

# Avalanche Magazine's Greatest Hits, Pt. 2

BY ANDREW RUSSETH | AUGUST 08, 2010



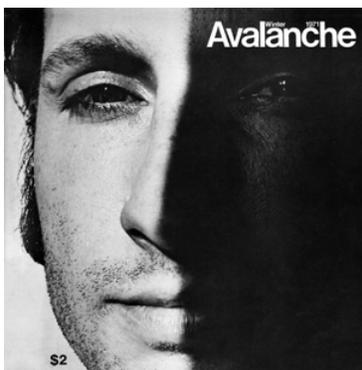
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**Avalanche** magazine, the paper of record for a particular strain of the international avant-garde during the first half of the 1970s, has been reissued in handsome new editions (a trade version and a signed and numbered limited edition) by New York publisher **Primary Information**. Earlier this year, **ARTINFO** [took a look at highlights from the periodical](#) (/news/story/35274/avalanche-magazines-greatest-hits-pt-1/), which featured in-depth interviews, beautiful advertisements, and the kind of quirky, buzzy news items that today would be disseminated through art blogs.

This week, ARTINFO presents a second and final look at the rich contents of the Avalanche box, while still only scratching the surface of the treasures hidden inside.

## 10. Warhol's Hollywood Ambitions

Emboldened by the success of his 1966 underground blockbuster "Chelsea Girls," (<http://www.artinfo.com/artists/profile/69/andy-warhol/>) (/artists/andy-warhol-69) **Andy Warhol** (/artists/andy-warhol-69) is said to have spent years fixated on making a big-budget feature that would cross over further into mainstream America, but — as might be expected of a filmmaker committed to offhandedly unpolished, gender-bent, barely scripted projects — it never quite panned. The debut issue of *Avalanche* carried news of early obstacles facing the project, a movie called "Specimen Days" that was to cover poet **Walt Whitmans** experience as a Civil War male nurse. Lining up a Hollywood-level star was proving to be difficult, *Avalanche* reported: "**Allen Ginsberg** (<http://www.artinfo.com/artists/profile/4834/allen-ginsberg/>), **Mick Jagger** (<http://www.artinfo.com/search/results/?query=Mick+Jagger>), and **John Lennon** (<http://www.artinfo.com/artists/profile/107672/john-lennon/>) have all turned it down."

## 11. Ads, Part 4: Promoting Daniel Burens Scandal

The controversy over French artist Daniel Buren's contribution to the 1971 **Guggenheim International** is by now legend: other artists joined forces to oppose the hanging of a gigantic curtain with Buren's signature stripes in the rotunda. Wily art dealer **Konrad Fischer** (<http://www.artinfo.com/search/results/?query=Konrad+Fischer>) stoked the controversy, buying an advertisement in the Winter 1971 issue that included a solemn photograph of the work and text that read: "A photograph of a work which, after pressure was exerted on the Museum by some participating artists, was censored and removed from the Sixth Guggenheim International Exhibition." Buren earned some choice publicity, and eventually he did get a chance to take over the museum's rotunda with his "Eye of the Storm" installation in 2005.

## 12. Michael Heizers Religious Ambitions

In a 1970 interview featured in the debut issue, seminal earthwork artist **Michael Heizer**, who was already working on a large scale in the deserts of the American West, shared his views on the artistic process. "If you consider art as activity then it becomes like recreation," he told *Avalanche*. Hinting at the gigantic, foreboding "City" project that he would begin in the Nevada desert two years later (and which continues to preoccupy him to this date), he told the magazine: "I guess I'd like to see art become more of a religion."

## 13. Joel Fishers Day Job and Drinking Habits

In the December 1974 issue, [Liza Béar](http://www.artinfo.com/search/results/?query=Liza+B%2E9ar) (<http://www.artinfo.com/search/results/?query=Liza+B%2E9ar>) asked artist **Joel Fisher** how he made a living back in the day. "I cleaned out apartments for dead people," he explained. "It was kind of repulsive. The places were piss and old newspapers.... I found a **Rembrandt** once, an unsigned Rembrandt etching, probably a reissue from the original plate, or a good forgery. I still have it." In something of a non sequitur, Béar then asked "How's your drink?" Replied Fisher: "It's good. I prefer Polish vodkas."

#### 14. Ads, Part 5: John Webers Hans Haacke Poll

While gallerist **John Weber** ([Jeffrey Deitch](http://www.artinfo.com/search/results/?query=Jeffrey+Deitch) (<http://www.artinfo.com/search/results/?query=Jeffrey+Deitch>)s mentor) didn't buy an ad to trumpet **Hans Haackes** exclusion from the Guggenheim International, he did run an ad in the Spring/Winter 1973 issue with survey results collected at the artist's show at Weber's gallery. The questionnaire asked visitors 20 questions about New York museums, including this zinger: "Esthetic questions aside, which of these New York museums would in your opinion exhibit works critical of the present US Government?" The 858 responses, shown in tastefully designed bar graphs, declared the [Museum of Modern Art](http://www.artinfo.com/galleryguide/24102/10620/museum-of-modern-art-sao-paulo/) (<http://www.artinfo.com/galleryguide/24102/10620/museum-of-modern-art-sao-paulo/>) and the **Whitney** as the winners, albeit with only a paltry 16 percent each. A full 23 percent of respondents said that no museum would do such a thing.

#### 15. Willoughby Sharp, Locked in a Box

Avalanche publisher **Willoughby Sharp**, [never one for low-key or half-hearted endeavors](http://www.artnet.com/magazineus/features/finch/finch12-18-08.asp) (<http://www.artnet.com/magazineus/features/finch/finch12-18-08.asp>), placed a notice in the newspaper in the mid-1970s announcing a performance that would be staged at noon on one November 16th. He explained: "I shall be locked in a box (8' x 8' x 16') at **112 Greene Street**, New York, and remain inside it for 300 hours. A closed circuit video system will enable the public to see this performance." Could Sharp have [inspired "endurance artist" David Blaine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Blaine#Buried_Alive) ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David\\_Blaine#Buried\\_Alive](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Blaine#Buried_Alive))?

#### 16. A Note from Richard Nonas

While ARTINFO can't claim to have read every item in Avalanche (though we did look at and ponder every single advertisement), we feel safe proclaiming this quotation from artist Richard Nonas as one of the most succinct explanations by an artist of his oeuvre that was printed in the magazine's entire run: "I want to make objects that can scare the shit out of me."

#### 17. The Adventures of Gilbert & George

The delightful British artist-couple **Gilbert & George** contributed ARTINFO's favorite item published in the magazine's entire run: a multi-page artwork in Avalanche Summer/Fall 1973 issue entitled "Drinking Sculpture." Consisting of a series of hazy, blurry photographs documenting a joyful alcohol binge undertaken by the two, it is accompanied by short bits of text, like "We stopped by at quite a number of places of refreshment last evening and everyone seemed very friendly and flighty on the whole." And then they offer this, which can double as a cheery end to our feature: "Made a fair number of decisions in the bar last night. Carried them all out and went home happy and diagonal."

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[Postwar & Contemporary Art \(/tags/postwar-contemporary-art\)](#)

## RECOMMENDED



[\(/news/story/2714865/clemens-krauss-noise-an-early-disorder-at-dominik-mersch\)](/news/story/2714865/clemens-krauss-noise-an-early-disorder-at-dominik-mersch)

GALLERIES

'Clemens Krauss: Noise - An Early Disorder'

[\(/news/story/2714865/clemens-](/news/story/2714865/clemens-)



[\(/news/story/2714790/uncanny-life-artifact-and-identity-at-fortyfivedownstairs\)](/news/story/2714790/uncanny-life-artifact-and-identity-at-fortyfivedownstairs)

GALLERIES

'Uncanny Life: Artifact and Identity' at Fortyfivedownstairs

[\(/news/story/2714790/uncanny-life-](/news/story/2714790/uncanny-life-)



[\(/news/story/2714507/elizabeth-islands-at-catriona-jeffries-vancouver\)](/news/story/2714507/elizabeth-mcintosh-islands-at-catriona-jeffries-vancouver)

GALLERIES

'Elizabeth McIntosh: Islands' at Catriona Jeffries

[\(/news/story/2714507/elizabeth-](/news/story/2714507/elizabeth-)