

Video Killed the Radio Star

The 1980s and their
Cultural Echoes



Introduction

by Bettina Steinbrügge
with Caroline Honorien
and Alexine Taddei

From the rise of neoliberalism under Thatcher and Reagan to the last events of the Cold War, the 1980s marked a profound reorientation of Western culture. The decade saw the emergence of (post-)colonial, queer and feminist discourses challenging the then-dominant cultural paradigm, and was defined by paradoxes increasingly mediated by images. Pop culture's gleaming surfaces encountered the deep fractures of global politics; new technologies collided with old ideologies; MTV's debut and Chernobyl's fallout reached audiences through the same screens.

Drawing from the Mudam Collection, international loans and archival materials, *Video Killed the Radio Star: The 1980s and Their Cultural Echoes* revisits a pivotal moment in which image overtook voice, access replaced ownership and aesthetics assumed a new political and cultural force. The exhibition examines the shifting perceptions and sensibilities of a world on the cusp of hyper-mediation.

The Mudam Collection is rooted in the attitudes of the 1980s. On the occasion of the museum's twentieth anniversary, *Video Killed the Radio Star* reflects Mudam's longstanding and formative engagement with the period. The exhibition explores how the transformations of the 1980s still inform the world we inhabit today – it revisits the decade and traces its reverberations. In dialogue with contemporary history, *Video Killed the Radio Star* invites viewers to question what is often overlooked by Western art history. From this standpoint, the exhibition incorporates more recent artistic practices, as well as archival material, to develop a broader argument around the 1980s. The encounters resonate across generations in a critical re-examination of the era's persistent cultural preoccupations and aesthetic forms, suggesting their afterlives in the present.

Emerging from the punk ethos developed around *World's End* (1981), the Vivienne Westwood ensemble presented here mobilises the imaginaries of pirate radio and the home recording of radio hits. As a garment, it embodies the practices of hacking, sampling, détournement and reappropriation that characterised 1980s fashion, music television, advertising and institutional display – all of which inform the exhibition's own curatorial logic. Throughout, artworks, archival materials and visual artefacts of the period are juxtaposed, sampled and reactivated; archives and historical narratives here are treated as materials to be re-edited and circulated in the present.



The exhibition is divided into two sections. The first examines how artists of the 1980s and today have challenged dominant regimes of representation in photography, painting, fashion, as well as through practices of institutional critique. New systems of typology, repetition and display developed by Bernd and Hilla Becher and elaborated upon by Thomas Struth, Andreas Gursky and Günther Förg, shifted documentary neutrality towards new forms of architectural and political observation. Elsewhere, coded visual patterns circulated through fashion, performance and conceptual art: Michael Clark's reappropriation of tartan and Daniel Buren's repeated stripes both transform utilitarian motifs into tools for questioning authority and institutional ordering. Running through the section is a sustained interrogation of gender, race, diaspora and the instability of representation – from Cindy Sherman's parody of the referential system of fashion photography that stages a fragmented, unstable feminine identity, to Lorna Simpson's dismantling of racialised image-making and Rhea Dillon's reflections on nationhood and diasporic belonging.

The second section turns to the transformations in geopolitics and media that reshaped the end of the decade. Some works register these shifts in the body and in urban space: Martin Wong traces queer forms of survival within abandoned architectures, while Park McArthur examines the uneven ways institutions regulate mobility, access and visibility. Others approach the infrastructural and political crises accompanying globalisation: Joyce Joumaa conceptualises Lebanon's recurring power outages as the continuation of a crisis rooted in the Lebanese Civil War and longer colonial histories. Across this section, screens, networks and media saturation emerge as the dominant organising logic of the era: Peter Halley's geometric abstractions and Hélène Yamba-Guimbi's installations both examine how technological systems produce new forms of violence and isolation, while General Idea's anticipations of virality and branding prefigure today's attention economy.

The two sections are connected by the Foyer, an interstitial space built from documentary archives. Layering fashion magazines, advertisements, music publications and artworks from the period, the Foyer presentation outlines a transition from the democratisation of cultural consumption – driven by innovations such as the Walkman (1979) and MTV (1981) – to the emergence of the digital attention economy. Archival material from RTL retraces the rise of broadcast aesthetics shaped by commercial television, videoclip culture and early computer-generated imagery. One of the first digital image-processing computers in Europe, connected to experimental CGI research programmes such as Cerise, reflects the technological transformations reshaping visual culture during this period. Many of these tapes have since deteriorated or been reused, pointing to the fragile material history of television archives.

Meanwhile, as the AIDS crisis unfolded, underground fanzines and magazines such as *My Comrade*, founded by Linda Simpson in 1987 and featured in the exhibition, developed alternative media for writing the history of queerness; here, these documents complement the work of Nan Goldin.

A monumental wall places these archival materials in dialogue with works by Michel Majerus, Angharad Williams, Nan Goldin and Mel Chin, producing a backdrop for documents and artworks to coexist equally. Artists like Michel Majerus, exploring the convergence of media and technology, are joined by emerging artists such as Angharad Williams and Leyla Yenirce, who extend these perspectives through countercultural and geopolitical interventions. The 'bad paintings' of Albert Oehlen resonate with the post-internet culture embodied by 4FSB. Julika Rudelius's videos, presented alongside television excerpts and archival broadcasts, carry these televisual codes into the realm of intimacy and self-performance through the language of reality television.

Video Killed the Radio Star is a portrait of the 1980s as a cultural turning point and origin of contemporary technologies, contradictions and desires. It invites us to consider what remains of that era now, what is relevant from it in today's algorithmically shaped information environment, in internet-mediated intimacy and post-truth politics, and to trace how the visual codes and political undercurrents of the 1980s have informed intersectional interpretations of postmodernism. Ultimately, the exhibition approaches the decade as an unfinished project whose images and vocabulary continue to organise perception, belief, ideology and power.

The show includes works from the collection by Bernd & Hilla Becher, Daniel Buren, Victor Burgin, Sophie Calle, Mel Chin, Harun Farocki, Andrei Ujică, Günther Förg, General Idea, Nan Goldin, Jack Goldstein, Andreas Gursky, Peter Halley, Richard Haughton, Anne Imhof, Joyce Joumaa, Isaac Julien, Martin Margiela, Park McArthur, Albert Oehlen, Grayson Perry, Sondra Perry, Josephine Pryde, Julika Rudelius, Sarkis, Julian Schnabel, Thomas Schütte, Cindy Sherman, Lorna Simpson, Michael E. Smith, Thomas Struth, Leyla Yenirce. As guests we invited the following artists: Bless, Rhea Dillon, Andrzej Steinbach, Vivienne Westwood, Alvin Baltrop, Harun Farocki, Roman Ondak, Martin Wong, Hélène Yamba-Guimbi, Michel Majerus, Angharad Williams and 4FSB.



Vivienne Westwood
and Malcolm McLaren
for *World's End*

Unisex ensemble
Waistcoat, shirt, trousers and belt
Autumn/Winter 1981–82 ready-to-wear
Damask or printed fabrics and madras
Musée des Arts décoratifs, Paris
Acquisition possible thanks to the support of Jayne Wrightsman, 2001
Inv. 2001.133.10



Daniel Buren
Croisements, in situ, 1987

Display cases, tableware, fabric
Collection Mudam Luxembourg
Donation 2018 – MJS, Paris



Bernd et Hilla Becher
18 Hauts Fourneaux, 1969–87

Set of 18 black-and-white gelatin silver prints
Collection Mudam Luxembourg
Aquisition 1996 – Apport FOCUNA



Cindy Sherman
Untitled #120, 1983

C-print, colour
Collection Mudam Luxembourg
Acquisition 1996 – Apport FOCUNA



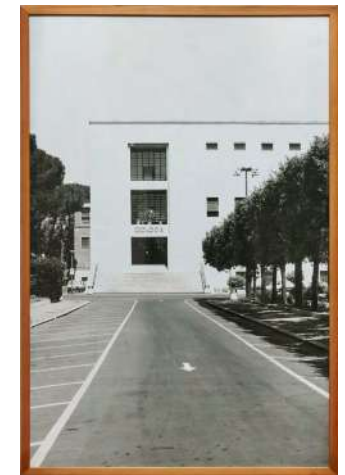
Isaac Julien
Baltimore Series (Ida B. Wells/Still Life),
2003

Digital print, colour
Collection Mudam Luxembourg
Donation 2022 – American Friends of Mudam,
Collection Raymond J. Leary



Lorna Simpson
Stereo Styles, 1988

Black-and-white dye-diffusion Polaroid print, engraved plastic plaques
Collection Mudam Luxembourg
Donation 2022 – American Friends of Mudam, Collection Raymond J. Leary



Günther Förg
Città Universitaria, 1985

Black-and-white gelatin silver print
Collection Mudam Luxembourg
Aquisition 1997 – Apport FOCUNA



Sondra Perry
*IT'S IN THE GAME '18 or Mirror Gag for Projection
and Two Universal Shot Trainers with Nasal Cavity
and Pelvis*, 2018

Digital video projection in a room painted Rosco Chroma Key Blue,
colour, sound, shot trainers
16 min 20 s, in looped
Collection Mudam Luxembourg
Donation 2019 – Allen & Overly

East gallery

Lorna Simpson
Julian Schnabel
Rhea Dillon

The 1980s witnessed a return of painting, but also a renewed interrogation of photography, particularly its use of visual language drawn from advertising, anthropological documentation and portraiture. Emerging from different New York art scenes, Julian Schnabel and Lorna Simpson responded differently to the ubiquity of postmodernist discourse: Schnabel through the return of expressive painting after its proclaimed ‘death’, Simpson through a fraught engagement with discourse that had initially excluded Black subjectivities and histories. Both, however, challenged the coherence and legibility of images. More recently, Rhea Dillon has turned to the flag as a form through which to unthink nationhood and diaspora.

In *Stereo Styles* (1988), Simpson presents ten black-and-white Polaroids showing the back of a Black woman’s head, each hairstyle paired with a single engraved adjective – *daring, severe, sweet* – echoing both the rhetoric of cosmetic advertising and the stereotypical language historically projected onto Black women. By borrowing the visual rhetoric of advertising, Simpson turns hair into a structure through which Blackness can be read, even as the subject herself remains withheld from view.

Hector similarly rejects stable portraiture. Rather than depicting the Trojan hero directly, the painting disperses him across fragments. The title may refer both to the ancient hero and to the Brazilian film director Héctor Babenco, a close friend of the artist. Schnabel’s paintings have been described as an ‘architecture of seeing’ – a formulation that might well also be applied to Simpson’s serial grids and her arrangement of a body that never fully resolves into a face.

Vexilla Onerosus [Latin: burdensome flags] (2023) belongs to an ongoing series in which Dillon attempts to imagine what a flag for the Black diaspora might look like: an emblem of cohesion for a people without land, displaced and dispersed across the seas. The work also confronts the nationalism rising across Europe and the Americas – where, of course, much of the Black diaspora lives, its presence itself a consequence of colonial displacement. Anti-climb paint gradually takes over the canvas, contaminating, staining and devouring it until the flag becomes partially illegible. The black medium never fully settles: it transfers onto whoever comes close, activating what Dillon calls the ‘engine of othering’.

Lorna Simpson was born in 1960 in New York City, United States. She lives and works in New York City.
Julian Schnabel was born in 1951 in New York City, United States. He lives and works in New York City and Montauk.
Rhea Dillon was born in 1996 in London, United Kingdom. She lives and works in London.

Bernd & Hilla Becher
Günther Förg
Andrzej Steinbach

Photography can function as an apparatus of classification. Organised in grids and typologies, photographic depictions became instrumental in categorising the world through Western logic.

From the 1960s through to the 1980s, Bernd and Hilla Becher documented disappearing industrial architectures across postwar Europe with systematic precision and a detachment characteristic of natural history. Their typological method (geometric arrangements, neutral lighting, frontal perspectives) borrows from nineteenth-century traditions of encyclopaedic classification. Arranged in grids, their photographs give viewers a pictorial version of taxonomic vision: furnaces become species to be compared, their similarities and variations charted across the frame. Yet for Hilla Becher, the effect was as much musical as scientific: ‘Each building has a particular sound. Putting a sequence of photographs together makes a sound; you have to be very attentive to questions of tone and scale and rhythm.’¹

Günther Förg came of age in postwar Germany, as part of a generation that questioned modernism’s entanglement with fascism. His photographs of the Sapienza University of Rome, designed under Mussolini as a monumental homage to fascist rationalism, present modernism as an ideological surface, one that fascism and the broader reactionary political field – but hardly they alone – could inhabit and circulate in. Shot with the same frontal clarity as the Bechers, Förg’s photographs eschew any aestheticisation of the buildings, maintaining the same frontal distance throughout the series.

Adopting the Bechers’ codes, Andrzej Steinbach focuses his attention on the camera itself, thereby holding a mirror up to the logic of documentation. Steinbach exposes the mechanics that allow bodies to be systematically recorded and categorised. In this series, Steinbach photographs not a subject but the act of photography itself – following a figure as they move through a neutral setting, camera in hand, until body and apparatus become indistinguishable. The subject of documentation partly collapses into the mechanism that produces it. With their androgyny, the figures portrayed trouble the apparatus and subvert the ability of the device to record and register its subjects in normative categories.

Bernd Becher was born in 1931 in Siegen, Germany, and died in 2007 in Rostock.
Hilla Becher was born in 1934 in Potsdam, Germany, and died in 2015 in Düsseldorf.
Günther Förg was born in 1952 in Füssen, Germany, and died in 2013 in Freiburg im Breisgau, Germany.
Andrzej Steinbach was born in 1983 in Czeladź, Poland. He lives and works in Berlin.

Vivienne Westwood
Cindy Sherman
Daniel Buren

As conservative politics gained ground in Europe and the United States in the 1980s, the critical horizon opened by philosophies of rupture created a space for intellectual resistance. It is within this current that the practices of Vivienne Westwood, Cindy Sherman and Daniel Buren are situated.

Vivienne Westwood opened her new London boutique, World's End, in 1981. That same year, she sent models down the runway wearing Walkmans for the Pirate collection (1981), from which this ensemble comes. The shop's distinctive façade is recognisable by its clock with wayward hands, emblematic of the punk irreverence that Westwood was, however, beginning to distance herself from.

The show heralded the arrival of the New Romantics, whose aesthetic draws on the baroque, the flamboyant and the androgynous. *Pirate* (1981) takes its inspiration from the privateer Thomas Tew and from 'C30, C60, C90, Go!', the Bow Wow Wow new wave track whose title references the lengths of cassette tapes fans used to 'pirate' songs off the radio. Westwood cultivated a nonchalance that sat in tension with her near-archaeological attention to French Revolutionary dress. This is clearly evident in how the crotch is cut directly into the fabric, without the use of preliminary sketches. The perspective she brings to bear on this historical period thus becomes a commentary on the growth of inequality due to neoliberal policy.

From underground piracy to institutional critique: the formalism of Buren's repeated stripes in *Croisements* (1987) underscores how those who maintain interiors are compelled to create order, be it in domestic spaces or in national collections. At the same time, the piece highlights how cultures are 'museumified' when put on exhibition.

In 1983, Cindy Sherman accepted a commission from Interview magazine. She submitted a series of photographs, among them *Untitled #120* – a parody that short-circuits the referential logic of fashion photography. In keeping with her practice, Sherman explores a fragmented feminine identity: off-kilter framing, shadowed light, an unflattering pose, a vacant, exhausted gaze, a background stripped of reference points. A handwritten note found in the artist's notebook – 'stupid looking model-types (but ethnic-dirty)' – nonetheless reveals the work's ambiguity and the limits of its critical potential. Sherman, in effect, operates with a restrictive conception of white femininity – one susceptible to contamination, alteration and defilement.

Vivienne Westwood was born in 1941 in Glossop, United Kingdom, and died in 2022 in London.
Cindy Sherman was born in 1954 in Glen Ridge, New Jersey, USA. She lives and works in New York City.
Daniel Buren was born in 1938 in Boulogne-Billancourt, France. He lives and works in situ.

Thomas Struth
Isaac Julien
Sondra Perry

Museums present themselves as neutral repositories of history and as spaces where encounters can unfold without conflict. Yet institutional display strategies turn visitors' movements through space into a choreography, instructing them what to look at, where to stand and how long they can stay – if they can remain at all. By determining who can look and what can be looked at, they produce forms of spectatorship shaped by exclusion and appropriation.

In *Museum Photographs*, Thomas Struth shows visitors inside institutions, thereby exposing the codes through which art is exhibited and consumed within Western museums. Tourists are seen pausing before canonical European paintings; their bodies are absorbed into the composition, trained into adopting postures of contemplative attention. The series reveals the museum as an apparatus that stabilises historical narratives, shaping and naturalising the Western gaze.

Isaac Julien's *Baltimore Series (Ida B. Wells/Still Life)* (2003) is derived from his film *Baltimore* (2003), shot across three Baltimore museums, including the Walters Art Museum and the National Great Blacks in Wax Museum. In this production still, wax effigies of African American historical figures are depicted 'visiting' collections of Western painting. Here, Ida B. Wells, a leading activist for Black civil rights and women's suffrage, stands in the museum as both a historical figure and a museological artefact. By inserting Black presence into institutional spaces from which it has historically been excluded, Julien presents the museum as a contested site where race, queerness and cultural legitimacy are renegotiated.

Sondra Perry's *IT'S IN THE GAME '18* (2018) brings similar questions into the digital sphere. Her twin brother Sandy, a former college basketball player, had his likeness and statistics sold by the NCAA to EA Sports for a video game; this non-consensual transaction converted his body into proprietary data. For this work, Perry reappropriates her brother's digital image alongside footage of herself and him walking through museum collections of looted African, Oceanic and pre-Columbian objects. Perry's work delineates a continuous appropriation, from colonial looting to corporate data extraction, in which Black bodies and histories have been converted into property. The work highlights the colonial continuum underlying contemporary forms of extraction.

Thomas Struth was born in 1954 in Geldern, Germany. He lives and works in Berlin and in New York City, United States.
Isaac Julien was born in 1960 in London, United Kingdom. He lives and works in London and in Santa Cruz, United States.
Sondra Perry was born in 1986 in Perth Amboy, United States. She lives and works in Newark, United States.



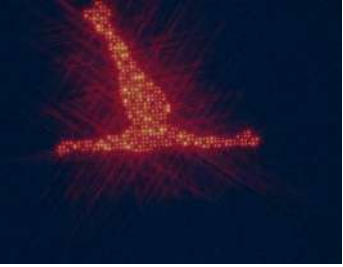
Anne Imhof
Angst III, 2016
Lacquer, aluminium, steel
Collection Mudam Luxembourg
Donation 2024 – Haus N., Kiel, Allemagne



Park McArthur
Polyurethane Foam, 2016
Acoustic polyurethane foam
Collection Mudam Luxembourg
Donation 2023 – Gaby and Wilhelm Schürmann
with the support of the members of the
Cercle des collectionneurs du Mudam Luxembourg



Harun Farocki, Andrei Ujică
Videogramme einer Revolution, 1992
Film 16 mm film transferred to high-definition video standard
colour, sound
Courtesy of the Estate of the artist



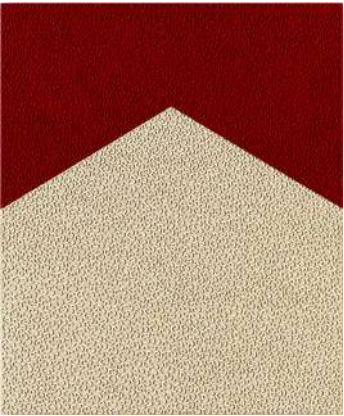
Jack Goldstein
The Jump, 1978
16 mm film, colour, silent
13 s
Collection Mudam Luxembourg
Acquisition 2001



Martin Wong
Closed Storefront, 1985
Acrylic on linen
Collection Daniel Buchholz and Christopher Müller, Berlin
Courtesy of the Martin Wong Foundation and P•P•O•W, New York



Alvin Baltrop
The Piers (men in wreckage), n.d.
(1975–86)
Gelatin silver print
Courtesy of Galerie Buchholz
and The Alvin Baltrop Trust, Third Streaming



General Idea
Untitled (Marlboro), 1986
From the series *Pasta Paintings*, 1986–87
Acrylic and pasta on canvas
Collection Mudam Luxembourg
Acquisition 2007

Martin Wong
Alvin Baltrop
Park McArthur

Largely overlooked in their time, artists such as Martin Wong and Alvin Baltrop traced forms of life that emerged in spaces shaped by abandonment. Decades later, Park McArthur extends these investigations by addressing the confinement and relegation of the disabled body.

‘Everything I paint is within four blocks of where I live and the people are the people I know and see all the time,’ Martin Wong once said. An aficionado of graffiti, Wong moved to New York’s decaying Lower East Side in 1978, where he painted the shuttered storefronts of Avenue B bodegas, churches and poetry bookshops – what he saw as the early signs of gentrification. Raised in San Francisco’s Chinatown and linked to the Nuyorican community, he chronicled a city collapsing under political neglect and the AIDS crisis. At once grim and tender, his paintings document how queer and immigrant communities navigated loss and endured amid the wreckage of urban disinvestment.

If Wong records the slow disappearance of a neighbourhood, Alvin Baltrop documents its clandestine reoccupation. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Baltrop photographed the abandoned West Side piers being reclaimed by queer communities as spaces for cruising after such activity had been criminalised elsewhere in the city. His distant photographs of men meeting in the secrecy of shadows and rubble, their bodies dwarfed by crumbling masonry, reveal how queer desire carved out temporary forms of community and intimacy in clandestine urban spaces. Demolished in the 1990s in the name of ‘urban renewal’, the piers survive in Baltrop’s photographs as counter-histories of the city.

Park McArthur extends these explorations of access and exclusion to address the disabled body itself, particularly in institutional spaces. Dense and immovable, *Polyurethane Foam* is made from the same material that lines the artist’s wheelchair. Installed as a block, the work invites visitors to negotiate its presence, while also exposing how architecture and design regulate movement unevenly, determining who gets to move freely through space and who encounters barriers, whether physical, social or institutional.

Martin Wong was born in 1946 in Portland, United States, and died in 1999 in San Francisco. He lived and worked in New York and San Francisco.

Alvin Baltrop was born in 1948 in the Bronx, New York City, United States, and died in 2004 in New York City, where he lived and worked throughout most of his life.

Park McArthur was born in 1984 in Raleigh, United States. They live and work in New York City.

Anne Imhof
Joyce Joumaa

Joyce Joumaa, a visual artist with a background in video, explores the microhistories that have shaped Lebanon. Her light installation *Periodic Sights* (2025) enters into dialogue with Anne Imhof’s painting *Angst III* (2016), composed of a steel plate coated in a matte black lacquer that reflects shadows in an unsettling way. The painting was first shown in the exhibition-performance *Angst* (Kunsthalle Basel), in which performers produce coded gestures without it being clearly possible to determine where the instructions come from. Where Imhof’s work puts into practice the concept of dissent against the established order, Joumaa turns to collapse as a force that might reconfigure everyday life and the world around it.

Periodic Sights (2025) repurposes electrical circuit breakers as backlit enclosures, ornamented with photographs of everyday life in Tripoli and Beirut. Each enclosure lights up at regular intervals – an echo of the collapse of Lebanon’s electrical grid in the aftermath of the civil war (1975–90), causing a void that private operators moved in to fill. Now known as the ‘generator mafia’, these operators notify residents of their electricity slots – limited to a few hours a day – via WhatsApp. The work subjects viewers to the same energetic temporality that shapes daily life of Lebanese.

Anne Imhof paints the way she performs, balancing structure and improvisation. The streaks in *Angst III* (2016) – Angst meaning ‘anxiety’ in German – evoke gashes, scratches and even the practice of graffiti. These raw marks recall the gestures and bodies of the performers. They also point to moments of drift in the painting process, when the artist struggles against the shadow of her own reflection mirrored on the surface of the canvas.

Like Joumaa, Imhof conceives her works in relation to the architecture of the exhibition space, taking inspiration from Caravaggio, who anticipated the way light would fall on his paintings when they were hung in churches. Zones of shadow become spaces that elude control, allowing the collective to deploy and assess its capacity for resistance: ‘We know how to move fast, how to survive, how to come together, to organise and grow strong, how to move unseen, how to prepare in the shadows.’¹

Anne Imhof was born in 1978 in Giessen, Germany. She lives and works in Berlin, Germany, and New York City, USA.
Joyce Joumaa was born in 1998 in Beirut, Lebanon. She lives and works in Beirut; Montreal, Canada; and Amsterdam, Netherlands.

**Harun Farocki,
Andrei Ujică**

During the Cold War, television and the press became political battlegrounds. Under communist regimes, the state overtly controlled information. The works of Roman Ondak and Harun Farocki explore how the camera never quite records the events it purports to capture, but in fact produces them.

Roman Ondak came of age in Czechoslovakia in the 1980s, when the underground cultural scene – with its samizdat, its unauthorised exhibitions, its civil resistance in the form of Charta 77 – was already testing the limits of what the state could control. *Bad News Is a Thing of the Past Now* (2003) is a diptych structured around re-enactment. Ondak began by photographing his father on a park bench, before then putting on his father's clothes and being photographed on the same spot, holding the same newspaper in a mock re-enactment. The result looks like the same person, thirty years apart. The two images, past and present, collapse into each other – son and father, personal biography and political history, each shadowing the other.

In *Videograms of a Revolution* (1992), Harun Farocki and Andrei Ujică assemble over 125 hours of footage shot in Romania in December 1989, as demonstrators were seizing the Bucharest television station and revolutionary actions were being performed in front of the camera. Aware of this fact, insurgents rehearsed their entrance before going live; the prime minister was forced to resign twice, because the crew hadn't been fully prepared the first time round. At the execution of Nicolae Ceaușescu, Romania's deposed leader, only one camera was allowed. All the other cameras were reduced to simply filming a television screen, thereby reproducing a single official image. The camera writes history as it unfolds.

Roman Ondak was born in 1966 in Žilina, Czechoslovakia. He lives and works in Bratislava, Slovakia.
Harun Farocki was born in 1944 in Nový Jičín, Czechoslovakia, and died in 2014 near Berlin, Germany.
Andrei Ujică was born in 1951 in Timișoara, Romania. He lives and works in Romania and Germany.

**Peter Halley
Hélène Yamba Guimbi**

Peter Halley's practice is defined by the use of fluorescent colours to depict cells, prisons and conduits, its visual vocabulary born of his experience of New York in the 1980s, as the personal computer was beginning to emerge. At the time, Halley described a post-industrial society defined by 'physical isolation and technological connectivity'.¹ This analysis echoes the reflections of philosopher Franco "Bifo" Berardi, who establishes a link between the acceleration of technological flows and the intensification of violence. This analysis also forms the backdrop to Hélène Yamba-Guimbi's work; however, where Halley describes the atomisation of social relations, Yamba-Guimbi seeks to arrest that movement, restaging it as a freeze-frame.

The three panels of *Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow* (1987) evoke the passage of a time that seems suspended. Its muted aesthetic runs counter to the glitz of the period. Haunted by the nuclear threat, Halley abandons his emblematic fluorescent motifs in favour of an empty space in which only two lines at the bottom of the canvas remain, resembling soundtracks scrolling across a screen. These lines trace the contours of a relationship to accelerated yet fragmented time.

In Hélène Yamba-Guimbi's sculptures, light dazzles the viewer, demanding the same kind of perpetual endurance as those who find themselves on the underside of a racist, capitalist society. The artist repurposes transparent boxes. Within them, she arranges construction tarpaulin, latex and lead tape – materials drawn from the peri-urban industries of Los Angeles, staffed by immigrant labourers – and reduces them to signs. Yamba-Guimbi creates spaces that distil the essence of contemporary violence. Inspired by Mexican street altars dedicated to saints, *Foreign I* and *II* were developed in spring 2025, as ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) raids across the US were being discussed in a tide of talk-show coverage that the artist followed online from her California studio.

Peter Halley was born in 1953 in New York City, USA. He lives and works in New York City.
Hélène Yamba-Guimbi was born in 1995 in Brittany, France, and works in Paris, France, and Los Angeles, USA.

Cops

First broadcast on Fox in 1989, *Cops* was created during the Writers Guild strike (1988), which pushed the television industry towards less costly productions. The series' immersive format follows police officers and sheriffs across the United States, mixing emergency incidents with scenes of domesticity. The handheld camera produces an effect of hyperrealism, at times offset by direct addresses to the viewer – confessional or joking in register – that seek to defuse the violence of the incidents. In the excerpt shown, official funerals unfold amid ceremonial salutes, accompanied by a voice-over evoking the recurring deaths of police officers. At the same time, the AIDS crisis continued to kill thousands of gay men and women, who often enough died in isolation and poverty, despite the support of their communities. No official form of remembrance has ever truly emerged since. Police violence, however – from the MOVE bombing (1985) to recent ICE operations – remains massively under-reported in the media. These asymmetries raise a question: who is permitted to die with dignity, and whose memory is commemorated?

Jack Goldstein General Idea

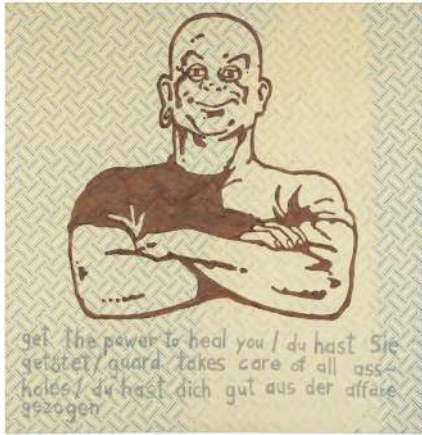
The General Idea collective is known for its mantra 'the image is a virus'. Jack Goldstein was a pioneer of the Pictures Generation, an appropriationist movement. Working within the same historical moment, these artists appropriated logos and symbols in order to probe the impact of mass media. In *Untitled (Marlboro)* (1986) and *Untitled (Vantage)* (1986), General Idea appropriated the two eponymous brands. Meanwhile, in the films *Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer* (1975) and *The Jump* (1978), Goldstein appropriated the MGM studio logo and the dive of an Olympic athlete from the Nazi propaganda film *Olympia* (1938).

In *Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer*, the lion is trapped in a loop, as if caught in a glitch. The cyclical effect lays bare the technical apparatus behind the Hollywood moving image, unsettling the familiarity with which it is ordinarily received. The absence of any direct reference to the propaganda film from which *The Jump* takes its diver – a figure who captivates at the very moment he vanishes into a glittering loop – anticipates the consumption of short-form content such as GIFs: brief, looping, often web-based animations that tend to erase their sources in order to maximise their circulation and, at times, to achieve virality – a concept that had occupied General Idea long before the democratisation of the internet became widely adopted. The absence of brand names in the paintings does nothing to impede the immediacy and recognisability of their logos – in keeping with the definition offered by William S. Burroughs, a writer close to the group, of the image as a virus that has contaminated the representation of the real. The elbow macaroni in the *Pasta Paintings* is testament to the sense of irony cultivated by the collective, which questioned the commodification of art even while seeking institutional recognition.

While General Idea played with the standardisation of their works, Goldstein delegated the making of his films to Hollywood professionals; both practices, however, signal a critical distance from the figure of the author. Programmed disappearance became a leitmotif of his work, present up until his death by suicide in 2003. The trio's members concealed their identities behind a collective pseudonym and an alter ego, Miss General Idea, who makes appearances in a number of their works. In doing so, the three men scattered traces of their queerness.

Jack Goldstein was born in 1945 in Montreal, Canada. He died in 2003 in St Louis, USA.

General Idea was created by AA Bronson, Felix Partz and Jorge Zontal in 1967 in Toronto, Canada. Felix Partz and Jorge Zontal died of AIDS in 1994.



Michel Majerus
antibakteriell, 1992

Acrylic on cotton
© Michel Majerus Estate, 2026
Private collection
Courtesy of neugerriemschneider, Berlin



Angharad Williams
Myself as Tinky Winky as Iggy Pop, 2025

Charcoal and soft pastel on paper
Private collection, Austria
Courtesy of KIN Gallery, Brussels



BLESS
BLESSbeauty Hairbrush, 2025

Wood, human hair
Courtesy of BLESS



Martin Margiela
*Collection artisanale
automne-hiver,
2006-2007*

Handbag made from a repurposed scooter helmet with a pale pink nappa leather lining
Lacquered helmet, leather
Collection Mudam Luxembourg
Donation 2007



Julika Rudelius
Forever, 2006

Double projection HD, colour, sound
16 min 50 s
Collection Mudam Luxembourg
Donation 2015 – Allen & Overy



Grayson Perry
It's Never Too Late to Have a Happy Childhood, 2000
Revenge of the Alison Girls, 2000

Glazed ceramic
Collection Mudam Luxembourg
Acquisition 2000



Albert Oehlen
Froher Depp, 1996

Oil on canvas
Collection Mudam Luxembourg
Acquisition 1997 – Apport FOCUNA

Michel Majerus
Leyla Yenirce
Angharad Williams

The launch of MTV in 1981 heralded the rise of pop culture and the cult of celebrity – and the economic structures underpinning both. In their works, Michel Majerus, Leyla Yenirce and Angharad Williams explore the afterlife of images and their migration across media and technologies.

Rarely exhibited, Majerus's *Antibakteriell* (1992) appropriates the image of Mr Clean, the iconic mascot of household cleaning products. The work attests to the artist's fascination with the proliferation of signs across painting, comics, digital art, advertising and flyposting, at a moment when he was beginning his career in Berlin against the backdrop of reunification.

In *PlayStation 5* (2022), Yenirce silkscreens a found image from the internet, depicting five women from the YPJ (Women's Protection Units), the Kurdish paramilitary group known for fighting Islamic State in northern Syria. The aestheticisation of the photos that depict them – as beautiful, young, healthy – is not without an echo of the girl-group aesthetic, and thus situates the work at the intersection of pop iconography, feminist resistance and military propaganda. Yet the discourse surrounding these images remains contingent on the geographical contexts and political agendas within which it is produced. By examining the public reaction to images of these women – all traces of whom may already have been lost – Yenirce takes a critical look at their status as pop stars of war.

Angharad Williams's self-portrait *Myself as Tinky Winky as Iggy Pop* (2025) fuses the image of Iggy Pop (*Lust for Life*, 1977) with the children's television character Tinky Winky. Targeted in 1999 by American Reverend and prominent televangelist Jerry Falwell, who claimed the character was gay, Tinky Winky has since been reappropriated by queer culture. The hybrid Williams constructs – formed of a punk rebel and symbol of resistance to gender binarity – sets two regimes of popular culture and counterculture in tension, one pre-1989, one post.

Majerus, Yenirce and Williams – three children of the internet – deploy strategies of sampling in order to reconfigure contemporary mythologies of virility, war propaganda and the control of dissenting bodies, thereby subverting the logics of control on which those mythologies rest.

Michel Majerus was born in 1967 in Esch-sur-Alzette, Luxembourg, and died in 2002 in Niederanven, Luxembourg.

Leyla Yenirce was born in 1992 in Beşiri, Kurdistan. She lives and works in Berlin, Germany.

Angharad Williams was born in 1986 on the island of Ynys Môn, Wales, United Kingdom. She lives and works in Berlin, Germany.

Charles Atlas,
Leigh Bowery
Albert Oehlen

Martin Margiela
4FSB

Punk produced not only music, but also a set of questions about mastery, authorship and the politics of skill. What do you do with the punk impulse after punk?

Leigh Bowery (1961–94) emerged from London's punk and clubbing scenes, where the body was becoming a site for experimentation and provocation. He pushed grotesque, architectural looks, unwearable by anyone but himself, each outfit made for just a single occasion. In *The Legend of Leigh Bowery*, Charles Atlas documents Bowery, Michael Clark and Rachel Auburn getting ready to go nowhere, dressing up simply for the sake of it.

Albert Oehlen emerged from the West German punk scene, applying a similar anti-authoritarian spirit to painting through deliberately 'bad' works. His *Bad Paintings* series, started in the early 1980s, was intentionally offensive, crude and jarring, and about as far from mastery and meaning as possible. *Froher Depp* [happy idiot] (1996) from this series presents flat colour overlaid with energetic brushwork, spray-painted lines, fluorescent yellows bleeding into diluted browns and drips left running. The title of the series is a fitting description of its method. Deliberate ugliness as a method is a punk gesture, refusing the idea that art owes anything to skill, taste and the market.

Martin Margiela's deconstructions of 1980s aesthetics suggest both dialogue and opposition. That decade had turned the designer into a celebrity, their image built on precisely the kind of polished surfaces and advertising glamour that Margiela systematically refused. Declining to be photographed, sending anonymous faxes instead of submitting to interviews and leaving basting threads visible in his unfinished coats, Margiela sought to become the Barthesian ideal of the 'dead author' who effaces himself entirely from the work; ultimately, however, he ended up producing his own myth in the process. *Casque-sac* (2006) – a scooter helmet transformed by hand into a handbag – represents a utilitarian object devoid of its original function.

4FSB's hand-dyed, bleached clothes bring the rebel logic to the digital realm. Worn by Doja Cat and Arca alike, each piece is made by allowing the fabric to react unpredictably; dye spreads, bleach corrodes the fibres, the toile acts like the surface of a painting, the stain becomes the image. 4FSB cites Bowery as a direct influence, noting how it took inspiration from his approach to the grotesque and body as a living sculpture, disrupting the figure until it becomes uncanny. In 4FSB's digital work, the face becomes unstable: it is stretched, filtered, and pushed past recognition until it stops being a portrait and starts becoming other.

Charles Atlas was born in 1949 in St Louis, United States. He lives and works in New York, United States.

Leigh Bowery was born in 1961 in Sunshine, Australia, and died in 1994 in London, United Kingdom.

Albert Oehlen was born in 1954 in Krefeld, Germany. He lives and works in Switzerland, Spain and Germany.

Martin Margiela was born in 1957 in Genk, Belgium. He lives and works in France and Belgium.

4FSB is a London-based art and fashion project.

BLESS Grayson Perry

Mundane and utilitarian objects such as the hairbrush and the decorative vase are often dismissed by high culture, regarded as mere craft objects or relegated to the domestic sphere. BLESS and Grayson Perry use them as Trojan horses, tools for questioning that which culture would prefer to keep out of sight.

By replacing bristles with locks of human hair, BLESS's *Beauty Hairbrush* becomes part beauty product, part sinister sexual iconography, suggesting bodily presence. The brush oscillates between the functional and the uncanny, referring to Victorian mourning rituals in which hair cut from the dead was braided, woven and preserved as jewellery. Such mourning objects remained physically intimate rather than hidden away, reflecting a Victorian relationship to death that accepted proximity rather than concealment.

Grayson Perry emerged from the same London context as Leigh Bowery, taking influence from him while squatting with Boy George and Stephen Jones in the 1980s and competing to create and wear the most outrageous outfits. Perry channelled this energy into his ceramics, a craft that fine art has historically dismissed as second-class. *Revenge of the Alison Girls* (2000) pays homage to Henry Darger, a Chicago hospital janitor who spent his evenings illustrating a vast fantasy epic that was discovered only after his death. The vase – coated in extravagant glazes and adorned with advertising transfers – is a revenge fantasy, depicting S/M scenes, bondage, cross-dressing and a violent stepfather confronted by a female army.

Lifestyle of the Rich and Famous, 1984–1995

Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous first appeared on TV screens in 1984, presented by Robin Leach. With swimming pools and champagne figuring as markers of social distinction, the series has left a lasting mark on popular culture and helped establish reality TV as a genre in its own right. Each episode follows celebrities from film, music, fashion, sport and politics in their daily lives. In her episode (1986), the actress Raquel Welch presents beauty as a personal discipline grounded in gymnastics and yoga. In *The World's Most Exotic Vacation Resorts* (1988), we glimpse the Reagans' favourite Bali hotel room, which they laud for its 'security' and 'pool'. In sharing their favourite holiday destinations – all of them in areas marked by colonial history – actresses Deborah Shelton, Teri Copley and Leann Hunley only reinforce those resorts' connections to an exoticised imaginary.

Julika Rudelius

Julika Rudelius draws on social and cultural milieus that she scouts out in advance. In *Forever* (2006), she turns her attention to a white, wealthy American female elite. Hovering between documentary and fiction, the film features five women over sixty, poolside at their luxurious Hamptons homes, photographing each other and delivering monologues on their relationships to beauty, surgery, success and happiness. Reappropriating the reality TV confessional format, Rudelius allows tensions to surface in the gaps: sideways glances, silences and staged exchanges reveal the competitive female dynamic that structures these relationships. One woman's mantra – 'it's up to us' – speaks to a self-care economy indifferent to the power relations that underpin it.

BLESS was founded in 1997 by Desiree Heiss and Ines Kaag, who live and work in Berlin, Germany, and Paris, France.
Grayson Perry was born in 1960 in Chelmsford, United Kingdom. He lives and works in London.

Credits

Images

- 1**
Raymond Clément, Photographies de plateau RTL, n.d. (1980–89)
Private collection
Courtesy of Raymond Clément

Dan Altmann, Centre CERISE, RTL Bertrange, n.d. (1980–89)
Private collection
Courtesy of Dan Altmann

2
My Comrade Magazine
n° 1, winter 1988 (cover and back)
Courtesy of Linda Simpson

Raymond Clément, Photographies de plateau RTL, n.d. (1980–89)
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5, 18, 19, 22
Exhibition view *Video Killed the Radio Star: The 1980s and their Cultural Echoes*, 12.06 – 11.10.2026, Mudam Luxembourg
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7, 8, 9 10, 23, 25
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Exhibition view *Park McArthur. Contact M*, 15.03 – 28.09.2025, Museum Abteiberg, Mönchengladbach
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Friends & Fools, a members' club
by Rote Wand
Courtesy of KIN
Photo: Fabrice Schneider

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Video still: © Julika Rudelius

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Installation view *Peintures des années 80 et 90. Collection Mudam*, 29.09.2018 – 01.03.2019, Mudam Luxembourg
Photo: Rémi Villaggi – Metz © Mudam Luxembourg

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My Comrade Magazine, n° 5, spring 1990 (cover)
Courtesy of Linda Simpson

Dan Altmann, Centre CERISE, RTL Bertrange, n.d. (1980–89)
Private collection
Courtesy of Dan Altmann

Raymond Clément, Photographies de plateau RTL, n.d. (1980–89)
Private collection
Courtesy of Raymond Clément
- ## Bibliography

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2
Quote from an interview conducted by Markus Pilgram at Mudam in March 2024

3
Andrew Moisey, "Bernd and Hilla Becher's Inadvertent Human Science." *Journal of Aesthetics & Culture* 17 (1), 2025.

Public programme

- Artist Talks**
Joyce Joumaa,
with Caroline Honorien

Hélène Yamba-Guimbi,
with Alexine Taddei

03.07.2026 | 17:30–19:00
- Curator's Tour**
with Bettina Steinbrügge

20.07.2026 | 18:00 | DE
16.09.2026 | 18:00 | EN
- Summer project**
with Magali Medinger
The 1980s as a Stage: Performing Sound, Style and Self
- Graffiti workshop: Tagging Identity**
Graffiti as an expression

01.08.2026 | 14:00–17:00
- Movement Workshop**
Moves & Attitudes:
80s Dance practices

15.08.2026 | 14:00–17:00
- 80s Night Fever**

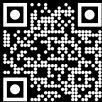
02.09.2026 | 18:00–22:00
- Opening evening**

15.07.2026 | 18:00–22:00
- Drop-in!**
Pins and accessoires

15.07 (with Magali), 22.07, 29.07,
02.09 (with Magali), 09.09.2026
18:00–22:00
- Music workshop (listening session)**
Mixtape Lab: Curating Sound
and Identity

18.07.2026 | 14:00–17:00
- Lunchtime at Mudam**

26.06.2026 | 12:30
28.08.2026 | 12:30
02.10.2026 | 12:30



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Mudam Luxembourg

Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean

3, Park Dräi Eechelen
L-1499 Luxembourg-Kirchberg

00352 453785-1
info@mudam.com

Mudam team

Gabriela Acha, Hollie Douglas, Sandra Biwer, David Celli, Alice Champion, Erouan Chantemargue, Sophia Correia, Camille d'Huart, Anaël Daoud, Zuzana Fabianova, Marie-Noëlle Farcy, Paula Fernandes, Clara Froumenty, Christophe Gallois, Jordan Gerber, Richard Goedert, Matthias Heitbrink, Christine Henry, Jacques Hirtt, Olivier Hoffmann, Caroline Honorien, Marie-Alix Isdahl, Julie Jephos, Yousra Khalis, Germain Kerschen, Clara Kremer, Léon Kruijswijk, Laurence Le Gal, Vanessa Lecomte, Ioanna Madenoglu, Tawfik Matine El Din, António Pedro Mendes, Laura Mescolini, Mélanie Meyer, Irfann Montanavelli, Carlos Monteiro, Barbara Neiseler, Markus Pilgram, Tanguy Portzenheim, Boris Reiland, Susana Rodrigues, Manon Roels, Thibaut Salvi, Elisa Seelmann, Alexandre Sequeira, Pedro Serrano, Bettina Steinbrügge, Alexine Taddei, Aurélien Thomas, Steve Veloso, Inês Venade, Adèle Wester, Ana Wiscour Conter, Nicole Wittmann

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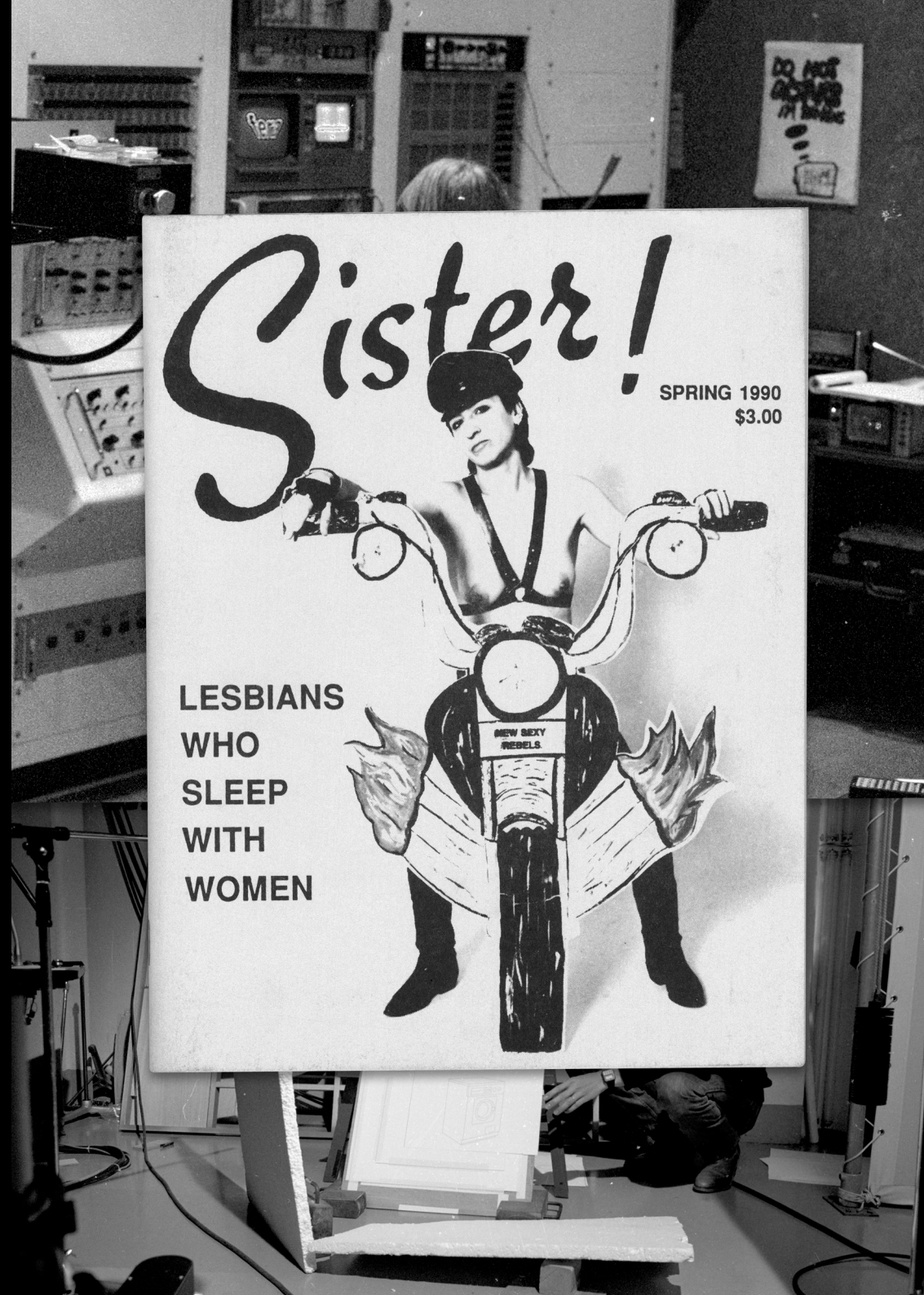
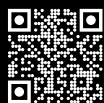
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Curators

Bettina Steinbrügge
with Caroline Honorien and Alexine Taddei

Production team

Boris Reiland, Tawfik Matine, Jordan Gerber,
Pedro Serrano, David Celli, Richard Goedert
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Collection team

Marie-Noëlle Farcy, Vanessa Lecomte,
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