

BASEL

PROVENCE, John Knight and Ghislain Mollet-Viéville

CAFE HAMMER

During Art Basel, the first issue of *PROVENCE*, “An Eight-Issue Magazine Dedicated to Hobbies” was launched by Daiga Grantina, Tobias Kaspar, and Hannes Loichinger at a neighborhood café. It was accompanied by an exhibition, curated by Egija Inzule, that stayed on view for five days. The entire project succeeded as an ingenious *gesamtkonzeption*.

Nowadays, it is rare for cultural players to indulge in hobbies that are not connected to their work. All activities tend to contribute to the production of a trademark identity, a dual instrumentalization of work and leisure that is the result of the post-Fordist economy. And so *PROVENCE* does not focus on hobbies as such, but rather explores the possibility of approaching activities outside strictly professional

THE GALLERY IS INTERESTED
IN PURCHASING WORKS OF
“MINIMAL & CONCEPTUAL” ART
CARL ANDRE
ART & LANGUAGE
ROBERT BARRY
DANIEL BUREN
VICTOR BURGIN
DAN FLAVIN
DON JUDD
ON KAWARA
JOSEPH KOSUTH
SOL LEWITT
LAWRENCE WEINER
IAN WILSON



GHISLAIN MOLLET - VIÉVILLE GALLERY
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Ghislain Mollet-Viéville, advertisement in *Flash Art* (March 1983). From “*PROVENCE*, John Knight and Ghislain Mollet-Viéville.”

structures by means of mimicry. Its glossy cover evokes an in-flight magazine; however, inside the magazine one finds eighty pages of scanned black-and-white text and images: articles, including reprints, and photo spreads by Merlin Carpenter, Andrea Leghien, and Richard Prince, among others. Instead of the usual advertisements, business cards—from those of art-world figures to those of flower shops—grace its pages, thereby signaling the personalized social networking activities that blur the boundary between business and leisure.

The exhibition offered complementary perspectives on magazines and art. One of two display cases contained eleven issues of *Interiors* magazine, from March 1982 to January 1983. These were part of John Knight’s *Journals Series*, begun in 1977. Knight operates in the field of tension between systems of sculpture, design, and architecture, and in

this spirit, he sent unsolicited, complimentary magazine subscriptions to some of his acquaintances, including the Basel architect who lent the copies on view here. The artist thus foists upon the recipients an aesthetic yet ephemeral object: The beneficiaries have to decide what value and what use the magazine—which Knight himself declared non-art—might have. In the display cases here, the magazines were presented as symbolic readymades, raising questions that might also be posed in the context of the identity of *PROVENCE* as both object and text.

The second vitrine, on the other hand, presented a case of affirmative marketing. A selection of ads and photo spreads evinced the pragmatic PR practices of Ghislain Mollet-Viéville, a French collector of Minimal and Conceptual art. By placing alluring ads in art magazines and leasing his art-filled apartment for fashion shoots, Mollet-Viéville publicized his collection from the 1970s to the 1990s. Often he himself was depicted in pointedly narcissistic poses. In an ad that appeared in *Flash Art* in March 1983, for instance, he is shown sporting a fopish argyle sweater next to a list of artists in his collection, Robert Barry and Carl Andre among them. Marketing supersedes design, fashion, and art. In this way, Mollet-Viéville’s collecting can be understood both as a passion that pervaded his life and as a professionalized hobby through which he secured income. In the triad of *PROVENCE*, the *Journals Series*, and Mollet-Viéville’s public appearances, aesthetic practice, ideology, and social ritual converged in a redefined realm wherein art, fashion, and design function and circulate side by side without colliding.

—Valérie Knoll

Translated from German by Laura Hoffmann.

