

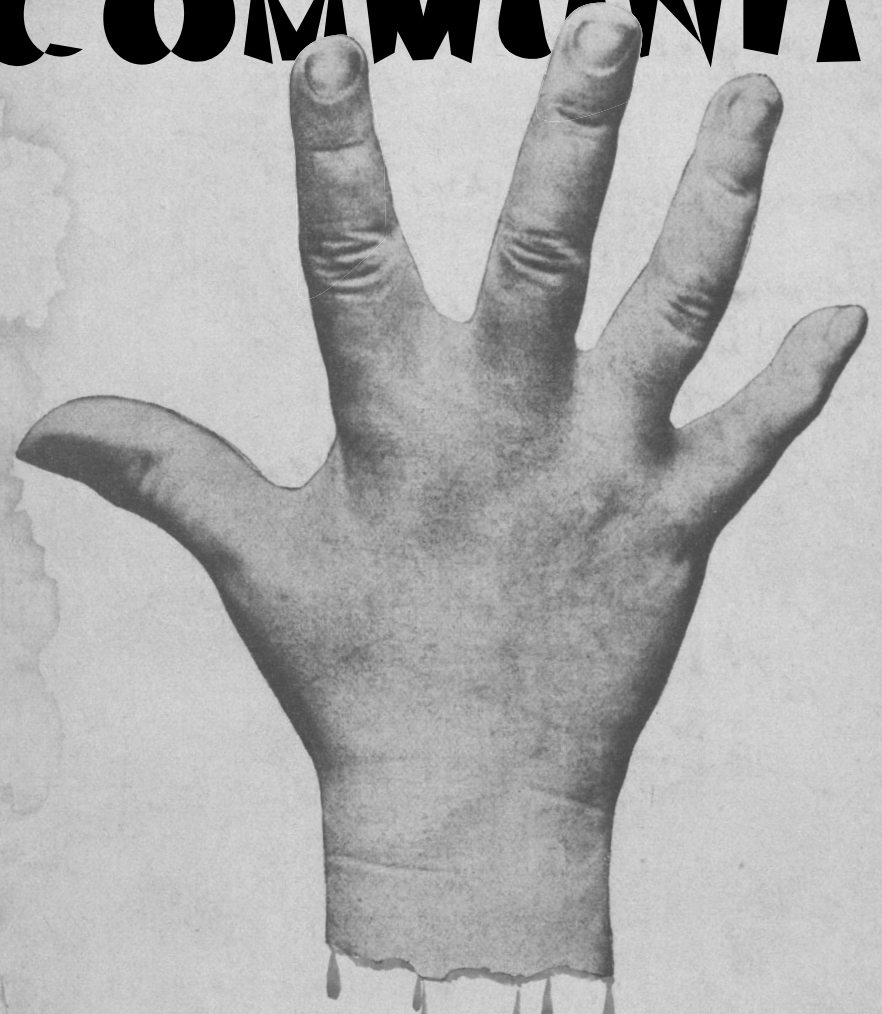


Parmi les photomonteurs soviétiques, Solomon Telingater (1903-1969) est sans doute celui qui revendique le plus nettement sa proximité avec le travail de John Heartfield, qu'il a rencontré lors du voyage en URSS de ce dernier, en 1931. La même année, Telingater conçoit la couverture d'une publication dédiée à son camarade allemand. Représentant russe de la Nouvelle Typographie et adepte du montage, Telingater élabore des mises en page de facture très libres, où se mêlent des caractères de corps différents et une iconographie foisonnante.



KOPIE 11.02.2026

COMMUNITY



KOPIE

011 Anonyme, couverture pour Jos de Saint-André [Joseph-Emmanuel van Driesten], *Réparation! Expiation!* 1914-1915, 2^e éd., Paris, 1915, typographie, 19,2 x 14,2 cm.

Das Verb

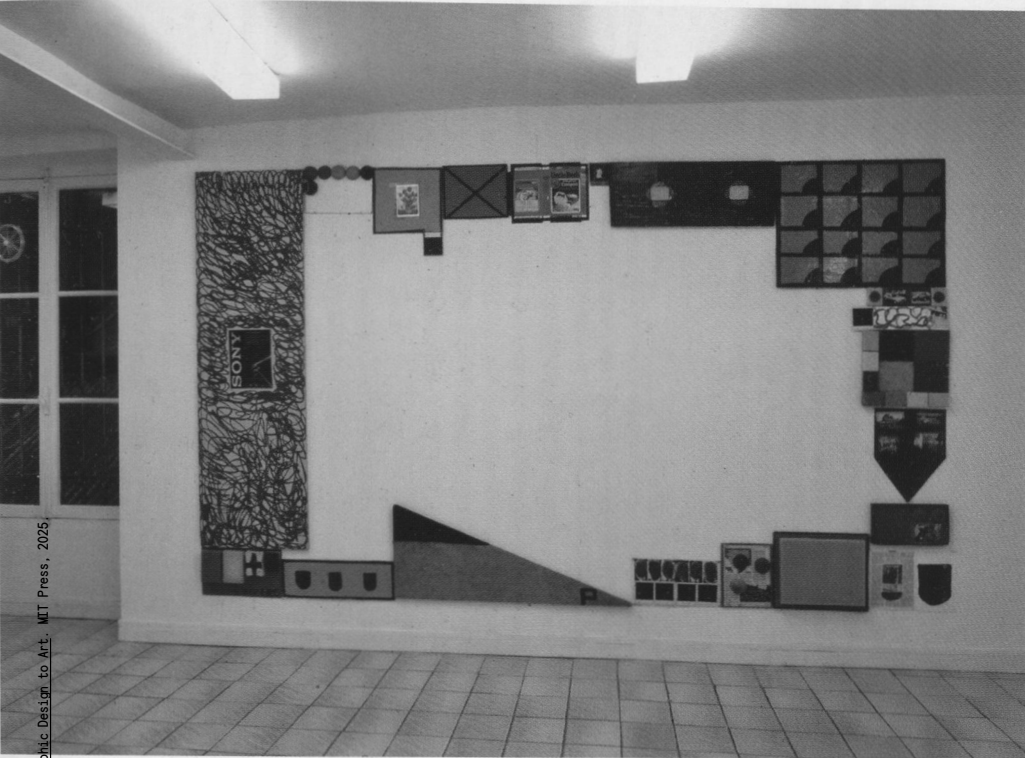
1 Lies.

2 Findest du die Verben? Übermale sie blau.

So geht es im Land der Riesen;
Da nähen die Schneider mit Spiesen,
Da stricken die Mädchen mit Stangen,
Da füttert man Vögel mit Schlangen,
Da schiess man die Mücken mit Pfeilen,
Da webt man die Stoffe aus Seilen,
Und ferner-so hab ich gelesen:
Da malen die Maler mit Besen.

IS THIS WHERE WE S
AA Bronson/Dont Rhi

So ist es im Lande der Zwerge;
Ameisenhaufen sind Berge,
Ein Steinchen ist ein Felsenstück,
Ein Seidenfaden ist ein Strick,
Die Nadel ist da eine Stange,
Ein Würmlein ist da eine Schlange,
Die Fliege dient als Jumbo-Jet,
Ein Entenfederchen als Bett.



Lisa-Lee Thomas Hirschhorn: From Graphic Design to Art, MIT Press, 2025.

exhibition at Galerie Francesca Pia, Bern, for instance.) Alignment, in turn, brought questions of sequence and shape to the fore. The next year, Hirschhorn tested a number of possible configurations in his Belleville studio. Flush at the top, a dozen *Lignes* decreased in height from left to right. A column of collages, center-justified, spanned nearly the height of the wall and tapered to a blunt point. Such delightfully artless arrangements, ordered by size, call to mind a young child's shuffling, stacking, and sorting of playthings. According to the psychologist Jean Piaget, children at the preoperational stage of cognitive development (typically under seven years of age) can only consider a single property, like height or length or color, when organizing objects. In his stress on the fundamental, Hirschhorn might be seen to resist certain models of progress that have been applied to art. Consider Suzi Gablik's evolutionary theory of art history that maps its "megaperiods" onto Piaget's developmental theory. According to her model, Western art of the modern period is the most advanced, corresponding to Piaget's formal-operational stage of development.⁹ The order evident in Hirschhorn's displays is nonhierarchical and based on the works' manifest properties. As Briony Fer has observed in relation to similar

"Thomas Hirschhorn / Toffe," exhibition view, Arts Rencontres Internationales, Paris, November 28–December 20, 1989.

HOULD BEGIN? ne

The Artist began to read aloud: 'The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.' He put the book down, and turned to his interlocutor on the other side of the room. 'Is this where we should begin?'

The room exhibited all the anonymities of any hotel room: inflated floral patterns on the bedding, one wall painted olive green to offset the beige of the other walls. On the wall alongside the bed, there hung a polite abstraction whose separate wall card offered the only indication that the accommodations existed on the campus of an arts institution. Outside the open glass balcony doors, voices and ornithic life enunciated the afternoon. It was to this hotel, perched on the nape of Tunnel Mountain, that AA Bronson, the Artist, and his Interlocutor, Dont Rhine, had come to think over the subject of communism. Far above the tinsel daily life of New York for the Artist and of Los Angeles for the Interlocutor, the mountains offered a pinnacle for speculative reflection.

With deer grazing along the roadside below and mountain peaks thrusting their crowns into a sky immune to spring thaw, this site offered the proverbial mountain top. And as migrants massed in New York and Los Angeles in the millions and all of the United States poised on the brink of descent into a Chai Latte Fascism, the Artist and his Interlocutor installed themselves away in their hotel room; surrounded by books with yellowed pages, ghosts, test pattern memories and the urgencies storming a nation away.

'Perhaps we should begin earlier.' Mused the Interlocutor, distracted by the soundscape blowing in through the opened sliding doors. A spectre is haunting Europe [the world] – the spectre of Communism [public gay sex]. All the Powers of old Europe [the world] have entered into a holy alliance to exorcise this spectre: Pope and Czar [President], Metternich [Evangelist] and Guizot [Imam], French Radicals public decency homosexuals and German police spies.' 'I took some liberties with the original.'

'Aren't we obliged to?'

**Only in community
[with others has each]
individual the means**

of cultivating his gifts in all directions; only in the community, therefore, is personal freedom possible. In the previous substitutes for the community, in the State, etc. personal freedom has existed only for the individuals who developed within the relationships of the ruling class, and only insofar as they were individuals of this class. The illusory community, [...] since it was the combination of one class over against another, [was] not only a completely illusory community, but a new fetter as well. In a real community the individuals obtain their freedom in and through their association.

Karl Marx, *The German Ideology*, ed. C.J. Arthur, ElecBook, London, 1998, pp.118-119

'You once described your current solo work as being very un-ironic. What obviously comes to my mind is the shift in your own biography in terms of transitioning from working in a collective situation to working in a personal situation.'

The Artist leaned back in his chair. A certain degree of automatism captured his voice. It was a subject that permeated any reflection on the past; a subject that

cast any recollection in an ambivalent relation to the present. 'With the deaths of Jorge and Felix I found myself thrown into being very much alone. I think because of the uniqueness of our situation and the communication between us there was no way, highly unlikely, that I'll ever be able to develop that again – it happened through a very unique sequence of events at a particular point in history when things were happening very fast. I find myself feeling very alone in every way. Sometimes I feel that I should allow myself to incorporate a more ironic language again, but I don't know quite how to do it. Maybe it can only happen, for me, in a more collaborative setting. It's funny, I have a whole heap of people that I've been supposedly doing collaborations with, yourself included, that have never quite come to fruition. There're all these collaborations that have never happened, some to a lesser or greater degree. With you, we got at least partway along. Most of them, nothing has happened. Three or four years ago, I talked to Michael Elmgreen and Ingar Dragset about doing a collaboration and we've never got any further than that, than saying we want to do a

collaboration. There are quite a few people like that.'

'Do you think that has something to do with the fact that none of these collaborations have been part of your everyday life?' The Interlocutor asked, his voice cast in the familiar register that characterised much of the exchange that afternoon.'

'Probably that's a big part of it.' The Artist confessed. 'I'm used to making art out of a daily practice of living together, of being together. To actually go and sit in a studio and work on a project, that way of doing a project, is quite alien to me. I've never really done that. It's always been my life and my work immersed in each other.'

After a moment's pause, the Artist looked up as if awakening from a murky sleep: 'Where does this take us in terms of communism?'

'[C]ommunism is the establishment of a communal life style in which individuality is recognized and truly liberated, not merely opposed to the collective. That's the most important lesson: that the construction of healthy communities begins and ends with unique personal-

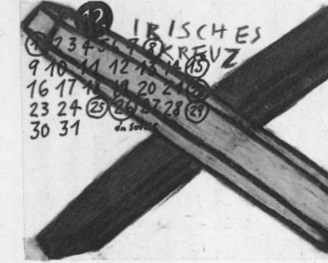
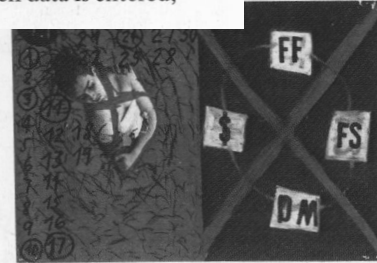
ity, that the collective potential is realized only when the singular is free. This insight is fundamental to the liberation of work.'

Félix Guattari and Antonio Negri, *Communists Like Us: New Spaces of Liberty, New Lines of Alliance*, trans. Michael Ryan Semiotext[e], New York, 1990, pp. 16-17

'There's a great formulation in psychoanalysis: demand minus need equals desire,' said the Interlocutor, taking his role in the encounter literally. 'This has made sense to me a lot in relationship to politics. A community constitutes itself around a specific struggle, or a set of struggles. Sometimes you're successful and your needs are met. But then there's this demand to continue and some will say that's just because you've institutionalised yourself. I also think it's because there's an incredible amount of enjoyment that exceeds any demand that that organisation has made. It seems like in some of the practices you've been involved with, especially General Idea, the demand is almost instrumental to the desire and not the other way around.'

'It was interesting in General Idea to what an extent pleasure was a big part of it. The pleasure of

10. Hirschhorn and Buetti (an artist then living in Berlin) coauthored eight artist's books by mail between August 1984 and March 1990. In addition to missives about their lives and work, the correspondence books are filled with drawings, collages, and photographs. The third volume was lost not long after it was completed; the remaining seven volumes are in Hirschhorn's archive in Aubervilliers. I have drawn on them for invaluable insight into Hirschhorn's private and artistic struggles.
11. Hans Rudolf Bosshard, *The Typographic Grid* (Sulgen: Niggli Verlag, 2000), 13.
12. Kate Eichhorn, *Adjusted Margin: Xerography, Art, and Activism in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016), 93.
13. At his KAOS-Galerie exhibition (November 18–December 18, 1987), Hirschhorn chose to show the photocopied sheets from *Calendar* (1995), rather than the "original" Neocolor collages from which they were made.
14. Julie Enckell Julliard, "All Mapped Out: Conversation with Thomas Hirschhorn," in *Thomas Hirschhorn: Maps* (Zurich: JRP Ringier, 2018), 7.
15. Steven Heller, *Merz to Emigre and Beyond: Avant-Garde Magazine Design of the Twentieth Century* (London: Phaidon, 2002), 6.
16. This list recalls, of course, the one that Leo Steinberg compiled to describe the "flatbed picture plane": "tabletops, studio floors, charts, bulletin boards—any receptor surface on which objects are scattered, on which data is entered,



At Bar Floréal, Hirschhorn attempted to foreclose any understanding of the “Neocolors” as privileged objects of aesthetic delectation first by multiplying the works on view, and second by disposing them in irregular configurations on the wall. Though relatively few by comparison to the sheer quantity of works that would define his hangings within a few years, a minimum of fifty works can be counted in the extant photographs of the Bar Floréal exhibition. Taped directly to the wall, some of the drawings were grouped in tight grids, others were clustered, and still others were hung singly. Near the window were suspended four epistolary-cum-artist’s-books that Hirschhorn had exchanged with Daniele Buetti, his close friend from the Kunstgewerbeschule.¹⁰ In this rather intuitive manner, Hirschhorn utilized nearly the full height and breadth of the gallery walls.

Yet it was perhaps in the logic of the “Neocolors” themselves, rather than through any exhibition strategy, that Hirschhorn most strenuously and effectively worked against the language of the tableau. (After all, while the irregular groupings might have denied the singleness of the tableau, they may also have produced an unintended “arty” effect.) With overall dimensions conforming to DIN standard paper sizes A4 and A3, the “Neocolors” referenced the workaday realm of memos and invoices, schoolwork and personal letters, flyers and newsletters—in short, the realm of documents. Hans Rudolf Bosshard, an instructor at the Kunstgewerbeschule Zürich from 1962 to 1991, advises in one of his typographic textbooks, “The sizes of the DIN series should be used where mechanical workflows and standardized equipment demand them, as in business stationery or publicity and information printing of all kinds.”¹¹ Indeed, the choice of format was of great significance in Hirschhorn’s then-ongoing efforts to find an audience for his self-commissioned works of graphic design.

Each of the “Neocolors” had the potential to be run through a simple photocopier—a potential realized with his 1985 calendar, in which the dates were simply overlaid on the collages. In this way, Hirschhorn’s “Neocolors” exploited xerography to “[blur] the boundary between art making, its context, and its publicity,” as Kate Eichhorn argues regarding the use of this technology in the formation of countercultures.¹² The originals were not privileged as such, as evidenced by the numerous cut-and-taped emendations that suggest a flexible working document rather than a finished composition.¹³ It might be useful to remind ourselves that we are dealing with a moment just before the advent of the World Wide Web in 1989. Though film, television, and video prevailed in the pre-digital mass media landscape, Hirschhorn’s attentions were concentrated on the dissemination of print. In his determination to circulate his work, further elaborated in chapter 3, Hirschhorn conceived of paper as “vector and material.”¹⁴ This was

working together played a big role in what we decided to do and how we did it. Rather than thinking in more strategic ways about what was going to advance our career (to return to that idea), we tended to think about what would be most ... I guess we were troublemakers. What would be the most questionable activity we could do in a particular situation? We were mischievous in a way, but the mischievousness was in a sense a way of questioning. We had the function of jokers – the joker being the only one who can criticise the king.’ The Artist punctuated his words with a wicked laughter. His eyes shut tight, his mouth gaping, shaped by benevolent mirth and a vicious delight in what injury could be inflicted on the proverbial monarch.

‘The community of interrupted myth, which is community that in a sense is without community, or communism without community, is our destination. In other words community (or communism) is what we are being called toward, or sent to, as to our ownmost future. But it is not a “to come”, it is not a future or final reality on the verge of fulfillment, pending

only the delay imposed by an approach, a maturation, or a conquest. For if this were the case, its reality would be mythic – as would be the feasibility of its idea.’

Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, trans. Peter Connor, et al. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1991, p. 71

Risking a suffocation on the free association of his colleague, the Interlocutor ventured into speculation. ‘Communal life came out of larger developments within the culture that were you were talking about, around specific ideas and around specific critiques. Certain old ways of living were no longer seen as valid. Does that sort of cultural ferment that can sustain experiments and new forms of living, does that exist? Or where does it exist?’

‘Where does it exist?’ The Artist asked, his voice scored with lament and longing. ‘There are, for example, the radical faeries and the loose communal structures that come out of that movement. It’s funny, but I find that I have absolutely no interest in it. Within the art world right now, there’s suddenly a big interest in collaboratives, or whatever they call them. Is that what they call them? It’s difficult to make

out what it’s about, really. Whether real or another form of marketing.’

The Interlocutor speculated aloud, ‘The other place where it still exists completely outside of the art world – totally outside of the art world – is in communes that have a sort of social mandate. Jonathan House or even Camp Sister Spirit – different situations where you have people living communally because of a religious or social commitment they have taken for a preferential option for the poor. The art world is anathema to this. Or is it?’

‘The art world,’ grumbled the Artist, ‘certainly in New York, is entirely about the market place. I do not find it life-sustaining. It’s not interesting for me. It doesn’t give very much. It’s mostly about creating collectables for rich folk. And yet, there I am. I find myself quite attracted to religious community because of that. Although, I don’t know what religious community, I don’t see anywhere where I fit in. I’m constantly thinking, maybe I should go to seminary. Maybe I should go and study something. Wanting some sort of life within which the idea of vocation, for example, is a baseline when the whole idea of vocation

seems to have vanished from the art world, or at least the art world that I'm part of.'

'Truth to tell, the best weapon against myth is perhaps to mythify it in its turn, and to produce an artificial myth: and this reconstituted myth will in fact be a mythology. Since myth robs language of something, why not rob myth?'

Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers, Jonathan Cape, London, 1972, p. 135. Cited in AA Bronson, 'General Idea's Bookshelf, 1967 - 1975,' in *The Search for the Spirit, General Idea 1968 - 1975*, ed. Fern Bayer, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, 1997, p. 20

'I just do not know what to do with that word,' the Artist said. 'It is too filled with meaning. Its historical connotations come too quickly to mind to make the term useable for us. It is not debased, degraded, or empty enough to use. It has not been co-opted enough by capitalism and the very forces against which it stood in opposition.'

His Interlocutor searched the mountainous vista for a solution to the impasse. 'Perhaps we could accelerate its debase-

ment. Perhaps this should be our collaboration: to appropriate the term for a series of projects that hollow out the term communism.'

Reclining on the bed, like an analysand, the Artist burst excitedly: 'A sex club named "Communism".'

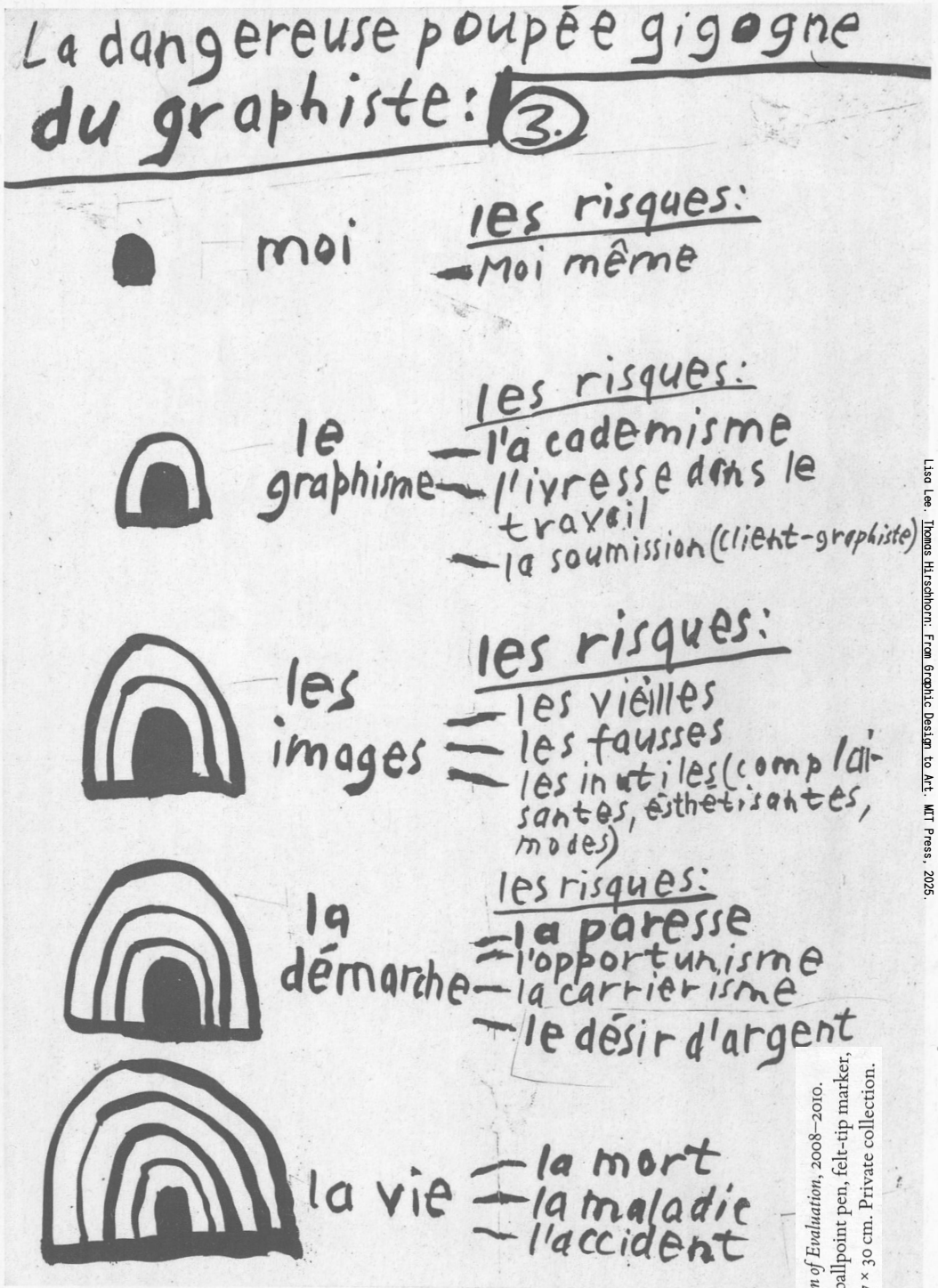
The Interlocutor rose, pulled to his feet by the possibility of a polyamorous relational art. He scanned the mountains for entrusted features to such a proposition. 'A hole in the floor into which people could piss, shit or cum, degrading the very foundations of communism. Perhaps we should propose an exhibition for the Museum of the Revolution where visitors take part in a collective humiliation and degradation. Speeding along the emptying of the term so it can finally have some valence again.'

It was as if clothing the idea in flesh knocked the wind from the room. The Artist dissolved into the flat surface of the bed. 'It is still too filled with meaning.' He sighed. 'A project like that would just be seen as transgressive and not mischievous.'

Heeding this cautionary reasoning, the Interlocutor turned his back on the window. The mountains would reveal nothing of

communism. Collaboration would end, like it began, in an ephemeral encounter.

'It is now possible to complete the semiological definition of myth in a bourgeois society: myth is depoliticized speech. One must naturally understand political in its deeper meaning, as describing the whole of human relations in their real, social structure, in their power of making the world; one must above all give an active value to the prefix de: here it represents an operational movement, it permanently embodies a defaulting.'
 Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers Jonathan Cape, London, 1972, p. 143



Lisa Lee, Thomas Hirschhorn, From Graphic Design to Art, MIT Press, 2025.

Spectrum of Evaluation, 2008-2010. Paper, ballpoint pen, felt-tip marker, tape, 37 x 30 cm. Private collection.