crowe, Textile Fabrication

Erik Newman, Structure Fabrication

Adam Liam Rose, Studio Assistant

Devin King, Music Guru

Alex Gartelmann, Exhibition Installation

Matt Gehring, Photographic Print Consultant

Robert Lewis Gonzales, Studio Assistant

Caroline Paige Geberick, Studio Assistant

Malcolm Sutton, Editorial Consultant

COLOPHON

PUBLISHER
The Green Lantern Press
2337 N. Milwaukee Ave.
Chicago, IL 60647
www.thegreenlantern.org

ISBN: 978-0-9974165-1-0
Printed in China
First edition of 750

PUBLICATION MANAGER AND EDITOR
Caroline Picard

ASSISTANT EDITOR
Fulla Abdul-Jabbar

COPYEDITING
Lauren Weinberg
with Samantha Chao and Nicholas Frank Amsel

BOOK DESIGN
Sonia Yoon

TYPEFACES
Titles: Anton, designed by Vernon Adams, 2013.
Subheadings & Body: Robato and Robato Condensed, designed by Christian Robertson, 2011.
Simone Forti's *The Garden* set in ITC Century, designed by Tony Stan, 1975.

This project is partially supported by an Individual Artist Program Grant from the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs & Special Events, as well as a grant from the Illinois Arts Council Agency, a state agency through federal funds provided by the National Endowment for the Arts.

Rothenberg's feminist social sculpture and animated objects echo radical en-actions from Brecht, Fluxus, suffrage street theatre, and Black Lives Matter protests. Worn shoes declare that the way lies both forward and backward, for the past always underlies the present and reverberates deeply in the desires of our current work and lives. This radical book should be in your backpack at a May Day parade or protest strike! Mourn and organize! —**FAITH WILDING**, artist, writer, and educator

Ellen Rothenberg's book/archive serves as a complex memory machine where the global 20th century's cultural, political, and social revolutions encounter the local now. The captivating imagery of Rothenberg's reflexive and expansive work lifts you out of history's shadows and makes you feel alive, resisting the wave of inevitability. *Shadowed!* is timely. This book is a gift to anyone curious about or deeply interested in material culture, history, social change, and contemporary art. —**IRINA ARISTARKHOVA**, author of *Hospitality of the Matrix: Philosophy, Biomedicine, and Culture*

Needed: An example of health which will paralyze the Angels. Provided: The fortifying Forward/Backward groove of conceptualist Ellen Rothenberg. Part performance, part archive, part tonic, *elsetime* is what happens to a retrospective when historical engagement is already the problem of the work. If you know Rothenberg's art, *Shadowed!* is essential reading. If you are coming to it for the first time, it is a compelling invitation to voyage. —**DANIEL ROSENBERG**, cultural historian and author of *Cartographies of Time*

Shadowed! troubles temporal linearity and spatial capture. It is a time of multiple moments and simultaneous directions. A performance in its own right, *Shadowed!* is an invitation to time travel towards alternative futures of the the past. In these pages we trespass (lightly, with worn shoes) through ecstatic and traumatic territories. —**BETTINA KNAUP**, curator and author of *re.act.feminism, performance art of the 1960s and 70s today*

Breathing new life into dog-eared crime novellas, faded bell-bottom jeans, and a tattered armchair, time-bending artist Ellen Rothenberg virtually collaborates with the past, reanimating the material traces of a gone world through an archival agency of the elsewhere. —**GREGORY SHOLETTE**, artist and author of *Delirium and Resistance: Activist Art and the Crisis of Capitalism*

Ellen Rothenberg's multimodal installation *elsetime* interlaced performance actions, installation, objects, public invitations to fellow artists, and visual essays. In this beautiful and thoughtfully designed book, you'll find each of these aspects explored anew as though readied for further action. New pieces by collaborators enter the scene and become enmeshed in photographic echoes from '60s collective rallying, music documentary, contemporary migrancy, material icons, and the live events generated during the exhibition. The great exclamation mark of the title brings all these absents squarely into view, while posing the pressing question: how does one avoid reenacting shadows from the past! —**CAROLINE BERGVALL**, artist, writer, performer, and author of *Drift*

ABOUT THIS BOOK

Shadowed! confronts the slippage of time and action within Ellen Rothenberg's exhibition *elsetime*. Sweeping through the studio of Bertolt Brecht, Woodstock in the sixties, Berlin in the nineties, and the Syrian protests of today, *Shadowed!* projects a dispersive, unfolding temporality. Beginning with a suite of *elsetime* photographs, the book continues with reflections on the show by Hannah B Higgins, Jeffrey Skoller, Caroline Picard, and Shawn Michelle Smith—spreading out from there into an artist's archive that includes scanned fragments of writings by Stefan Brecht, Allen Ginsberg, Angela Davis, and transcribed contributions from Simone Forti. A subsequent section includes documentation of performances produced in response to *elsetime* by artists, activists, and musicians. *Shadowed!* ends with the transcript of a public conversation that took place within the original exhibit, capturing a discussion that incorporates an active audience. By layering these performative, photographic, and written encounters, *Shadowed!* allows the afterimage of an exhibition to unfurl beyond the gallery, beyond this book, and into its own elsetime.

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$30.00
ISBN 978-0-9974165-1-0
53000>
9 780997 416510