

BOOKFORUM

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ANN CRAVEN

by C. C.

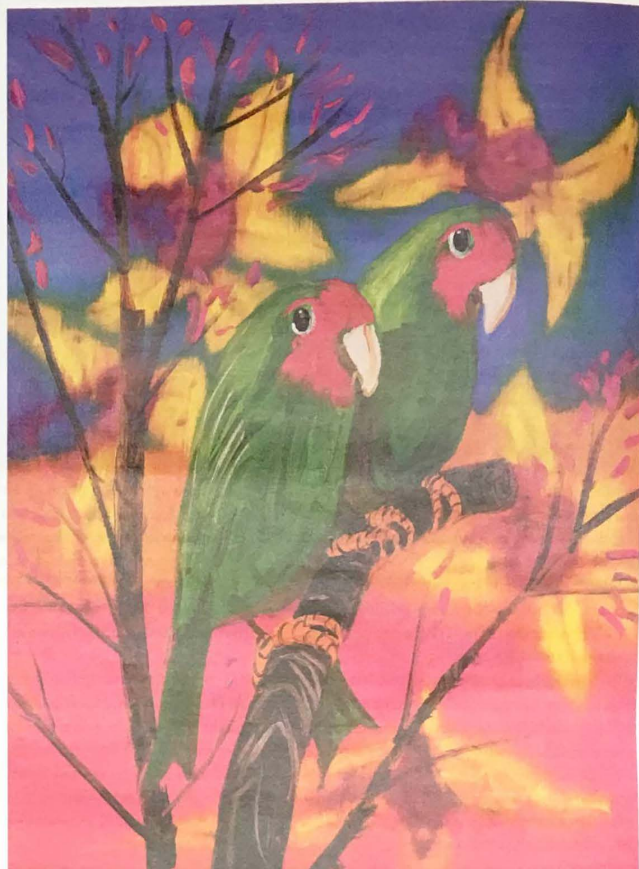


Ann Craven, *Two Lovebirds (at Sunset)*, 2018, oil on canvas 40 x 30 "

Pink canaries, in order to remain pink, must be fed exclusively crimson food. Without a consistent intake of pigment their unusual color fade away, replaced by a familiar yellow. ANN CRAVEN (Karma, \$50), a new volume of the artist's paintings, documents her practice of painting and repainting found images over the course of decades, showing them the same care that an aviculturist would a promising "red factor" canary (one that might someday become pink). Craven's likenesses of birds, deer, flowers, and moonlit skies multiply over this book's 560 pages, welcoming the reader into her hazy, unsettling wonderland of wide-eyed critters. In shades of pink, yellow, purple, and orange, these paintings allow Craven to take the central conceit of Robert Rauschenberg's *Factum I* and *II*, both from 1957, and push it to its extreme: Instead of one copy, made concurrently with the original, how about fifteen, made over a lifetime? This obsessive sense of repetition over time unites most of Craven's kitsch menagerie. Her "Stripe" and "Palette" paintings - among the few nonrepresentational works here-index the particular combinations of girlish pastel hues with which she has rendered her primary subjects. *Pink Canary 2*, a dainty oil painting of a bubblegum-hued bird, is dated 1997-2018: Craven has been carefully reworking this subject for more than twenty years. The effete fowl, alight on a berry-laden branch, betrays nothing of the artist's extended process. In the present, the bird is simply beautiful.-C. C.

Artful Volumes

BOOKFORUM CONTRIBUTORS ON THE SEASON'S OUTSTANDING ART BOOKS.



Clockwise, from top left: James Turrell, *Ganzfeld APANI*, 2001, neon light; fluorescent light. Installation view, Arsenale, Venice, 2011. Ann Craven, *Two Lovebirds (at Sunset)*, 2018, oil on canvas, 40 x 30". Zanele Muholi, *Phindie I*, Paris, 2014, gelatin silver print, 20 1/2 x 39 1/2".

James Turrell's dynamic experiments with light, space, color, and landscape can only be hinted at on the page. Even so, **EXTRAORDINARY IDEAS—REALIZED** (Hatje Cantz, \$85) manages to convey much about the artist's intentions, if not the experience of the work. The volume's retrospective account begins in 1967 and includes projection pieces (those created by a single beam of light), skyspaces (chambers whose ceilings are open to the sky), ganzfelds (installations that suppress depth perception), and plans and images devoted to the Roden Crater in Arizona, an Earthwork sculpture in which Turrell sought to make a space that "engaged celestial events." Each of these approaches to shaping light within geometric forms results in some kind of perceptual distortion, a realignment of the visitor's sense of materiality; Turrell's meticulously engineered environments transform light into a palpable object. In photographs of various ganzfelds—luminous realms with tilted floors and coved corners—people appear to float within a limitless radiance. Having visited one of these rooms at the Guggenheim in New York, I can attest to the disequilibrium, as well as to an unsettling yet provocative sense of occupying terra incognita. Light is felt as wind or heat might be felt; and space, when experienced as indefinite, paradoxically presses close and envelops the body. *Extraordinary Ideas* can't provide that extraordinary sensation, but it does remind us that light, as Turrell puts it, "is a powerful substance." —ALBERT MOBILIO

A reprint of the 1989 book **BROKEN MUSIC: ARTISTS' RECORDWORKS** (Primary Information, \$34), one of the first monographs to focus on artists' use of vinyl, offers an essential look at the overlap of music and the visual arts in the second half of the twentieth century. Ursula Block and Michael Glasmeier

have compiled a remarkably thorough pre-digital bibliography that will thrill obsessive Discogs lurkers the world over. *Broken Music* also includes a flexi disc of its namesake—a collage piece by Milan Křižák built out of the squeaks and warbles of severely damaged albums, itself an experimental record that becomes a part of the tradition the book set out to document. As the authors note, the nearly two-hundred-page compendium is meant to serve not only as a reference, but also as "an entertaining picture book." Some highlights: Robert Rauschenberg's design for the cover of Talking Heads' *Speaking in Tongues*, which layers three clear disks printed with red, yellow, and blue collages so that they can be spun and reconfigured; Thomas Kapielski's swiss cheese record (a yellow cardboard disk with those characteristically irregular holes); Michael Snow's graphic, conceptual liner notes for his 1975 record *Musics for Piano, Whistling, Microphone and Tape Recorder*; and everything Laurie Anderson has ever touched. Now, if only we could hear these records . . . —CANADA CHOATE

During a conversation in September celebrating their new monograph, **SOMNYAMA NGONYAMA, HAIL THE DARK LIONESSE** (Aperture, \$75), the South African photographer Zanele Muholi twice asserted, amiably but firmly, that the book's hundred photographs are self-portraits, not selfies. At the same time, Muholi discounted the idea of herself as the subject. These distinctions are important: Each of Muholi's self-portraits, made over the past six peripatetic years, references a particular personal experience or historical person or event—from their humiliation at border control to the killing of Sandra Bland. The zip ties, travel pillows, latex gloves, and other handy materials that form the outfits Muholi wears in their images

carry specific valences, too. In *Sebenzile, Parktown, Johannesburg* (2016), those materials produce a portrait of domestic servitude: Muholi wears rolls of tape as hair buns and has coiled the flexible tubing from a washing machine around their shoulders, neck, and head; a modernist wall decoration in the background is constructed from a garbage bag and toilet paper. Like so many of Muholi's photographs, *Sebenzile, Parktown, Johannesburg* addresses the perception of the black body "as perishable, as expendable, forever laboring." Taken as a whole, the photographs in *Somnyama* assemble an archive of black and LGBTQI self-representation Muholi did not have growing up; they have created one of the most multilayered, striking, and rewarding projects in contemporary photography. *Somnyama* expands the idea of self-portraiture, revealing in its accumulated images the intricate structure of identity. In *Bona, Charlottesville, Virginia* (2015), Muholi lies on a bed and holds a hotel mirror so that it reflects their face back to them and to the viewer; in Muholi's native isiZulu, *bona* means both "they" and "see." "You hold up the mirror to yourself," they explain. "How else would you remember that you were there?" —NICOLE RUDICK

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Clockwise, from left: Pat Hearn in Renée Green's installation *Taste Venue*, 1994, Pat Hearn Gallery, New York. Jeremy Blake, 1906, 2003, digital animation, color, sound, 21 minutes. From *Everything Is Connected: Art and Conspiracy*. Bruce W. Talamon's photograph of Parliament-Funkadelic, Los Angeles Sports Arena, California, 1977.

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THE CONDITIONS OF BEING ART: PAT HEARN GALLERY & AMERICAN FINE ARTS, CO. (CCS Bard/Dancing Foxes Press, \$40) tracks the careers of the charismatic and influential gallerists Pat Hearn and Colin de Land, an art-world power couple who transformed the New York gallery scene in the 1980s and '90s before both succumbed to cancer. (Hearn died in 2000 at forty-five; de Land passed away in 2003 at forty-seven.) This text-heavy catalogue accompanies a show at Bard's Center for Curatorial Studies, where the works of more than forty artists are spread across eighteen galleries, along with documentation from the gallerists' archives. The book's ten essays thoughtfully consider these two distinct but linked careers, both marked by an uncommon engagement with artists: Exhibition cocurator Lia Gangitano writes movingly of Hearn's "businesslike spiri-

tuality," while Diedrich Diederichsen remarks on de Land's "existential sincerity." On the surface, the thematic coherence of their artist rosters is hard to parse. Hearn's ran the gamut from now-lauded painters like George Condo and Mary Heilmann to provocateurs as divergent as photographer Mark Morrisroe and the unclassifiable Lutz Bacher; de Land's included the seemingly unmarketable institutional critique of Andrea Fraser and Art Club 2000. The throughline is the couple's hands-on dedication to building an artist-centric network within, and alongside, thriving commercial spaces. —LISA DARMS

EVERYTHING IS CONNECTED: ART AND CONSPIRACY (Metropolitan Museum of Art/Yale University Press, \$50) tries to build a motley intellectual framework to understand—appreciate, but still quarantine—the giddily depressive, narcotically addictive aesthetics of paranoia. But by yoking the scattered vestiges of Black Panther agitprop, the pulp epistemologies of Jim Shaw and Raymond Pettibon, the post-9/11 crypto-"Truther" work of Sue Williams, Cady Noland's "false front" cut-outs, and so many more spasms of "leftward ho!" political disgust, the book feels less like an interrogation of "American conspiracism" and more like a lefty born-again postmodernist tract. Thine would be the Kingdom and the Glory, if only the demon Establishment's iron hand weren't pulling the strings behind every sinister development! Yet the all-powerful neoliberal program is looking like a house of cards atop a sinkhole: Alex Jones has been elevated from a guest crackpot in Richard Linklater's *Waking Life* to a key player in our national nightmare, and the Left's FBI-phobia has been appropriated wholesale by the nationalist-right wingnuts. It feels like the art herein is mostly playing semiotic solitaire while our

presciently unhinged conspiracy artist in chief and his gang are playing with live ammo, for keeps. —HOWARD HAMPTON

Photographer Bruce W. Talamon had a motto: "Stay out of the way, and don't mess up the vibe." That deference and inconspicuousness surely made the colossal musicians he was aiming his camera at—Marvin Gaye, Aretha Franklin, Donna Summer, Stevie Wonder—feel at ease, resulting in vivacious, intimate pictures. Those genius performers and scores more are captured onstage, in cover-photo shoots, and during downtime in the exuberant collection **BRUCE W. TALAMON: SOUL R&B. FUNK. PHOTOGRAPHS 1972–1982** (Taschen, \$70). Born in 1949 in Los Angeles, Talamon got his start with *SOUL*, an LA-based publication that was launched in the wake of the Watts rebellion and focused on black popular culture and politics; gigs with Motown Records, ABC television, and *Soul Train* soon followed. Whether in black-and-white or effulgent color, Talamon's photos evince many moods—often various shades of ecstasy, as seen in shots of Labelle in concert in '75, at the height of the trio's intergalactic, proto-disco magnificence. But Talamon is also attuned to melancholy: Witness a solemn teenage Michael Jackson in the stands for a '74 Motown company basketball game, where he's flanked by younger siblings Janet and Randy, who looks even more dejected than his brother. Herb Powell's captions, too often overwritten, sometimes clash with the lucid beauty of Talamon's images. Yet those blurs occasionally yield terrific details: Mostly students from nearby LA high schools, the dancers in the early years of *Soul Train* (which first aired in '71) received as their payment "a chicken dinner and a Coca-Cola." Recording those phenomenal dancers, Talamon proves Sly Stone's declaration: Everybody is a star. —MELISSA ANDERSON