

Against
the Grain



Against

the

Grain

Christopher

Russell

The Devil Will Find Work



have yet to discover a clear account of Etienne Carjat's wounded hand, so I don't know if the blood trickled or gushed. Were bones impacted or was it an historically exaggerated scratch? I want to believe that the sword went through, but not cleanly, that the blade disturbed the assumed order of small bones, making a place for itself. And the blood - it seeped from top and palm, curdling around hairs, slowly converting the familiarity of skin into a bloody unease, a foundation for the history of transgressive art.

The myth that artists had taken over the city developed in the aftermath of the Commune of Paris and retains a profound and lasting impact in the contemporary art world. The notion of the artist as an anarchistic catalyst of social change became the foundation for a series of philosophical and stylistic transformations that artists are still sifting through. Myths of artistic freedom, anarchy within the structured excitement of the city, lured Rimbaud to Paris, to his relationship with Verlaine, and ultimately to the party and argument that became the backdrop for Carjat's stabbing. Freedom was a serious proposition, and young Rimbaud took it to an extreme.

The absolute freedom of the individual is society's greatest horror. The social pact, the agreement that citizens make to trade aspects of freedom for a sense of security, cannot withstand complete freedom. The horror of social violation is echoed in the invention of the flaneur, a word initially used to describe a regimen of walks designed to occupy the minds and time of the newly emergent middle class. But the term flaneur became an attack on laziness, the social withdraw of the decadent. The devil will find work for idle hands to do. This bromide embodies the social anxiety around the developing middle class. Given the equation of leisure time and depravity, decadent art and literature became the frayed edges of a society ever on the verge of unraveling.

Of the decadents, perhaps the most shocking images come from J. K. Huysmans, whose novels explored topics that remain taboo more than a century later: the fictionalized, satanic underworld of Paris - delighting in tales of exalted excrement and ritualized murder. *A Rebours*, translated as either *Against Nature* or *Against the Grain*, is a tale of complete withdraw from the social world in favor of a solitary existence dedicated to sensory pleasure: a complete focus on aesthetic detail, the willful corruption of youth, orgies, homosexuality, syphilitic deterioration and pedophilia all located within a world of exotic plants, texts, images and color.

A Rebours begins with the main character, Des Essients, staring down a hall filled with family portraits, noticing that the personage depicted in each painting becomes increasingly frail as his eyes track from past to present. He then notes his own fragile condition and determines there is no use in perpetuating the failed proposition of his family lineage. He sells off the family estate, and all its furnishings, converting ancestry into capital. He has no concern for establishing a secure legacy, a good family for stable social advancement. Des Essients revels in the notion that he'll have exactly

enough money to finish out his days in precisely the manner he chooses. He embraces the decadent withdraw from communal life and retreats into indulgence, satisfying his senses in pleasures unimagined throughout the history of strong men who amassed the fortune Des Essients would spend on himself.

Huysmans abandons the most basic convention of fiction writing: narrative arch. His exhaustive vision of sensual adventure required another type of ancestral betrayal, that of his literary predecessors. He doesn't dwell within the tricks of light and shadow that defined the moody psychology of the Gothic novel. He delivers a processed psychology, taking pains to precisely record the intellectual labor of decision making. He built a detailed portrait by tracing the minutia of how Des Essients draws a particular conclusion. Huysman favors decimating the family over the ghostly haze of sublimated betrayal familiar to the Gothic novelists.

Huysmans deals with concrete decisions about aesthetic worth. He posits conclusions, concrete decisions about the determined value of specific commodities. He indulges in the luxury of sensory impressions created by all items entering his home, paintings, colors, texts, foods, sounds, servants, etc. He controlled the analysis of his own decisions and the reward for the reader is the lengthy, unimpeachable rationale for each book on the shelf, for each decision in his home's design and décor, and every pleasure incurred within. He writes with singular concentration on the intellectual labor involved in choosing a wall color, factoring in the varied and combined effects of trim color, natural and artificial light.

These pages of the novel offer a deep analysis of the decision making process, something most often left to impulse. The reader ultimately understands Des Essients' exact rationale how he decided to curate his home. His attention to detail is as thorough as one expects of the Gothic Novel, yet he doesn't allow for the psychological impressionism that the Romantics would have appreciated. The power of Gothic Literature exists in the netherworld of sublimation, the inscrutable, tensions built upon omissions and intentional misalignments. The power of Huysmans comes from an opposite direction, carefully directed signification, making sure that the readers' tastes don't interfere with his narrative momentum, replacing the facade of social convention with a roadmap to specific conclusions.

Des Essients decides in Chapter 5 that the architecture of his home in Fontenay is missing a kinetic element, something that will offer a periodic surprise of chance juxtaposition. He decides to have the shell of a living tortoise encrusted with precious metals and stones. Once suitably decorated, the tortoise is allowed to roam about the house offering a pleasant sensation of variety within the otherwise stagnant aesthetic of his home. Ultimately the weight of adornment destroys the animal, and the chapter ends uneventfully, though with the animal's death. The life of the tortoise is not

lingered on or offered as an empathetic device, it simply provides that an experiment of design has failed.

Kinetic decor faltered. The tortoise, reduced to an element of design, became stationary. The embrace of pleasure at the cost of all else is, perhaps, Huysmans' most brilliant metaphor for decadence as it predicts Des Essients' eventual demise without creating a distinct narrative arc, a specific chain of events leading to an anticipated conclusion. It is never revealed what became of the tortoise shell, if it was merely discarded, if the animal rotted in place, or was stripped of flesh and his shell salvaged for decorative purposes, if the cabochons and gold were recycled into another piece or if the whole mess was simply discarded.

Understanding the tortoise is important because Des Essients' frivolity exhausts his humanity. He provides a portrait of society on the edge of the abyss. He's lost any sense of the value of life, even his own. This divorce of right and wrong makes him, perhaps, more amoral than even Gilles de Rais. For Des Essients, empathy has no currency in pleasure.

Huysmans' world reflects the nightmare of anxiety surrounding the middle-class: the iniquitous associations of leisure time, positing the possibility of a crumbling social pact, a growing segment of society dedicated to their own pleasure above any sense of social need or responsibility. The horror of the tortoise, the ease with which the value of life is discarded for personal enjoyment precisely represents the threat of syphilis: the price of moral misstep, societies fragile nature.

Huysmans, the writer who willingly reveals the precise train of logic for why each thing in his fictional setting is the exact way that it is, falters on the subject of pedophilia. The male child is the instigator if not the aggressor, and in Chapter 9, Des Essients has only to agree to the child's advances. The description is truncated, so the reader only knows that the two wander off together and that the events of that afternoon are recalled with sexual relish throughout Des Essients' life. There is no description of sexual mechanics, or even a vague sense of which type of sex acts occurred. This is the only scene in which Des Essients is not in complete control, the active creator of his own world. He finds his limit passively participating in a child's game. The pleasure of those moments returns in haunting excitement, but Des Essients needs a level of distance from this ultimate transgression. He separates himself from the act, unable to register the ethics of an afternoon with a young boy.

This scene exposes the limits of cultural thought, the farthest extent that a fictional character can stretch social convention, and ultimately represents a new model of ancestry. Huysmans feels the need to pass something along to a new generation, but elides traditional modes of reproduction. He is chosen by his successor and the ensuing unspecificity of the text becomes generative. Des Essients might not extend his lineage

through heredity, but
thoughts into ever
tipped into a text fleshed
of detail implores readers to
Huysmans couldn't.

Huysmans left room for readers to expand their
darker corners. The pedophilia scene is a sketch
out to a photorealistic extreme. The differential
color the pederastic scene in their own minds. To
make sense of the scene, the viewer must interact with the full force of a prospect that
Huysmans couldn't.

Contemplating what is missing, what the decadent refused to write, extends the
novel into the minds of its readers and requires them to think through the darkest
proposal of social devastation. Huysmans recognized that youth is the future of
intellectual perspectives, that social transgression is generationally based. Even though
Des Essients was without family, his ideas maneuver themselves into successive
generations through the space of the novel. Des Essients created a future by planting
his seed in a child, Huysmans passed his ideas into the future in a body of leaves and
dots of ink.

The Devil May Care



n abstract orange flicker engulfs a distant house; the wheeze and crackle of burning wood is a calming accent to the silence of night. Walls of flame, a mesmerizing highlight against a stage of darkness. Feelings overcome thought; ideas lodge themselves within musculature. Security, the peace one feels standing unaffected by a distant horror, is relative to the tragedy of others, sublimated into sensations that defy description. Plumes of yellowed carbon, a sickly gray reflecting the fire. Twitch and burn, the lulling beauty of conflagration.

A trick of cinematic close-up, zooming into the fire, pulling back to reveal another scene. The trembling orange becomes something else, something orange and trembling. Contours of skin writhe into spasms, reflect the dim warmth of an Edison bulb. Pale skin shading into darkness, iridescent glints of cosmetics, flashing hair wet at the tips, bodies moving together, against each other, boundaries faltering within a tangle. Among impassioned gasps, the unknowable becomes perfectly clear.

In Edmond Burke's burning house, the devil is seen from a distance, contained within the frame of night, separated from the viewer by a gulf of space, the black of night. One is affected physically, but pleasantly as he's confronted with devastation yet immune to its ramifications. The devil dazzles us with the brutality of his spectacle, but behaves himself, focuses his incendiary energy on an isolated target, providing a contemplative reprieve for those who escape his sight.

The devil offers an alternative to the rigid confines of social structure, but the price of freedom is disease. For Huysmans, life offers only two choices: withering within the banality of quotidian experience or embracing the badness repressed by the social pact. In a clear dichotomy of good and evil, his choice is clear: personal enjoyment, fine furnishings, exotic gardens, orgies, syphilitic contamination. The devil is embodied in the sweat that lubricates tangled bodies on a bed, cum leaked and licked, gasped breaths and nihilistic indifference. Bodies are instruments of pleasure, even if indulgence ultimately spells demise; freedom becomes the ability to maneuver outside social acceptance.

For Huysmans, the devil is a vector, swallowed whole and relished, passed along through a lust for understanding. There's no point of safe contemplation. The sublime fails to excite adequate sensation, and so he looks into the depths of social taboo. He no longer takes pleasure in abstract sensations, but revels in the risk of succumbing to pleasure. Watching flames consume a distant house doesn't approach the smug contentment registered on Nero's face. Satan lives inside, he's accepted into one's heart and becomes a philosophy for daily living.

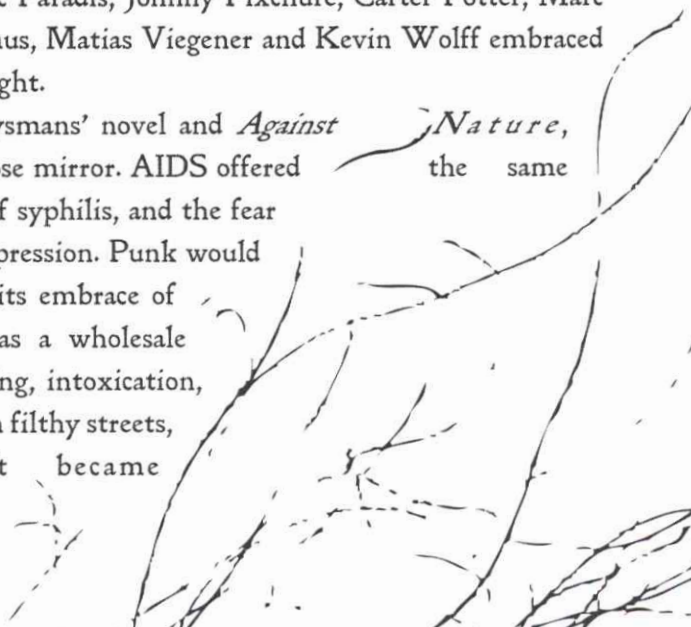
Georges Bataille writes of an intimate link between sex and death, ecstatic metaphysical elisions of mortality. Other bodies represent an attempt to subvert our own obvious ending. To know an other exceeds the sum of one's own existence, sex becomes metaphysical, fleeting and addictive. But taken outside of Bataille's mysticism,

equating sex and death seems to speak directly of syphilis. The threat, though not the stigma, of venereal disease ebbs in the middle of the twentieth century only to emerge with paranoid ferocity, transmogrified, as the AIDS epidemic.

Within Huysmans' novel, sensory exploration is an elaborate primer for the final chapters of syphilitic decay. The intoxication offered by commodities eventually pales in comparison to sexual transcendence, states that move the mind beyond reason. The exhausting effects of debauchery overcome the pleasure of decadence. Huysmans' novel begins with the loss of genetic fortitude and ends with a loss of personal resilience. It leaves one wondering if Des Essiens' final embrace of god foreshadows Huysmans' own Catholic conversion. Or, was Huysmans making a connection between the cloistered life of the ecclesiastic and the secluded ritual of decadent withdraw, each existing in opposition to quotidian insipidity. Huysmans leaves us wondering what our bodies are good for, if not pleasure, and what price that satisfaction is worth.

Intimacy allows the pleasure principle to overcome the life drive, accepting the risk of relinquished boundaries. The freedom that Huysmans finds is ultimately that of the unknowable: either death or god (if there's a discernible difference.) In the 1980's that formula conspired with the nihilism of Punk to challenge the the social reserve of "Just say no," the fear of imminent plague, and a culture of activism whose moral superiority can be as personally stifling as its conservative opposite. The artists of *Against Nature*, the art exhibition that appeared at Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE) in 1988, curated by Dennis Cooper and Richard Hawkins and featuring visual, video, performance and literary works by Nayland Blake, David Bussel, Peter Christopherson, Arch Connelly, Bruno Cuomo, Vaginal Davis, John de Fazio, Arold Fern, Mike Glass, John Goss, John Greyson, Hudson, Gary Indiana, Doug Ischar, Larry Johnson, Isaac Julian, Tom Kalin, Kevin Killian, George Kuchar, Stashu Kybartas, Steve Lafreniere, Boyd McDonald, Tim Miller, Marc Paradis, Johnny Pixchure, Carter Potter, Marc Romano, Jack Shear, Michael Tidmus, Matias Viegner and Kevin Wolff embraced the ruinous wonder of decadent thought.

100 years passed between Huysmans' novel and *Against Nature*, yet the politics of the day seem a close mirror. AIDS offered the same threat of death that had been true of syphilis, and the fear of disease became a force of social repression. Punk would have also had familiar tones, with its embrace of Rimbaud-esque anarchy: freedom as a wholesale rejection of societal norms / squatting, intoxication, self-abuse. Solitary wandering, down filthy streets, through the shadows of night; it became a perversion of the



decadent's retreat,
the physical location
of addiction, the place to find the
next fix, the next prick, the next place to crash.
Cruising cannot be entirely separated from the legacy
of the flaneur. The café and arcade are traded for toilets and
alleyways: the elusive substance of art, the fleeting rush of life
Pleasure comes in the momentary extraction of one's body from
the banality of the social pact. Personal satisfaction requires a
distinct separation from Nancy Reagan's normalcy.

AIDS activists resounded their mantra, "Knowledge = Power," while
the government pushed its credo, "Just say no," but each provided an image of life
foregrounded by civic responsibility in advance of individual pleasure. Huysmans'
novel became a reference for life which eschews the predictable identity of activism
for a wholesale challenge of the social pact. While activism continuously demands
justice within an increasing number of limited arenas, the artists of *Against Nature*
made their own withdrawal, defined social space as they wanted it to be, in relation to
their personal desires. AIDS was an enormous concern, an acknowledged backdrop for
Against Nature, but the show didn't address a specific grievance or begin with the task
of reasserting a need for government funded research. It took on cultural assumptions
by personally invalidating their terms, by looking at numerous individual approaches
to the anxiety of desire. They chose the freedom of cruising, curiosity, wandering the
city, looking for the next thrill, whatever and wherever the pavement might lead, by
adopting a promiscuous curatorial perspective. The shock of *Against Nature* is the
range of responses that deviated from a perceived gay norm.

Ancestry is a concept that largely elides homosexual artists. Gay activists made
efforts to reclaim historical figures, to establish a rhetoric that placed the gay movement
squarely within a rich history of social involvement and artistic production. Figures
from antiquity, Da Vinci, Michelangelo, Joan of Arc, etc. were posthumously inducted
into a movement whose values and nomenclature would have been entirely unfamiliar.
As the gay male body became increasingly equated with disease, it was also seen as a
site of rebellion. Fabricating a history to counterbalance negative assumptions became a
tenet of the activist's prescriptive identity. Personal standards weren't so much personal
as something set by the ivory tower of gay political correctness.

The primary criticisms waged against *Against Nature* dealt with the lack of civic
production, absence of an activist's agenda, or essentially, using the name AIDS in vain.
The curators chose the personal and evasive identity of the Gothic over the concrete
identity of gay historiography and assimilation. Instead of claiming pride in chintzy
rainbow emblems, Cooper and Hawkins employed the sterile, medical subtitle,

"A Group Show of Works by Homosexual Men." They ducked out of the identity business, focusing on the individual rather than common goal. The effect was to separate contemporary experience from contemporary activism.

Against Nature looked to literature for models of evasive identity, guises which allowed the individual room to maneuver. The result was an embrace of Maurice Blanchot, whose surrealist texts offer characters seemingly floating through the enigma of the afterlife, ghosts fluidly inhabiting physicality, of L'Autreant who designed an elusive identity that today remains largely speculative, of Walpole who's initial sensation was derived from the complete dissolution of his own authorship, of Rimbaud, the original punk who ultimately lived under bridges like a fairy tale troll and eventually disappeared into Africa.

The malleability of identity predicts *Against Nature's* own dissolution into mythology. As a legend it has three distinct guises: irresponsibility, transgression and academia. The show is vilified for irresponsibility, wasting both resources and opportunity to increase AIDS awareness and social acceptance of homosexuality. It is lauded for its transgressive candor, for discussing life in a dialog that is largely consumed by death, introducing pleasure in a moment of struggle. It is also dismissed as being too clearly academic, the physical pieces in the show seeming largely a paradigm of conceptual art and therefore resistant to emotional response. Today the show is primarily experienced through a catalog which only lists basic information about the works included: artist, title, medium. Perhaps the most concrete influence comes from pedagogy, as a number of the show's original participants have become involved in academia. LACE's own archive has but a precious few images documenting the project. The bulk have been lent and lost or, more likely, purloined as souvenirs of a show whose historical importance is becoming increasingly understood. Twenty years later, accounts of *Against Nature* differ from person to person and, as if predicting the flow of historical dialog, the catalog primarily documents literary aspects of the show. Fiction and musings have historically supplanted the physical space of the gallery. Vibrant images of naked torsos, cum and blood preserved as kitsch paperweights are now a background, mingled with history and speculation, rushing from the enigma of history, influencing a new generation of artists.

Sympathy for the Devil



r the Green River Killer's dumping ground. Bodies in various stages of decay, putrified flesh / the shade of blue eye shadow, blond hair, wet, brown with mud, red patches of gore, eroded, water logged and worm eaten. Ophelia in multiplicity, a hall of mirrors, a grotesque nod to *The Lady From Shanghai*. Bodies mingling in the physical space of the imagined wilds of the Gothic novel, the flash and slash of Jason's blade then a jump cut to the mortal wound, blood smeared around a mottled black gash / still oozing, prodigious spray across floors and windows, splatter merging into landscape. Branches blocking the sun, nature strains to contain a murderous fury. Limbs twist into the arch of Adam's house / that shape around the doors of cathedrals / stretching toward perched gargoyles, icons of awe and horror. This ramble of cultural familiarity marks an historical flow of power, the rushing current of thought that represents a contemporary Gothic aesthetic.

The social unconscious bottoms out, its trails of historical breadcrumbs, studied at length, eventually offer diminished returns. History has its own equivalent to the Decadent's solitary retreat, a world where an excess of meanings collapse under their own weight. Within that rubble is the precise location of the contemporary Gothic, intellectual exploration succumbed to ravaged remnants, to the unknowability of history. Beyond Foucault is a realm of questioning too old, too complex or convoluted. Epistemologies require beginnings that are interpolated, truncated and convenient. The gothic seizes upon elusive histories, mysteries from antiquity whose disconnection informs the present, the influence of a past lingering outside our vantage point.

The terms of the Gothic lie beyond description, they are felt in the fleeting rush of cumming and the imaginary forever of death; they are inherently Romantic. The Gothic represents a current of historical power that permeates every aspect of society, but can only be abstracted, truncated or mythologized – never precisely identified. The Gothic thrives on temporal interpretation, a free flow of historical exploration and contemporary reinvention.

Gothic artwork references a composite notion of darkness, an incomplete history, a thread of cultural thought that lingers over apocalyptic chaos. The Gothic manuscripts of William Morris were influenced by the texts and architecture, word and deed, of Horace Walpole, who was in turn inspired by Renaissance drawings of fantastical Gothic architecture based on abstract notions of third century attacks on the Roman empire. Goths, brutes, an entire people who represent the cataclysmic force of the uncouth, an attack from a cultural vacuum, a broadsiding of the social pact that crumbled the predictable order of classical thought.


The Gothic evolves two distinct aspects from this abbreviated history. Its original terms are largely imaginary. There is nothing known of the original invaders. There is no surviving artistic culture to mimic, nothing to reinforce specific terms of a style, instead they represent a thematic inspiration. The origin only exists as fantasy, in

individual attempts to resolve a contemporary aesthetic within a speculative history. The second aspect of the Gothic that comes from its truncated history is the tendency to conflate myths of creation and Armageddon. The Gothic declines nostalgia. It refuses to accept the myth of a peaceful beginning leading to a violent end, to the notion that knowledge corrupts and that better times can be found in the past. The Gothic declines an original innocence and concedes merely friction and anguish.

The power of the Gothic comes from generational reinvention, a perversion of ancestry that differs from Huysmans, but is a variation on the theme, a permutation within an episteme. The contemporary Gothic maneuvers historicity into the arena of Romantic imagination. The contemporary Gothic is free to pick and choose from historical example without feeling constricted by accuracy, as its own history has proven too elusive. There is no beginning, so interpretations are personalized around themes of destruction, violence, anger, macabre - the territory that pushes hardest against the social pact.

The flaneur, the cruiser, historical permutations of the shadowy archivist who wanders the city with a lust for understanding, still haunts the contemporary Gothic. This figure is now translated through Walter Benjamin's *Arcade Project*, taken off the street and moved inside. The space of focused meandering becomes the territory of the researcher. Cobbled streets and broken curbs become aisles of books and electronic data. The library, the internet, thrift stores and record shops are the heirs of exploration pioneered in the arcades. The information of intellectual cruising is laden with a history that sublimates into a hazy sense of the past, mingles with other indistinct histories and informs the present.

Tom Allen paints in order to fuck with history, refusing differentiation between the seventeenth, nineteenth and twenty-first centuries. His influences are equally formed of historical painters such as Salvatore Rosa and Caspar David Friedrich and contemporary industrial music. His images are every bit German Romanticism, yet his color palate places his work squarely in the present; there's never any concession of one to the other. Wendell Gladstone mines mythological references for increasingly elaborate totems that play out psycho-dramas within the highly constructed narratives of his acrylic relief paintings and sculptures. His tableaux range from pure pathos to psychedelic mysticism. Robert Fontenot takes on the classics, using bread dough to recreate violent scenes that evoke the friezes of Greek architecture. Fontenot, replaces stolid gods with utter brutality: decapitation, forced mastectomy, amputations and stabbing. His work is realized in the awkward naivety of a child's medium, the monochrome of bread dough referencing cheap encyclopedia reproductions as much as Greek marble. Cheyenne Weaver works through the elaborate designs of map cartouches, Baroque forms that guided early explorers away from monster infested waters. She relishes these elaborate forms,



reimagining original

engravings as sculpture or wallpaper, celebrating their utility and reverencing their warnings by focused overproduction.

Anna Sew Hoy's abstractions of tangled, shredded cloth forms lingers in an amorphous territory. The instability of the sculpture encourages a read of violence. Torn denim references various types of assault, abandonment, deterioration, and moves into the vernacular of horror movies: swells of leaches or serpents, the webbed lairs of fantastical monsters, but the real power of her compositions is that they don't signify any one thing. They present an intellectual tease that eventually trudges into the murky waters of sensation. Julian Hoeber's black figural portraits owe a debt to Ad Reinhardt, but linger on death rather than the death of painting. Hoeber creates emotionally dense portraits that inspire a deflating sense of awe while his lead sculptures of bullet riddled visages capture the raw ferocity of violence.

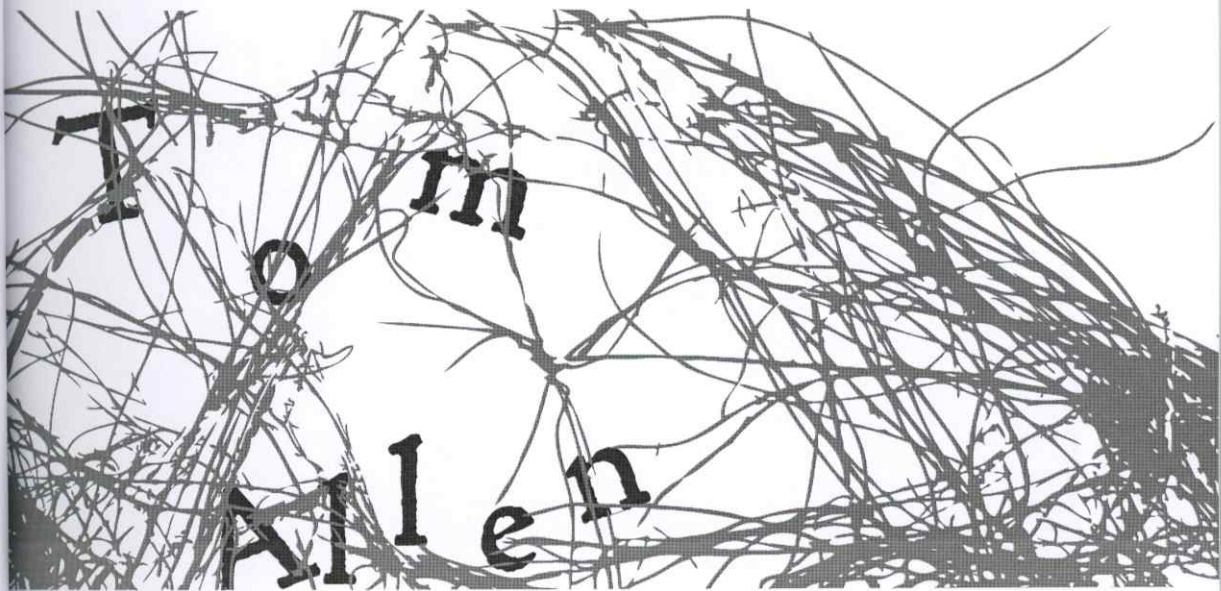
Brian Kennon stands closer to the recent past, taking equal influence from punk and appropriation. His projects traverse a dangerous territory of cultural overlap: sexism blurring into feminism, the nuclear paranoia of Ab Ex painting, the conceptually messy abutment of pedagogy and appropriation. Kelly Sears appropriates pop cultural images in the service of narrative animation. Appropriated stills come to life and perform to biting and humorous scripts. Her moving collages are obvious heirs to several Beat practices and aesthetics. Ryan Taber submerses himself in research that eventually informs sculptural confections. Pieces that smash together disparate concepts linked within layers of esoteric scholarship.

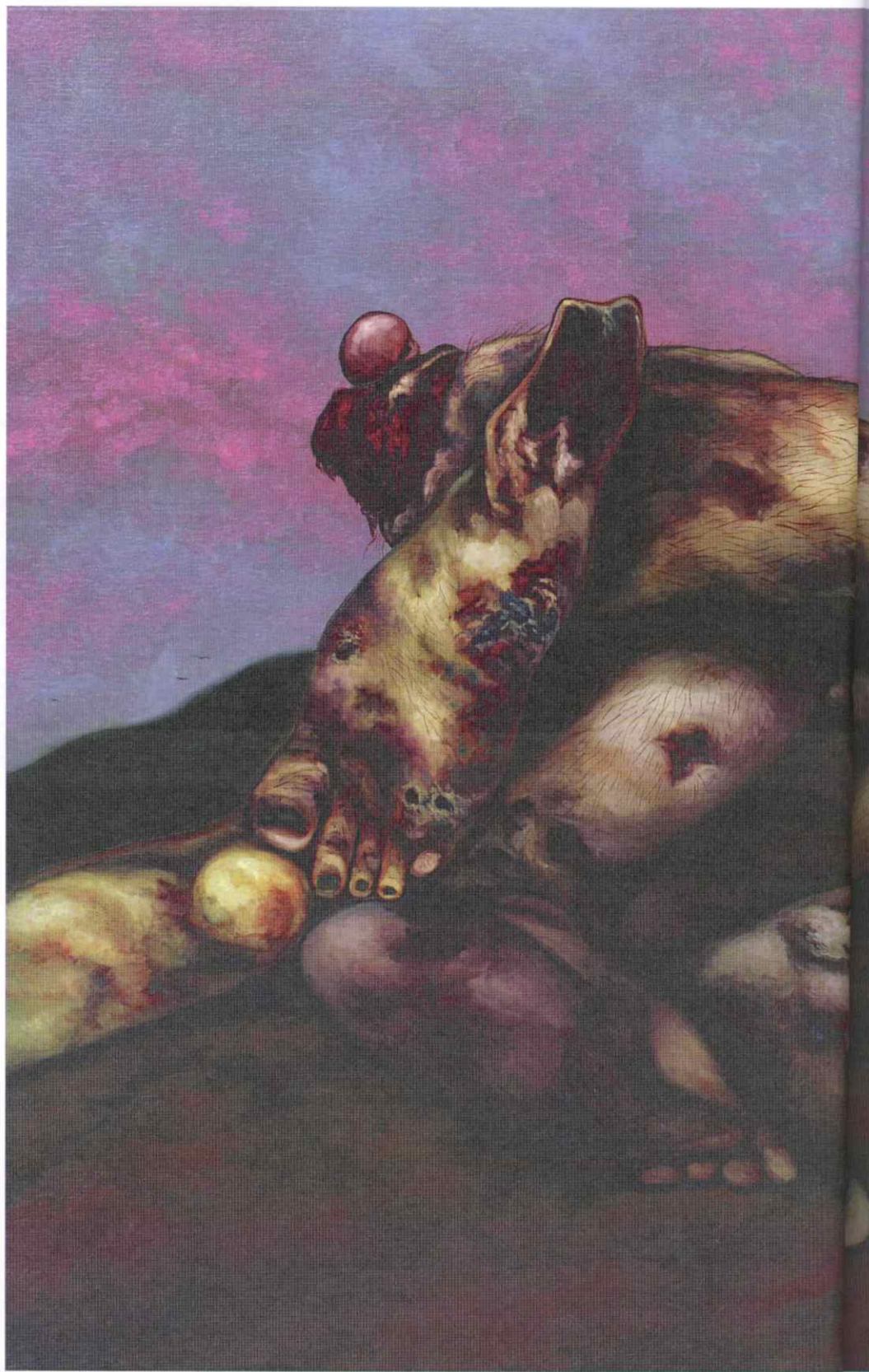
Brian Bress' aesthetics of overproduction might be the clearest heir to a decadent art practice. He frequently builds and photographs sets and then re-incorporates the photographs into the very space they represent. Bress' practice is a self effacing history turned to artistic practice, a triumph of overproduction. Matt Greene inhabits a dreamy collision of mysticism, nature, and desire. His work wanders through the darkness of the forest through frankly sexual depictions of women with guitars and masochistic images of medieval dress-up. His work conflates historical fantasy with contemporary subjects among layers of shadowy imagery. Amy Sarkisian meanders through numerous aesthetic reinventions, from sequined skulls to shrunken apple portraits, and magazine collages. Her totems of death and the grotesque place her directly in the arena popularly understood as Gothic, yet she arrives in this area by hijacking hobby supplies to subvert craft culture.

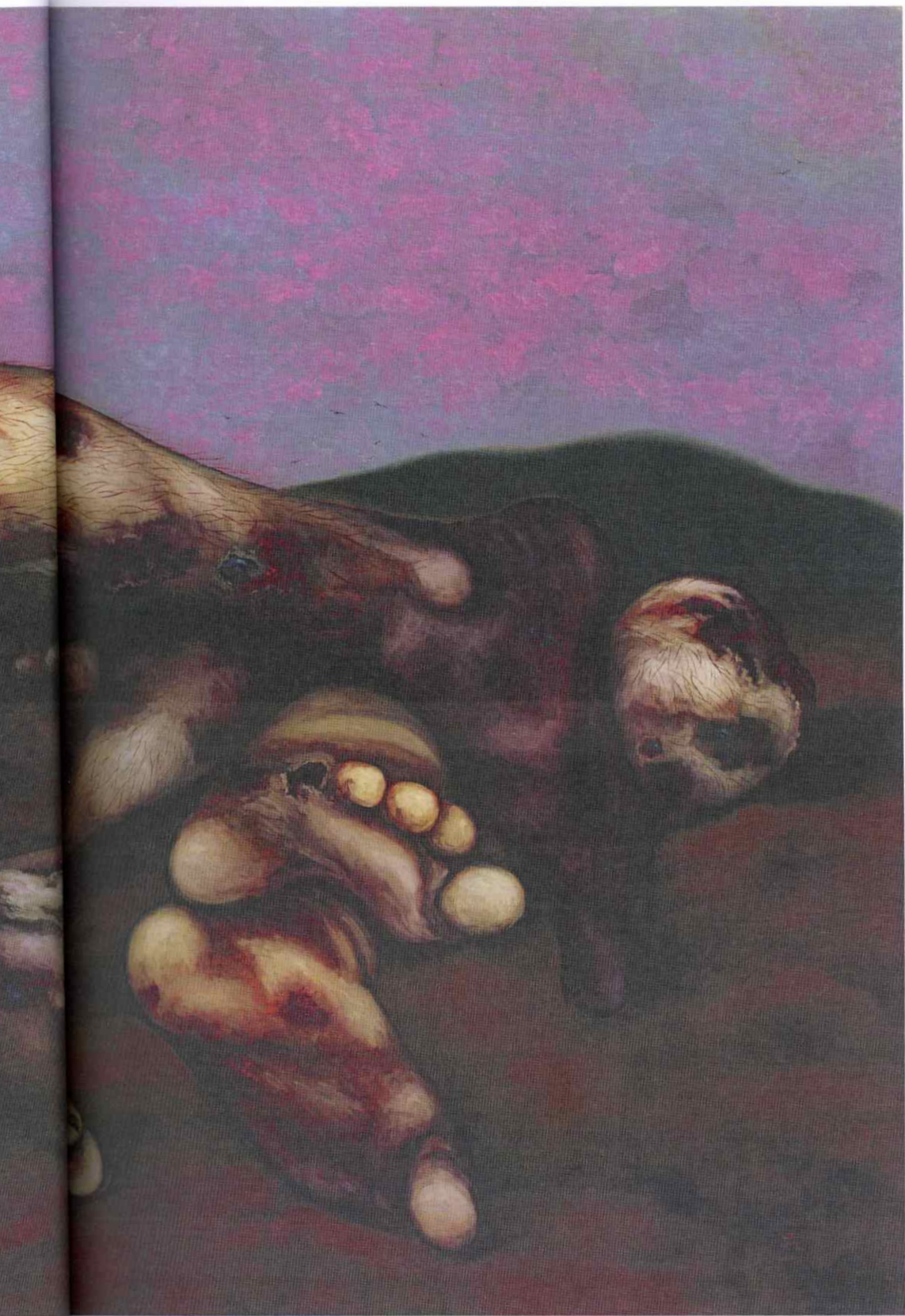
John Knuth's work is reminiscent of a Dennis Cooper quote from the mid 90's. Something to the effect that young artists are 90% nerve and 10% other stuff. His mummified rats, gnarled bodies protruding from a minimalist spill of salt located within crumbling skyscrapers, speaks of youthful audacity, empathy, and art's ability to shock. Ami Tallman uses animals as the primary subjects in her paintings. These are deliberately used to elicit empathy, situated around witty musings on the nature and causality of war. Animal imagery becomes a surrogate for the other that we consciously exclude from compassion. Her rabbits and game birds evoke a sense of sadness and loss while implicating the viewer in the grotesque entitlement of military ambition.

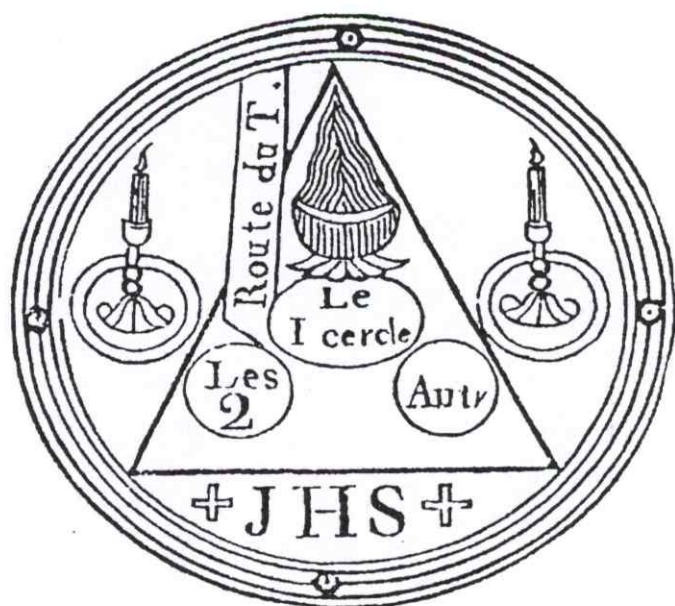
This show began as a way of connecting historical threads, noting influences that are perhaps even unknown to the individual artists within the show. My aim is speculation: from where does our notion of the Gothic evolve, where does its history falter?

The Devil's in the Details









Brian

Bress















Wendy
Gladstone









W a r t



Grzene





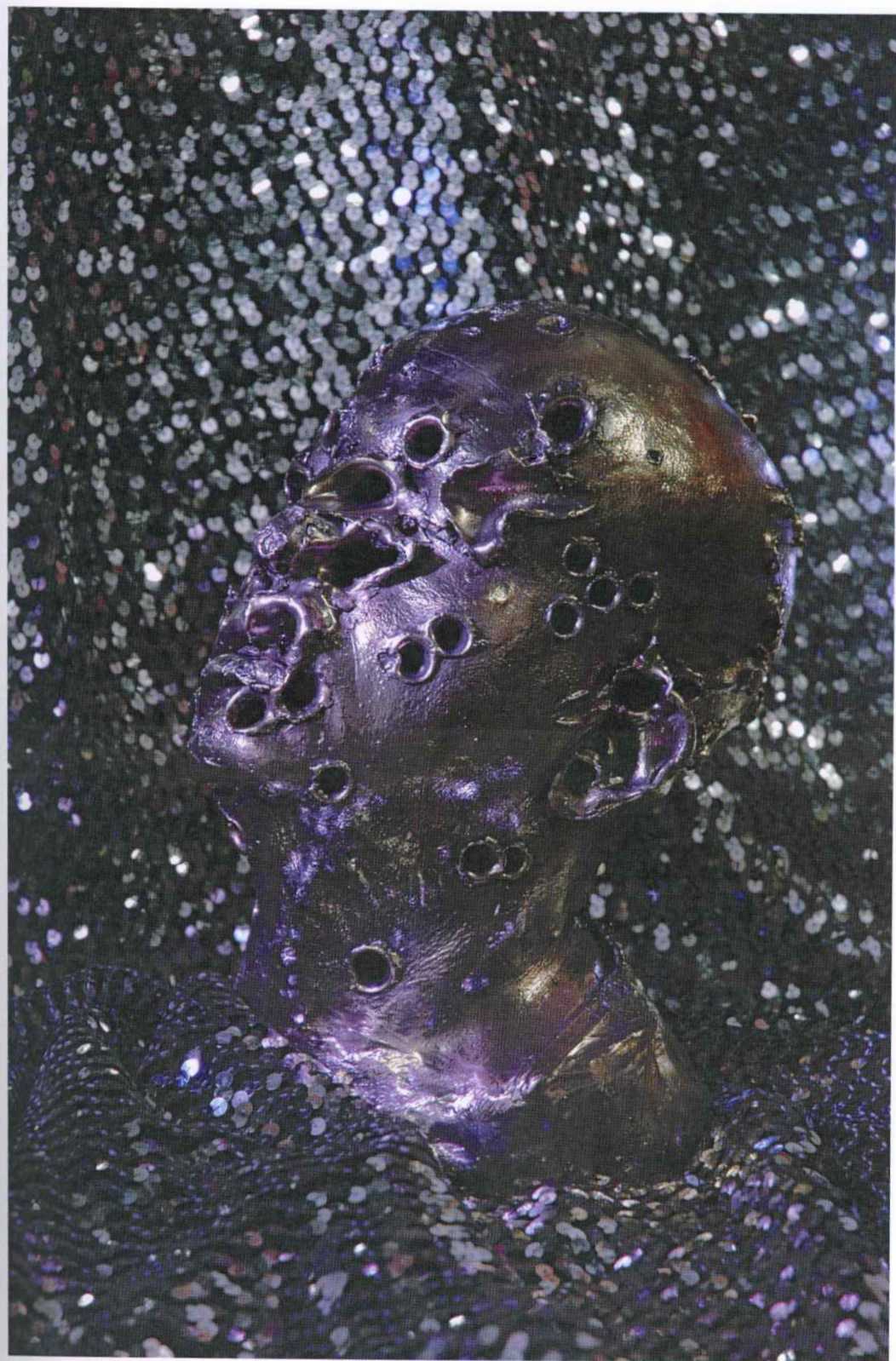


Julian

H o e b e r



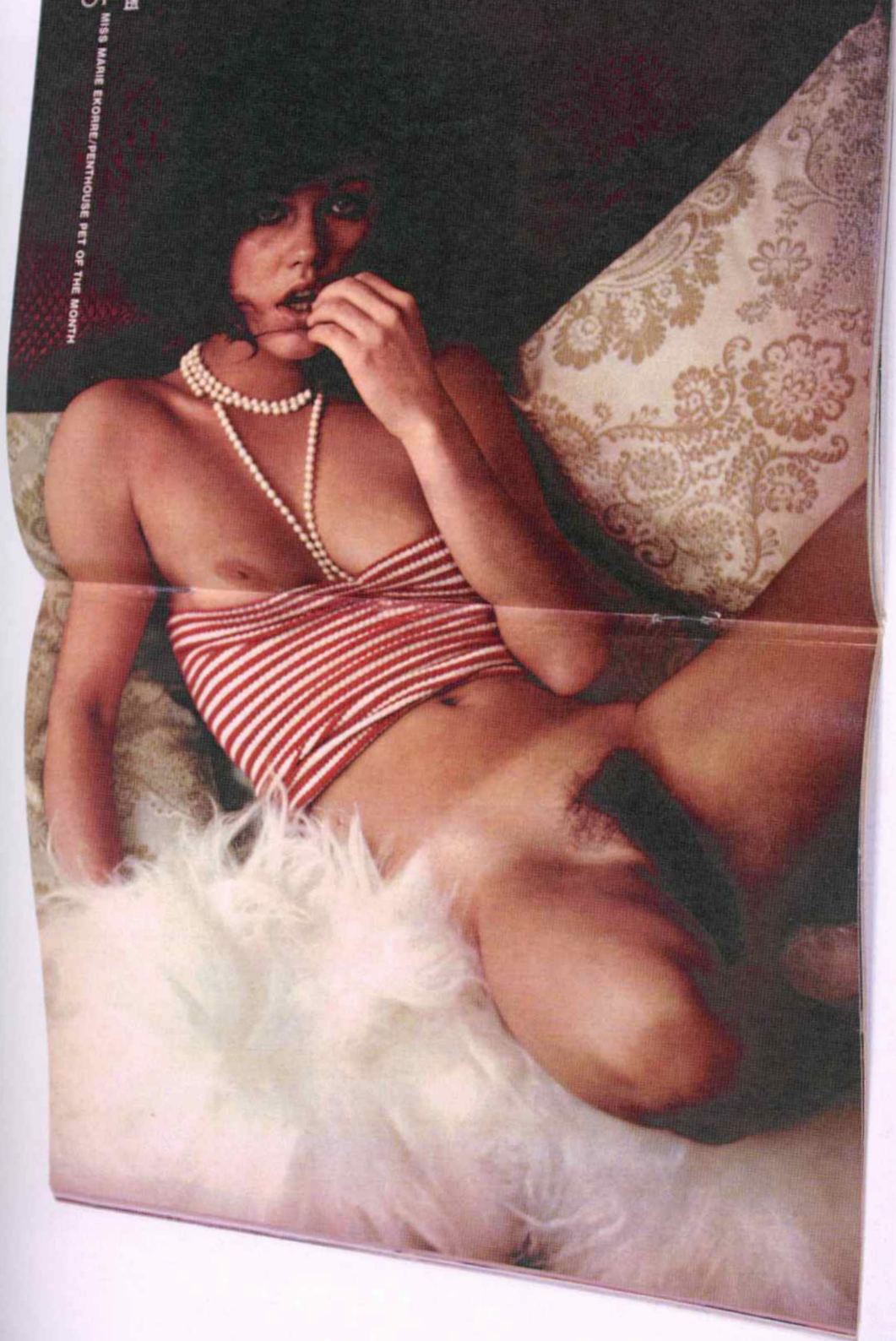


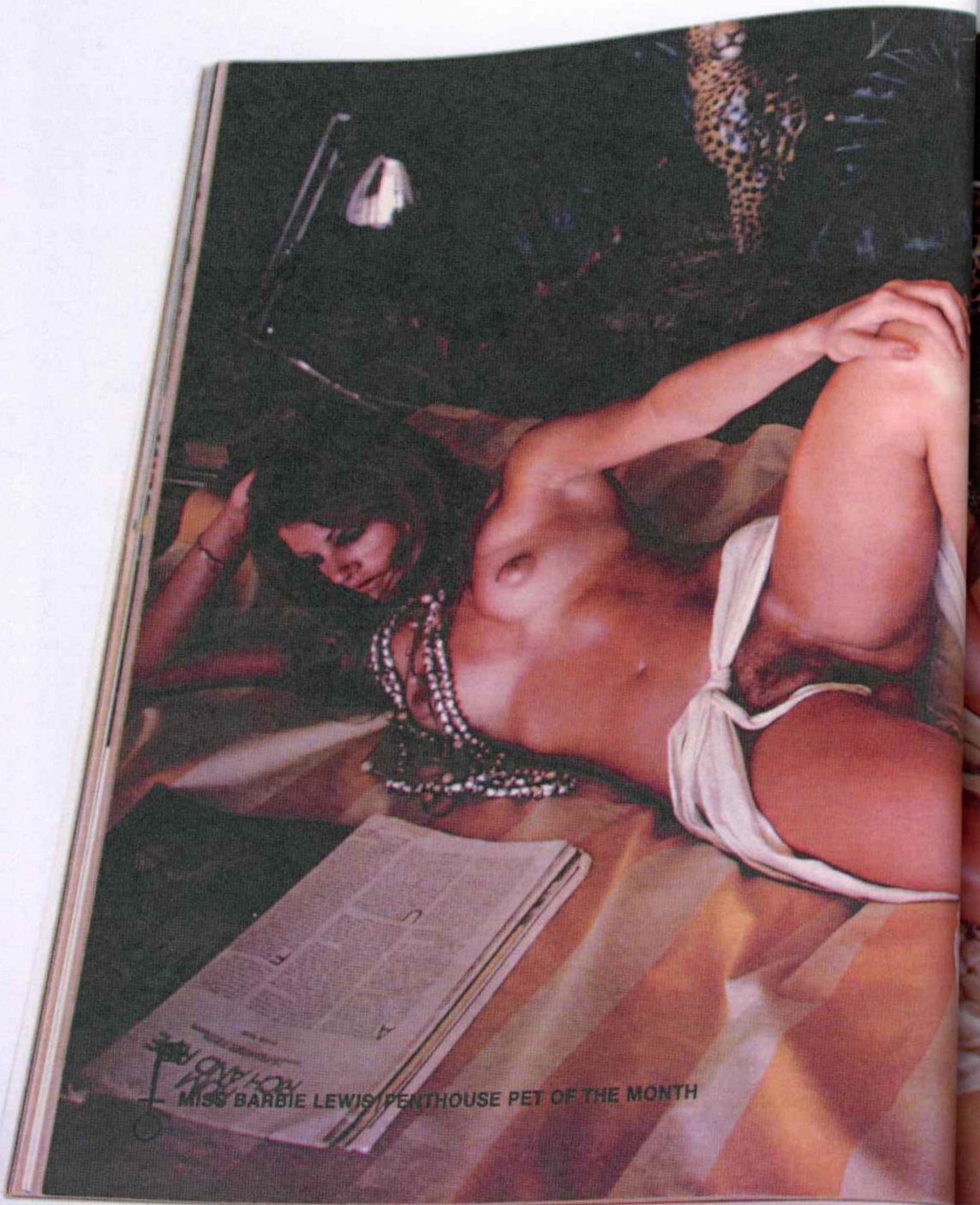






MISS MARIE EKORNE/PENTHOUSE PET OF THE MONTH





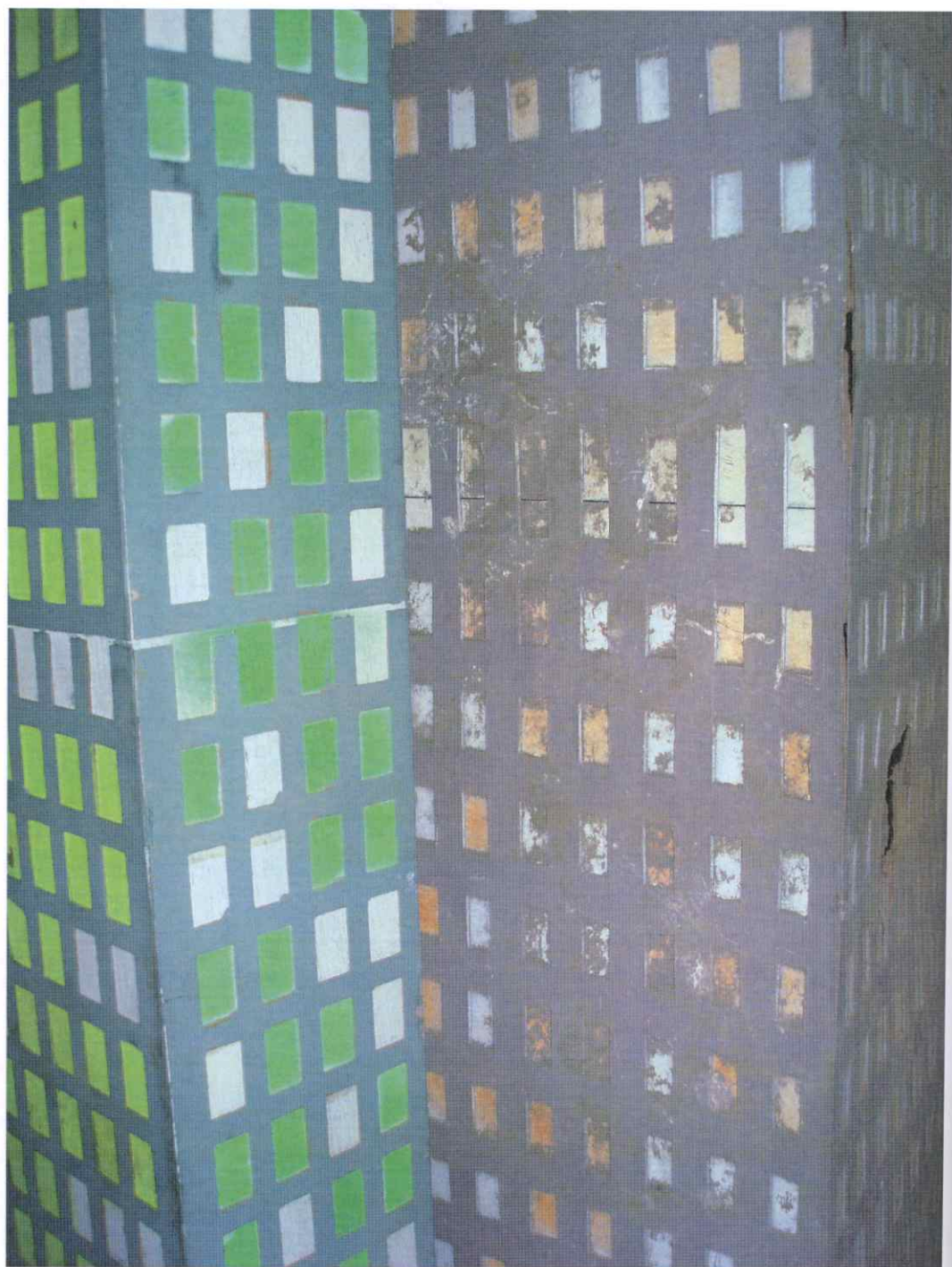
MISS BARBIE LEWIS PENTHOUSE PET OF THE MONTH



John

Knuth

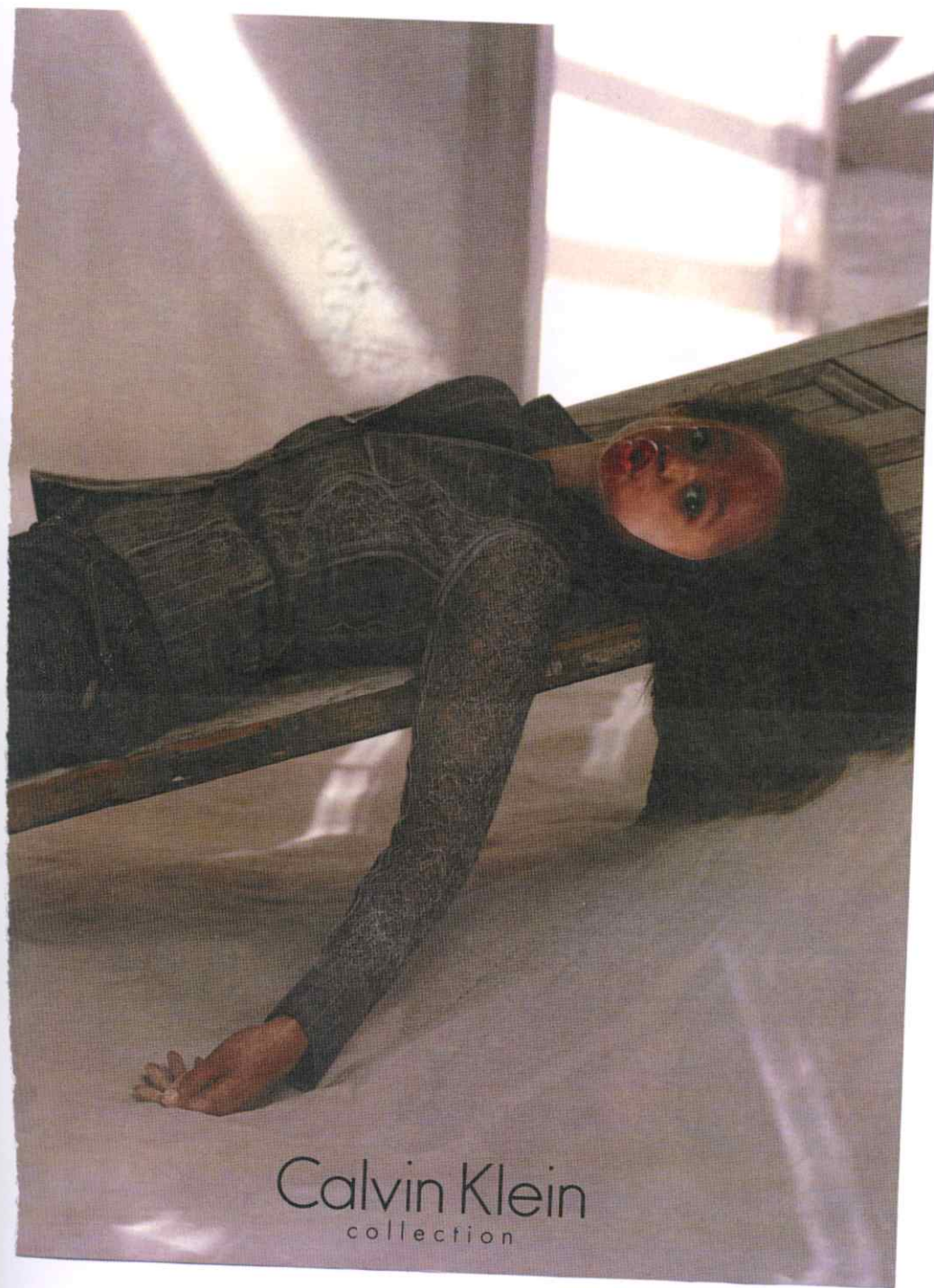






Amy

Sarkisian

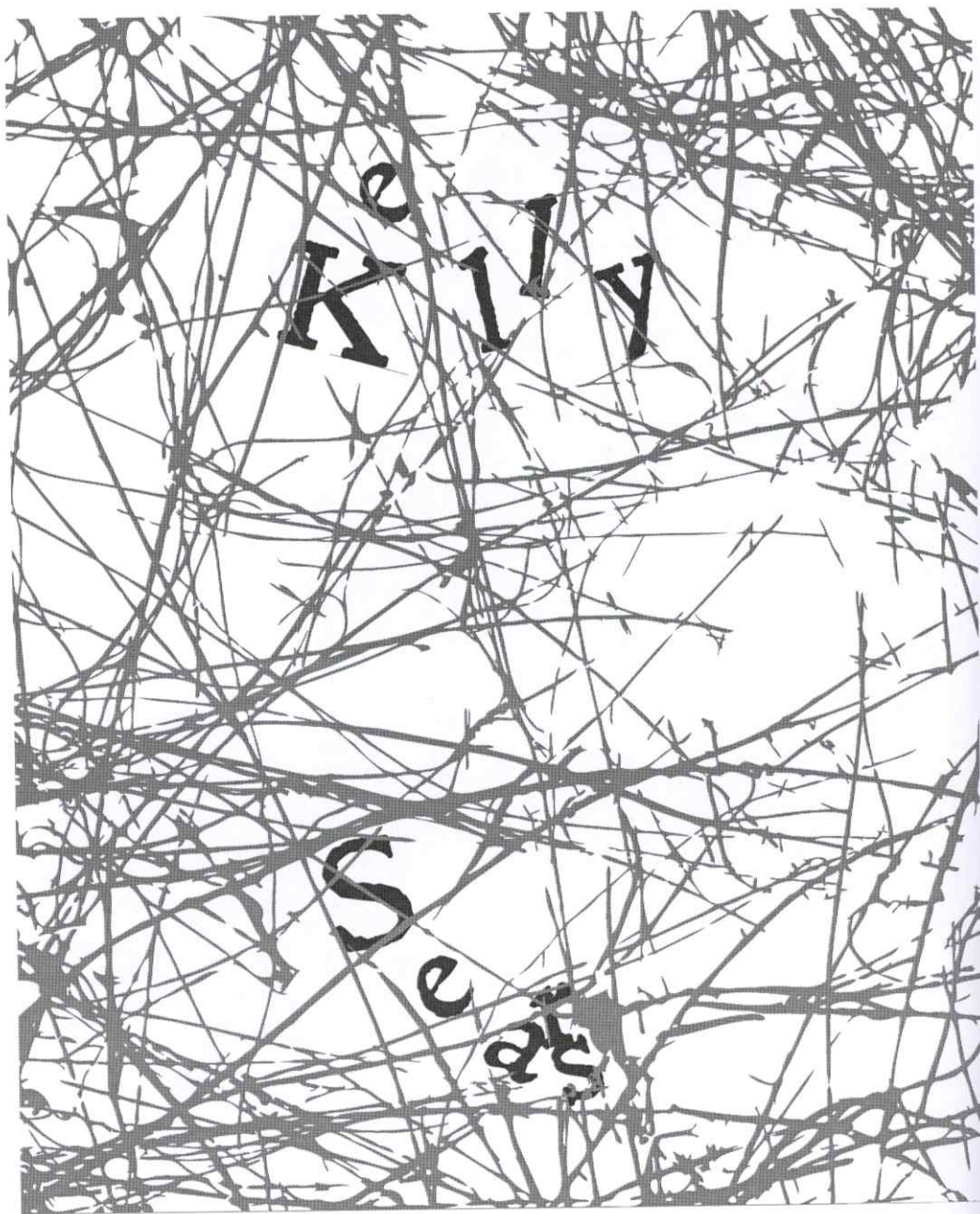


Calvin Klein
collection





CESARE PACIOTTI



appeal to women

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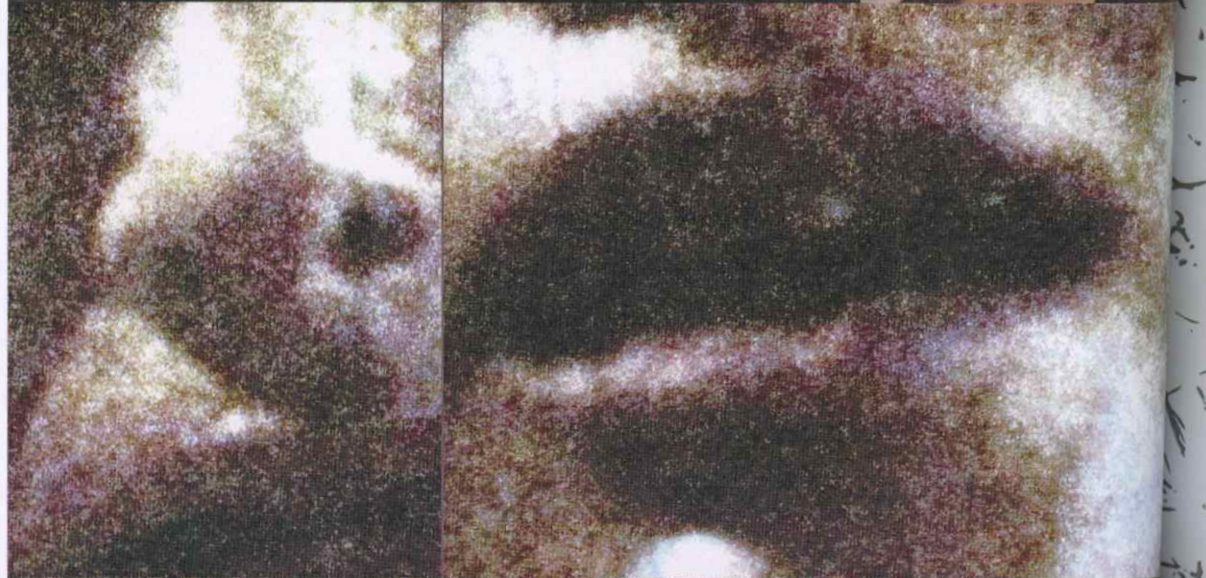
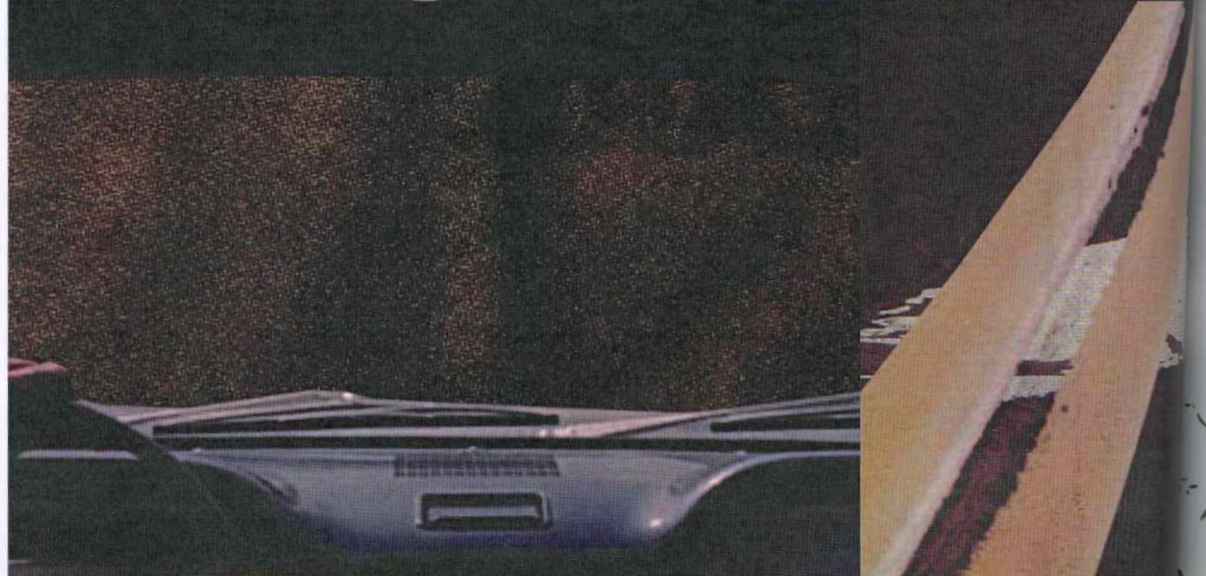
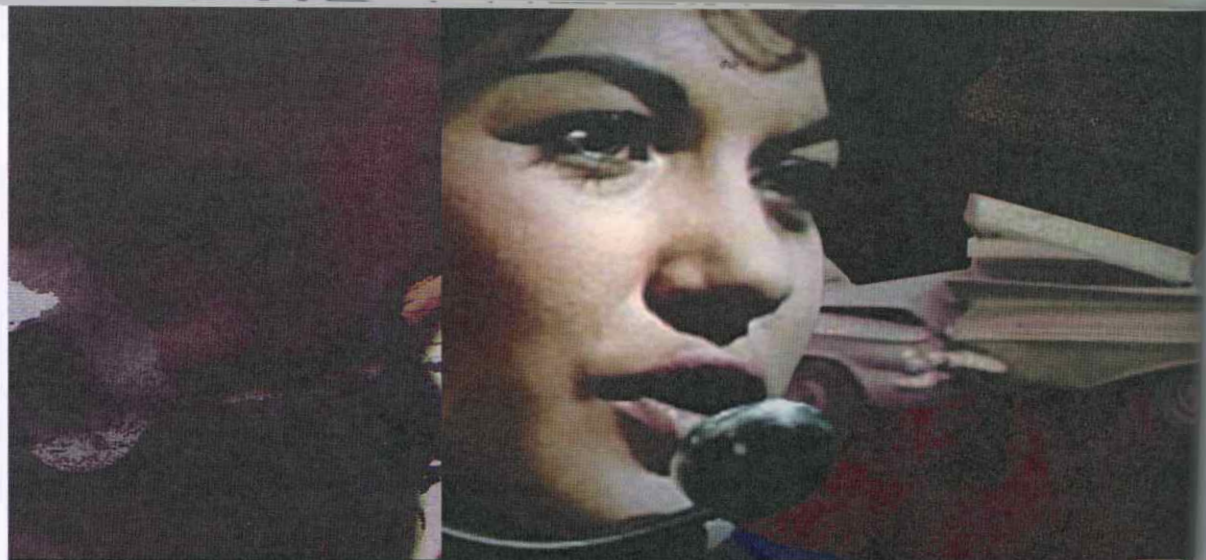
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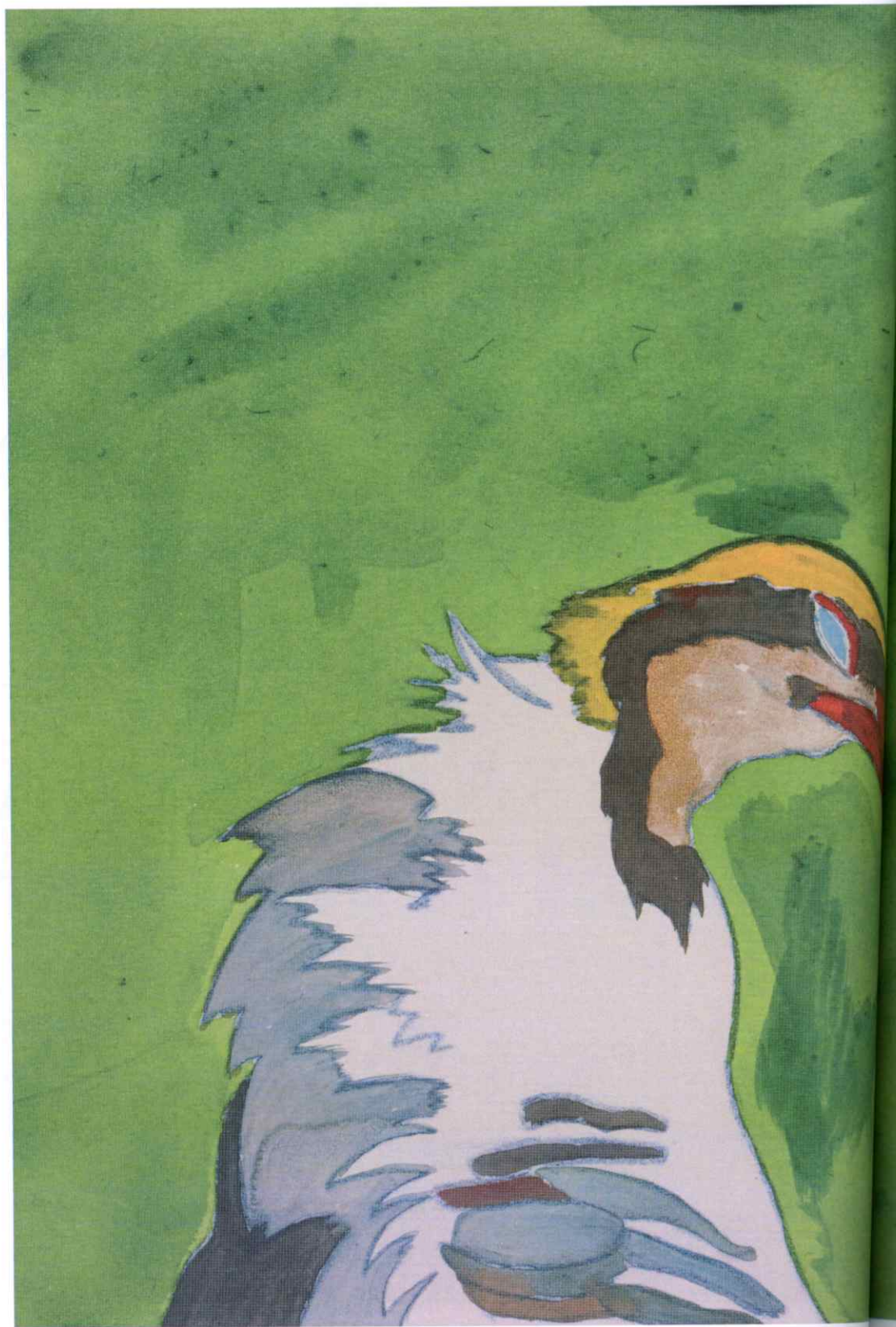
Taber





Ami

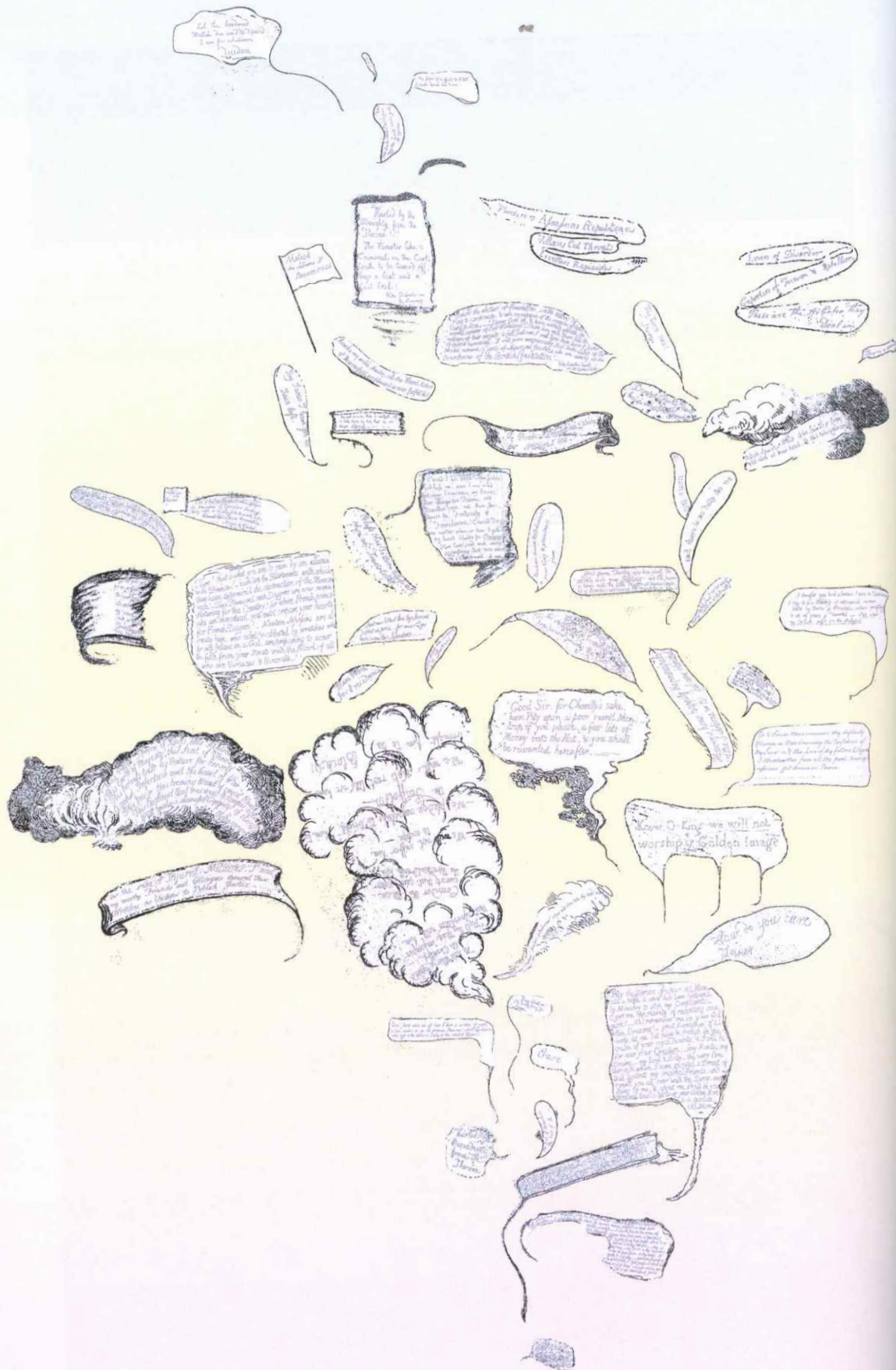
Taliman







Cheyenne
Weaver



List of Works

Tom Allen

Offering
oil on canvas
28.5" x 39"
2007
Courtesy of Gallerie Michael Janssen Berlin/Cologne

Tom Allen

Magic Circle

Brian Bress

Disaster Family
color photograph
43" x 54"
2007

Robert Fontenot

Captains of Industry
bread
dimensions variable
2008
Courtesy of the Artist

Wendell Gladstone

Bad Harvest
acrylic on canvas
54" x 120"
2007
Private Collection

Wendell Gladstone

Witch Doctor
acrylic on canvas
72" x 72"
2008
Courtesy of Kravets/Wehby Gallery, New York, NY

Matt Greene

The Compromise
acrylic and photocopy on canvas
96" x 120"
2008
Courtesy of the Artist

Julian Hoeber

Gunshot Head (work in progress)
bronze and stainless steel
8" x 9" x 16"
2008
Courtesy of Blum and Poe, Los Angeles, CA

Julian Hoeber

Self Portrait (Carnival Head)
Pigment Print
36" x 24" (unframed)
2008
Courtesy of Blum and Poe, Los Angeles, CA
Photo: Heather Rasmussen

Julian Hoeber

Self Portrait (Violet Head)
Pigment Print
36" x 24" (unframed)
2008
Courtesy of Blum and Poe, Los Angeles, CA
Photo: Heather Rasmussen

Brian Kennon

Untitled
photograph
10" x 6.75"
2008
Courtesy of Daniel Hug Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

Brian Kennon

Untitled
photograph
10" x 13.5"
2008
Courtesy of Daniel Hug Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

John Knuth

Building
cardboard, wood, paint, dust, pigeon shit
dimensions variable
Circa 1983-2008
Courtesy of the Artist

John Knuth

Building
cardboard, wood, paint, dust, pigeon shit
dimensions variable
Circa 1983-2008
Courtesy of the Artist

John Knuth

Assault
salt cured rat
dimensions variable
2008
Courtesy of the Artist

Amy Sarkisian

Untitled
mixed media on magazine
7.4" x 11"
2005
Courtesy of Cardenas Bellanger, Paris

Amy Sarkisian

Untitled
mixed media on magazine
15.3" x 11"
2005
Courtesy of Cardenas Bellanger, Paris

Kelly Sears

video sequences
2008

Anna Sew Hoy

Tiedyesky
tie-dyed t-shirts, string, feathers
dimensions variable
2006
Courtesy of the Artist and Karyn Lovegrove Gallery,
Los Angeles, CA

Ryan Taber

"Unnamed Peak #1" (Acarospora schleicheri and
Chalked Crimp on rhyolitic tuff in The Ice Cave
at the Sad Boulders, Bishop CA)
inkjet print
16" x 24"
2008
Courtesy of Mark Moore Gallery, Santa Monica, CA

Ryan Taber

"Unnamed Peak #2" (Chalked Crimp on
glaciated metamorphic schist at Rat Rock in
Central Park, New York, NY)
inkjet print
16" x 24"
2008
Courtesy of Mark Moore Gallery, Santa Monica, CA

Ami Tallman

ink and oil on sanded paper
12" x 18"
2007

Ami Tallman

watercolor on paper
12" x 12"
2008

Cheyenne Weaver

Scandalum magnatum Claviceps purpurea:
Or caricatured oratory of a Whig, Edmund
Burke, English Parliament 1770-1808
broadside, wheat paste, wheat ergot
dimensions variable
2008
Courtesy of the artist

LACE (Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions) is a nonprofit contemporary art center located in the heart of Hollywood. For 30 years and counting, LACE continues to produce and present art and events to inspire the public imagination and engage with timely issues that shape local and global life.



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Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions

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