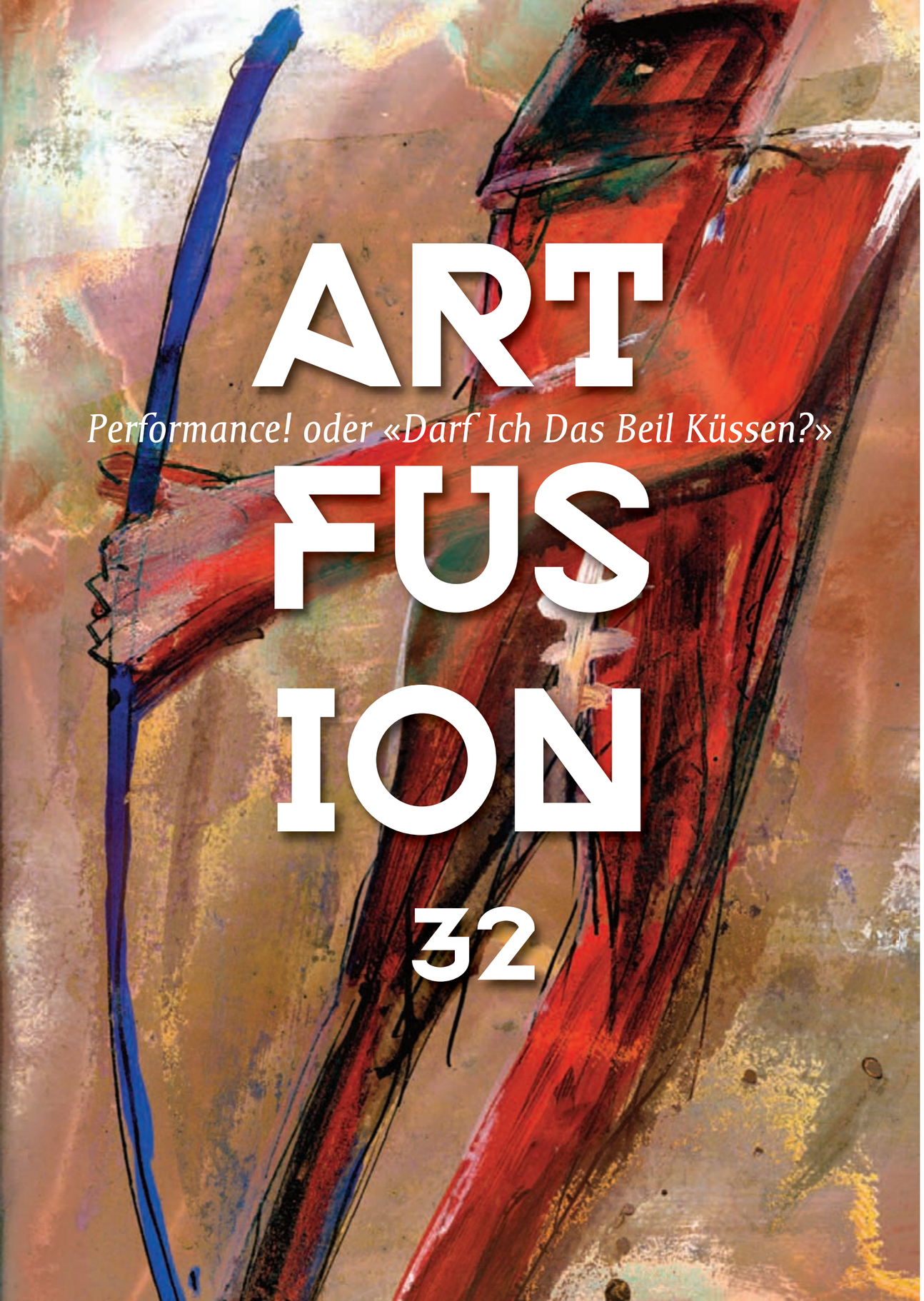

ART FUS ION

Performance! oder «Darf Ich Das Beil Küssen?»

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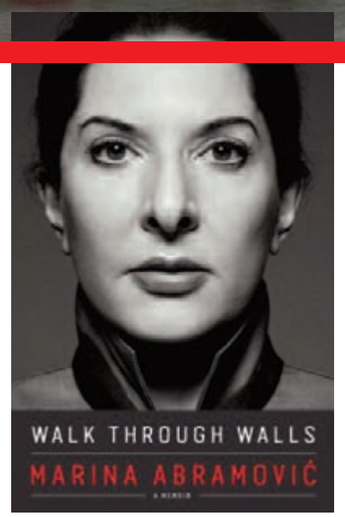

Dieter Roth†1998, Tagebuch 1967

Roth, Dieter [Roth, Karl Dietrich; Rot, Diter] gilt als der wohl größte Allesfex der Nachkriegsgeschichte, der ein Zeichner war, ein Filmemacher, ein Maler, Plastiker, Möbeldesigner, Sachensucher, Würstemacher und gerne auch ein Dichter. Gerade das, die Lyrik und Schriftstellerei, streicht die Ausstellung besonders heraus: Roth sei ja eigentlich immer ein Mann des Wortes gewesen, wenn auch einer, der Wörter am liebsten verdrehte, konfettiklein zerhäckselte oder möglichst sinnfrei aufeinanderprasseln ließ. Rund 500 Künstlerbücher gibt es von ihm, und auch ein Theaterstück, das man ungestraft das radikalste und langweiligste der Welt nennen kann. Es besteht aus nur einem Wort: Murmel. Murmel füllt viele Seiten und den halben Abend.

© Roth, Dieter [Roth, Karl Dietrich; Rot, Diter]

http://www.dieter-roth-museum.de/

HJK

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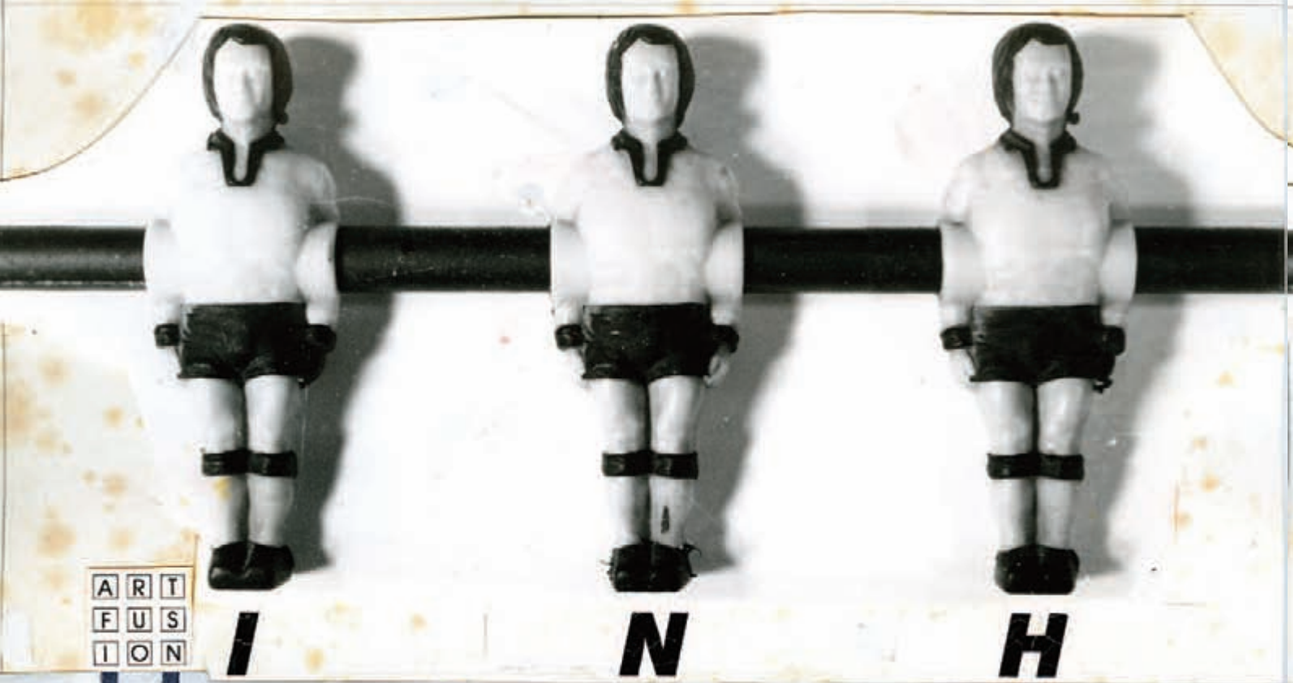

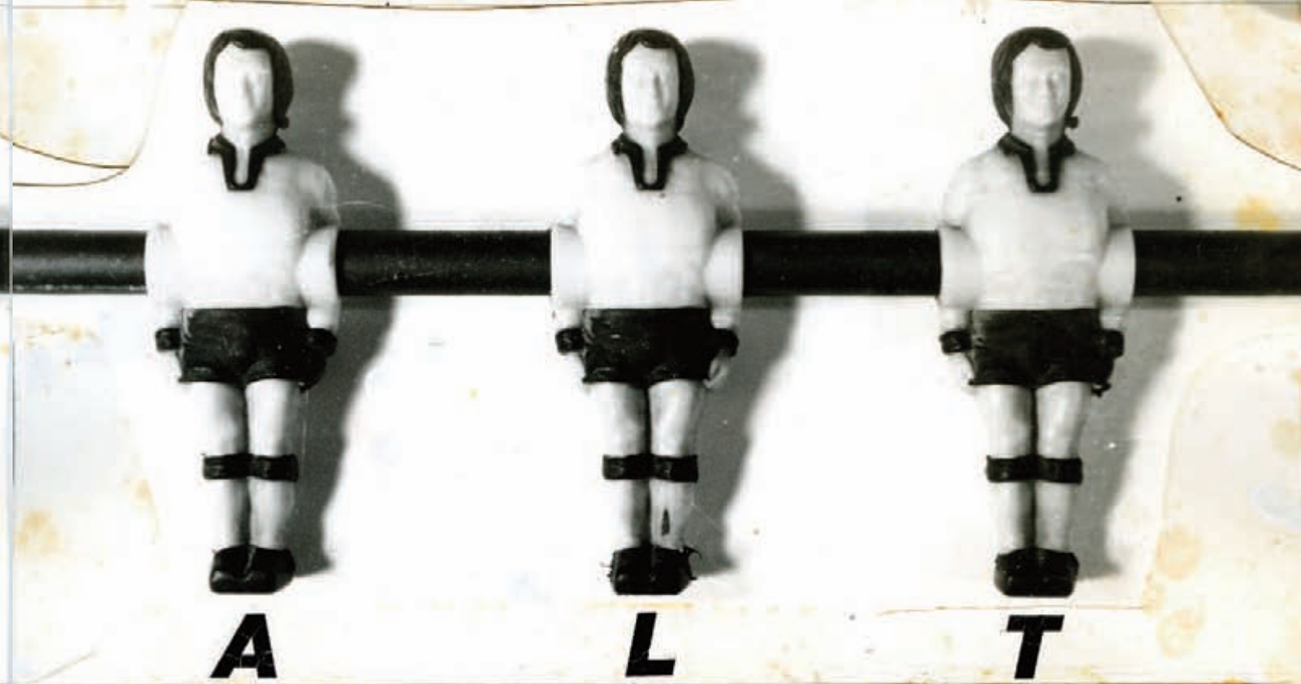

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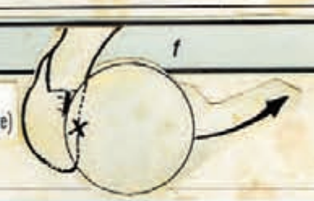

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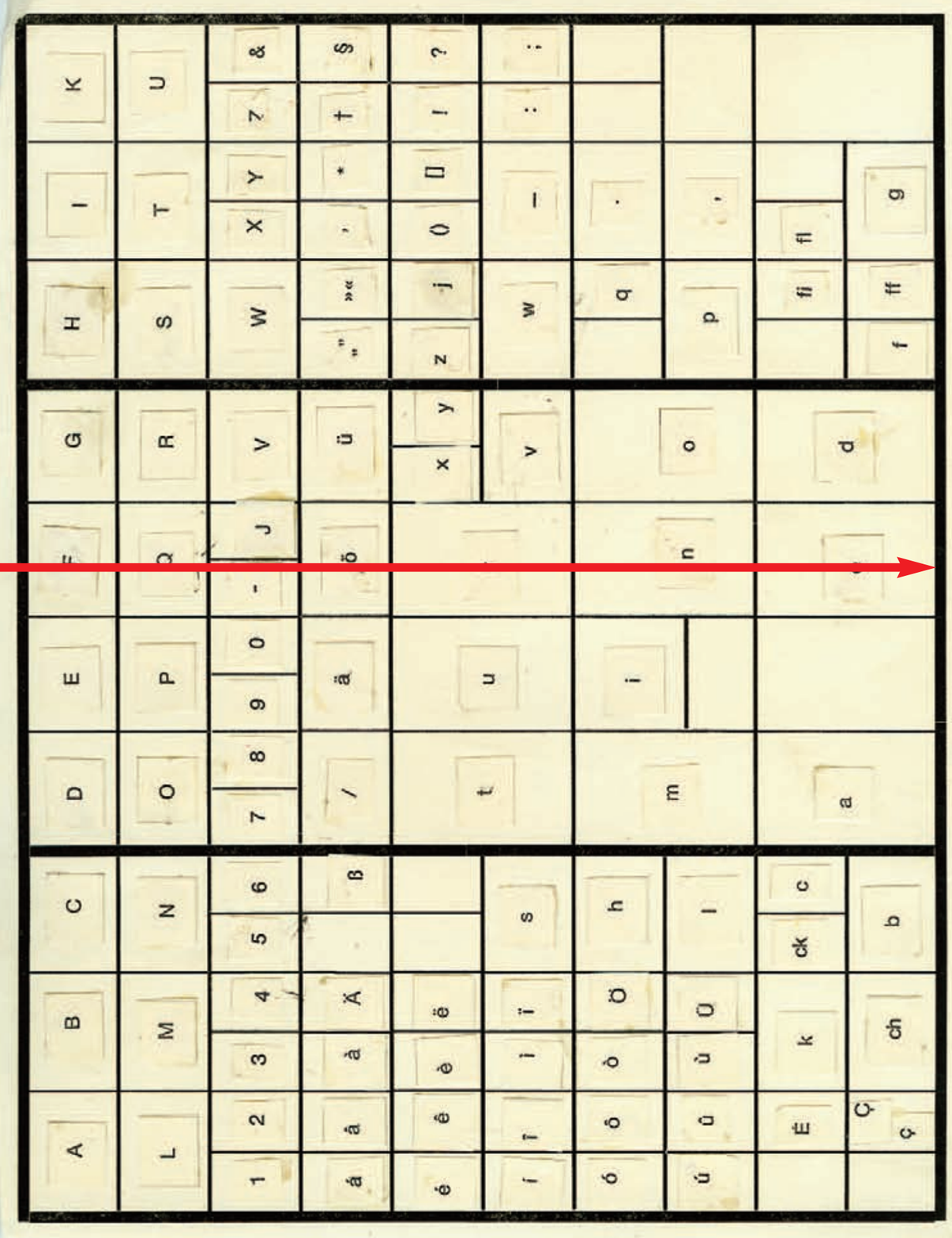

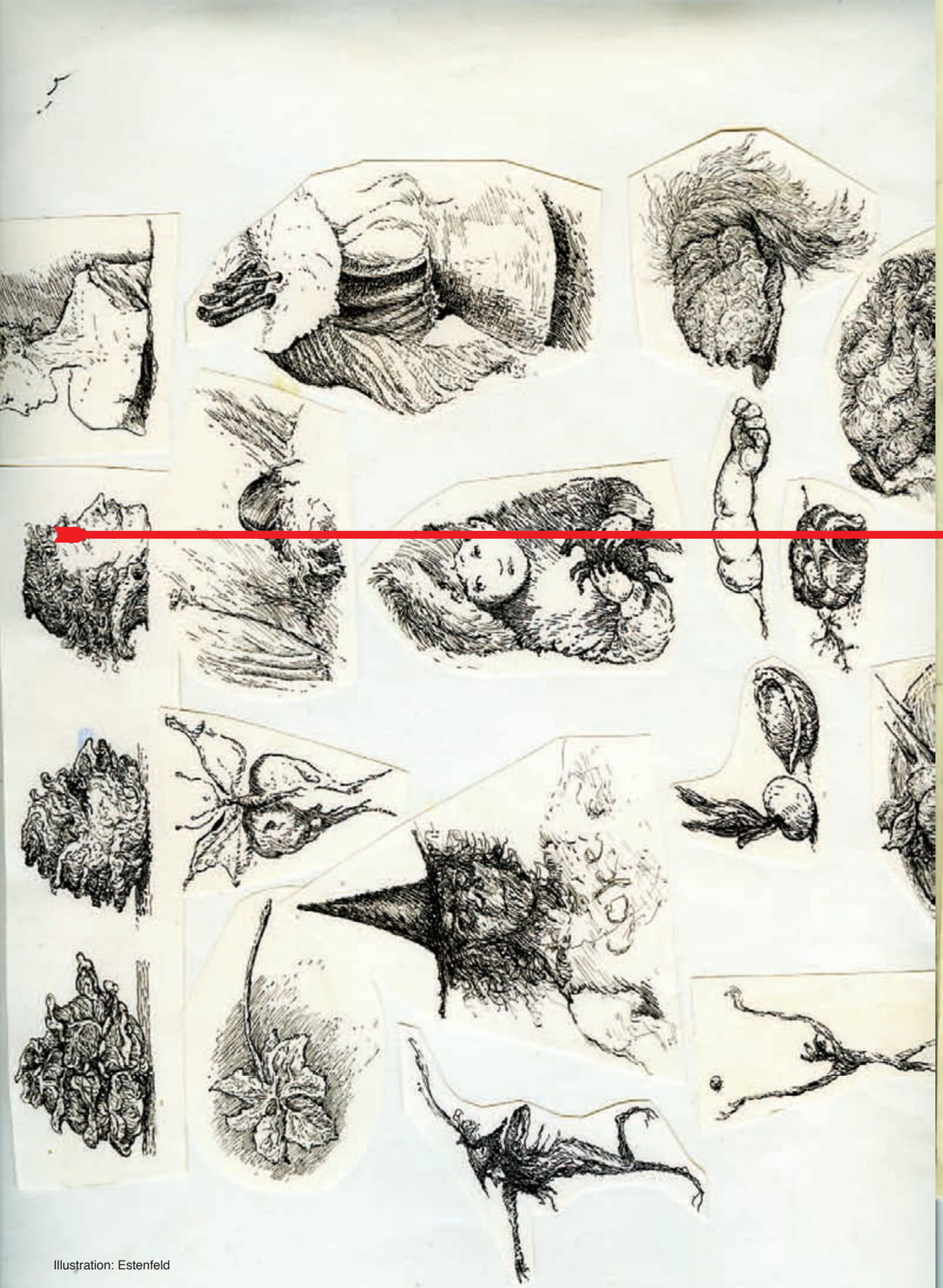

Illustration: Estenfeld

HJK

drawing: SB, age 4

Anonymous Nude, glass negative, circa 1930s

An analysis of ART-RITE magazine and its history.
By David Frankel. Issue #9 (Summer 2005).

"WE WERE RIDING ON THE ABSURDITY OF THE SITUATION-THAT WE WERE THREE NOBODIES, HAD NO MONEY, HAD NO FAME, AND DIDN'T KNOW ANYBODY IN THE ART WORLD. BUT IT WAS PERFECT — WE WERE TOTALLY FREE. – EDIT DEAK, 1974."
BY DAVID FRANKEL

Edit Deak and Walter Robinson may shudder to hear it, but talking to them recently about Art-Rite I accidentally thought of the olde movie Babes in Arms, in which Judy Garland and Mickey Rooney, teenaged and rural, stage a Broadway-type musical in a barn: "Hey kids, let's put on a show!" But since the magazine Deak and Robinson published and edited, and wrote and designed and typeset and distributed, out of their downtown-Manhattan lofts between 1973 and 1978 was so open, democratic, and fresh-faced, they may think the parallel fine, or at least poetic justice: they and a third editor, Joshua Cohn, staged an exhilarating deconstruction (if an exhilarating deconstruction isn't a contradiction in terms) not only of art but of art writing, so they must take what they get. In any case, Judy Garland and Mickey Rooney could really dance.
"An important aspect of Art-Rite," says Deak today, "was a whole new tone and attitude. It was unheard of to have a sense of humor at the time, or not to be talking about 'the problem' of art – the problem of this, the problem of that. A few years later the punk magazines came along, and I realized that's what I'd wanted – I loved those fanzines. That's not what we were, we were much more formalist, but we were a very different sound than what was around us."

The fanzine image carries, since Art-Rite had a loving relationship with the art world and particularly with its own generation. Distributed free, it was "given away," according to an undated grant application, "in recognition of the community which nurtures it." The application goes on to describe the magazine's "close relationship with the art community" and its reflection of "the younger generation's view. For its collective audience, Art-Rite represents a restless but friendly, constantly evolving entity." In a statement Deak and Robinson wrote for Studio International in 1976, the editors admitted to "some nasty comments about a few 'major' artists," but those artists "were famous and successful and because they were safe we couldn't hurt them and since we spent the rest of our life defending babies we had to attack someplace." Even when the magazine went negative it did it amicably.
Deak, Robinson, and Cohn met in 1972, when they were all in their early twenties and the three of them took an art-criticism class taught by Brian O'Doherty at Barnard College in New York. Under another hat O'Doherty was the editor of Art in America, which he wanted to make new, and he liked to ask his strongest students to write for it. He extended this invitation to Cohn, Robinson, and finally Deak, who, however, was puzzled: "I thought, aestheticism must be in trouble if they want baby blood – I mean, what do we know? We were in the last year of undergraduate work. I had come from Budapest, didn't even speak English when I started school. We started giggling; there must be some weird void – what's wrong with the system that they want us?" She and the pair she still calls "the boys" did write for O'Doherty, but they also began to fantasize about producing a magazine of their own, perhaps as a newsprint insert in Art in America – "piggybacking on the establishment, having the establishment distribute the enemy, our voice. This was the period when people talked about things like that." The insert idea died but the larger idea stuck, and to make it happen they enrolled in the Whitney Museum's Independent Study Program, for which they proposed to publish a magazine as their class project. Robinson meanwhile had gotten a job as a typesetter and designer for a Jewish weekly newspaper, and, he says, "We stole all the type from there until they caught me and I got fired." And that's how Art-Rite began.
O'Doherty is distinguished and worldly, but he gets a little mushy about the Art-Rite editors: "They were three extraordinarily gifted people. I never quite saw them as students because they were pretty well grown up – the personalities were very rich. Josh had the makings of a very gifted writer, and he was a delight. Mike [Robinson] was multitalented. He had eloquence, brilliant descriptive gifts, he was a fine critic, and he was going to be a really fine artist. Edit was a genius of sorts. She had something I was very sympathetic to: the enigmas of Eastern Europe, which at times mirror and superimpose on our own Irish enigmas. The terms of mind I'm familiar with as an Irishman established a sympathy between me and Edit. She was the most extraordinary student I ever had."
Read through Art-Rite, though, and I doubt you'll find an essay that you'll think has the depth or ambition of O'Doherty's book Inside the White Cube. The magazine had a different purpose, sociable, sharp, in touch; its strengths were collective and magpie, not the magisterial grand récit but the agglomerative ground-level view. Asked to name a highlight of Art-Rite's run, Deak and Robinson independently choose the same issue: no. 14, dated winter '76/'77. One of several focusing on a single art form (performance, video, painting), no. 14 examines the artist's book.
The magazine falls into three sections: an "Idea Poll" in which 45 artists and other interested parties, from Kathy Acker to Sol LeWitt, Adrian Piper to Richard Tuttle, answer the same general question on the subject; a "Thematic Anthology" in which artists' books are sorted into genres, for example "British Pastoral," "Not Photography (photography)," "Luscious Color"; and then a "Features and Reviews" section of signed articles on the medium. (Much of Art-Rite was unsigned; guest writers usually got a byline, but the editors often wrote anonymously, reflecting their collaborative process.) A good deal of thought went into images, so that the issue is virtually a compendium of decisions on how to represent a book visually – whether to show the cover, or individual pages, or individual images cropped from their pages, or perhaps the book as an object, held open by somebody's hands, which in Deak's case might also hold a cigarette. "We were basically formulating how to write about a new medium that had not been dealt with before," says Deak. According to her, it was in this issue that Marcel Broodthaers made his first appearance in an American journal, and whether or not this is so, the editors certainly assumed no knowledge of him on the reader's part: "The late Broodthaers," they write, "who was Belgian …" They add that he "was one of the most prolific makers of excellent books, and his work has an allusive Duchampian wit, a Magrittian mystery, and a diabolic Lissitzkyan mastery of design."
It is easy to see why Deak and Robinson prize this issue, which is focused, knowledgeable, speculative, witty, and thick with information. It must also have been a pile of work for them: it runs up to 80 pages with pretty small type. Usually the magazine was more eclectic and more dependent on pure éclat. Several issues were turned over to artists to do with what they chose. The standouts, for me, are Alan Suicide's harsh and punky no. 13 (January 1977), mostly a group of found photographs invoking speed, violence, and rock 'n' roll; and Kim MacConnel's no. 17 (undated, but late 1977), 24 pages crammed with cheerful, fluid drawings evoking commercial illustration from the '50s. The magazine was famous for its covers, which were always by artists. William Wegman contributed an oh-so-smart and funny drawing for no. 2, while Christo created a trompe l'oeil "wrapping" for the cover of no. 5. Other cover artists included Tuttle, Vito Acconci, Joseph Beuys, Robert Ryman, and Ed Ruscha (Deak and Robinson commissioned Ruscha, she remembers, when they were vacationing in France; they doubted he had ever heard of them, but she felt that if they drove all night to Saint-Tropez, bought a tourist postcard there, and sent it to him with a Saint-Tropez postmark – "Hi Ed!" – he'd bite. He did.)
A few of the Art-Rite covers were also labor intensive since they were partly handmade. For no. 8, dated winter 1975, Pat Steir designed a triplet of roses that had to be potato-printed red, yellow, and blue. (There were 6,000 copies; each cover was stamped three times, once per color; that is a lot of potatoes.) Deak has a vivid memory of these issues laid out as a field of flowers on the floor of her loft. For no. 6, dated summer 1974, Dorothea Rockburne had the staff (Deak, Robinson, and Cohn, that is) fold the bottom right-hand corner of every cover upward on a diagonal to divide a large, delicately outlined, but otherwise blank square into a pair of triangles. Looking at this device, which applies the principles of Rockburne's work in folded paper to turning the issue into a mass-produced multiple, you may not realize at first that it also rephrases the notion of a cover: to make it function, the magazine's first spread – the inside cover on the left and the facing page on the right – must be blank, since the folded-over outer cover lays them bare, including them in the work. Asked to create one page, Rockburne used three – a real expense for a penniless magazine. ("She took three pages for a cover, and we were very poor, and very conscious of it, but we did it," says Deak. "That was classy.") It is a brilliant design.
The cover artists were usually from an older generation than the editors or already had at least some reputation. Inside Art-Rite the stress was on the new. O'Doherty remembers, "Artforum had the inside track, it was the hot center, which Art in America was trying to nudge into. But Art-Rite was on the inside of the inside track of the young generation. It had something of a samizdat quality, it was passed around – I don't think Artforum ever saw it as competition but it was hot stuff." Young artists weren't strikingly visible in the magazine's first issues, which discussed Mel Bochner, Carl Andre, and Jules Olitski, among others, but as the editors hit their stride they began to search out their own generation – to the point where you could plausibly argue that the '80s began in their lofts in 1973. "Reorganizations," a kind of manifesto published in Art-Rite no. 3 (undated, but it has to have been from the fall of that year), announced, among other things,
We need not distinguish between the decorative, the utilitarian, or the purely artistic.
We need not determine whether art is literary, literal, or literate.
We need not determine whether art is about a plot, itself, or a science …
We need not determine what problems the art addresses itself to …
We need not determine the art's structure or the process through which that structure was realized.
We need not describe what the art looks like.
We need not remain detached and analytical while looking at art.
So much for the critical routines of the past. As for what might replace them:
Good art is proportional to the circuits it creates…
Good criticism identifies the circuits art actually creates.
Art-artness circuits alone are of a very low order.
Art-viewer circuits with history, other art, and or books are of a low order.
Art-self circuits are of a high order.
Art-viewer-other people circuits are of a high order.
High order art is hard for artists to make.
At the time, the downgrading of the "art-artness" relationship to "a very low order" I'm sure was read as applying not only to formalist art and the school of Clement Greenberg but to Minimalist and Conceptual art – more recent, and more current forms that had been equally heavily theorized in art-historical terms. (In fact Olitski, Andre, and Bochner, who together might be taken as samples of those three approaches, had all taken hits in earlier issues; perhaps these were the "major artists" who had been fair game "because … we couldn't hurt them.") Put in the place of "art-artness" were "art-self" and "art-viewer-other people" – immediate, subjective, and social exchanges. I wouldn't want to classify the diverse art of the '80s too tightly under this rubric, but the prophecy is there.
In Robinson's memory of the '70s, "The art world seemed so cold and macho and then you'd see this funny William Wegman and this charming Laurie Anderson." That was the change Art-Rite charted. Although you'd find Richard Serra, say, in the magazine (as a writer, however, and on the subject of television), you'd also find Anderson or Piper or Diego Cortez or Jack Smith. By no. 9, dated spring 1975, Art-Rite had begun a phase of opening its issues with a list headed "By, with, and about," or "By, for, about, and thanks to," reflecting the braided relationship between the editors and their audience. In this and the next two issues that year, these lists included Vito Acconci, Lawrence Alloway, Laurie Anderson, Eleanor Antin, Richard Armstrong, Rudolf Baranik, Gregory Battcock, David Bourdon, AA Bronson, Trisha Brown, Scott Burton, Lucinda Childs, Colette, Diego Cortez, Jeffrey Deitch, Richard Foreman, Hans Haacke, Alanna Heiss, Rebecca Horn, Neil Jenney, Bill Jensen, Jill Johnston, Joan Jonas, Lucy Lippard, Mabou Mines, Brice Marden, Annette Michelson, Elizabeth Murray, Steve Paxton, Robert Pincus-Witten, Yvonne Rainer, Robert Rauschenberg, Judy Rifka, Susan Rothenberg, Irving Sandler, Julian Schnabel (in 1975 Schnabel was 24, and probably still working as a burger cook), Carolee Schneemann, Joan Simon, Jack Smith, Patti Smith, Holly Solomon, Nancy Spero, Alan Suicide, John Torreano, Hannah Wilke, Robert Wilson, Robin Winters, and many others both less and equally well known. As early as 1976, David Salle was writing for the magazine. It was a catholic community.
Cohn dropped out of Art-Rite relatively early, after seven issues; he and Robinson got into a fistfight over – well, over Deak – and he left and went to law school. Neither Deak nor Robinson know how to reach him now, and I didn't talk to him for this article. Deak and Robinson I've known for years, though Robinson only slightly; he has a sardonic, ironic, newspaperman kind of presence, and now edits the magazine section of the website Artnet.com. Deak has had various health- and life-related problems, and by her own account has been "out of the picture for years." People who know her miss her.
I first met Deak well after Art-Rite folded, in 1981, when I came on staff at Artforum. Ingrid Sischy, who had become the magazine's editor a year or so earlier, had made Edit a regular contributor, and besides writing unorthodox articles – I remember, for example, a spectacular piece about the hip-hop artist Rammellzee, and another on, of all things, those Cabbage Patch dolls – she served as an all-purpose one-person think tank. Ingrid tended to keep her meetings with Edit à deux, I suspected then (and have not changed my mind) because Edit contributed more to her plans for the magazine than she wanted to let the rest of us see. (I should add that Ingrid was formidably inventive herself.) But Edit regularly danced by. She would hurry through the office, laughing, vivid, bright-clothed, Hungarian, making herself briefly focal before she and Ingrid would run out to a gallery, a studio, a bar. To a rather shy and quiet Irish/English person (my main contribution to Artforum at the time, I'm quite sure, was a trivial willingness to work ninety-hour weeks), she was intimidatingly glamorous; but besides being sparkling in both her perceptions and her style, she was always warm and always utterly a pleasure. Even now, talking to her about Art-Rite and reading through old statements and interviews of hers on the magazine, I'm struck by her generosity and by an endearing modesty that runs through her general flamboyance. A use of the word "humble" seems a long-term habit: "We were really thinking very humbly," she told me. And back in 1974 she told Alan Moore, who was writing an ultimately unpublished article on Art-Rite for Artforum (Edit has a copy of the hot-type-set galleys), that she saw herself as the "humble servant" of artists. A lot of readers, I would guess, may snort, "Oh, sure" – but the remark rings true to my sense of Edit's character.
Can or should an independent critic, let alone an independent critical journal, act as the "servant" of artists? I think Deak's use of the word relates in part to Artforum, funnily enough, and to its role in the world in which the Art-Rite editors were growing up. Back then, critics – and Artforum critics in particular – had an influence over American artists that today is diffused across a much wider spread of agencies both within and outside the media. Cohn told Moore in 1974, "I think at this point Artforum is an imposition on artists. They feel obliged to read it and obliged to respond to it. I want people to either like Art-Rite or say, 'Omigod, what a crock of shit! I don't have to listen to these guys at all.'" Deak picked up his thought: "Someone told us, 'You are the new kind of critics, very humble'" – that word again – "just the opposite of the '60s power trip.' I want to take away criticism's importance and focus back on the artwork."
This was the ambition behind Art-Rite's authorial voice, which must have been startling at the time in its colloquial informality. It also affected the format, which was stylish and plain at the same time: that undated grant application, refreshingly droll, says of the magazine, "It is printed on newsprint in the belief that the low-cost process will help deinstitutionalize and demystify the esoterica it contains." (Newsprint also had an aesthetic status for the editors, and maybe even a moral one: Robinson told Moore, "Coated stock is ecologically unsound, for the mind as well as the earth.") And the stance flows as life-blood through the editorial choices. Of a series of profiles of critics – Alloway, Lippard, Max Kozloff, Pincus-Witten – that ran regularly in Art-Rite's first issues, for example, Deak says now, "I was naïve enough to think that what we were doing was helping people focus on one critic at a time. Artists were devastated by the glossies" – Artforum, Art in America – "which had so much power. I wanted the critics to be powerless – wanted to bring the critics to the artists to make it clear [who they were] … but I don't think the artists looked at these articles like that, they just wanted gossip. They wanted [critics] to have authority and power."
Deak, Robinson, and Cohn were not into authority and power. In keeping with the times, their stance was a demilitarized opposition to what they saw as the establishment. Their attitude to money was equally unpresumptuous. (Art-Rite apparently began with a gesture at economic contingency: issues 2 and 3 say "35 cents" on the cover. But no. 4 is labeled "free gift," and then the subject is shuffled aside.) Deak and Robinson could cheerfully write in their Studio International statement, "The editors (who are the publishers as well) make the magazine because they like to and because they want fame and fortune," but a grant application from 1978 leaves the budget for staff – "executive, administrative secretarial, technical, build./grounds maintenance, legal, accounting, auditing" – blank in all fields. In fact "staff" is listed under "Items raised on an in-kind basis." The application form also asked whether or not the records were annually audited; Deak and Robinson tactfully declined to reply. (They decided, though, to answer a couple of inquiries presumably intended for applicants from alternative spaces: Type of ceiling? "Vaulted." Type of floor? "Wood.") They did record the breakdown of the magazine's income: 20 percent from ads, 10 percent from sales, and 50 percent from grants. That leaves twenty percent unaccounted for – perhaps Deak and Robinson classed as "income" but considered it best not to mention the materials and machine time that Robinson purloined from his place of work.
Deak and Robinson once wrote an essay dividing "Alternative Periodicals" into types: "Picture magazines," "Parochials and House Organs," "The Voice of the New," "The Scholarly Ones (vehicles for analysis)," "Lobbyists," and "Newsletters." Art-Rite has qualities of more than one of these, but probably closest is the "The Voice of the New," subtitled "a sensibility in print":
These are critical magazines of more confidence (than "Parochials and House Organs"). They are authoritative in the art they promote, and are creating or are committed to the avant-clique. (Deak and Robinson did not want self-knowledge.) They capture the flavor of the avant-garde by being part of the action, working closely with the artist. Their attitude towards the powers-that-be is rebellious, while their attitude towards their own people is most solicitous. The revolt can spread to the style of criticism as well, which tries to bypass conventional art reviewing through interviews, artists' statements, anything but analytic expostulation; they tend to advance the interests of the artist (accuracy) or the audience (clarity) over that of the critic. This type of magazine is fast disappearing.
Rather than disappearing, though, this type of magazine might better be described as short-lived. Art-Rite's last issue was no. 21, in December 1978: a group of several thousand unique drawings by Rifka, on paper printed on one side with the Art-Rite logo and folded once over the drawing on the other side. Each sheet was sold for one dollar. After that, says Deak, "It wasn't that we weren't going to do another issue … we just weren't working on one." She kept one of Rifka's drawings containing the stenciled letters DO NOT BOTHER ME.
Robinson, for his part, observes that "elbow grease only lasts for so long." Apparently exhausted with the project by the end, he looks back on Art-Rite with mixed feelings; asked about the editors' intellectual process, he replies:
"Oh God, I don't even know if there was an intellectual process. I was trying to stop being nervous and do something, it was completely intuitive. We had really simple ideas about assisting artists, looking forward, new things, speaking directly without jargon … it's almost embarrassing to think about it. The format I think was pretty good – artist's cover, interview with a critic … but I don't think I learned how to write until much later. We were pretty unsophisticated. We inserted ourselves into the art scene, got a certain amount of attention, tried to be hip. The theater we gave artists to work in was really fantastic. And there was a certain amount of freedom there – you come in new and it all seems sealed up and closed down, so you try to open up a little space for yourself, and that worked out really well."
I think Robinson is way modest. And Deak, who says she loves publications "like one pats a kitten," has opposite memories. "There was a hell of a lot of style to Art-Rite, classy style, even though it was about being thrown away. We were really cool. We were funky but we were pretty professional." As for the intellectual process, "I would go meet [Robinson and Cohn] in these informal sessions that might be an evening or might be two days, day and night. We were exchanging our brains and our knowledge. We felt none of us knew anything alone, but maybe the three of us together had a better chance of knowing something." Despite its informality the magazine was not at all casual: When it did an issue on painting (no. 9, in the spring of '75), Deak "knew fifteen reasons why" she wanted Ryman for the cover.
"Edit provided a lot of the spark," Robinson says now, "and Josh and I did a lot of the carrying. Edit was our blazing star. She was an immigrant, she knew no boundaries … she could make something out of nothing." That may seem like a double-edged compliment, but I don't think he means it that way. Making something out of nothing, after all, is what artists do themselves.
David Frankel is senior editor in the Department of Publications at the Museum of Modern Art, New York and a contributing editor of Artforum.

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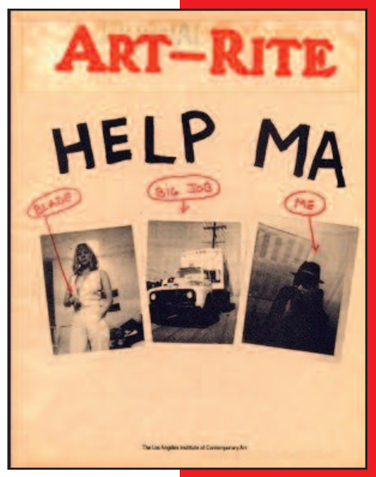
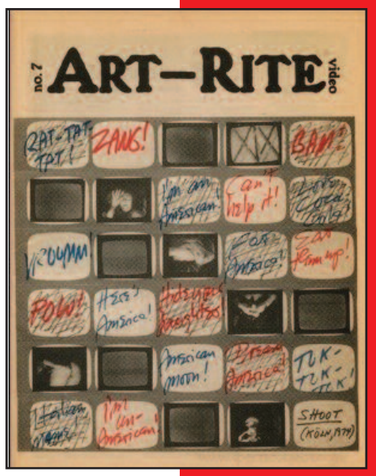
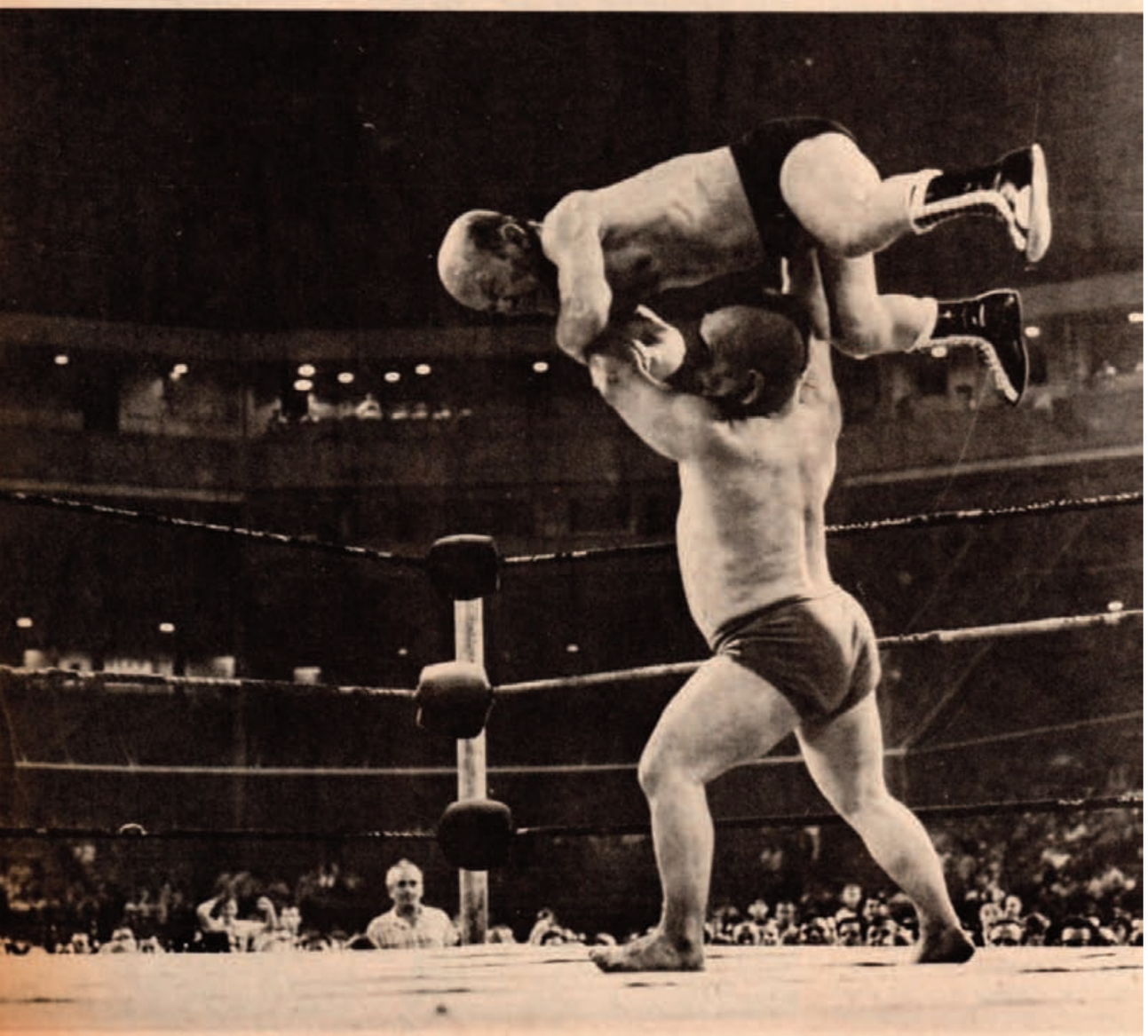


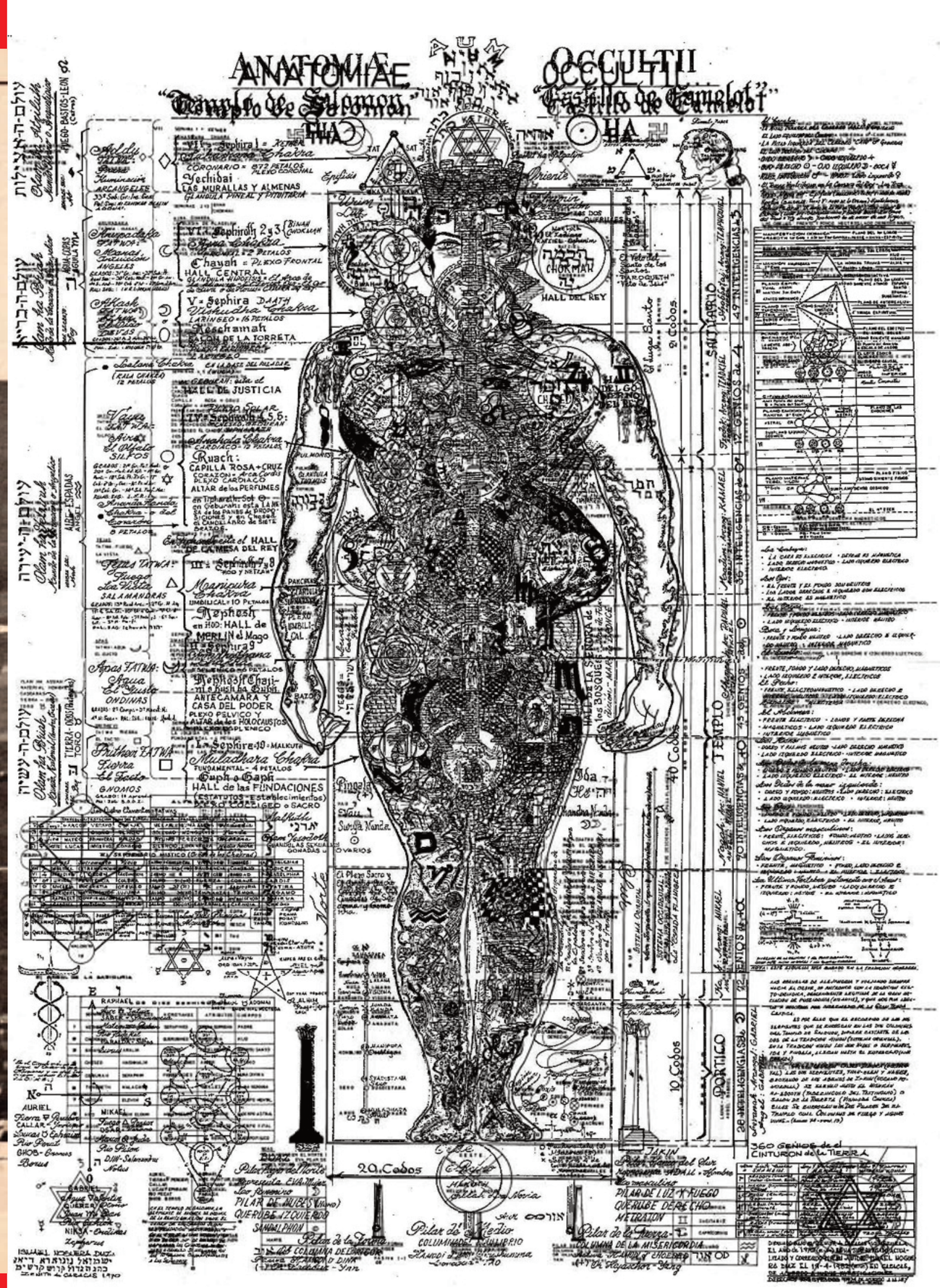


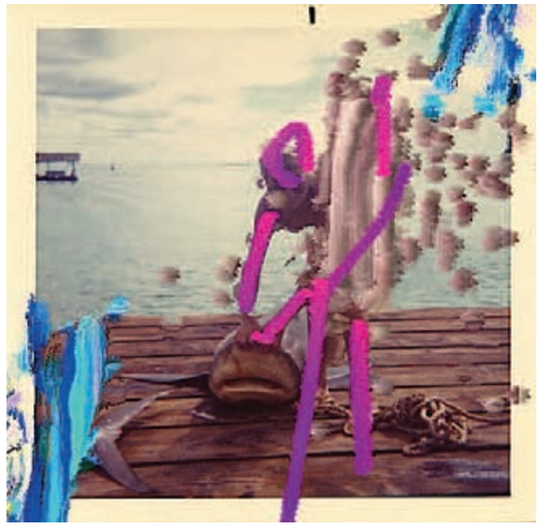
midget muscle

Pound for pound, nobody tries harder than the midgets. They are a colorful part of the wonderful world of wrestling. Their antics and ring showmanship delight any crowd. In fact, the midgets are always in demand by wrestling fans all over the country. It's easy to see why.



Little Beaver shows his might by lifting Sky Low Low sky high, high on the way toward a hard landing below.





jazz

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Performance! oder «Darf Ich Das Beil Küssen?»
herausgegeben und gestaltet von hjk

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The body’s centers of awareness. Enciclopedia Utilidad Iglesias. Janeiro. 1943. Argentina.

Plate VII. All the primary colours gain with their juxtaposition with white. The principles of harmony and contrast of colours. 1890.