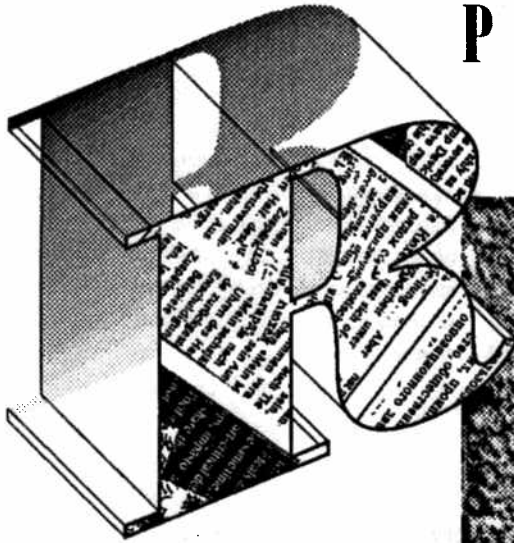


P r i n t r e v i e w s



On the Passage of a few people through a brief moment of time: *The Situationist International 1957–1972*, ed. Elisabeth Sussman. Boston, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989.

This book is a collection of articles and translations presented on the occasion of an exhibit tour (only three stops, unfortunately) of situationist art and documents that took place in 1989–90. Most of the articles are excellent, well-written and researched. On top of that, this book is well worth its price just for the color reproductions of some of Ager Jorn's *détourned* paintings. There are many other illustrations as well, something that has been left out of many of the American translations of situationist literature.

A few of the articles are particularly worth mentioning. Thomas Y. Levin's article entitled *Dismantling the Spectacle: The Cinema of Guy Debord* is a detailed and carefully documented account of Debord's six films. It covers the description, theory, historical placement of each, and often mentions some of the critical response and details of early showings. Film stills are also included. These thorough descriptions are especially appreciated since Debord has banned the showing of his films while he is alive: "Incensed [as he was] by the murder of [Gérard



Lebovici] and by the manner in which the press reported it..." Another important feature of Levin's article is his overview of some immediate predecessors to Debord's films, especially the lettrist films of Jean-Isidore Isou. Isou's film theory, which contains, for example, the idea of *chiseling* (the "renunciation of subjects external to the medium itself, a reflexive involution during which basic formal and technical presuppositions are subjected to radical interrogation"), appears to have had a great impact on Debord—who may have realized Isou's ideas more concretely or to a greater extent than Isou himself. In general, Isou's and Debord's film theories are well connected to the important theories of lettrism and situationism (*détournement* and plagiarism, the

function of art in society, urbanism, others), and could make a good introduction to or further clarification of both. My only criticism is of some allegedly nostalgic elements reported in Debord's last film, which is, of course, a criticism of Debord if Levin's analysis is correct. I find the idea incompatible with his other theories.

Other important inclusions in the book are first-time English translations of accounts of two *dérives*, a concept that has always made more sense to me in theory than in practice. It is informative to read Debord's written accounts of actual *dérives*, it certainly cleared the fog a bit on

the concept of the psychogeographic exploration of urban areas.

Détournement, an easier concept to understand, is made clearer by physical manifestations described in an article by Peter Wollen entitled *Bitter Victory: The Art and Politics of the Situationist International* and the article on Debord's film. Wollen's article also thoroughly covers the history of situationist art and graphics, and goes into the conflict over the place of art in situationist political theory that eventually split the SI.

—Michael Gendreau

***The World of Zines: A Guide to the Independent Magazine Revolution* by Mike Gunderloy and Cari Goldberg Janice. New York: Penguin Books, 1992.**

"Zines," in case you don't know, are magazines that are too small in circulation or too modest in production value to be seen on the same racks as the "slicks," such as *Time* or *Vanity Fair*. During most of the eighties, *Factsheet Five* was Mike Gunderloy's meta-zine (magazine about magazines) which focused, almost exclusively, on zines. *Factsheet Five* virtually defined the geography of zinedom, serving simultaneously as its gazetteer and its road map. For those of us who produced a zine during this time, we could always rely upon Gunderloy—first of all, to review our most recent issue; and secondly, to send us a free copy of *Factsheet Five* when such a review appeared. *F5* served as a printed meeting place for zines of all stripes whose editorial grist ran the gamut from science fiction, politics, radical art, anarchism, extremism of all kinds; to television and movies, networking and mail art, humor, comics, homemade music, and other subjects too numerous to mention. It was a wonderfully reciprocal, exchange-driven arrangement, and it made all of us very happy.

So what does the new book by Gunderloy and Cari Goldberg Janice, *The World of Zines*, have

to offer that compares with *Factsheet Five*? Very little, as it turns out. *Factsheet Five*'s terse, superficial judgments, which in the magazine format seemed unfortunately necessary but nonetheless useful, in book form only underscore the false but common perception that these publications are, in fact, trivial. What Gunderloy's *Factsheet Five* lacked in depth, it more than made up for in scope. At its best, it was a mine shaft sunk into a rich underground vein of information that seemed vital to any well-rounded comprehension of what constitutes cultural activity in the machine age. A new issue was never more than a few weeks away. It was this excitingly temporary quality that made *Factsheet Five* seem so vibrant and necessary. *The World of Zines*, on the other hand, has the dank breath of authority—the "final word" on the subject—and contains actually less information and is less comprehensive than any given single issue of *Factsheet Five*. However, *F5* is no more, and readers interested in zines will probably want to put up the \$14 Penguin Books is asking for it. As a toe-hold into a hidden world, it is probably worth it; but by all means, don't stop there. You'll see what zinedom is about only if you go straight to the source: those who make the zines and thrive on the cultural exchange it brings into their lives.

—Lloyd Dunn