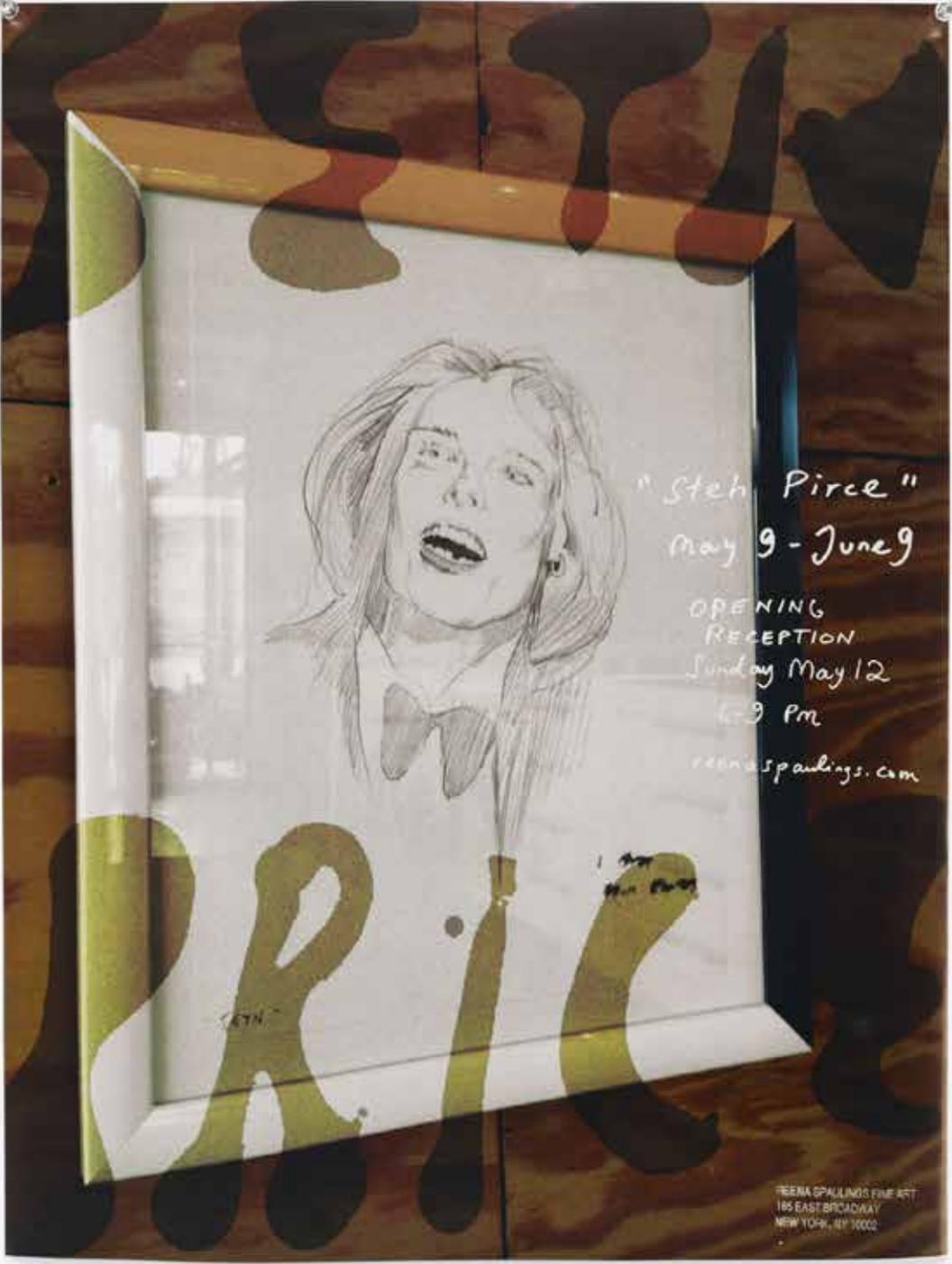


FOLKLORE
UNIVERSITY
PRINCETON





REENA SPALLINGS FINE ART
185 EAST BROADWAY
NEW YORK, NY 10002



SETH BRIDE, EDITH LOSS, U.S. DOCUMENTA 13

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Folklore U.S.
Seth Price

CHRISTOPHER BOLLEN IN
CONVERSATION WITH SETH PRICE

January 2012

Christopher Bollen: Your work consistently plays off the idea of presence and absence, or presence by means of absence. In your series of gestalt silhouettes, for example, it's the voids that actually come to represent the tangible figures of the work. Or take your vacuum forms, which carry the shape of an object that's no longer present, as if these works hold the ghost of the item. If we were to read your work biographically, could we say that there is some refusal on your part to give yourself over to the object, to be an artist who makes concrete things, instead of voids?

Seth Price: *[laughs]* Maybe. It's funny how you figure out your own work after the fact. You're right, so much of my work is about flatness and absence. But it's about material, too. That's always been important. Whether it's rough and industrial or totally shiny, with this idea of the perfect surface or product. I would say I always had a problem with the iconic image, or the image per se. And maybe I still do. I started out wanting to work with writing and music and video. And that may have led me to avoid a certain kind of image making, and I ended up working with absences. But I was always interested in materiality.



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CB: And now you're collaborating with a menswear designer, actually designing clothes.

SP: Yes, and that's what's been interesting about working with fashion. It is almost a totally materialist pursuit. The final product is about the fabric, the trim, the cut. So even when a designer presents clothes within a narrative, like, "This is my hobo collection," or whatever, everyone watching the show is more concerned with the details of the clothes. What people are paying attention to is two buttons instead of three, or how the fabric drapes. The narrative information the designer supplies—"My collection is referencing 1930s haberdashery"—that's just historical footnotes, no one gets hung up on it. Whereas in the art world people can get very hung up on the concept, more so than on the material.

CB: Right.

SP: So it's a parallel world to art, in that it's also all about material, concept, and distribution. And it's also based on the circulation of luxury goods; it rides this swell of money and tries to keep its autonomy somehow, if it's any good. But there's a different understanding in fashion of what's on offer. People dive in, they're affirmative of the concepts or narratives in a show, but they don't take those things so seriously because they're more interested in the material details and what those choices indicate.

CB: Fashion is always going to be about the details, because at the end of the day there are only so many ways that a designer can remake the same garment. Especially in menswear, where it's very difficult to redesign a suit so that it looks radically different every season. So the focus has to be on the slightest alterations, the minuscule changes in material and form. Otherwise the whole industry would go down the drain. Clothes are pretty standard and limited, just like human bodies are.



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SP: Yeah. A bomber jacket is a cliché that never goes out of style. It gets reinvented every couple of years. Every designer makes one. At this point, the elasticity of the thing is so great that any jacket could be called a bomber. Whatever history the garment has is just an essence you kind of spray on.

CB: You weren't fearful about stepping into the world of fashion? Many artists consider fashion to exist just beyond the River Styx in terms of cultural value. Well, I guess you aren't launching the Seth Price brand.

SP: I kind of am. [laughs] At documenta it will be clothes for sale.

CB: So if I were wearing Seth Price, what would I have on?

SP: It consists of seven garments: a trench coat, a bomber, a flight suit, gaiters, and some other pieces. It's military. They're going to be made out of white canvas, with security patterns on the lining.

CB: How did it all start?

SP: Well, last spring one of my vacuum-formed bomber jackets was bought by MoMA. That piece was supposed to be an iconic image, but you know, it's such a shock to feel that all the loose ends are being tied up. All of the things that didn't make sense start being named. You see that people behind the scenes have been stitching you into the fabric of your time. I can't explain it. But I wanted to take the bomber jacket back from the museum—to sell it out, in a way—by remaking it. So the collection is allowing me to pursue that.



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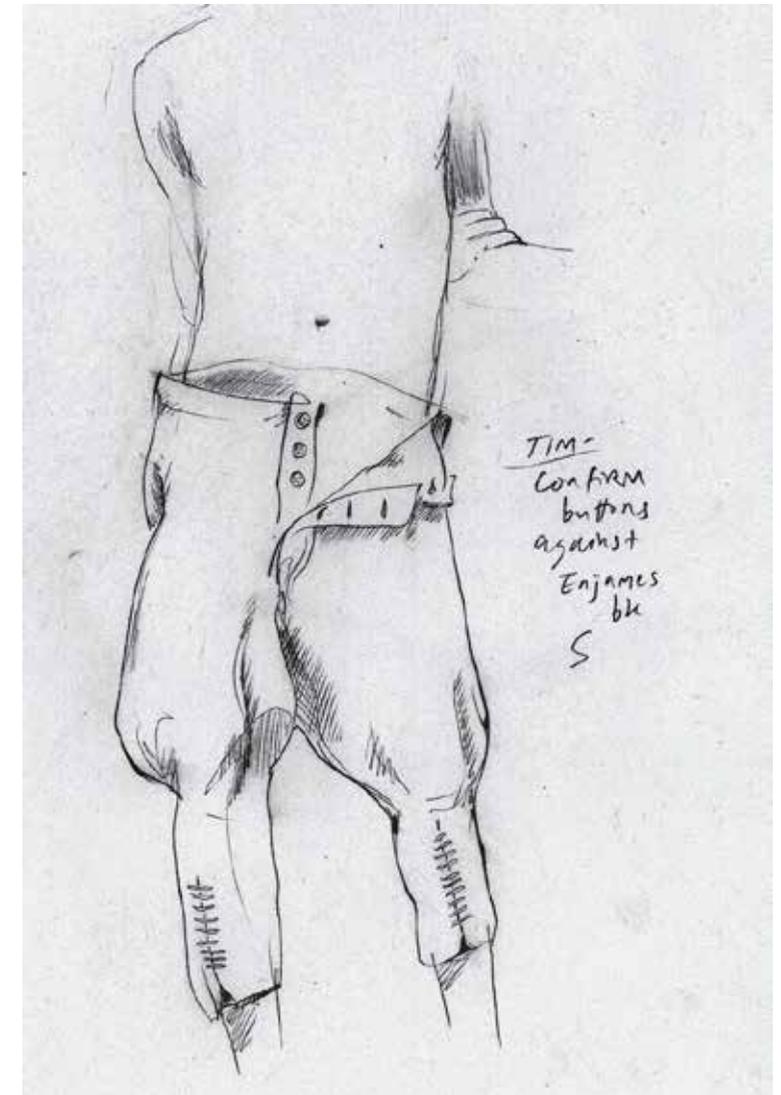
STYLE	SS2012 - SP 01	STYLE	SS2012 - SP 02	STYLE	SS12 - SP 07
DESCRIPTION	BOMBER JACKET	DESCRIPTION	HOODED BATWING JACKET	DESCRIPTION	GAITER
COMPO	CANVAS (BODY) - COTTON TERCATE (LINING)	COMPO	CANVAS (BODY) - COTTON TERCATE (LINING)	COMPO	CANVAS (BODY) - COTTON TERCATE (LINING)
COLOR	Off White	COLOR	Off White	COLOR	PAINTED
PRICE:	318	PRICE:	398	PRICE:	158
STYLE	SS12 - SP 04	STYLE	MC-OW-03	STYLE	SS12 - SP 06
DESCRIPTION	FLIGHT PANTS	DESCRIPTION	Tailored Overcoat	DESCRIPTION	PONCHO
COMPO	CANVAS (BODY) - COTTON TERCATE (LINING)	COMPO	Cotton	COMPO	CANVAS (BODY) - COTTON TERCATE (LINING)
COLOR	Off White	COLOR	Off White	COLOR	Off White
PRICE:	200	PRICE:	460	PRICE:	480
STYLE	SS12 - SP 05			STYLE	
DESCRIPTION	FLIGHT JUMP SUIT			DESCRIPTION	
COMPO	CANVAS (BODY) - COTTON TERCATE (LINING)			COMPO	
COLOR	Off White			COLOR	
PRICE:	520				

Page 1

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CB: How did you get in touch with Tim Hamilton?

SP: He got in touch with me. Initially he asked me to make a video for a fashion presentation. That was last fall, so that would have been, let's see, the Spring/Summer 2012 collection. The fashion calendar is really schizophrenic. So his request was, "Do you want to create a video backdrop for my show?" and I was completely uninterested. Because that's what I do already. You show up someplace and install a video and that's an art show. But my summer was empty, so I said, "No, but I *would* like to design clothes," thinking it was a shot in the dark. But he wanted to meet. I wanted to do the white canvas bomber, and he was into that, and he proposed doing other pieces. You know, we got excited about working together. So it became this military collection. I've been thinking about how much sportswear is indebted to military gear, and working with the bomber as an image, because it's so coded, and Tim's always been into army stuff. He has these great reference books, these military-clothing collectors' guides. Strange books. I started getting really involved with the details, and we'd go back and forth about, like, dolman sleeves.



CB: But this early collaboration with Tim wasn't exactly art yet, was it?

SP: No. I was just exploring another way of producing, or thinking about another industry. It was for fun. But then I made a proposal for documenta that was rejected, and suddenly it was fall and I was trying to figure out what to do, and I thought: Wait a minute, I'm already making Spring/Summer 2012 clothes, and here I am supposed to be coming up with Spring/Summer 2012 art. It's perfect, I can just roll it all up.

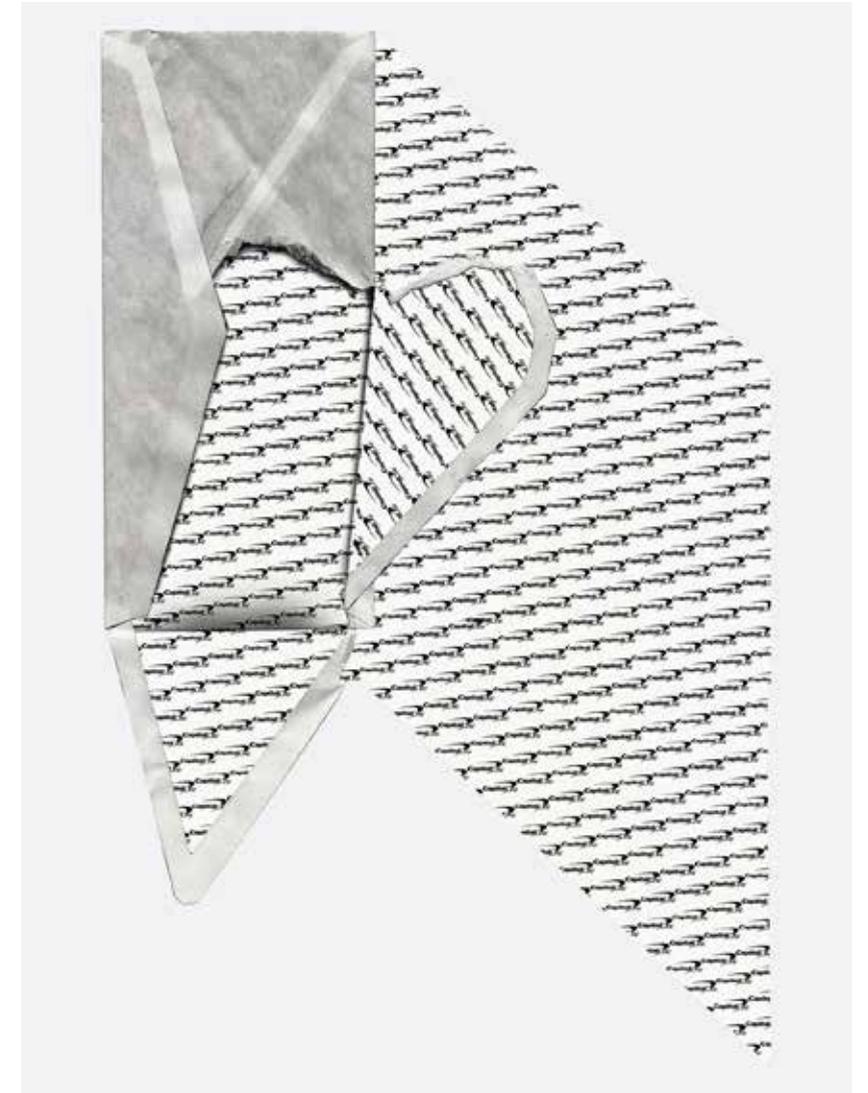
CB: How did envelopes become an influence in the design process?

SP: Last summer I was kind of idly working on these envelope designs, just little sketches based on security patterns. I've been working with envelopes for a couple of years already. I was thinking about how an envelope is a single sheet of material that's cut to a pattern, printed on the inside, and then folded and attached to contain an object or, in the case of a security envelope, sensitive financial data, presumably, which you have to guard from sight by use of a repeating pattern. And a jacket is the same, it's essentially a piece of fabric that, having been cut, is folded, arranged, attached; like an envelope, it takes you places.

CB: And like an envelope, a jacket conceals sensitive material that is often guarded from sight by corporate logos.

SP: Right. So when we were planning out the garment liners, it made sense to me to use security patterns. And I felt like I could compile all these somewhat over-the-top ideas in a way that I wouldn't do in my art. I mean, to put a corporate logo inside a piece of military gear that is also a bank envelope, it becomes kind of a high-concept Hollywood pitch, like: "The banks meet the military... on the runway." [laughs]

CB: All-in-one fascism.



SP: All-in-one ideological critique. Too dumb to even propose, within a framework that's so concerned with criticality. Canvas is something you make army gear out of, and it's what paintings are made of, and already you're too thick with signifiers. On the other hand, I felt like, yes, I can do it, precisely because it's "just fashion." You walk down the street and see someone wearing a hoodie with an all-over print of skulls and crossbones, but then you notice the skulls are actually SpongeBob, wearing a Monopoly top hat, and it's not crossbones, it's a dildo and, like, a mortgage contract. That's fashion and graphic design, or streetwear design, at least. People just stack up these codes ad nauseam. But then as I was working with this in the clothing, my anxiety about doing that for some reason flipped over into being excited about engaging with it, as art, by preserving that anxiety as part of the work. I decided it could translate to documenta and bring this other level of, I don't know what to call it, awareness of the mythology in the art world about critique. The lore around criticality and "the political" in art. How if you transgress that it's almost seen as bad taste. Saying too much, or saying it in the wrong place. And how "political art" is often seen as sort of well intentioned but naive, but thank God someone's doing it. I mean, there can be a pretty narrow view of what the political is. And "selling out," what is that?

CB: Right.



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SP: All these questions. Not that this is my primary interest in doing this work, but it is a way to take a step back and think about framing the project as a whole, and relating it to its context, giving it another set of questions. So that basically gave me permission to do it. And a show like documenta, a lot of people are invested in seeing it as an alternative to the U.S.-market-based art worlds, which are presumably focused on shiny things and a post-Pop heritage, and, you know, fashion. I thought it seemed like a good opportunity to show up, like, "Here's the New York artist, true to form." There's this Beuys quote where he says something like, "Everything people accuse me of, I will be that, over and over." So we'll see what happens.

CB: And you did a fashion show last fall, right?

SP: Yes. I mean, Tim did his SS12 show here [in New York City], and our collaboration was one part of it. We chose a space together, an empty storefront. I did a sound track, I made a video. It was fun. That show was all samples. We're in touch with a Korean factory now that's making the full line.

CB: Which corporate logos did you pick?

SP: Capital One. The FDIC. Corbis, the image-rights agency. UBS. Paychex. And a generic crosshatch envelope pattern. There are others.



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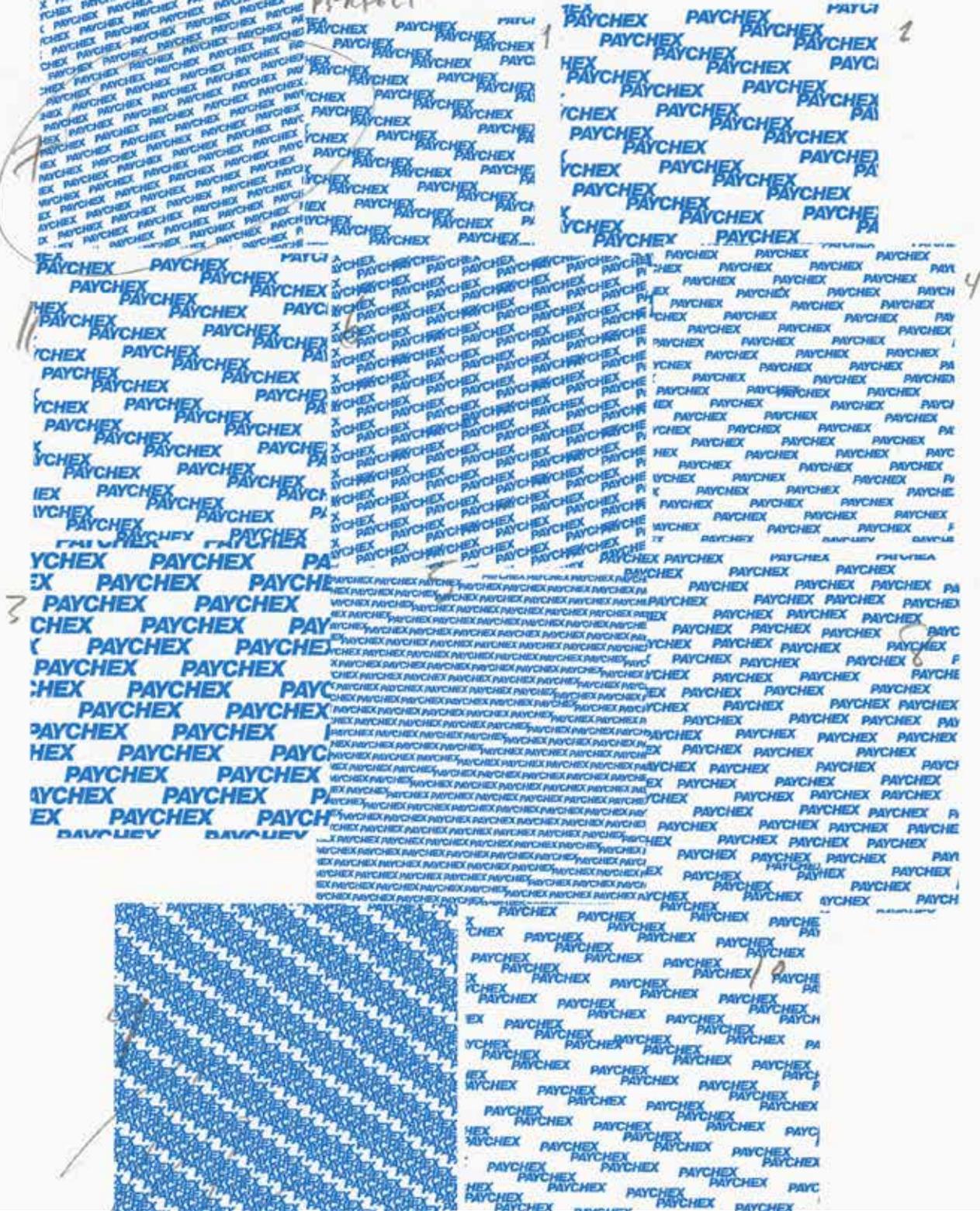
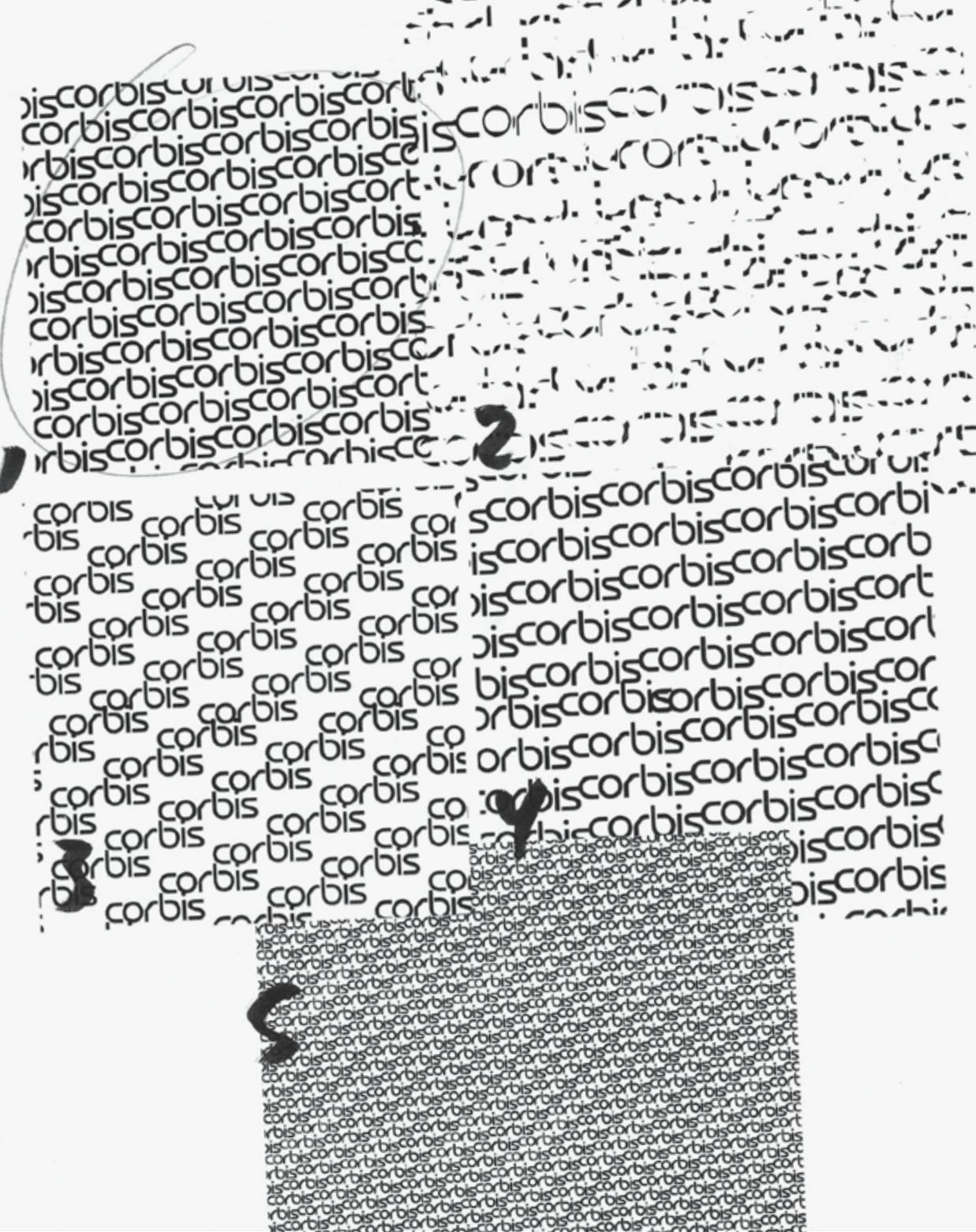
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CB: I'm surprised documenta is down with you showing fashion. What exactly are you planning to exhibit?

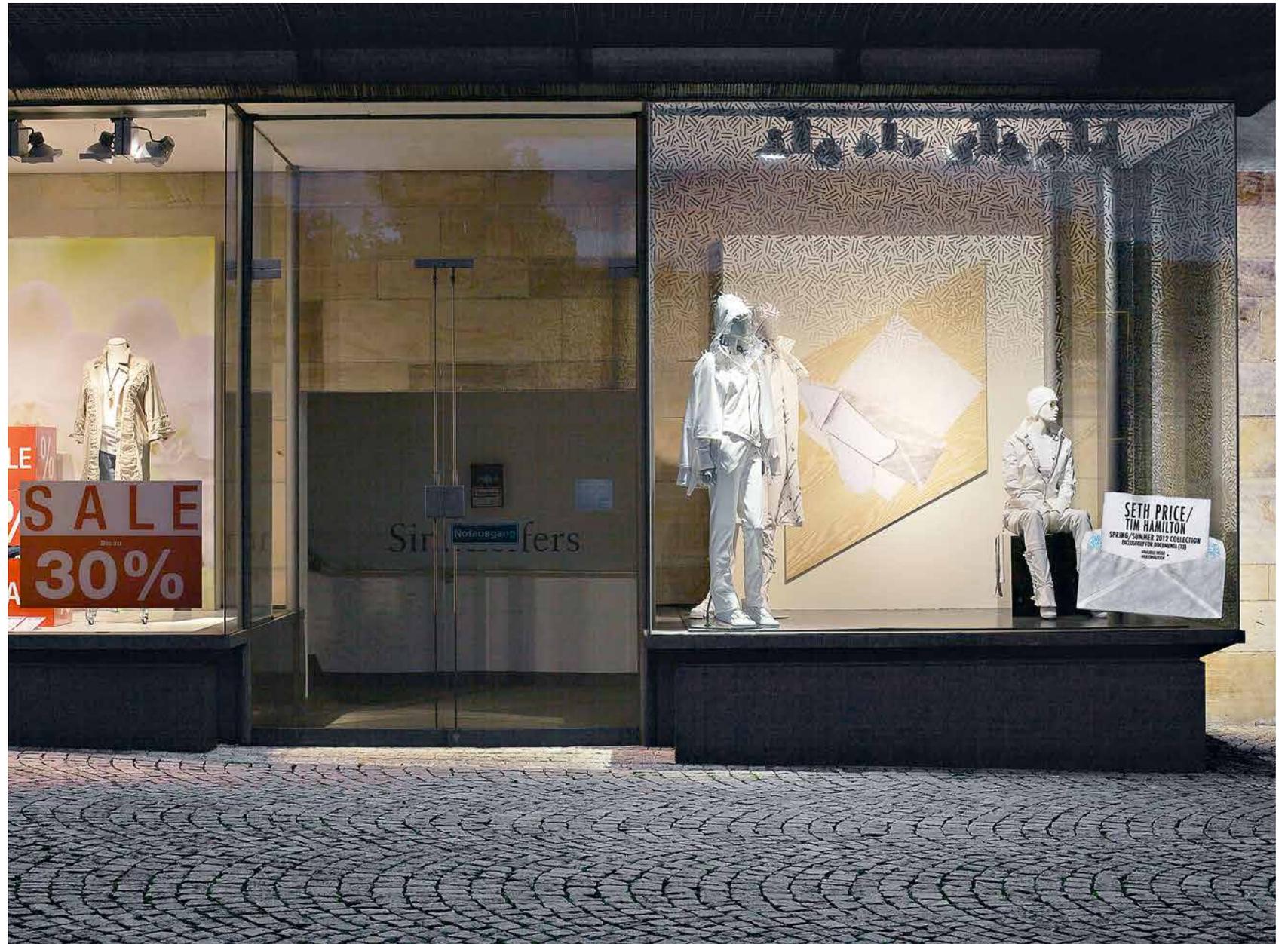
SP: The idea is to send two related but separate bodies of work. One part involves the clothes I'm doing with Tim. They'll be for sale, on the racks at a department store in Kassel that's actually right next door to the main documenta venue, the Friedericianum. The two buildings actually look similar, kind of eighteenth-century buildings, with colonnades. The department store mostly sells labels like Gant and Tommy Hilfiger, but they're debuting a "designer corner" to coincide with documenta, and they wanted to work with me. But basically they're a conservative department store in the provinces, so they're nervous about putting art in the windows. We had to do a pitch to their buyers, so I wrote it with no reference to militarism or any art concept, I presented it as just white sportswear. Which is not entirely untrue. You get to do that with fashion, you can always strip it back to its material, utilitarian facts: it's just fabric to put on your body, and that's fine, too. Whereas in art there's an anxiety about stripping it back to just being material to put on the walls, because then why are we even doing it?



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CB: So you're doing the store windows.

SP: Yes. They're big vitrines on the main documenta plaza. It's like having an extra venue for my work. Because the clothes are being consigned directly to the department store. It's not going through documenta. Which made me nervous, because the shopwindows in particular amount to a very public installation by one of the exhibition artists that wasn't part of the game plan. More people will probably see the shopwindows than whatever I do in the exhibition hall. But luckily the curator's into it.







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BOLLEN / PRICE



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a. SinnLeffers department store window, dOCUMENTA (13), Kassel, 2012 b. *Black Letter with Leak*, 2012, in SinnLeffers department store window

CB: In five years, documenta will be sponsored by Gucci. You've opened the floodgates. But you're still showing a second body of work at documenta, right?

SP: Yes. I'm using the garment-industry connections and all the same materials to make artworks. They're these big, not quite wearable security envelopes, but they're made like garments, in the fashion system. It's like mutated versions of the clothes, with all the ratios skewed differently. You have the same ideas and materials, but they aren't made for the human form, they're made for the wall. It's garment construction as a sculptural fact. So basically you have one idea that gets sent to documenta through two different channels and gets deformed by the particularities of those channels. At least, I hope.



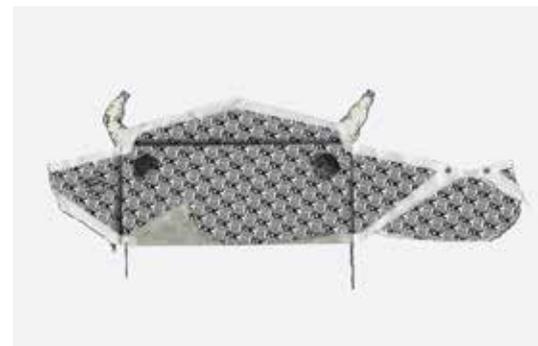
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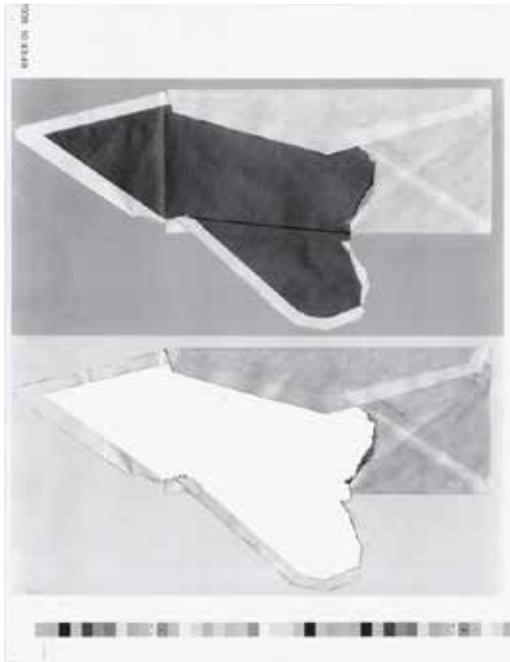
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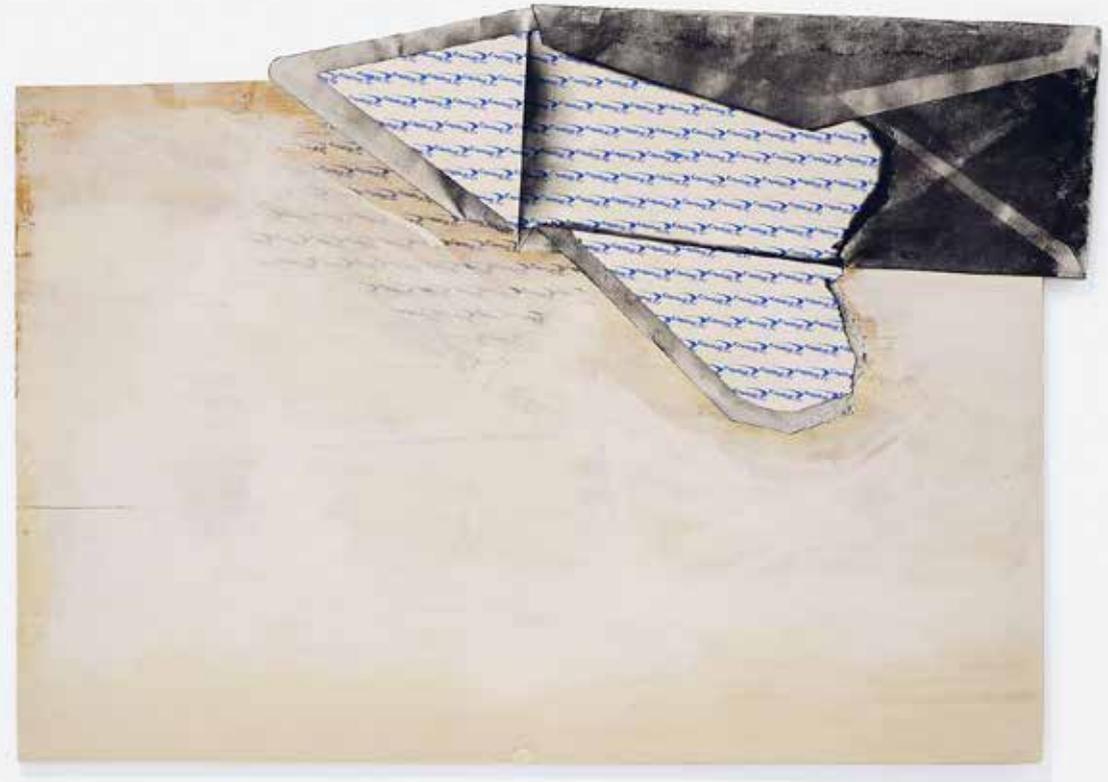






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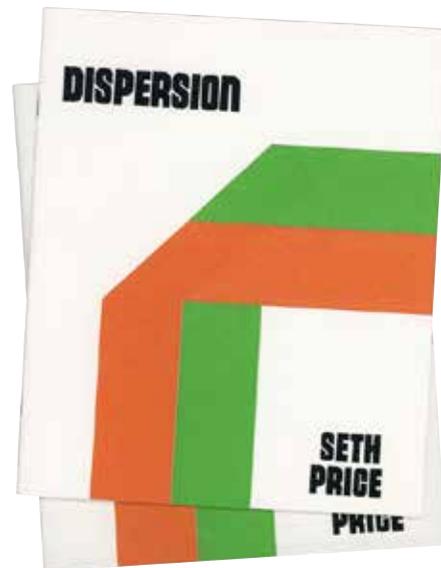
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a. Working drawing, 2012, ink jet on paper b. *Black Letter with Company*, 2012, screenprint, gesso, acrylic, enamel, and acrylic polymer on plywood, dOCUMENTA (13), Kassel, 2012



CB: On my Facebook account the other day, an avid art patron who shall remain nameless posted an article that basically said, "In this day of stock-market volatility and real estate implosion, the rich are diversifying their art portfolios." In other words, art is a safer investment right now than gold. This woman posted the article as if it were something the art world should celebrate. I don't want to seem old-fashioned, nor do I think that artists need to be poor to create legitimate works. And yes, money makes the art world go round. But I think a bunch of disinterested speculators buying up art and determining who gets shows and what has value is pretty awful. At least it's not the reason I took refuge in art as a young adult. I thought in your essay *Dispersion* you were trying to figure out ways to short-circuit that relationship between the artist and the buyer.

SP: Well, I was thinking about a different model of circulation. I never thought of it as a replacement. I liked the idea of redundancy, that you could operate in different economies simultaneously, and sometimes with the same artwork. And *Dispersion* was my example of that. It operates in three spheres. It's available online as a free PDF, and that version is available everywhere, there's no spatial location, essentially, unless you think of a server somewhere as the location. And there's no price. But then it also exists as a booklet you can buy. It's selling for ten dollars at Printed Matter, and then it comes up as a used book on Amazon. That's the retail economy. And then I took the essay's layout file and printed the spreads on plastic and vacuum-formed them over knotted ropes. That's sculpture, it was for sale in the art economy, at art-world prices. And the essay got broken up, and the pages got sent to different homes. So in a way it's this same idea of sending a work through different channels and seeing how they recompose the message.



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CB: Isn't that a bit like having your cake and eating it, too? You can say your work is free to the public, but you also get to sell it to the highest bidder. I don't know, Seth.

SP: [laughs] I thought about that a lot. But I could have done that with any of my essays. That would have been the cynical gesture, to just keep moving them into this vacuum format. But I think it made sense with *Dispersion*, which was always all about circulation. I didn't think of it as an "essay"; it was kind of an ambiguous mix of the text and its design and its circulation and the different manifestations. So this was a way to bring that out. I liked the idea of taking the piece back into material, into the plastic arts, and pointing to the design as something to look at, an image in and of itself, rather than just a delivery device. I knew it would be something people would critique for "having my cake and eating it, too," as you said. I don't know if it was a successful gesture. But it seemed like there were enough questions or conflicts there that it was worth trying. There's so much anxiety among artists and critics about the concept of selling out that it must be interesting to engage with on some level. I always like working in an area where there's a threat of compromise. Well, maybe not always. But it's good to feel a little uncomfortable about some aspect of an artwork, whether it's material, conceptual, or some aspect of the economics. If you don't play with these things a little bit, they start to flow really smoothly. And soon you're not even aware that they're things you can fuck with.



a. *Essay with Knots* pp. 12–13, 2008 (detail), screenprint on high-impact polystyrene vacuum-formed over rope knots

CB: So selling out is never an issue for you?

SP: Well, the fashion thing started because I had this urge to sell out this piece that had been taken and placed in this other constellation. And I don't want to complain that the work got bought by MoMA. I was really happy about it. But it was also a conflicted feeling. So taking the clothes to documenta is a way of playing with that feeling of selling out. Not economically, more in terms of integrity or whatever. And to take the project to a stage where certainly it will be picked apart. And maybe it won't work. It could come across as this simplistic equation of art and commerce. The whole cliché of art and fashion is a good reason not to do it.

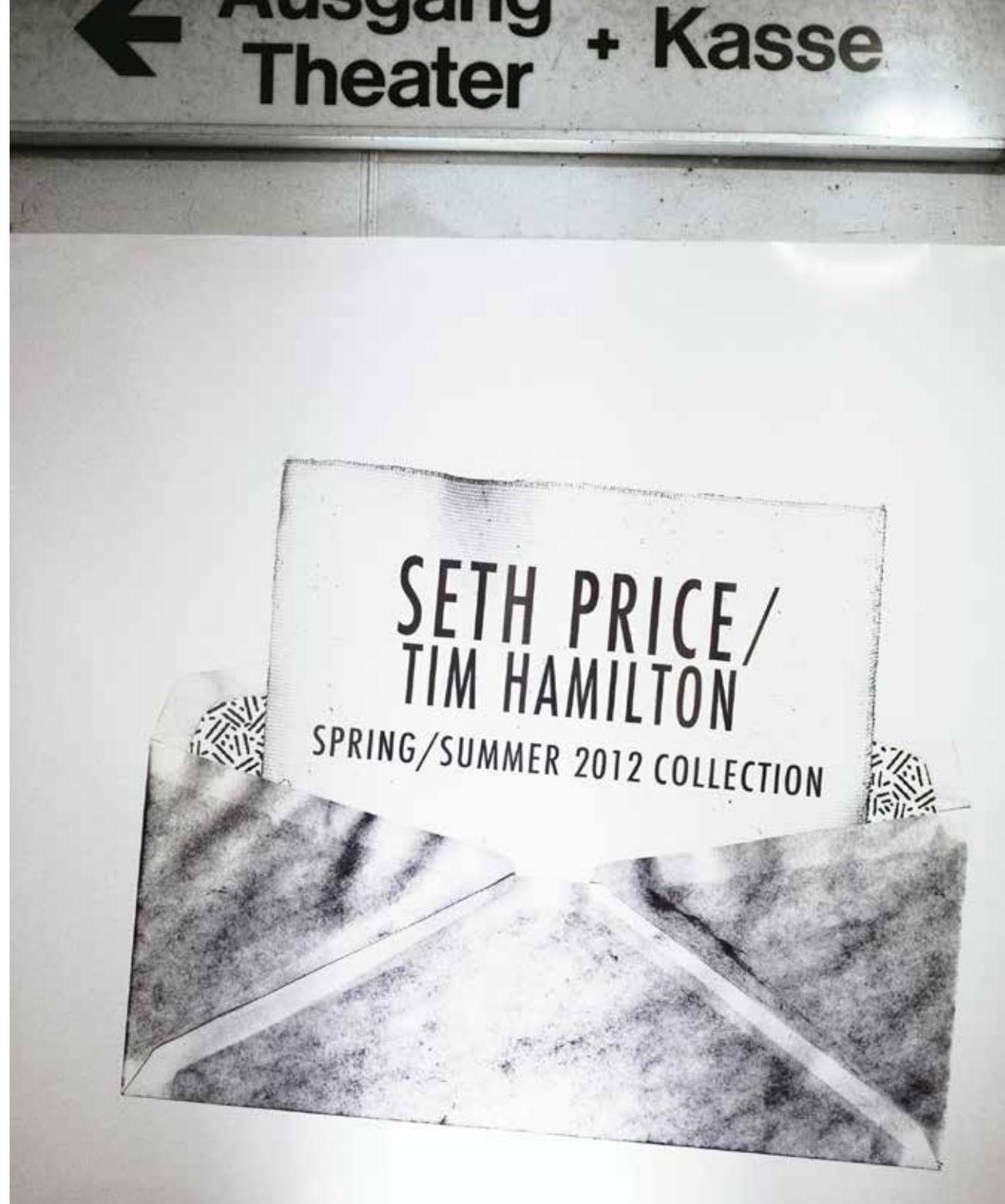
CB: Well, art can barely find a new way to sell out. When you think back to that notorious 1974 Lynda Benglis ad in *Artforum* where she posed naked with a dildo and sunglasses, two of the editors, like Rosalind Krauss, were so outraged they resigned from the magazine. Ten years ago, *Artforum* was chockablock with Dior Homme ads and no one said a word. We've come a long way, in other words, in forty years, with the relationship of art and fashion. The audiences have intermingled, and they've infiltrated each other.



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SP: There's a kind of seduction/repulsion quality that's consistent. That's a big part of it. I was walking down the street a few months ago and they were opening a new YSL boutique, and there was a plywood fence around the construction site, and the fence was covered with a billboard-size vinyl print of a mostly naked woman advertising the store. It was an inflammatory image, and people had been scrawling all over it.

CB: What did they write?

SP: Objections. "This image is degrading to women," things like that. My first reaction was to stop and look at the image, because I like the seduction. And also I'm interested in fashion photography, and I'm interested in advertising, and I'm interested in printing technologies. And my next reaction was to read the commentary, which is also interesting. I like graffiti and the destruction of private property and vandalism, and I like dissent and unlicensed commentary. And I agree with a lot of the sentiments people were writing. But I detest moralizing more than anything, so I was also thinking, why can't you just let me enjoy my stupid moment of seduction! I liked all of those different pushes and pulls in one moment.

CB: What a world it is when the vandal is the moral center that is monitoring cultural imagery.

SP: The whole thing was complicated. I'm interested in that tangle. ♥



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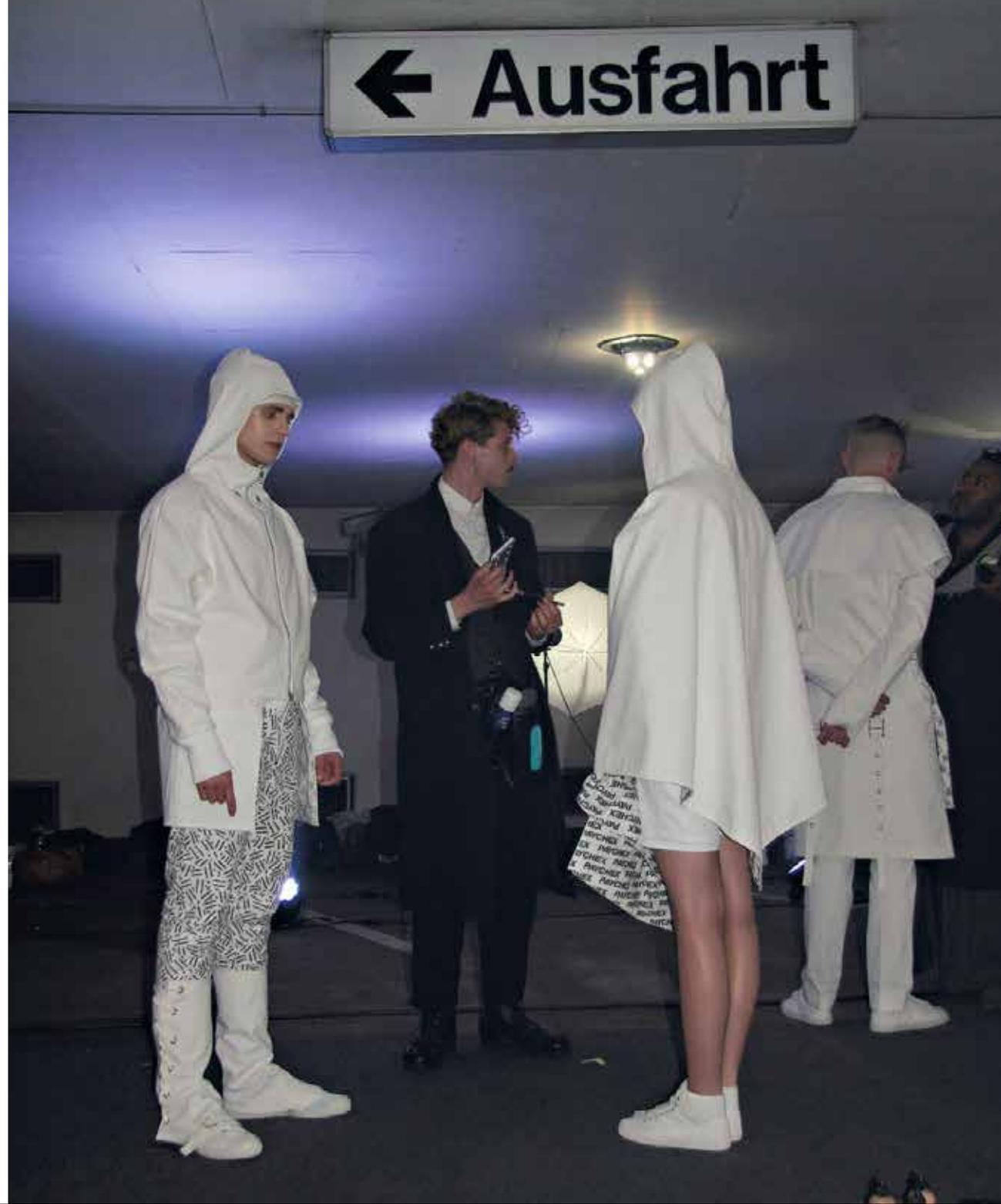


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BOLLEN / PRICE



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a–b. The *Folklore U.S.* SS12 fashion show, staged during the opening of dOCUMENTA (13), Kassel, 2012



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BOŠKO BLAGOJEVIĆ IN CONVERSATION
WITH BEN MORGAN-CLEVELAND

August 2013

Boško Blagojević: How long have you been working for Seth?

Ben Morgan-Cleveland: Almost two years. Just about two years. I'm pretty much gone, though. I'm getting too busy with my own work.

BB: I worked for him for less, for a little while. I was sad when I left, but I had an opportunity to get a full-time job with health insurance and salary, so I was like, *Whatever*. So what are we looking at on this table?

BMC: This is all ephemera from working on the envelopes. These abstract pictures here are these drawings he did on Tyvek, with stamps. Tyvek is this material that was originally made to cover houses. It's kind of cottony feeling, but it's synthetic cloth, it's made out of plastic fibers. But now it's also used to protect art, to store art. It's breathable, it's nonabrasive. It's basically synthetic paper.

BB: You said these are made with stamps? I've never seen this work.



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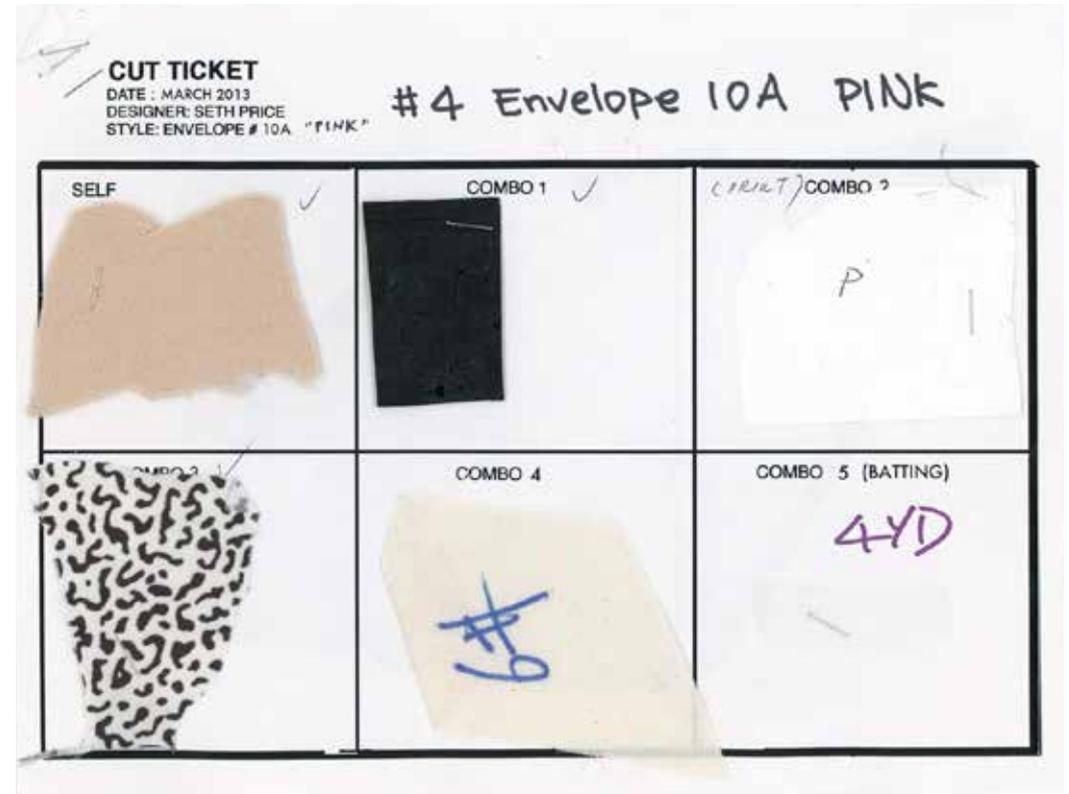


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BMC: Well, these got sewed inside the envelopes, so you only see them when it's open. What else? These here are Cut Tickets: these are the basic instructions for the garment factory manufacturing the envelopes. The swatches stapled on there represent every material you use in a given piece. So here the Tyvek print gets called "Combo 2." There's this whole crazy fashion terminology you have to learn. The "Self" is essentially the outer layer, the garment's main fabric. Then it goes "Combo 1," "Combo 2," "Combo 3," etc., which are all the additional materials that make up the garment.



a. Garment-factory work bin, showing Cut Ticket and work in progress **b.** Cut Ticket with annotations by studio and garment factory **c.** Container for Virus Pattern plus Handmade Pattern, 2013, blackened cork facing, neoprene shell, printed charmeuse

liner, screenprinted Tyvek center panel, double-headed zippers, zipper tape, covered snaps, grommets, buckles, straps, etc.

BB: Like what sorts of materials?

BMC: Well, there's the liner, like inside a jacket. There's facing, which is an extra layer on the edges. There's all these different stiffeners you fuse to the Self for extra body, like siri or organza. You have to specify all that on the Cut Ticket. But that's only half of it. You also have to get the trim. Trim is zippers, buckles, snaps, buttons, all that stuff. So there were always six moving elements at all times, and it was really crazy to keep track of, because every order is specific. For instance, for this project here, each envelope sculpture needed three different zippers, and every zipper was a different gauge and length, and each envelope had a different color scheme for all the metal trim, which could be nickel, antique brass, gunmetal, antique nickel, black... And that was just the color of the teeth. Then the tape that goes along the zippers was all different colors and materials, to match the envelopes. And the zipper pulls were all different. A shop would be custom-making zippers and screw up the size, then they got the size right the second time around, and the color of the tape was right, but the pulls were wrong. It was chaos.

BB: Wow.



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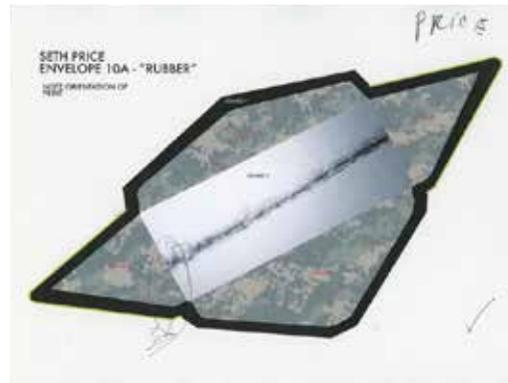


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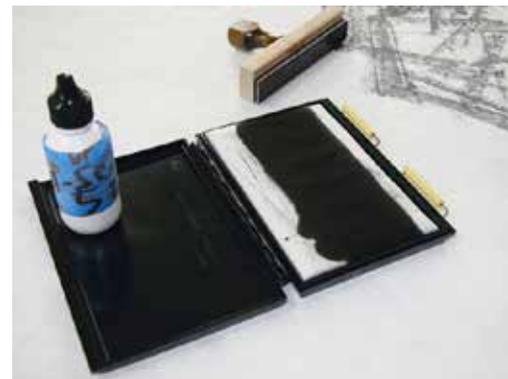
BMC: So that's the Cut Ticket. We also gave the factory these diagrams. Like here it shows where the printed Tyvek actually goes, it's the center panel of the envelope interior. So once you open the envelope, you see the stamp painting.

BB: What do you think he was going for with the mark making on these Tyvek panels? This one is kind of crazy. Kind of Constructivist.

BMC: I don't know, I feel like he was free-balling it. I know he was looking at early computer art, like 1960s. The stamp is just a really simple way of mark making. He just got this rectangle stamp made, and banged them out. That was kind of the hand, in the pieces. But it was on the inside, so you didn't see it much. And these are just stamped designs he came up with that are just, like, whatever. This one's like a pyramid, with this kind of conglomeration of marks. This is like a library, or books or something, and this is like diagonals; this could be a city; this is a sun shower, maybe.



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BB: Let's come back to the table now.

BMC: So this was the initial sketch, this is the envelope as a garment. It has arms and legs. Those circles represent snaps, so you can close it. Then on the interior was this liner fabric that was all made from these bank logos and stuff like that. That was an older version, because the recent ones had stamp drawings instead of bank logos.

BB: So this one, how big were the arms? It's amazing to see it like this, because when you see it in the gallery, it's totally abstracted, when you see the piece collapsed on the pedestal or the floor. Was it oversize or was it for a human being? I always thought they were too big for a human.

BMC: Well, the envelope itself was about six feet tall, so you add on normal-size arms and legs, and the legs would kind of pop out the bottom, so it was for an oversize person.

BB: Right, right. I always liked that idea about it: what kind of bodies are these for? I always thought, what about the bodies?

BMC: Yeah, the body is totally important to them.

BB: When I've thought about the problem of making art, it's hard to really pick a place to start, and one thing that I probably wrongly envied about fashion people was that the story comes from the body. That's the goal, even though you get there so many different ways. But with art, it's like, what's the goal? So you have this factory producing the fabric sculptures. And they also did the collaboration with Tim Hamilton?



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BMC: No, they didn't do that. I guess that clothing was made in Korea.

BB: Oh, where's your factory, then? It's not in Korea?

BMC: We used a Korean shop, but it's here in New York. I think an actual factory in Korea did the clothes. But I wasn't really involved with that. Seth would just be on the phone with some mill in China. But our factory was cool. They do stuff for Thom Browne. They did Britney Spears's red jumpsuit she wore in that video *Crazy*.

BB: Wow.

BMC: What else? So first there was documenta, then Petzel, and then Reena and Capitain, those were the same time. So we did three different iterations of this: envelopes, this soft—not “soft sculpture,” but—

BB: Yeah, I don't like that term, either. It's hard to think of something adequate to call these. What does that tell you?

BMC: Yeah, this is a little bit more of a weird—it's weirder than that. It's kind of like a fashion hybrid thing.

BB: Yeah. I like that about the work, I always appreciated that it seemed to have sort of come out of the Tim Hamilton collaboration but somehow is bigger than that.

BMC: Yeah, it was this interest in fashion, but then it snowballed into this other thing, where it was a lot about materiality and manufacturing. Some days I would go out and get just denim. Linen we fucked with for a minute, but that doesn't have the right kind of body, it's kind of flimsy. There was one piece in documenta on linen, and Seth was like, “Ah, no.” I think they steamed the shit out of it and the wrinkles still didn't come out.

BB: Material is everything. So what was your daily experience on your missions?

BMC: The early-stage missions consisted of getting fabric swatches. I would go out with descriptive words he wanted. Something “rugged,” “military,” “off-white,” “teched-out,” this, that, and the other. Going to these places, you learn what words are nonstarters. Like, Seth would tell me to get “hard-core.” And that meant nothing. No one knows what that means. It's like these African dudes or, you know, Indian, or even some Italian-American dudes from Jersey. But “hardcore,” they didn't know what that meant. So I had to translate that.

BB: Where'd you find this one?

BMC: This is Sunbrella, this fabric that's super-synthetic. I think it's UV-protected, it's for awnings and umbrellas and shit. That was from Elegant. Elegant is on Fortieth. They're the best. They have a system where you don't have to ask someone for a swatch, they're already there, so it's super-convenient. And they have the best selection. But they're twice as much as anywhere else. So for Sunbrella I would be going place to place, and I'm supposed to be asking for, like, “rugged, black, outerwear, teched-out.”

BB: Right. That's very descriptive, what you said. I'm getting so many ideas.

BMC: They'd be like, “Here's some black canvas.” I'd be like, “Yeah, but that's not teched-out.” And they'd be like, “I don't know what you mean by that.” So I'd be like, “Synthetic.” So they'd be like, “Okay, here's black synthetic.” And I'd be like, “Yeah, but that's not rugged, that's lightweight.” You know, it was that kind of process. For the big envelopes we were making the first time around, the rolls had to be sixty inches wide, which is unusual, typically they're fifty-seven, fifty-eight. So that narrowed our options down. But I would get hundreds of swatches a week, bring them back here, and we'd go through them, just lay them out, pick them out. Seth is good about that, he'd be like, “Yes, this. Done.” Sam Pulitzer helped me out. He would get swatches, and Bill Hayden, Matthieu Malouf... All these people, these friends. It was cool, because after doing this a bunch of times, places

would know I'd come in and spend \$300 on some retarded fabric, like fifteen yards of Sunbrella.

BB: Wow, that's expensive material.

BMC: They're expensive, yeah. That was probably \$18 a yard or something. I forget what the number was, but we had to get around thirteen yards of Self for a single envelope. Which is crazy because the finished piece is only eight feet wide. But when the factory cuts it there's all these concerns about the grain. If you're doing high-end, you have to have the grain going the same direction, everything has to link up. For instance, if you have a high-end striped sweater, the stripes match from the sleeve to the shoulder, even though it's a different piece. And to get that you have to waste fabric. The factory is really good at what they do, they do couture and that's just the way you do it, the best way possible, without cutting corners.

BB: Right. It contributes a lot to the final consistent feel of the thing, right? A garment, well, I guess an artwork, too, it can reach a certain state of wholeness, when you're like: *This is done*. And getting there is tricky, it's—

BMC: It's super-tricky. With this world, it's so tricky. We learned a lot, after three iterations of doing this.

BB: So you buy a bit of material, right?

BMC: Yeah, thirty, forty yards at a time.

BB: And you take the roll back to the studio, right? What then?

BMC: Or we sometimes bring it straight to the factory.

BB: But is there a sample stage?

BMC: No. These were *all* samples. In fashion, when you do a line, the first proof is the sample. That's why they have sample sales. For us the proto is the final, because you're not mass-producing them.

BB: What are these sheets called?

BMC: This is the Cutters Must.

BB: Like, "Cutters must do this"?

BMC: Basically. The Cut Ticket shows what kinds of materials there are, and the Cutters Must is a chart listing every pattern piece, and what kind of trim and how much. It calls them out by pattern number and quantity, all the pieces that will be put together to make the final garment.

BB: Okay. What's the factory like?

BMC: So our factory was about twenty-five people. It's Korean, it was run by this woman Soyoung. We'd buy all the materials, the fabrics and the trim, I'd make a Cut Ticket with the swatches, Seth did the Cutters Must in Excel and made diagrams in Photoshop. We'd gather little baggies with all the grommets, snaps, zippers, and buckles for each piece and put everything in boxes, separated by piece, and everything had to be labeled with which piece it went to. Like, this one says, "Tech," which was the working title for this high-tech mesh piece. Soyoung was the manager, but really this guy Sean—which was his American name; his real name is some Korean name I was told one time but I forgot—and he was actually the master artisan behind this shit. He ran the shop, he was in charge of the pieceworkers. He's like the HNIC. He's this really kind of interesting guy. He has this super kind of strange combination of really effeminate features but also kind of manly. He didn't take any shit. The work meant something to him, he took pride. He wanted to do a good job. But he was so weird. He had the limp-wrist thing going on, he'd wear sandals... He had, like really long hands. I think he made his own clothes. He's... he's the coolest guy. He had a long pinkie nail.



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CUTTERS MUST

DATE: September 6, 2013
 DESIGNER: SETH PRICE
 STYLE: ENVELOPE 10B - white
 SEASON:
 SIZE:

PAT #	DESCRIPTION	CUT	PAT #	DESCRIPTION	CUT
SELF			COMBO 3		
1	CENTER	2	15	SIDE FLAP LINING	1
2	TOP FLAP	1			
3	BOTTOM FLAP	1			
4	LEFT SIDE FLAP	1			
5	RIGHT SIDE FLAP	1			
6	PULL TAB LOOP	4	COMBO 4		
7	PULL TAB	4	13	TOP FLAP LINING	1
8	BELT	4	14	BOTTOM FLAP LINING	1
			15	SIDE FLAP LINING	1
TRIMS					
			ZIP 1	21 1/4" DBL HEAD SEPARATING	1
			ZIP 2	30 3/8" DBL HEAD SEPARATING	1
			ZIP 3	51" DBL HEAD SEPARATING	1
				EYELETS FOR PULL TABS	6
				EYELETS FOR BELTS	12
				1/2" GROMMETS	9
				1.25" BUCKLES FOR PULL TABS	2
				1.5" BUCKLES FOR BELTS	2
16	TOP FLAP BORDER	1			
9	TOP FLAP FACING	1	PLEASE CONFIRM WITH SETH FOR FINAL		
10	BOTTOM FLAP FACING	1	SNAP AND EYELET PLACEMENT ON BELT		
11	SIDE FLAP FACING	2			
SEAM ALLOWANCE					
				1/2" EVERYWHERE	
PLEASE NOTE:					
				SIDE FLAPS ARE ON TOP OF BOTTOM FLAP	
				ZIPPER ALONG LEFT SIDE FLAP	
				ZIPPER ALONG BOTTOM EDGE	
12	CENTER LINING	1			

PLEASE DOUBLE-CHECK FABRICATION OF THIS CUTTER'S MUST

BB: What does that mean? Is that cocaine?

BMC: Maybe. But it could also be like a fashion thing, like maybe he could pull the thread through.

BB: Who taught you how to make the Cutters Must?

BMC: No one. Well, this whole thing was this weird mix-up of all these different people helping, and everyone figuring it out at the same time. Seth knew this woman Emily the pattern maker, someone he knew through Tim. She told us how to speak the right language, so they'd work with us. Actually, after his Petzel show there were two artists who wanted to make, whatever, garment sculptures, and they found out where we made them, but Soyoung refused to work with them. I think it's 'cause they didn't come with the right lingo and tools. You can't just roll up, like, "I'm an artist." So pattern makers are the secret weapons in the industry. Designers have crazy ideas, and the pattern makers say, "Here's what's actually possible." So Emily was like, "You need to make a Cutters Must." But *then*, even though we had it all exactly how they wanted it, I would still and Seth would still and Emily would still have to go to the factory and hold their hand and walk them through the process. They would be really confused. Which is kind of the craziest thing about this field, you realize there's *so much* labor and work that goes into a garment that it's kind of insane, how much wasted energy there is. Maybe not wasted, but it just takes a ton of time. It's all this old-world shit.



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BB: Well, to me, this Cutters Must looks like—

BMC: It's Greek. I know.

BB: No, I'll tell you what it seems like to me, it looks like primitive computer code, like Fortran. It's all capitals, there's blocks of text that are centered. Basically they're instructions, for making a sandwich or whatever, and that's all code is. But this, to me, is old, right? It isn't really optimized.

BMC: But that's insane to me, because this is what they do all the time. The Cutters Must is just the elements that go into the piece, it doesn't tell you how to make it, it just tells you what you need and how much of it there is. This isn't even the pattern! The pattern is this huge rolled-up blueprint with every piece at life size, printed on a plotter, all these shapes you cut out and pin on the actual fabric to cut. It's twenty feet long.

BB: So for them to construct a piece, they get the pattern and this packet.

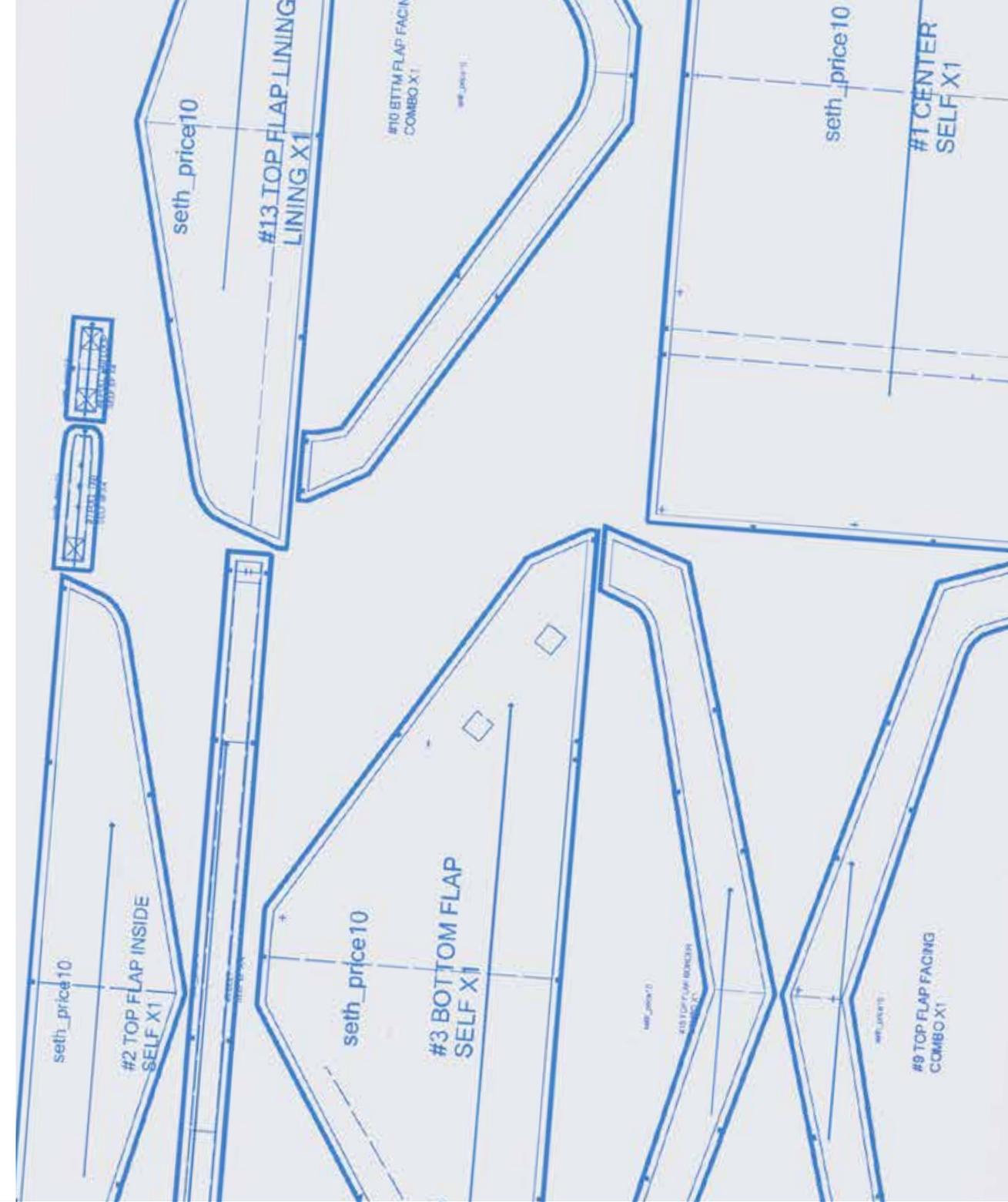
BMC: They get the pattern, the Cutters Must, the Cut Ticket, and then this diagram stuff was additional to help them, because they really needed it for our shit.

BB: So here's the diagram.

BMC: Yeah, how it would look if you opened up all the flaps, the insides. This next page is the diagram of the envelope when it's closed, with all the snap positions.

BB: Wow. I mean, I can understand why they would need a little guidance with this, because if you're making clothing, you're like, *What?*

BMC: Yeah, I'd be over there and the pieceworkers would be all, "*Ma fun, ma fun,*" when I walked in, and I was like, "What are they saying?" and Soyoung was like, "*Ma fun* means 'annoying.'"



BB: How would you describe this fabric? This is interesting.

BMC: I would say that's a—well, this is not the side you're traditionally supposed to use. I would say this is a denim that has a layer of glue on the back. But Seth wanted them to reverse the material and sew it with the inside out.

BB: No, I was thinking, what's the mood it evokes? It makes me think of hospitals. It makes me think of a cast. It makes me think of a Third World—maybe an Eastern European hospital, they're making you a cast out of this stuff they've had for years in storage, and it's kind of started to yellow, and it's a little nasty.

BMC: Yeah, it's dead. Seth called that "Corpse"; he wanted the white finish on the plywood paintings to have the same feeling. So you have that as the Self, and Combo 1 is this weird cork we used as facing.

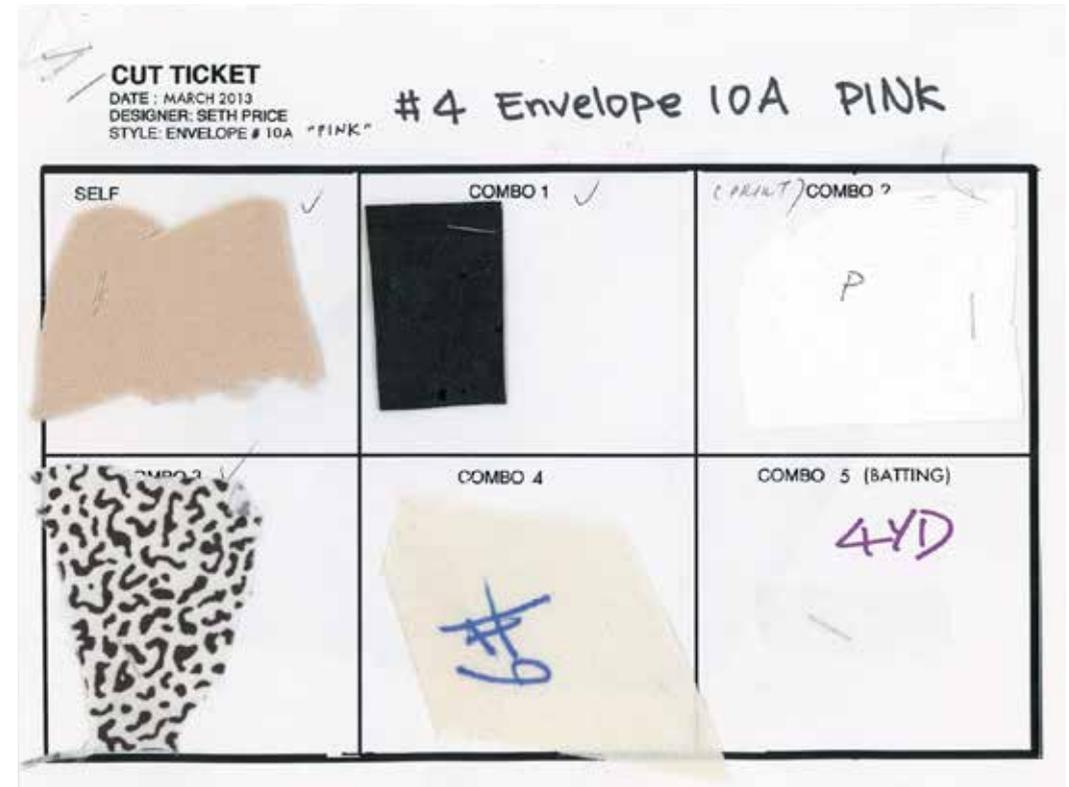
BB: It makes me think of Halloween.

BMC: It's burned cork.

BB: Yeah. It's blackened in this showy way, in this kind of cheap, ostentatious way. I like it. But it's got this sort of costume-y feel to it. These colors are all really good. This piece in particular, 10B.

BMC: No, I know. This stuff is all so cool.

BB: It's very considered. This one, it's like you've got this really stark Halloween-y burned cork, and you've got this hospital-style thing that makes me think of a sanitarium. Like this gauze for Combo 5.



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BMC: No, this is batting. Batting is a filler you put between the Self and the liner. You use it typically in outerwear, or he was thinking about sleeping bags. When we did them for documenta we didn't use batting, and the work, when you put it on the wall or leaned it somewhere, it didn't hold its shape at all, it was like a T-shirt. We got the finished pieces back on the last day before everything was shipped, so we had one afternoon with the work. He was freaked out because it was all so floppy and he'd planned them to hang on the walls, and they didn't have body. So he switched the whole exhibition so it had platforms with a lot of work lying on them, like a designer boutique.

BB: What iteration did you start to use batting?

BMC: Well, after the documenta show, someone said something about the work looking like a sleeping bag or something. I mean, they did. And first Seth got kind of tight about it, but then maybe he thought about it and liked the idea, because they're kind of like body bags, and the sleeping bag gave him the inspiration to use something to fluff it out. And he met with Emily and worked out how to do it. This page is all sleeping-bag research.



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a. "Sleeping bag" style, at "Folklore U.S.," Petzel Gallery, 2012
 b. Working drawing, 2012, pen, pencil, and ink jet on paper

BB: What's this?

BMC: It's a bag of plaids. One day we had Sam Pulitzer in here, I was on a specific mission to gather certain things that I knew exactly what they were, and Sam was out to gather this plaid Seth saw in a book of old suits. It was based on what Seth was into, which was something that couldn't be described, but if you worked here you knew about it. So Sam got all these different plaids. And like two weeks later the *Times* wrote something about this particular kind of fabric—and it was not just plaid, it was, like, this specific kind of English fucking—

BB: Burberry?

BMC: I forget the terminology. No, not Burberry. I think it was glen plaid. Anyway, it was supposedly the hot shit in some menswear shows that week.

BB: That's funny. So what happened?

BMC: Seth cut it. We didn't pursue it.

BB: It's fun to ride trends, though. I mean, they wrote about it because it was happening, and he picked it from that book for a reason.

BMC: But we also worked with other trends, like the neoprene, which is kind of hot now. Everyone's doing that, Martine Rose and Hood by Air. Seth kind of popped up with that around the same time, or a little before. But you know, if that Hood by Air stuff had popped right when we were gathering materials—

BB: He would've backed away from that too, you think?



BMC: I don't know. Maybe. But it seemed like a free zone. But by the time these were done and they were shown, I think that's when Shayne [Oliver] saw them at the show, because he DJ'ed Seth's opening. And then maybe he got inspired for Hood by Air. And Martine Rose—I mean, I don't know if she saw them at all, it was kind of a zeitgeist thing.

BB: Paul Graham says if you move something from an idea phase to an action phase, at least fifty people in the world are doing very similar things.

BMC: You know, Seth just said that, before you got here.

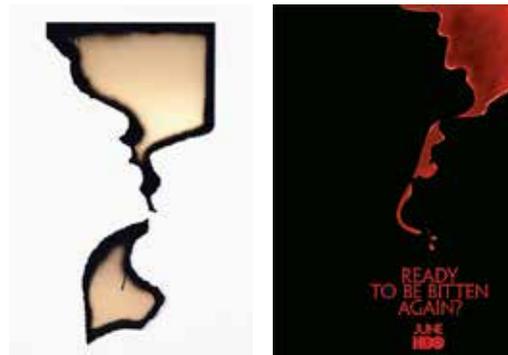
BB: Did he? Interesting. I mean, there's those people who ripped his work off, or whatever—YSL, right, and Margiela? And True Blood. So where'd you find these giant gold safety pins? This was hanging off the zippers, right, in one piece?

BMC: Yeah. For Petzel he made all those charms, with these feathers and chains and little doodads, to hang off the zippers.

BB: What is this, brass?

BMC: Probably brass plate. It's that adult-baby thing, or it's military, this weird, like, menace.

BB: I didn't make the adult-baby connection. That's really funny. I was just thinking like some elegant sort of fake Chanel dress with a big pin, like decorative.



BMC: Yeah, that also. So the first project, we were like, "Envelope 1," "Envelope 2." And that became confusing, so then giving things nicknames based on the Self made it a lot easier. So this Self, this kind of gray, double-layer, high-tech mesh, kind of see-through fabric—

BB: So interesting. Almost like something you'd find in a Nike sneaker.

BMC: Exactly. We called this piece "Hamptons," because it had this high-tech, sporty thing going on, but all-gold trim.

BB: And what's this other stuff? Oh, neoprene. This is like a cushion, but it's so fake feeling. It's so, like, cheap seat. A cheap car seat. And this little guy, did Seth design—

BMC: That was a liner.

BB: Did he design this?

BMC: Yeah. That's the *Virus* pattern. He designed three different liners. One was *Virus*, one was, um, *Youth Culture*, and one was like these rotating saw blades.



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BB: *Youth Culture*? Can I see that?

BMC: *Youth Culture*, to me, looks kind of like—where is it?—a skateboard company or some shit.

BB: Oh, right. Looks sort of eighties to me somehow. Or actually nineties. Like, sharp, abstract, repeating, but also seemingly unique. Like it's seemingly a story, but it's actually repeating the same thing again and again. So he took it from this envelope here, this security pattern?

BMC: I guess. Maybe he just copied that. You know, he tiled his own shit in Photoshop, and that was what he used as the base.



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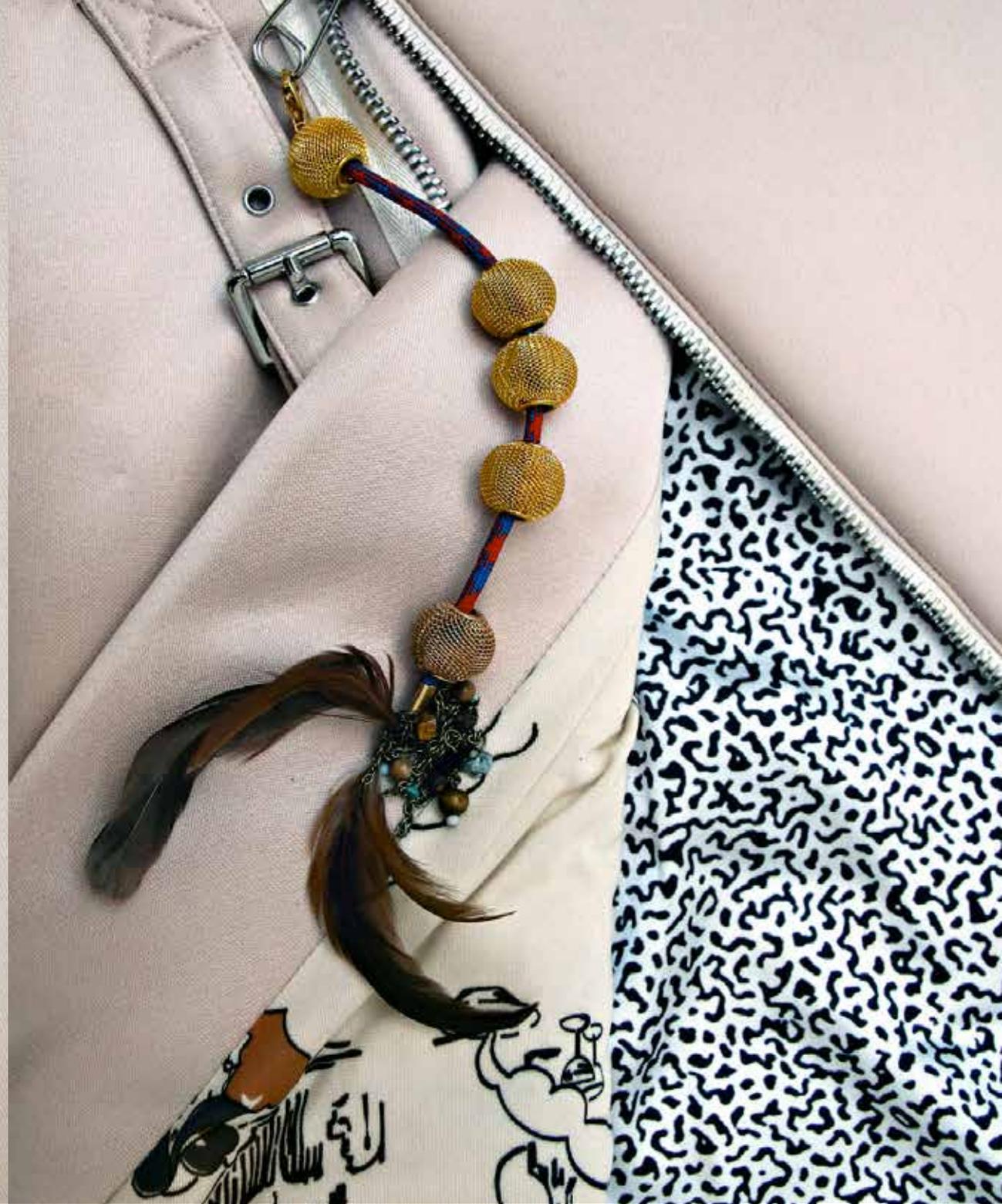








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BB: What's this weird little illustration, these kind of elegant chic women having champagne?

BMC: So in addition to me and Sam and Bill going out and getting swatches, Seth was on eBay getting fabric. I don't know what he typed in his search, but it's like—

BB: Was this a scarf? Or where did this graphic come from?

BMC: I don't know. It's kind of like this bougie Art Deco revival kind of scene, these elegant people drinking, essentially. And it was on this sandalwood kind of background of, like, washy—

BB: Was it a painting, or it was—

BMC: No, no. It was a textile. It was a silk, or whatever. It got paired with the *Virus* pattern, and the Self was pink neoprene.

BB: It looks like it might've been silk. It looks like a silk scarf, almost a Hermes or, not Hermes... And did this come also from something like that, this flower graphic?

BMC: Uh, yes. But these envelopes were just these small physical models that were used to give an idea to Sean, showing the liners. We mixed the liners up in a given piece, which you don't normally do with clothes.

BB: "Lampo." That's a zipper brand? It sounds like "Lambo." The Lambo of zippers.

BMC: Yeah, they're Italian. That's the best. All this stuff, it's so crazy—



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BB: It's little trinkets. This one looks like dog ears.

BMC: So these are pull tabs for zippers. We were trying to get tabs for these sleeve-pocket zippers. It's a detail from bomber jackets. The idea was to attach these leather pull tabs here onto these bell-shaped zippers. And it is impossible. People will just not do certain things. They were like, "Just rip them out, put them back on this, and glue them yourself, if you want it so badly."

BB: And did you do that, in the end?

BMC: No. I was like, "I guess we could do that," but Seth is really not into—specifically for this, but I think in general—he is not into DIY. Well, all his work is kind of DIY. But he's not into ghetto. He's into, like, using the methods of production that exist. Like, this is how it's done, and if people won't that's annoying, but we're not going to force it.

BB: I appreciate that, because it prevents you from drifting into this other world of, why do anything, why follow any rules? It's like in software engineering, a hack can be two things, a really elegant solution to a problem, or a negative thing where you didn't really engineer the problem, you just hacked it. Like, a duct-tape solution.

BMC: Yeah, Seth is not into duct tape. He wants shit to make sense not in art terms where anything goes, he wants it to make sense in this other world.

BB: It's funny, the fashion world. It's like a machine, right? That machine can produce certain things in a wide variety of possibilities, but it's *certain* things. That machine produces clothing, it produces fabric, it produces social relationships. His whole project seems like seizing on that machine from outside of it, where you're like, "I'm going to make art, but using this machine, the fashion machine."



BMC: But you would think if you have money and time and the facility that Seth does, that you could do anything. But there are all these limitations. It was the craziest thing to come up against. I thought you could do anything. You come up against walls preventing you from doing what you want, before you even get out the door.

BB: Give me an example.

BMC: Okay. There's basically one place that is *the* zipper store. And that's Botani. Botani was so annoying, because they have a monopoly, so they're hesitant to handle strange requests. I'd be like, "I need an eight-gauge reversible nickel zipper with oatmeal satin tape." Eight-gauge is really chunky. For a jacket, typically it's five-gauge. "Reversible" means you can zip it from the top or the bottom. "But I need it in 120 inches." And they're like, "Nope, too long." Meanwhile they're standing in front of rolls that were a hundred feet of zipper. They just were hesitant to do weird shit. The manager would eventually acquiesce, and it would happen, but it was always a hassle. At all these places I was using Seth's credit card, and I went to Botani so much they knew me, but as "Seth." One time me and Seth were there together, and I called him Seth, and they were like, what?

BB: They were Italians?



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BMC: No, Botani is owned by a Chinese guy. But it's run by this woman Hosfa, she was Middle Eastern of some sort. At one point I was getting a lot of buckles from there. These envelopes, they—these garments or whatever they were, sculptures, these envelope sculptures—they have these belts, and they have straps with two holes, so I had to get buckles with two prongs. And they had to be a certain width to match the pattern of the belt. But a lot of buckle styles Seth chose only came with one prong. So I had to have Botani take a prong off another buckle and add it to our buckle so it had two. And they just wouldn't want to do it. I'd have to talk to the manager, and the manager would be like, "Okay." Because I would spend like, you know—I mean, not me, but if I was Seth, I'd be spending a thousand dollars on zippers.

BB: Really? Wow.

BMC: Yeah, Botani's quality. But if you want to dream something up, in terms of fashion, you are looking at *so much* work. So many dead ends. Another problem was fabric-covered snaps. At least in the size we needed, for snapping through cork facing and whatever. I went to all these random-ass places. I went to this place with crazy Islamic music, in the sixth floor of this random-ass building on, like, Fortieth and Ninth. And this dude with incense burning had a million snap machines. Someone else told me about him and I was like, "I hear you're the snaps dude," and I told him, and he's like, "No." So I talked to Sean, and he's really tough to talk to, his English isn't great, and he's prideful, and he doesn't have time for questions or bullshit. So I asked him about making these big custom snaps and he was like, "No," and gets mad at me, gets mad at Soyoun, and—

BB: Because he didn't want to do snaps?

BMC: Imagine a grumpy older auto mechanic who's running his shop, and knows how to do all this crazy shit, but doesn't want to be bothered. I was like, "I know you have the machine. Just try it. This fabric, that snap." And he got fed up and brings me

a plastic bag and is like, "Go here." It was this bag all in Chinese, but then at the bottom it was like "He Zhen," and some Chinatown address.

BB: Wow.

BMC: This dude apparently does all the snaps for Marc Jacobs.

BB: Whoa!

BMC: So I went down there, there were like three Chinese dudes watching soccer on this big flat-screen, and he's like, "What's up?" It was like a barbershop or some shit. So I was like, "Can I get these different samples?" And he just made them. Then I'm like, "Here's my credit card." And he was like, "Ha-ha-ha-ha." So I got cash, and then I was like, "In the future, can you do such and such?" And he's like, "No." I was asking him about putting fabric snaps on these huge-ass envelopes. But he's used to putting snaps on a jacket, on pants.

BB: "Why would I fuck with you? I'm working with Marc Jacobs," yeah.

BMC: But the thing is he *would* work with us. He only knows Marc Jacobs because Marc Jacobs found him too. But he's got his tiny shop, which he's probably had forever, it's really old-world, why should he do some weird shit? It's a cascade of problems and mistakes when you do weird shit like we did.

BB: Would you ever offer them more money?

BMC: That's the thing, it was never about the money. My whole thing would be, "Can you do this?" I never was like, "How much will it cost?" All these people invent their prices anyway. And working for Seth, it was never a question of cost, it was always just see if this is even *possible*, we'll talk about money later. And he's charging, you know, one dollar a snap or whatever—what's he going to charge, really, five dollars a snap? He's not looking at changing his life. But he was way cooler than Botani. You know,

Botani caters to fashion students and shit. And this guy was with all these massage parlors in this kind of crummy area in Chinatown. Half the time I went there he wasn't there, I would call him and he'd be like, "I'm in Jersey. When do you need me?" "I'm in your fucking store now!" Like, if he were to drastically change his business model, what would he really gain? Have all these douchey students rolling in?

BB: Right, right, they can live without your business. This is an interesting one, where'd you get this? This is like a kind of sleazy, like—this is nightlife. Like, a shiny gray suit with cheap... But I do want to say something, now that I'm thinking about this work. Because it's fashion in an art context, one option would've been to just hire someone: "Could you just make this for me? Approximate it, and if you come to a decision point, just choose something, or whatever's available." Or, like, all these artists doing fashion that just make prints for some designer's clothes. But no, you're encoding all these details, right? And they're all going into the piece: this zipper, this button, this kind of fabric. You're embedding it, encoding it. So how will that value communicate outside of the context of fashion, in the context of art? It's almost like a leap of faith, right?

BMC: Totally, we did that all the time. Like selvage edges. That's where you save the raw unstitched edge from a bolt of fabric, and you use it as the edge of a pattern piece. Like, we ran it across the top of the envelope. Who sees that? Maybe it's something you sense somehow, I don't know.

BB: What else?

BMC: With the mesh pieces, we left out the fusing and batting behind the Self on the front side, because we wanted you to be able to see the top stitching through the perforations. Also we wanted serged edges on the flaps—serging is an edge stitch—well, the factory called it "merrowed edges," which was confusing. Normally you might see it on, like, a designer trench coat. And these are all such tiny things, it's like, who would notice?

BB: Do you guys ever care about what the sculptures feel like? Was that ever a consideration in the whole conception and production process? Because really high-end shit like Hermes, high-end designer shit, it's about what it feels like to the wearer more than the appearance of it. So, for instance, Rick Owens—he's known for this—will make luxury a private experience, where he'll put the most expensive material of the piece on the inside, so it's touching you. So it's not for the world. It's private.

BMC: Well, I feel like that's why the Tyvek had the painting, or the hand of the artist, because it's on the inside.

BB: Oh, interesting.

BMC: But I feel like in general these pieces were using the conventions, but not necessarily so concerned about what it would feel like. You know, it's more about what your knowledge of what it *would* feel like means to you, because anyone seeing the sculpture has an intimate idea of how clothes feel, what pulling a zipper is like, what denim feels like. Most of these weren't displayed as garments, they were displayed as luxury goods. Well, at documenta some of them were kind of garment-y, displayed like you'd wear them. But the later iterations, like at Reena Spaulings, it was more about the idea of a handbag. At Petzel they were more like sleeping bags, where the batting was important, because that conveyed some sense of warming capability, the liner was kind of silky, nylon-y, on your skin—I don't know, maybe it was about touch. But I feel like it's a lot about the conventions of this way of fabricating goods. It's art, you know, it's not functional, even though it alludes to functionality.

BB: Maybe this is violent to the work to say, but is it like prop clothing, or is it clothing?

BMC: I don't think it's prop clothing, because when I think about a prop, it's something used in lieu of real things. But this *is* the real thing, even though this is not really used for what it's telling you it ought to be used for at first glance.

BB: So it's not really going to be used for what it's advertised as.

BMC: Yeah. But that's not quite true either, because you see it in a total art context, so you know.

BB: I love that dress Seth has, the dress that hangs in his bedroom, the one that's like a vintage Dior or something, or Givenchy? It's a fancy designer dress, and he kind of took it out of that context and he hangs it and it's really beautiful, and it's a piece, but it was always a piece, it was a piece on a body, as opposed to a piece on a wall that creates an imagined body. With these works, the most interesting thing on my first encounter was the imagined body. Who is the man who would wear this? He was like a seven-foot-tall freak from the future. It was very particular, this missing body. It's also interesting to think about all your travels in the production of this work, your body moving around the city. Bodies moving around like envelopes.

BMC: Well, I think the work is meant to provoke that sort of question.



BB: So tell me about the stores.

BMC: In the garment district there are three tiers of fabric stores. The top is Elegant and Mood, and some of these linen places, or fur and leather. Then down from that is where most of the stores are, like Hamed or Amin. They all have the same shit. Beneath that is these really weird kind of like—there are a lot of African people running shit, and it was really cool. It was mustier. You were more on your own. There would be shit with stains on it. But it was cheap as hell and you could haggle. And they wanted your business. I liked all levels. All levels had something good.

BB: What do the floors look like?

BMC: The floors are a mix of different rugs and linoleum. They have fans around to keep the moisture away. All these stores are kind of ghetto, even the top stores. Mood is kind of the commercial one. That's the one on *Project Runway*, where they shop. So it's kind of always bumping, and it's really expensive. It's kind of annoying. It's kind of a scene. Tons of fashion students. Mood and Elegant are on the same level, but they're still kind of crappy. Like, there are weird staircases in the back that are kind of dark and broken, and you get to the top floor and you see behind some shelves just garbage and dust. It's kind of surprising that this is the top and it's still a free-for-all. Like somehow they're just making it happen. But when you're at that level where you have this market, presentation doesn't matter.



BB: Would you recognize real professionals shopping there?

BMC: A few. You know, this is like the pinnacle of where you can get all the different materials to construct garments, the garment district, it's all in this one area. But the people working there, they're not doing real well. The weird thing is that 90 percent of the people in that world are just stocking shelves or whatever, and they don't know about fashion. At the same time, I imagine you can't just apply for a job there. You know, it's either your cousin, or your wife's friend... It's all family.

BB: So the garment district is an unusual place.

BMC: Well, yeah. It's this local manufacturing, we were using this whole sourcing and production system that's here, it's been here forever, it's one of the last manufacturing districts left in Manhattan. And it's ten minutes from the studio, this whole machine, so it's local to us. But it's also totally global, globally it represents a lot.

BB: Were you naturally seduced by all the fabrics? Was it hard to focus?

BMC: You know, it's like learning to walk. I would watch people who really knew what they were doing, I would see how they held the fabric. They would kind of shake it, give it a good shake, feel how it moved, hold it to the light and all these different, weird—

BB: Did you ever smell it?

BMC: Uh, no. The shit is all kind of musty, you know. It's not clothing. Clothing smells good. Presentation and smelling good is like, they don't have time for that.

BB: So they shake it, and they do what?



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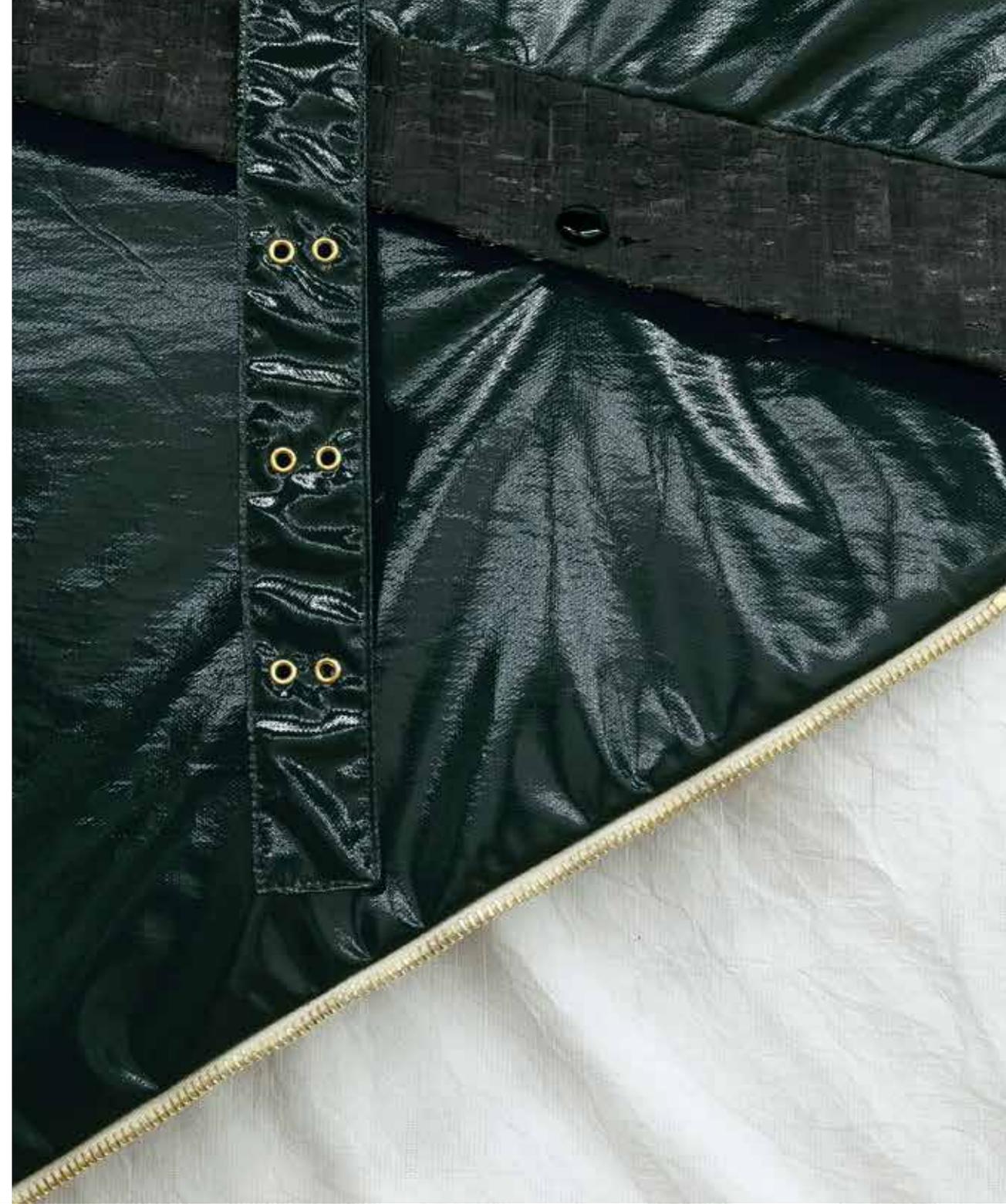


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BMC: How you feel it is, you stretch it. You can stretch it east to west, but you've also got to test it north-south, because there's a big difference there. There's two-way stretch and four-way stretch. Two-way stretch is typically something with synthetics in there like a nylon, a spandex. It can either go right to left, or right to left and top to bottom. And if it has a coating on it, that affects it. We didn't do a lot of stretchy stuff, which was good, because that's a whole different world. Though we did use some plasticky shit in the Reena show, this real deep green, almost black-green material. We got into some weird techy materials on that last go-round, Kevlar and stuff.

BB: But what *is* that, these iterations? Three iterations, over what, a year and a half? It's the seasonal pulse of fashion. You know what's interesting about fashion is, fashion is always concerned with "That's in, that's out." And that's not superficial, that's celebrating it. It's about the fact that people are changing, the world is changing. Fashion is essentially, I think, in a really sophisticated way, responsive to the world explicitly, whereas I feel like if you're a serious artist your goal is always to make that timeless piece that will survive you, that will be coveted and written about and photographed and reproduced and referenced in other art. It's timelessness, inserting yourself in this long narrative of art, where fashion is, like, last season doesn't matter.

BMC: Which is relating to this idea of products and industry.

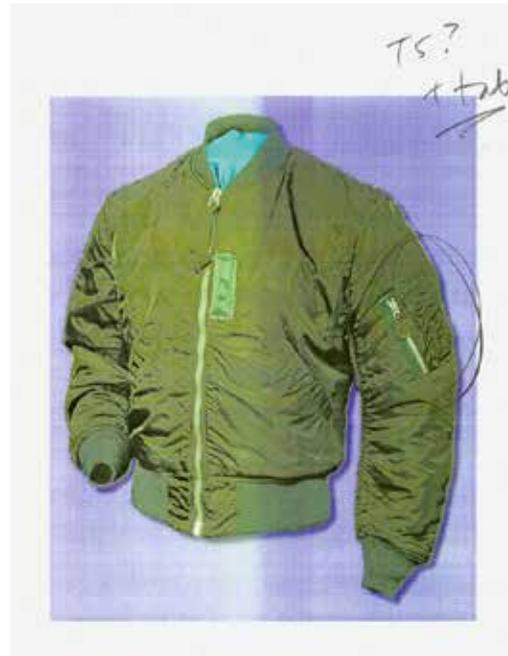


BB: Yeah, there's a kind of embedded business logic to it. Maybe I'm uplifting it in a way it shouldn't be, but I think that business logic is a subset of a different, broader logic, which is essentially about being responsive to the world, constantly responsive, in such a way that evolution is the thing, and revision and elaboration, and even going back and forth. I really like thinking about this mode of the work, the—wait, let me just take a break from that for a second, *this* is interesting. So he found, let me guess, a picture on the Internet of this jacket, and he's like, "I want that." Or no. What is it?

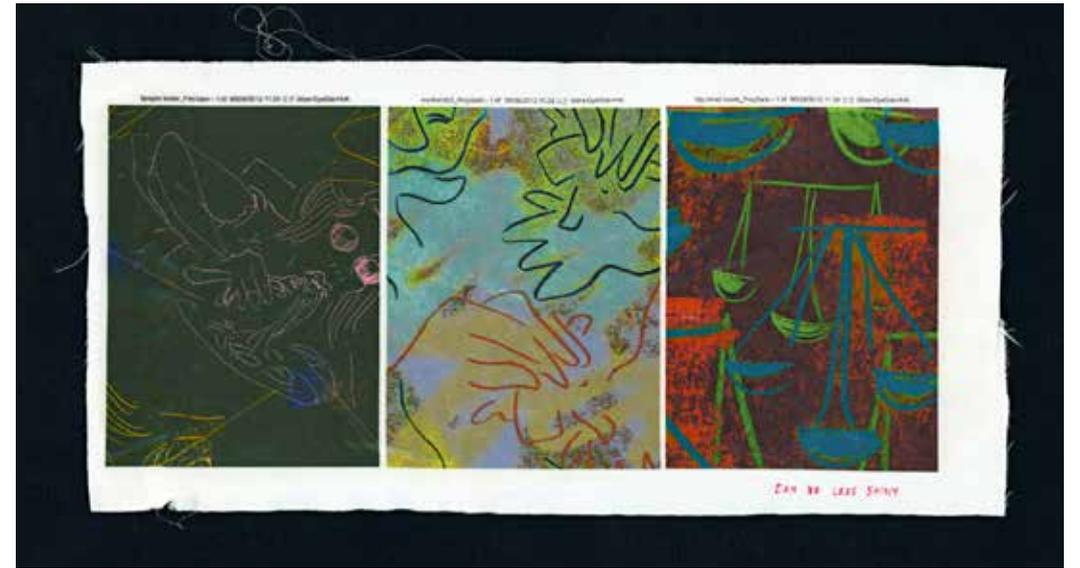
BMC: Yeah, it's all about this sleeve-pocket detail. That zipper is stitched so only the teeth are showing. When you buy a zipper, it comes with half an inch of zipper tape on it. But in that jacket the outer edge of the Self goes right up to the edge of the teeth, so you see very little tape. It's just a detail.

BB: So he wanted to reproduce that effect. And what's this?

BMC: These liners were all designed by Seth. These different patterns. He had this dude Daniel make them. Well, some were made in China, too. But Daniel has these—I don't know exactly what they were, they were hot presses that print on fabric. Daniel was like a man-child, and not in a good way. Like, he still lived with his mom.



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BB: Are you serious?

BMC: He had to walk me through his whole operation each time, but he was always like, this is top-secret, proprietary, blah-blah-blah. He had a little dog, and it was always a big song and dance about his wife, and he would always call and text us asking if I was coming in, and when, over and over. He's just super high-strung. It was all these weird personalities that I had to deal with. Like this creepy Russian guy Vadim, he was hooking us up with these rugged cotton ducks. He was running shit, but he was also into what we were doing, and that's kind of special. And there was Bi-Bi, this Guyanese woman at Diana's, she was totally cute, and we would always kind of be flirting.

BB: So you'd be out getting stuff, talking to people...

BMC: I'd be doing "surgical strikes," as Seth would call them. Sometimes I would find really great shit and bring back a swatch, and he'd be like, "Yes," and next day they wouldn't have enough to fill the whole order. Or it would just be gone.

BB: So what would you do then?

BMC: It's over. The well is dry. The crazy shit about the fashion world in New York is that it's all in flux. It's not like an Apple Store, where you know what's going to be in stock, or like a Walmart, where you pretty much—

BB: There's scarcity.

BMC: There's scarcity, and they are always getting new shit, and when something's gone, you will never get it again.

BB: Yeah, that's fascinating. You think about clothing being mass-produced—

BMC: You think about New York, you know? This is the garment district, the center of the fashion world. You would think you have access to whatever you want.

BB: The thing is, New York is where you really learn about scarcity. This is the city where even though there's thirty of those Citi Bikes in front of my building when I get up in the morning, I know that if I leave after eight thirty I'm not going to find any. Because this is the city where demand constantly meets supply, and surpasses it. I think living in America, sometimes you feel because this is, like, a land of abundance, you feel—

BMC: I should be able to get exactly what I want.

BB: *Exactly* what I want. If I have money, I should be able to buy what I want, it'll come to my house, Amazon will ship it. But it's interesting about the fabrics. Even bigger designers that are operating at a smaller scale, like if you go to 3.1 Phillip Lim, I went there recently, I was looking at a T-shirt, and I grabbed two sizes, a small and a medium. I was trying to figure out which I liked, right? *Totally different fabrics*. So I asked the employee—

BMC: Wow.

BB: Totally different grain, different consistency. One was gauzy and the other was a lot thicker. I asked the employee—and this is a big designer—I was like, "Why is it different fabrics?" And he's like, "Uh, they're not." But my guess would be that it's about scale. If you're Uniqlo and you're making clothes, you probably have a network of factories where you're like—

BMC: And it's in Vietnam.

BB: Or wherever. But it can also be in Italy. Gucci has their own crocodile farm, where they grow crocodiles that they make their belts and shoes out of, in, like, South Africa.

BMC: Wow.

BB: But Phillip Lim, right, he's probably sourcing this shit, and they run out of one fabric and they're like, "Well, this one's similar." Right? "This *basically* does it." ♥







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BLAGOJEVIĆ / MORGAN-CLEVELAND



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a. *Cocktail Napkin*, 2012, acrylic, enamel, and resin on UV-cured ink jet on PVC vacuum-formed over rope knots, UV-cured ink jet on veneer composite over foam

b. *Kissing and/or Mouth Full*, 2012, enamel and acrylic paints on UV-cured ink jet on PVC vacuum-formed over rope knots, resin, and foam

BETTINA FUNCKE IN CONVERSATION
WITH BEN MORGAN-CLEVELAND
September 2013

Bettina Funcke: Seth told me that sometimes a plywood piece would be in the studio for a year before it was done.

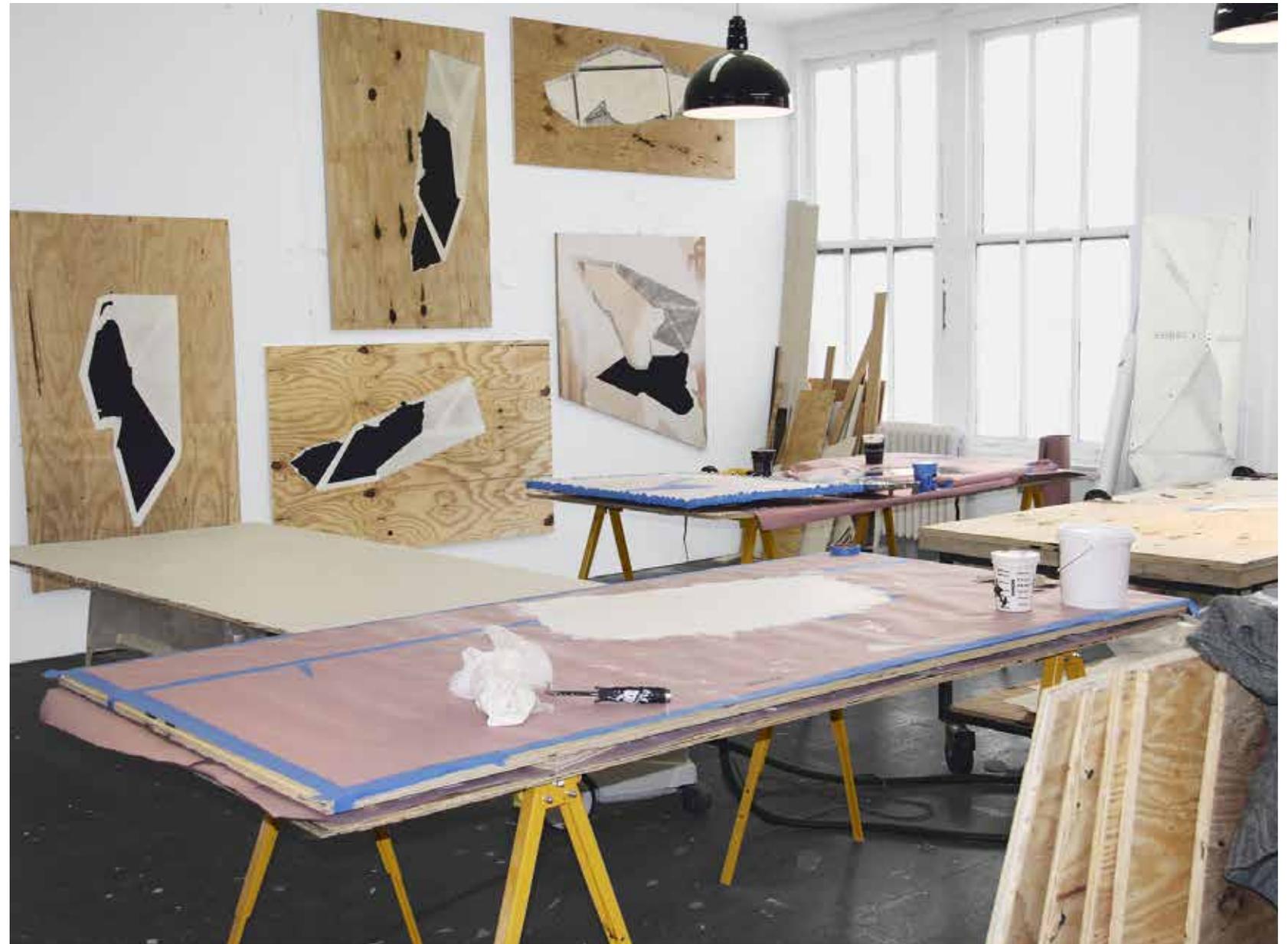
Ben Morgan-Cleveland: Yeah.

BF: Why does it take so long?

BMC: Because it's hard. And you want to be open to creativity and chance, and it's not totally prescribed. They're paintings, so they're kind of organic, and every move you make opens up all these other possibilities, every parameter stays pretty open.

BF: So what would happen? They're so layered, and it's hard to understand how they were made, when you look at them. First you would get the wood. These here are the early—the dirtier ones.

BMC: Yeah, the plywood at this point was really shitty, which was good. But that was just luck. Later on, it was harder to get shitty-looking plywood.



BF: What's good about it being shitty?

BMC: It has a lot of texture, a lot of divots, and it's topographic because it's so roughly cut. There are a lot of knots and defects that the factory doesn't bother to smooth out. Or it's stamped with these patterns and words from being shipped around, which is nice, because it goes with envelopes. You know, the higher up the scale you go, the smoother it gets, the less and less it looks like wood or an idea of wood. There was a collector or someone in here, I wasn't here but Seth told me about it, who actually was like: "What's this wood you're using? It's so weird!"

BF: That's funny.

BMC: Yeah, I think some people, rich people in particular, haven't ever seen low-grade plywood or really ever looked at it. Man, look at these. We cut all these early shapes with a jigsaw; there aren't any straight lines.

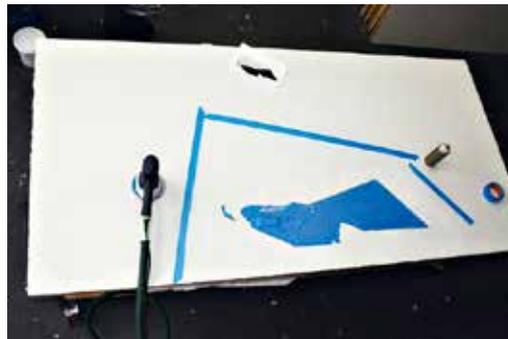
BF: Tell me what the process is, because I know it's very laborious and lengthy to make these.

BMC: Yeah, super-artisanal. We start by preparing the ground for where you're going to print with this molding-paste surface. We had to get it like glass, like porcelain, and totally level. You have to really build it, and really sand it, build and sand, ten or fifteen layers high. You fix little imperfections and check it to see if it's absolutely smooth. The wood is warped and rough, of course. Because it's, you know, grade D or X or whatever it was, not a high grade of product.

BF: So you make a little white plateau in the shape of an envelope, to print on? How do you get the shape to be so precise? Because it has to match up to the print, right?

BMC: First, he made all these little envelopes—

BF: Seth made these? These paper envelopes?



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BMC: Yeah, I don't know, he wanted a particular—we couldn't find business envelopes that had the exact right shape. So he made this Photoshop template, this kite picture here. He'd print it, cut it, fold it, glue it, and then tear that open. Then he scanned it into the computer and turned it into vinyl stencils and silk screens. Like, if you look at this envelope here, it directly becomes that painting. And these were also used for the cloth sculptures. So you actually have some garment sculptures that were handmade off the same template that we used to cut vinyl stencils. All from this little kind-of-tossed-off envelope that got scanned.

BF: So then you have a vinyl template.

BMC: It's a mask. Seth would position it on the plywood surface, or sometimes he'd take a photo of the wood and put it in the computer and digitally move the envelope around on top of it. Then, when we had a composition, the vinyl was stuck on the wood. After that we'd use this polymer medium, and we'd squeegee that on with a Bondo applicator, which is typically for fixing a dent in your car. And that was like the beginning of this slow, Zen buildup. Ten or twelve layers go by, and then it needs to be sanded.

BF: So you get this envelope-shaped blank.

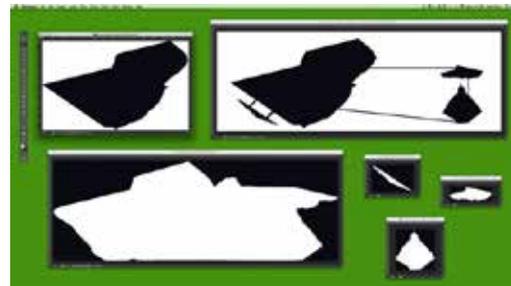
BMC: Yeah. Oh, and there was all this waiting. You'd print the envelope's outside edges and then you'd have to wait for it to dry before printing the inside. And all these steps are really laborious, because nothing was ever perfect, the shape of the vinyl is supposed to match the silk screen, and they come from the exact same file, but they'd be a little off. The screen stretches a bit when you push the ink through, or the vinyl stretches a tiny bit when you stick it on. It was always bringing a digital image into this messy situation of actual things, and things not lining up. And then we'd mask the edge and print on the interior of the envelope with different patterns and logos.



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BF: And these patterns come from the fabric pieces? Or did Seth make them first for the envelopes? Or for the fashion line?

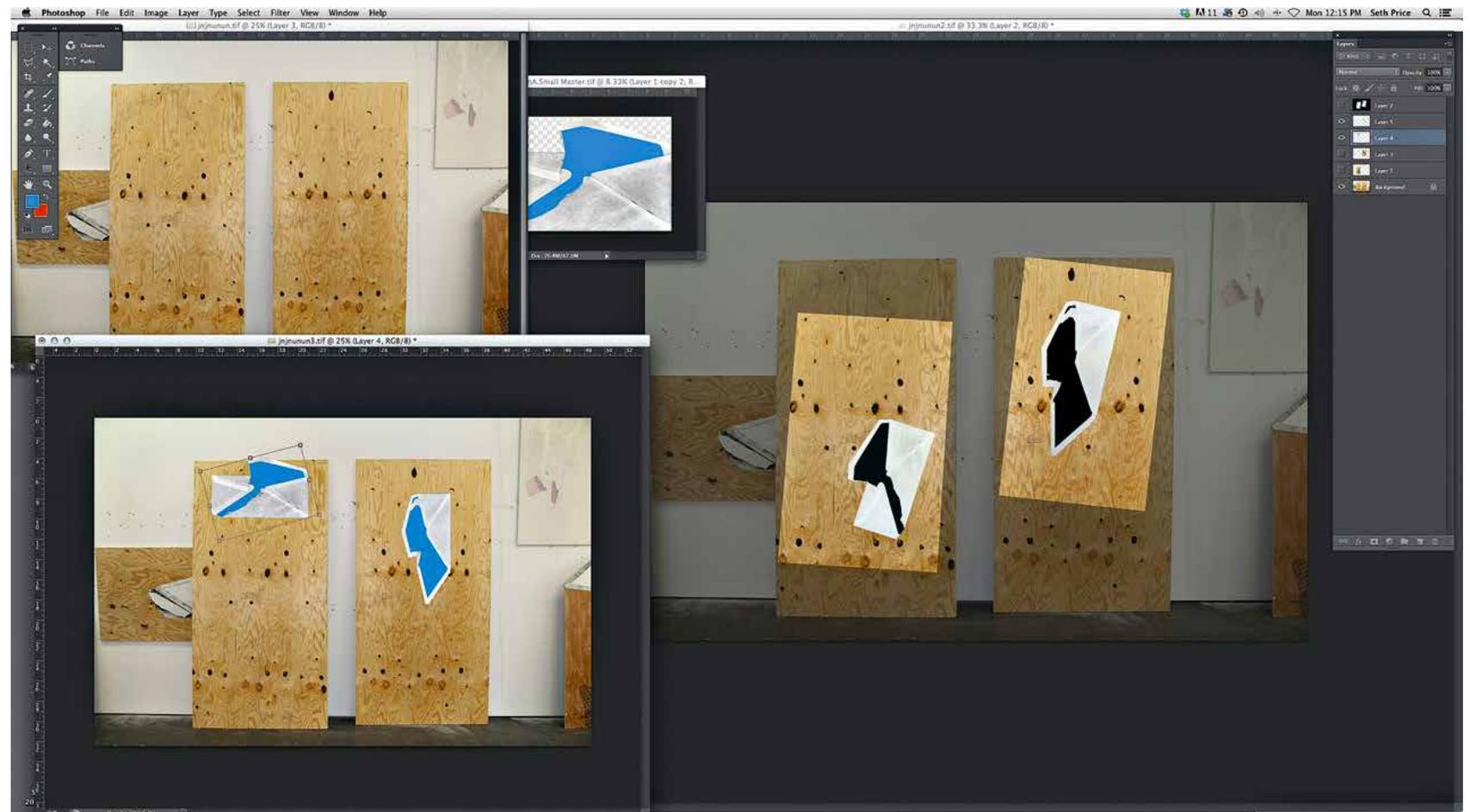
BMC: I think it was all done at the same time. You know, he would design a logo and then tile them digitally. So they were also handmade, in a way. Even though they're in Photoshop and everything, it wasn't something he found, it wasn't a scan or something he downloaded. And he made mistakes tiling them, like every once in a while there are logos that overlap, but that looked cool, too.

BF: It sounds like a long process of going back and forth between reality and computer.

BMC: Yeah, he would talk about it as "Photoshop IRL." That was something Josh Smith said about the painted vacuum forms, that they were like Photoshop in real life. After any new layer or manipulation to a wooden piece Seth would take a photo and put it in the computer and sketch out different possibilities and print out ten options, and we'd tape them up, talk about it, and make another move. You know, cut it into a new shape, add paint, rotate it.

BF: The piece was turning around?

BMC: Yeah, they kept turning, depending on the things we kept doing to them. I think he hung some for the show one way, and then someone bought it, and he went over and put the cleat on another way right before it shipped. Which I'm sure was, you know, not appreciated.



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BF: It's a work of very limited variables, but there are so many possibilities within this limited vocabulary. Seth doesn't really close down options while he's doing anything. So then what happens?

BMC: We'd be putting on all this paste, layers and layers. But the paste would seep in really quickly, so after getting it as smooth as porcelain, if we came back the next day, it would have all sunken down to reveal the grain of the wood. You have to plan your day so that you finish the final layer, have it dry, and still have time to print it, which usually took multiple prints with different screens. And if you fuck up the print, which happens a lot, you have to sand it off and start building it all up again.

BF: Then Seth would do spray painting, hand painting, colored pencil, to finish the details?

BMC: Yeah, exactly. Like, bring certain details out or diminish others. Like a whitewash or charcoal or colored pencil. This is one from the Petzel show. This grain actually has a lot of colored pencil on it.

BF: Now that you mention it, it's really pronounced.

BMC: Yes, it's used in a similar way as you would use makeup, to kind of accentuate certain knotholes or wood grains and make others recede.

BF: Now I suddenly see three heads down here.

BMC: Yeah, they're kind of like weird orifices.



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BF: These look more like a Xerox than a photographic reproduction, these earlier stages of your silk-screen experiments.

BMC: I know, that's a cool thing and we totally went with it, but that was definitely not what we were trying to do. All the imperfections in the earlier pieces look really good now. But at the time they were just purely bewildering.

BF: Did you guys teach yourselves screen-printing?

BMC: Seth knew a bit, I guess. But we had to kind of teach ourselves. 'Cause what we were trying to do was unusual. You're printing on raw wood, this totally rough surface that won't accept the ink, but then you're printing on this sanded paste that's like glass, which is also hard to print on for different reasons, and you have to print from one surface to the other. And the wood is warped in ten different directions, even if you clamp it down.

BF: Tell me about this piece. It seems like the compositions often come back to this idea, with the different forms in a kind of tension: the envelope, the rectangle, the marking.

BMC: So this shows the envelope at an angle. We usually had it at some angle. The wooden rectangle becomes a standard canvas shape, but with this parasite. But also it becomes the blank page behind the letter, or beneath it, or within it.

BF: It's like a still life: someone just opened a letter and walked away. You open the envelope and you take out a message, a sheet of paper.

BMC: And the envelope is made from a sheet of paper that's folded up.



BF: Yes, so that it can hold another piece of folded paper. There's a difference here, isn't there, between these two pieces of plywood?

BMC: Right. So when we were having trouble printing on the warpy stuff, Seth had these fabricators make him some plywood. In the middle was quality wood so the pieces would be rigid and straight, and it was layered between pieces that were low-grade, for that shitty surface.

BF: Oh, so it's entirely artificial? It's like the envelopes he handmade. Or the security patterns. They all look real, you'd never know. And the pattern, the structure of the wood in these pieces, always plays with symmetry and these repeating knotholes or motifs. That's because of the way plywood is made?

BMC: Yes, they take slices of the tree and kind of iron them out and run them right next to each other so you get sheets. It's called book matching, because you open up the wood like facing pages of a book, so all the holes and patterns are in a mirror image.

BF: Oh, it's the same with the wood in Seth's silhouette pieces. It's that theme of artificiality again. Constructedness, and being a product, but in something you think of as natural. It's funny to start to think about the composition of plywood, being made of layers, and these artworks are so concerned with layers, and then Photoshop is all layers.

BMC: Right. And paper is made from wood, but plywood is made from wood, too. They're all wood products.



BF: In the Reena show there were some pieces where it was really prominent, the symmetry and repetitions of the plywood structure. The ones with the negative or void. Those black pieces looked so solemn.

BMC: They are solemn. It's a big black void. It's kind of intense. Black itself, on the spectrum, it's receiving everything but not giving back.

BF: In these there's a weird thing going on with inside/outside, too. Even more than with the fabric pieces, where that was also a major element, I think.

BMC: Things are leaking out of the envelope. Those patterns.

BF: Well, you open the envelope, and the envelope is the message. There's never anything else in there except the security patterns, which arguably are part of the envelope. But then they sometimes come out onto the paper, which was inside the envelope. And there's also something about the size. It's obviously bigger than an actual envelope, it comes closer to a figure.

BMC: Yeah, body-size. And with that weight to it on the wall, a big chunk of wood.



BF: So then you could say they're anthropomorphic, because they recall the body, or the body's size. A totem, or—

BMC: Seth actually called them totems. At the beginning he was seeing them as heads.

BF: Or masks. Yes, I can see the totem idea.

BMC: And the void can then be literal: a void within you. Or like a style, you're wearing a void.

BF: Yes, it sort of sucks you in. The piece that we're looking at on the wall, it almost looks like you could fall into it and it would swallow you.

BMC: The abyss. It's like a monster or something. That one kind of reminds me of Seth's folktales that he does.

BF: It reminds me also of the silhouette pieces, where it's also about inside/outside and positive/negative.

BMC: Yeah. But those were a lot more, like, luxury product. And these are all handcrafted, kind of rough.

BF: A little folk-art.

BMC: Yeah, a little folk-art. And maybe that's why the fashion things, the cloth pieces, they play that luxury role. That kind of product thing.

BF: As an opposition. There's the studio work, and there's the commercially, industrially produced work.

BMC: Yes, inside/outside, one thing and its negative. These are a response to the cloth pieces, or the fashion thing.



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BF: I think that's an interesting area to talk about a little bit more, this dialogue between the fabric pieces and the studio, or plywood, pieces. You were working on them at the same time, right?

BMC: Yes. One would kind of influence the other. In the early garment pieces, we were going after this rugged military look. And at the time, these plywood pieces were also rougher, more in that folk direction. And then after that, the plywood pieces became more petite and a little bit better done. And the cloth pieces, the sleeping bags, also became a little bit nicer, and adorned, too, with those charms he did. They kind of went through different seasons together. But the plywood pieces were still pretty folksy at that point, as opposed to the ones shown at Reena Spaulings, which were austere. Those earlier ones still had some color in them, some painting, pencil, and gesture, they had to do with painting. Whereas the ones at Reena Spaulings were more product-y, they were more like something you'd see in a boutique. They were still folksy, in a way, but they were really well done and really stripped down, just *boom*. I kind of related it to this luxury-brand thing he was trying for with the handbag-style pieces. The black pieces seemed better to accompany that, because they were cold and stark, like how a product should be, or how it wants to be.



BF: And sovereign. You're mastering your materials now, so you can afford to do much less to it. In this photograph of the Petzel installation, when the envelope flap of these works folds into a different direction with each work, it makes it sort of look like they're about to shoot off somewhere.

BMC: Yeah, like fireworks. This tall one here was strange. I remember him asking if he should put it in.

BF: Yeah, I remember that, too.

BMC: And I was like, "No," and I think you said, "No."

BF: So then he said, "Yes," of course. [laughter] Oh, yeah, he looked at this one as a horizontal for a long time. But in the show, he hung it vertically.

BMC: Yeah.

BF: Actually, it's another one where the pattern explodes, like the exploding Corbis in documenta.

BMC: Yes, exactly.

BF: So he *did* do it again, with the envelope taken apart like that. Hmm. It just really breaks harmony. Because it's already a very complicated motif to look at and try to understand, since it's not abstraction. I mean, he always talks about them as diagrams, diagrams for the fabric envelopes, maybe, or just some kind of schematic drawing or explanation. But for me, it was difficult to see that connection. I think it's more of a Cubist notion.

BMC: Totally. In a way, they're all exploded already.



BF: And I think the moment you undermine the full shape of the envelope outline, you're just really—

BMC: Pushing it. Yeah. You know, looking at this picture of the Petzel show, in the context of all the envelopes around, I think it's kind of cool, though. A runway with the sleeping-bag envelopes on it, that's cool. Like sleeping models, invisible models.

BF: When you talk about the work, it sounds a little bit like—because you figured out processes and techniques together—you really identify with it.

BMC: Yeah. It's like working in an Italian car shop, like working on a Lamborghini or something, modifying products and taking pride in this manual labor that works through problems.

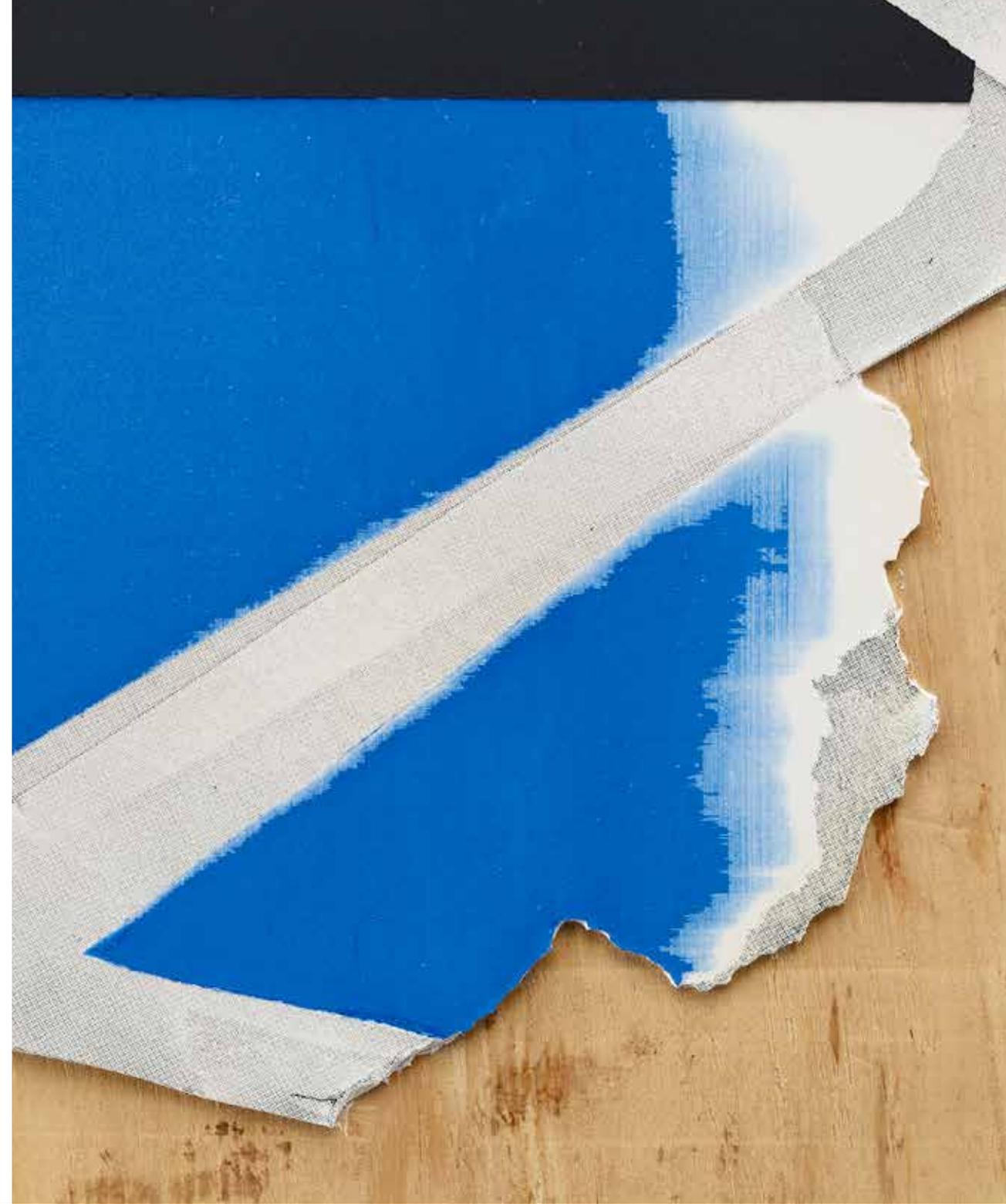
BF: A couple of times now you've made references to luxury products.

BMC: I mean, they are luxury goods. There's a high level of quality control, and they have to walk whatever line they're going for in a very deliberate way. But then they're also really weird, because—I mean, they're kind of interesting like that—I guess art itself is kind of—I mean, that's kind of why this is interesting, because it brings in the question of what is art now, in our situation? I mean, what is it in relation to products?

BF: But also these works are made with such care and precision and investment of time, whereas you could think of a lot of art that's also perceived or valued like a luxury good, but is made more gesturally, more quickly. A lot of contemporary painting, in fact.



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BMC: Well, yeah, that's something I like about these. They have all these elements that go into making art, inspiration and creativity and care to craft. But then they're also almost daring you not to see that or something, they're not bragging, not being ostentatious about it. In a way that's kind of cool, because they're, like, you know, commodified, but then kind of resisting that in a chill way.

BF: They're really made in dialogue with the fabric pieces, then.

BMC: Yes, totally. Sam [Pulitzer] had a good quote about Seth's work. You might not want to put this in there. But as opposed to Cheyney Thompson. Cheyney makes paintings that function as products, and Seth makes products that really function as paintings. Which I think is kind of, you know—

BF: I don't know, I'd have to think about that a bit longer. I know that Cheyney has a slightly different use of the term *product*, maybe, than Seth.

BMC: Right. Totally. Like, a painting to buy to put on your wall, to invest in, that sort of stuff.

BF: Well, he's also really invested in a very theoretical sort of abstract investigation—

BMC: Well, I know. But—

BF: But you think they don't embody it in the same way that this embodies it.

BMC: Yeah. That's what I think. I think these are more generous, if you let them be. But then the folk-art thing is weird, because they're not really folk art. I mean, they're rough, they're awkward and kind of outsider. Some of my friends didn't like them at Petzel, they were just like: "Oh no! Why did he do *that*..." But at the same time you're supposed to be into stuff that's weird, so everyone was like, okay.



BF: There's also a relationship not just to folk art or fashion or luxury goods but to the history of painting. Like looking at, I don't know, Ryman, for example, or who else comes to mind? Certainly in dialogue with his own group of friends, in some inarticulate way.

BMC: Right. In some ways, these are super-economical, and there aren't a lot of options: there's white, and there's off-white, and there's the color of the wood. But maybe instead of gestural painting it's more about compositional ideas, and ties into Photoshop and design and layout. We did a piece called *Design as a Spray of Surfer's Cum on the Waves*.

BF: Well, the limited variables is something I'm interested in, because it applies to a lot of Seth's work. So why—you always refer to these works as paintings. In my head I always refer to them as prints.

BMC: I know. Well, they're tricky, obviously, but I see them as paintings because—you know, this is painted. It involves a print, but it also involves painting.

BF: You mean the application of the molding paste and gesso to create flat surfaces—

BMC: Is painting. And I like giving things the benefit of the doubt: if it *could* be a painting...

BF: I always think of these as the wooden pieces. But it's true that there's something about the size and the stability, and the depth of the wood is reminiscent of the stretcher. And the actual process involves a lot of preparation for painting, like gessoing a canvas and giving it a wooden support. But on the other hand there's no gesture. Or sometimes there is, I guess.



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BMC: But you could think of them as sculptures, too, because the material is built up into different levels, and the wood is sawed and shaped. But then the reason he wanted to do all the edges with that white porcelain finish was to make the wood, the surface, just float. It loses depth as an object or a material. I think that's why that collector didn't recognize it as plywood, because it's kind of presented as an image. It's supposed to be wood as an effect.

BF: Then they're very close to the vacuum pieces, which share all these sort of ambiguities of sculpture and painting, and painted-on versus pressed or printed. Well, vacuum forming is printing, in a way. And looking now at this black negative shape inside the envelope, it recalls the silhouette pieces. Because those also look like continents or country boundaries.

BMC: Yeah. And they're relatively flat, but they're also actually raised off the wall a little bit.

BF: It's weird, they do have this quality of being incredibly graphic in reproduction, they resolve back into looking like Photoshop sketches. Even from ten feet away you think it's a sticker, that it's flat. But up close they're all textured, you have the different layers and thicknesses of the white parts and the black parts popping out, it is like a sculpture. That play with flatness and depth, all his work, pretty much, has that. It's interesting for me to talk and think about these pieces more, because if you take a look at them, you don't immediately see the relationship to other bodies of work. Maybe you can feel some sort of relationship, but you don't immediately have words for it. You might even wonder, what is the connection: In being alienated? In being excited? Or both at once? ♥



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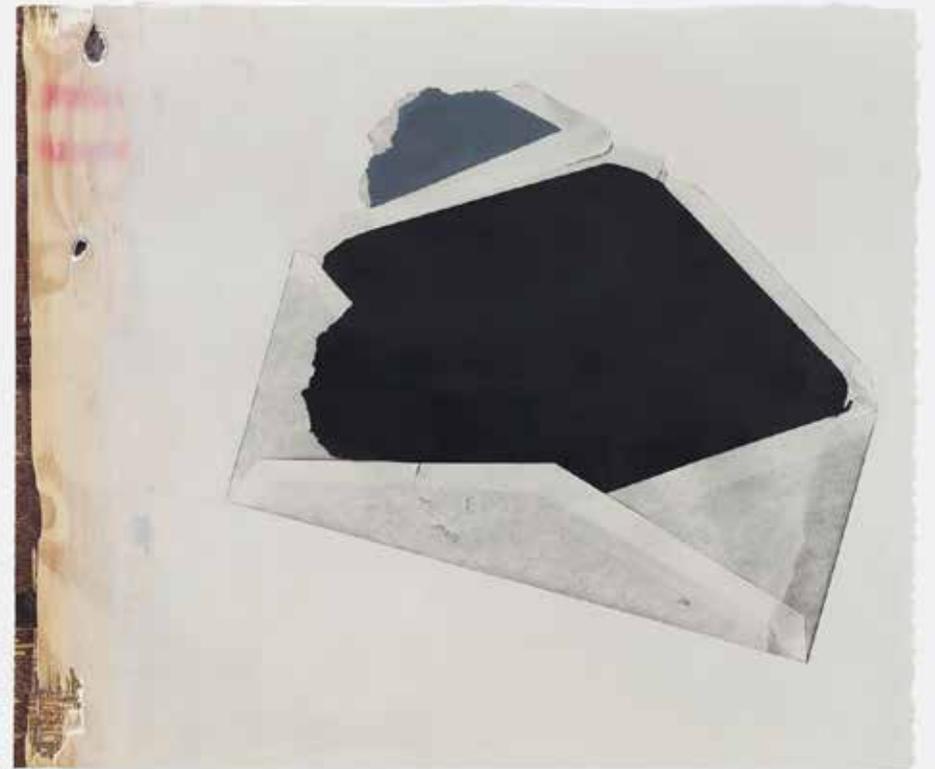




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FOLKLORE U.S.

You know how to be cool? First off you don't *be* cool, you *seem* cool. The way you seem cool is to get all quiet and self-assured and apparently at peace with yourself. Not mean, not cold; those are signs of weakness. Just keep your mouth shut, mostly. Another thing, when you *do* say something, say the opposite of what someone else just said, just reverse it. Example: *When we heard they were tossing out all the rules, someone said it would be total anarchy, but my friend said, "No, that's when the Real Rules begin."* It sounds smart, even though it doesn't mean anything. But then you think about it and you start to realize, maybe it does mean something after all.

There's actually a book, a hidden best seller, that tells you dried-up bread crusts how to *seem*. It's basically just rules. Like if someone is like, "What do you think of the new Darkthrone album, it kind of sucks," and you never heard of Darkthrone, you say, "To be honest, and I know this is not a popular opinion, I think it's the best work they've ever done." Just head that shit off at the pass. You flip it, thus planting the seed of uncertainty. When they inquire further you need not explain yourself, you simply go mum, as if explanation—conversation itself—is beneath consideration. Think of it like how you have to cheat to get an actual good haircut: it'll be the coolest, tangled, pushed-back flop-volume, but when you actually comb it straight out it's crap, all ill-cut and raggedy with random strands jagg-ing out. But who cares if you look dorky when you get out of the shower? Actually, on second thought you should say, "I think it's *among* the best work Darkthrone's ever done." Since I know you people hate to be firm or conclusive, even



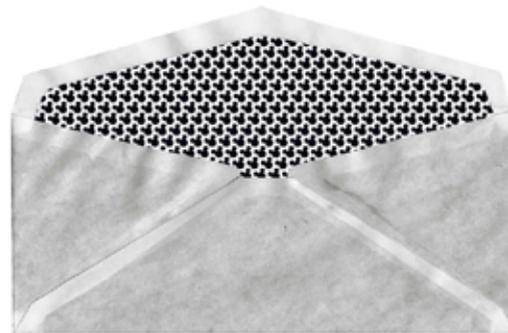
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about a bullshit sound bite about shit you don't know shit about.

In summary, if you think about it, all you have to do is flip the common sense. Whatever people typically say or think probably gets interesting if you invert it. If you make a "bad" video, it will probably be more interesting than this pathetic circling around some neurotically formulated concept of what a "good" video could be. If you dress "badly," it will at least be interesting. People on the street will be scoping you out like, "Hmm, that must be the new shit, guess I just don't understand it yet. Sigh." So our line of advice, our *best practices*, would be: "Redundancy, Waste, Perversion, Excess, Don't Try Too Hard, and Do the Bad." But if you want the short version, usually it's enough to simply not make sense.

Understood. My advice is also about words. To pass as an adult you essentially need to master the language used in the medical and legal pro-worlds. Not *master*, really, it's chiefly about attitude, an attitude of mastery and ownership, *seeming*, as you say. But after you get the hang of the basic tonus you're able to attend to the playful and endless matter of manipulating words. For example, in adult world, when someone with that authoritative demeanor scrapes a bit of skin off your forehead with a sharp stick and makes off with it, that's a "biopsy." You got "biopsied." You say, "They did the biopsy; we're waiting for lab results on the blood work." What'd you say your name was? Bopsy? And a guy swiped some ooze off that boo-boo? And now he's in the other room, scratching his head?

Anyway, at a certain point, when you get the hang of this, you can ease into making shit up. A driveway might be a "road approach," or, taking it from the other side of things, a "car approach," or I guess even a "house approach." For example, "Is the property oriented in such a way that there's a good road approach?" Just work it in there as you hash out the deal, no one



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blinks. Or, "We happen to have three cars, does the property have a car approach on the north side also?" Or, "The house approach is paved with crushed seashells to yield, upon arrival, a pleasantly cranky maritime soupçon." See how authoritative and professional that sounds, like your mind is composed of sharp, interlocking polyhedrons. In fact, I just made that shit up, no one ever heard it before. But it could be some of that new-new. That's how professional lingo gets lab-engineered and virused around.

Alternately, you could maintain that it's a sort of pro-world poetry, that it's pure invention arising from the fundamental need to play, and thus an expression of hope. It's the choice to put your plants in arid soil where good words normally won't grow. And by the way, forget writers who think it's interesting to simply list names of trees and plants, when few readers can be expected to call up images befitting these lovely names: "She stood among swamp oaks, soft maples, tamarack, butternut." Fuck it, that's either poetry or it's a sequential list of entries in a botanist's catalogue. Either way, please leave it alone, craft it right back out of that "pared-to-the-bone" short story.

On the other hand, to get the feeling of reality you do need abundant, senseless detail, which could simply mean lovely words denoting little, i.e., pure evocative sound, i.e., something approaching poetry. And let's face it, most of life consists of standing anxiously in a clearing surrounded by encroaching thickets of shit you don't understand. Like, if you were really standing amongst those particular trees you just mentioned, they don't mean nothing, it would be just more trees. Though if you were ignorant of the names of absolutely *everything* around you, you'd qualify as certifiably insane, and thus incapable of convincing everyone that you're in fact sane. As they drag you off.

It's like how with slang sometimes it's better to just not go there. You're not sure what to say,



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a. *Container for Virus Pattern plus Handmade Pattern* (detail), 2013, blackened cork facing, neoprene shell, printed charmeuse liner, screenprinted Tyvek center panel, double-

headed zippers, zipper tape, covered snaps, grommets, buckles, straps, etc. b. *Untitled*, 1993, ink and collage on letter paper

you get all insecure: Yeah, man, we did some *blow*? We were doing *lines*? We blew some *yayo*? Powder? Charlie? Snow? What you do is just say, "Some cocaine." As if you don't even give a fuck enough to complete your. "Some cocaine was consumed." The passive voice. "Heavy cocaine usage last night." Understated, clinical. Everyone respects the hands-off approach with the low-pro glow. Or ditch slang entirely: "Some sex occurred last night." "I'm stepping out; one must needs urinate." Shit flirt with funny. Why? Who know.

Like a marketing exec who pitches a down-market sweetened alcoholic beverage called, say, Tiané. Sounds about right. "If we're lucky, in about two years we'll see a lot of babies named Tiané born to lower-class urban moms." "Right, right. But maybe we should name it, like, Liazé. *L* sounds are trending on the street. Nearly as much as *z* sounds." "But if it's all about *z*, why not Ziazé?" "Right. Or we just go with Zzzzz." Now that's how you spread influence. Enough influence that you have parents naming kids after your product. And I ain't just talking down-market, neither...I mean, if you could actually meet Bob Marley or Bob Dylan, what would you say to them? Like me, you'd probably be curious to know how they feel about their Christian names being slapped on a few thousand male babies. "When we get there tonight, don't forget to ask if Marley and Dylan got into Gifted & Talented." On the one hand, a pre-tarnished skull ring; on the other, a Tribeca-flavored edible undergarment. You people just consume and consume and consume, and then you're sick and must stop and vomit it all up for the next meal.

But I don't agree. Because that's actually how a person makes stuff. It's not from some position of withdrawal or purity, rather the opposite. What do we like? Josef Frank textiles, Nathalie Du Pasquier jewelry, clothes by Paul Harnden, Zen Buddhism but not mainstream Buddhism, anything by Bach, anything by Kafka. I could go on. As for the pre-tarnished-jewelry metaphor,



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do you honestly feel that “back in the eighties” men were still men, women were women, the mainstream was the mainstream, and the underground was the underground? That all the barriers were still in place, *but in a productive way*, and now we’re tossing out all the rules? I mean to say, is it genuinely the fault of the nineties? The truth is that just because you lived through a period or listened to its music when it was new or wore the styles of that age, this means precious little. You possess no claim to any of it, no more than we who come later to heft it and put it under a light and study these artifacts with disinterest. It may be better to approach everything as a researcher. You wore dolman-sleeved jackets? You liked Run-DMC in 1983 and Royal Trux in 1993? Who gives a shit? You moved on and rejected it, or it rejected you. I choose it consciously, I own it more than you ever did. Because we take these inconsequential leavings and background noise and fuck them into weapons. We’ll take the wretched loop playing while you’re on hold with your bank and stutter it into a sensation. We like things broken down and infirm. The more amateur the better. Although it’s not that they are “broken,” it’s that they never worked properly in the first place. We once set out to spray a Mercedes sign on the wall but mistakenly made a peace sign. The spray paint was applied too thickly and kind of dripped down to fill in the missing line segment; it happened after we’d already left the scene. And fuck mid-century modernism, shit’s boring. We like the thirties for furniture. Also the nineties. We appreciate Memphis, of course, but now that house is too crowded. Whoever was building furniture when the towers fell, seek out that person and sink your investment. We “kind of hate” Apple, but we use it anyway. Look, by the time you’re seven you basically know what your limits are: you’re not Italian, but you *are* tall and lovely; you’re not Tom Cruise—who’s tiny and anxious-making—but who cares, these days no one cares about celebrities. How many freaking movie stars we down to now, Will Smith? Fucking ghost town over there. Ditch that twentieth-



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century shit, we rather make micro-hallucinations and jury-rigged imitation. Drop your interest in film, photography, montage, collage, fragments, heterogeneity, speed—in a word, *modernity*, plus the hysterical love of modernity you've daubed with prefixes like *post-* and *super-* and *hyper-*. Film as a metaphor is done, along with all those artworks and experimental fictions that used film as a structuring or narrative device, or that allude to jump cuts, establishing shots, montage, zooms and pans, frames per second, deep focus, seething grain. Or later, starting in the eighties, all those people who got excited about video as metaphor: test patterns, cathode rays lighting up the dark, vertical holds and densities of broadcast snow, horizontal scan lines stacked like noir window blinds, everyone living in a realm flickering, unstable, and staticky, close to the edit, in the video-store aisles, in the erotic insertion of a tape into a hole in a unit. Whether on film or on video, movies are essentially a boring, short-lived historical flash, just signal to noise.

The twist is that cinema has a twin, born and raised right alongside: the Story. In your fixation on moving images you're like those fiction writers clinging to this corny-ass idea of literature as human interest: uhhh, it is sweeping, even as it is a collection of lapidary "set pieces," it surveys modern history as well as our little moment, it addresses individual psychology plus the swamp of family, it respects passion and feeling, and it is fundamentally humorous, since we see humor as a vital means of bringing people together, of easing the common burden of our "humanity," plus an absurdist bite in reality's squat neck. But just because you suck doesn't mean you're a vampire. To all you out there crafting set pieces about people who love and fight, our struggles and hopes, how petty and silly and human we are with our *frailty*, a quality we worship, disdain, coddle, and above all *leverage*: well, we don't feel much like laughing or crying, particularly.

In that case, you need to ditch all those dreams that snuck in uninvited, smuggled in the crack



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between movies and stories. Example: there is a dream specific to the twentieth century, and it is peddled by movies and books and advertisements, and it describes the lovely little town that conceals evil or chaos “beneath its placid surface.” Establishing shot: a panoramic, sweeping pan of an LA Valley scene, low dry hills lined with ranch houses, kids on bikes tracing lazy loop-de-loops; or, alternately, a calm and steady zoom high over leafy East Coast suburbs in autumn, a maroon station wagon slowing to round a corner and pass from sight, Victorian wood-frame houses under maples rustling in the wind: winter’s coming. Which we already know, because it’s a twentieth-century picture, it’s thoroughly uptight about the “what lies beneath” thing. Which petered out some time in the nineties. And what replaced it? That’s the question of today.

What? You talking about the nineties? Furniture is one thing, but what about all those guys who follow an aesthetic credo that has them looking one step from homelessness, or grad school at least: frayed button-downs, mussed hair, scuffed non-Black Person sneakers, and no logos at all, unless they’re total non sequiturs (e.g., a tee announcing “Vidal Sassoon,” admittedly an amusing name). Dried-up bread crusts from the indie-rock era. Fine, but you’re in your forties or fifties now! Get some effing dignity, man. That’s the thing about men’s fashion, it’s chiefly about dignity. Women can play the coquette, but for men, straight or gay, the chief thing is dignity. You understand that, you can make a pile of money.

Right, but thing about decades. You’re still fairly young. When you first learn about decades as a structuring idea you’re quite small, and ten years seems like a long time. The problem is that this casual understanding of decades stays with you far longer than it has any right to. By the time you’re poised at what the ancients called “the midpoint of life”—i.e., your thirties—your experience of time has matured, and you should have



come to understand that ten years is nothing, that this division of the century into decades is silliness, that the endless shambolic sliding of trends, historical moments, and cultural eras resembles only the behavior of ungainly amounts of refuse as a container is tipped over to send its contents slithering and slipping over and around themselves and into the next container, leaving greasy muck everywhere.

Yes, but occasionally you have to take out the garbage. What do I really know about life after World War II? I mean, I'll tell you what. Okay, "Postwar Era." Everyone says everything changed. What really changed is that in the fifties people had pretty tight haircuts. Shit was tight and slicked out. But kind of naive? I don't know if that was coming out of the Great Depression, some kind of scarcity/rationalism issue, or more from the militarization of a whole society or whole generation, i.e., an uptight optic. Or what. Because most guys had longer hair than that, even just thirty or forty years earlier. History's so schizo. But by the end of the sixties everyone had just went completely the other way, crazy-long hair, just "stop cutting, stop cutting," but also stop combing, stop grooming, stop using soap. Probably because more people had color TV, and the movies were into kids all of a sudden, and that whole discovery of older people having short hair, you know, it was a rejection of uptightness that was actually itself mad uptight. Do you know what I mean? So by the end of the seventies hair got a little less shaggy and long, or at least less long, but they were still into the natural vibe; even if it wasn't quite as long, it got, like, super-styled, you were taking a long time to make it look like your hair was natural and had no product or anything, but it was all puffed out and kind of dry, kind of blow-dried, because if it was *really* natural it would get all ratty, and all nasty with sebum, and you didn't want that. Then in the eighties they *really* discovered product, or maybe the dudes who make product had some serious brainstorms to, like, rescue us from that fifties slicked-



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out thing. Because eighties haircuts got crazy severe, kind of like fifties haircuts that finally got fuck-you blood, like they saw their dad knifed, by their mom, and they got sent to a foster home, and learned to, you know, keep a lookout. No, I'm just playing. But really, if you were an art school girl in the eighties, you were definitely thinking about the fifties, you had a little leather biker jacket and cat-eye glasses and suede creepers. Which would all live in the back of the closet until well after your first baby. And then in the nineties people go back to kind of more scruffed-out styles, like dudes in bands getting back into long hair and the ratty look, but now they had that serious product lust in their blood, and there is just absolutely no putting that genie back in the bottle. And in the two-thousands people started getting creative, like: now that we found gel, what are we going to do about it? Suddenly you could wake up to the reality of bangs. My personal gripe is that so many dudes with long hair have the same retarded non-style, which apparently arises from a belief that long hair means granting every strand an equal opportunity to reach its full potential. It's thick, it's shapeless, it's falling to the shoulders, and there it gets chopped. It looks like a supposedly urban-minimal throw rug that, through factory error, was woven from polar fleece. Memo to guys: there's a reason women have a culture of salons, stylists, and products: we have to deal with all this hair! Get it together, guys, get it taken care of professionally. Come on. How many products in your hair, motherfucker? You should have three: a leave-in candy, a pomade, and a silk groom. Plus that stuff on your scalp for the dandruff, sebum, whatever it is.

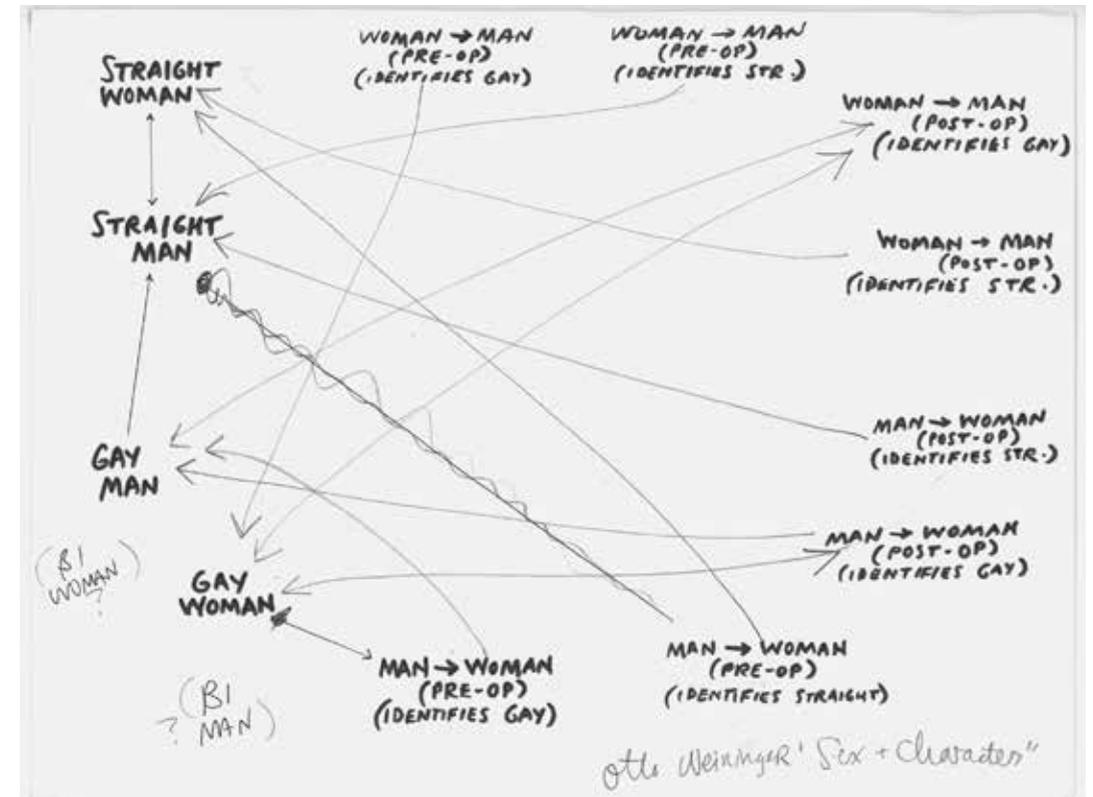
But you young adults are often slightly out of focus, as if your accumulated lack of consideration for or ignorance of all the lives open to you has clouded your mien. Dim little stars, glimpsed only from the side. All u earnest people who decry the transformations money has wrought on this town (a city changing before our eyes, developers remaking us in the image of health



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and safety, guard the memory of all that is lost!) have no understanding of what's been gained, and not in the positivist terms developers and politicians use, but in terms of all the oddball approaches to life that real people rustle up in the face of massive body blows. To their lifestyles. Get used to it, it's here, by all means organize to combat the next onslaught, but stop pining for what you've lost, it demeans all the things that we down here have wrested from the wreckage.

Yes, but to take that urban-gentrification image to the next level, what you're talking about is exactly the situation of being a young person today, poking your head out of the muck and getting a sack of muck in the face. That's right. Motherfucker, it's all about the youth. You hate the young, and it's only because they will die long after you, it's obvious. Experience only makes people duller and more depleted and more tired, not wiser. As we slowly morph into those who make a virtue of failure by calling it a sign of resistance.

So, in closing, here's a little game we play. You just add "if you're young" to any clichéd lyric or advertising tagline, and thereby derive the true, hidden sense.

Night time is the right time (if you're young)
Life is a bowl of cherries (if you're young)
Just do it (if you're young)
Be all you can be (if you're young)

I see your humor. And I raise you one. For we prefer to play another, related game.

Life is a highway (unless you're old)
Think different (unless you're old)
A diamond is forever (unless you're old)
A mind is a terrible thing to waste (unless you're old)

Oh yeah, that be so funny, that be totally working!



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Yeah, it be like something I could sell to a real stand-up guy! I mean, a stand-up comedy guy.

No, aiming higher, maybe: something to sell to late-night talk-show host?

Yeah, well, speaking of time. We're writing a book called either *The Day Before Tomorrow* or *The Day After Yesterday*. We can't decide which.

Oh, that's so funny, because our new book is called just *Today*.



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Seth Price

Amerikaner / American, geb. / b. 1973
in Ostjerusalem / East Jerusalem
lebt / lives in New York

Ein Kleidungsstück ist wie ein Briefumschlag: Beide werden mithilfe einer flachen Schablone ausgeschnitten, zusammengefasst und sicher versiegelt. Beide sind leere Verpackungen, die auf einen Inhalt warten, mit dem sie dann auf Reisen gehen.

Im Jahr 2011 gestaltete Seth Price in Zusammenarbeit mit dem New Yorker Modeschöpfer Tim Hamilton eine Kleiderkollektion aus leichten Stoffen. Die an Soldatenuniformen angelehnte Linie umfasst unter anderem eine Bomberjacke, einen Fliegeranzug und einen Trenchcoat. Die Außenseiten sind aus grobem Leinwandstoff, einem Gewebe, das traditionell für Militärkleidung und in der Kunst eingesetzt wird. Die Innenfutter sind mit Sicherheitsmustern aus Umschlägen für Geschäftsbriefe bedruckt; solche Muster bestehen typischerweise aus einem stetig wiederholten Banklogo oder einer abstrakten Darstellung, die die versendeten persönlichen oder finanziellen Daten verdecken sollen. Dem Kalender der Modeindustrie entsprechend stellten Hamilton und Price die Linie auf Hamiltons Modenschau im Herbst 2011 in New York vor, um die Kleidung dann über den Winter für die Frühling/Sommer-Saison 2012 herzustellen. Zusätzlich zu den Geschäften, die zu Hamiltons üblichen Vertriebspartnern zählen, sind die Kleidungsstücke während der dOCUMENTA (13) im Kasseler Kaufhaus SinnLeffers direkt neben dem Fridericianum zu erwerben.

Zwischenzeitlich hat Price eine zweite Gruppe von Werken vorbereitet, die in den Ausstellungsräumen der dOCUMENTA (13) im Kasseler Hauptbahnhof gezeigt wird. Die parallel zur Modelinie entwickelten riesigen Geschäftsbriefumschläge, die hier an den Wänden hängen, sind aus denselben Materialien – außen Leinwand, mit Logos bedruckte Innenfutter, Taschen, Reißverschlüsse, Ärmel und Beinteile – und in der Modeindustrie gefertigt: Price konnte auf Hamiltons professionelles Netzwerk von Näherinnen, Musterdruckern und Fabriken zurückgreifen. Bei den Skulpturen jedoch sind die Größenverhältnisse zwischen den Einzelteilen aus der Balance geraten: Sie ähneln eher aufgerissenen

Umschlägen als Kleidungsstücken und sind kaum tragbar. Die menschliche Gestalt erscheint hier als missliche Zugabe; Gliedmaßen hängen herab wie die von Tierellen.

Auf der dOCUMENTA (13) werden die beiden Werkgruppen nebeneinander gezeigt, die eine in den Ausstellungsräumen, die andere im öffentlichen Verkauf. Während der Eröffnungswoche unterstreicht eine Modenschau in der Parkgarage des Fridericianums diese getrennten und doch aufeinander bezogenen Kollektionen: die Wandarbeiten aus Leinwand und die Designer-Oberbekleidung. Auf die Einladung von SinnLeffers hin, das Schaufenster des Kaufhauses zu gestalten, hat Price die zwei Gesten zu einer kompakten Außen-Installation verdichtet, die auf dem Friedrichsplatz zu besichtigen ist.

A piece of clothing is similar to an envelope: both are cut from a flat template, folded, and secured shut. Each is an empty package, awaiting content and subsequent travel.

In 2011, Seth Price designed a group of clothing in collaboration with New York fashion designer Tim Hamilton. Based on military tailoring, the collection of lightweight garments includes a bomber jacket, flight suit, and trench coat, among other items. Outer shells are raw canvas, a fabric with traditional military and artistic uses. The interior lining is printed with security patterns taken from the inside of business envelopes; such patterns typically feature a repeating bank logo or abstraction meant to obscure the personal or financial data within. In accordance with the fashion industry's calendar, Hamilton and Price presented samples of the clothing during Hamilton's Fall 2011 show in New York, then spent the winter fabricating the collection for the Spring/Summer 2012 season. In addition to distribution through Hamilton's usual outlets, the clothes are available for sale during dOCUMENTA (13) at Kassel's SinnLeffers department store, located directly beside the Fridericianum.

Meanwhile, Price prepared a second group of works for dOCUMENTA (13)'s exhibition space at Kassel's Hauptbahnhof. Developed in parallel to the clothing line, these huge, wall-mounted business envelopes are fabricated from the same materials—canvas shells, logo-patterned liners, pockets, zippers, arms and legs—and within the fashion industry, using Hamilton's professional network of seamstresses, pattern makers, and factories. In the sculptures, however, the ratios between the ideas are skewed differently: more ripped-open envelope than garment,

they are hardly wearable. Here the human form is tacked on awkwardly, limbs dangling as from animal pelts.

At dOCUMENTA (13) the two groups of work are juxtaposed, one in the exhibition halls, the other available for sale to the public. During opening week, a fashion show in the Fridericianum's parking garage highlights these two separate but related collections: the canvas wall works and the designer outerwear. Invited by SinnLeffers to decorate the store's shop-window, Price has compressed the two gestures into a compact outdoor installation, viewable on Friedrichsplatz. IT

Petzel

“Folklore U.S.” Seth Price

Seth Price presents a show of new paintings. In various media. Portraits of envelopes and letter paper. What is this, the new paper culture? Another breast beater about how “we” are becoming disconnected and solipsistic, thanks to our hyperspeed digital blah-blah? So it's a return to snail mail. And we're getting into stationary. Maybe you could work in a play on “stationary.” Or just, “Paper Trail: Seth Price at Petzel Gallery.”

Because these Photoshop layers are real world status, fuck digie. We got back-of-the-envelope sketches, designers' tipsy doodles, scrawls on 1970s cocktail napkins. All that, writ large. “Back of The Envelope: Seth Price at Petzel.” But see, that's just taste. Like people who say: “Look, put it this way: I'd rather work out drunk than hung over.” You're a bubble bath, box of chocolates, and Chardonnay type gal; I'm a guy who likes to get home and kick back, uncork a nice red, feet up, Bach deedle-dee-deeing, mushrooms bubbling in cream sauce. “Pushing The Envelope: Seth Price at Petzel.”

Like people who still grate their parmesan fine instead of roughing it into irregular scree, which gives a dish some tooth. We like heterogeneous crude, not silk-milled slick. Get with it. Same for sea salt, incidentally: “Don't muffle the rough stuff.” Definitely something here about eating and drinking. All packaged-up though, which, now, that shit really got started back in the '80s with Yoplait, Capri Sun, and Fruit Roll-Ups—“I'm Going to the Post Office: Seth Price”—and weird packaged sweets, Japanese mouth-melters in inscrutable wrappers, we don't entirely get it but we admire the wrap, we understand processed product, the way bacon's a pork product and plywood's a wood product. *PShop IRL, don't mess.* Like stupid designers who forget that their shining, lapidary screen images will end up on dull paper, poorly printed, logos intruding.

Because it's underwritten, of course. Spoken for. Might have called this show “Underwriters.” *The power of the purse.* Which only means the evolution of the fashion industry to the point where it's all about bags. “Whatever else you're turning out next season? Make sure we got some new shit for stowing our old shit.” Garment bag, sleeping bag, body bag, shit. Sport it, flaunt it, slip it on, slip it in. Cinch and line, zips and bucks, loop de loop. Insides and outsides. Doing the whole “inside/outside” riff, but dead bang flat. Like people who think Helmut Lang pioneered special rinses, when point of fact native son Ralph Lauren done it in the early '90s, those antique industrial washers he stumbled on down South, the Carolinas or something. And he was just catching a ride on some slipshod denim folkway. Fashion is underwritten by bad behavior.

To be soft yet hard: what fulfills this mandate? In fact, a turd. Which is precisely how some see folk art: a soft transmission, hardly received. “Partial Post: Seth P.” Like people who “watch every penny,” because why, because they're afraid it's going to kill them? And lord, what about that title. *Folkloresis* is what, a Roman deity? Lord of the Underwriters. “What lies beneath.” Some old bread crust with a beard, dropping folksy quips: “Look bad and stupid, inevitably you will appear interesting, even fashionable.” God of the sly and apt. “US Letter Format: Seth Price.” Who said that? Just folks!

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SETH PRICE

STEH PIRCE

MAY 9 – JUNE 9, 2013

For his fourth exhibition at the gallery, Seth Price presents six new works that articulate the form of a standard business envelope: once as a series of screen prints on plywood, and again as wall-based sculptures fabricated with materials and techniques borrowed from the fashion/garment trade. One series involves a hands-on, artisanal, completely in-studio process, whereas the other relies on outsourced art labor.

The works on plywood (a “wood product” which is itself composed of layers) are a sort of Photoshop in real life, hand made by gradually building up white grounds in advance of the prints, then adding multiple layers of matte black gesso on top of the printed surfaces. So the work arrives as an accretion of material densities in actual space. Price designed a prototype for these envelopes on the computer, printed it out, then cut, folded and glued its edges to generate paper models. He then tore the models open and rescanned them back onto the computer to make the images we see printed on the plywood. Delivered in slow motion, these works finally arrive with the weight and thickness of sculptural things.

To produce his textile works, Price worked with a professional pattern maker and a factory in Manhattan’s garment district. Each envelope’s main shell fabric (the “self,” as it’s called in the industry) is composed of a high tech material, including a bonded elastomer fabric, a Kevlar-impregnated mesh, and Neoprene, a synthetic rubber. These materials are faced with blackened cork and trimmed with snaps, zippers, straps and buckles. The artist has hand printed decorative “security” patterns on the envelopes’ Tyvek linings, which are exposed or hidden from view depending on how each work is styled on the wall. Like designer accessories, these works operate in terms of both structure and style and, hung here like pelts, are finally delivered as display. Here, sculpture is displaced within the channel of fashion.

With its mechanized mass production in the mid-19th century, the adhesive envelope submitted authorship to a standard format, ensuring the extension of a postal system that enclosed its users within a communicating circuit. Its folds produce an interior space that allows private communication while seeming to preserve the presence of a Romantic author or soul in the moment of transmission. Displaying the material basis of modern communication without including any message or address, Price seems to capture the spirit of communication itself. In advance of the faster, ever more immersive communications networks we use today, the postal system could only take off by standardizing both its materials and its subjects. Here, the empty envelope appears as the anonymous, mask-like face of information that summons its own operators, or the fetish that momentarily completes an individual within the constant revolutions of a closed circuit.

John Kelsey

Gallery Hours: Thursday through Sunday, noon to 6pm.

FOLKLORE U.S. EXHIBITIONS
AND PRESENTATIONS

"Seth Price x Tim Hamilton," Spring/Summer 2012
presentation for New York Fashion Week
September 7, 2011

Folklore U.S. SS12 fashion show,
dOCUMENTA (13), Kassel
Friedrichsplatz parking garage
June 7, 2012

"Folklore U.S.," dOCUMENTA (13), Kassel
Exhibition at Hauptbahnhof
Shopwindows and garments for sale at SinnLeffers
department store
June 9–September 16, 2012

"Folklore U.S.," Petzel Gallery, New York
October 26–December 22, 2012

"Steh Pirce," Reena Spaulings, New York
May 9–June 9, 2013

"Seth Price," Galerie Gisela Capitain, Cologne
June 7–August 31, 2013

SPRING/SUMMER 2012 PRESENTATION,
dOCUMENTA (13), KASSEL

Concept and direction: Seth Price & Tim Hamilton
Garments by Seth Price & Tim Hamilton: Bomber Jacket,
Infantry Poncho, Field Gaiter, Paratrooper Pants, Officer's
Trench, Batwing Sniper Jacket, Flight Suit
Stylist: William Graper
Hair: Martin-Christopher Harper
Makeup: Hugo Villard
Show production: Eva Gödel / Chewing the Sun
Casting: Tomorrow Is Another Day
Models: Mathis, Fabian P, Florian, Benedikt, Moritz L, Marcus,
Arnd, Assan, Ousenu, Julian P, Henning B, Rene K, Felix S,
Marcel B, Felix K, and Ivonne B @ Tomorrow Is Another Day
Lauren van Asseldong and Sarah von den Brink @ Union
Models
Isabelle Sonnenschein, Lia, and Siri Laude @ Modelwerk
Anne Kruger @ SMC

PHOTO CREDITS

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exhibition poster
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exhibition poster



SETH PRICE WOULD LIKE TO THANK

Sabine Amelie Alt, Erik Andersson, Maria Elena Guerra Aredal, Daniel Aronstein, Andrew Black, Boško Blagojević, Chris Bollen, Isabella Bortolozzi, Jamison Brosseau, Elena Brugnano, Andrew Cannon, Gisela Capitain, Jonathan Caplan, Nicolas Ceccaldi, Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, Whitney Clafin, Angus Cook, Cub Craft, Célia Cretien, Chantal Crousel, Stefanie Drobnik, Max Eisenberg, Daniel Finch, Regina Fiorito, Lisa Franzen, Bettina Funcke, Theodora Gilman, Eva Goedel, William Graper, Lila Hamilton, Tim Hamilton, Terry Harding, Martin Christopher Harper, Bill Hayden, Laura Higgins, Rachel Hudson, Jeff Jin, Marie Karlberg, Seth Kelly, John Kelsey, Jasper Kettner, Adam Kleinman, Danny Krebs, Bradley Kronz, Patty Lin, Christine Litz, Joseph Logan, Alex Mackin Dolan, Mathieu Malouf, Chus Martinez, Dorian McKaie, Sarah Moog, Ben Morgan-Cleveland, Sheldon Moyer, Jason Murison, Shayne Oliver, Jake Palmert, Kat Parker, Friedrich Petzel, Lou Funcke Price, Sam Pulitzer, Jonas Raam, Melissa Ratliff, Amanda Riesman, Hernan Rivera, Carissa Rodriguez, Jeff Ryu, Ko Sadakuni, Katrin Sauerländer, Eva Scharrer, Beatrix Schopp, Matthew Schrader, Svenja Schuhbauer, Carolin Schulz, Soyoung Son, Dorothee Sorge, Emily Sundblad, Niklas Svennung, Andrea Teschke, Sam Tsao, Isidore Tuason, Chiara Vecchiarelli, Ned Vena, Emily Wang, Michael Wiesehofer, Matthew Wilkin, Kristian Wolf, Brian Wondergem, Elliot Wright, Marco Zeppenfeld

This publication would not have been possible without the generous support of Petzel Gallery, New York, and Galerie Gisela Capitain, Cologne.

SETH PRICE, *FOLKLORE U.S.*

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Editor: Bettina Funcke
Copyediting and proofing: Sam Frank
Design: Joseph Logan and Seth Price with Rachel Hudson
Lithography: Trifolio, Verona

Typeset in Akzidenz Grotesk and Caslon
The paper is GardaGloss Art 130g

Printed in Italy
Trifolio, Verona
First Printing 2014

ISBN 978-3-86335-606-4

First published by
Koenig Books Ltd.
At the Serpentine Gallery
Kensington Gardens
London W2 3XA
www.koenigbooks.co.uk

Distribution:
D.A.P. / Distributed Art Publishers Inc.
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Fax: +1 212 627 9484
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Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek
The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available on the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.



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