

30 YRS part 10



dominique gonzalez- foerster

DOMINIQUE GONZALEZ-FOERSTER
AND CAMILLE VIVIER, *GORGONE I*
(*APPARITION*), 2021, HAIR,
MAKE-UP, AND JEWELS BY
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Purple emerged alongside a new generation of French artists, including Pierre Joseph, Philippe Parreno, Bernard Joisten, Pierre Huyghe, and Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, who often worked together on collaborative projects. Dominique played a key role in the beginning of *Purple*, helping us to conceive a magazine by, for, and about artists, and also curating shows.

In this interview, she talks about the origins of *Purple* and the shows we organized together, including “June” (1993), “Winter of Love” (1994), and “Elysian Fields” (2000), as well as the evolution of her prolific work, from installations to music, films, and performances.



1993 purple prose #3
cover by dominique
gonzalez-foerster
featuring catherine
bret-brownstone



1993 june exhibition
curated by purple
at galerie thaddaeus
ropac photo by wolfgang
tillmans

SPECIES OF SPACES

DOMINIQUE GONZALEZ-FOERSTER

interview by olivier zahm

beginnings

OLIVIER ZAHM — You were on *Purple*’s editorial staff at the beginning and served throughout the 1990s, taking part in editorial meetings and contributing ideas for themes and artists, but also writing and taking pictures for the magazine. What do your remember from the beginning of *Purple*? DOMINIQUE GONZALEZ-FOERSTER — It all started through my friendship with Elein Fleiss, the cofounder. I remember the little Macintosh in her apartment that we ran the whole thing on. I remember when you came along, too, and made your way into our friendship. We’d eat dinner every evening at the Vietnamese place on Rue Louis Bonnet, in Belleville. Pho Dong Huong was like our headquarters. I remember we were super-excited early on with Maurizio Cattelan, when we did *Permanent Food*. I remember the joy of the early days with the artists on our editorial staff, like Jean-Luc Vilmouth, Dike Blair, and Bernard Joisten. We spent a lot of time together. We had a lot of time on our hands.

OLIVIER ZAHM — Why do you think we decided to create a magazine back then? DOMINIQUE GONZALEZ-FOERSTER — There was nowhere else to show the way our ideas knitted together, nowhere else to talk the way we wanted to talk about art, and associate it with other forms and practices. Everything seemed to have already been taken or to be already occupied.

OLIVIER ZAHM — How would you describe *Purple*’s founding idea? DOMINIQUE GONZALEZ-FOERSTER — The big idea behind *Purple* was to conceive of the

magazine as a space beyond itself: outside the mere paper magazine, I mean. Hence the many possible exhibitions, journeys, places, rooms. Hence the possibility of an open space where we could establish bonds between people — and within that space associate practices that were not necessarily associated elsewhere. We’d speak of the magazine as a script and of an exhibition as the filming of a script.

OLIVIER ZAHM — What do you recall about putting together the first issues, which were closer to fanzines than to magazines? DOMINIQUE GONZALEZ-FOERSTER — We were truly in the moment. For example, I remember seeing Vanessa Beecroft’s drawings for the first time or Wolfgang Tillmans’ photos in Cologne. We suddenly had a space where we could take our discoveries and show them to others. As for the production, we were improvising, teaching ourselves how to put together a magazine.

exhibitions

OLIVIER ZAHM — Indeed, the magazine was conceived as a space, in and outside of its pages. I think that was a vision that *you* brought to *Purple*. DOMINIQUE GONZALEZ-FOERSTER — It’s true that I always think in terms of space. I’m very “species of spaces,” like Georges Perec. It goes from the space in a drawer to the space in a room, and on to the space of the street and the city, of an exhibition, of a cinema, of the planet and the universe, like my current exhibition at the Serpentine.

OLIVIER ZAHM — Also, we thought of the magazine as an exhibition space, and of exhibitions as magazines in space. DOMINIQUE GONZALEZ-FOERSTER — I think *Purple*’s first exhibition was “June,” at the Thaddaeus Ropac gallery, on Caroline Smulders’ invitation. That’s where we displayed the magazine for the first time. I remember the invitation, with a photo by Wolfgang Tillmans. It had Viktor & Rolf in a corner. And there was one of the first gallery installations by Martin Margiela, who attended the opening. That was the only time I met him. He had a Christ-like beauty, as I recall. And I remember the unexpected visit of the director of the Musée d’Art Moderne, Suzanne Pagé, who saw “June” and instantly thought of doing a big exhibition at her museum. “L’Hiver de l’Amour,” it was called, and then later “Winter of Love” at MoMA PS1 in New York. The print and exhibition parts of *Purple* would advance in parallel and feed into each other.

OLIVIER ZAHM — And in 2001, *Purple* did the “Elysian Fields” exhibition at Beaubourg [Centre Pompidou], when it reopened. More than 50 artists spread over the whole of Beaubourg’s first upper exhibition floor, at Bernard Blistène’s invitation. DOMINIQUE GONZALEZ-FOERSTER — And there were a lot of smaller exhibitions, like “8½” at Jousse Seguin in Paris, “Beige” in Copenhagen, an exhibition in Mexico, and still others that I no longer remember. The magazine gave birth to a great many exhibitions, and we’d rethink the format every time. We felt we were innovating, constantly asking what an exhibition could be. For “L’Hiver de l’Amour,” for example, we decided to make a magazine catalogue and make the exhibition into a program of events, performances, situations, different places. I set up an office for the biographical sessions I’d hold at set times. Maurizio Cattelan had the remains of a blown-up pavilion of contemporary art carted over from Milan and exhibited. We reimagined the Musée d’Art Moderne de la Ville de

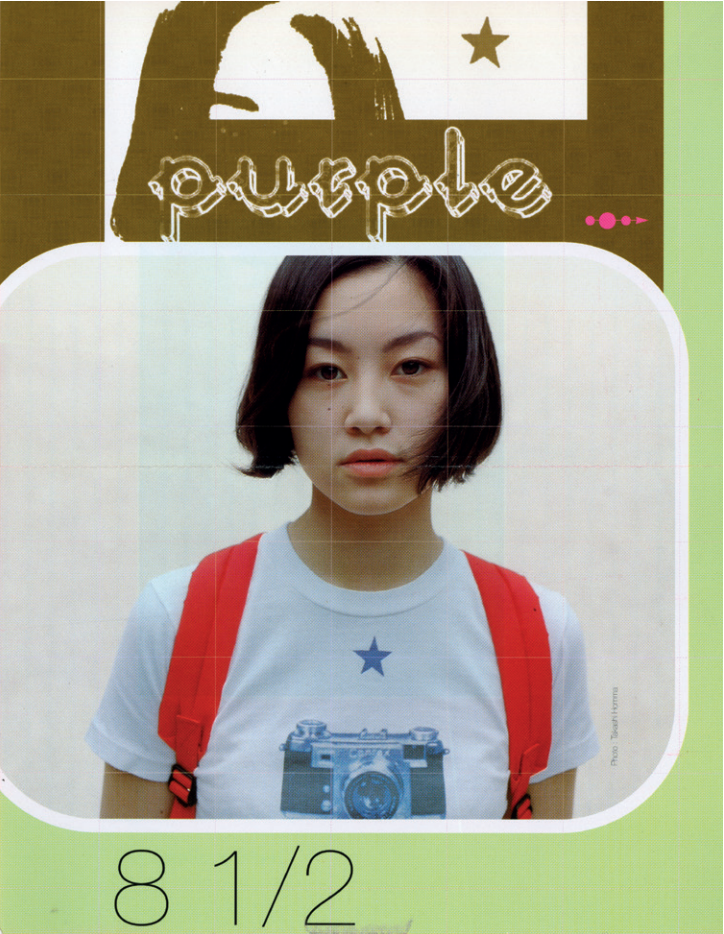
Paris not as a simple exhibition space but as a program, made up of time and multiple possibilities: some real, some fictional or abstract. We invented a new relationship to exhibition time, to make it last longer, so that we could dwell there for a while and return to it.

OLIVIER ZAHM — The architect François Roche made the step heights uneven, as on a mountain trail, so that the feeling of getting to the exhibition would imperceptibly change. Security rules don’t allow for such liberties these days. General Idea’s giant AZT pill would greet you in the lobby, and in the last room you’d see *Fin de Siècle*, an ice floe with three seals on it, symbolizing the freeze in sexuality after the AIDS crisis. DOMINIQUE GONZALEZ-FOERSTER — The presence of General Idea’s piece was fundamental. Do you remember the covers by Andrea Zittel? So you could move through “L’Hiver de l’Amour.” It was beautiful. And the mattresses by Rirkrit Tiravanija for you to rest or sleep on. And Vidya’s first appearance, all but nude, sleeping in an antiseptic transparent bubble.

OLIVIER ZAHM — In an isolation bubble, with strictly hygienic contact. DOMINIQUE GONZALEZ-FOERSTER — That’s an exhibition I’d really love to see again now. There aren’t many exhibitions you’d like to see reconstituted. We applied that logic at PS1 with “Winter of Love” because in that case we spent three months in New York to devote ourselves to the exhibition and its events. The “Elysian Fields” exhibition at Beaubourg became a landscape, with a set of modernist houses and a Palm Springs feel out in the middle of the desert. We’d seek to reformat every exhibition a different way.

OLIVIER ZAHM — We wanted to make exhibitions into venues for experimentation and for living. We employed those terms in the introduction we wrote together for “L’Hiver de l’Amour.” We explored different sensations and temporalities, with an openness to other

1996 8 1/2 exhibition
curated by purple at
galerie jousse seguin
paris photo by takashi
homma



practices, like fashion, architecture, dance, cinema, clips, design (the Salon Jean Prouvé). That wasn't so common at the time in artistic fields. Nowadays it's the norm. DOMINIQUE GONZALEZ-FOERSTER— There are so many exhibitions these days in the format we invented in the '90s. “L'Hiver de l'Amour” really is an exhibition I'd love to see again now.

OLIVIER ZAHM — There was a collective aspect to it, too. Because all of us together would conceive of exhibitions and the magazine without distinction between curator and artist. I, for one, didn't want to be the official curator, even if it would be natural from the institutional perspective for me to be in that position, with Elein in the background. DOMINIQUE GONZALEZ-FOERSTER— You could almost say that the magazine served as a script or storyboard for our exhibitions. The early '90s marked the return of the collective.

OLIVIER ZAHM — The collective in its micrological, corpuscular, minority form, as the philosopher Félix Guattari would have said. We included a video of his in the exhibition, and for the title we took inspiration from his anthology of articles *Les Années d'Hivers*, on the era of frozen desire in the '80s. DOMINIQUE GONZALEZ-FOERSTER— Yes, especially for the two of us, whose childhoods were imbued with the utopia of community. The 1990s were our 1970s. At least, that's how they seemed to me, through different groups and our experiences with Pierre Huyghe and Philippe Parreno, and the many kinds of collaboration we had with them. Those were collaborative, collective years. It was rather special.

OLIVIER ZAHM — You've never lost your love for collaboration. In the 2000s, for example, you worked with legendary French musicians and singers, like Alain Bashung and Christophe. DOMINIQUE GONZALEZ-FOERSTER— And now with the philosopher Paul B. Preciado, the musician Perez, and the artist Ange Leccia for the film



I just finished on the French singer Christophe. The basic principle is to have a symbiotic model. There are many parallels here with mycelium, mushrooms.

OLIVIER ZAHM — Is the symbiotic model the future? DOMINIQUE GONZALEZ-FOERSTER— It's the future and the past. It's a reality. The obsession with the signature, individuality, originality no longer makes sense. It's still a commercial necessity, no doubt, but in truth, when you closely observe the modalities of apparition or manufacture for any practice or work, you never find a single person.

OLIVIER ZAHM — You find a hundred. DOMINIQUE GONZALEZ-FOERSTER— At least! And you find love, conversation, exchange, and multiple influences. I know of no isolated creator who's produced a great work. But maybe our generation has less ego. Or another kind of ego.

OLIVIER ZAHM — We have a common desire to stand apart from the generation of the '80s, which was much more individualistic than ours. And the magazine was an instrument for that.

DOMINIQUE GONZALEZ-FOERSTER— As I recall, there wasn't just one magazine at the time. There were several that counted.

OLIVIER ZAHM — Yes. There was *Documents*, for example, put together by Nicolas Bourriaud and Éric Troncy, as well as Ezra Petronio's *Self Service*. Both magazines came out at the same time as *Purple*. There were also *i-D* and *The Face* in London, *Interview* and *Index* in New York. DOMINIQUE GONZALEZ-FOERSTER— Those were the magazines one would read at the time. Because it was still pre-Internet days. The culture of the 1980s was a magazine culture that extended into and diversified in the '90s. That's what informed and nourished us. It's completely impossible to realize now how much of a wellspring that was.

travels

OLIVIER ZAHM — Your other wellspring is travel. You were long in charge of a section in *Purple* that covered places and your journeys. You'd return with photos and a travel story that amounted to more of a psychological story, a sort of mental space, a landscape exhibition.

DOMINIQUE GONZALEZ-FOERSTER, *VÉRA & MISTER HYDE*, 2015, FILM STILL, HD VIDEO, COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND ESTHER SCHIPPER, BERLIN, COPYRIGHT ADAGP, PARIS, 2022, PHOTO COPYRIGHT THE ARTIST

DOMINIQUE GONZALEZ-FOERSTER— It was really a great desire to see for myself things that I'd maybe heard of through cinema or literature, seen in films or read about in certain novels. For example, when I went to Hong Kong, I wanted to see the locations from Wong Kar-wai's *Chungking Express*. When I went to Japan, I'd seen images of gardens in Kyoto from the 1980s. I think this relates to exhibitions. I remember arriving in Japan for the first time, feeling the temperature and humidity, the sensation of being physically welcomed into a sort of body, into that humid warmth, and finding it very pleasant. Besides, to travel is to wander. I've always been one to wander about rather than travel on a schedule.

OLIVIER ZAHM — And that's when you'd take pictures for your section in the magazine. DOMINIQUE GONZALEZ-FOERSTER— At the time, I'd take nothing but slides because I liked the fragmentary nature of 35mm. I'd identify zones, geographies, assemblages, constellations...

OLIVIER ZAHM — In your reportage on Seoul, for example, you compared the city to a video game. DOMINIQUE GONZALEZ-FOERSTER— Yes, but that was then... Seoul has changed so much. I had the good fortune back then to travel to all but unrecorded places. You couldn't do that so much now, the good fortune to perceive certain zones, certain ensembles, certain states of the city that were a bit melancholic, a bit empty. I also had a fear of photographing people. I'd seek out more or less deserted places. I was looking for horizontality...

OLIVIER ZAHM — Listening to you talk, I'm reminded of Chris Marker. DOMINIQUE GONZALEZ-FOERSTER— Yes. But at the time, I didn't know him so well. I loved *La Jetée*, but it was in rewatching *Sans Soleil* that I came to understand his importance. That film has everything.

OLIVIER ZAHM — How does your travel relate to your exhibitions?

DOMINIQUE GONZALEZ-FOERSTER— I have trouble fitting my trips into my exhibitions because there's a formatting problem. There's a parallel between a bedroom and an exhibition, as it's not so hard to introduce a domestic space into an exhibition space. However, for travel, big geographic shifts, whole cities, I think cinema scales better.

the bedroom

OLIVIER ZAHM — Let's talk about the notion of the bedroom because it's the opposite of travel, unless one goes on a journey around one's room, like Xavier de Maistre in his *Voyage Autour de Ma Chambre*. You've often made use of the model of the bedroom, which is an intermediary place, a liminal space between sleep and wakefulness, day and night, public and private, solitude and sexuality, consciousness and the unconscious. Could it be that the bedroom is the matrix of your work? DOMINIQUE GONZALEZ-FOERSTER— The true setting for my thought and vision is the bedroom. I don't have a studio, but I call my workplace the workshop of the night, and that place is my bedroom. In fact, in my exhibition at the Chantal Crousel gallery, “La Chambre Humaine,” the stage was my bedroom, conceived as a round bed surrounded with works of art. In *Pornotopia*, Paul B. Preciado describes the workplace of *Playboy*'s founder, Hugh Hefner, as being around his bedroom and especially his bed, where he would edit photos, commission articles, and so forth. I've never had a workshop and don't think I'll ever have one because, for me, the bedroom forms a much shorter circuit for ideas, reading, films that I watch at night. I'm constantly metabolizing all the inputs. That's why I call it the “workshop of the night” because the bed is the setting of gestation. We've learned that the eight-hour unit of sleep was an invention meant to boost production in the late 19th century, to sustain the three eight-hour shifts of industry. I often sleep for two or three hours, wake up refreshed, put in a full

session of work, and fall asleep again afterwards. With all its possibilities, the bedroom has a beauty all its own. It's a space of invention, be it sexual, artistic, or what have you... It's a superlatively fertile space.

apparitions

OLIVIER ZAHM — That brings me to the question of “apparitions.” Since 2012, you've been embodying various persons — like Edgar Allan Poe, Lola Montès, and Fitzcarraldo — who “appear” in surprising ways. Why this desire for apparition? It's a very daring self-transfiguration. DOMINIQUE GONZALEZ-FOERSTER— There's no link between it and the actor's craft. It's like a psychic's séance. It's like becoming a portal, a conductor for intensity, a channel for an existence that has left artistic traces. Art forms are also ways to bring absences into existence, or to counter absences. Once I started doing them, these “apparitions” became addictive. Even if there's no link to rehearsal or to the actor's craft, there's a long preparation, even a premeditation, that leads me into a state that I consider to be a form of trance.

OLIVIER ZAHM — You conjure the person's spirit? DOMINIQUE GONZALEZ-FOERSTER— Or, rather, I open a passage to something that's a form of existence...

OLIVIER ZAHM — A ghostly form. DOMINIQUE GONZALEZ-FOERSTER— Works of art, or an artist's whole body of work, are already a form of artificial, proliferating life — and a bit monstrous.

OLIVIER ZAHM — It's like a plant. DOMINIQUE GONZALEZ-FOERSTER— It's a life that's bigger than its author, bigger than its own proliferation or existence. Also, when you start on a work of art, you're unaware of everything that's going to happen and of the consequences in terms of contamination and archiving. It's enormous. Étienne Souriau wrote a book that might interest you. It's called

DOMINIQUE GONZALEZ-FOERSTER, *HOLORAMA 5 (LOIEFULLERFOREVER)*, 2022, INSTALLATION VIEW, COPYRIGHT DOMINIQUE GONZALEZ-FOERSTER, SERPENTINE GALLERIES, 2022, AND ADAGP, PARIS, 2022, COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND VEGA FOUNDATION, PHOTO HUGO GLENDINNING



DOMINIQUE GONZALEZ-FOERSTER, *ALIENARIUM 5, GROUP APPARITION*, MAY 28, 2022, SERPENTINE GALLERIES, FEATURING DOMINIQUE GONZALEZ-FOERSTER AS HILMA AF KLINT, COPYRIGHT ADAGP, PARIS, 2022, PHOTO CAMILLA GREENWELL

Les Différents Modes d'Existence, and it's about the question of spirits. We're insufficiently cognizant that we exist amid all sorts of beings living or dead, artificial or organic, or hybrid. This coexistence lies behind a great many other works. All the more so with the virtual world. The frontiers of birth and death are not necessarily meaningful with respect to the digital forms we now take on. It's obvious that we've entered a new phase or mode of existence.

OLIVIER ZAHM — Such is the feeling or perception that your work induces. Indeed, in “Alienarium,” we meet an alien through virtual reality. DOMINIQUE GONZALEZ-FOERSTER — Hence the fascination with holographic illusions and all manner of apparitions... It goes back to the late 19th century. We've yet to emerge from a history of exhibitions that begins in the 19th century with World's Fairs, which superimposed states of exhibition, states of incarnation and apparition, metabolizations, collages, palimpsests, layers upon layers. It renders visible the complexity of our relationship to time and influences, and all the beings and artworks that run through us...

OLIVIER ZAHM — That was the striking thing for us all at the time, in the 1990s, with the advent of David Lynch's cinema. DOMINIQUE GONZALEZ-FOERSTER — Yes, Lynch contributed as well to a perception of space, of the world, of our existences that integrates the figures of our dreams and fantasies, possible and impossible encounters. I still remember the day I turned around at the Guggenheim Foundation in Venice because I could hear the click of camera shutters behind me, and saw Liz Taylor. She was an apparition. The Virgin Mary also makes apparitions. An apparition is something that spills over outside of the real and transcends it. Maybe I'm cultivating uncomfortable ground, but in any case, I think I lend visibility to the symbiotic aspect between humans and nonhumans, the living and the nonliving.

OLIVIER ZAHM — You pique my interest with this notion of symbiosis in exhibitions and these perceptions that come to you from cinema, travel, the bedroom. DOMINIQUE GONZALEZ-FOERSTER — That's it in a nutshell. It's synesthesia, media-synesthesia. Because there's Proustian or Rimbaudian synesthesia, as people will say, but I think I'm the victim of cultural synesthesia. I'm always associating films, books, cities, encounters, conversations. I'm not singular. I think Susan Sontag had the same multi-perception: in other words, the same permanent collage of mixed mediums and mixed modes of representation. And maybe that's what found a home in *Purple* and in exhibitions: in other words, in a space not limited to a single format.

songs

OLIVIER ZAHM — And this leads us to music because the missing dimension so far here has been the voice and singing. You've taken the risk of becoming a singer. DOMINIQUE GONZALEZ-FOERSTER — That's for sure. I had the good fortune to go on tour with and listen to Alain Bashung and Christophe because I handled their stage design. It was like having the greatest teachers and not realizing it. At the time, though, singing onstage seemed to me a complete impossibility. Never in my wildest dreams 20 years ago, when I met Christophe, would I have imagined I'd find myself singing onstage at Silencio. But it happened in stages, once I'd met an opera singer who gave me singing lessons for “Fitzcarraldo” and “Maria Callas.” It gave me a way in through opera and a fascination with the lyric art. Then I met Julien Perez. It's been almost five years since then, and we've put out three records, *Exotourisme*, and lots of clips. We're touring in the fall and are about to put out some new songs.

OLIVIER ZAHM — So, song isn't a minor art, as Serge Gainsbourg would say? DOMINIQUE GONZALEZ-FOERSTER — A song is a capsule of emotion. The emotional part is

something I seek out in exhibitions, but it's tough with exhibitions to reach the levels of emotion you can easily reach in music or cinema. And songs contain everything: words, a visual aspect, movement onstage, and the singer herself. My singer isn't me — she's a replicant. In other words, I don't have a singer's sincerity, a singer's character.

OLIVIER ZAHM — Yes, but you have a very deliberate look. DOMINIQUE GONZALEZ-FOERSTER — True, but it's always changing. I've explored the various replicants in *Blade Runner*. No identity is lasting onstage. This is not new. It's been explored by David Bowie, Madonna.

OLIVIER ZAHM — And you take this nonidentity and radicalize it. DOMINIQUE GONZALEZ-FOERSTER — Because I'm incapable of doing otherwise.

OLIVIER ZAHM — It's at once an apparition, a singer, a tale... DOMINIQUE GONZALEZ-FOERSTER — And it could be an exhibition. The beautiful thing about my concerts is that there's a momentary condensation of all my previous practices.

END

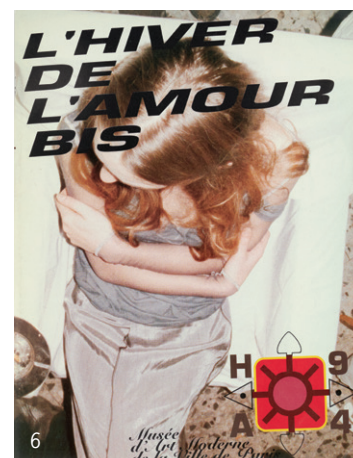


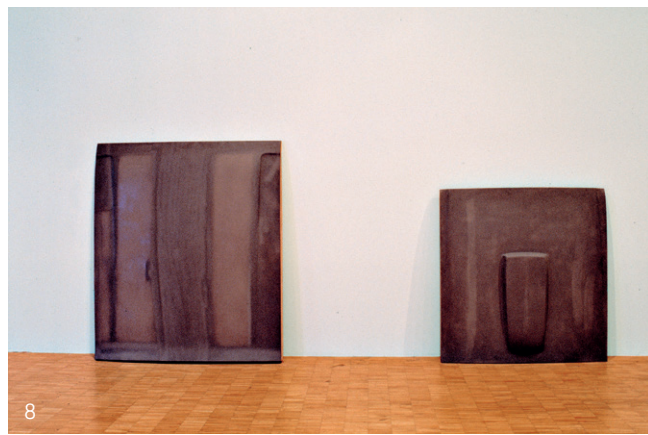
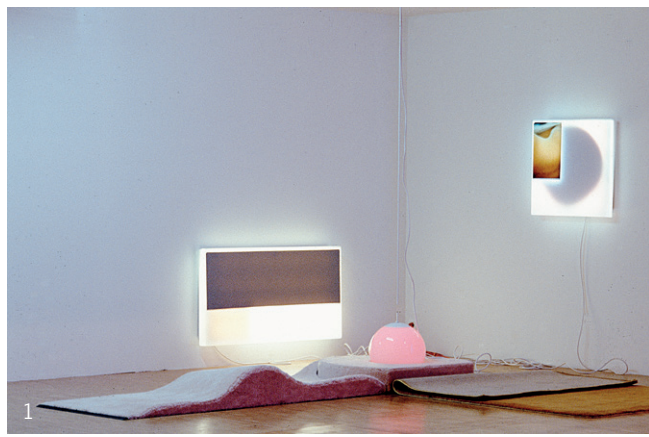
L'HIVER DE L'AMOUR, 1994 arc musée d'art moderne de la ville de paris

“The Winter of Love,” which we’re experiencing now, is not what we imagine. It’s about capturing, evoking, and showing who we are, the climate we’re in. It’s the crossing of a season and a moment in art that is also the art of the moment and all the hours that have transformed us. It’s a reason to exhibit, film, and re-experience them. A reason to make this magazine. The more we condemn the present, the more we must fall in love with it (Gombrowicz). If we talk of a climate and therefore of a perceivable sensibility, it is certain that our style must be conceived as something possible — what might happen next, something real outside the exhibition itself. And to leave it feeling transformed, as if to prolong the exhibition.



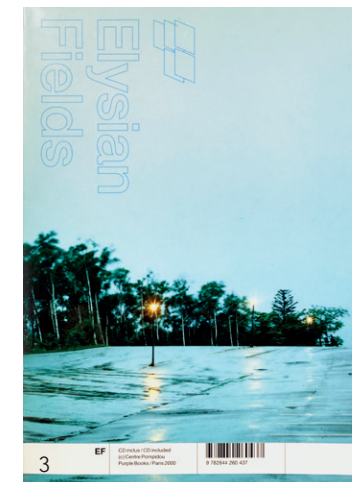
1. DIKE BLAIR, PERFORMANCE
2. ELEIN FLEISS AND BERNARD JOISTEN DANCING IN *ELECTRICITY ROOM*, SOUND INSTALLATION BY WOLFGANG TILLMANS
3. GENERAL IDEA, *FIN DE SIÈCLE*, 1990, INSTALLATION VIEW, EXPANDED POLYSTYRENE WITH THREE STUFFED FAUX SEAL PUPS, ACRYLIC, GLASS, AND STRAW, PHOTO REINHARD TRUCKENMÜLLER
4. VIKTOR & ROLF, INSTALLATION/JAN VAN OOST, *SANS TITRE*, 1993, COURTESY AIR DE PARIS
5. WOLFGANG TILLMANS INSTALLING HIS WORKS
6. “L'HIVER DE L'AMOUR BIS” CATALOGUE 1994, COPYRIGHT MUSÉE D'ART MODERNE DE LA VILLE DE PARIS, PHOTO ANDERS EDSTRÖM
7. VIDYA, PERFORMANCE





ELYSIAN FIELDS, 2000 centre georges pompidou

curated by purple
institute, elein fleiss
and olivier zahm
scenography by dike blair
and dominique gonzalez-
foerster, soundtrack by
bennett simpson



1. DIKE BLAIR, INSTALLATION
2. TAKESHI KITANO, PAINTINGS
3. AND 4. ANDREA ZITTEL, *ROUGH*, INSTALLATION VIEW, 1998,
COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND ANDREA ROSEN GALLERY, NEW YORK
5. BERNARD JOISTEN, INSTALLATION, COPYRIGHT ADAGP,
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6. JORGE PARDO, *UNTITLED* (SIX LAMPS), 1999
7. COMME DES GARÇONS, INSTALLATION
8. RICHARD PRINCE, *HOODS*
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