

The Copy Art Revolution

もしこのお前様へ
お返ししたなら

A yellow Pikachu figure with a rainbow-colored mane and tail, standing on a black base. The figure is positioned in the foreground, slightly to the left of the center.

お父さんとお母さんに
お父さんとお母さんに
お父さんとお母さんに

2018

CEPA GALLERY'S HISTORY

Founded in 1974 during an intense period of creativity and artistic exploration in Buffalo, CEPA Gallery is Western New York's premiere visual arts center. One of the oldest photography galleries in the nation, CEPA remains an artist-run space dedicated to the advancement of contemporary photo-related art. Throughout its history, CEPA has earned international acclaim for its unique array of visual arts programming and dedication to the artistic practice. Recognized as one of the most relevant and important alternative art spaces in the United States by the European Journal of Media Art, CEPA's Visual Arts program curates world-renowned exhibitions; its organizational structure is celebrated for efforts to maximize resources through collaboration; and its educational programming is recognized among the best in the nation having earned a 2013 National Arts & Humanities Youth Programming Award. Each season, CEPA brings an impressive roster of national and international artists into Erie County for exhibitions, public art initiatives, residencies, educational and community-based programming. The projects CEPA commissions give voice to marginalized communities, promote diverse ideas and perspectives, and help to increase dialogue around issues pertinent to local audiences. Its commitment to serving artists and the artistic practice, to engaging new constituencies with exhibitions and installations of importance is continually recognized and celebrated. CEPA's unique ability to mutually serve the interests of working artists, WNY's diverse communities, and international audiences is what separates it from other cultural organizations and is the reason for its continued success and growth.

CEPA Gallery is registered New York State 503C3 not-for-profit organization that is generously supported by the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Joy of Giving Something, Inc., M&T Bank, Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Legacy Funds at the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo, Robert J. & Martha B. Fierle Foundation, The Vogt Family Foundation, Hodgson Russ LLP, ABC-Amega, The Cameron and Jane Baird Foundation, The Marks Family Foundation, Robert and Patricia Colby Foundation, Healy Family Education & Scholarship Fund, CEPA Members and Board members, plus numerous individuals.

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CEPA GALLERY
CONTEMPORARY PHOTOGRAPHY & VISUAL ARTS CENTER

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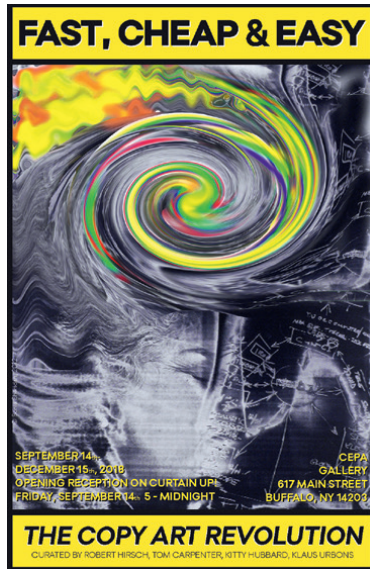
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ATTORNEYS



A PREVIEW OF

FAST, CHEAP & EASY

The Copy Art Revolution



CEPA GALLERY
&
Western New York Book Arts Collaborative

Curated by

ROBERT HIRSCH

KITTY HUBBARD

KLAUS URBONS

TOM CARPENTER

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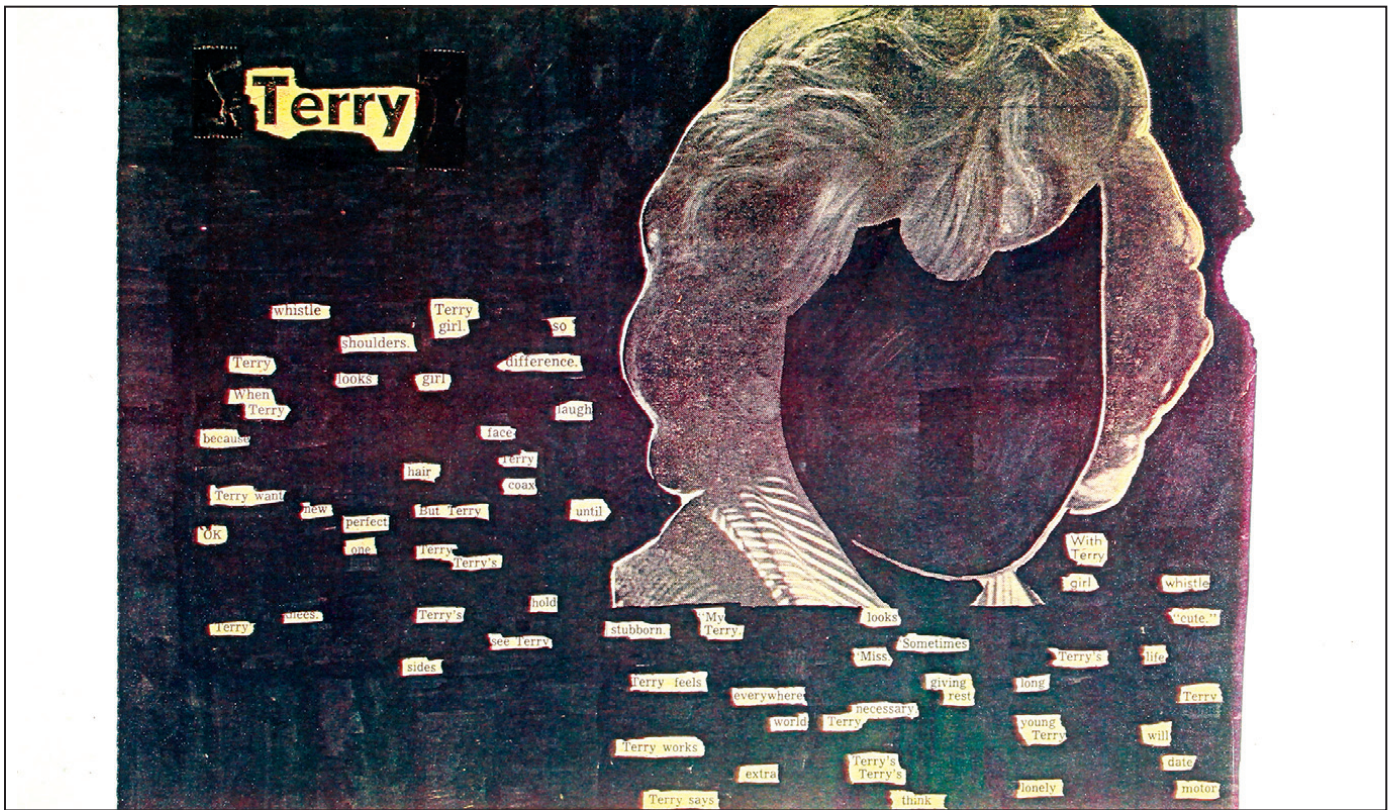
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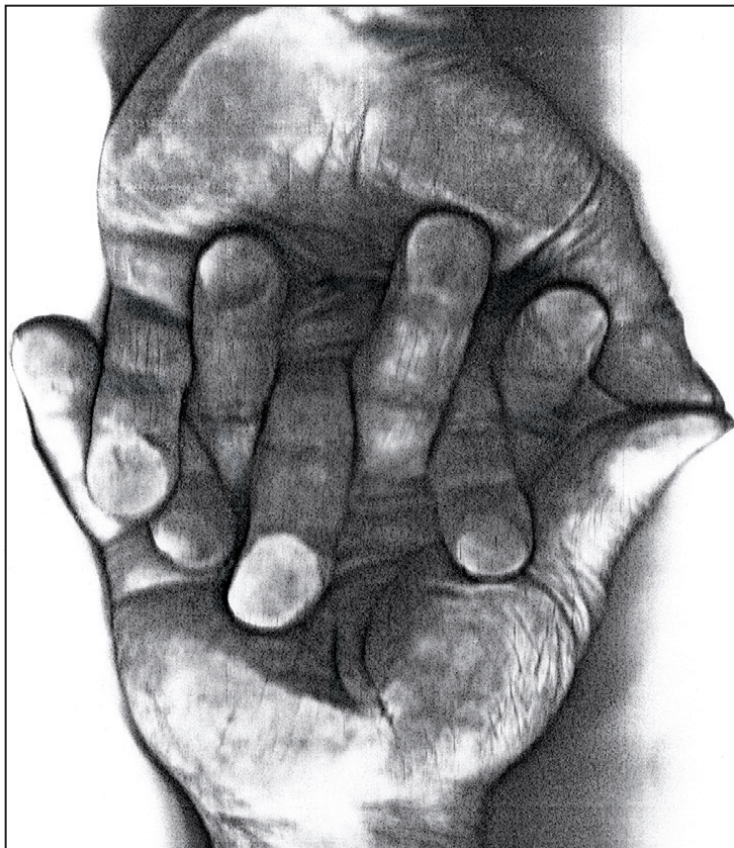
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Hollis Frampton (1936-1984) is internationally recognized as a pioneering filmmaker, art theorist, photographer, and writer. From 1973—1984, Frampton was on the faculty of the Department of Media Study at the University at Buffalo.

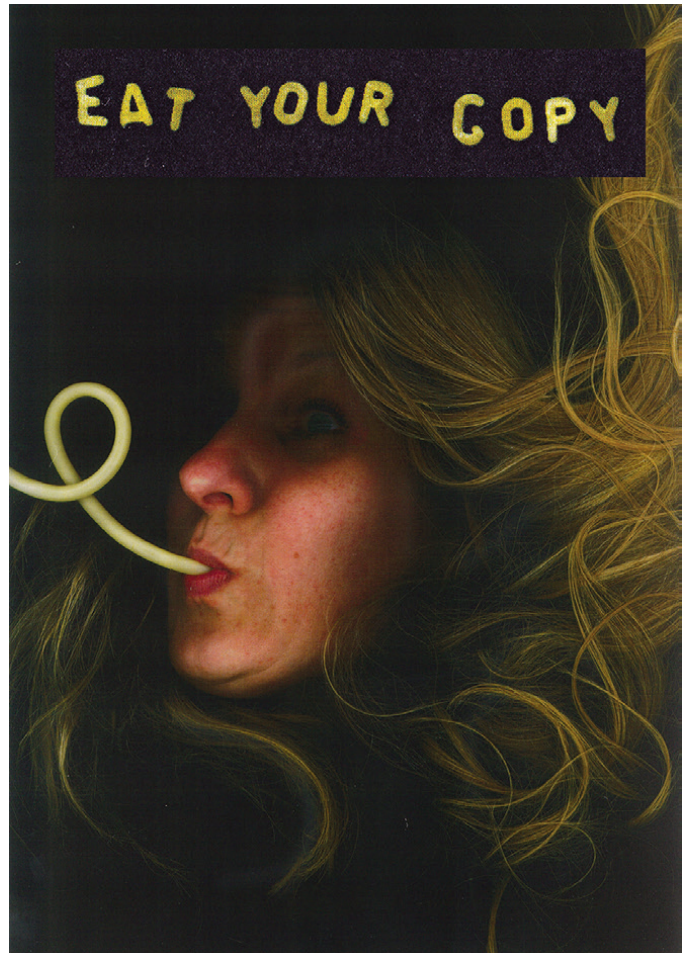
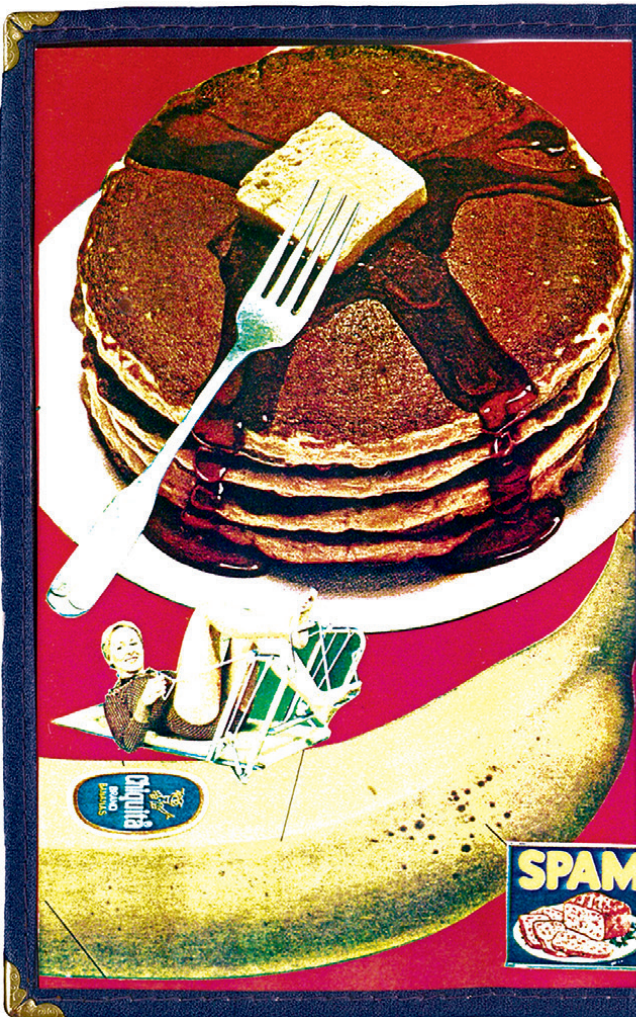


Bottom Left © John Coplans. *Self Portrait (Hands # 10)*, 1988. 11 x 8.5 inches. Electrostatic print. Courtesy of Amanda Means, Trustee, The John Coplans Trust.

Top © The Estate of Hollis Frampton. *She Was (aka Terry)*, 1979. 9 x 11.5 inches. Electrostatic print. Courtesy of Dean Brownrout Modern/Contemporary.



© Joey Patrick. *Smashing Red Dada*, 1984. 14 x 8.5 inches. Electrostatic print.



FAST, CHEAP & EASY: THE COPY ART REVOLUTION

CEPA Gallery and Western New York Book Arts Collaborative, Buffalo, NY

September 14th – December 15th 2018

Fast, Cheap & Easy: The Copy Art Revolution is an international survey featuring over 100 artists from the 1960s to the present who have explored the neglected and underserved role of the copy machine as a quick and innovative method to express ideas and inexpensively produce and circulate copy art to a larger audience. Specially, the exhibition focuses on artists who worked in proximity to Rochester, San Francisco, and Mülheim an der Ruhr, Germany.

Xerography or electrophotography is a dry photocopying process that was patented in 1942 by American patent lawyer Chester F. Carlson (1906 – 1968). However, it was not until 1960 that Haloid/Xerox released the Xerox 914, the first commercial, automatic copier. Colored toner became available in the 1950s, but full color copiers were not commercially available until the 3M Company released its Color-in-Color copier in 1968, which used a combined electrophotographic dye sublimation process. Xerox unveiled its first electrostatic color copier in 1973. In a nutshell, electrophotography is based on the concept that opposite charges attract and like charges repel. The same force that holds a balloon to a wall when you rub on it against your hair makes electrophotography work.

Although developed with business applications in mind, artists immediately saw the unintended visual advantages of ordinary copiers. Running parallel to Polaroid's 60-second photography, the photocopier was the first tool in the history of photography that allowed the rapid creation and the remixing of any kind of visual information. It did not take long for artists and amateurs to tap into the unique imagemaking possibilities these machines offered. The copy art vanguard found that it was a highly democratic and pluralistic process that allowed people to make and disseminate economical, permanent, photographic-like prints without the need of an expensive and elaborate chemical darkroom or specialized training. Experimentation was at the fore as there was no established aesthetic. Prior influences incorporated Dada, Surrealism, and Fluxus (use of collage and montage), along with cross pollination embracing contempo-

rary graphic design trends with text, irreverent, raucous, and spontaneous punk rock art and music, all affected the maker's psyche. Many of the individuals involved in copy art movement, especially on the free-wheeling West Coast, did not have traditional academic arts education. Instead, their goal was to get the concepts informing their work into circulation. The East Coast makers had more formal academic training that revolved around educational institutions, the center of which was at Visual Studies Workshop (VSW), and extended to the then George Eastman House (GEH), and Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT).

As a result of such access and instruction at VSW, especially by Joel Swartz and Joan Lyons, these activities, along with others working at GEH and RIT, Rochester became the East Coast academic center of what would eventually be called the Copy Art Movement. A similar phenomenon of interaction among makers occurred on the West Coast, where a loose confederation of artists under the direction of Barbara Cushman (1945 – 2014) produced a series of copy art calendars known as the *Color Xerox Annual* from 1980 – 1984. This collection was donated to the Xerox Archive in 2014 and led to the exhibition *The Immovable Camera: Copy Art in the Bay Area 1980 – 1984* at SUNY Brockport's Tower Fine Art Gallery in 2015. An equivalent milieu of exchanges can be observed in Mülheim an der Ruhr, Germany, site of the Museum of Photocopy and now home of the Makroscope, a cultural center dedicated to the interdisciplinary and experimental use of art and technology. *Fast, Cheap & Easy* highlights works that radiated from these personal interactions regarding the copy machine as an aesthetic and technical artists' tool without using algorithms to drive content.

The electrophotography process brought some immediate changes to photographic imagemaking by reversing its methodology. Instead of taking a camera to a subject, imagemakers now would bring a subject matter to the copier. Initially this converted a largely solitary activity into one of artistic collaboration and information sharing involving makers, scientists, and technicians...

THE DEPARTMENT OF ART & TOWER FINE ART GALLERY PRESENT

The Immovable Camera: Copy Art in the Bay Area 1980-1984

October 27 - December 11, 2015

Opening Reception:
Tuesday, October 27, 4-6pm



GALLERY HOURS:
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SUNDAY: 1PM - 4PM



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CURATED BY ROBERT HIRSCH, TOM CARPENTER & KITTY HUBBARD

The Immovable Camera: Copy Art in the Bay Area 1980-1984 presented the anti-establishment color copy art calendars created from 1980 to 1984 by a democratic mixture of people from the San Francisco Bay Area, which was the forerunner of *Fast, Cheap & Easy* exhibition.

ON COPIES, ART & LIFE

With art forms such as Mail Art, Visual Poetry, Happenings or Performance, Copy Art developed in the 1960s and 1970s in waves at various places around the Fluxus movement. The work with the copier is understood as an artistic process, less than an independent art direction. (1) Not many artists like Klaus Urbons have dedicated themselves solely to copy art. It often appears in conjunction with other techniques and art forms, as well as with print graphics and graphic arts processes. In this respect, it is also seen and classified as a sub-group of prints. (2) Klaus Urbons emphasizes the technological aspect of this art by placing it in the broad field of electrographic art. In addition to video and fax, the copier is broadly understood to be an electronic form of photography and film (as well as telegraphy communications and printing) that use the techniques of light and operate on the basis of electricity and electronics. (3)

The discovery of the copier as an artistic tool unfolded over time. The key breakthrough was the realization that the copier, which was designed as a technology of office communication, could be used to promote communication within the artist community (Mail Art) and as a medium of image production and implementation. Discussions on the extension of the concept of art and the democratization of art promoted artistic experiments on the copier and the development of copy art. Initially fascinated by the fast process of copying, the visual explosiveness of the copy and its plug-in accuracy, the scope of design expanded with the technical innovations such as color, enlargement, reduction, zoom, and the inclusion of human and machine errors (chance). For copy art artist Roland Henss-Dewald, copy machines opened a new universe as he strived to overcome the boundaries of the medium: New visions through thoughtful shrinking and thoughtless 'pulling up.' Visual recycling with electrostatic forces. Images were decomposed, deprived of their individuality, to expose their nature, to unmask it. (4)

This shifted the focus from the object being photographed to the process of creation and the specific aesthetics of the copy. Whether and when a copy becomes art is at the discretion of the artist, who controls and influences the imaging and translation process. The most obvious manifestation of copy art is the contradiction between the original and the copy. Certainly every artistic examination of the technical apparatus expresses this contradiction, "Here the routine based on repetition, there the tendency of the artist to uniqueness; here the mass product, there the one-off piece ..." (5) But in copy art, this ambivalence is not neutralized, as in photography, by an artificial limitation of the editions, but rather thematized. A look at the short history and the context of copy arts' origins shows that the questioning of the prevailing concept of originality was, if not intended, at least reflected upon by the copy art artists. As incunabula (a book printed in Europe before 1501), Timm Ulrich's works "The Photocopy of Photocopy of Photocopy" (1967) and "Walter Benjamin: 'The Artwork in the Age of its Mechanical Reproduction' Interpretation" (1985), are referenced here. The latter was acquired by the Center Pompidou in Paris in May 2018. (6) For this work, which as created by making 100 photocopies, Ulrich reproduced the title of Walter Benjamin's groundbreaking work "The Art in the Age of Its Mechanical Reproduction" as a copy of the previous copy, until the original source was no longer readable. The loss of the aura of a work of art described by Benjamin becomes immediately clear in relation to the loss of data in the copy.

It should be noted that the examination of the original and authorship, craftsmanship versus technically controlled processes accompanies the work with the copier. Numerous works reflect this problem, as did Klaus Urbons' work *Zeitraum 12 - 12 Hours* (1987). It emerged from a copy art performance that took place in the Alte Post in Mülheim an der Ruhr, the present-day home of the Kunstmuseum. For twelve hours, Urbons...

ON ART AND AN UGLY MACHINE

Unlike many old machines—old cars, typewriters, and even toasters—the resale market for old copy machines is virtually non-existent. As most technologies age, their utility wanes but people come to fetishize these machines, or at least their parts, for entirely new reasons. Old typewriters, for example, are frequently repurposed as accessories and sometimes even broken down—their keys amputated from arms and repurposed to craft bracelets and earrings. By contrast, old copy machines seem to have little or no value whatsoever once they stop turning out copies.

Large, clunky and often despised even during their working lifespan, when copy machines break down, that's it—they are either carted off and dumped or pushed into a back room and forgotten. Even the world's only significant collection of copy machines, which was developed by copy artist Klaus Urbons and later warehoused in the Deutsches Technikmuseum, remains in storage rather than on display. The message is obvious:

Copy machines never had much aesthetic appeal and may even be the world's ugliest machines. But this doesn't mean that copy machines played a marginal role in the history of twentieth-century art.

To be clear, copy machines were never marketed directly to artists. They were most aggressively marketed to businesses. Specifically, they were marketed as office technologies that might eventually replace a certain class of office workers—namely, female clerical workers. In fact, Xerox's advertising campaigns in the late 1950s to 1960s took great pains to demonstrate just how much smarter, faster and more accurate their copy machines were than the average clerical worker. But when one steps back, it becomes clear that Xerox's engineers—and perhaps even Chester Carlson, xerography's inventor—were never singularly focused on creating an office machine.

In the late 1940s to early 1950s, before Xerox machines...



© Joan Linder. *Copier (Homage to Giorgio Morandi)*, 2000. 40 x 50 inches. Oil on canvas.

IN THE BEGINNING THERE WAS [THE] COPY:

FROM THE ART OF DRAWING TO COPY ART

*Dedicated to Peter Huemer for his
pioneering work over the years.*

Among the initial myths of the classical avant-garde is the delimitation of the established art techniques, such as drawing, etching, painting, and sculpting, from newly gained representation techniques that include collage, copies, blueprints, photographs, digital imaging, film, and mixed media, to create modes of production of art. However, when the result of the experiment is only “art” for a few, the anti-avant-garde majority will sardonically cry: “oh, so much for high art.” Many of these techniques, which define the framework of art production, have taken their starting point in drawing. Even if, for example, the camera seems to be superficially unrelated to the drawing pen, one still speaks of a “sharp-edged image,” of a “soft-drawing lens.” among others. However, the paths also lead back to drawing. Think of Arnulf Rainer’s overpainted or “oversubscribed” self-portrait photographic series. Often, such innovative presentation techniques, with their radical challenges of the conventional art canon, were a polemical affront to great masters of craftsmanship in painting, cold-needle etching, woodcut, copper engraving, and their highly stylized, always valuable art product.

The technical expansion of art’s repertoire of production was also largely accompanied by the expansion in content of an art concept that relativized traditional quality criteria and generally encouraged the development of art in new directions. These technical innovations did not always find their way to the “new art.” Consider graffiti or industrial enamel techniques, that despite the various stages of becoming art, reveal how futile it can be to introduce populist aesthetics, such as airbrushing, to the higher spheres of art, freed from the

social sweat of committed, aesthetic production. All these methods of representation are intertwined: once the auratic work of art is on the line of fire, a radicalized avant-garde manages to enforce the “shock product without aura” against traditionalist solidity. Other times lapidary drawing, such as in Cy Twombly, gains an almost extremist sharpness, although formally nothing so spectacular was driven. As one literally sees, the entanglements of presentation techniques have always had the revolutionary heroization on the content-related, but only later on the formal side. In the reproducibility of art, however, many techniques that facilitate this have the odor (ogun/war) of art destruction per se, because for the conventional understanding of great art in the nineteenth-century, the fetish “uniqueness of the original” is immutable. Reproductive techniques, even graphic “copying,” are derogatory, stigmatized by almost immoral subalternity as hostile to art. In the age of his “technical reproducibility,” to speak with Walter Benjamin, art is also freed from beautiful appearance by the fact that the sheer endless repeatability calls into question the uniqueness of substantial grand art of old style. On the other hand, it creates something absolutely new, which to call “Art”, and to understand it as such, means for the recipient a cognitive and progressive act in the emancipatory, greedy consciousness of modernity. The presentation techniques of photography, film, and television thus become “media.” In turn, instances of aesthetic mediation in which the content, reference Marshall McLuhan, is no longer even the “message” in this mediation technique, that is the medium itself. Nevertheless, drawing and, ultimately, painting, always could compete “against” the media, not only alienated – but at the same time avant-garde ennobled. As a result...



The immediacy and reproducibility of Xerox prints enabled artists to make editioned works in the form of artists' books, pamphlets, and zines. The artists' books in *Fast Cheap and Easy* represent a variety of copier-based books, from collaborative efforts like *Smithsonian* by Sonia Sheridan and Keith Smith to Nancy Topolski's acrylic medium Xerox transfer books to monthly zines by Color Blind Bowen (aka Richard Bowen). These self-produced publications pre-date the rise of print on demand book publishers such as Blurb and Lulu. Topolski provides insight: "I have perpetually been engaged in making artists' books as a means of personal expression as well as pursuing

knowledge and understanding through the process of making. I believe that the writing process is akin to that of making art and I hope to offer the viewers/readers of my work the opportunity to grow and learn by thinking both visually and conceptually. I believe the making of an artistic object can benefit both the artist's process and a viewer's conceptual interests." Richard Bowen, publisher of the zine *Rich Jokes*, said his idea for doing this came from his experiences travelling as a comedian. Regardless of where Bowen was doing a show: "I would go into a FedEx store with my notebook and have everything I needed to make a book on the spot – paper, glue stick, copier, and stapler."