

Arnaud Maggs, Once a Designer

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Abstract

Arnaud Maggs had a decades-long career during which he produced important work in both commercial and fine art. In his early years he worked as a graphic designer and illustrator. In the late 1960s he pursued commercial photography. Maggs then transitioned to fine art in the early 1970s, producing work frequently positioned within the context of conceptual art. Maggs and others often portrayed his shift to fine art as a dramatic and transformative reinvention, resulting in limited acknowledgment of his early commercial work and only cursory investigation of its impact on his subsequent artistic production. This dissertation maintains that Maggs's visual and conceptual languages reveal a synthesis of strategies from each stage of his career, and argues for a more comprehensive understanding of Canada's visual culture by bridging the gap between fine and applied art histories.

Biography helps to reveal a range of influences and experiences that may otherwise remain concealed but contribute to shaping an artist's work. In so doing, biographical detail — especially detail that traces professional experiences and work history — helps to unsettle perceptions of artistic genius by offering a more nuanced understanding of how an artist's work develops through interconnected influences, life experiences, and work history. Through a close examination of Maggs's biography and emphasis on his commercial experience, this dissertation highlights the interconnections in Maggs's creative practices and challenges traditional biases in art history. In order to expand biographical and contextual details, I conducted a series of interviews with people who knew and worked with Maggs. This oral history unsettles the mythology around his career narrative. What emerges instead is a picture of an artist whose formal and conceptual languages evolved over decades of *work*.

Structured in two parts, “Once a Designer, Always an Artist: Redefining the Mythology of Maggs” and “Once a Designer, Always a Designer: Commercial Practice and Conceptual Praxis,” this dissertation contextualizes Maggs’s work within larger trends and foregrounds the profound influence his early careers had on his artistic production in order to illuminate his motivations and offer a counternarrative to published accounts of his career trajectory.

To Sadie and Tom

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Introduction

Arnaud Maggs's memories of his childhood reveal a mature appreciation for the formal qualities of everyday objects and an interest in collecting. As a young boy, Maggs (1926–2012) and his family lived just west of Montreal in Strathmore, Quebec (now Dorval), which at the time was in the country. At age four, he would eagerly await visits from the "Popcorn Man," who came weekly to sell his goods to the community. In 1975 Maggs compiled a list of "interrelated" influences in a notebook. The Popcorn Man topped his list, followed by a brief description: "He drove a motorcycle & sidecar, all white, [painted] with the words 'Stop me & buy one.' The top of the sidecar was a glass box, inside which was kept popcorn, in rows of neat white bags."¹ Maggs's emphasis on the visual details of the motorcycle and sidecar reflects his early recognition of the power of design and presentation. It was less about the popcorn itself and more about the minimalist white packaging: Maggs was drawn to the little bags sold by the Popcorn Man as aesthetic objects. Those bags made up one of his first collections, hinting at the importance of both collecting and the use of repetition to his creative output in design and illustration, photography, and fine art. He later recalled, "I was so fascinated I would forget to open the popcorn and eat it. There were rows of white paper popcorn bags in my bedroom on a shelf, which my mother finally threw out."² Maggs's understanding of the Popcorn Man as an aesthetic experience reflects the interconnections between design and art that shaped his way

¹ Arnaud Maggs, "Personal Journal: Beginning 1975," unpaginated notebook, 1975–81, page dated "7 Nov. 1975," Library and Archives Canada (LAC), Ottawa, R7959-5522, R7959-137-3-E, vol. 839.

² Robert Enright, "Designs on Life: An Interview with Arnaud Maggs," *Border Crossings* 31, no. 2 (June/August 2012), 45.

of working and his thinking about creative production. “I must confess,” Maggs noted, “that popcorn seller was my first art experience. And I still love and am fascinated by vitrines.”³

Scholars and critics have identified “an archival impulse” in contemporary art. Critic Hal Foster points to a photographic history for this instinct, asserting that a thread extends from the work of Aleksandr Rodchenko (1891–1956) and the montages of John Heartfield (1891–1968).⁴ Maggs was a collector, and an archival impulse is evident in his work. For him, that inclination was informed by his interest in design and form, the frameworks of conceptual art, and the influence of his partner, Spring Hurlbut, who herself engages with historical objects and content in her artmaking. Maggs’s personal and found collections provided material to use in both his commercial and artistic work, but they also shaped thematic frameworks for his art projects. His propensity for collecting extended from his childhood fascination with the Popcorn Man to develop into a defining characteristic of both the man and the artist.

Maggs delighted in the small details and humour of found objects and design ephemera and predictably gained renown for his personal collection. In January 1958, *Canadian Homes and Gardens* (fig. 0.1) included his home in an issue about achieving personal style, and the August 7, 1965 edition of *Star Weekly* (fig. 0.2) showcased his home and collection in a story titled “The Weird and Wonderful House of Arnaud Maggs.” Revealing his lifelong interest in the shape of the human head, Maggs’s collection included dolls and milliner’s dummies. Objects with an emphasis on letterforms also featured prominently. Many of these same “weird and wonderful” objects appeared in Maggs’s photographs for an installation at the Three Small

³ Ibid.

⁴ Hal Foster, “An Archival Impulse,” *October* 110 (Autumn 2004): 3.

Rooms restaurant, which I will discuss further in chapter 2, “Commercial Photography.” Both of these articles note that Maggs’s collection extended beyond what was on display. Rather than showing everything at once, Maggs rotated his collection, which points to his keen sense of space, his esteem for the relationship between design and order, and his eye for presentation. *Canadian Homes* magazine included Maggs’s house and collection in its March 1966 issue, for which Maggs himself supplied the photographs. Emphasizing the importance of curating a collection, he explained: “It isn’t the decorating materials or their design, it’s what’s done with them. ...You have to know what is original, and balanced, and pleasing to the eye.”⁵

Collecting also connected with Maggs’s interest in classification and order. Establishing rules and parameters, he used his camera to create, define, and manipulate collections, even with his portraits. “I enjoy cataloguing people’s faces,” he told Gail Fisher-Taylor in 1982. “I’ve always been a bit of a collector. And now I’ve gotten into collecting photographs of people.”⁶ His approach to portraiture connects with his interest in shape, and with his knowledge of early studies of human physiognomy and traditions of photographic typologies. Curator Maia-Mari Sutnik makes an important connection, for instance, between Maggs’s portraits and the sixteenth-century physiognomy studies of German artist Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528). She asserts, “Dürer’s way of delineating physiognomies — frontally and in profile — led to Maggs’s conception of modular frameworks for the human head.”⁷

⁵ Quoted by James Purdie and Keith Branscombe, untitled article, *Canadian Homes* (March 1966): 11.

⁶ Gail Fisher-Taylor, “Anatomy of a Portrait: An Interview with Arnaud Maggs,” *Photo Communiqué* (Fall 1982): 17.

⁷ Maia-Mari Sutnik, “Portraits by Arnaud Maggs,” in Philip Monk, Arnaud Maggs, and Maia-Mari Sutnik, *Arnaud Maggs: Works, 1976–1999* (Toronto: Power Plant, 1999), 9–10. Dürer’s name appears in various lists and notes about influences in one of Maggs’s personal notebooks: “Notebook,” ca. 1980 [unpaginated], LAC, Ottawa, R7959-5460.

Maggs's images in works such as *64 Portrait Studies, 1976–78* (1976–78) also follow photographic traditions related to human physiognomy and classification. Maggs signalled the influence of nineteenth-century criminologist Alphonse Bertillon (1843–1914), whose mug shots established a system of identification and classification that used both a frontal view and a profile of each subject: “I was asking myself: ‘How am I going to present these pictures?’ And my mind went back to Alphonse Bertillon, the Paris police official who set up a system of identifying people. And I figured that’s as good a way as any, and probably the best.”⁸

Developed for the judicial system in France, the Bertillon method (*bertillonage*) was a racialized instrument of classification and surveillance.⁹ And the inherent severity of Maggs’s early portraits came across; “Is this a police line-up?” viewers would sometimes ask.¹⁰ The Bertillon method informed his systematic approach to portraiture, but, unlike it and other nineteenth-century approaches to recording the body, Maggs’s detached, analytical approach was not about surveillance. Rather, it was a reaction against the soft, flattering lighting that has historically dominated in portraiture. “I’d say [sidelighting] is the most beautiful light there is,” he asserted. “But I felt from my experiments that sidelighting brought too much attention to the lighting itself. I just wanted to be aware of the face.”¹¹

⁸ Charles A. Stainback, “Q and A with Arnaud Maggs,” in *Arnaud Maggs: Identification*, ed. Josée Drouin-Brisebois (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 2012), 112. In addition to frontal and profile views, Bertillon’s system of identification led to photographic documentation of body parts such as noses and ears. Interestingly, Maggs was also fascinated by ears. While they remain unpublished, he took closeup photographs of many ears over the course of his career.

⁹ Shawn Michell Smith, “The Mug Shot: A Brief History,” *Aperture* 230 (Spring 2018): 30–33.

¹⁰ Comments and reactions to *7 Canadian Photographers at NFB* (1977) were recorded by gallery attendants; handwritten note by Suzanne Dicaire on “NFB Photo Gallery Daily Report to Mrs. Monk” log sheet, March 3, 1977, Box 37, “7 ‘77, EX-1977-A.”

¹¹ Fisher-Taylor, “Anatomy of a Portrait,” 12.

Maggs's approach to portraiture links him to other twentieth-century artists. His work is often connected to that of the photographer August Sander (1876–1964), for example, who produced an exhaustive series of portraits of German workers in the early twentieth century. Maggs included Sander on his list of influences, and he saw his work in *August Sander: Photographs of an Epoch, 1904–1959*, a travelling exhibition that was mounted at the National Gallery of Canada in 1982.¹² Writer and curator Philip Monk notes that Maggs shares with Sander “a taxonomic urge to collect and categorize, using the human being as subject.”¹³ The accumulation of photographic portraits produces a visual archive, a purpose that also connects Maggs to the work of German conceptual photographers Bernd and Hilla Becher. Bernd Becher (1931–2007) studied painting and typography and Hilla (1934–2015) photography. Through their prolific and systematic images of industrial structures and as prominent teachers in Düsseldorf, the Bechers contributed to an understanding of German photography as sober and analytical. Their work is frequently characterized as methodical and objective, with archival intent. It is often taken up within the context of both documentary traditions, stemming from photographers such as Eugène Atget (1857–1927) and Sander, and conceptualism.¹⁴ Maggs's

¹² Maggs, “Personal Journal.” On October 3, 1982 in another notebook, Maggs logged seeing the “wonderful Sander exhibition” and attending a lecture that addressed Sander's work that included Rosalind Krauss, Allan Sekula, and Ute Eskildsen. Arnaud Maggs, “Log Book – Arnaud Maggs,” unpaginated notebook, 1974, LAC, Ottawa, R7959-6403.

¹³ Philip Monk, “Life's Traces,” in Monk, Maggs, and Sutnik, *Arnaud Maggs: Works, 1976–1999* (Toronto: Power Plant, 1999), 21.

¹⁴ Gordon Hughes, for instance, asserts that “the Bechers are in direct dialogue with Sander, not only through their use of archival structure, but through their attempt to create a compositional system that suppresses the individuality of authorial expressivity”; Gordon Hughes, “Game Face: Douglas Huebler and the Voiding of Photographic Portraiture,” *Art Journal* 66, no. 4 (2007): 63. For an expanded discussion of how the Bechers were differently positioned in the European and American contexts (in the United States they were frequently aligned with conceptual art), see Stefan Gronert, “Alternative Pictures: Conceptual Art and the Artistic Emancipation of Photography in Europe,” in *The Last Picture Show: Artists Using Photography, 1960–1982*, ed. Douglas Fogle (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 2003), 88–89.

grid-based taxonomic portraits relate to the now canonical architectural typologies of the Bechers, whose systematic photographs of industrial structures in Germany are also viewed as acts of preservation. Tim Griffin suggests that their work highlights a tradition in photography that capitalizes on the potential for indifferent documentation and preservation through photographs.¹⁵ In 2008, Maggs poignantly reflected on his own work as “evidence of existence,” noting that “in all those pictures I took between 1976 and 1983, at least twenty percent of the people are dead now.”¹⁶ As a collection of serial images, his artworks are also shaped by the medium itself, which I will discuss further in chapter 4, “Designing Conceptualism.”

Maggs’s documentation of paper ephemera extends the possibilities for portraiture as evidence of existence. Engaging with history, his photographic collections of found material — in works such as *Notification xiii* (1996) and *Travail des enfants dans l’industrie: Les étiquettes* (1994) — offer both documentation and space for imaginative projection. In so doing, they invite the viewer into the works, extending further still the potential for portraiture. Whether of human subjects or paper ephemera, his multiple-image portraits are an extension of his interest in collecting and archiving and, as such, his artworks challenge the conventions of portraiture. In chapter 5, “From the Page to the Wall,” I address the ways in which Maggs’s portraits, whether they capture human subjects or paper ephemera, expand the possibilities for portraiture.

¹⁵ Tim Griffin, “Faulty Towers: The Legacy of the Impassive Eye in Contemporary German Photography,” *Art on Paper* (September/October 1998): 50.

¹⁶ Quoted in Ben Portis, “Evidence of Existence: A Conversation with Toronto-Based Photographer Arnaud Maggs,” *Art on Paper* 12, no. 5 (May/June 2008): 66.

Maggs had a decades-long career during which he produced important work in both commercial and fine art. In his early years he worked as a graphic designer and illustrator. In the late 1960s Maggs pursued commercial photography, working in both editorial fashion and portraiture. It was in 1973, at the age of forty-seven, that he decided to focus on fine art. Significantly, it is this particular moment of change that has become the persistent crux of his career narrative; the shift to fine art was often positioned by Maggs as a dramatic and transformative reinvention, and this shift is frequently underscored in the literature on his work and practice.¹⁷ The result is that there has been limited acknowledgment of his early commercial work, and only cursory investigation of its impact on the nature and forms of his subsequent artistic production. The tendency of scholars to overlook the intersection of art and design in Maggs's career highlights art-historical biases that often discount contemporary commercial creative production — a narrow focus that limits, and even undermines, an understanding of art.

Fine art is associated with conceptual and intellectual exploration and self-expression, unbound by expectations of utility, whereas the applied arts are typically understood as art forms driven by decoration and functionality. There is a lot of overlap between the fine and applied arts. Consider sculpture, architecture, and craft, which have each been situated in the discourses and practices of fine art and applied art alike. Likewise, many of the disciplines that

¹⁷ See, for example, Josée Drouin-Brisebois, "Arnaud Maggs: Portrait of a Working Artist," in *Arnaud Maggs: Identification* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 2012), 27; Monk, "Life's Traces," 20; Doina Popescu, introduction (with Rachel Verbin) to *Arnaud Maggs*, by Doina Popescu, Maia-Mari Sutnik, and Sophie Hackett (Göttingen/Toronto: Steidl/Scotiabank Photography Prize, 2013), 21; Portis, "Evidence of Existence," 64; Stainback, "Q and A," 112. Sometimes, although it is acknowledged, discussion of Maggs's transition from commercial artist to fine artist is less explicit. See, for instance, Sutnik, "Portraits by Arnaud Maggs," 10.

often sit beneath the umbrella of applied arts are also referred to as design. Take, for example, graphic design, fashion, industrial or product design, and interior design. Commercial art, which includes design, illustration, and photography, among others, is often connected to advertising, and is anchored in business and driven by market aims. Although the terms design and designer are used in a range of fields, in the context of this paper on Maggs, I use them interchangeably with graphic design and graphic designer. Graphic design, which is commonly defined as a framework for organizing images and type for the purpose of visual communication in a specific context, is a problem-solving process. It involves aesthetic and technological considerations, as well as a number of practical concerns, such as client directives, budgetary restrictions, and time constraints. Nevertheless, as scholar and designer Jorge Frascara insists, graphic design also relates to social responsibility and the impact of visual communication in the environment and on people.¹⁸ Graphic design is an interdisciplinary practice where artistic, technological, and even psychological concerns overlap. Frascara argues that, “the practice of graphic design transcends the realm of aesthetics,” which, as he reveals, enables an understanding and critique of graphic design that is not limited simply to style, but instead involves both critical and social analysis.¹⁹ Such is true of fine art as well, however. And, although both fine art and graphic design operate as commodities within the commercial realm, there is a distinction between them. As Norman Potter has noted, “a designer works through and for other people, and is concerned primarily with their problems rather than his own.”²⁰ Although a

¹⁸ Jorge Frascara, “Graphic Design: Fine Art or Social Science?” in *Design Studies: Theory and Research in Graphic Design, A Reader*, ed. Audrey Bennett (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2006), 28.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Norman Potter, “Is a Designer an Artist?” in *Design and Art*, ed. Alex Coles (Cambridge MA and London: The MIT Press and Whitechapel Gallery, 2007), 29. Originally published as *What is a Designer?* (London: Studio Vista/New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1969); revised and extended (London: Hyphen Press, 1989/2003).

generalization — and one that neither accounts for the ego-driven autonomy of designers such as Paul Rand (1914–1966), for example, nor the pressure on artists from dealers to produce work that sells — Potter’s definition highlights that a designer does not maintain explicit creative control, which signals some of the tensions between commercial and fine art practices, and reveals how the role of the designer is potentially at odds with that of the artist. As Milton Glaser (1929–2020), a key designer at the prominent New York City-based studio Push Pin, asserts, “designers are placed somewhere between the ethos of art and the ethos of business, and this causes a lifetime of conflicting identifications.”²¹

There is a stubborn blind spot in critical writing about the importance of design in art. Scholar and critic Alex Coles asserts that “the art world naively continues to perceive design as inferior to art.”²² He also posits that “neither design nor art has ... benefited from the possible insights that could [be] gleaned from an open dialogue between them.”²³ Design writer Rick Poynor echoes these sentiments in a text titled, “Art’s Little Brother”: “designers have always had an inferiority complex when it comes to their relationship with artists and art.”²⁴ Despite the shifting significance and prominence of the role of design in culture, Poynor insists that “old ways of thinking persist and the balance of power seems to stay much the same.”²⁵ I aim to redress this lack of dialogue through my investigation of the ways in which Maggs’s early creative practices directly informed his artmaking, and also how this persistent tension

²¹ Milton Glaser, “Design and Ambiguity,” in *Art Is Work* (New York: Overlook Press, 2000), 263; originally delivered as talk at the 45th Annual Convention of the New York State Art Teachers Association.

²² Alex Coles, “Designart,” *Art Monthly* 334 (March 2010): 8.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Rick Poynor, “Art’s Little Brother,” in *Design and Art*, ed. Alex Coles (Cambridge, MA, and London: MIT Press and Whitechapel Gallery, 2007), 94. Originally published in *Icon* 23 (May 2005).

²⁵ Ibid.

between fine and commercial art practices shaped his career narrative.²⁶ In order to do this, I look closely at his biography with specific emphasis on Maggs's work experience. Examining the various personal and professional influences on his career trajectory reveals new insights about his motivations. Moreover, my emphasis on his commercial work history foregrounds the significance of that work in his artistic development, which helps to disrupt the notions of artistic genius that have dominated art historical narratives, particularly those with a monographic focus. Later in this introduction I will expand on the significance of biography further as I outline my methodological approach and the structure of this paper.

On the occasion of an exhibition at the Power Plant in 1999, Philip Monk asserted that “we should not be surprised by the coherence of Maggs's oeuvre,” because, as he points out, Maggs “decided to be an artist when a mature man.”²⁷ Although Monk highlights examples of other photographers and artists who transitioned from commercial to artistic practices, including Irving Penn (1917–2009), Richard Avedon (1923–2004), and Andy Warhol (1928–1987), his text — as the majority do — maintains an emphasis on Maggs's art career.²⁸ My project, however, looks closely at the intersections of design and art in Maggs's career trajectory and practice in order to more thoroughly illuminate how commercial work elicited the coherent body of work he produced as an artist.

²⁶ For me, “career narrative” refers to how an artist's career and artistic development have been conceptualized and written about in texts, both scholarly and general, by scholars, curators, critics, and even the artist him- or herself.

²⁷ Monk, “Life's Traces,” 20.

²⁸ Ibid.

Curators such as Monk have contributed the bulk of writing on Maggs in the context of specific exhibitions. The result is a number of careful examinations of both his artistic practice and specific works of art that effectively contextualize his photographic output and influences according to the history of photography. As noted, Monk, for instance, suggests that Maggs's desire to collect and categorize people parallels the work of Sander, and Sutnik connects Maggs's grid-based photographic work with the architectural typologies of the Bechers. Both Monk and Sutnik also link Maggs's taxonomical approach to structure with the frequently grid-based, informational presentation that is characteristic of conceptual art. Curator Catherine Bédard makes these same connections to German typological and conceptual traditions, but she asserts that "typology according to Maggs is a graphic exercise invested with subjectivity. This explains its framing within a grid, whose minimalism is woven through with an eminently human and sensuous content, yet shown with all the appearance of documentary objectivity."²⁹ Bédard makes an important observation about the interplay in Maggs's work. In my master's thesis, I pointed to Doina Popescu's assertion that Maggs's practice "build[s] bridges between modernism and conceptual art, while using photography to create dialogues between memories, archives, objects and people."³⁰ I asserted then that her description is "a succinct summation of the literature on Maggs, which often both implicitly and explicitly

²⁹ Catherine Bédard, "Arnaud Maggs, Front and Back," in *Arnaud Maggs: Notes capitales*, by Arnaud Maggs and Russell Keziere (Paris: Services culturelles de l'ambassade du Canada, 2000), 27.

³⁰ Doina Popescu, introduction to *Arnaud Maggs*, by Popescu, Sutnik, and Hackett, 22, quoted in Anne Cibola, "Old Works/New Works: When Contemporary Photographic Artworks Held by Canadian Public Institutions Change after Accession" (master's thesis, Ryerson University, 2014), 18. Popescu refers to a passage in an essay by curator Maia-Mari Sutnik: "Maggs's art is embedded in the modernist tradition of formalism that still involves pictorial problem solving, an issue that is richly resolved in his photographic portrait work. However, Maggs's artistic building blocks have programmatically evolved and taken on a different conceptual vocabulary"; Sutnik, "Portraits by Arnaud Maggs," 17.

addresses the quality of interplay in his practice: between modernism and conceptualism, subject and structure, and subjectivity and objectivity.”³¹ It is a point that I believe warrants repeating in the context of a study related to his graphic design and conceptual art output, as what is revealed in the literature is a portrait of a maker who is at once formally and conceptually rigorous.

Throughout Maggs’s artistic career, his conceptual frameworks were shaped by historical and art historical references. In the most recent exhibition catalogue, produced to coincide with Maggs’s receipt of the Scotiabank Photography Award, curator Sophie Hackett explores the complex and layered historical references and influences related to his *After Nadar* series (2012) in particular. The work comprises a series of self-portraits of Maggs dressed in costume as Pierrot, which, as the title suggests, were done after a series of nineteenth-century portraits by Nadar (Gaspard-Félix Tournachon) (1820–1910) and Adrien Tournachon (1825–1903) of Charles Deburau as Pierrot. As Hackett asserts, “*After Nadar* is a celebration of the artist’s ability to interpret and reinterpret, to take artistic license.”³² The explicit connections Maggs makes to the history of photography are particularly poignant, as it was the last series completed before his death.

The exhibition catalogue prepared to accompany *Identification* (May 4–September 16, 2012) at the National Gallery of Canada provides the most exhaustive overview of Maggs’s career and output. In addition to reproductions of a significant number of works by the artist, it includes a text by Josée Drouin-Brisebois, an interview with Maggs conducted by Charles

³¹ Cibola, “Old Works/New Works,” 18.

³² Sophie Hackett, “Arnaud Maggs Takes a Turn as Pierrot,” in Popescu, Sutnik, and Hackett, *Arnaud Maggs*, 116.

Stainback, and a chronology prepared by Rihannon Vogl. Although the emphasis certainly remains on Maggs's artistic output, Stainback's interview addresses his early career, providing valuable insight into Maggs's network of contacts and influences. Additionally, Vogl's chronology in *Identification* offers a timeline of Maggs's life and careers, including key details of when and where he worked as a designer.³³

What remains scarce in the literature on Maggs, however, is an extended and explicit discussion of the influence his commercial practice had on his ways of working and of seeing photographically, as an artist. Among the exceptions is curator Ingrid Jenkner's analysis in her essay that accompanied *Arnaud Maggs: Numberworks*, an exhibition mounted at the Macdonald Stewart Art Centre in Guelph in 1989. The work Maggs created during this period moved away from the serial portraits he was previously making to focus on numbers and letterforms. Highlighting the consistent ongoing emphasis on repetition and classification in his practice, Jenkner positions Maggs's numberworks as extensions of both his graphic design experience and his photographic portraits.³⁴ Outside of the curatorial context, in "Arnaud Maggs: Back to Ink," artist and designer Robert Tombs makes connections between Maggs's early careers and his artistic expression. Offering a chronological overview of his varied careers and points of transition, Tombs draws attention to some key alignments between Maggs's design career and fine art approaches in particular. "Looking back at the early graphic marks from the approximate 'now' of this article," Tombs declared in 2008, "one can clearly see the seeds of exuberant expression, whether manifested in line, tone, colour, texture or shape — in

³³ It is worth noting that the chronology in *Identification* has an autobiographical quality, suggesting the need for more exhaustive research.

³⁴ Ingrid Jenkner, *Arnaud Maggs Numberworks* (Guelph, ON: Macdonald Stewart Art Centre, 1989), 7–12.

lettering, typography or illustration — that led finally, and surprisingly, to his current more cerebral serial photographic work.”³⁵ Similarly, interviews conducted by Michael Mitchell and Robert Enright for *Canadian Art* (2010) and *Border Crossings* (2012) respectively help to signal the importance of design to Maggs as an artist.³⁶

Absent almost entirely from the literature on Maggs, though, are a close examination and discussion of the technologies and processes involved in his design career, and of the overlapping and productive period of experimentation between his commercial photography career and his move to fine art. This is unsurprising given the lack of material more broadly on Canadian graphic design history. While designers, scholars, and critics have been expanding the literature on graphic design in the United States and Britain, its Canadian history is underrepresented. In the mid- to late 1970s there were growing calls for a recognition that design differed from art and needed its own history. As Robin Kinross outlined in a 1985 text that grappled with what a history of design should look like, “Design was different: part of ordinary life and to be *used* (not put in museums), and it needed to be studied not as a series of isolated objects but as an activity, in its whole social and material context.”³⁷ It was in 1983 that Philip B. Meggs’s *A History of Graphic Design* was first published. That textbook (now called *Meggs’ History of Graphic Design*) has been revised and republished several times over; it offered the first comprehensive overview of the history of design that extended beyond the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Kinross, along with others, has consistently pointed to the

³⁵ Robert Tombs, “Arnaud Maggs: Back to Ink,” *Devil’s Artisan* 65 (Fall/Winter 2009): 84.

³⁶ Michael Mitchell, “Abracadabra,” *Canadian Art* 27, no. 3 (2010): 140–44; Robert Enright, “Designs on Life: An Interview with Arnaud Maggs,” *Border Crossings* 31, no. 2 (June/August 2012), 40–57.

³⁷ Robin Kinross, “Design History’s Search for Identity,” in *Graphic Design: History in the Writing, 1983–2011*, ed. Sara De Bondt and Catherine de Smet (London: Occasional Papers, 2014), 17. Kinross’s text was first published in *Designers* by the Society of Illustrators, Artists, and Designers, 1985.

need for more writing about design. In particular he has favoured the notion of design criticism over design history, insisting that what was absent from the field was scrutiny.³⁸

A number of authors and publishers have risen to the challenge. *Meggs' History of Graphic Design* has since been followed by a significant number of textbooks, monographs, and edited volumes on design history, many of which seek to fill gaps in Meggs's publication.³⁹ Take, for example, Susan Doyle, Jaleen Grove, and Whitney Sherman, whose *History of Illustration* (2019) brings together a range of contributors who examine the global history of illustration specifically, including its sociocultural relevance and impact and its overlaps with graphic design. Or, David Jury, who puts the focus on the "jobbing" printer's role in shaping design history in *Graphic Design Before Graphic Designers: The Printer as Designer and Craftsman, 1700–1914* (2006). Consider also Briar Levit, who in *Baseline Shift: Untold Stories of Women in Graphic Design History* (2021) redresses the dearth of material on woman designers in the accepted canon of design history. Additionally, a number of publications offer more focused views of particular periods in design history. *Mid-century Modern Graphic Design* (2012) by Theo Inglis, for instance, is a richly illustrated overview of American design production in the mid-twentieth century specifically. Maggs gets the briefest of mentions in a caption where Inglis outlines Monogram Art Studios' relationship with Columbia Records in the 1950s:

New York-based Monogram Art Studios had a contract to design record sleeves for Columbia during the early Fifties. They also created sales-promotion material for several pharmaceutical companies. Monogram often designed the Columbia covers themselves in-house, without crediting a specific designer, but often they commissioned an artist from a large pool of freelance graphic designers and illustrators, such as Ronald Clyne,

³⁸ Ibid., 19.

³⁹ Some select examples: Johanna Drucker and Emily McVarish, *Graphic Design History: A Critical Guide* (Boston: Pearson, 2013); Stephen Eskilson, *Graphic Design: A New History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2019); Steven Heller, ed., *Teaching Graphic Design History* (New York: Allworth Press, 2019); Richard Hollis, *Graphic Design in the Twentieth Century: A Concise History* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2021).

Rudolph de Harak, Art Seiden, Arnaud Maggs, George Lois and Erle Yahn.⁴⁰

I will address this period of Maggs's career in detail in chapter 1, "Graphic Design and Illustration."

The past thirty years have also seen an increase in publications addressing design theory and criticism. In the realm of theory, for example, Audrey Bennett's *Design Studies: Theory and Research in Graphic Design: A Reader* (2006) and Helen Armstrong's *Graphic Design Theory: Readings from the Field* (2009) are volumes of essays that explore the fundamentals of graphic design theory. Insisting on graphic design as a research-oriented practice, Bennett asserts that "*Design Studies* affirms that graphic designers are producers of interdisciplinary knowledge and not just visual translators of a client's knowledge"⁴¹ — a useful reminder in the context of this project, which seeks to examine Maggs's interconnected practices. Allworth Press's *Looking Closer* series, comprising five edited volumes of critical writing on graphic design, the first of which was published in 1994 and the last in 2006, expands design criticism. With a largely Western focus — the United States and Britain in particular — the volumes aim "to present the most provocative and compelling voices in design criticism."⁴² Nevertheless, more than thirty years after Kinross called for critical scrutiny and a written history of design, the editors of *Graphic Design in the Writing*, published in 2014 complete with a republication of Kinross's

⁴⁰ Theo Inglis, *Mid-century Modern Graphic Design* (London: Batsford, 2019), 92.

⁴¹ Audrey Bennett, introduction to *Design Studies: Theory and Research in Graphic Design: A Reader* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2006), 21.

⁴² Michael Bierut, William Drenttel, and Steven Heller, eds., foreword to *Looking Closer 5: Critical Writings on Graphic Design* (New York: Allworth Press, 2006), vii. See also similar compilations, such as *Design Culture: An Anthology of Writing from the AIGA Journal of Graphic Design* (New York: American Institute of Graphic Arts/Allworth Press, 1997). It is important to note that a cadre of prominent British and American designers, writers, and critics define this literature. Bierut, Drenttel, Heller, Jessica Helfand, Ellen Lupton, and Rick Poynor, for example, appear repeatedly in collected volumes as editors and writers.

earlier essay, still identify the need for a written record. “Finally, a word about words: calling this book a ‘reader,’” they contend, “was for us a way to underscore the theoretical and discursive potential of graphic design, and to argue that its history needs not only to be exhibited and illustrated, but also produced and debated ‘in the writing.’”⁴³ Despite the growth of the literature of design history since the 1980s in Britain and the United States, the written record remains young and ripe for expansion.

By comparison, Canadian design history literature remains even more cursory and underdeveloped. As design historian Brian Donnelly points out in “Locating Graphic Design History in Canada,”

the relative lack of design studies in Canada ... design institutions here never established broadly ideological claims regarding this country’s unique or national design culture, as was so often the case elsewhere and in other fields (such as literature or art). Canada, in other words, has never merited a chapter in Meggs.⁴⁴

Canada’s graphic design history has been published largely in journals, magazines, and master’s theses and doctoral dissertations. Donnelly, for example, explores the mid-century period in Canadian graphic design in “Mass Modernism: Graphic Design in Central Canada, 1955–1965, and the Changing Definition of Modernism,” wherein he asserts that, “despite its presence as a major industry in Canada, and its well-established status as a field of study at universities ... graphic design in Canada has not been comprehensively or even critically studied.”⁴⁵ In a two-

⁴³ Sara De Bondt and Catherine de Smet, eds., *Graphic Design: History in the Writing, 1983–2011* (London: Occasional Papers, 2014), 5.

⁴⁴ Brian Donnelly, “Locating Graphic Design History in Canada,” *Journal of Design History* 19, no. 4 (Winter 2006): 285.

⁴⁵ Brian Donnelly, “Mass Modernism: Graphic Design in Central Canada, 1955–1965, and the Changing Definition of Modernism” (master’s thesis, Carleton University, 1997), 1.

part overview of design history in Canada published in *Applied Arts* magazine, Will Novosedlik outlines dual influences on Canadian modern graphic design in particular. He emphasizes that its development was anchored initially in the widespread influence of William Morris's Arts and Crafts movement, which he says dominated approaches to Canadian design for four decades.⁴⁶ Despite this early interest in a decorative aesthetic informed by Morris and his characteristic emphasis on craftsmanship and handwork, Novosedlik points to the growing appeal of European Bauhaus teachings for designers in the 1940s and beyond: "Contrary to the Morrisian ideal of recovering the past to create a better present, the Bauhaus goal of breaking with the past to build a new future appealed to a nation that wanted to forget the hardships of depression and war."⁴⁷ His overview addresses these influences and motivations and offers select examples of design work by practitioners who include Carl Dair (1912–1967) — whose work I will address later in relation to Maggs — Theo Dimson (1930–2012), Allan Fleming (1929–1977), Burton Kramer (b. 1932), and Jim Donohue (1934–2022). Novosedlik's overview is brief and, as a result, he mentions only a few key players.

Despite a strong reputation in the industry, as I will demonstrate in chapter 1, Maggs is absent from Novosedlik's overview, as is the case in the recent documentary film *Design Canada* (2019), directed by Greg Durrell, which also traces Canada's design history in the modernist period. Using archival footage and a series of interviews with prominent Canadian designers who worked in the mid-century period, Durrell's film underscores the significance of design in shaping Canadian identity. Acknowledging the limited space and time afforded by the

⁴⁶ Will Novosedlik, "Our Modernist Heritage," pt. 1, *Applied Arts* 11, no. 1 (March/April 1996): 31.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 32.

film format, Durrell explains: “Unfortunately [Maggs] will not be in the film. It’s funny how fast 75 minutes go, it will allow us to focus on the flag, CN, CBC, Expo67 and only 1–2 more major topics.”⁴⁸ A scarcity of literature on Canadian graphic design creates a challenge when framing the work of Maggs, as well as that of others who have been excluded from the already limited material that is available. Canada’s graphic design history, then, remains less accessible to those outside the field, including art historians and curators. Maggs cannot be easily slotted into the existing framework for understanding graphic design production in this country and beyond, which helps to explain in part the underexplored connections between Maggs’s early careers in creative industries and his later career as a fine artist.

As a point of comparison, a similar emphasis on artistic output versus design production has defined the literature on American artist Edward Ruscha (b. 1937) until recently. Ruscha, who is considered a canonical conceptual artist, is often invoked in discussions about the “deadpan” or “amateur” approach to conceptual art photography.⁴⁹ “Despite its dependence on photography, conceptual art exhibits little *photographic* self-consciousness,” Nancy Foote writes in “The Anti-Photographers,” “setting itself apart from so-called serious photography by a snapshot-like amateurism and nonchalance that would raise the hackles of any earnest professional.”⁵⁰ This “anti-photography” stance that has come to define the photographic approaches of conceptual artists, particularly in North American writing on the subject, is

⁴⁸ Greg Durrell, email message to author, June 6, 2017.

⁴⁹ See for instance, Jeff Wall, “Marks of Indifference: Aspects of Photography in, or as, Conceptual Art,” in *Reconsidering the Object of Art, 1965–1975*, ed. Ann Goldstein and Anne Rorimer (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1995), 247–67; also published in *The Last Picture Show: Artists Using Photography, 1960–1982*, ed. Douglas Fogle (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 2003), 32–44.

⁵⁰ Nancy Foote, “The Anti-Photographers,” in Fogle, *The Last Picture Show*, 27; first published in *Artforum* 15 (September 1976): 46–54. Emphasis in the original.

supported by claims made by Ruscha himself. “Photography’s just a playground for me,” he told A.D. Coleman in 1972. “I’m not a photographer at all.”⁵¹ But curator Margit Rowell asserts that despite the many statements he has made that minimize the importance of photography in and to his work, “the photographer’s ‘way of thinking and seeing’ is fundamental to the visual formulation of Ruscha’s ideas.”⁵² In 1960 he took on a number of design-related roles, including painting For Sale signs, doing layout work for an advertising agency, and personalizing ceramic gifts for Sunset House, and in 1965 he began doing layouts for *Artforum* magazine, where he worked for a few years as a graphic designer, using the name “Eddie Russia.”⁵³ It was in 1962, while he was still working as a designer, that Ruscha began creating *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*, which was published the following year. This was the first of several photobooks, including *Every Building on the Sunset Strip* (1966), that he would design and produce over the following decade.

Although Ruscha’s design background has not been ignored, and in recent years the connections between art and design in his work have been explored in more detail, the literature on his work, as with Maggs, tends to emphasize his art career. Nevertheless, over the past couple of decades, exhibitions have examined Ruscha’s connections with design, including *Cotton Puffs, Q-tips, Smoke and Mirrors: The Drawings of Ed Ruscha*, which was mounted at the

⁵¹ A.D. Coleman, “I’m Not Really a Photographer,” in Fogle, *The Last Picture Show*, 22; originally published in the *New York Times*, September 10, 1972.

⁵² Margit Rowell, “Cotton Puffs, Q-tips, Smoke and Mirrors: The Drawings of Ed Ruscha,” in *Cotton Puffs, Q-tips, Smoke and Mirrors: The Drawings of Ed Ruscha* (New York/Göttingen: Whitney Museum of American Art/Harry N. Abrams/Steidl, 2004), 11.

⁵³ Michael Dooley, “Ed Words: Ruscha in Print,” *Print* 48, no. 5 (September/October 1994): 32–42, <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A16464948/AONE?u=anon~d901ab04&sid=googleScholar&xid=ea18e401>.

Whitney Museum of American Art in 2004.⁵⁴ Similarly, an exhibition titled, *Ed Ruscha: Standard* (2012–13), at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, highlighted his connection to graphic design, cinema, and urban history. Most recently, *Ed Ruscha / Now Then*, a major retrospective mounted by the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 2023, addresses Ruscha’s cross-disciplinary approach to artmaking.⁵⁵

Cornelia Butler stresses the collision of various categories, methodologies, and investigations — including graphic design — in his early work. And, as with Rowell’s assertion that Ruscha’s photography shaped his way of seeing and thinking, Butler suggests the same of these “dialectical investigations.”⁵⁶ She quotes the artist as saying “I started looking at ideas as though they were stains,” which she connects to this hybrid blending of approaches in his early career.⁵⁷ Reinforcing further still the influence of Ruscha’s production work on his body of art is Jennifer Quick’s “Back to the Drawing Board: Ed Ruscha 1956–68,” which maintains that his commercial art practice was fundamental to shaping both the material and conceptual frameworks for his artwork. Her dissertation takes an in-depth look at the design procedures associated with the commercial art drawing board and how those and other commercial art techniques informed Ruscha’s practice. He “frequently deployed procedures executed on the drawing board, including layout, projection drawing, and type design, as well as commercial art techniques of replication, scaling, and paste-up layout,” Quick explains. And she insists that he “used and reinvented these commercial arts methods to stake out his place in the world of

⁵⁴ Margit Rowell, ed., *Cotton Puffs, Q-tips, Smoke and Mirrors: The Drawings of Ed Ruscha* (New York/Göttingen: Whitney Museum of American Art/Harry N. Abrams/Steidl, 2004).

⁵⁵ Christophe Cherix, Ana Török, and Kiko Aebi, *Ed Ruscha / Now Then: A Retrospective* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2023).

⁵⁶ Cornelia Butler, “Information Man,” in Rowell, *Cotton Puffs*, 28.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

postwar art.”⁵⁸ Ellen Lupton and Jennifer Tobias likewise explore the design processes that shaped Ruscha’s work in “Production: Eddie Russia,” their contribution to the *Ed Ruscha / Now Then* catalogue. Situating his work in relation to design history and practice, Lupton and Tobias acknowledge not only that “production by Eddie Russia subsidized the art of Ed-werd Rewshay,” but also they insist that design practice was significant to his artistic development.⁵⁹

These analyses of Ruscha’s work — particularly Quick’s — challenge commonly held ideas about deskilling and amateurism as intimately linked to conceptual practice. Ruscha’s practice helps to situate Maggs’s work and approach, as it offers contextual detail about the modes of production and dissemination that characterize canonical conceptual art. These modes frequently operate within the conventions of graphic design, including, for example, an emphasis on the grid, informational systems such as text, and the use of mass marketing publishing strategies such as the book format, as found in Ruscha’s practice. In some extreme examples of conceptual art, the concept is expressed only as design. Consider, for instance, Robert Barry’s *Closed Gallery* (1969), comprising three invitations to gallery shows in Amsterdam, Turin, and Los Angeles, for which an exhibition announcement was designed and printed that stated simply: “During the exhibition the gallery will be closed.” *Closed Gallery* offers a succinct example of design’s significance to conceptual art. New exhibitions and scholarship are contributing to a re-examination of canonical understandings and interpretations of conceptual art and its origins, but attention to the significance of design in

⁵⁸ Jennifer Eileen Quick, “Back to the Drawing Board: Ed Ruscha 1956–68” (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2015), 3.

⁵⁹ Ellen Lupton and Jennifer Tobias, “Production: Eddie Russia,” in Cherix, Török, and Aebi, *Ed Ruscha / Now Then*, 226.

this context remains scarce.⁶⁰ With examining these connections between art and design in the work of Ruscha and Barry, among others, an understanding emerges that helps counter prevailing narratives around conceptual art, the relationship between commercial and fine art practices, and their respective careers as artists. Likewise, investigating the disciplinary intersections in Maggs's career trajectory and output reveals that design is not only a critical component of conceptual art production, but also a significant factor in Maggs's own artistic exploration and development.

Maggs was known for his disciplined, rigorous approach to image making, and his visual and conceptual languages were shaped by his decades of creative practice in commercial art. Frequently positioned within the context of conceptual art, his works reveal a synthesis of strategies from each stage of his career. His explorations of the grid, portraiture, and collecting informed his key thematic investigations, which included systems and classification, time, memory, and death. Maggs himself said that "everything I had done as a designer I put into the photographs right away,"⁶¹ which in many ways, given the minimal material related directly to his design practice, functions as a call to action, to more thoroughly assess what his design

⁶⁰ See Alexander Alberro and Sabeth Buchmann, eds., *Art after Conceptual Art* (Cambridge, MA: Generali Foundation/MIT Press, 2006); Grant Arnold and Karen Henry, eds., *Traffic: Conceptual Art in Canada, 1965–1980* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2012); Luis Camnitzer, Jane Farver, and Rachel Weiss, *Global Conceptualism: Points of Origin, 1950s–1980s* (New York: Queens Museum of Art, 1999); Heather Diack, *Documents of Doubt: The Photographic Conditions of Conceptual Art* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2020); Fogle, *The Last Picture Show*; David Joselit, "Conceptual Art 2.0," in *Contemporary Art 1989 to the Present*, ed. Alexander Dumbadze (Newark: John Wiley & Sons, 2013), 159–68; Eve Meltzer, *Systems We Have Loved: Conceptual Art, Affect, and the Antihumanist Turn* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013); Catherine Morris and Vincent Bonin, eds., *Materializing Six Years: Lucy R. Lippard and the Emergence of Conceptual Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012); Michael Newman and Jon Bird, eds., *Rewriting Conceptual Art* (London: Reaktion Books, 1999); Matthew S. Witkovsky, ed., *Light Years: Conceptual Art and the Photograph, 1964–1977* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011).

⁶¹ Enright, "Designs on Life," 46.

practice offered to his photography. Photographer Paul Orenstein was young and just starting out in the field when he assisted Maggs in the 1970s. Orenstein insists that, in order “to understand him, I think you need to understand the graphic designer and the commercial photographer at least equally to the fine art photographer.”⁶²

The intersection of disciplines in Maggs’s practice is key to his artistic explorations; as such, these discourses and his related practices need to be examined together. Doing so offers a more robust picture of Maggs by disrupting some of the commonly repeated published accounts of his career trajectory and by reinforcing his standing as a significant contributor to design and commercial photography in Canada. Moreover, Maggs’s multifaceted career points to the impact that commercial practice had on shaping his artistic explorations, and, by extension, his practice underscores the significance of the applied arts to Canada’s art history. In my view, this helps to dismantle modernist notions of the artist as genius, which has tended to frame the narrative about Maggs. Acknowledging the interconnections between his early creative practice and the development of his formal and conceptual strategies as an artist also helps to extend an understanding of conceptual art more broadly. Design, as Maggs shows us, is critical to conceptual art output. Likewise, examining the disciplinary intersections in Maggs’s practice offers examples of how the conceptual art syntax — often viewed as systematic, objective, and cold — offers a powerful framework for engaging with evocative and emotive content.

⁶² Paul Orenstein, discussion with author, August 9, 2017.

In order to provide this new lens on Maggs's work and processes, I needed to work from the archive, using both existing materials found in various repositories and interview transcripts that I created. My project has involved archival research in several locations. The Estate of Arnaud Maggs maintains fine art photographs and records related to his photographic production, including grant applications, correspondence with curators and institutions, and hanging schemes for his artworks, along with photographic documentation and other related materials. These have been helpful in shaping a view of Maggs's artistic production as well as his activities in navigating the arts funding and gallery worlds. Curatorial records at the National Gallery of Canada, including correspondence, images, planning notes, and articles and reviews, have further illuminated Maggs's artistic practice and engagement with curators and institutions. Library and Archives Canada (LAC) holds fonds related both to Maggs's photographic production and his design career; this material forms a significant part of the body of work on which my research is focused. The design-related holdings include final design and illustration work in print, but also examples of process work that demonstrate how he created the images, modified them, and prepared them for publication. This research was further supported by holdings in fonds connected to those who knew Maggs. For example, the Marjorie Harris fonds, held by McMaster University, includes fashion spreads from *Maclean's* magazine as well as notes related to her work. The *Maclean's* digital archive likewise offered invaluable visual examples connected to my research; moreover, the tables of contents and mastheads during the time when Maggs was contributing to the magazine were equally illuminating, corroborating or clarifying dates and providing insight into the range of writers, editors, designers, and art directors he worked with. Similarly, the Advertising & Design Club of

Canada (ADCC; previously the Art Directors' Club of Toronto) maintains an online archive of past award winners, which helped to clarify dates and expand an understanding of Maggs's collaborators while he was working in design and commercial photography. The ADCC digital archive also provided valuable information about the accolades Maggs received for his work and further insight into his years of overlapping practice.

A historical approach — one that emphasizes the significance of materiality — frames my project. Acknowledging materiality asserts a view of artworks or designs as objects. The materials used in the making of an object, the modes of display and dissemination, and the processes and technologies involved at each of those stages are significant to understanding the purposes, reception, and interpretation of the object. The materiality of art and design objects has particular relevance to my considerations of the processes used in Maggs's design and commercial photography work, and the way in which this work relates to ways of seeing in his subsequent artistic career. Scholars Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart, whose edited volume *Photographs Objects Histories: On the Materiality of Images* addresses the "objectness" of photographs, have influenced my methodological position here. Their own stance has been shaped in part by a "material turn" in anthropology and cultural studies, as well as by what they term a "social turn" in art history.⁶³ They assert that "photographs have inextricably linked meanings as images and meanings as objects" and insist on "the centrality of materiality as a formative element in the understanding of photographs as social images."⁶⁴ Edwards and Hart

⁶³ Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart eds., *Photographs Objects Histories: On the Materiality of Images* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 3.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 2, 15. Similarly, Sandra Dudley locates the renewed interest in material culture studies and theory in anthropology in the 1980s and 1990s through the work of scholars such as Susan Pearce, Daniel Miller, and Ian Hodder, whose writing on material culture has contributed to the rise of object-focused studies; Introduction to

point to Roland Barthes, who famously argued in his discussion of the image and the referent that “the photograph belongs to that class of laminated objects whose two leaves cannot be separated without destroying them both: the windowpane and the landscape.”⁶⁵ Likewise, they identify in the materiality of photographs two interrelated forms: the plasticity of the image (which relates to technical and physical characteristics) and the presentational form of the object (as a cabinet card or a gelatin silver print, for example).⁶⁶ Both the plasticity of the image and the presentational form of the artwork are significant considerations in the development of Maggs’s ways of working and seeing.

As I have pointed out elsewhere, curator Geoffrey N. Swinney calls for recognition of the museum register — the “documents and textual practices that construct collections and that record the career trajectories, or biographies, of objects” — as both a working tool and a museum object.⁶⁷ Swinney’s language implicitly acknowledges the narrative function of the museum. Textual material, including Maggs’s notebooks (also in the fonds at LAC), is particularly significant to my analysis. Textual records related to the National Film Board’s Still Photography Division and the Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography (CMCP) — now held by the National Gallery of Canada — for example, which include correspondence and exhibition notes, were important to my research; this material provides contextual detail about

The Thing about Museums: Objects and Experience, Representation and Contestation, ed. Sandra Dudley, Amy Jane Barnes, Jennifer Binnie, Julia Petrov, and Jennifer Walklate (New York: Routledge, 2012), 1–8.

⁶⁵ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 6. See also Edwards and Hart, *The Thing about Museums*, 2; although they do not quote Barthes directly, they do cite Barthes and this analogy.

⁶⁶ Edwards and Hart, *The Thing about Museums*, 3.

⁶⁷ Geoffrey N. Swinney, “What Do We Know about What We Know? The Museum ‘Register’ as Museum Object,” in Dudley et al., *The Thing about Museums*, 31. See also Cibola, “Old Works/New Works,” 11.

Maggs's institutional relationships, as well as a picture of institutional dealings with photographers more broadly at the time when Maggs was working.

"An author's name," Michel Foucault argues, "is not simply an element in a discourse ... it performs a certain role with regard to narrative discourse, assuring a classificatory function."⁶⁸ Moreover, he insists that "the author is an ideological product."⁶⁹ Foucault's emphasis on the author as construction has been instrumental in centrally positioning questions of authorship in art historical scholarship. Swinney's insistence on the narrative capacity of the museum register and his call to view the register as a museum object, for example, demonstrate an extension of Foucault's argument. Foucault's insistence on the author as construct provides an important initial framework by which to address the transitions in Maggs's career, from designer to commercial photographer to artist — or, perhaps, Artist — and the way they have been positioned in the literature. The body of writings about a given artist or artwork is likewise a valuable object of study in the examination of narrative function and the construction of the artist. As I have suggested, Maggs's reinvention as an artist is often positioned as the crux of his career narrative, which in large part has been written by curators in the context of exhibitions related to his art practice as a photographer. As such, my dissertation considers the literature on Maggs's practice as a significant part of the body of work on which I will focus.

⁶⁸ Michel Foucault, "What Is an Author?" trans. Josué V. Harari, in *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, ed. James D. Faubion (New York: New Press, 1998), 210.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 221.

Scholar Kevin Moore, whose dissertation and subsequent book focused on the shaping or framing of photographer Jacques-Henri Lartigue (1894–1986) as an artist, also underscores authorship as a construction. Moore asserts:

Lartigue is a bifurcated figure in the history of photography. ... On the one hand, a photographer whose ... imagery was created outside art photography currents... on the other... a “precursor” to modern photography, a figure kidnapped from one era and smuggled into another for the purpose of bolstering the idea of a distinct photographic tradition for art photography in America.⁷⁰

His study, which examines the historical context related to both the making of Lartigue’s images and the shaping of Lartigue as an artist, highlights the significant impact John Szarkowski had in developing the canon of modern photography, during his tenure as curator and director of photography at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York.⁷¹ Moore acknowledges other precedents for this kind of study, which, as he asserts, are necessitated by a tendency in the history of photography to “discover [and assimilate] ‘lost masters.’”⁷² He points to Rick Dingus’s study of Timothy O’Sullivan (1840–1882), who, like Lartigue, was framed by Szarkowski as a “primitive genius.”⁷³ Likewise, Moore calls attention to Molly Nesbit’s study of Eugène Atget, which sought to emphasize Atget’s intention to create documents rather than produce “vernacular expressions,” as argued by Szarkowski and Maria Morris Hambourg.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Kevin Moore, “Jacques-Henri Lartigue (1894–1986): Invention of an Artist” (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2002), 31. See also Kevin Moore, *Jacques Henri Lartigue: The Invention of an Artist* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004). All the references made here, however, are to Moore’s dissertation.

⁷¹ The “transformation” of Lartigue that Moore explores occurred late in the photographer’s life, well after the photographs cited by Szarkowski were taken. As such, Szarkowski’s is a retrospective interpretation of Lartigue’s work. By contrast, interpretations of Maggs’s work happened contemporaneously with the creation of the work itself.

⁷² Moore, “Jacques-Henri Lartigue,” 35.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 35–36.

Moore's project examines both the "historical" and the "mythical" Lartigue; he structured his dissertation (and book) around the concepts of formation and transformation, resulting in a two-part arrangement. My intention to consider Maggs's formation and transformation — or transition, as I prefer to call it — to fine artist borrows from that methodological approach. I have similarly structured my dissertation as two distinct parts: part 1, "Once a Designer, Always an Artist: Redefining the Mythology of Maggs," and part 2, "Once a Designer, Always a Designer: Commercial Practice and Conceptual Praxis." Moore's framework offers a useful guide for analysis of key motivations involved in transformation of the reception and interpretation of the artist. For my own project, I address both formation and transition within the contexts of design, conceptual art, and photography in Canada. Doing so offers a framework within which to emphasize the artist as narrative construction, while also insisting on the nature of the overlap between the disciplines themselves and Maggs's own chronology.

Recognizing that this dissertation will become part of the growing literature on Maggs's practice, it is important to acknowledge my own biases and subjectivities. Despite blurred boundaries between life and work, and art and design — and the ever-evolving definitions of those practices — I nevertheless find myself acutely aware of the tensions that exist in my own life and work between the fine and applied arts. As a graphic designer and a professor in the photography and illustration departments at Sheridan College, I inhabit various roles as a maker and educator. In these roles I often experience the conflicts and intersections between theory and practice, as well as the interplay between art and commerce. My academic research revolves around the convergence of design, photography, and conceptual art, which aligns with Maggs's work. When I first discovered Maggs's early design, illustration, and commercial

photography work, I was thus immediately interested in how those initial commercial paths influenced his visual and conceptual languages.⁷⁵ I was also struck by the absence in the literature about his work of explicit discussions about the impact that design processes and technologies had on his broader creative output, for example, or how industry changes affected his career trajectory.

In order to expand biographical and contextual details, I conducted a series of interviews with friends and family, assistants, curators, scholars, and design professionals with whom Maggs worked (see appendix A), resulting in more than twenty-eight hours of audio material and an archive of related transcripts.⁷⁶ Their recollections help to enrich published accounts of Maggs's life and career, offering keen insights, specific details and examples, and clarifications. Memory is, of course, subjective, "a constructive process, prone to bias and errors."⁷⁷ Its existence, functions, and articulations are fraught with contradictions and dualities. As scholar Aleida Assmann argues, the construction of memory is "always profiled by the edges of forgetfulness."⁷⁸ However, compounding accounts and anecdotes of several individuals who knew and worked with Maggs helps to establish a more comprehensive picture of Maggs both personally and professionally. In her introduction to *Virginia Woolf's Nose: Essays on Biography*, Hermione Lee refers to Elizabeth Gaskell's emphasis on anecdotes as key

Essays on Biography, Hermione Lee refers to Elizabeth Gaskell's emphasis on anecdotes as key

⁷⁵ Anne Cibola, "Arnaud Maggs: A Career in Three Acts," *PhotoED Magazine* 63 (Winter 2021/22): 32.

⁷⁶ Informed consent was provided per the York University Human Participants Research Protocol. Printed transcripts will be retained in my personal archive.

⁷⁷ Clare J. Rathbone, Martin A. Conway, and Chris J.A. Moulin, "Remembering and Imagining: The Role of the Self," *Consciousness and Cognition* 20 (2011): 1175, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.concog.2011.02.013>.

⁷⁸ Aleida Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization: Functions, Media, Archives* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 396. Historian Pierre Nora also addresses the "dialectic of remembering and forgetting" in "Between Memory and History: *Les lieux de mémoire*," trans. Marc Roudebush, *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989): 7–24.

to biography: “Get as many anecdotes as possible. If you love your reader and want to be read, get anecdotes!”⁷⁹ Certainly, hearing directly from those who knew Maggs enlivens this text. More significantly, however, essential insights from these interviews into each of his careers helpfully illuminate details around his moments of transition from design and illustration to commercial photography, and finally to fine art. They also offer clarity around his working processes at each stage of his career. Donnelly’s work on Canada’s design history likewise involves oral history. He explains:

The graphic design tradition in Canada, then, could be said to be an oral tradition in two senses: it has been informally transmitted, primarily through studios, schools, and periodicals, without having been permanently collected, curated, or canonized in print or by institutions, and it is only now being gathered up again as an oral history from the practitioners themselves.⁸⁰

The oral histories I have recorded in this dissertation are significant in shaping an understanding of Maggs’s early careers in particular, which is important to capture not only because there is a dearth of material about Canada’s design history and Canadian commercial photography, but also because many key players in the design industry, especially from the time when Maggs was working, are no longer alive.⁸¹ Though largely specific to Maggs, this oral history helps to extend the work of others such as Donnelly, and to expand upon the limited design history published in Canada.

⁷⁹ Elizabeth Gaskell, quoted in Hermione Lee, *Virginia Woolf’s Nose: Essays on Biography* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 1. The original quotation comes from *The Quarterly Review* (1856), copied by Gaskell in her manuscript of *The Life of Charlotte Bronte* (1857); Jenny Uglow, *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Habit of Stories* (London: Faber, 1993), 406.

⁸⁰ Brian Donnelly, “Locating Graphic Design History in Canada,” *Journal of Design History* 19, no. 4 (Winter 2006): 285.

⁸¹ Indeed, since I conducted the interviews with Maggs’s friends and colleagues, three of my interviewees have died: Keith Brandscombe (in 2021), Jim Donohue (2022), and Michael Mitchell (2020). I am forever grateful for their thoughtful insights and generosity with their time.

Historian Margaret MacMillan contends that “historians who use biography ... have too long been regarded with suspicion by much of the historical profession.”⁸² Lee locates this anti-biographical position in aestheticism, connecting it to French writer Gustave Flaubert and symbolist poets such as Charles Baudelaire, who, she asserts, viewed art “as an inviolable entity, set apart from life, not to be degraded by biographical interpretation.”⁸³ However, as MacMillan insists, “we must always locate people in their times.”⁸⁴ In a recent panel discussion titled “Curating Art or Curating Artists: The Thorny Question of an Artist’s Biography,” curators, scholars, and writers grappled with the implications of biographical framing in an exhibition context. The biographical framework can be traced back to Vasari’s *Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects* (1550), which used the life stories of his contemporaries to illuminate their practices. Emphasizing that — although the artwork must come first — art writer Louisa Buck contends that “all of these different elements that feed into [the art] cannot be ignored. And, I think the artist as an individual cannot be ignored either, and the context in which they operate, and the relationships they have.”⁸⁵

Francis Bacon (1909–92) offers a useful comparison to Maggs here. In their exhaustive biography of the artist, Mark Stevens and Annalyn Swan outline how Bacon downplayed his time in Paris in the 1920s, his study of anatomy, and his success as an interior designer. Underscoring the tension between the fine and applied arts, Stevens and Swan connect this to a hesitancy among some artists — including Maggs, I argue — to be associated with early-

⁸² Margaret MacMillan, *History’s People: Personalities and the Past* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 2015), 5–6.

⁸³ Hermione Lee, *Biography: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 93.

⁸⁴ MacMillan, *History’s People*, 7.

⁸⁵ Louisa Buck, panel member, “Curating Art or Curating Artists: The Thorny Question of an Artist’s Biography,” panel discussion, Association for Art History, YouTube video, 1:27:45, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S_qk9M_Arnk, 44:38–44:50.

career commercial art that helped to pay the bills. They assert that Bacon “appeared particularly touchy [on the subject], probably because there was a moment when his design work was not an unpleasant chore but a chosen career,”⁸⁶ and they further insist that a “more significant reason for this erasure ... was Bacon’s later desire to control his public image and story.”⁸⁷ Recalling Poyner’s assertion that designers have an inferiority complex in relation to artists, Bacon’s deliberate concealment of his training and his early design successes underscores the complexities surrounding artistic identity and the differences in public reception of art and design. However, as Buck suggests, it is often what is hidden that is most interesting:

Bacon completely concealed the fact, almost, that he was a designer, a really quite successful interior designer at the beginning of his career. He concealed the fact that he went to anatomy lessons and actually did really study drawing and actually the human figure. This was part of his myth, to hide all that. And that’s as fascinating as what he did reveal — what he concealed.⁸⁸

As Stevens and Swan contend, with no apparent formal training, Bacon “could emerge miraculously as an artist, as if sprung fully formed from the head of Zeus.”⁸⁹ Biography, then, can help to reveal a range of influences and experiences that may otherwise remain concealed but contribute to shaping an artist’s work. In so doing, biographical detail — especially detail that traces professional experiences and work history — helps to unsettle perceptions of artistic genius by offering a more nuanced understanding of how an artist’s work develops through interconnected influences, life experiences, and work history. My methodological

⁸⁶ Mark Stevens and Annalyn Swan, *Francis Bacon: Revelations* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2021), 86

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Buck, “Curating Art or Curating Artists,” 44:59–45:25.

⁸⁹ Stevens and Swan, *Francis Bacon*, 86.

approach to researching Maggs was anchored in biography, and so too is the structure of this dissertation. Biographical details and context are woven throughout both parts of this dissertation in order to situate Maggs's activities and illuminate the productive dialogue between art and design throughout his career, and to disrupt the myth of the artist and seemingly inherent notions of genius.

This work comprehensively incorporates and extends content I wrote for *Arnaud Maggs: Life & Work*, with full acknowledgment and approval from both my supervisor, Sarah Parsons, and the publisher, Sara Angel.⁹⁰ The extension of this content here enables me to include deeper analyses of Maggs's work, record further insights from those who knew Maggs, and include additional visual examples. Part 1 examines the biography of Arnaud Maggs from 1926 to 1979. Through this exploration, a more complete understanding of his life and work emerges, dismantling the dominant self-mythologizing narrative that has come to define his story. Practical considerations — industry changes; financial pressures; personal relationships and circumstances, including divorce — illuminate both the challenges he faced and the choices he made, both personally and professionally. A close look at Maggs's early activity in design and illustration, discussed in chapter 1, for instance, reveals a range of influences and a distinct interest in pushing himself as a designer through informal lessons and lectures in Montreal, New York, and Italy. Maggs worked in design and advertising for over two decades, honing his skills and becoming a versatile, innovative designer who gained recognition for his self-promotional, editorial, and advertising work. A thorough exploration of Maggs's early

⁹⁰ Anne Cibola, *Arnaud Maggs: Life & Work* (Toronto: Art Canada Institute, 2022).

biography underscores his significant contributions to the applied arts in Canada. Indeed, the reputation he garnered ensured support from the Toronto community when he shifted his focus to commercial photography.

Part 1 also highlights how Maggs was both part of and greatly influenced by the changing photographic landscape of the 1960s and 1970s. As revealed in chapter 2, his move from design to commercial photography coincided with a period when perceptions of photography were shifting and the medium was increasingly being recognized as an art form. This change was influenced by institutions such as MoMA in the United States and by developments in Canada, where Maggs was working, that also acknowledged photography's significance. Key institutions, such as Library and Archives Canada, the National Film Board's Still Photography Division, and the National Gallery of Canada, began or maintained active collecting practices during that time. Likewise, public perceptions of photography were changing through the medium's representation in popular culture, and there was a correlated increase in demand in the advertising and design industries. In addition to these broader changes, Maggs's decision to explore new creative directions in photography was also shaped by specific contemporaneous changes at Art Associates, his workplace.

The recollections of Maggs's peers and colleagues reveal a range of interconnections between his design and commercial photography practices, and, as his photographic career developed, his undeniable role in shaping Canadian magazines during the 1960s. A close investigation of this period, using interviews, archival documents, and negatives from Maggs's commercial practice, demonstrates productive overlaps between his commercial photography career and his fine art practice. The explorations in part 1 also reveal that Maggs's transition

from commercial photography to fine art was less an abrupt reinvention and more a gradual evolution that was shaped by life experiences and creative practice. Commencing with a 1969 trip to Europe, Maggs underwent a period of self-discovery during which he blended his commercial and artistic practices. A close examination of this important period of transition in chapter 3 offers a more nuanced understanding of the factors that shaped his career trajectory and his artistic narrative.

Part 2 extends this exploration with an emphasis on how Maggs's years of professional practice in design, illustration, and photography shaped his artworks both visually and conceptually. Through an ongoing exploration of his biography, additional anecdotes from those who knew and worked with Maggs, and examination of specific examples, part 2 emphasizes Maggs's artistic output as a synthesis of minimalist and conceptualist vocabularies, the processes of commercial photographic practice, and design strategies. The systematic and sequential approach that defined his fine art portraiture, for example, aligns with the language and approaches characteristic of conceptual art, a movement with which Maggs is often associated. Chapter 4, however, examines the motivations and practical realities that shaped works such as *Ledoyen Series*, *Working Notes* (1979), for example, demonstrating that the strategies employed by Maggs emerged from the processes and practices of commercial photography.

The grid, a dominant structure in Maggs's artwork, aligns with the language of conceptual art and minimalism, but it is also integral to the structure and processes of both photography and design. Part 2 explores how Maggs's early careers anticipated the dominance of the grid in his artwork. Chapter 4 examines how his understanding of the grid as a structural

device shaped his visual language as an artist. Chapters 4 and 5 both consider how Maggs's grid-based artworks reveal a dialectic. He exploited the analytical potential of the grid format in many of his large-scale artworks, while at the same time he explored the device's expressive capacity. His portraits of Joseph Beuys and André Kertész, for instance, foster an analytical read that characterizes much of his work, but they also foreground the grid's ability to emphasize time and duration. Likewise, works such as *Travail des enfants dans l'industrie: Les étiquettes* (1994) and *Notification xiii* (1996) are at once analytical and evocative. Anchored in Maggs's interest in graphic design, they serve as powerful examples of his use of the grid format and his attention to scale in the creation of affective visual archives of found ephemera. This exploration of the influence of Maggs's early careers on his artistic production underlines the significance of commercial work in shaping both the formal and conceptual inquiries that define his artistic practice. And, as I have noted, it also insists on the importance of the applied arts to both Maggs's own history and to that of Canada.

Introduction: Illustrations



Figure 0.1 Margit Bennett, "Decorating Is a Highly Personal Art," *Canadian Homes and Gardens*, January 1958, 13–15. R7959-5476, ref. R7959-311-4-E, vol. 837, Library and Archives Canada (LAC), Ottawa. © *Canadian Homes and Gardens*.



Figure 0.2. Leah Gingras, "The Weird and Wonderful House of Arnaud Maggs," photographs by Ray Weber, *Star Weekly*, August 7, 1965. R7959-5478, ref. R7959-313-8-E, vol. 837, LAC, Ottawa. © *Star Weekly*.

PART ONE

Once a Designer, Always an Artist: Redefining the Mythology of Maggs

1. Graphic Design and Illustration

Arnaud Cyril Benvenuti Maggs was born in Montreal on May 5, 1926, to Enid and Cyril Maggs.

His first name came from his mother's father, who had been the commanding officer of a Sikh regiment in British India, where Enid and her siblings spent the early part of their childhood.

During a visit to England when she was thirteen, her father died of pneumonia; her mother died of tuberculosis soon afterward.¹ After her parents died, the children were sent to Canada to live with their grandparents, who had retired to Windsor, Nova Scotia. Cyril Maggs was from Wallasey, near Liverpool, England, but his mother was Italian; Benvenuti was her maiden name. "Her family claimed to be direct descendants of the Italian sculptor Benvenuto Cellini," Maggs later explained.² After fighting in the First World War, Cyril immigrated to Canada, and eventually both he and Enid ended up in Montreal, where they met. They married in 1925.

Though Maggs recalls his father singing in a choir and doing some amateur acting, Cyril made his living in insurance.³ He was a clerk at Sun Life Assurance for his entire career, a job that supported the family even through the Depression. The household was not without its tensions, however. Maggs felt that "my mother generally disliked my father," suggesting that her feelings shaped his own tense relationship with Cyril.⁴ Enid adored her son. "My mother would impress upon me that I was both different from other children and superior to them," Maggs recounted. "As a consequence, I had a combined inferiority/superiority complex."⁵ Maggs was the first of three children but it wasn't until he was ten years old that his sister,

¹ Arnaud Maggs, 15, panel 2 ("672/159/834"), 1989, Library and Archives Canada (LAC), Ottawa, R7959-6396.

² Maggs, 15, panel 1 ("492/357/816"), LAC, R7959-6396.

³ Robert Enright, "Designs on Life: An Interview with Arnaud Maggs," *Border Crossings* 31, no. 2 (June/August 2012): 44.

⁴ Maggs, 15, panel 2.

⁵ Quoted in Enright, "Designs on Life," 44.

Heather, was born. From the moment she arrived, the two were inseparable.⁶ His brother, Derek, followed five years later.

Initially the Maggs family lived just west of Montreal, in Strathmore, Quebec. It was there that Maggs would await weekly visits from the Popcorn Man, which, as noted in the Introduction, marked a significant aesthetic experience that would shape his interests in design and display. Later the family moved to Prince Albert Avenue in Westmount. Maggs's sister, Heather Cook, describes "a big rambling house" bustling with relatives.⁷ As a teenager in Montreal, Maggs showed an aptitude for design work. He created posters for high school dances and as a Grade 11 student was invited to design the yearbook cover (fig. 1.1). A spare design with an emphasis on type and negative space, the cover was Maggs's first published work. Hinting at his creative aspirations, his yearbook entry for that year predicts "cartooning for the National Geographic" as his future. In interesting alignment with his own multi-faceted career, Maggs cites American journalist, historian, food critic, and photographer Lucius Beebe (1902–66) as his prototype. Beebe, who was an untrained photographer, is credited with inventing the railroad-picture book genre with his 1938 publication *High Iron: A Book of Trains*. Just like Beebe, Maggs was ultimately known for his work in several realms but also as a personality.

Maggs had a passion for music, forming a jazz club with friends. His wife, the artist Spring Hurlbut, recalls him telling stories of their antics, including how his mother shut down the club because he and his friends had started throwing records out his bedroom window.⁸ He

⁶ Maggs, 15, panel 1.

⁷ Heather Cook, *Pictures from a Darkroom Floor: My Life in France* (Toronto: Two Ladies Press, 2012), 9.

⁸ Spring Hurlbut, discussion with author, February 28, 2020.

would go to see musicians such as Cab Calloway, Count Basie, and Duke Ellington, among others, at Chez Maurice Danceland in Montreal, a venue often packed in the early 1940s with crowds of teenagers. He and his friends would also go dancing at Victoria Hall in Westmount, where the Johnny Holmes Orchestra — the band that gave Maynard Ferguson and Oscar Peterson their starts — performed every Saturday night.

Maggs did not enjoy school and he never graduated. Instead, toward the end of the Second World War he decided to join the Royal Canadian Air Force. His basic training began in Toronto in 1944. Though he wanted to become a pilot, he failed the test and was sent to Prince Edward Island to train as a rear gunner at the No. 10 Bombing and Gunnery School. By the time he had completed his training, the war was nearly over. “I never saw action,” he explained, “which was fortunate, because the rear gunners were the first to get knocked off.”⁹ Maggs was placed in the reserves and returned to Quebec. After his return he decided to become a commercial artist and enrolled in the Valentine School of Commercial Art in 1945. The school was the studio of a commercial artist located above a drugstore at Greene and St. Catherine Streets in Westmount. Although his stint there was short-lived — he quit after a month — his interest in commercial art persisted.

Maggs’s career in commercial art began formally when he was hired in 1947 to work as an apprentice at the Montreal offices of Bomac Federal Ltd., a commercial art studio and engraving house with locations in Toronto, Ottawa, and Montreal. At first he performed a range

⁹ Enright, “Designs on Life,” 44.

of tasks, such as cutting mats and changing paint, to support the other artists.¹⁰ Impressed by their work, his design aspirations were cemented and he committed to developing typographic skills. “I quickly realized that I wanted to be a ‘layout man,’” he explained. “To do this I needed to acquire an excellent knowledge of typeface[s] and the ability to execute them faithfully by hand.”¹¹ While apprenticing, he designed an anniversary emblem for the Sun Life Assurance Company. “I was 21 at the time,” Maggs noted, “and won a contest for best design plus \$25.”¹² He continued to develop his design skills through apprenticeship and professional practice. For two decades he worked in advertising and graphic design as a designer, illustrator, and art director at prominent studios in Canada, the United States, and Italy.

When Maggs was working as a commercial artist in the 1950s and 1960s, one of his regular tasks was to create layouts and fit type. Working with translucent layers on illustration board, graphic artists would create paste-ups or mechanicals with the artwork positioned in preparation for reproduction. Using a process camera, the paste-ups and mechanicals were converted to negatives, which would then be used to prepare plates for the printing press. Black artwork and typography formed the base layer of a paste-up or mechanical. For coloured designs and illustrations, transparent overlay sheets would be positioned on top to indicate the areas of colour. Each overlay had registration marks to ensure that all the layers aligned.

How to Keep Your Food Safe in Summer, an illustration prepared by Maggs for the June 30, 1962 edition of *Canadian Weekly*, depicts a family heading off to a picnic. The paste-up for

¹⁰ Charles A. Stainback, “Q and A with Arnaud Maggs,” in *Arnaud Maggs: Identification*, ed. Josée Drouin-Brisebois (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 2012), 110.

¹¹ Maggs, 15, panel 5 (“294/753/618”), LAC, Ottawa, R7959-6399, quoted in Rhiannon Vogl, “The Making of Arnaud Maggs,” in Drouin-Brisebois, *Arnaud Maggs: Identification*, 212.

¹² Arnaud Maggs, handwritten note attached to Sun Life Assurance Co. of Canada 31st Annual Dinner booklet, 1977, R7959-6421, Arnaud Maggs fonds, LAC.

the illustration comprises a base layer of fine black linework, a spot-colour overlay for the banner, and an overlay drawing of colour for the rest of the illustration (figs. 1.2–1.4). As this example shows, if an area required modification, the designer or illustrator could simply redraw the detail and paste it on top of the original drawing. Linework and fills could also be revised using black or white ink or paint, depending on whether information had to be added or removed. Despite being noticeable in the paste-up, such modifications were rendered seamless by the photographic process. Although fixes like these would be made before the paste-up was photographed, they are akin to dodging and burning in the photographic printing process, which allows for targeted brightening and darkening. The necessary precision and close study of shape and form that resulted from this type of design practice developed into preoccupations that would guide Maggs's art and design work throughout his career.

Maggs worked as a graphic designer in the mid-twentieth century, when design was heavily influenced by European modernism and the profession itself was being redefined. The visual and conceptual underpinnings of European modernist art movements, such as Dada, De Stijl, and Russian Constructivism, informed twentieth-century developments in graphic design. They also shaped Maggs's artistic development and appreciation of certain artists. Curator Ann Thomas recalls his fascination with El Lissitzky (1890–1941):

I think he has grown to like certain artists' work in a kind of obsessive way. So we have in our living room at home a whole bunch of books and ... I knew if I came home and the Lissitzky book was sitting on our coffee table — I remember saying to my husband, "Oh, did Arnaud Maggs come by?" He'd always pull it out ... he pulled out his Lissitzky book again — always, always, always. The spine of it, of course, has "El Lissitzky" in a very constructivist typeface and for me it was the perfect sort of Arnaud declaration in a way. Everything he did had some connection to that structured way of thinking about art, so

he never abandoned his design principles or knowledge or understanding, he just brought it into his more creative sphere, finding an interest in archival objects and signs, markings. So he then sent me a picture. He took a photograph of his Lissitzky book on the coffee table — the spine of it — and sent it to me. I just remember saying, “Oh my god, Arnaud, you’re such a signature piece — ‘Arnaud was here.’”¹³

Maggs’s deep admiration for El Lissitzky underscores the lasting influence of European modernist movements on his work and his ways of thinking.

The Bauhaus, which sought to integrate art and life, was particularly instrumental in shaping a critical context for design when Maggs was coming of age as a designer. Bauhaus teachers, including Josef Albers (1888–1976), Wassily Kandinsky (1866–1944), Paul Klee (1879–1940), and László Moholy-Nagy (1895–1946), for example, rejected representational imagery and pursued abstraction in their work. Moholy-Nagy, whose practice was multidisciplinary, maintained that typography and photography were fundamental to modern visual language and communication. Jan Tschichold (1902–74), who was inspired by Russian Constructivism and the design teachings of the Bauhaus, published *Die Neue Typographie* in 1928. In line with Moholy-Nagy’s call for clarity, *The New Typography* insisted on efficient communication in design, promoting asymmetry, sans serif typefaces, bold rules, and, importantly, the positive use of negative space. These developments in graphic design expanded beyond Europe to impact the ideas of artists and designers in North America. An influx of European émigrés further cemented European influence on modern graphic design in America. Albers and Moholy-Nagy were among many artists and designers who left Europe for the United States to escape Nazi Germany. Both brought their ideas and influence to new teaching posts — Albers

¹³ Curator Ann Thomas, discussion with author, July 12, 2017.

at the experimental Black Mountain College in North Carolina, and Moholy-Nagy at the New Bauhaus (later the Institute of Design) in Chicago — joining others who were beginning to frame a context for graphic design education in American schools.

Informed by Moholy-Nagy and Tschichold, Canadian designer and typographer Carl Dair (1912–67) helped to shape graphic design in Canada from the late 1940s until his death in 1967. In Montreal he partnered with Henry Eveleigh in 1947 to form what has since been called “Canada’s first true graphic design office.”¹⁴ Commissioned by E.B. Eddy, a Quebec-based paper manufacturer, Dair wrote and designed a series of eight hugely influential booklets on the subjects of typography and printing. These publications included *Type & Paper* (1946), *Design for Printing* (1947), *Type Talks* (1948), *Portfolio of the Work of the Great Master Printers* (1948), *Design of Letterheads & Business Forms* (1951), *The E.B. Eddy Handbook of Printing Production* (1952), *Spacing* (1954), and *The Art of the Printer* (1956). Design historian Brian Donnelly, who lauds the series as “Dair’s most important single contribution to the development of design,” points to their influence on prominent Canadian designer Allan Fleming (1929–77), and Will Novosedlik highlights their use as standard texts at the Institute of Design in Chicago.¹⁵ Dair’s first book, *Design with Type* (1952), lays the groundwork for effective typographic design and the importance of contrast. The book developed in part out of lectures Dair delivered at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts and l’École des Beaux-Arts.¹⁶

¹⁴ Will Novosedlik, “Our Modernist Heritage,” pt. 1, *Applied Arts* 11, no. 1 (March/April 1996): 34.

¹⁵ Brian Donnelly, “Mass Modernism: Graphic Design in Central Canada, 1955–1965, and the Changing Definition of Modernism” (MA thesis, Carleton University, Ottawa, 1997), 22–24; Novosedlik, “Our Modernist Heritage,” 34.

¹⁶ The book “drew heavily on his teaching notes from classes given at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts and the École des Arts Graphiques ... and in the informal Saturday morning seminars he conducted with Montreal printers and designers”; Donnelly, “Mass Modernism,” 25.

Following his time as an apprentice in Montreal, Maggs went to Toronto, where he continued to hone his skills as a letterer at Brigden's Ltd. There he met Margaret (Maggie) Frew, a fashion illustrator at the studio; the two were married in 1950 and soon decided to return to Montreal. Back in Montreal, Maggs went to Dair's evening lectures. Having no formal education in design, such lectures were important to Maggs. In *Design with Type*, Dair asserts that, fundamental to typographic design — and design more broadly — is the organization of diverse elements into a visual unit.¹⁷ Establishing a “visual unit,” to borrow Dair's term, was a structural and spatial strategy Maggs would employ as a designer, and also as an artist. Dair's influence on Maggs's artistic work will be addressed in Part 2 of this dissertation.

In addition to influencing Maggs's understanding of typographic form and structure, Dair's classes introduced him to the work of American practitioners. The work of graphic designer, illustrator, and writer Jerome Snyder (1916–76) particularly resonated with Maggs. Snyder designed album covers and his illustrations appeared in prominent American magazines, including *Fortune*. In the 1950s he was the first art director of *Sports Illustrated* magazine, where he championed illustration. Characterized by a playful energy and a sense of humour, Snyder's designs and illustrations were an important source of inspiration for Maggs (fig. 1.5). “I would take things out of his drawings and try to disguise them so people wouldn't know where I had gotten the influence!” Maggs admitted.¹⁸ Snyder's name also appears in Maggs's

¹⁷ Carl Dair, *Design with Type* (New York: Pellegrini & Cudahy, 1952), 44–45. The book would later be expanded and republished in 1967 by University of Toronto Press.

¹⁸ Gail Fisher-Taylor, “Anatomy of a Portrait: An Interview with Arnaud Maggs,” *Photo Communiqué* (Fall 1982): 8.

notebook in his lists and descriptions of key influences on his work.¹⁹ Like Snyder, Maggs would sometimes work as an illustrator, sometimes as a designer, and frequently as both.

In the 1950s, Swiss graphic designers, including Emil Ruder (1914–70) and Joseph Müller-Brockmann (1914–96), extended the functionalism of the Bauhaus and *The New Typography* by introducing an underlying grid, resulting in what is commonly referred to as the Swiss International Style, or simply “Swiss Style.” The Swiss Style dominated corporate graphic design globally, including in the United States and Canada. Maggs’s work for IBM in the 1960s, for example, demonstrates the visual economy of Swiss functionalism (figs. 1.6 and 1.7). His use of an underlying grid, contrast of scale, and the functional use of colour achieve a sense of order and establish a visual hierarchy. However, Maggs’s work fits largely within the context of American illustrative graphic design such as Snyder’s, which reacted against the rigidity of the International Style. Maggs’s design work tended to lean in a more playful, energetic direction, defined by the use of illustration and often hand lettering. *Chicken a la King* (1953) offers an example of his lively approach to both imagery and text in his illustrations from that period (fig. 1.8).

Founded in 1954 by Seymour Chwast (b. 1931), Milton Glaser, Reynold Ruffins (1930–2021), and Edward Sorel (b. 1929), Push Pin was a hugely influential design and illustration studio in New York City, with an international reputation and a stable of admirers and copiers. As designer Barry Zaid explains, there were “a number of illustrators who — like Push Pin — also worked with lettering.” Zaid asserts that, in Toronto, Arnaud Maggs and Theo Dimson

¹⁹ Arnaud Maggs, “Personal Journal: Beginning 1975,” unpaginated notebook, 1975–81, LAC, Ottawa, R7959-5522, R7959-137-3-E, vol. 839.

“were tops in that area at the time,” noting that Dimson’s approach was refined and Maggs’s was mischievous.²⁰ Push Pin’s output was characterized by the use of bold illustration and expressive typography, and its aesthetic influence on graphic design is hard to overstate (fig. 1.9). Though the studio was formed the same year Maggs left New York, its impact can still be seen in his work, and he cites the studio in the list of influences in his notebook.²¹ Push Pin’s characteristic aesthetic is evident in Maggs’s promotional material for Art Associates in 1964 (fig. 1.10). The grid-based layout and varied illustrations in *1945* (1964), for example, demonstrate similar structural and stylistic strategies. Likewise, the boisterous logo design and posters Maggs created to advertise Toronto-based antique store Antiques & Things (figs. 1.10–1.13) recall the work of the famous American studio. The seductive draw of Push Pin had an impact on Toronto’s design community, leading to an exodus of several of Maggs’s colleagues to New York to work there in the 1960s, including Hedda and Doug Johnson and Zaid, who went to Push Pin following a brief stint at Art Associates when Maggs was art director.

In 1952 Maggs received an early honour in *Canadian Art* magazine, when Dair proclaimed, “Montreal has its bright sons in Arnaud Maggs, George Wilde, Hector Shanks and Tancred Marsil.”²² Dair was summarizing the 1951 exhibitions of the Art Directors Clubs of Montreal and Toronto, drawing attention to successful projects and the promise of the younger generation, arguing that “the new crop of artists is sturdy and sound and imaginative.”²³ Maggs’s work would continue to be included in *Canadian Art* roundups of strong contemporary

²⁰ Designer Barry Zaid, email discussion with author, July 5, 2017.

²¹ Maggs, “Personal Journal.”

²² Carl Dair, “New Patterns in Canadian Advertising,” *Canadian Art* 9, no. 4 (Summer 1952), 157.

²³ *Ibid.*, 173.

graphic design throughout the 1950s and 1960s, and the magazine twice commissioned his illustration work for the cover in the 1950s.²⁴ In 1960, when the *Canadian Art* published a special issue on graphic design, eleven of his designs were featured on its pages.²⁵

Though the influence of European modernism is undeniable in design work of this period, design historians Steven Heller and Greg D’Onofrio contend that “American Modernists came in many flavors.”²⁶ Among these they note the “rational moderns,” whose work is closely aligned with the Swiss Style; the “exuberant moderns,” who explored “big ideas” using typography; and the “eclectic moderns,” who emphasized personal, expressive elements in their designs.²⁷ The illustrative approaches of many American designers in the mid-century period exemplify this kind of exuberance and eclecticism, including that of prominent graphic designer Alvin Lustig (1915–55), who had a profound impact on Maggs’s way of thinking.

In 1951 Maggs’s first son, Laurence (also known as Lorenzo), was born. That same year he rented studio space in downtown Montreal and started work as a freelance designer. Maggs offered layout, design, and illustration services to a range of local clients, including Sport Togs and Ciba Inc. (figs. 1.14 and 1.15). As a member of the Montreal Art Directors Club, he regularly attended meetings, and through the club he encountered Lustig, who delivered a lecture there in 1951. “It was a thrilling experience,” Maggs wrote. “He helped my unarticulated thoughts

²⁴ See *Canadian Art* 13, no. 4 (Summer 1956) and *Canadian Art* 15, no. 2 (Spring 1958).

²⁵ See *Canadian Art*, special Issue on graphic design (May 1960): 54, 56, 62, 70, 97, 140, 181, 183, 187, 197, and 198.

²⁶ Steven Heller and Greg D’Onofrio, *The Moderns: Midcentury American Graphic Design* (New York: Abrams, 2017), 13.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

become clear.”²⁸ According to Maggs, Lustig insisted that “if you’re going to be an artist it has to permeate every cell of your being, it has to inform all your decisions, day and night, 24/7.”²⁹ It was a pivotal moment for him; Lustig’s lecture energized Maggs and inspired him to move to New York City with his young family.

Lustig died very young — he was just forty years old — from complications related to diabetes. In his short career he wrote and lectured on the role and impact of graphic design, expounding both its significance and the promise of its relationship with painting. “The inter-relationship between the highest kind of experimental painting and the best kind of design is a very close one and a very profound one,” he argued in 1952. Moreover, he declared, “it was no accident that the best design came out of the Bauhaus, where you also had some of the best painters.”³⁰ Indeed, the aesthetic influence of abstract painters such as Joan Míro (1893–1983) and Klee is undisguised in many of his designs, including the book jackets he created for New Directions Books. Founded by James Laughlin, New Directions published the work of modernist writers, including D.H. Lawrence, Ezra Pound, Tennessee Williams, and Henry Miller, among others. Lustig’s cover for *The Man Who Died* (1947), by Lawrence, for instance, recalls the visual economy of Míro’s work of the same period, featuring an emphasis on line, point, and shape that playfully blurs the boundaries between representation and abstraction (fig. 1.16). Frequently using the language of abstraction and surrealism, Lustig’s approach was to capture

²⁸ Maggs, “Personal Journal.”

²⁹ Enright, “Designs on Life, 46.

³⁰ Alvin Lustig, “Designing: A Process of Teaching,” in *The Collected Writings of Alvin Lustig*, with an introduction by Philip Johnson (New Haven, CT: Holland R. Melson Jr., 1958), 20–21; first published in the *Western Arts Association Bulletin*, September 1952.

the spirit of the text rather than offer a literal illustration. The result, as one critic claimed, “has more imaginative power than direct illustration could achieve.”³¹

In his notebooks, Maggs also names Míro as an inspiration, alongside other painters who explored abstraction, such as Pablo Picasso (1881–1973), Klee, Arshile Gorky (1904–48), and Willem de Kooning (1904–97), and he cites *Fantastic Art, Dada & Surrealism*, published by MoMA in 1947, as an important influence. “The book even smelt surrealistic,” he wrote.³² But more important than Lustig’s design work as aesthetic inspiration were his philosophies on design and life, which had a more enduring impact on Maggs’s career, even as it evolved from commercial to fine art practice.

In his writings, Lustig addresses the differences between the applied and the fine arts. “The basic difference between the graphic designer and the painter or sculptor,” he explains, “is his search for the ‘public’ rather than the ‘private’ symbol.” Further, he insists, “it is this tragic split between the public and private experience that makes both our society and our art fragmentary and incomplete.”³³ Lustig’s aim, though, was not to be a painter; he believed in the role of design and the responsibility of the designer. As he wrote to Laughlin in 1948, “I think that it is in this effort to break down the barrier between art and life that the most challenging problem lies, and which I feel my contribution might be made.”³⁴ In addition to a significant and influential body of work, it is his insistence — inspired by the Bauhaus — on integrating art and

³¹ C.F.O. Clarke, “Alvin Lustig: Cover Designs,” *Graphis* 4, no. 23 (1948): 244.

³² Maggs, “Personal Journal.”

³³ Alvin Lustig, “Graphic Design,” in *The Collected Writings of Alvin Lustig*, with an introduction by Philip Johnson (New Haven, CT: Holland R. Melson Jr., 1958), 35–36.

³⁴ Alvin Lustig to James Laughlin, January 9, 1948, Correspondence, 1943–55 and undated, Bequest of James Laughlin IV, Houghton Library, Harvard University, quoted in Steven Heller and Elaine Lustig Cohen, *Born Modern: The Life and Design of Alvin Lustig* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2010), 56.

life through design that contributes to Lustig's legacy. His practice extended beyond graphic design to include textiles, architecture, and furniture, which aligned with his push for interdisciplinarity in the practice. His dedication to shaping design as a profession with mutable boundaries perhaps contributed to Maggs's comfort in moving from one discipline to another later in his career.

In New York, Maggs worked as an illustrator and freelance designer and took evening classes in design. Not recognizing the name of Alexey Brodovitch (1898–1971) as the instructor of one such class, Maggs selected a different teacher.³⁵ It is interesting to speculate what direction his work might have taken had he enrolled in Brodovitch's class instead, because the famed Russian-born art director favoured photography. His experimental and dynamic use of the medium often featured the work of European avant-garde photographers such as Man Ray, for instance.

Maggs's time in New York shaped his work ethic and attention to detail. "I think what influenced me the most," he explained, "was the professionalism and the drive to excel, which I hadn't experienced in Montreal. Art directors would send me back again and again to my studio to make a drawing better."³⁶ He also met designer and illustrator Jack Wolfgang Beck (1923–88), who influenced his work. At Tuesday night gatherings with Beck's friends, Maggs encountered other New York-based designers, including Rudolph de Harak (1924–2002) and Jerome Kuhl (1927–2016). Beck had established the Loft Gallery in his Manhattan studio, where

³⁵ Stainback, "Q and A," 110.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 111.

he would show the artwork of local illustrators. Among them was Andy Warhol (1928–87), who, like Maggs, began his career in commercial art. When Warhol's drawings appeared on Beck's gallery walls, Maggs purchased three of them for five dollars each.

There are several parallels between Warhol's career and that of Maggs. The two were working in commercial art in New York City at the same time and their professional circles overlapped. As Maggs notes in his late-career interview with Charles Stainback, however, they were at different stages in their careers. Maggs was a young, ambitious designer, keen to earn a living. Warhol, by contrast, was firmly established in the commercial realm and already making moves in the direction of art. "Andy wasn't struggling in the same way. In some circles he was regarded as the artist of the moment," Maggs explained. "If he was struggling, it was to become the artist he eventually became. I was just beginning. I was struggling to survive."³⁷ Nevertheless, Warhol remained an important influence.

Many have pointed to affinities between the formal characteristics of Maggs's artwork and the grids and seriality of Warhol and the minimalist sensibilities of Sol LeWitt (1928–2007) and Carl Andre (1935–2024).³⁸ The multiplicity and repetition that define Warhol's silkscreened portraits, for example, shaped Maggs's ideas about structure and format both conceptually and formally. Declaring Warhol his favourite artist, Maggs himself asserted, "He would show a grid, repeating the same image with variations caused by either too much or too little ink in the silkscreen. I would show a grid, which would appear to be the same image but which would

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ See, for instance, Maia-Mari Sutnik, "Portraits by Arnaud Maggs," in Philip Monk, Arnaud Maggs, and Maia-Mari Sutnik, *Arnaud Maggs: Works, 1976–1999* (Toronto: Power Plant, 1999), 9. See also Philip Monk, "Life's Traces," in the same volume, 20–21.

actually be very similar portraits of the same subject.”³⁹ Akin to Lustig’s influence, Warhol also had an impact on Maggs’s conception of what it is to be an artist. Aligned with the languages and strategies of advertising and popular culture, Warhol’s artistic identity was defined both by his persona and the work itself. Though Maggs was not intent upon establishing a persona to the same degree as Warhol, he understood the value of storytelling in shaping views about his work, particularly as he sought to move away from commercial work in the 1970s and establish himself as a serious artist. As attested by his 1980 portraits of artists such as Joseph Beuys (1921–86) and André Kertész (1894–1985) — discussed in more detail in part 2 — Maggs also shared Warhol’s fascination with celebrity and collaboration.

In New York, Maggs’s interests in design and jazz coalesced. He produced album covers for both Columbia Records and Prestige Records (figs. 1.17–1.19), including one for *Jazz at Massey Hall* (fig. 1.20). That now legendary recording features the quintet of Dizzy Gillespie, Charles Mingus, Charlie Parker, Bud Powell, and Max Roach. Following a meeting with Mingus and Roach, Maggs mapped out the design while riding the L train back to his studio.⁴⁰ American graphic designer Alex Steinweiss (1917–2011) is credited with developing the idea of album cover art in the late 1930s. Likewise, designer Reid Miles (1927–93), who in his prolific career produced nearly five hundred album covers, is viewed as the “father of the modern jazz album cover.”⁴¹ Record companies were recognizing the positive impact that design had on sales. By the

³⁹ Stainback, “Q and A,” 111.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 110.

⁴¹ Heller and D’Onofrio, *The Moderns*, 262. For a further overview of the period, see Theo Inglis, “Record Sleeves,” in *Mid-century Modern Graphic Design* (London: Batsford, 2019), 63–107.

postwar period, record jackets had evolved way beyond a protective sleeve, and the illustrated album cover had become the norm. Inspired by abstract art, designers of the period created covers that were often lively and fun, conveying the spirit of the music in their design. Many prominent artists, illustrators, and designers, including Albers, Lustig, Jim Flora (1914–98), and Snyder, among others, helped to define the look of the record sleeve in the 1940s, '50s, and '60s. Maggs's style at the time was varied, but the artwork of *Jazz at Massey Hall* exemplifies his playful illustrative approach. On the back of the album he explored space and typographic form by setting the copy inside large letterforms spelling "JAZZ."

It was a challenging time, however. As Maggs later recalled, "We couldn't afford to go to a movie, much less hear some live jazz. I pounded the pavement in the daytime looking for interesting work. At night I laid out full-page newspaper ads for out-of-town department stores."⁴² In 1954, when the Maggses were expecting their second son, Toby, they returned to Toronto, where Maggs took a post at William R. Templeton Studios. An ad he created for Templeton during that time illustrates the photography services offered by the studio (fig. 1.21). Although the design scene in New York offered Maggs new contacts and instilled a sense of rigour, living in Toronto was easier for the young family.

By 1957 Maggs had decided to freelance again, setting up shop in the basement of the family's Don Mills home. His third child, daughter Caitlan, was born that same year. Maggs produced a range of design and illustration work during this period, further expanding his versatility and skills. As his ad for Templeton suggests, he also worked with photographers in his role as a designer; indeed, all the major design firms had photography departments. In 1957

⁴² Stainback, "Q and A," 111.

Maggs collaborated with photographer Peter Croydon on an editorial project for *Chatelaine* about frozen desserts, pairing Maggs's playful lettering and Croydon's bright images of ice cream (fig. 1.22). Their work was recognized by the Art Directors' Club of Toronto (now the Advertising & Design Club of Canada) in 1958; in the award listing, Maggs, who was billed as the designer, also shared photographer and artist credits with Croydon.⁴³ In addition to his advertising and editorial work, in the late 1950s Maggs produced a number of book cover designs that further established his presence in the design landscape of Toronto. Like much of his work, his book covers frequently combined both design and illustration. In keeping with the approach of designers such as Lustig, for example, Maggs's covers — as seen in the work he produced in 1958 for Sinclair Ross's *The Well* and *Figurets: More Fun with Figures*, by J.A.H. Hunter — also often explored abstraction (figs. 1.23 and 1.24).

Maggs moved to Italy with his family in 1959, when he was invited to work for the prominent design firm Studio Boggeri. Founded in 1933 by Antonio Boggeri (1900–89), the Milan-based studio had an international reputation. With its roster of design masters, including Boggeri himself, Aldo Calabresi (1930–2004), Max Huber (1919–92), Bruno Monguzzi (b. 1941), Bruno Munari (1907–98), and Bob Noorda (1927–2010), the studio's work exemplified Italian and Swiss modernism. Their output was characterized by clear communication, harmony between positive and negative space, and the use of structural grids. During his tenure there, Maggs worked on designs for the tire company Pirelli and Roche Pharmaceuticals (figs. 1.25 and

⁴³ See Advertising & Design Club of Canada, "Award/1958, Editorial Art," https://theadcc.ca/archive/211_1958_award_non-fiction. Maggs maintained contact with Croydon after leaving his design career, and photographed him in 1981, when he documented the Toronto arts and cultural scene for his projects *48 Views*, *Turning*, and *Downwind*.

1.26). His illustrative approach to *tubi per irrorazione* for Pirelli is bold and simple, particularly in contrast to the bold blue flood of the background; it exemplifies the harmonious spatial relationships that characterized the studio's work. Maggs also took drawing classes at the Accademia di belle arti di Brera. But his stay in Italy was brief and difficult. He called the move "disastrous," admitting that he and the family "seemed unable to cope with the change in lifestyle."⁴⁴ Though just a young child at the time, Caitlan Maggs recalls that some of the reasons the family struggled included Maggs's difficulties getting paid and illness and injury among the children:

It was a bit of a fiasco ... the guy didn't pay him. So he was working for about a month; we were all there — he had three little kids: six, three, and a baby. I had dysentery, Toby had scarlet fever or something, and my other brother met with a terrible accident there. It was just — it was really tough on my parents. It was really tough and it didn't work out.⁴⁵

They decided to change course and went back to Don Mills. Foreshadowing his eventual shift to photography, Maggs created a promotional piece to announce his return to Toronto that depicts the artist, smiling, camera in hand (fig. 1.27). That project was honoured in 1961 in the "Direct Advertising Art, Illustration" category by the Art Directors' Club of Toronto.

Caitlan recalls growing up in a household filled with artistic inspiration and encouragement:

My dad at that point was working from home as a freelance illustrator, and getting lots of work designing book covers and record covers and stuff like that. ... He had this art studio in the basement where we were all encouraged to go and draw whenever we wanted. My mother had also been an artist, but she was in the period where once you got married, with babies arriving, you didn't have a career. But we were all encouraged to draw a lot. So we were a family of a lot of drawing and whatnot ... Even when I was a

⁴⁴ Maggs, 15, panel 5.

⁴⁵ Caitlan Maggs, discussion with author, September 14, 2017.

teenager ... we'd go up to his parents' cottage in the Laurentians and we would do these group drawings. You know, where each of us would take a turn to draw.⁴⁶

Her memories of life in Don Mills point to Maggs's busy design career, but they also reveal the artistic values that he and Maggie instilled in their children.

Around the same time, Maggs became a graphic designer at Sherman Laws and Partners. Describing him in those years, graphic designer Jim Donoahue remembered:

My first time meeting him, he was a slick-looking guy. He was tall and thin and wore really handsome suits. I don't know why I remember the suits, but he always had a very nice suit on. He was very well dressed. So he was very much the part at that time in his life, he was very much an advertising guy. That's a bit of a cliché, but that's really what he was.⁴⁷

Art director and designer Keith Branscombe had similar recollections about Maggs's style. Fellow designer Allan Fleming encouraged him to meet with Theo Dimson and Maggs when he returned from the United Kingdom in search of work in Canada. "I called them up and I went over to Danforth Road," Branscombe explained. "And I thought, 'Well, that's a couple of spiffy-looking guys that really dressed up'. So *Mad Men*—looking, you know."⁴⁸

Maggs's reputation for design would continue to strengthen. In the 1950s and 1960s, even if they were employed by a studio, it was common for designers to create self-promotional projects to generate interest in their work. Maggs produced several such projects over the course of his design career that are notable for their originality. Donoahue remembered one series that Maggs made using brightly coloured tissue paper. Alongside playful illustrations, Maggs silkscreened phrases such as "Let Me Try, I'll Come Out Swinging"

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Jim Donoahue, discussion with author, August 10, 2017.

⁴⁸ Keith Branscombe, discussion with author, September 14, 2017.

and “Use Me on Your Next Campaign: Designer Sgt Maggs” (figs. 1.28 and 1.29). In another example from the same period, Maggs printed on tissue a constellation of flowers in bright colours.⁴⁹ The inventiveness of his work and the unconventional materials left a lasting impression. “I can’t remember anybody ever trying anything like that,” Donohue explained. “Tissue paper is pretty light and flimsy, and silkscreen ink is pretty heavy ... It was so bizarre to try to do something on tissue.”⁵⁰ In his view, the work revealed something of Maggs’s character as a designer: “at the time it occurred to me that this was a very unusual guy who would attempt that ... But Arnaud did it ... he actually pulled it off.”⁵¹ But, as Donohue contended, Maggs did not “pull it off” simply from a technical point of view: “they were quite cunning images.”⁵²

When *Idea*, a Japanese magazine with a focus on international advertising art, dedicated its June 1960 issue entirely to visual communication in Canada, Maggs was featured. He was joined by just fifteen other Canadian designers, including industry heavyweights Dimson and Fleming. Maggs’s spreads featured self-promotional work, editorial illustration, booklet design, and advertisements he had done for Pirelli while in Milan. At the height of his design career, Maggs’s innovative approach and willingness to experiment won the respect and admiration of his peers. Fellow designer Arnold Rockman declared: “His talent is an exciting one, rare anywhere, but especially in Canada. Unlike most designers in Toronto, Maggs likes to turn his hand to anything.”⁵³ He was regularly recognized by inclusion in design and illustration annuals

⁴⁹ *Canadian Art*, special Issue on graphic design (May 1960): 130.

⁵⁰ Donohue, discussion.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Arnold Rockman, “Goodbye, Arnaud Maggs,” *Toronto Star*, January 19, 1963, 46.

in both Canada and the United States. The bold, minimalist design he created in 1961 for the cover of the thirteenth annual of the Art Directors' Club of Toronto, for example, was featured in the 1962 annual of the American Institute of Graphic Arts (fig. 1.30). In a 1963 overview of trends in Canadian book design, writer, designer, and publisher William Toye states that Maggs's cover "has original touches that are stunning in their simplicity."⁵⁴ Produced around the same time, Maggs's letterhead for photographer Paul Rockett was similarly minimal (fig. 1.31). It was recognized by the Advertising & Design Club of Canada in 1963, in the "Direct Advertising Design, Letterheads" category.

Maggs also continued to illustrate. Toye points to his facility in this area, arguing that "illustration for children's books, which could do with a short article of its own, is a special skill, and Maggs is one of our few graphic artists who do original and memorable work in this field (his *Nunnybags* [sic] for Gage is outstanding)"⁵⁵ Likewise, Donohue acknowledged the strength of Maggs's work in both domains as part of what defined him as a designer:

He had a good eye. He was a good designer. He was also an illustrator — he could draw. A lot of graphic designers can't actually draw. They can design stuff, but they can't draw. So illustrators are often in a different world, but Arnaud could certainly handle both. He did wonderful stuff. He had an interesting way of looking at things. It separated him. He wasn't one of the usual graphic designers. He was a little bit different.⁵⁶

Maggs's book jacket design and illustrations for *Nunny Bag: Stories for Young Canada* were published in 1962. Epitomizing his childlike illustration style for the book, his playful line drawings for Muriel Maclean's "A Taste of Spring," Fred Swayze's "Shadowed," and Beatrice Shand's "Lost — A Temper! A Fairy Fantasy," for example, express his ongoing fascination with

⁵⁴ William Toye, "Book Design in Canada," *Canadian Literature* 15 (Winter 1963): 62.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Donohue, discussion.

the human head, particularly in profile (figs. 1.32–1.34). The illustrations for “Joey, the Lost Kangaroo,” by Hermione Frey, integrate line drawings and type, another of Maggs’s ongoing design interests (figs. 1.35–37). In addition to underscoring these consistent preoccupations, this work also points to a range of design and illustration influences that include Warhol and Alexander Girard (1907–93).

In 1962 Maggs attended the International Design Conference in Aspen, Colorado. A long-time admirer of Girard, on his way home he stopped off in Santa Fe to meet the American designer. The meeting went well and Girard invited Maggs to work for him. This time Maggs left Toronto on his own, leaving Maggie and the three children in Canada. While in Santa Fe he developed fabric designs for Herman Miller; although ultimately the pillows (figs. 1.38–1.41) were not produced, they convey the whimsy that characterizes both Maggs’s and Girard’s work. The snake from this series (fig. 1.38) bears some resemblance to a well-known Herman Miller design created by Girard in 1961. After three months in Santa Fe, Maggs returned to Toronto, where he joined Dimson at Art Associates as a graphic designer; in 1965 he was appointed the firm’s art director.

With nearly two decades’ experience in design and illustration, Maggs frequently received accolades for his work and was well established as a key player in Toronto’s design scene. As publisher and editor Jonathan Eby proclaims, “Jim Donoahue, Arnaud Maggs, and Theo Dimson were the young hotshot designers in the 60s.”⁵⁷ Maggs’s work in graphic design garnered him a reputation for excellence in the local advertising and design world, a reputation he could leverage when shifting careers. Around 1966, when he began working as a

⁵⁷ Jonathan Eby, discussion with author, November 3, 2017.

photographer, he was well supported by those who were familiar with his design work.

According to Marjorie Harris, the Modern Living editor at *Maclean's*, her colleagues in the art department insisted on working with Maggs. “The guys in the art department all of course knew who Arnaud was, because he was a well-known graphic designer, and they told me, ‘You’re going to use this guy Arnaud,’” she explains. “And I said, ‘Well, great, because how much does he know about fashion photography?’ And they said, ‘Nothing. So it’ll be very inventive’ — and it was.”⁵⁸ Examining this period in detail helps to underscore Maggs’s contribution to design and illustration, thereby preserving his legacy within the applied arts in Canada. Tracing his biography during this period, alongside the changing landscape of the design industry, also offers insight into the challenges he faced as he developed his career, and provides greater clarity around his decisions to change course.

⁵⁸ Marjorie Harris, discussion with author, October 4, 2017.

Chapter 1: Illustrations

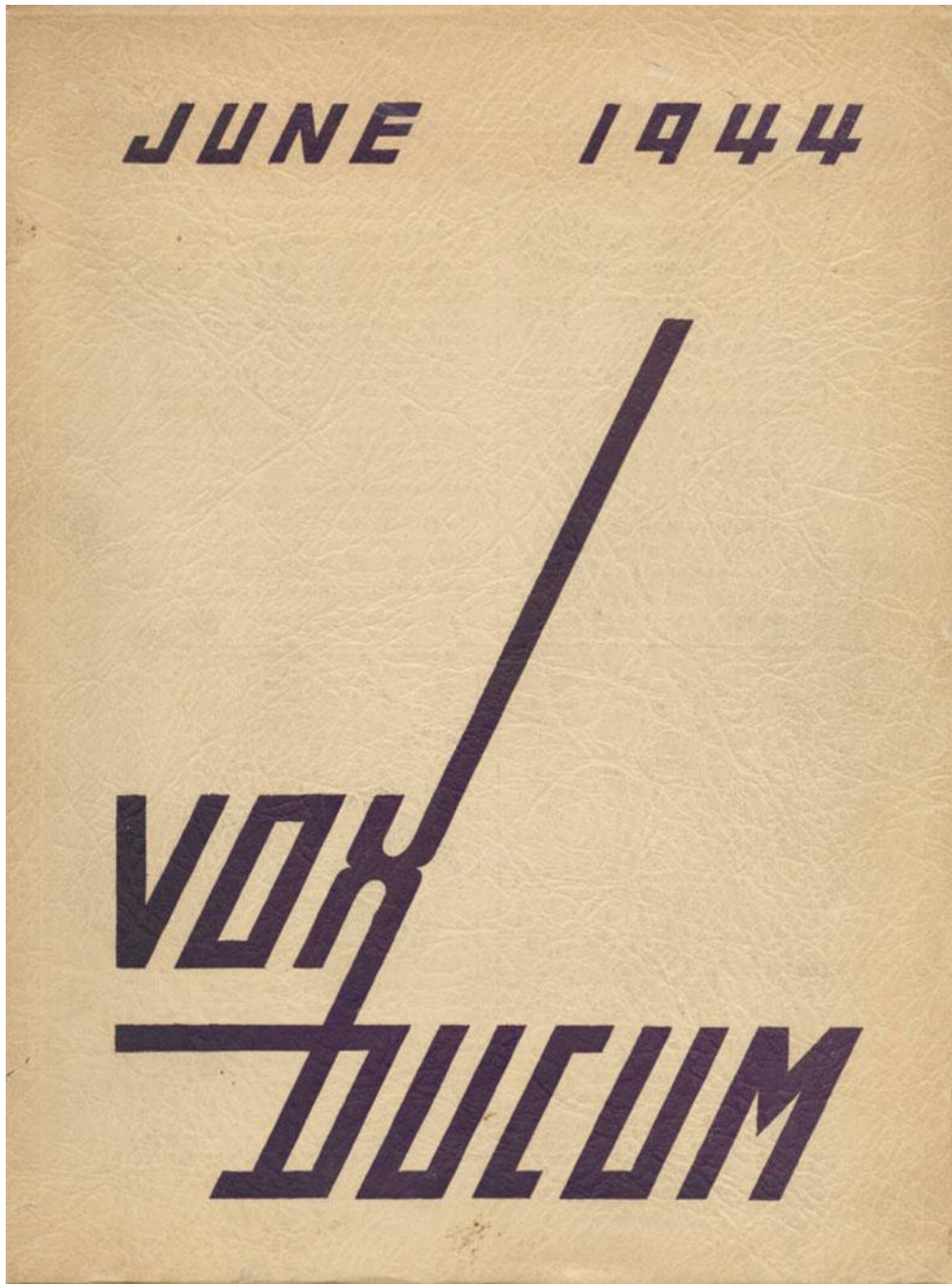


Figure 1.1 Arnaud Maggs, cover for *Vox Ducum*, Westmount High School yearbook, Montreal, Quebec, 1944. Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, R7959-5523.



Figure 1.2 Arnaud Maggs, *How to Keep Your Food Safe in Summer*, created for *Canadian Weekly*, June 30, 1962. Illustration paste-up; pen and ink and wash on wove paper, 38.2 x 51 cm (support). Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, R7959-20. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figure 1.3 Arnaud Maggs, *How to Keep Your Food Safe in Summer*, created for *Canadian Weekly*, June 30, 1962. Illustration paste-up; pen and ink and wash on wove paper, 38.2 x 51 cm (support). Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, R7959-20. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figure 1.4 Arnaud Maggs, *How to Keep Your Food Safe in Summer*, created for *Canadian Weekly*, June 30, 1962. Illustration paste-up; pen and ink and wash on wove paper, 38.2 x 51 cm (support). Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, R7959-20. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figure 1.5 Jerome Snyder, *New York*, from the *United States* series, c. 1946–49. Gouache, crayon, and pencil on paperboard, 37.7 x 27.9 cm. Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC, 1984.124.272, gift of the Container Corporation of America.

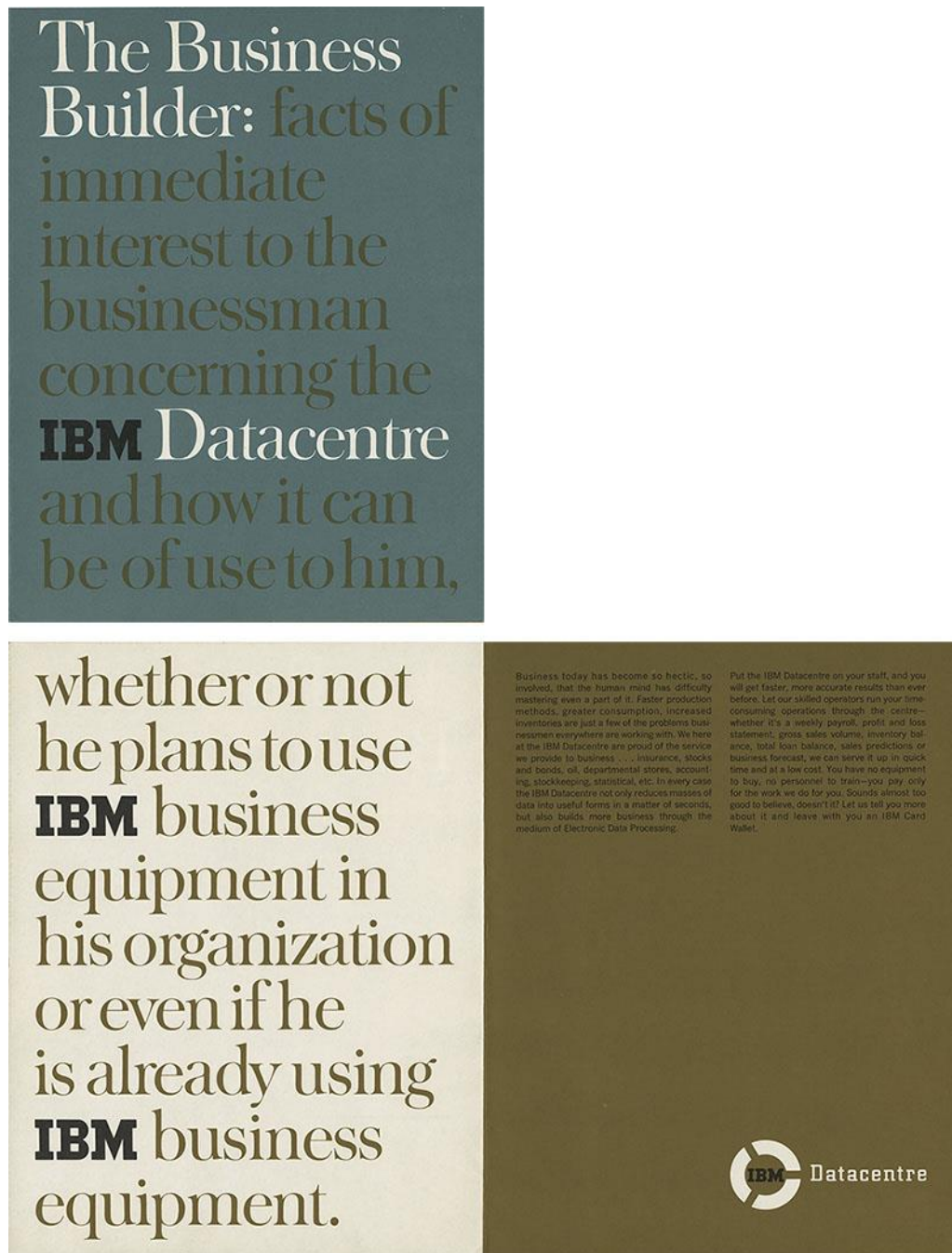


Figure 1.6 Arnaud Maggs, folded brochure, "The Business Builder: IBM Datacentre," c. 1960–65. Photomechanical print on wove paper, 21.6 x 27.8 cm (front cover and interior spread shown). Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, R7959-303. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figure 1.7 Arnaud Maggs, folded brochure, "Some Pertinent Facts about the New IBM Datacentre," c. 1960–65. Photomechanical print on wove paper, 21.6 x 27.8 cm (front and back covers and interior spread shown). Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, R7959-305. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



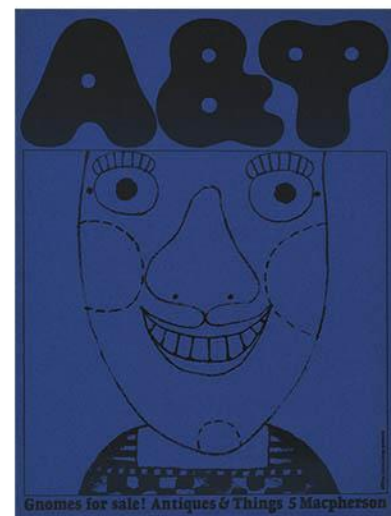
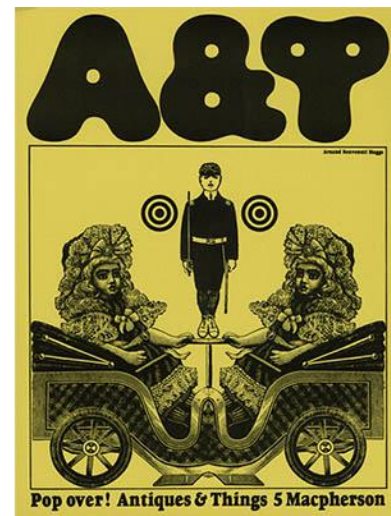
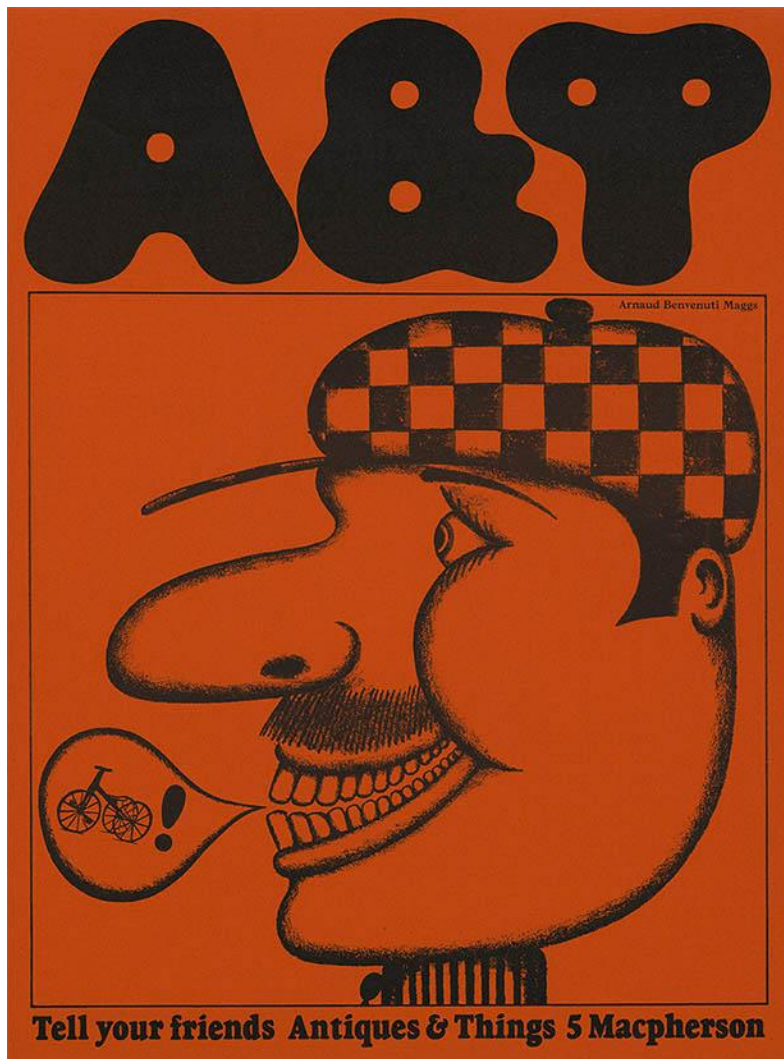
Figure 1.8 Arnaud Maggs, *Chicken a la King*, 1953. Watercolour and gouache on tinted wove paper, 27 x 42 cm. Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, R7959-3. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.

Figure 1.9 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. It was a grid-based example of work by Push Pin from *The Push Pin Monthly Graphic #24*. The image can be found online here: Anne Cibola, *Arnaud Maggs: Life & Work* (Toronto: Art Canada Institute, 2022). <https://www.aci-iac.ca/art-books/arnaud-maggs/>

Figure 1.9 Seymour Chwast, *Push Pin Monthly Graphic #24: Entertaining Boxes*, 1959. Seymour Chwast Archive.



Figure 1.10 Arnaud Maggs, *1945*, advertisement for Art Associates, 1964. Photomechanical print on coated wove paper, 29.9 x 28.0 cm. Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, R7959. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figures 1.11–1.13 Arnaud Maggs, *Tell Your Friends*; *Pop Over!*; and *Gnomes for Sale!*, advertising posters for Antiques & Things, 1964. Photomechanical prints on coated wove paper, 24.2 x 32.5 cm. Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, R7959-462–464). © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figure 1.14 Arnaud Maggs, brochure (cover and interior) for Sport Togs Ltd., “We’ve Great News!” 1951. Photomechanical print on wove paper, 26.5 x 36.4 cm. Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, R7959-141. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.

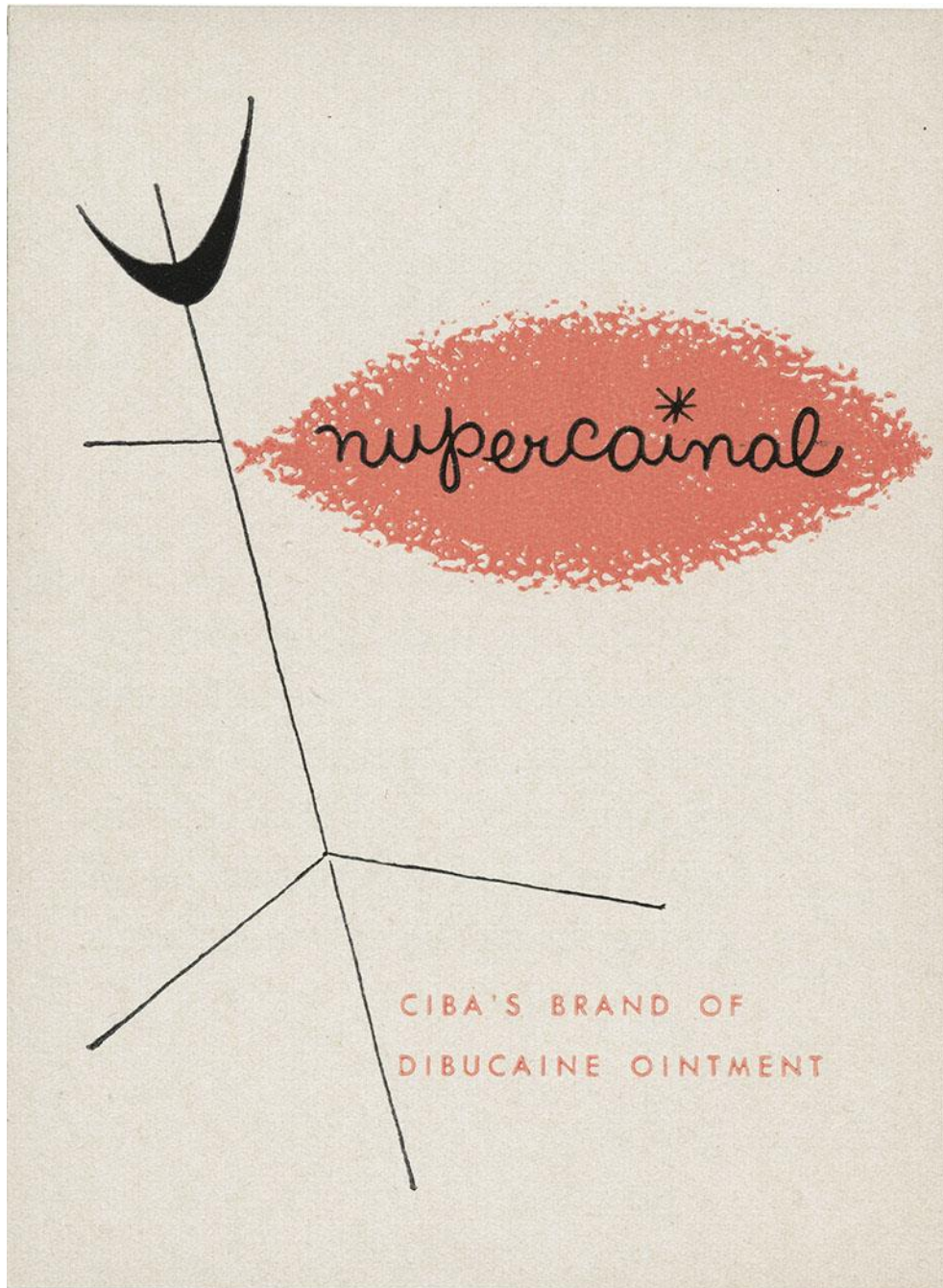


Figure 1.15 Arnaud Maggs, brochure cover for Ciba Co., "Nupercainal: Ciba's Brand of Dibucaine Ointment," 1951. Photomechanical print on coated wove paper, 6.7 x 9.1 cm. Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, R7959-139. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.

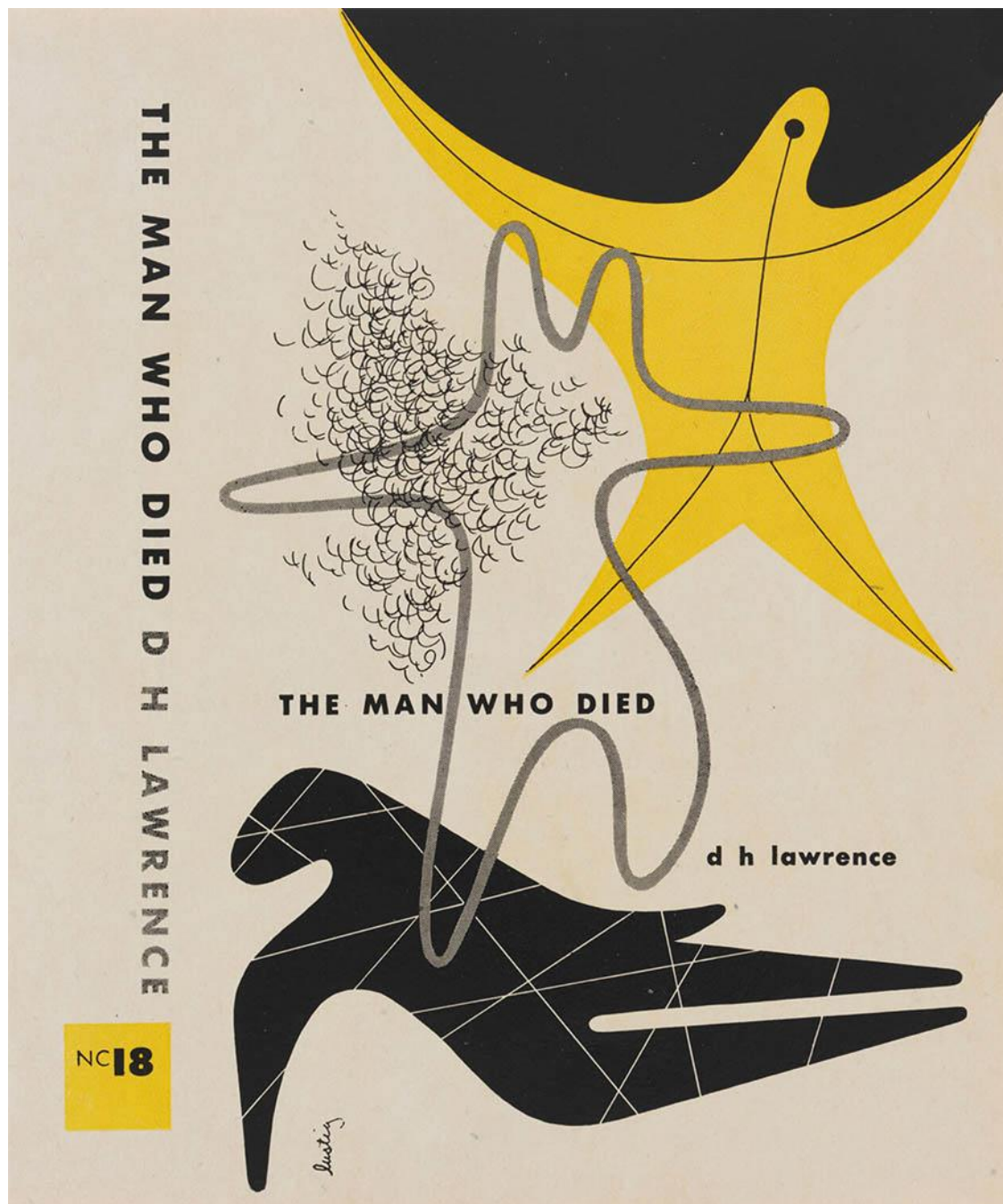


Figure 1.16 Alvin Lustig, cover design for D.H. Lawrence, *The Man Who Died* (New York: New Directions, 1947). Los Angeles County Museum of Art, M.2015.204.176, gift of Tamar Cohen, 2015. Image courtesy of the Estate of Elaine Lustig Cohen / Los Angeles County Museum of Art / Art Resource, NY. © New Directions Publishing / Alvin Lustig. Reprinted by permission of New Directions Publishing Corp. Photo: Museum Associates / LACMA. Licensed by Art Resource, NY.



Figure 1.17 Arnaud Maggs, album cover, *Rodgers & Hammerstein's Carousel, Sung by Frank Sinatra* (New York: Columbia Records, 1953). Photomechanical print on coated wove paper, 18.2 x 18.2 cm. Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, R7959-149. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figure 1.18 Arnaud Maggs, album cover, *Blues by Gould: Morton Gould and his Orchestra* (New York: Columbia Records, 1953). Photomechanical print on coated wove paper, 18.3 x 18.1 cm. Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, R7959-152. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figure 1.19 Arnaud Maggs, album cover, *The New Benny Goodman Sextet #2* (New York: Columbia Records, 1954). Photomechanical print on coated wove paper, 20.3 x 20.9 cm. Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, R7959-150. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.

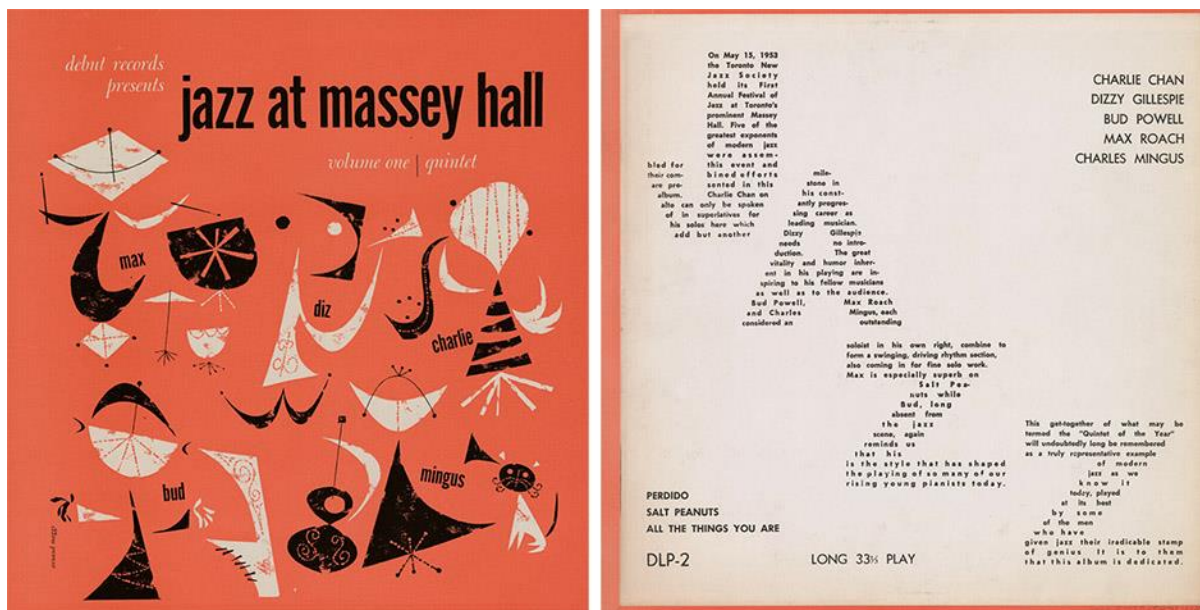


Figure 1.20 Arnaud Maggs, album cover, *Jazz at Massey Hall, vol. 1, Quintet* (New York: Debut Records, 1953). Photomechanical print on coated wove paper, 26 x 26 cm. Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, R7959-5474. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figure 1.21 Arnaud Maggs, advertisement for William R. Templeton Studios, c. 1950–55. Photomechanical print on wove paper, 36.2 x 28.2 cm. Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, R7959-100. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figure 1.22 Arnaud Maggs and Peter Croydon, design and photography for Elaine Collett, “Frozen Desserts,” *Chatelaine*, June 1957. Courtesy of Toronto Public Library. © *Chatelaine* / St. Joseph Communications / Arnaud Maggs, courtesy of Stephen Bulger Gallery.

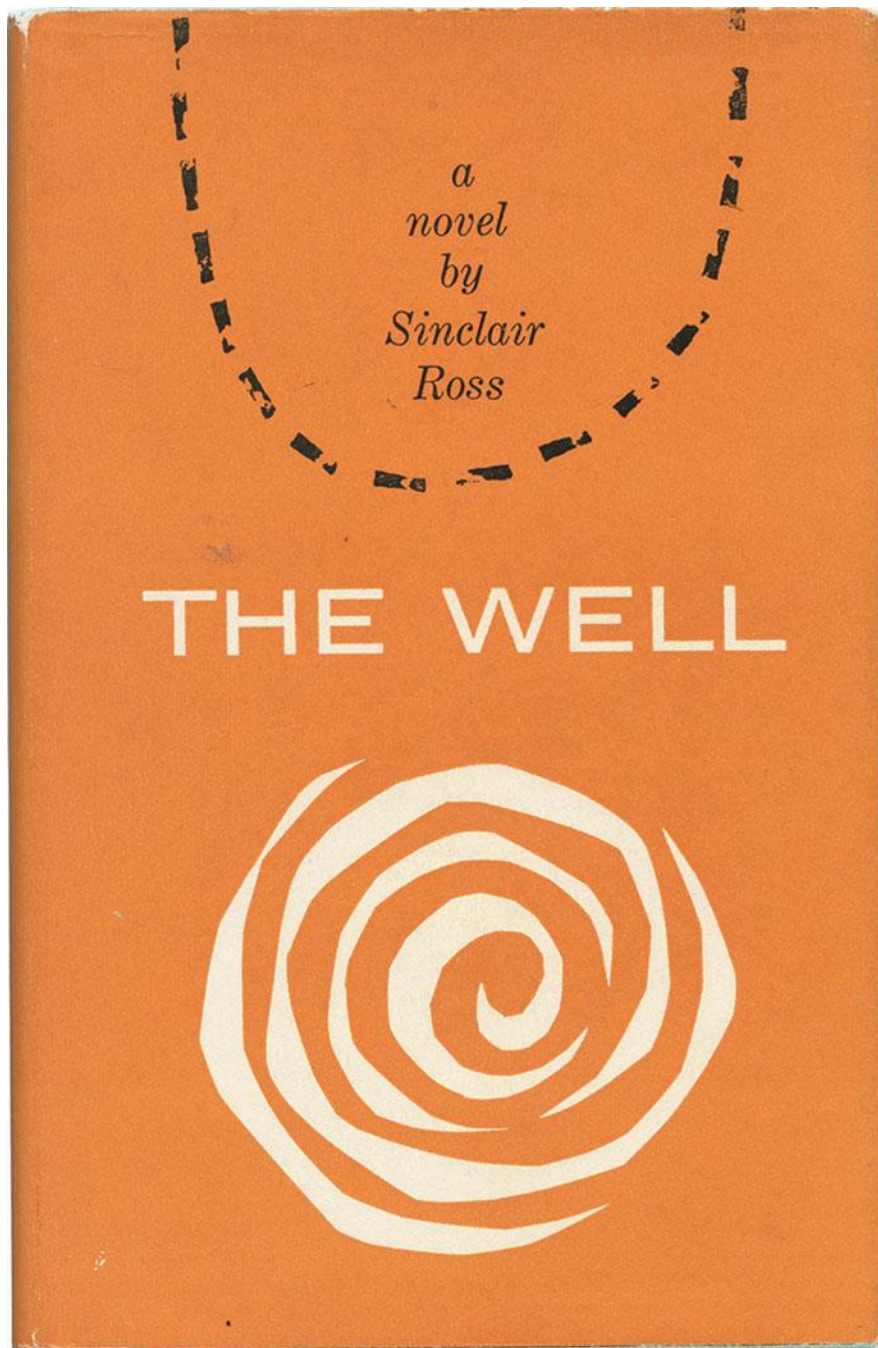


Figure 1.23 Arnaud Maggs, cover for Sinclair Ross, *The Well* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1958). © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy of Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figure 1.25 Arnaud Maggs, "Pirelli, tubi per irrorazione," advertising design for Pirelli, 1959. Photomechanical print on coated wove paper, 31.9 x 23.3 cm. Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, R7959-137. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.

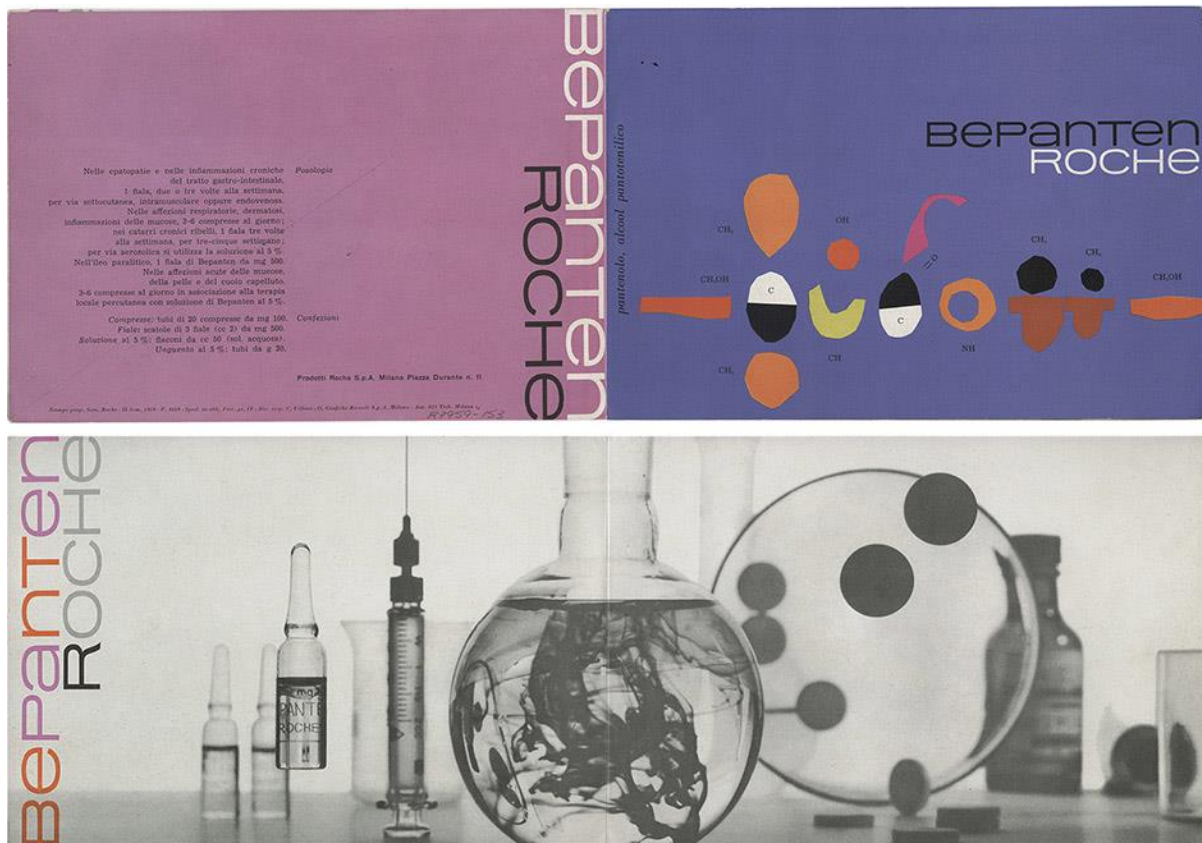


Figure 1.26 Arnaud Maggs, brochure (front and back cover, interior spread) for Roche Pharmaceuticals, “Bepanten Roche,” 1959. Photomechanical print on coated wove paper, 41 x 41 cm. Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, R7959-153. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.

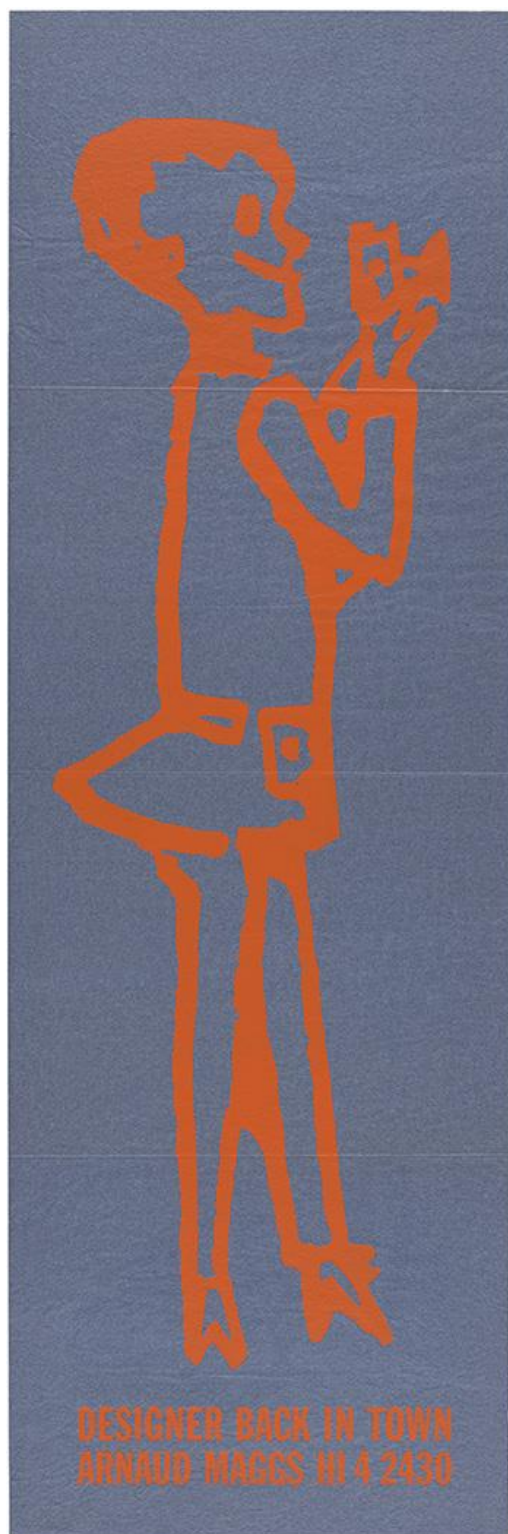


Figure 1.27 Arnaud Maggs, self-promotional poster, "Designer Back in Town," 1960. Silkscreen on tissue paper, 76.1 x 25.1 cm. Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, R7959-281. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figures 1.28 and 1.29 Arnaud Maggs, self-promotional posters, “Let Me Try, I’ll Come Out Swinging” and “Use Me On Your Next Campaign,” 1960. Silkscreen on tissue paper, 50.6 x 37.8 cm. Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, R7959-471 and 469. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figure 1.30 Arnaud Maggs, spine and cover, *13th Art Directors' Club of Toronto Annual*, 1961. Photomechanical print on coated wove paper, 84.1 x 28.6 cm. Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, R7959-358. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.

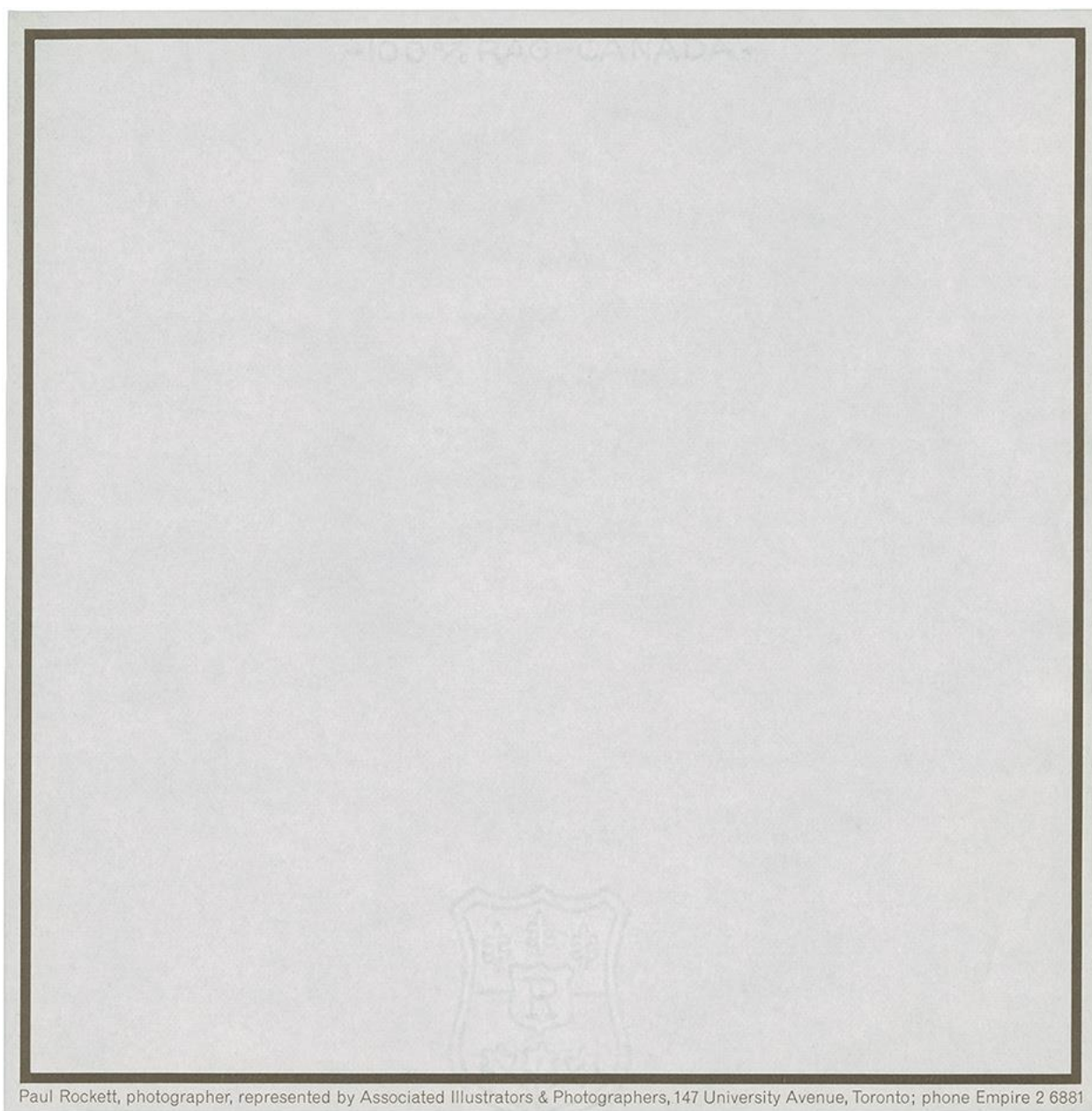
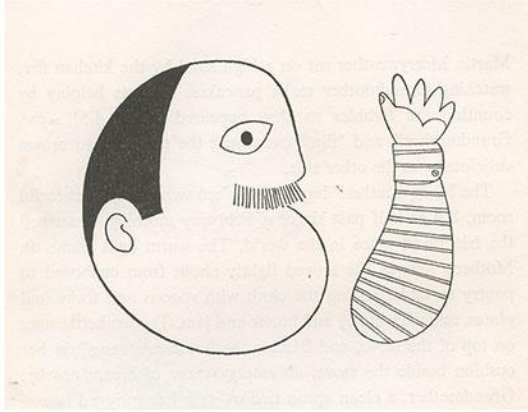
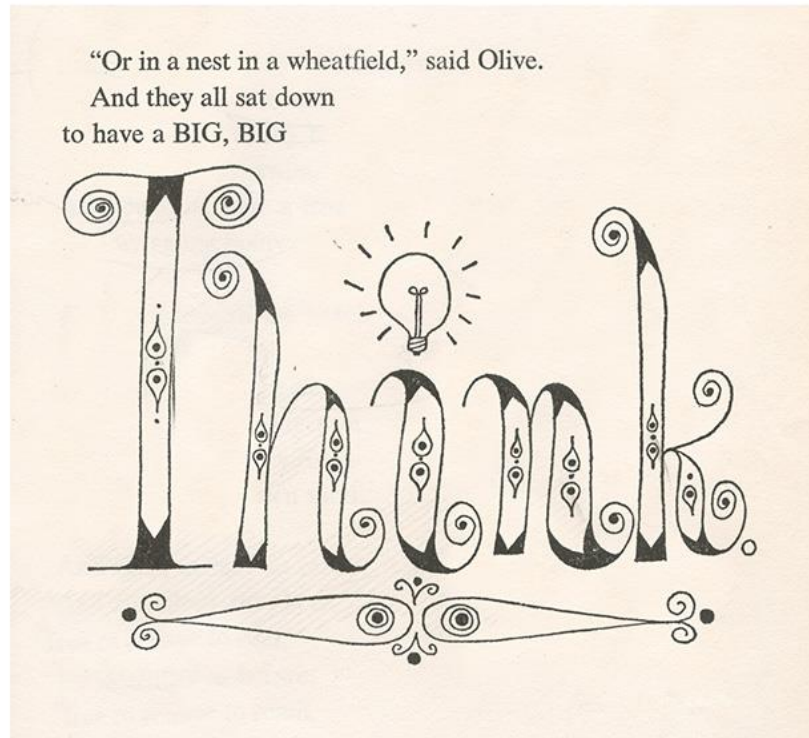
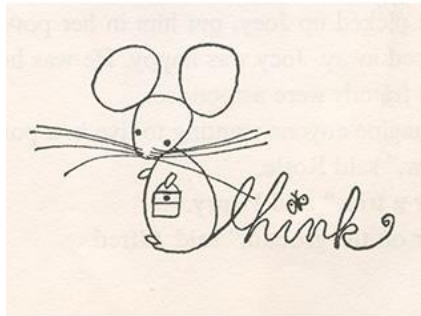
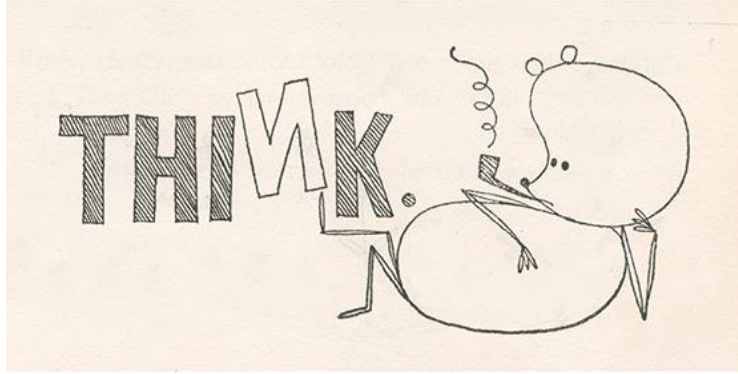


Figure 1.31 Arnaud Maggs, letterhead for Paul Rockett, c. 1962. Photomechanical print on wove paper, 22.8 x 23.1 cm. Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, R7959-293. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figures 1.32–1.34 Arnaud Maggs, illustrations for *Nunny Bag: Stories for Young Canada* (Toronto: W.J. Gage, 1962). © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figures 1.35–1.37 Arnaud Maggs, illustrations for Hermione Frey, “Joey, the Lost Kangaroo,” in *Nunny Bag: Stories for Young Canada* (Toronto: W.J. Gage, 1962). © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figures 1.38–1.41 Arnaud Maggs, pillow designs for Herman Miller, 1963. Marker pen and watercolour on wove paper: *Snake*, 37.8 x 38.1cm; *Cat*, 38.1 x 37.9 cm; *Fox*, 38 x 38.1 cm; *Lemur*, 38 x 37.6 cm. Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, R7959-22, -21, -23, -25. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.

2. Commercial Photography

In 1966 Maggs left his job in graphic design to become a commercial photographer. It was a decision that developed out of his exposure to the industry and a long-standing interest; since the early 1960s he had been noting film exposure times and camera settings for some of his photographs (fig. 2.1). “He had a camera around his neck all the time,” Maggs’s daughter, Caitlan, remembers. “I had a camera and a light meter in my face my entire life!”¹ By the summer of 1966 Maggs had a Hasselblad, a professional medium-format camera. Exploring his new equipment, he took portraits during a visit to Elora Gorge (fig. 2.2) and later used his family members as subjects for camera tests. His son Toby was a frequent sitter (fig. 2.3), and his older son, Laurence (“Laurie”), would pose with his bandmates from Cats Pyjamas (figs. 2.4–2.6). As the contact sheets demonstrate, Maggs photographed the band both on 35 mm film and using his Hasselblad. As was the case with his earlier design career, Maggs did not pursue formal education in photography; he learned through experimentation, by watching others, and through years of work as a fashion and editorial portrait photographer.

In 1969 *The Canadian Magazine* published a special issue about the sixties. The headline proclaimed the decade “ten years of turmoil: wondrous, wide open and violent.”² Marked by the escalating war in Vietnam and intensifying racial violence in the United States, the period was also defined by the promise of freedom and the mobilization of youth in support of the civil

¹ Caitlan Maggs, discussion with author, September 14, 2017.

² *The Sixties: A Special Issue*, *The Canadian Magazine*, December 13, 1969, 2.

rights movement, antiwar protests, and the sexual revolution. By the 1960s, photography was being recognized as its own art form, and views on the medium were also changing.

The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York was particularly influential in shaping the role of photography. Scholar Christopher Phillips argues that MoMA maintained an authoritative hold on the reception of photography. Through an examination of how MoMA's curatorial approaches — first by Beaumont Newhall, then Edward Steichen, then John Szarkowski, and finally Peter Galassi — have framed photography, he demonstrates how the museum transfigured the medium, defining for photography its own aesthetic realm.³ John Szarkowski in particular had a strong impact on shaping ideas about photography at the time in question. He arrived at MoMA in 1962. As writer Clive James posits, in a 1980 review of selections from what he calls “an avalanche, composed of books about photographs,” Szarkowski “conjured up from photography's short past more geniuses than the Renaissance ever knew.”⁴ In 1966 Szarkowski published *The Photographer's Eye*, in which he put forward a formalist vocabulary that attempted to emphasize the inherent and particular qualities of the medium. His landmark 1967 exhibition *New Documents*, featuring the work of Diane Arbus (1923–71), Lee Friedlander (b. 1934), and Garry Winogrand (1928–84), drew important distinctions between self-expression and documentation in photography and emphasized the significance of the photographer's personal vision. Subsequent exhibitions and catalogues, including *Mirrors and Windows: American Photography Since 1960* (1978), would further establish photography as a medium of personal expression.

³ Christopher Phillips, “The Judgment Seat of Photography,” *October* 22 (Autumn 1982): 27–63.

⁴ Clive James, “The Gentle Slope of Castalia,” *New York Review of Books*, December 18, 1980, https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1980/12/18/the-gentle-slope-of-castalia/?lp_txn_id=1538905.

Around the same time, Canadian photography was experiencing a boom. Writer and photographer Paul Couvrette has suggested that in 1967 — the year of Canada’s centennial — “photography blossomed in Canada.”⁵ Similarly, curator Maia-Mari Sutnik, in her introduction to *Michel Lambeth, Photographer*, suggests that Lambeth’s death in 1977 happened at the “height of the photography boom,” when ideas about the medium were being reshaped.⁶ Public galleries were exhibiting photography and artist-run centres were popping up across the country, offering alternatives to established exhibition frameworks. But as Peter Bunnell has articulated, “periodic exhibitions do not create a vital place for a museum in a community of artists and public. There has to be the guiding direction of an exhibition program which must ultimately be defined in conjunction with an acquisition policy.”⁷ And as Millie McKibbin points out in her talk at the *Canadian Perspectives* conference, clear exhibition and collecting policies related to photography were underdeveloped or non-existent at the institutions she surveyed.⁸ At this moment of significant change and development in the interpretation and validation of photography, three national institutions already had defined mandates and staff specific to photographic collecting, signalling their importance as key institutional players with respect to photography in Canada: the Public/National Archives of Canada (now Library and Archives Canada, or LAC), the Still Photography Division of the National Film Board (NFB), and the National Gallery of Canada.

⁵ Paul Couvrette, “National Film Board – Stills Division, Past & Present,” in *Canadian Perspectives: A National Conference on Canadian Photography, March 1–4, 1979* (Toronto: Ryerson Polytechnic Institute, 1979), 263.

⁶ Maia-Mari Sutnik, *Michel Lambeth, Photographer* (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1998), 7.

⁷ Peter Bunnell, “The National Gallery Photographic Collection: A Vital Resource,” *artscanada* 192–95 (December 1974): 40.

⁸ Millie McKibbin, “Photography and the Public Gallery in Canada, 1979,” in *Canadian Perspectives: A National Conference on Canadian Photography, March 1–4, 1979* (Toronto: Ryerson Polytechnic Institute, 1979).

LAC acquired its first photography in the nineteenth century (albeit very near its end), in 1897. In 1906 a separate Picture Division was created. Six years later a mandate was established by act of Parliament to collect official records and historical documents. The collection represents the history of photography, but also government and private interests in Canada in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Having begun with an official mandate in 1912, LAC's collection significantly predates the "photographic boom" in Canada. The archives had a clear purpose as the official repository for government records, and the sheer number of its photographic holdings makes LAC an important institutional player in terms of the medium.

Just as LAC was already collecting photographic materials, so too was the NFB's Still Photography Division, later the Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography (CMCP) and now part of the National Gallery of Canada collection. Martha Langford posits that it was in the 1960s — when photography was achieving greater recognition as art — that the Division first saw itself as a key player in cultural expression in Canada. She underscores the significance and influence of MoMA in legitimizing photography as an art, pointing to the museum's emphasis on personal expression in both the interpretation and validation of photographs.⁹ Langford also signals the importance of the growing number of photography programs at colleges and universities in the United States at the time, and she asserts that the photographic aspirations fostered by those programs were imported to Canada with the influx of American students

⁹ Martha Langford, "Some Major Canadian Collections: The Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography," *History of Photography* 20, no. 2 (Summer 1996): 174. Langford provides a detailed outline of the history of the Division and the CMCP, including both motivations and output. See also Valérie Boileau-Matteau, "Re-contextualizing a Visual History of Canada: The Division of the National Film Board of Canada's Still Photography Division Collection" (MA thesis, Ryerson University, 2006).

during the Vietnam War.¹⁰ In her chapter of *Traffic: Conceptual Art in Canada*, Jayne Wark addresses this phenomenon in relation to the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (NSCAD), citing the number of Americans who played a role in the now mythic period of the school's history related to conceptual art. She explains that Canada was attractive as a liberal alternative to the United States, which was fraught with social and racial tension.¹¹ It was during this time that the Still Photography Division expanded its output, starting a travelling exhibition program in 1966, opening a permanent gallery space on Ottawa's Kent Street in 1967, and furthering its publication program. As Carol Payne contends, the Division's establishment of a permanent exhibition space "cement[ed] its interest in presenting photography as an expressive form."¹²

It was also in 1967 that the National Gallery of Canada began acquiring photographs under the direction of James Borcoman, who became the first curator of photography at the institution. Borcoman's aim was to collect bodies of work and, as Ann Thomas outlines,

The principle that he established was that the collection would cover the entire history of photography — not just from the beginning, but from the prehistory up to the current period. ... The National Film Board was collecting contemporary Canadian, Library and Archives Canada (or National Archives as it was then) was collecting historic Canadian, and they didn't want duplication in government departments. So the memorandum was that the National Gallery collects a comprehensive history of photography, including, but not emphasizing, Canadian.¹³

The 1967 decision to acquire photographs was a major step, according to Peter Bunnell, who asserts that the National Gallery was swift and dedicated in its new collecting aims, in short

¹⁰ Langford, "Some Major Canadian Collections," 174.

¹¹ Jayne Wark, "Conceptual Art in Canada: The East Coast Story," in *Traffic: Conceptual Art in Canada, 1965–1980*, ed. Grant Arnold and Karen Henry (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2012), 18.

¹² Carol Payne, *The Official Picture: The National Film Board of Canada's Still Photography Division and the Image of Canada, 1941–1971* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013), 50.

¹³ Curator Ann Thomas, discussion with author, July 12, 2017.

order shaping a collection of “exceptional merit and international stature.”¹⁴ That key national institutions decided to collect photographic material as art was critical to the medium’s acceptance as an art form and signalled the significance of photography in Canada.

In 1966 Italian director Michelangelo Antonioni released his first English-language film, *Blow-Up*. The plot of this thriller centres around the potential chance documentation of a crime by the film’s protagonist, a fashion photographer played by David Hemmings. “Full of shocks,” according to a review in *Life* magazine, *Blow-Up* was hugely successful at the box office.¹⁵ Antonioni’s film was considered an instant classic and was also responsible for shifting and expanding perceptions of photography in popular culture. Addressing the fundamental centrality of photography to the film, Walter Moser asserts that “no other movie shows as many different aspects of photography or explores them as timelessly and in as much depth as *Blow-Up*.”¹⁶ That same year, Maggs decided to become a photographer. “Antonioni’s *Blow-Up* had just come out,” he told Charles Stainback, “so it was quite cool to be a photographer at that moment in time.”¹⁷

In *Phil Bergerson: A Retrospective*, Peter Higdon and Don Snyder survey the development of the Toronto-based photographer, including the shifting of views on

¹⁴ Peter Bunnell, “The National Gallery Photographic Collection: A Vital Resource,” *artscanada* 192–95 (December 1974), 40–42. Also pointing to the changing significance of photography in Canada is *artscanada*’s dedication of its entire issue to the medium in 1974.

¹⁵ “Antonioni’s Hypnotic Eye on a Frantic World,” *Life*, January 27, 1967, 62B.

¹⁶ Walter Moser, “‘Antonioni’s Hypnotic Eye on a Frantic World’: *Blow-Up* and Photography” in *Blow-Up: Antonioni’s Classic Film and Photography*, ed. Walter Moser and Klaus Albrecht Schröder (Ostfildern, Germany: Hatje Cantz, 2014), 6.

¹⁷ Charles A. Stainback, “Q and A with Arnaud Maggs,” in *Arnaud Maggs: Identification*, ed. Josée Drouin-Brisebois (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 2012), 112.

photography in the city in the 1960s. Ryerson Polytechnical Institute (now Toronto Metropolitan University) experienced the photographic boom through increased enrolment and an energized photography department. As Higdon and Snyder explain, “applications to the Photographic Arts program shot up dramatically after the film was released.”¹⁸ Indeed, the marketplace was shifting accordingly. Illustration fell out of fashion with art directors and advertisers, who favoured photography in its place. Tracing the impact of the commercial industry’s changes on Warhol’s career, Thomas Crow explains that by the mid-1950s “the balance of power between illustration and photography was shifting,” and he asserts that in the wake of those changes and the ascendance of Push Pin’s innovative illustrative approach, Warhol’s style of illustration was becoming increasingly outdated.¹⁹ Given its growing popularity in the advertising world, photography could also be more lucrative. Jonathan Eby, an assistant art director at *Maclean’s* in 1967, maintains that “photography was attractive to a lot of designers because it was a quick and very good buck.”²⁰ Visual trends in the industry were changing, and there were increasing and well-paid opportunities to be had in photography.

Mirroring shifts in the broader creative industry, change was afoot at Art Associates as well, which contributed to Maggs’s decision to take up photography. In 1965 Theo Dimson left the firm to start his own business, Reeson Dimson & Smith Ltd. Barry Zaid, who had been hired by Maggs in 1964 or 1965 to work at Art Associates, recalls that the firm seemed to be in a slump.²¹ Similarly, in Maggs’s autobiographical work *15* (1989) he claims that after Dimson’s

¹⁸ Peter Higdon and Don Snyder, *Phil Bergerson: A Retrospective* (Toronto: Daylight Community Arts Foundation, 2020), 16.

¹⁹ Thomas Crow, “Ad Men,” *The Long March of Pop: Art, Music and Design, 1930–1995* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), 175–81.

²⁰ Jonathan Eby, discussion with author, November 3, 2017.

²¹ Barry Zaid, email discussion with author, July 5, 2017.

departure, “Art Associates began to cave in.”²² According to Maggs, it was the dissolution of the packaging department and the sell-off of its equipment that prompted his interest in photography. Design processes were also changing. For example, toward the end of the 1960s, graphic design started to make use of photographic processes. The result, according to designer and art director Keith Branscombe, was “a wretched period of phototype setting when dreadful things happened to letterforms.”²³ In keeping with his tendency to characterize changes in his career direction as abrupt and unexpected, Maggs declared that he had “the sudden urge to be a photographer” in 1966.²⁴

Branscombe, then art director at *Canadian Homes* magazine, recalled a story he ran that reflects Maggs’s shifting interests and move toward photography. In March 1966 he produced an article about decorating with objects to add personality to a home. Maggs’s home and collection had appeared previously in Canadian magazines (figs. 0.1 and 0.2) and he had garnered a reputation as a collector (the significance of collecting on his work will be addressed further in part 2). As Caitlan Maggs recalls,

We had a house where we had this low table in front of the fireplace, and it was just this big, long thing full of antiques that I would get paid twenty-five cents a week to dust from my mom. It was all these artifacts — beautiful. You know, very chic, and Eames chairs and all white-on-white and very, very, very cool for that period. There were a lot of artifacts, and my dad was very precise about how he liked the house. It had to be impeccable.²⁵

²² Arnaud Maggs, 15, panel 7 (“834/159/672”), 1989, Library and Archives Canada (LAC), Ottawa, R7959-6399.

²³ Keith Branscombe, discussion with author, September 14, 2017.

²⁴ Stainback, “Q and A,” 111.

²⁵ Caitlan Maggs, discussion.

Since he had visited the home, Branscombe knew that Maggs appreciated the aesthetic details of his various flea market finds. “I remember being at Arnaud’s for dinner once in his suburban home [in Don Mills],” he recounted. “I was taken with every place in that house, where there were tchotchkes of all kinds.”²⁶ But, Branscombe recalled, Maggs seemed reluctant to participate in the article, that perhaps he “didn’t want people mauling over his collection.”²⁷ So Branscombe offered to work with a photographer of Maggs’s choice. Instead of suggesting someone, however, Maggs responded, “I was thinking maybe I could take the pictures.”²⁸ Whether it provided inspiration or impetus, Branscombe’s story gave Maggs a reason to try photography for an editorial context.

As a photographer, Maggs started out working primarily in editorial fashion for Canadian publications. In 1967 he started shooting for *Maclean’s* magazine on a regular basis, producing images that celebrated Canadian fashion along with staff writer and Modern Living editor Marjorie Harris. He was also hired by TDF Artists Limited, another prominent advertising studio in Toronto, where he produced editorial fashion images and portraiture for a number of Canadian magazines, including *Chatelaine*, *Quest*, *Homemaker’s*, *Canadian Business*, *Saturday Night*, and *Toronto Life*. One of Maggs’s most important early photography projects was for the Three Small Rooms restaurant in Toronto’s Windsor Arms Hotel.

In the 1960s the Windsor Arms underwent a number of transformations. It had been purchased by Arthur Minden, a partner at Toronto-based law firm Minden and Gross. When he

²⁶ Branscombe, discussion.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

died in 1963, his son, George Minden, took over as owner and managing director. According to architect Janis Kravis, Minden was impressed and inspired by Sju Små Hem (Seven Small Homes), a restaurant in Copenhagen, and it became a starting point from which to rethink what the hotel offered.²⁹ Kravis was hired to design and develop Three Small Rooms, which comprised a main dining room, the Wine Cellar, and the Grill, which was a smaller dining area with a chef's station. Initially a couple of large-scale, brightly coloured Marimekko fabric panels hung on the main wall of the Grill.³⁰ Eventually though, Minden sought an update. In 1968 graphic designer Jim Donoahue was charged with doing "something unusual" as a replacement.³¹

Donoahue had seen some of Maggs's photographic work, and he decided on a wall of photographs to be chosen from Maggs's existing collection of images. He was drawn to the black-and-white photographs of objects, noting, "They were interesting. It would be, like, a really marvellous letterbox that would be by the side of the road and he'd shoot it. He shot unusual things."³² Maggs's negatives, however, reveal that he chose to photograph objects specifically for the project (fig. 2.7), and Donoahue allowed him to select the final images. In the end, the installation comprised approximately twenty-four photographs, all in black-and-white. Although shot on 35 mm film, each image was cropped to a square format. Many of the images were close-ups of objects, but there was no clear, overarching theme for the installation. As Donoahue describes it, "they were all different, but they were all charming."³³

²⁹ Janis Kravis, "Three Small Rooms Restaurant, Toronto, 1964," <https://www.karelia.ca/blog/2ml3xw5z7aj53b2xs74l8exdd4lffww>.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Jim Donoahue, discussion with author, August 10, 2017.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

Donoahue's plan for the wall involved hanging the evenly sized photographs in a grid formation. They were mounted to a backing material but remained unframed, hung in three rows and approximately nine columns (fig. 2.8). The top row was a bit shorter at one end of the installation to accommodate a bulkhead. Paul Orenstein, a photographer who assisted Maggs at the start of his own career, says the photographs were "a signature part of the restaurant" — so much so that, after becoming damaged, they were reprinted rather than replaced with something new: "We actually reprinted them, because over the years food splashed on [the installation] and they had to be redone. So we redid [the prints] for them. It was a huge compliment that they would do the same thing again, and we treated it like it was a museum execution."³⁴ Interestingly — as this may well have been the first time Maggs's photographic images were presented in a grid — in 1968 Maggs was not actively involved in their arrangement. According to Donoahue, he had been unwell on the day of the installation, so Donoahue determined their placement and glued them to the wall himself.³⁵ Nonetheless, the project is an important precursor of the grid-based installations that would define Maggs's later art practice.³⁶

³⁴ Paul Orenstein, discussion with author, August 9, 2017.

³⁵ Donoahue, discussion.

³⁶ Evincing Maggs's own acknowledgment of the significance of this work, he prepared a set of prints from *Three Small Rooms* as an artwork. LAC holds a set, along with an exhibition hanging scheme and a note about the contemporary editions, dated 2005. Although the restaurant installation needed to accommodate a bulkhead, Maggs's later hanging scheme outlines three equal rows of ten images; it calls for the images to be unmatted and framed, "preferably [in] black metal," and that they be "in close proximity [to each other] or touching"; Arnaud Maggs, "Plan for Installing 'Three Small Rooms,'" 1968, LAC, Ottawa, R7959-677-2-E, vol. 856.

³⁶ Donoahue, discussion.

Maggs's career shift paralleled changes on the home front. His marriage to Maggie had ended the year he joined TDF, and he moved from Don Mills to the Cabbagetown neighbourhood of downtown Toronto. As Caitlan remembers, "Every family we knew was splitting up. It was the new thing. It was the sixties ... and suddenly everything shifted."³⁷ In a transformation from ad man to wild man, Maggs's identity also moved with the times. Marjorie Harris remembers a dramatic change:

he went from being really chicly dressed — fabulously up-to-date — to a guy with great long hair and a huge beard. One time I remember the cops stopping us just because of his hair. We were on our way to do a shoot and the model was in the backseat of the car and there's Arnaud getting stopped for driving while hairy! It was unbelievable.³⁸

Toronto-based daguerreotypist Mike Robinson was a friend and neighbour of Maggs for many years and, starting in 1995, a printer for the artist. He remembers Maggs telling stories about using drugs and looking like a veritable hippie.³⁹ Likewise, Caitlan recalls:

My dad had been one of the first hippies in the '60s and he did experiment with different substances and stuff. I remember him very clearly telling me, when I was about eight and we were walking on the street (I think we were in Cabbagetown) ... "Cait, listen, I don't want you ever to take drugs." He said, "But I want you to look at the trees and see the pink and the purple of the bark — but don't do it with drugs, just look for those colours." This probably would've been in around '66 — no, '65 — and he was really striving to think outside the box, you know. "Really look. What do you *really* see? You don't need to be on anything to see that."⁴⁰

Though in his forties at that point, the youthful rebellion of 1960s counterculture clearly had an impact on Maggs.

³⁷ Caitlan Maggs, discussion.

³⁸ Marjorie Harris, discussion with author, October 4, 2017.

³⁹ Mike Robinson, discussion with author, August 3, 2017.

⁴⁰ Caitlan Maggs, discussion.

The 1960s and 1970s were also a time of change for many Canadian magazines. Publications such as *Maclean's* and *Canadian Business* shifted direction in terms of both content and design, and Maggs's work contributed to their reshaping. His photographic work in Canadian magazines also influenced a new generation of young photographers such as Orenstein.

Following tensions between editors and management in the 1960s, *Maclean's* underwent changes at the editorial level. Borden Spears took the helm in 1965, a number of new writers and editors joined the team, and between 1965 and 1967 the art department saw changes too.⁴¹ For example, Jonathan Eby, who ultimately championed Maggs, joined the publication as art director in 1967. Previously published every two weeks, under Spears's direction *Maclean's* shifted to a monthly magazine, starting that same year. As part of an effort to increase advertising revenue and draw readership, *Maclean's* also introduced new content. When writer Marjorie Harris joined the publication, she was assigned fashion and lifestyle content, which, she contends, "is something they'd never ever done before and about which I knew zero."⁴² Her focus was on highlighting Canadian fashion design.

Maggs's reputation for excellence in Toronto's advertising and design world provided him leverage when shifting careers. When he began working as a photographer, he was well supported by those familiar with his design work. "He had called, saying he was getting into photography and if we could use him, he was available," Eby explains. "He was one hell of an artist, and anything he was doing was attractive to me. And so we contacted him and started

⁴¹ For a detailed history of *Maclean's*, see Fraser Sutherland, *The Monthly Epic: A History of Canadian Magazines* (Markham, ON: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1989).

⁴² Harris, discussion.

using him.”⁴³ During this period *Maclean’s* held a distinctive position within the Canadian publishing landscape. It was a large-format publication, akin to renowned American magazines such as *Look* and *Life*, making it visually compelling. As Eby explains,

Maclean’s magazine was a very visual magazine at the time, not a newsmagazine, and ... it was large — the size of *Look* magazine at the time and *Life* magazine. [They] were all large-format magazines and they had great visual displays. So the people who were hired to work for [*Maclean’s*] were considered the best in Canada and it was an honour for them. So, just by being included, they were included in the top people in Canada.⁴⁴

Just as his design career helped gain support for his photography, Maggs’s presence in *Maclean’s* helped to establish his commercial photography career.

Maggs created the cover photograph for the November 1967 issue of the magazine (fig. 2.9), and his first fashion shoot for the publication was printed in December 1967.⁴⁵ “Fantasy Living” introduced readers to stylish “at-home clothes” (fig. 2.10). “We were both learning,” Harris contends. “He was learning how to take a photograph. I was learning how to set up a fashion shoot.”⁴⁶ Though Harris worked with a number of Canadian photographers, including Bert Bell and John Sebert, among others, Maggs quickly became a staple at the magazine. As Harris explains, she would use Maggs “if I wanted to do something that was really daring.”⁴⁷ A more traditional approach to editorial photography had photographers execute client-approved concepts that sometimes came with specific directives. It was not uncommon for the client to express preferences such as their spouse’s fondness for red dresses, for instance. As Branscombe illuminated,

⁴³ Eby, discussion.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ The issue includes several stories that feature Maggs’s photography.

⁴⁶ Harris, discussion.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

In the old days, artists used to draw pictures and then this drawing would be approved by the client. The client would look at it and he'd say, "Yeah, but I showed my wife and she likes red dresses, so can you have a red dress on that woman?" So then you'd write "red dress." And then this would go to the photographer and he would look at it and have to do that photo. And that's the way it worked.⁴⁸

Harris and Maggs's approach was less static and formulaic, perhaps because they were new to their respective roles. Harris recalls Maggs's openness to exploring ideas:

We would sit and talk. I would tell him what my concept was and he would say, "I would really, really like to do this." And so it's an art.

And he was great to work with because you could just say almost anything and he'd get it and then push it, whereas a lot of photographers might say, "Well, exactly what is it that you want to get across?"... Arnaud would just go, "Whoo, yes, let's do this! Let's get so-and-so to collaborate. Let's move outside or inside or something." He would do creative things.⁴⁹

For "Fantasy Living," Maggs photographed models wearing contemporary fashions at the *Sculpture '67* exhibition at Toronto's City Hall, where the sculptures served as bold backdrops. The location, as Harris says in the article, "indicate[s] the luxury of these clothes," supporting her declaration that confining "house clothes" to the bedroom was outdated.⁵⁰

At the same time, there was a broader shift in attitudes toward photographers. Eby, among others, believed strongly that photographers were not simply hired hands. "I always thought it was important to keep the creative mind of the photographer in play," he explains. "At the time there was a great scene going on in New York — Helmut Newton and other leading photographers — and it was obvious that these guys were not just clickers of cameras. They had intellectual input to make."⁵¹ He felt that Maggs was among those photographers who made intelligent contributions to the magazine. "He had a keen mind and keen eye," Eby

⁴⁸ Branscombe, discussion.

⁴⁹ Harris, discussion.

⁵⁰ Marjorie Harris, "Fantasy Living," *Maclean's*, December 1, 1967, 35–36.

⁵¹ Eby, discussion.

insists, and as a result, he extended freedom to Maggs: “I wanted to see what he could bring to [a shoot]. He would have a lot of freedom. I would just keep him in the parameters of the magazine and what the editorial side might be requesting.”⁵² Figures 2.11 and 2.12 illustrate some of approaches that Maggs brought to fashion images for *Maclean’s* in the late 1960s.

In addition to fashion editorials, Maggs also produced portraiture and still-life imagery for *Maclean’s*. His merchandise setups for the magazine recall the carefully arranged collections in his own home, demonstrating the significant impact his collecting had on his commercial work. They also connect back to work he produced as an art director for Art Associates. Art-directed and designed by Maggs and photographed by Ken Bell, a 1966 promotional piece for the firm demonstrates that the selection and placement of objects was central to the concept (fig. 2.13).

In the December 1967 issue of *Maclean’s*, the magazine featured a roundup of gift ideas, “A Yesterday Christmas ... for Grown-ups, A Today Christmas ... for Children” (fig. 2.14). According to Harris, Maggs “would just build [the objects] into a room” and photograph all the merchandise together.⁵³ She remembers him feeling that the collection of gift ideas for children was missing something. “We really need a big poster in here,” she recalls him declaring. Rather than sourcing a poster, however, Maggs made one: a high-contrast black-and-white portrait of Harris’s son from the shoulders up, with a lit cigarette in his mouth. “I guess [my son would have been] about seven or eight, and he stuck a cigarette in the kid’s mouth,” Harris recounts. “And he made a poster out of it.”⁵⁴ In “A Today Christmas ...” Harris’s son is photographed

⁵² Eby, discussion.

⁵³ Harris, discussion.

⁵⁴ Ibid. “I got shit thrown at me for that!” she adds.

sitting next to the larger-than-life poster Maggs created. The bold, punchy image works well with the bright, playful offerings in the children's gift roundup, and it also helps to create effective compositional balance. And not only did it solve his design problem, Maggs contributed content: the idea of a customized poster became one of the gift suggestions. Eby explains that Maggs "was like a Hollywood prop shop," which was part of his appeal as a photographer. "Anything you could imagine, Arnaud probably had, and he could represent it. He was always an attraction that way, as he was a one-stop shopping centre."⁵⁵ Maggs's personal collection provided props for several stories in *Maclean's*, and it was a particularly valuable asset for assignments with a still-life bent. Take, for example, "On June 21st There Will Be 93 More Days of Summer. What Are You Going to Do?" Maggs's photographs feature throughout the story, and the images in the introductory spread and on page 35 incorporate objects from his collection (fig. 2.15).

Harris and Maggs frequently travelled for assignments, and his work for *Maclean's* and other publications included exploration both in the studio and on location. "We were always recreating a different reality, even in the simplest kind of photography he was doing. And, as I say, he was experimenting all the time, because he was definitely not going to just be a photographer. He was going to be something," Harris insists, pointing to Maggs's pursuit of artistic expression.⁵⁶ As a photographer he ultimately helped shape the look of *Maclean's* in the late 1960s. His cover for the May 1, 1969, issue demonstrates his conceptual contributions and hints at the emphasis on comparative analysis that his future artistic works would explore. For a

⁵⁵ Eby, discussion.

⁵⁶ Harris, discussion.

story about Lionel Tiger's speculative research on male bonding (for example, *Men in Groups*, published in 1969), Maggs portrayed his subjects as captive animals or scientific specimens to be studied (fig. 2.16). The interior spread features frontal portraits of his naked male and female models from the shoulders up. Although the moody lighting in this editorial work does not match his eventual approach in artworks such as *64 Portrait Studies, 1976–78* (1976–78), in retrospect the project foretells work to come.

Both Harris and Eby continued to work with Maggs following their days at *Maclean's*. Eby, for instance, left the magazine in 1972 to work for Comac Communications, where he led the art department for *Homemaker's* and a new publication, *Quest* magazine. *Quest* was a controlled-subscription magazine geared at the start toward men. Photographs Maggs took for the new magazine contributed to award-winning stories, including "The State of the Affair" (1972–73), which visually and conceptually played with similarity and difference (fig. 2.17). These same preoccupations would define his artistic projects, where comparative analysis is key to both the artistic impetus and viewers' experiences of his output.

Maggs's approach to photography was informed by his work in advertising and graphic design. In Harris's view, this was a benefit that ensured efficiency, and also results. "He organized everything around him that he was working on, and his eye — his graphic eye — was just so impeccable for design. And he never wasted film," she explains. "He'd take a shot, bracket, bracket, bracket, and that would be it. And it was never ever difficult to edit his shots, because you'd always take the main shot that he had taken rather than the bracket."⁵⁷ His previous work also often led to inventive photographic solutions that were rooted in the

⁵⁷ Ibid.

language and approaches of design and advertising. In 1968, for example, Maggs worked on an assignment for *Chatelaine* about raising outstanding children. As the contributors' page (fig. 2.18) explains, the story posed logistical problems that Maggs solved in an interesting way:

[W]e immediately ran into one of society's current problems: mobility. Most of the mothers and children no longer lived in the same town or city (or sometimes even country). But photographer Arnaud Maggs found an ingenious solution: he blew up action shots of the children to poster size, then posed the blowups with the mothers.⁵⁸

Maggs's approach to "How to Raise an Outstanding Child," which leaned on his graphic sensibilities and experiences in the print industry, netted playful and compelling results. Figure 2.19, for instance, shows Rose Kastner with a poster blow-up of her son Peter Kastner, an actor who at the time was starring in an American television sitcom called *The Ugliest Girl in Town*.

Like *Maclean's*, *Chatelaine* was a prominent magazine, and when it merged with *Canadian Home Journal* in 1958 it had impressive distribution numbers.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, competition within the Canadian market, particularly with American women's magazines, led to more shifts in the 1960s. Owner Maclean-Hunter expanded *Chatelaine* in the 1960s to include a series of publications — *Chatelaine*, *Châtelaine: La revue moderne* (taking over *Revue moderne*), and *Miss Chatelaine*, which eventually became *Flare* — offering a truly national market for advertisers, allowing for content sharing between English and French editions, and expanding its demographic reach to include teenagers.⁶⁰

Cultural historian Valerie J. Korinek declares *Chatelaine* instrumental in the development of "makeover mania" in the 1960s.⁶¹ Beauty content and makeover articles

⁵⁸ "At Chatelaine" (contributors' page), *Chatelaine* 41, no. 8 (August 1968): 2.

⁵⁹ Sutherland, *The Monthly Epic*, 249.

⁶⁰ For an in-depth study of *Chatelaine's* history, see Valerie J. Korinek, *Roughing It in the Suburbs: Reading Chatelaine Magazine in the Fifties and Sixties* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000).

⁶¹ Korinek, *Roughing It*, 201–2.

became part of a strategy for increasing readership and attracting a younger audience to the publication. Just as he did for *Maclean's*, Maggs worked on a range of assignments for *Chatelaine*, including fashion and editorial photography, and he also contributed images in support of beauty and fitness articles produced by *Chatelaine* editor Eveleen Dollery (figs. 2.20–2.24). As Korinek points out, these short, heavily illustrated articles pushed the notion that “women’s ‘natural assets’ were all visual — skin, face, posture, figure — and the tools of maximizing these assets were makeup, exercises, and beauty regimes.”⁶² The repetition and comparative scrutiny encouraged by “Face Facts” (fig. 2.23), for example, are not dissimilar to Maggs’s artworks, which also insist on a comparative way of seeing and looking.

By the mid-1970s Maggs’s contributions to *Chatelaine* had shifted more toward portraiture (figs. 2.25 and 2.26). “I remember him saying he was interested in making portraits rather than photographing somebody for what they were wearing,” recalls curator Ann Thomas.⁶³ Likewise, artist Lee Dickson, who was Maggs’s partner in the early 1970s, remembers, “He didn’t like being a fashion photographer; he didn’t like trying to take pictures and having four people standing behind him. They were there to put on the makeup and then fuss over things.”⁶⁴ His emphasis on portraiture would be underscored by the work he did for *The Canadian Magazine* around the same time.

In 1975 Maggs was asked to shoot covers for *The Canadian Magazine*, which was distributed in newspapers across the country. As he records in his notebook, they were looking

⁶² Ibid., 202.

⁶³ Thomas, discussion.

⁶⁴ Lee Dickson, discussion with author, June 29, 2017.

for “cover portraits that would be easily identifiable and that would stand out.”⁶⁵ His photographs of prominent Canadians — Pierre Berton, Jean Chrétien, Stephen Lewis, and David Suzuki, for example (figs. 2.27–2.30) — contributed to picturing the nation through portraiture. Maggs’s cover images were frequently supported by additional interior portraits. Some of his secondary images are notable for their close-cropping, a tendency seen in work he produced for other publications, including *Chatelaine* and *Canadian Business*. Take, for example, the portraits of Bill Davis and John Turner that were printed in the interior of *The Canadian* (figs. 2.31 and 2.32), which show near-profiles of the politicians close up. Some of his other secondary images capture the subjects in interior spaces, often with family members, to provide a more intimate view. Such was the approach for his portraits of Roy McMurtry and Joe Clark, for instance (fig. 2.33 and 2.34). Orenstein believes that Maggs’s early careers in graphic art and magazine photography were central to who he was, and identifies his work for *The Canadian* as particularly influential for him as a photographer. “I loved the shots,” Orenstein explains. “He was Canada’s greatest portraitist at that moment.”⁶⁶ The covers mark an important shift in focus for Maggs — from fashion photography to portraiture — and set the trajectory for his early artworks.

Some of Maggs’s cover images for *The Canadian* reveal clear intersections between his artistic and editorial approaches; for a 1976 cover, he photographed musician Ronnie Hawkins in true profile (fig. 2.35). In 1976 Maggs also started working on *64 Portrait Studies*, which he

⁶⁵ Arnaud Maggs, “Personal Journal: Beginning 1975,” unpaginated notebook, 1975–81, LAC, Ottawa, R7959-5522, R7959-137-3-E, vol. 839.

⁶⁶ Orenstein, discussion.

considered his “first serious” artwork.⁶⁷ It was initially shown in 1978 at the David Mirvish Gallery in Toronto, in his first significant solo art exhibition (fig. 2.36).⁶⁸ Revealing a taxonomic approach to portraiture inspired by variations in human physiognomy, the work marks the start of Maggs’s large-scale, grid-based portrait explorations. For it he photographed sixteen female and sixteen male sitters against a textured background. Comprising four rows of equal-sized black-and-white portraits, *64 Portrait Studies* presents the viewer with neutral images of the thirty-two sitters with their bare shoulders exposed, “so there was equalization among the people,” Maggs explained.⁶⁹ Starting with the details seen in figure 2.37, the portraits of his female subjects form the first and second rows of *64 Portrait Studies*, alternating between profile and frontal views. The portraits of the male subjects follow suit in the third and fourth rows. No single sitter takes priority.

The alternating arrangement of the rows between profiles and frontal views reveals the beginnings of a systems-based approach to artmaking. Maggs established systems and procedures for the conception, making, naming, and display of his artworks, which will be addressed further in chapter 4. However, *64 Portrait Studies* was made before Maggs developed a method for his work that was defined in part by the number of exposures on a roll of film. Instead, his final selection of images was made from a staggering 2,400 possible

⁶⁷ Gail Fisher-Taylor, “Arnaud Maggs: Anatomy of a Portrait: An Interview with Arnaud Maggs,” *Photo Communiqué* (Fall 1982): 12.

⁶⁸ Maggs exhibited photographs in three solo shows prior to the 1978 exhibition at the David Mirvish Gallery: *Baby Pictures*, at the Baldwin Street Gallery, Toronto (1971); *People of Brussels*, as part of the Brussels (ON) Centennial (1972); and *Movie Directors*, at the Revue Repertory Theatre, Toronto (1973). These are addressed in chapter 3.

⁶⁹ Ben Portis, “Evidence of Existence: A Conversation with Toronto-Based Photographer Arnaud Maggs,” *Art on Paper* 12, no. 5 (May/June 2008): 66.

frames.⁷⁰ As a commercial photographer, Maggs would take many images, and final selections would be made by reviewing negatives or contact sheets. As an artist, he started out working much the same way. Contact sheets for *64 Portrait Studies* reveal experimentation with a range of variables. For example, Caitlan Maggs is photographed against both light and dark backgrounds in varying poses (fig. 2.38). From a large number of exposures Maggs edited down his final selections with an eye to achieving a consistent neutral look for the sixty-four portraits as a whole. His goal was to bring together individual portraits that worked effectively as a unit. "Some people didn't work at all," he explained. "Some people I'd have come back for another sitting."⁷¹

In electing to include only emotionally neutral images, Maggs's ongoing interest in the proportions of the human head informed his selections. Unconcerned with revealing anything of his sitters' personalities, he instead established an analytical methodology for *64 Portrait Studies*, aimed at drawing attention to shape. "More than anything," he explained, "I wanted people to compare all the wonderful and varied head shapes."⁷² The work is a photographic extension of his early preoccupation with the shape and form of the human head, which he explored in his drawings and illustrations in the early part of his career.

Paul Orenstein started working with Maggs during his period of transition between commercial photography and art. He recounts an illustration project for *Toronto Life* magazine that is indicative of Maggs's methods. In 1972 *Toronto Life* was purchased by Michael de

⁷⁰ Robert Enright, "Designs on Life: An Interview with Arnaud Maggs," *Border Crossings* 31, no. 2 (June/August 2012): 43.

⁷¹ Arnaud Maggs, "Arnaud Maggs," Kodak Chair Lecture Series, Ryerson University, February 11, 1994; sound recording, Toronto Metropolitan University Archives and Special Collections, maggs_1.mp3, 00:12:15.

⁷² Stainback, "Q and A," 112.

Pencier, and Ken Rodmell was hired as art director. Rodmell and John Macfarlane, the editor, wanted spot illustrations for every column and every feature in the inaugural issue, but their budget would not allow for it. Limited by economics, they decided to choose one person to do all the work for the entire issue — Maggs.⁷³ Maggs wanted to achieve a childlike style for the illustrations. Orenstein suggests that he made many variants as he repeated similar drawings over and over (figs. 2.39 and 2.40). Although Orenstein felt Maggs was successful, he recalls him being critical of the results. “I’m looking at them,” he says, “and they’re *all* like child’s drawings. But [Maggs] would deconstruct each one and reject them, saying, ‘It’s not free enough,’ or ‘It’s too forced.’ ... At first I couldn’t see the difference, or the differences didn’t matter to me.”⁷⁴ For Orenstein the process was revelatory. Maggs’s rigorous approach and his interest in slight differences came through strongly in this project, as it would in *64 Portrait Studies* and elsewhere throughout his career. “Gradually, as he was describing why he didn’t like one and why he did like another,” Orenstein explains, “I could see what he was seeing. So this was an amazing education for me in terms of how his mind worked.”⁷⁵

A close examination of contact sheets from Maggs’s commercial photography projects from this period reveals a process of exploration and experimentation that laid the foundation for his early artworks. The negatives and contact sheets for his session with Ronnie Hawkins, for example, show a conscious working through of ideas that would eventually shape his strategies for *64 Portrait Studies*. He explored many poses and angles with Hawkins, trying frontal images, profiles, and near-profiles. He photographed the musician in colour and in black-and-white,

⁷³ John Macfarlane, discussion with author, September 8, 2020.

⁷⁴ Orenstein, discussion.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

indoors and out, fully clothed and with his shirt off (figs. 2.41–2.43). It is certainly not uncommon for commercial photographers to, when possible, dedicate time on a job to taking images for themselves, so to speak — ones that satisfy their personal artistic inquiries. Maggs’s negatives and contact sheets demonstrate that he fulfilled both the client’s needs and his own creative concerns at the same time. Explicitly acknowledging this practice recognizes the productive interconnections between the applied and the fine arts, and better acknowledges the value and importance of commercial practice to art history.

Maggs’s commercial photography sets served as testing grounds, allowing him to refine his vision and develop his artistic approach. His black-and-white photographs from the Hawkins session align with his early artworks, and the markups on the contact sheets and subsequent test prints further illuminate his dual focus on commercial and artistic practice (figs. 2.44–2.47). Although similar to the image used on the cover of *The Canadian*, his selections represent the choices he made as an artist. Likewise, Maggs’s 1978 cover portrait of Buffy Sainte-Marie portrays the musician in profile, along the lines of his approach to *64 Portrait Studies* (fig. 2.48). Though shot in colour, the strong contrast of Sainte-Marie’s hair and jacket against the light background points to his preference for punchy, high-contrast images in his artworks. Part 2 of this dissertation will examine additional examples of how Maggs’s decades of commercial work informed — often very directly — his artistic practice.

In addition to offering opportunities for artistic exploration, Maggs’s commercial shoots also expanded his network of potential sitters. “If I go to do a commercial assignment and the person is someone that I would like to photograph also for myself,” he explained, “I try to

arrange another sitting in my own studio.”⁷⁶ Such was the case with Yousuf Karsh (1908–2002), for instance. In 1976 Maggs photographed Karsh for *The Canadian* in front of his own famous portrait of Winston Churchill (fig. 2.49); he would later photograph Karsh in 1981, as part of *48 Views* (1981–83; fig. 2.50). This was also the case with Leonard Cohen (1934–2016), whom he photographed for *Maclean’s* in 1972 (fig. 2.51). In his notebooks, Maggs listed Cohen as an influence.⁷⁷ Orenstein proposes that the early shoot with Cohen contributed to some of Maggs’s ideas about life, which at the time involved paring down his belongings and moving toward minimalism in his personal spaces. “It really influenced him,” he says. “It played into the simplicity thing.”⁷⁸ Maggs would photograph Cohen again in an editorial context. And in 1977, he photographed the musician, in both frontal and profile views, in the high-contrast square-format style of his artworks (fig. 2.52).

By the time Maggs was working for *Canadian Business* in 1977, his reputation as a portraitist was cemented. Canadian journalist and editor Alexander “Sandy” Ross, whom Maggs had worked with at *Maclean’s*, is credited with the magazine’s rebirth in 1977. Prior to 1977, *Canadian Business* was a trade publication. As Mark de Wolf colourfully asserts in a tribute some years after Ross’s death, *Canadian Business* was “a bone-dry, 49-year-old Canadian Chamber of Commerce house organ steeped in the diction of the trade press.”⁷⁹ There had

⁷⁶ Fisher-Taylor, “Anatomy of a Portrait,” 17.

⁷⁷ Maggs, “Personal Journal.”

⁷⁸ Orenstein, discussion; “He was on a similar quest to Cohen’s,” he expands. Curator Karyn Allen likewise found affinities between Maggs and Cohen: “I think of Leonard Cohen a lot when I think of Arnaud. ... If [Arnaud] served you a tomato on a plate, it would be like an Arnaud Maggs photograph. ... His way of viewing food, how he cut food, how he served it to you, it was all curated ... He could have, like Leonard Cohen, gone to the top of a mountain as if he were going for two weeks and [have] ended up staying five years”; discussion with author, August 4, 2017.

⁷⁹ Mark de Wolf, “Raggedy Sandy,” *Ryerson Review of Journalism*, April 1, 1997, <http://rrj.ca/raggedy-sandy/>.

been moments, however, in the publication's history where design was central to its identity. Illustrator Grant Timmermann, for instance, produced the covers for *Canadian Business* from 1944 to 1948. In December 1948, Canadian designers Carl Dair and Henry Eveleigh redesigned the magazine, garnering accolades for its modern design. Ross and his business partners, Michael de Pencier and Roy MacLaren, were willing to take risks and make bold moves. When they purchased the publication, they sought to treat business "as a spectator sport" rather than a dry, straightforward subject.⁸⁰ This new editorial direction was explicitly stated in the first issue of the revamped *Canadian Business*: "We hope it reflects our basic editorial conviction: that business is important, interesting, understandable and — more often than many people realize — *fun*."⁸¹ Freelance contributors, both writers and image makers, play an important role in establishing a publication's brand identity. "When you're doing a publication," Donna Braggins, then a graphic designer at the magazine, explains, "you're creating a brand, an identity, and you're looking for people that help you establish that look."⁸² With *Canadian Business* in particular, the goal was to redefine what a publication about business could be, challenging preconceived notions about the subject and the approach to covering it. It was in this context of reimagining business journalism that Maggs found a fitting platform for his portraiture. His closely cropped portrait of John Orr appeared in the first issue of the redesigned magazine (fig. 2.53).

⁸⁰ Michael de Pencier quoted in Mark De Wolf, "Raggedy Sandy."

⁸¹ Editorial, *Canadian Business* 50, no. 9 (September 1977): 10.

⁸² Donna Braggins, discussion with author, July 4, 2017.

Though there is an early example of Maggs staging a photograph for a story using his niece and nephew as models,⁸³ his assignments were primarily portraits of businesspeople (figs. 2.54 and 2.55). “He was absolutely a portraitist,” Braggins explains. “He had a very distinct way, a very distinct style of photographing people.”⁸⁴ Maggs continued both his artistic work and editorial projects for a range of magazines, including *Canadian Business*, in tandem throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s, even as he garnered a reputation as an artist. And his artistic reputation was an important part of what he offered editorial publications. Maggs was already photographing for *64 Portrait Studies* when he started doing *Canadian Business* assignments. He was also one of the photographers who helped to define the photographic identity of *Canadian Business* at that time. Braggins explains:

Because he had a distinctive style and approach to people ... he would always be a part of a group of photographers we would consider [for assignments]. He was always meticulous about his research and he was fundamentally intelligent. You could give him something and he would add value and insight. And that was one of the reasons we wanted to use him, because we wanted to actually have somebody who was a partner in articulating the strengths of the subjects of the articles.⁸⁵

His work aligned well with the brand and, moreover, it helped to propel it. “To bring someone like Arnaud into that selection, it was really a very conscious effort to create a cultural statement about business,” Braggins further argues.⁸⁶ The inclusion of Maggs’s work helped *Canadian Business* signal its deliberate departure from conventional approaches to business and its commitment to presenting a more dynamic narrative about the Canadian business world. Recalling the trust that Eby and Harris would put in Maggs, Braggins points to his taste

⁸³ See Ronald Burke and Tamara Weir, “Why Good Managers Make Lousy Fathers,” *Canadian Business*, November 1977, 53.

⁸⁴ Braggins, discussion.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

and the advantage that his previous career experience brought to his photography and his working relationships in the magazine industry:

When working with Arnaud one always had the sense of the fully rounded professional, because he understood what it was to be an art director at the same time ... he was performing as a photographer. We always trusted that Arnaud had terrific judgement and taste, and so there was a real mutual respect in the selection process. ... He gave us a reasonable selection to have a dialogue [about] with editors and at the same time preserved control over a selection that would be optimal [for him]. ... The nice thing was he — This is where that kind of professionalism comes in, that understanding of what the process was.⁸⁷

It was a period of mutual impact. As an artist, Maggs's editorial portraiture helped to define the photographic identity of Canadian magazines, and his editorial work offered opportunities for exploration that shaped his artistic portraiture.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

Chapter 2: Illustrations



Figure 2.1 Arnaud Maggs, "Laurie, Toby, Caitlan, Maggie, Gramps, Anthony K., circus, Toby playing cards, 2½ secs FH #4 paper," 1960. Gelatin silver contact sheet (35 mm negatives). Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, R7959-2202. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figure 2.2 Arnaud Maggs, "Mennonite women, Elora Gorge, first pictures with the Hasselblad," 1966. Gelatin silver contact sheet (6 x 6 cm negatives). Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, R7959-2179. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figure 2.3 Arnaud Maggs, "Toby Maggs," September 1, 1966. Gelatin silver contact sheets (6 x 6 cm negatives). Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, R7959-2181. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figure 2.4 Arnaud Maggs, "Cats Pyjamas (with Laurie Maggs)," fall 1966. Gelatin silver contact sheet (6 x 6 cm negatives). Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, R7959-2172. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figure 2.5 Arnaud Maggs, "Cats Pyjamas (with Laurie Maggs)," fall 1966. Gelatin silver contact sheet (35 mm negatives). Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, R7959-2172. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figure 2.6 Arnaud Maggs, "Cats Pyjamas (with Laurie Maggs)," fall 1966. Gelatin silver contact sheet (35 mm negatives). Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, R7959-2172. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figure 2.7 Arnaud Maggs, "Windsor Arms," April 1968. Gelatin silver print contact sheet (35 mm negatives). Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, R7959-2149. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figure 2.8 Arnaud Maggs, *Three Small Rooms*, 1968. Windsor Arms Hotel, Toronto [photographer unknown]. Courtesy of Stephen Bulger Gallery, Toronto. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.

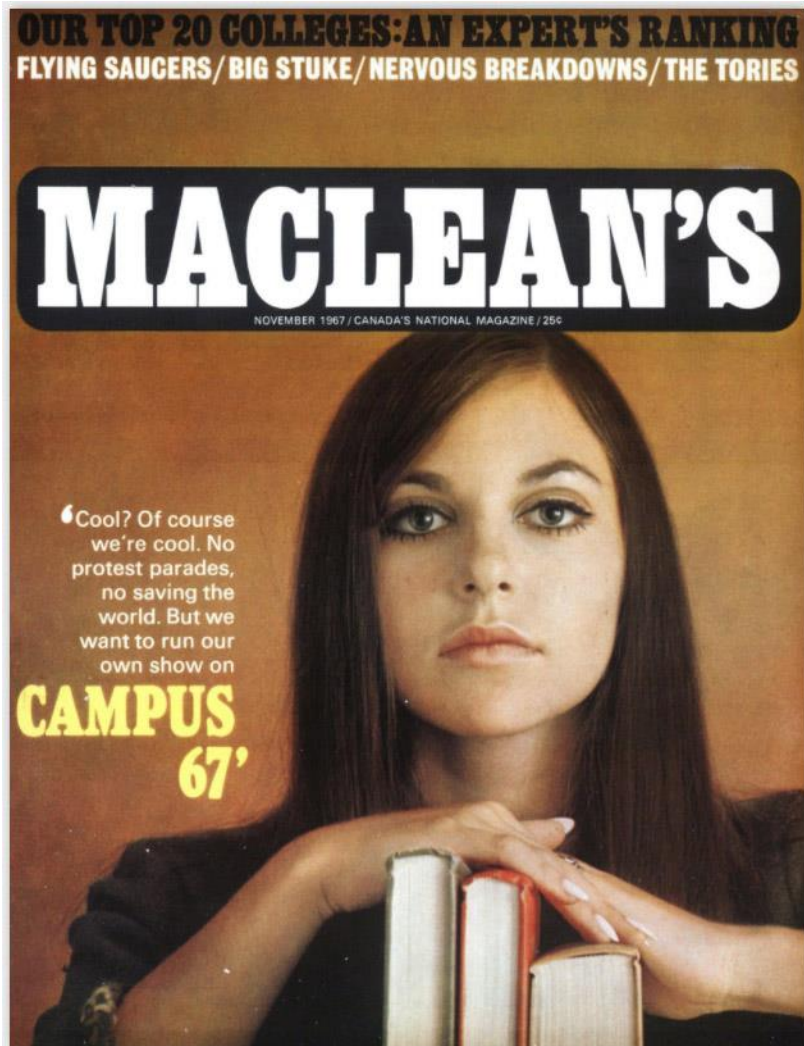


Figure 2.9 Arnaud Maggs, cover photograph for *Maclean's*, November 1, 1967. *Maclean's* Archive, <https://archive.macleans.ca>. © Maclean's / St. Joseph Communications / Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figure 2.10 Arnaud Maggs, photographs for Marjorie Harris, "Fantasy Living," *Maclean's*, December 1, 1967, 34–37. *Maclean's* Archive, <https://archive.macleans.ca>. © Maclean's / St. Joseph Communications / Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figure 2.11 Arnaud Maggs, photographs for Marjorie Harris, "The All-Canadian Fabrication," *Maclean's*, April 1, 1969, 86–89. *Maclean's* Archive, <https://archive.macleans.ca>. © Maclean's / St. Joseph Communications / Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figure 2.13 Arnaud Maggs (art direction and design), promotional material for Art Associates Ltd., 1965 or 1966. Courtesy of Advertising and Design Club of Canada (ADCC). © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figure 2.15 Arnaud Maggs, photographs for “On June 21st There Will Be 93 More Days of Summer. What Are You Going to Do?” *Maclean’s*, June 1, 1971, 30–31 and 34–35. *Maclean’s* Archive, <https://archive.macleans.ca>. © Maclean’s / St. Joseph Communications / Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.

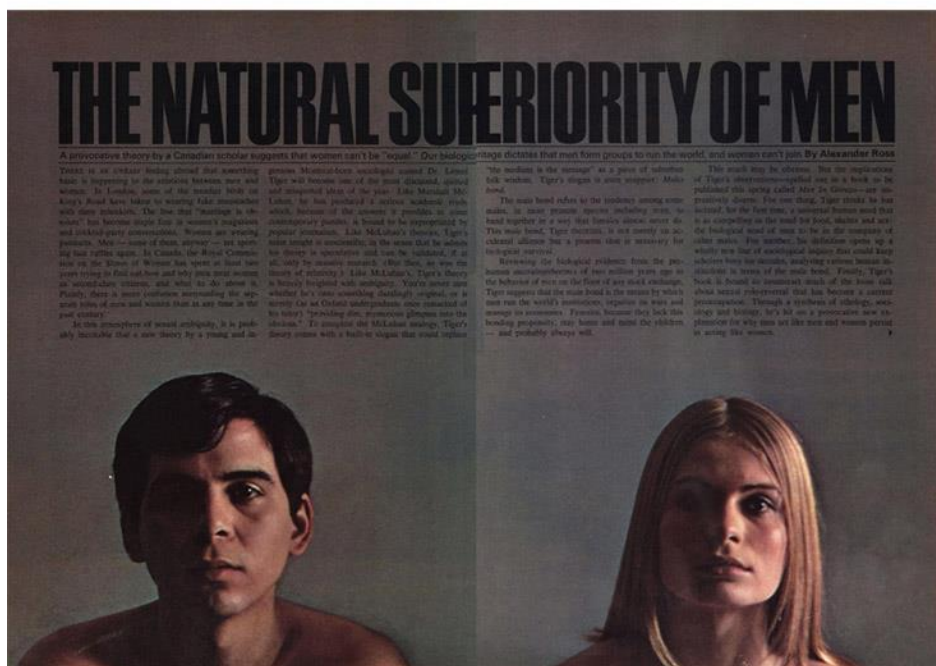
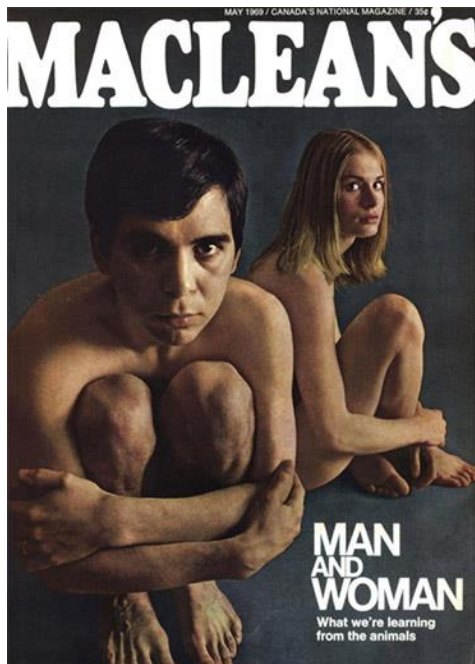


Figure 2.16 Arnaud Maggs, photographs for Alexander Ross, “The Natural Superiority of Men,” *Maclean’s*, May 1969, cover and 22–23. *Maclean’s* Archive, <https://archive.macleans.ca>. © Maclean’s / St. Joseph Communications / Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



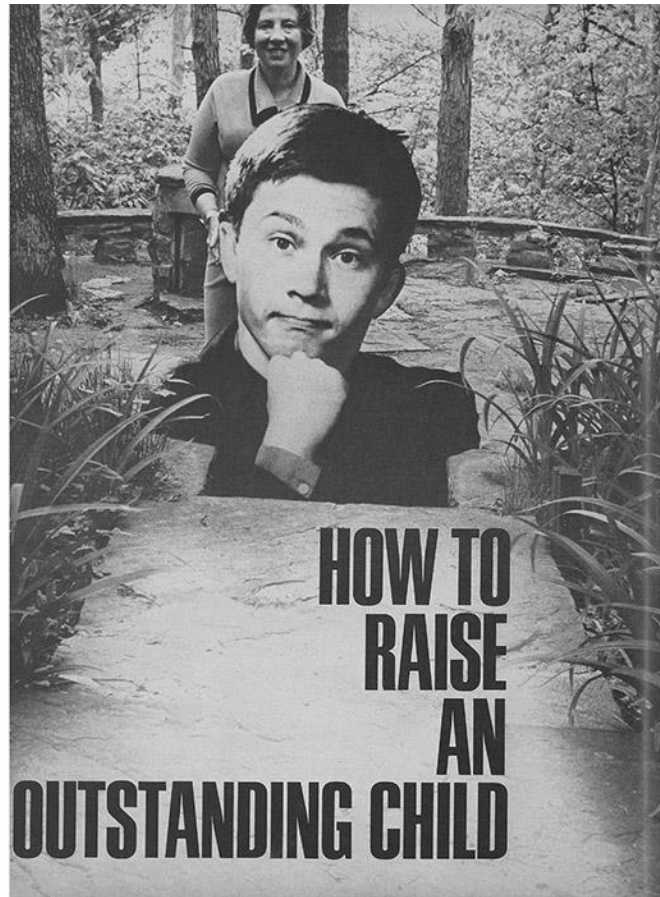
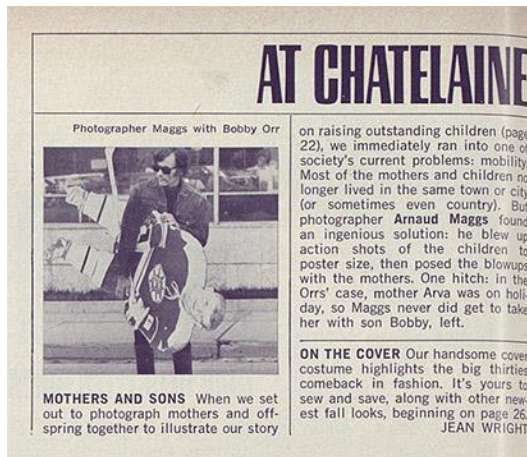


Figure 2.18 "Photographer [Arnaud] Maggs with Bobby Orr" [photographer unknown], in Jean Wright, "At Chatelaine" (contributors' page), *Chatelaine* 41, no. 8 (August 1968): 2 (detail). Image published with permission of ProQuest LLC. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission. Image produced by ProQuest LLC as part of ProQuest® Women's Magazine Archive. www.proquest.com.

Figure 2.19 Arnaud Maggs, photograph of Rose Kastner and son Peter for Shirley Mair, "How to Raise an Outstanding Child," *Chatelaine* 41, no. 8 (August 1968): 22. Image published with permission of ProQuest LLC. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission. Image produced by ProQuest LLC as part of ProQuest® Women's Magazine Archive. www.proquest.com. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figure 2.20 Arnaud Maggs, photographs for Vivian Wilcox, "G-r-r-r-eat Fakes," *Chatelaine* 41, no. 10 (October 1968): 42–45. Image published with permission of ProQuest LLC. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission. Image produced by ProQuest LLC as part of ProQuest® Women's Magazine Archive. www.proquest.com. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.

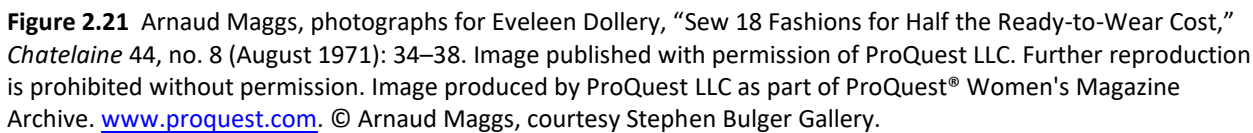




Figure 2.22 Arnaud Maggs, photographs for Eveleen Dollery, "Bare It," *Chatelaine* 45, no. 10 (October 1972): 58–61. Image published with permission of ProQuest LLC. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission. Image produced by ProQuest LLC as part of ProQuest® Women's Magazine Archive. www.proquest.com. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figure 2.23 Arnaud Maggs, photographs for Eveleen Dollery, "Face Facts," *Chatelaine* 42, no. 3 (March 1969): 34–36. Image published with permission of ProQuest LLC. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission. Image produced by ProQuest LLC as part of ProQuest® Women's Magazine Archive. www.proquest.com. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.

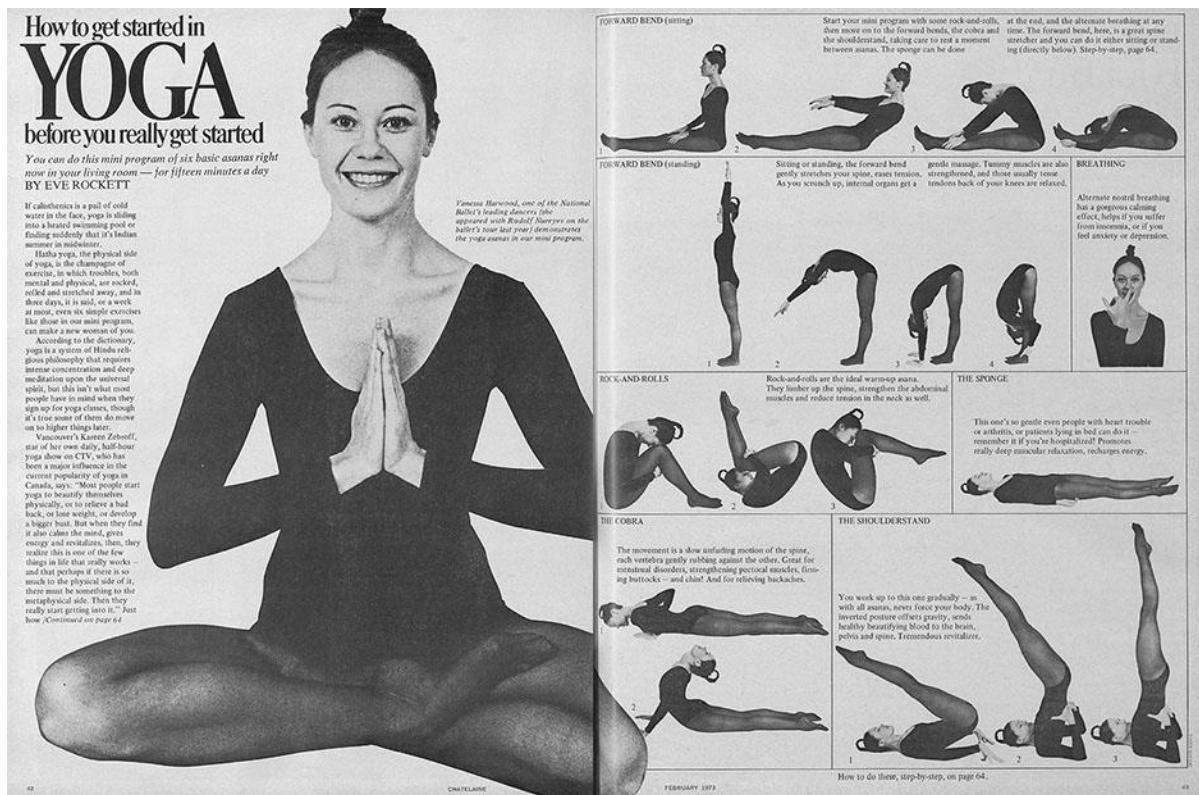


Figure 2.24 Arnaud Maggs, photographs for Eve Rockett, "How to Get Started in Yoga Before You Really Get Started," *Chatelaine* 46, no. 2 (February 1973): 42–43. Image published with permission of ProQuest LLC. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission. Image produced by ProQuest LLC as part of ProQuest® Women's Magazine Archive. www.proquest.com. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.

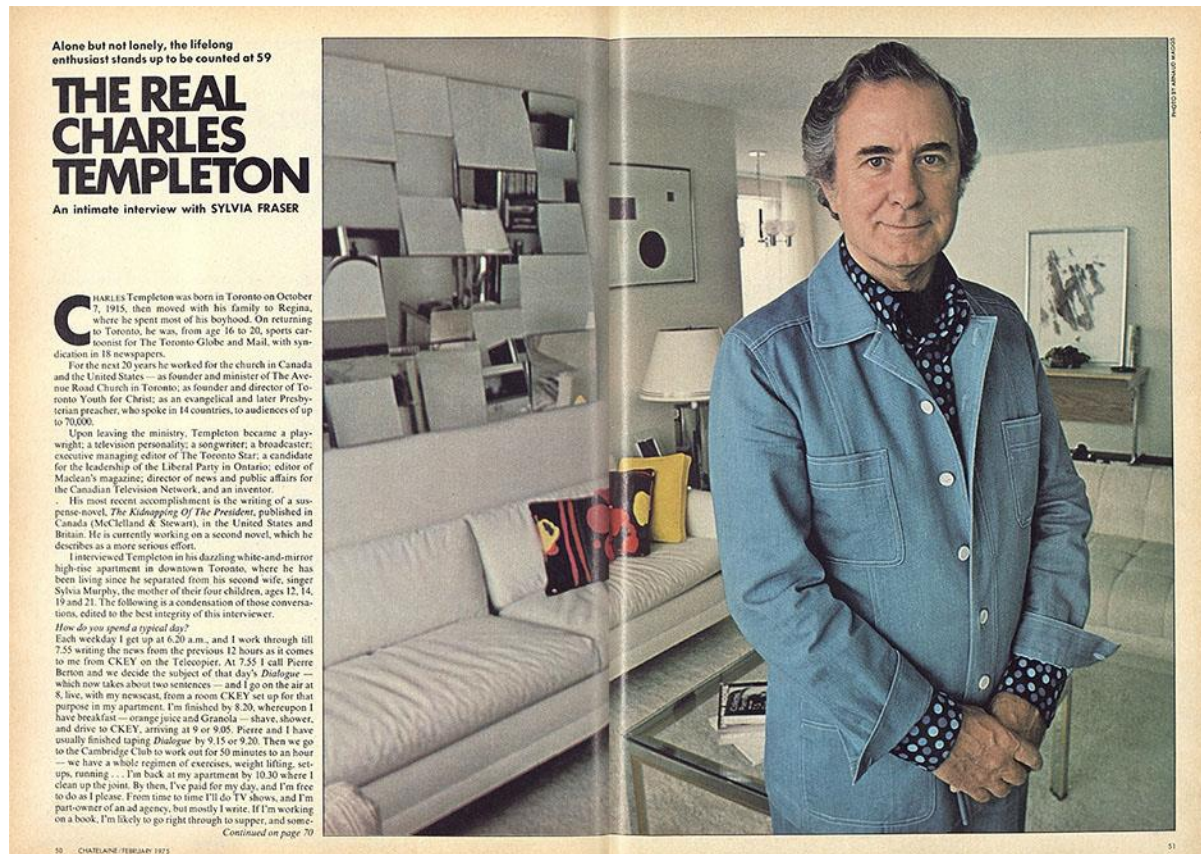


Figure 2.25 Arnaud Maggs, photograph of Charles Templeton for Sylvia Fraser, "The Real Charles Templeton," *Chatelaine* 48, no. 2 (February 1975): 50–51. Image published with permission of ProQuest LLC. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission. Image produced by ProQuest LLC as part of ProQuest® Women's Magazine Archive. www.proquest.com. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figure 2.26 Arnaud Maggs, photograph of Margaret Atwood for Valerie Miner, "The Many Facets of Margaret Atwood," *Chatelaine* 48, no. 6 (June 1975): 32. Image published with permission of ProQuest LLC. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission. Image produced by ProQuest LLC as part of ProQuest® Women's Magazine Archive. www.proquest.com. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.

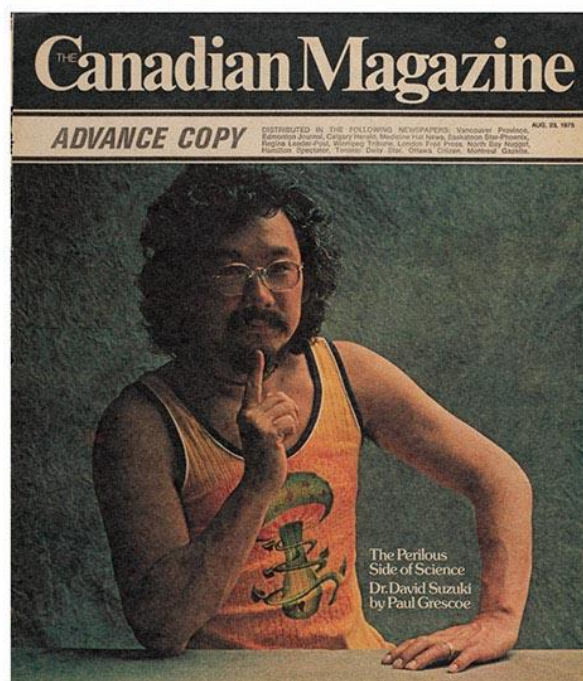
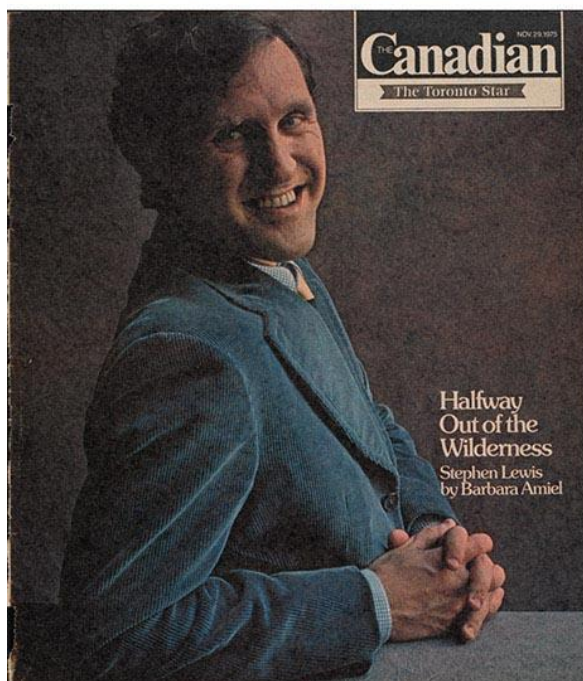
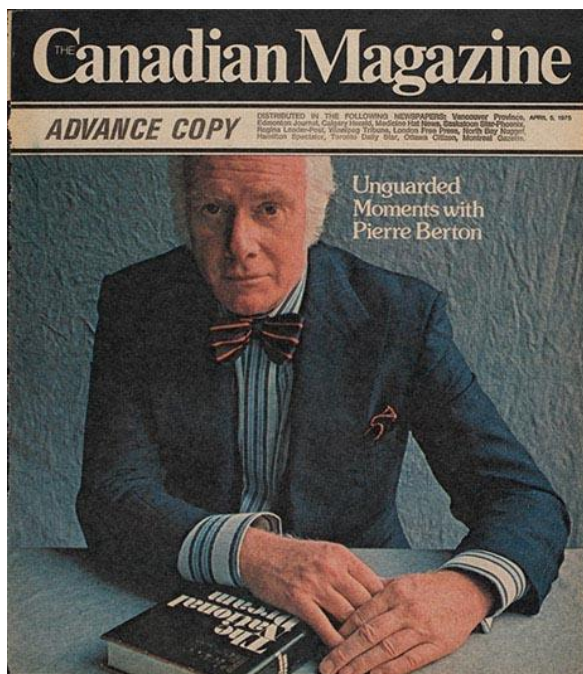


Figure 2.27 Arnaud Maggs, cover portrait of Pierre Berton, *The Canadian Magazine*, April 5, 1975. Library and Archives Canada (LAC), Ottawa, R7959-657.

Figure 2.28 Arnaud Maggs, cover portrait of Jean Chrétien, *The Canadian*, January 21, 1978. LAC, R7959-648.

Figure 2.29 Arnaud Maggs, cover portrait of Stephen Lewis, *The Canadian*, November 29, 1975. LAC, R7959-660.

Figure 2.30 Arnaud Maggs, cover portrait of David Suzuki, *The Canadian Magazine*, August 23, 1975. LAC, R7959-655.

All photographs courtesy of *The Canadian*, *Toronto Star*. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figure 2.31 Arnaud Maggs, portraits of Bill Davis, *The Canadian Magazine*, May 10, 1975. LAC, Ottawa, R7959-661. Courtesy of *The Canadian, Toronto Star*. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.

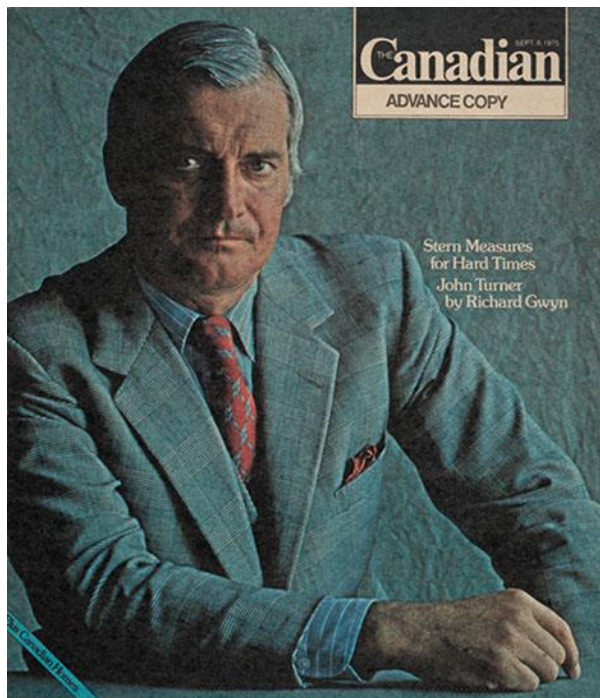


Figure 2.32 Arnaud Maggs, portraits of John Turner, *The Canadian*, September 6, 1975. LAC, Ottawa, R7959-664. Courtesy of *The Canadian*, *Toronto Star*. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.

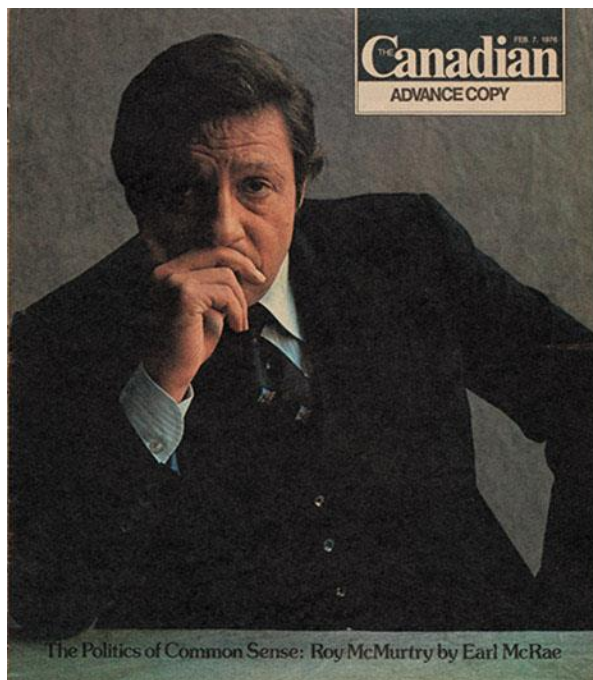


Figure 2.33 Arnaud Maggs, portraits of Roy McMurtry and family, *The Canadian*, February 7, 1976. LAC, Ottawa, R7959-652. Courtesy of *The Canadian*, *Toronto Star*. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



The Man Who Would Be Prime Minister
Joe Clark: an intimate profile by Richard Gwyn



Figure 2.34 Arnaud Maggs, portraits of Joe Clark and family, *The Canadian*, March 24, 1979. LAC, Ottawa, R7959-650. Courtesy of *The Canadian*, *Toronto Star*. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.

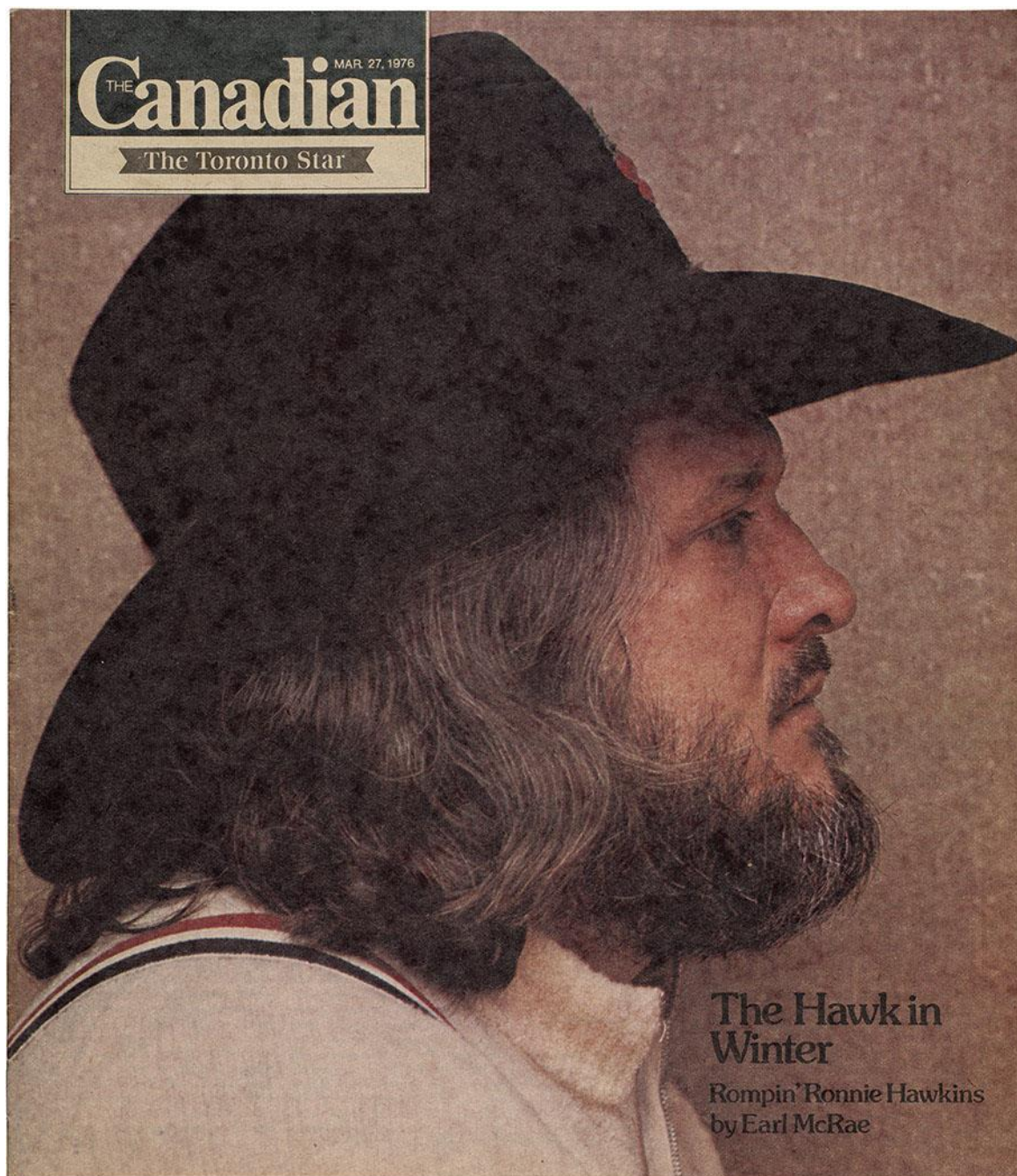


Figure 2.35 Arnaud Maggs, portrait of Ronnie Hawkins, *The Canadian*, March 27, 1976. LAC, Ottawa, R7959-647. Courtesy of *The Canadian*, *Toronto Star*. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figure 2.36 Arnaud Maggs, *64 Portrait Studies*, 1976–78, 1976–78. Gelatin silver prints, 40.4 x 40.4 cm each; images 37.9 x 38.2 cm each. Installation at David Mirvish Gallery, Toronto, 1978 [photographer unknown]. CMCP Collection, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, EX-85-100.1-64; purchased 1985. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figure 2.37 Arnaud Maggs, *64 Portrait Studies, 1976–78, 1976–78* (details). Gelatin silver prints, 40.4 x 40.4 cm each; images 37.9 x 38.2 cm each. CMCP Collection, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, EX-85-100.1-64; purchased 1985. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figure 2.38 Arnaud Maggs, *Caitlan Maggs (related to 64 Portrait Studies)*, c. 1977. Gelatin silver contact prints (6 x 6 cm negatives). LAC, Ottawa, R7959-1969. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figure 2.39 Arnaud Maggs, illustration for *Toronto Life*, 1972 (top left). Courtesy of Toronto Public Library.
© Toronto Life / St. Joseph Communications / Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.

Figure 2.40 Arnaud Maggs, five variations on *Toronto Life* illustration, 1972. Pencil on wove paper, 60.8 x 47.8 cm each. LAC, Ottawa, R7959-510–514. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figure 2.41 Arnaud Maggs, "Ronnie Hawkins & Wife," February 7, 1976. Colour transparencies, 6 x 6 cm each. LAC, Ottawa, R7959-3971, 3969, 3970, 3968, 3966, 3967. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figure 2.42 Arnaud Maggs, "Ronnie Hawkins," February 7, 1976. Gelatin silver contact print (35 mm negatives). LAC, Ottawa, R7959-1801. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.

Figure 2.43 Arnaud Maggs, "Ronnie Hawkins & Wife," February 7, 1976. Black-and-white negatives, 6 x 6 cm each. LAC, Ottawa, R7959-3973. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.

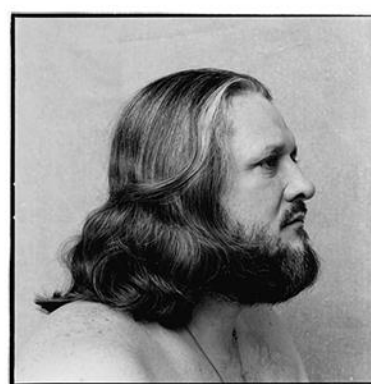


Figure 2.44 Arnaud Maggs, "Ronnie Hawkins," February 7, 1976. Gelatin silver contact print (5.5 x 5.5 cm negatives). LAC, Ottawa, R7959-1801. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.

Figures 2.45–2.47. Arnaud Maggs, *Ronnie Hawkins*, February 7, 1976. Gelatin silver prints, 25.4 x 20.3 cm. LAC, R7959-1801. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figure 2.48 Arnaud Maggs, portrait of Buffy Sainte-Marie, *The Canadian*, January 14, 1978. LAC, Ottawa, R7959-649. Courtesy of *The Canadian*, *Toronto Star*. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.

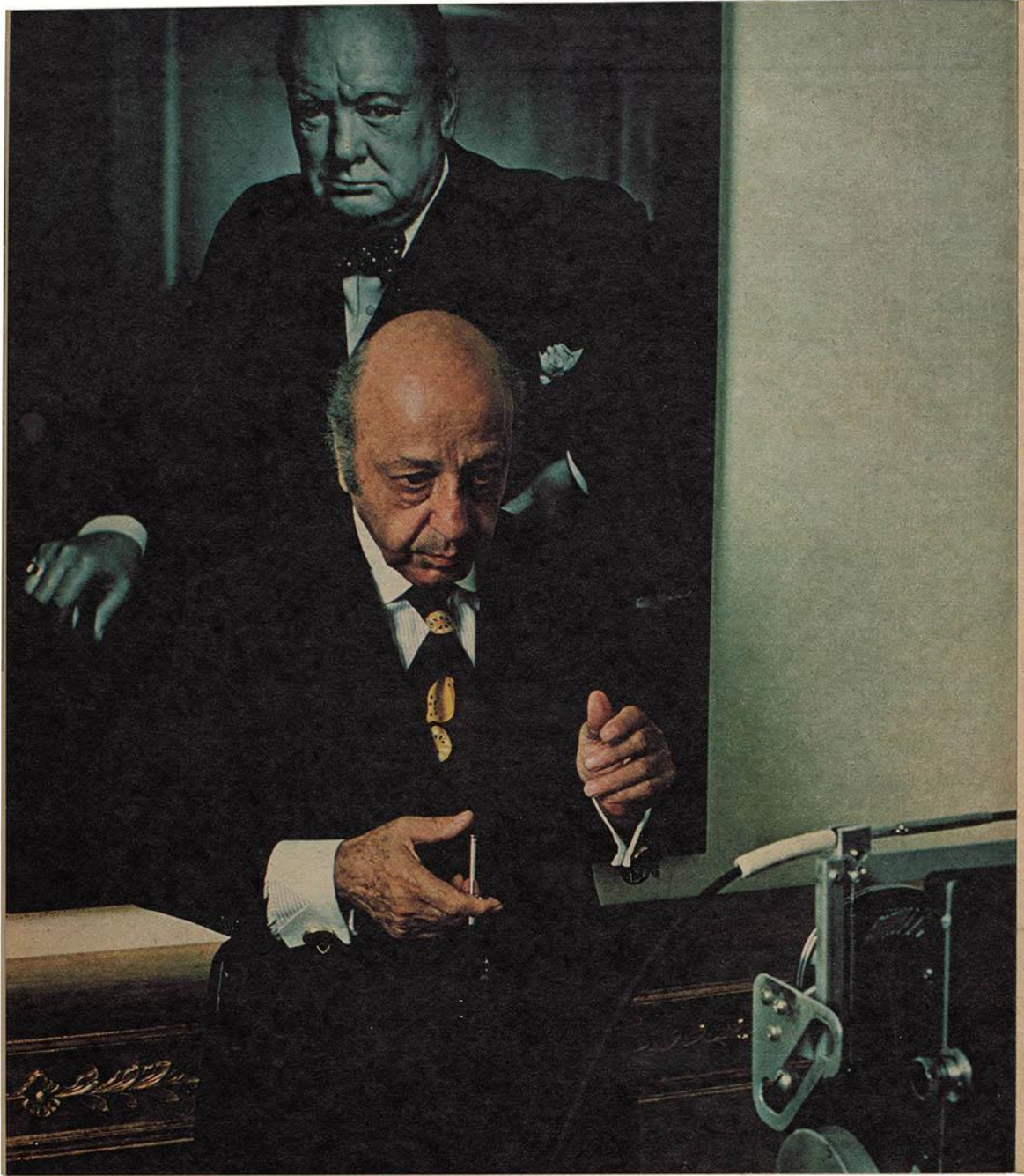


Figure 2.49 Arnaud Maggs, portrait of Yousuf Karsh, *The Canadian*, October 30, 1976. Karsh stands in front of his photograph of Winston Churchill (Yousuf Karsh, *Winston Churchill*, 1941). LAC, Ottawa, R7959-670. Courtesy of *The Canadian*, *Toronto Star*. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figure 2.50 Arnaud Maggs, *Yousuf Karsh, from 48 Views*, 1981–83. Gelatin silver print, 40.6 x 50.8 cm.
© Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.

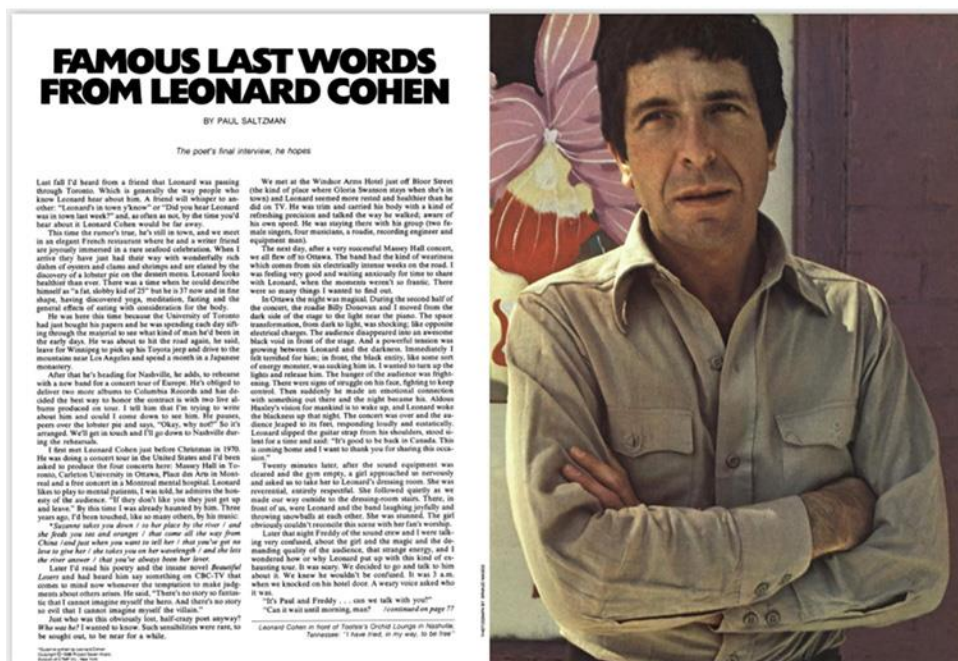
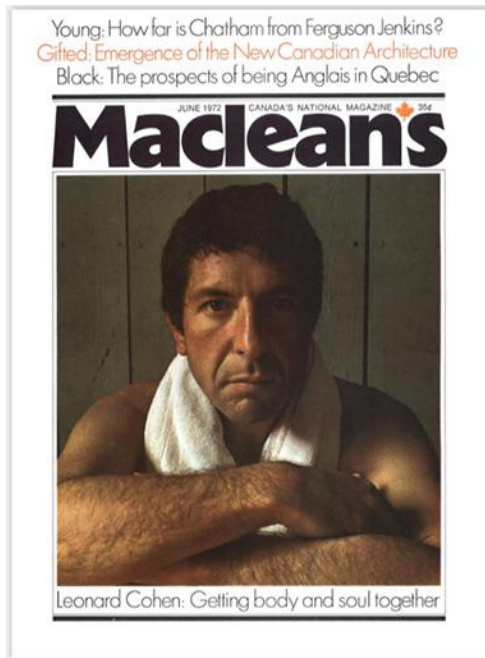


Figure 2.51 Arnaud Maggs, portraits of Leonard Cohen for Paul Saltzman, "Famous Last Words from Leonard Cohen," *Maclean's*, June 1972. *Maclean's* Archive, <https://archive.macleans.ca>. © Maclean's / St. Joseph Communications / Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.

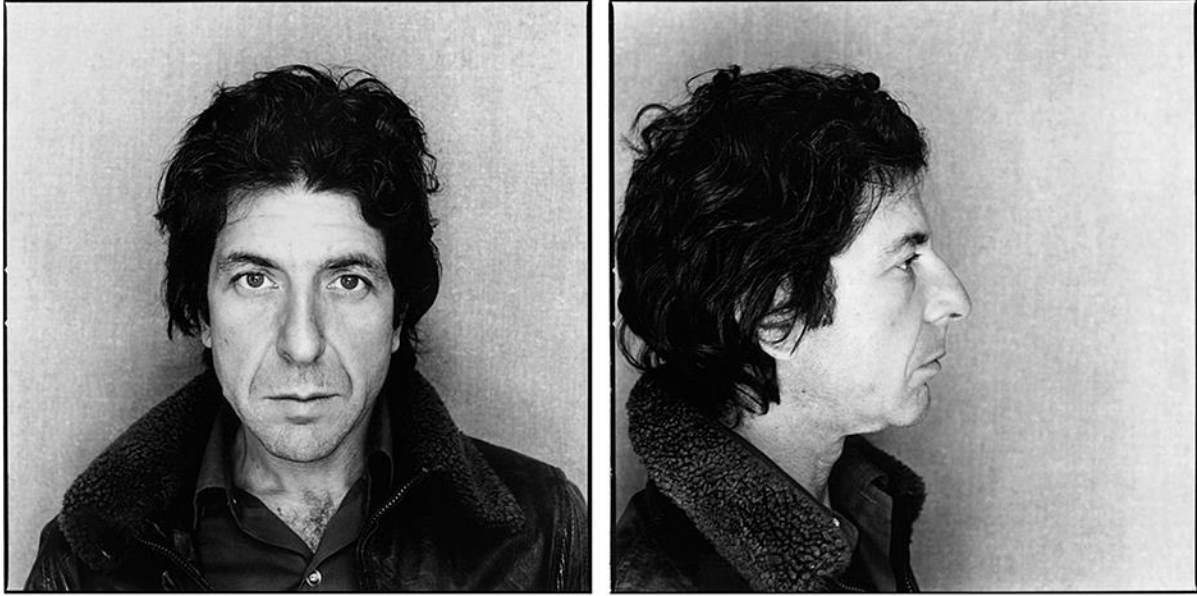


Figure 2.52 Arnaud Maggs, *Leonard Cohen*, 1977. Gelatin silver print, 70.16 x 105.73 cm. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.

becoming the messiest fraud of all time. The money alone was enough to qualify it as the largest and most audacious; what made the decline, rape and fall of IOS unique in the annals of finance is that it crumbled under the laws of so many countries. The South Sea Bubble scandal of the early 1700s ruined thousands of people throughout the British Empire. But the IOS fiasco affected investors from practically every country on earth (barring the communist bloc); and it hit American, German and British investors particularly hard. That's how the situation stood when the real subject of our attention entered the scene.

John A. Orr, FCA is a partner and former chairman of Touche Ross & Co., one of Canada's "big eight" accounting firms; former financial counsel to the commissioner investigating the Atlantic Acceptance collapse in 1965; and since 1973, permanent liquidator of two of the largest IOS dollar funds—The Fund of Funds Ltd., and IOS Growth Fund Ltd. (also known as Transglobal Growth Fund Ltd.). Both are nonresident Ontario corporations and are called "dollar" funds because they were quoted in U.S. dollars rather than in the currency of the country of their registration.

Orr was appointed by the Supreme Court of Ontario in August, 1973, to accomplish three tasks that are easy to spell out, but have proven incredibly difficult to execute:

- * Protect the remaining assets of the two funds and convert them to cash.

- * Determine the identity of all creditors and fundholders and the proper amount of their claims and investments.

- * Pay them.

This story is about the strange paths that Orr has traveled in achieving these ends. For Orr was to have jurisdiction not just in Ontario or just in Canada, but throughout the world. With this global scope, he has become a major—though very quiet—figure in what has become the most complex, baffling, longest-running liquidation in history; he estimates that he will still be matching cheques to balances well into the 1980s.

But Orr did not become one of the nation's most respected financial investigators without being patient, cautious and very, very thorough. "In

the liquidation business, you're no good unless you slog through the dirt yourself," he says. "After a little practice, you develop a sixth sense for where the money's gotten to. If I couldn't find the money, I couldn't get the money, which meant that I couldn't really do my job. So I found the money."

Ah yes, a complex man making an even more complex assignment sound like a child's game of hide-and-seek. George Cihra, a Toronto lawyer who has worked closely with Orr on every aspect of the liquidation is an admirer of his doggedness. "The question that's always stuck in John's mind," he says, "is: 'Who do you trust?' Some of the people we've dealt with were crooks. Others were reformed crooks."

Orr on the art of liquidation:
"You're no good unless you slog through the dirt yourself. After a while you develop a sense for where the money's gone"

Others were honest people who later turned crooked. With so many people making so many accusations against each other, John had the good sense to keep that one big question lodged in his head at all times. Certainly, that's what he did with the Atlantic Acceptance affair in 1965. And that's what made him the logical choice for this liquidation.

Orr ploughed through this jungle of deception and conflicting jurisdictions like a slow-moving but powerful bulldozer. Some of the obstacles he encountered were formidable. In the past four years he's successfully beaten off legal challenges to his authority by agencies as diverse as South American banks to the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission. He's even brought action against other accountants—Arthur Andersen & Co., for allegedly failing to ensure a significantly high degree of care as auditors of one IOS subsidiary.

His first obstacle was where to lay hands on enough money to pay the

expenses of the liquidation—including his own salary. Neither the Fund of Funds nor the IOS Growth Fund had any assets in Ontario. So Orr had to look elsewhere in the IOS empire to find the wherewithal to pay the small army of lawyers, investigators, computer programmers, accountants, secretaries and consultants that would be needed. He found it in the \$600,000 bank account of a tiny IOS subsidiary called Dominion Guarantee Co., at the Chase Manhattan branch in London, England. Since Dominion was registered in Panama, both Orr and Cihra flew to Panama City, called a meeting of the board of directors and had Orr appointed to the board, which then elected him managing director. Armed with this authority, Orr and Cihra flew the same day to London and persuaded Chase Manhattan that they were entitled to make withdrawals from Dominion's \$600,000 account.

No one disputed Orr's authority inside Canada. But getting authorities in other jurisdictions to recognize this status was another matter. And the confusion over who legally owned what share of IOS and who was entitled to clean up which part made it easier for Vesco and LaBianca to bob and weave from the repeated orders for their presence and explanation in courts throughout North America and Europe. As Orr says: "Vesco was able to flagrantly violate the laws of any country because his frauds took place in many countries at the same time. The lawmakers ended up fighting each other instead of the one man they all wanted to catch."

Within days of Orr's appointment, his authority was challenged by a formidable lawmaker: the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission. The SEC had already expended a good deal of time and effort trying to clear up the dollar funds and was in no mood to hand everything over to the new boy from Canada.

Besides, the SEC already had its own "receiver." John P. Schenker who was appointed to liquidate all IOS holdings in the U.S. "Any time we mentioned the word 'liquidation' to the SEC, they'd fly off the handle."

Orr politely insisted that he was the liquidator of the two Canadian-registered funds, no matter where on earth their assets happened to be. The SEC balked, even while conceding that

John Orr: for four years, he's played a global game of hide-and-seek with the shadowy presence of Robert Vesco

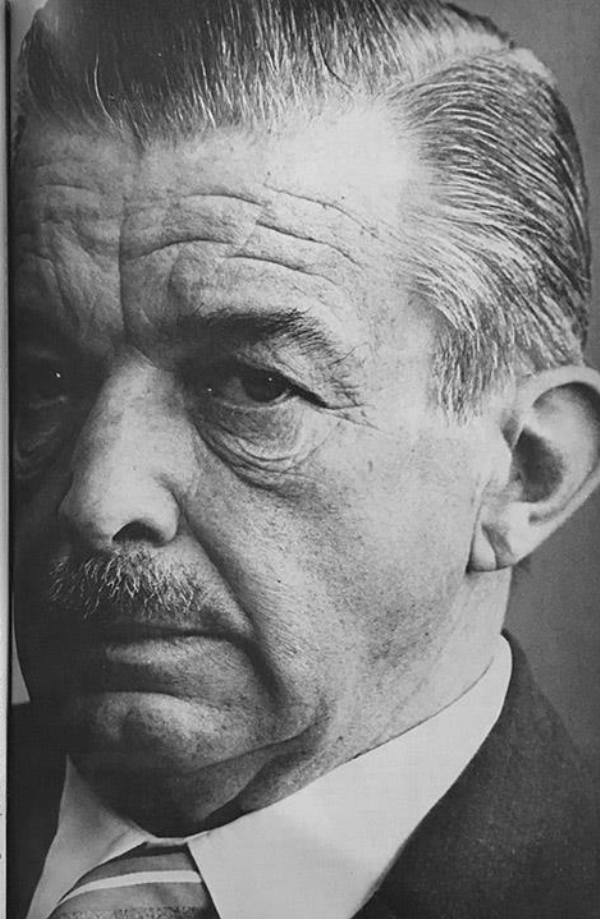


Figure 2.53 Arnaud Maggs, portrait of John Orr for Robert Ramsey, "Robert Vesco, Meet John Orr," *Canadian Business*, October 1977, 74–75. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy of Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figure 2.54 Arnaud Maggs, portrait of Frank Stronach for Joanne Kates, "How Magna Got Big by Staying Small," *Canadian Business*, February 1978, 39. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy of Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figure 2.55 Arnaud Maggs, portrait of Bill Teron for Stephen Kimber, "A Most Uncommon Civil Servant," *Canadian Business*, March 1979, 77. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy of Stephen Bulger Gallery.

3. Transition to Fine Art

In 1973, at the age of forty-seven, as the story goes, Maggs, already a professional success as a graphic designer and fashion photographer, decided to become an artist. Often positioned as a spontaneous and transformative reinvention, this pivotal moment defines the way his career trajectory is addressed in the literature about his work. In part this is the work of Maggs himself. Keenly aware from his days in advertising of the power of a good hook, he often relayed the story as a lightning-bolt moment. The version he told the audience at his 1994 Kodak Lecture Series talk is consistent with a narrative that Maggs has often repeated and is recounted in essays about his work: “just as suddenly as I had become a photographer, I decided that I wanted to become an artist — whatever that was. And I sold my house, I sold my Hasselblad, and I sold most of my possessions.”¹ Over time, the drama of the story increased. “One day in 1973, out of the blue, as if from nowhere,” he explained to Charles Stainback on the occasion of his 2012 National Gallery of Canada exhibition *Identification*, “came the idea ‘I’m going to be an artist.’ Seriously — I had never remotely considered the idea ... So where the idea came from I really can’t say, but from that moment I was imbued with energy and the energy is still there.”²

¹ Arnaud Maggs, “Arnaud Maggs,” Kodak Chair Lecture Series, Ryerson University, February 11, 1994; sound recording, Toronto Metropolitan University Archives and Special Collections, maggs_1.mp3, 00:04:58. As noted in the Introduction, for examples of how this version is repeated in the literature, see Philip Monk, “Life’s Traces,” in Philip Monk, Arnaud Maggs, and Maia-Mari Sutnik, *Arnaud Maggs: Works, 1976–1999* (Toronto: Power Plant, 1999), 20; Doina Popescu, with Rachel Verbin, Introduction, in Doina Popescu, Maia-Mari Sutnik, and Sophie Hackett, *Arnaud Maggs* (Göttingen/Toronto: Steidl/Scotiabank Photography Prize, 2013), 21; Ben Portis, “Evidence of Existence: A Conversation with Toronto-Based Photographer Arnaud Maggs,” *Art on Paper* (May/June 2008), 64; and Maia-Mari Sutnik, “Portraits by Arnaud Maggs,” in Monk, Maggs, and Sutnick, *Arnaud Maggs: Works, 1976–1999*, 10.

² Charles A. Stainback, “Q and A with Arnaud Maggs,” in Josée Drouin-Brisebois, *Arnaud Maggs: Identification* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 2012), 112.

In many ways performative, this mythologizing connects Maggs to some of his key artistic influences, who include Joseph Beuys and Andy Warhol, and to conceptual art. As Blake Gopnik writes in his foreword to Matt Wrubican's *A Is for Archive: Warhol's World from A to Z*, "unlike almost any other artist in history (or — scarier thought — maybe just like most of them), Warhol turns out to be the very least reliable witness to his own art and life and ideas, as eager to steer you wrong as to set you straight."³ Warhol's practice, then, was defined as much by his persona as it was by his artistic output. Though much more political, Beuys's practice was likewise shaped by his persona. The formative impact of Fluxus — a rebellious multidisciplinary art movement that favoured process — on Beuys's art practice instilled an emphasis on the merging of art and life, resulting in institutional critique and hazy distinctions between fact and fiction. Although Maggs does not point to the self-mythologizing prevalent in the practices of Warhol and Beuys as key to why he found them influential, both artists were important to him and his development as an artist.

In more recent years, some have begun to question the veracity of the common narrative around Maggs's transformation to artist. For example, artist and filmmaker Katherine Knight, who alongside Marcia Connolly created *Spring & Arnaud* (2013), a documentary about Spring Hurlbut and Maggs, acknowledges some of the gaps in his narrative:

I think [his career narrative] is really orchestrated. We don't tell the story [in the film] that he had a family before, really, and a wife, and that there were other partners before Spring. But how do you go from being a dad of a family in Don Mills with a job to living in a coach house behind a Victorian house and your art being indivisible from your life? There's another story there; it just wasn't our story to tell. And that's not a story he's telling. He tells his story as if his life started at forty-seven.⁴

³ Blake Gopnik, foreword to *A Is for Archive: Warhol's World from A to Z*, by Matt Wrubican (Pittsburgh/New Haven: Andy Warhol Museum/Yale University Press, 2019), 7.

⁴ Katherine Knight, discussion with author, May 23, 2017.

Knight's observations highlight the constructed nature of Maggs's career narrative, pointing to the omission of certain details both personal and professional. "Biographies are full of verifiable facts," Hermione Lee confirms, "but they are also full of things that aren't there: absences, gaps, missing evidence, knowledge or information that has been passed from person to person, losing credibility or shifting shape on the way."⁵ Starting abruptly at the age of forty-seven, the standard narrative portrays Maggs as a fully developed self-taught artist, perpetuating the modernist notion of the artist as genius and contributing to the formation of mythologies around his persona.

Maggs chronicled his biography in a work titled *15* (1989; fig. 3.1). Using the materials of a graphic designer, *15* outlines his life story on eight sheets of carbon paper. Atop these sheets, using Dymo tape labels, he created a small grid of nine digits in which each row and column adds up to fifteen. As curator Josée Drouin-Brisebois and others (including Maggs himself) have pointed out, the number is a nod to Warhol's famous dictum "in the future, everyone will be world-famous for 15 minutes."⁶ The text is difficult to decipher, partially obscured by the Dymo grid and threatening to disappear in the darkness of the carbon. In line with the twentieth-century modernist biographical method that incorporates a psychoanalytical approach and emphasis on childhood, Maggs's autobiography addresses his relationship with his parents in addition to his career trajectory. He expressed later that the work was not meant to reveal

⁵ Hermione Lee, *Virginia Woolf's Nose: Essays on Biography* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 5.

⁶ Josée Drouin-Brisebois, "Arnaud Maggs: Portrait of a Working Artist," in *Arnaud Maggs: Identification* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 2012), 29. See also Robert Enright, "Designs on Life: An Interview with Arnaud Maggs," *Border Crossings* 31, no. 2 (June/August 2012): 57.

those personal details with clarity: “The text is almost impossible to read, which is what I wanted, but damned if the Archives didn’t take them apart and scan them. Now they are readable and they are rather personal in places.”⁷

Like Knight, in her catalogue essay for *Identification* Drouin-Brisebois identifies a self-mythologizing tendency in Maggs’s story. She argues that his autobiography “has become akin to a fictional story” and likens the work to Joseph Beuys’s fictionalized narrative in *Life Course/Work Course*.⁸ Her essay is the only text to address the performative nature of Maggs’s story. As she explains, it was the Maggs mythology that piqued her interest when writing about his work for the exhibition catalogue:

I think it was the right moment to write something like that and to reveal a little bit of the persona of Arnaud. I could have gone even further, but I decided to keep it what it was, and he was very, very happy — almost mischievously happy — that I had caught him. ... I very much struggled with writing the text. It was only after reading — and I say this in my essay — all of what had already been written that I thought, “I can’t contribute anything more because it had been said, and said very well.” And then I realized that it had been said too well, and always in a very similar way, and that when I listen to Arnaud, it was exactly how he talked about it. [So I thought], “This has been a performance.” For me, that was what piqued my interest and actually made me very conscious of his own positioning as an artist and his own persona as an artist. And his interest in Andy Warhol and Joseph Beuys — that was very deliberate, and the story that he told of how he became an artist.⁹

Drouin-Brisebois draws attention to Maggs’s artistic persona and the deliberate construction of his career narrative. Rhiannon Vogl, who assisted her with the National Gallery of Canada exhibition, wrote the chronology of Maggs’s life that appears in the catalogue. She similarly recalls Maggs’s interest in shaping his story through the editing process:

⁷ Enright, “Designs on Life, 56–57.

⁸ Drouin-Brisebois, “Arnaud Maggs,” 29.

⁹ Josée Drouin-Brisebois, discussion with author, July 12, 2017.

There were some things that he wasn't super keen on sharing. But that was more related to personal stuff. ... It was not so much that [some details] ended up getting cut, more that they were de-emphasized. When I originally wrote [the chronology], I assumed that maybe personal relationships were more significant and he perhaps wanted to downplay some of them. I feel like he was very strong in what he wanted to remember. ... there were just some things that he seemed to remember better than others, but maybe that was because he wanted to remember them better than others.¹⁰

Lee argues that “biography is a process of making up, or making over,” which, as she further explains, suggests the potential for arranging, inventing, and transforming details.¹¹

Fundamental to the biographer's role, according to her, is “the internal tussle between ‘making up’ and ‘fact,’ or ‘making over’ and ‘likeness.’”¹² Drouin-Brisebois and Vogl's recollections — and Maggs's own discomfort with the details of 15 being laid bare by the documentation process at LAC — reveal something of this tussle. Collectively, these insights underscore the constructed nature of Maggs's narrative and the measured choices he made around shaping his artistic identity.

The common narrative around Maggs's transition to fine art tends to overlook the significant impact of his decades of experience in creative industries — years and experience that, I argue, fundamentally shaped his artistic production. Although his career transitions are often portrayed as impulsive, it is critical to recognize the knowledge, skills, and artistic language that Maggs developed during his years of creative work in design and commercial photography. In discussing perceptions of artists who transitioned from commercial practice to art careers, curator Philip Monk highlights the historical tendency to malign commercial art:

We tend — not anymore, but in the past, around the time when Maggs made that decision [to become an artist] — people would tend to denigrate a commercial art

¹⁰ Curator Rhiannon Vogl, discussion with author, July 14, 2017.

¹¹ Lee, *Virginia Woolf's Nose*, 37.

¹² *Ibid.*, 38–39.

career. So even with Warhol — he was denigrated until he became an artist and everyone recognized what a great artist he was. It took a while, even when he was making the transitions out into the public world [as] an artist. People dismiss an artist coming from that path, especially if one decides to be an artist late in life.¹³

Designer Milton Glaser, as noted in the introduction, likewise illuminates the persistent tension between commercial and fine art practices:

At art schools, which are usually divided between the fine arts and the applied arts, a peculiar process begins. Those students who select design as their major are perceived as having “sold out,” that is, of having exchanged their higher calling for commercial reasons. They are shunned and humiliated by the fine arts faculty and students. One of the causes of this behavior undoubtedly stems from the recognition that the relentless pursuit of money does not help one’s spiritual development.¹⁴

This offers a motive for Maggs’s shaping of the narrative around his art career in a particular way. “I think he wanted to be recognized as an artist,” photographer Paul Orenstein confirms. “And being a photographer may not be the best way to do that. Certainly, doing magazine and advertising work was not the way to do that then.”¹⁵ De-emphasizing his previous creative work ensured that the focus remained on Maggs’s artistic production alone, preventing his commercial art career from sullyng his reputation as a “serious artist.” However, discounting his extensive creative background undermines a deeper understanding of the various influences and expertise that fundamentally informed his artistic practice.

¹³ Philip Monk, discussion with author, July 7, 2017. In a discussion of Maggs’s career narrative with his wife Spring Hurlbut, she agreed with this sentiment: “There was a time where you couldn’t be a commercial photographer, you couldn’t be a commercial artist, you couldn’t be anything but an artist, or you were contaminated.” Spring Hurlbut, discussion with author, February 28, 2020.

¹⁴ Milton Glaser, “Design and Ambiguity,” in *Art Is Work* (New York: Overlook Press, 2000), 263; originally delivered as talk at the 45th Annual Convention of the New York State Art Teachers Association.

¹⁵ Paul Orenstein, discussion with author, August 9, 2017.

Maggs's transition to fine art was not, in fact, instantaneous. Focusing on his biography, as I demonstrate here, helps to demystify the tale of reinvention and insists on the significant impact his creative work experience had on shaping his visual and conceptual languages as an artist. In 1969 a Canada Council grant enabled Maggs to travel to Europe, where he journeyed through France, Spain, and North Africa. This trip marks the beginning of his transition to fine art. An opportunity for self-exploration, its aim was to connect with some of the photographers who had influenced him. Although his initial goal was not successfully realized, Maggs felt it offered an important lesson. "For me, this was a voyage of discovery," he explained. "I realized I had never stopped long enough to fully appreciate the world around me."¹⁶ Around this time Maggs began moving from commercial to fine art photography. Although he often addressed this change in direction as an abrupt reinvention, his shift to fine art actually involved a years-long period of evolution that included reflection, exploration, and overlap with his commercial practice.

Maggs left TDF Artists in 1970 to work for himself, continuing to take on fashion and editorial photography assignments. Around this time he purchased the coach house behind his large Victorian home at 384 Sumach Street, with intentions to create a separate studio space. At that point Maggs's collecting habit had taken over his living space. In his notebook he admits, "I collected everything I saw which interested me. At one point my tiny living room had two television sets side by side ... the living room walls were completely covered with pictures, paintings and photographs."¹⁷ He details layered cloth covering the walls of the dining-room-

¹⁶ Rhiannon Vogl, "The Making of Arnaud Maggs," in Drouin-Brisbois, *Arnaud Maggs: Identification*, 214.

¹⁷ Arnaud Maggs, "Personal Journal: Beginning 1975," unpaginated notebook, 1975–81, LAC, Ottawa, R7959-5522, R7959-137-3-E, vol. 839.

cum-bedroom, and albums stored in the kitchen. During those years of transition, he slowly pared down his belongings, ultimately deciding to make the coach house a live/work space and sell his house. As Orenstein explains,

He sold the big, beautiful gingerbread Victorian house ... and renovated the back house, which was a smaller — also beautiful — gingerbread cottage. He put this amazing eight-by-twelve skylight — north-facing skylight — in the building, and it became a studio. So he had this gorgeous little spare studio and he lived upstairs kind of modestly. And that was all he wanted ... The important part before this was that he also questioned his possessions. So he had these collections, and at the same time that he was an obsessive collector and lover of things, and they were all beautiful, he would also question that. So he said, “I want to get rid of everything. It’s too much baggage.” So he was doing that as well, even though he had the most exquisite collection of things. He was questioning having things ... Part of what was driving this rear studio thing was to get rid of stuff, which he did. And it killed him to do it, I know it did. But he did it. It was partly financial but it was partly kind of trying to clear his head and to create room and live more simply, live more economically, live more purely — which he did.¹⁸

Publisher Jonathan Eby likewise points to this shift in lifestyle. “He went from the extreme hoarder to a monkish lifestyle,” he remembers, “and I think that’s where the transition was heading — into his art pursuit. He just sort of cleaned out his past.”¹⁹ But although Maggs purged his collections, he never lost the impulse entirely. Later projects such as *Scrapbook* (2009), for example (fig. 3.2), offer a glimpse of the ephemera that he hung on to, his love of typography and letterforms on clear display. *After Nadar: The Collector*, from 2012 (fig. 3.3), features his collection of white jugs found in France. Paring down and scaling back offered Maggs a sense of calm, and the sale of his house afforded some financial flexibility to focus on further developing his art practice.

¹⁸ Orenstein, discussion.

¹⁹ Jonathan Eby, discussion with author, November 3, 2017.

In 1971 Maggs mounted an exhibition at the Baldwin Street Gallery in Toronto titled *Baby Pictures* (figs. 3.4 and 3.5). He later pitched the show to Lorraine Monk, exhibition producer at the National Film Board's Still Photography Division, in 1972. His artist statement for the project reads in part:

Arnaud Maggs has been known for many years in Toronto as an accomplished graphic artist and designer. Around three or four years ago he decided to get more directly involved in professional photography, mainly in the field of fashion. Most recently he has turned his attention partially toward a more serious treatment of his personal, non-commercial, photographic images. Thus resulted this exhibit, his first one man show of photographs.²⁰

Pre-dating his 1973 decision to become an artist, the text reveals an early interest in moving away from his commercial focus to explore photography as a medium for self-expression.

Also in 1971, Maggs started teaching a course called "Entertainment" at the Ontario College of Art (now OCAD University) in Toronto.²¹ Lee Dickson was one of the students in his class. Though ultimately Maggs taught only a few times, Dickson recalls him showing Gaudi's tilework in Barcelona and the Watts Tower in Los Angeles. "Everyone loved [the slides]," she explains. "We just thought it was fabulous seeing that stuff."²² In his notebook, however, Maggs admits, "I had just started my own 'business' and was very speedy and uncalm and was at a stage it seemed when I should have been learning rather than teaching."²³ Eventually Dickson and Maggs would live together in his Cabbagetown house, and she would sometimes assist on his photography shoots. During this period the two would spend time drawing, writing in

²⁰ Arnaud Maggs to Lorraine Monk, October 31, 1972, "NFB – Photographers: M, Mc, N, O," National Film Board Still Photography Division, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

²¹ Lee Dickson, discussion with author, June 29, 2017. Maggs's autobiographical artwork 15 suggests that the course was about lifestyles.

²² Ibid.

²³ Maggs, "Personal Journal," entry dated October 2, 1976.

notebooks, studying art, and practicing tai chi. They talked about art constantly and, as Dickson remembers, the decision to become an artist was a “difficult transition for him.”²⁴

Maggs’s shift to fine art was shaped by a period of dedicated immersion in artistic exploration and study, according to Dickson. Their shared experiences were characterized by an almost reverential approach to creative pursuits. “It was a religious scenario that we did drawing and writing in our notebooks,” Dickson explains. “We spent a lot of our days just sitting drawing. We’d draw each other, or I had planted this garden and we had this little oasis — it was a beautiful little place that we lived in for a short period of time — and I’d draw plants.”²⁵ During this time, the two would also spend time looking at art, which would reinforce their interests:

We’d go down to the Kodak Museum [now the George Eastman Museum] in Rochester and I remember looking at — going through original prints, looking at Diane Arbus prints. It was so exciting to hold these Diane Arbus prints; her work is so amazing. We just did a lot of studying art, basically.²⁶

Dickson’s personal accounts help illuminate the nuances of Maggs’s transition to fine art. Their joint devotion to drawing and their exposure to influential photographers contributed to his ongoing artistic development. Interestingly, Arbus had gone through a transition of her own in the mid-1950s, when she moved away from the fashion photography business she ran with her husband, Allan, to pursue less commercial subjects.

²⁴ Dickson, discussion.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid. In an interview Maggs included the trip down to the George Eastman Museum in a list of influences on his work; Stainback, “Q and A,” 113.

As *Baby Pictures* demonstrates, Maggs's explorations outside of commercial practice also revolved around portraiture. He mounted two additional solo exhibitions in this period. *People of Brussels* was installed as part of the Brussels (Ontario) Centennial in 1972 (figs. 3.6–3.11),²⁷ and in 1973 Maggs presented a series of portraits of filmmakers in *Movie Directors*, at the Revue Repertory Theatre in Toronto (figs. 3.12 and 3.13). Related certainly to some of the editorial portraiture he was doing, these images also align with the kind of portraiture that the NFB's Still Photography Division supported, demonstrating Maggs's growing interest in expanding the audience for his work. The interplay between art and documentary in *People of Brussels*, for example, is paralleled in the collecting mandate of the Division. As Martha Langford, the Division's executive producer at the time, explains, its initial activity was inspired by American photo essays in picture magazines that featured the average citizen, but of course applied to a Canadian context: "The photostories produced by the National Film Board were adapted from this commercial model to the information requirements of the nation. The tone was cheery, the pictures were clever, and the subject was Canada."²⁸

The activities of the Division — which included both collecting and commissioning bodies of photographic work and the national and international dissemination of those images through exhibitions, books, and photo stories — factored prominently in imaging the Canadian national identity, and in shaping the production and reception of photography in Canada. In *The Official Picture*, Carol Payne examines "how the rhetoric of the documentary photograph and the photographic archive [of the Division] reify conceptualizations of Canadian nationhood and

²⁷ Karyn Allen, *Arnaud Maggs: Photographs, 1975–1984* (Calgary: Nickle Arts Museum, 1984), 56.

²⁸ Martha Langford, ed., *Contemporary Canadian Photography from the Collection of the National Film Board* (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1984), 7.

support federal nationalism.”²⁹ Borrowing the term from social psychologist Michael Billig, Payne argues that the Division’s photographs contributed to a form of “banal nationalism” and functioned as didactic reminders of national identity.³⁰ Her examination of the Division’s output demonstrates the ways in which it put forth *the* definitive image for the Canadian government. In her chapter on portraiture, Payne makes a distinction between two types of portraits found in the collection: those of identifiable people and those of unnamed Canadian citizens. She posits that the unidentified portraits function as a sort of typology of the Canadian people.³¹ In the 1960s and 1970s, under the direction of Lorraine Monk, the Division shifted its focus from documentary to contemporary artistic photography, an emphasis that strengthened into the 1980s, when it was redefined as the Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography (CMCP).³²

Moreover, the Still Photography Division had a policy of purchasing everything it exhibited. “Purchasing allowed the Division to build up a great repertoire of travelling exhibitions,” Langford contends. And it “was also the Division’s main form of patronage, providing encouragement and financial assistance [for photographers] to complete projects or to begin new work.”³³ The Division’s changed mandate and its purchasing policy offered significant support to photographers and affected artists and their production. In her essay about the work of Robert Bourdeau (b. 1931), for example, curator Sophie Hackett asserts that

²⁹ Carol Payne, *The Official Picture: The National Film Board of Canada’s Still Photography Division and the Image of Canada, 1941–1971* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2013), 5.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 10.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 138.

³² Valérie Boileau-Matteau, “Re-contextualizing a Visual History in Canada: The Division of the National Film Board of Canada’s Still Photography Division Collection” (master’s thesis, Ryerson University, 2004), 23.

³³ Langford, *Contemporary Canadian Photography*, 12.

this “new openness toward expressive creative work easily encompassed Bourdeau’s early photographs,” and thus “he became part of [the] young cadre” of photographers who, as she suggests, found an advocate in the Division.³⁴ Bourdeau’s work found a home in the Division’s collection and at the National Gallery of Canada. In another example, curator Maia-Mari Sutnik traced Michel Lambeth’s complicated relationship with the Division’s various aims and projects in *Michel Lambeth, Photographer*. Her assessment demonstrates that while Lambeth (1923–77) was able to capitalize on the Division’s support of photography (it owns more than 1,300 of his negatives and prints), “he felt that the opportunity for developing clear photographic ‘vision’ was often curtailed by a differential approach to the thematic.”³⁵

A letter from 1972 in the archives of the National Gallery of Canada suggests that Maggs sent twenty slides about pollution for Monk’s consideration.³⁶ One was selected and purchased for fifty dollars. But it was not until later in the 1970s that Maggs’s work found a regular home in the collection. Nevertheless, these early exhibitions and his pitches to Monk demonstrate an awareness of the Division’s support of photography, and they reveal his initial explorations of subject choice, how to show and develop an audience for his work, and how to position himself as an artist.

Around this time, monetary challenges had an impact on Maggs’s decisions. As mentioned previously, he sold his primary residence, in part to help manage expenses while

³⁴ Sophie Hackett, “At the Station Point,” in *The Station Point: Robert Bourdeau*, by Ann Thomas, William A. Ewing, and Sophie Hackett (Toronto: Magenta Foundation and Stephen Bulger Gallery, 2011), 194.

³⁵ Maia-Mari Sutnik, “Michel Lambeth (1923–1977): An Enduring Presence,” in *Michel Lambeth, Photographer* (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1998), 20.

³⁶ M. Murphy to Arnaud Maggs, June 29, 1972, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, “NFB Photographers,” box 32, “NFB Photographers [32], Still Photography Division/NFB, M – Miscellaneous/*divers*: Jean Mackenzie, Anaud [*sic*] Maggs, Malak, John Max, Dan Milek; Mc – Miscellaneous/*divers*; N. Miscellaneous/*divers* – Brian Nevitt, Neil Newton; O – Miscellaneous/*divers*: Charles Oberdorf.”

supporting his ex-wife. Acknowledging the financial strain, Maggs's notebook outlines weekly alimony payments and contributions to an insurance policy: "I have been continually hassled by money, largely due to paying off back alimony and also keeping up payments on a policy of which Maggie is the beneficiary. These two things amount to almost \$100 a week and I seem to be getting deeper in debt."³⁷ In the same notebook Maggs points to the dual strategies of applying for grant funding and continuing to work on editorial projects as a means of financial stability. The many years of overlap between his commercial and fine art photography careers emphasize the very real practical considerations involved in shifting his focus to art. The financial struggle of working as an artist in Canada — a grant-dependent existence for many — required that Maggs pursue commercial editorial projects in order to subsidize his personal artistic work. "I've got to make a living in some manner," he explained in a 1982 interview. "I've always needed an economic base, and it seems a good way to make a living to do photographs for magazines."³⁸ Jonathan Eby, whom Maggs worked with at *Maclean's* and *Quest*, explains:

Well, he still needed the income, and nine times out of ten it might have been that I would call him. On a particular day he might have been thinking he was going to go off and work on a project, but I interrupt[ed] by offering him two thousand dollars, you know. And he would take time out to accept another paycheck.³⁹

Dickson too acknowledges the financial difficulties Maggs faced during this time of change from commercial to fine art practice, and points to the intersection of his artistic pursuits, his editorial assignments, and personal obligations:

[The transition] didn't happen overnight. He went from — He'd do covers for [*The Canadian*]. We'd go up to Ottawa and he'd take pictures of politicians, or we'd have all these famous people ... come to our little house in the back. We did a lot of work on [the

³⁷ Arnaud Maggs, "Personal Journal," entry dated October 4, 1976.

³⁸ Gail Fisher-Taylor, "Anatomy of a Portrait: An Interview with Arnaud Maggs," *Photo Communiqué* (Fall 1982): 16.

³⁹ Eby, discussion.

coach house] and an architect had designed it to be a studio. The house in the front he ended up selling because he couldn't afford both places plus paying his wife, and she'd gotten the house in Don Mills. It was a very financially stressful time trying to manage all this stuff, even though he was good at making money.⁴⁰

As addressed earlier in chapter 2, it was during the early to mid-1970s that Maggs began shifting his commercial focus from fashion photography to portraiture. His portrait work for *The Canadian Magazine* — which began in 1975 — formed a significant part of his editorial work at the time. As demonstrated above, this period offered opportunities for Maggs to meet professional expectations and to explore personal artistic ideas, revealing some of the explorations and experimentation informed by commercial practice that helped to shape his artistic practice. Close attention to Maggs's biography also points to the tension between pursuing his personal artistic vision and the need for financial security.

Maggs would continue to take on select editorial work for decades. In 1983, for example, he was commissioned by the Art Gallery of Ontario to photograph artist Alex Colville on the occasion of his first major retrospective. As Sutnik recalls,

I took Colville over to [Maggs's] studio and they had about a two-hour session ... We had to be there at a certain time when the light was right and all [that], so he took a lot of preparation. When we came there, the space was all ready; there was a chair and he [had] thought about different positioning of Colville's hands and stuff like that. He was totally prepared ... He had already calculated out in his mind what kind of poses he was going to have.

He really treated it as a professional assignment. He brought over proof prints and asked, "Which ones do you like?" It was kind of odd, because you're thinking he'll say "Maia, I'll bring you over which ones I like" or something, but no, he brings the proof sheets ... So, a consummate professional ... Here you are a personal friend of someone and ... he switches over into a complete kind of professional mode. He took assignments very, very seriously. It was a job for hire and he treated it as a job for hire. And the pictures turned out quite nice.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Dickson, discussion.

⁴¹ Maia-Mari Sutnik, discussion with author, June 26, 2017.

Indeed, some of Maggs's commercial photographic work from later in the 1980s was recognized by the Advertising and Design Club of Canada (ADCC). In 1987, for example, under the creative direction of Michael Paul and the art direction of Dick Silverthorne, Maggs made a series of photographs of men and women for SMW Advertising's Nicorette campaign that was honoured in the Advertising, Print Campaign category (fig. 3.14). His 1988 portraits of artists Renée Van Halm, John Clark, Allyson Clay, Guido Molinari, and Bernie Miller formed a portfolio for *Canadian Art* titled "The Definitive Eye," designed and art directed by Jim Ireland (fig. 3.15). The images featured the artists in front of their work or in their studio spaces. The overall portfolio was honoured by the ADCC in 1989 in the Editorial, Magazine Section category, and Maggs's image of Allyson Clay was recognized in the Editorial, Editorial Photography category. Just as *Canadian Business* had sought Maggs for his cultural cachet in the late 1970s, *Canadian Art* signalled his significance in the article's introduction. "What makes this portfolio particularly special," declares the intro spread, "is the participation of photographer Arnaud Maggs. Himself an artist, this is in fact Maggs' first commercial shoot in almost a decade."⁴² As I have shown, these images were actually some of the many commercial portraits he continued to produce.

Nevertheless, Maggs began to prioritize artistic expression over commercial pursuits in the early 1970s. Sutnik suggests that he simply began to lose interest in commercial assignments:

I think he got bored. I think he got tired of the — of that sort of chase that you have to do in the commercial world. I think when you are an artist you can be more contemplative, you can take your time to develop, you create your own timelines, and I think that's what I — that he simply got bored.⁴³

⁴² Arnaud Maggs, "The Definitive Eye: A Portfolio of Five Canadian Artists," *Canadian Art* 5, no. 3 (Fall 1988): 90.

⁴³ Sutnik, discussion.

Maggs himself alluded to creative dissatisfaction being at work in his interview for the *Identification* catalogue. “Work should be play,” he insisted, “and it wasn’t play anymore.”⁴⁴

Commenting on his dedication and resolve, Caitlan Maggs suggests that he reached a point where he was ready to move away from client work and prioritize his own creative ideas:

I don’t know what made him want to make that shift or who influenced him to think that he had to do his own work. ... Was it a midlife crisis type of thing or more “I want to leave my stamp”? Well, he finally said, “I don’t want to do the other things anymore. I don’t need to do it anymore.” ... At a certain point you’re like, “I want to use my creativity. I want to develop my own creativity. I want to express myself. I don’t want to just be [on the perimeter] of creating something for someone else’s vision. I want to actually bring my own vision to life.” And I think that’s what he realized — that he wanted to do more, because he’d been doing other people’s visions.⁴⁵

Despite a willingness to emphasize artistic exploration over commercial projects, this period of transition from Maggs’s established career in the creative industries to fine art can also be characterized as a time of artistic uncertainty and questioning. As Dickson explains, it was a difficult time for Maggs. Orenstein also remembers this well. He recalls, “He would question everything. He would say, ‘I don’t know about photography; I don’t think it’s really art.’ He’s killing it, he’s doing it, right? He’s doing what he wanted to do and at the same time he’s questioning it and he’s saying, ‘I want to be a painter.’”⁴⁶

Thinking he would like to be a painter, Maggs enrolled in drawing and anatomy classes at the Artists’ Workshop. His notes from classes led by Paul Young in 1974 reveal an emphasis on decisions related to economy: “A drawing achieves as much by omission as commission ...

⁴⁴ Stainback, “Q and A,” 112.

⁴⁵ Caitlan Maggs, discussion with author, September 14, 2017.

⁴⁶ Orenstein, discussion.

What *must* be included?"⁴⁷ These lessons connect to the practice of design and typography, but in the context of drawing the human form, it led to a new way of thinking and seeing for Maggs:

One day I was drawing the model's head. I think it was in profile, and I thought if I drew a perfect circle the back of her head would fit the edge of the circle and her forehead would touch it and her nose would touch the circle and her chin would touch the circle. And I was suddenly just thunderstruck. I was made aware of the proportions of the human head. And I started *looking* very closely at everyone from that moment on.⁴⁸

Though a revelatory moment for Maggs in drawing class, a preoccupation with the shape of the human head — particularly in profile — is evident throughout his career, in his professional illustrations, sketches, and doodles as well as in his early photographic experiments, family photographs, and even his object collections (figs. 3.16–3.20).⁴⁹ The anthropomorphized crescent moon that shows up in some of his sketches and drawings helps to demonstrate his interest (fig. 3.21 and 3.22). The principles of continuity and closure are at work: the circular shape of the full moon is implied. The moon drawing connects to Maggs's exploration of the circle in relation to the human head, as he makes explicit in the three drawings done together in figure 3.22. They emphasize the centrality of positive and negative space to his work, shaped by the early days of his career as a lettering artist. Interestingly, following his notes on drawing are a number of pages dedicated to definitions and descriptions related to the origins of the alphabet, recorded a few months later, in November 1974.⁵⁰ These notes emphasize the connection between his figure studies and typography and letterforms. The flattening of form

⁴⁷ Arnaud Maggs, "Feb 1974 – Paul Young's Notes on Drawing," in "Log Book – Arnaud Maggs," unpaginated notebook, 1974 (third page), LAC, Ottawa, R7959-6403.

⁴⁸ Maggs, Kodak Chair Lecture, 00:04:58.

⁴⁹ For examples of this in his illustrations, refer to figures 1.2, 1.11, and 1.32–1.34; in his early photographic experiments and family photographs, refer to figures 2.1, 2.3, and 3.5; and in his collections, note the objects he documented for the Three Small Rooms installation, figure 2.7.

⁵⁰ Arnaud Maggs, "Nov 74. Origins of the Alphabet," in "Log Book," 1974 (fifth page).

and volume and an emphasis on outline are clearly visible in his drawings, of course, but these characteristics would come to define his photographic explorations of the human head as well.

Although Maggs felt drawing was a good place to start, he quickly realized it was important to revert to photography, for its believability: “I went home and I thought, ‘Well, I’ve got to show what I’m seeing, and the best way to do it is through photography, because photography has an authority about it.’”⁵¹ He bought a used Rollei camera and began a period of prolific photographic exploration of the human head.⁵² Building on his work experience and his ongoing preoccupations, these photographic experiments would help to shape the work he would produce as an artist, including *Kunstakademie* (1980), *Joseph Beuys: 100 Profile Views* and *Joseph Beuys: 100 Frontal Views* (both 1980), and *48 Views* (1981–83), among others, which I examine more thoroughly in part 2.

Maggs did some of his early photographic prints himself, but he quickly began working with assistants. The relationship between photographer and assistant is not dissimilar to those in the commercial art studios Maggs worked in, where specialists did various tasks and Maggs was the graphic artist or art director. “He admitted he knew nothing about photography,” asserts Orenstein, who assisted Maggs in the 1970s. Maggs was careful to surround himself with people who had greater technical proficiency. “He’s always said to me, ‘I’ve always made a habit of hiring assistants who know more than I do,’” confirms his friend Mike Robinson, who

⁵¹ Maggs, Kodak Chair Lecture, 00:04:58. See also Portis, “Evidence of Existence,” 65–66.

⁵² Several lighting tests and notes on his photographic trials can be found in his notebooks; see, for example, “Personal Journal.”

started printing for him in 1995.⁵³ Maggs was exacting. Orenstein recalls that some images would require several reprints to achieve what he wanted:

I'd go do a print and I'd show it to him and he'd go, "No, make this lighter, make this darker, bring this detail out here." ... So I'd go back and do it and keep doing it and keep doing it. And sometimes I'd do twenty or thirty tries. I became a very good printer. To satisfy him it had to be good.⁵⁴

Orenstein's recollections of Maggs's rigorous standards relate to the work ethic that Maggs developed while working in New York City as a graphic designer, where art directors would send him back for revisions and improvements. Robinson too recalls Maggs's thorough approach: "He was exacting, but he knew when it was good enough. He had the whole project in mind."⁵⁵ When working with assistants, Maggs would lean on their expertise and the strength of their production abilities. Robinson, for example, introduced a range of improvements to Maggs's workflow in the 1990s, allowing him to focus on conceptual development of his ideas, since he had the support of specialists for solving technical challenges and developing and printing his work.⁵⁶

A decision about medium choice was starting to form, but Maggs continued to consider what defined his artistic identity. In his personal notebook started in 1975, he appears to grapple with who he is as an artist. A combination of lists of influences, notes about lighting, reflections on black-and-white versus colour photography, diary entries, and what reads as a

⁵³ Photographer Mike Robinson, discussion with author, August 3, 2017. This was corroborated by Orenstein.

⁵⁴ Orenstein, discussion.

⁵⁵ Robinson, discussion.

⁵⁶ For example, "[For the *Hotel* series] Maggs had these long, thin trays. They were made out of 6-inch PVC pipe that was cut in half. So he was processing through these kinds of trays. ... But the chemistry wasn't getting at the print very well. So I changed it to processing them in large trays, but still rolling them because [the prints] were maybe seven feet long by two feet wide. So I made a tray with a 2 x 3 foot area. I diluted the developer and then we rolled back and forth through the process and then drained it"; *ibid.*

draft autobiography, the notebook underscores the dual influences of art and design on his ways of thinking about creative practice, and it further demonstrates that this was a period of reflection on his creative interests. These reflections contributed to shaping both his artistic approach and his career narrative.

Indeed, Maggs's ideas were directly shaped and informed by the work of other artists, which often contributed to pivotal moments of development in his own work. Of particular importance to the artistic development of his photography were his early lighting explorations. Maggs's first experiments as an art photographer were inspired by the soft, sculptural portraits of nineteenth-century photographers such as Julia Margaret Cameron (1815–79), resulting in his 1975 portrait *Julia Mustard IV* (fig. 3.23). "I really liked very much the sort of Victorian north light sidelight on the face, because it's very sculptural," he explained.⁵⁷ His goal, however, was to emphasize the two-dimensional shape of the human head rather than its three-dimensional form. "For me it wasn't working because it looked a bit too beautiful. It didn't bring out the asymmetrical properties of the face, which is what I wanted to see."⁵⁸ Uninterested in flattery, he found that a graphic approach aligned better with his aims. Maggs found his solution in axis lighting, inspired by the work of Edward Weston (1886–1958). Axis lighting puts the light source behind the camera and emphasizes the outline of the subject. "In [Weston's] *Charis in the Sand*," Maggs told Robert Enright, "there is almost a black edge around her body" (fig. 3.24).⁵⁹ Although the dark outline is not as dramatic in his own work, in *64 Portrait Studies, 1976–78*, for example, axis lighting affords the matter-of-fact appearance Maggs was looking for (fig.

⁵⁷ Maggs, Kodak Chair Lecture, 00:10:18.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 00:10:30.

⁵⁹ Enright, "Designs on Life, 46.

3.25). The outline has a flattening effect, allowing him to emphasize the shape of the human head, including its asymmetries. It was an important discovery for him as an artist, as it informed his approach to lighting for the rest of his career. “Everything I have done since, except for ‘After Nadar,’ has used that lighting,” he explained to Enright.⁶⁰

The graphic appearance of Maggs’s work is further amplified by his approach to making prints. The visual efficiency of images by Irving Penn (1917–2009) and Richard Avedon (1923–2004) — their spare backdrops, emphasis on closeups, and high-contrast images — was an inspiration to Maggs. His friend and assistant from 2005 onward, artist Katuska Doleatto suggests that Avedon’s work in particular informed his approach to printing. “Arnaud really loved Avedon’s work,” she explains. Doleatto asserts that, like Avedon, Maggs preferred punchy, high-contrast prints, “but it was important that there be detail. ... You still need the texture of the hair to show through.”⁶¹ In 1988, when Maggs was exploring number and letterforms, he created *Spine*, a high-contrast Xerox homage of sorts featuring the spine of *Observations*, Avedon’s 1959 book collaboration with designer Alexey Brodovitch and writer Truman Capote (fig. 3.26). Penn and Avedon both straddled the line between commercial photography and art, attaining museum status in the 1960s and ’70s. Noting that it was predominantly their portraiture, rather than their commercial advertising and fashion work, that garnered attention from curators, Philip Monk suggests that they served as examples for Maggs when he was contemplating an art career.⁶²

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Katuska Doleatto, discussion with author, February 28, 2020.

⁶² Monk, “Life’s Traces,” 20.

In 1977 Maggs bought a building in Aveyron, a rugged area in southwest France where his sister, Heather, had a home. Eventually Maggs was spending his Septembers there. France — particularly its flea markets — would shape many of his creative ideas and provide the subjects for several of his later artworks based on found paper ephemera. In 1978 he taught an evening course at the Baldwin Street Gallery of Photography titled “Improving Your Portraits.” Interestingly, at this time he was double-billed as a “photographer and graphic designer.”⁶³ That same year, *64 Portrait Studies* was mounted at the David Mirvish Gallery. As an installation, the series, like much of Maggs’s output, was characterized by its grid-based hanging scheme and its monumental scale. The final dimensions of the artwork were shaped by the gallery space upon this first installation (fig. 2.37). The gallery had “only one unbroken expanse of wall, 28 feet long,” Maggs wrote in his notebook. “I decided to use the one wall only, and that is how the number of pictures, 64, was determined.”⁶⁴ His decisions around installation reveal his acute awareness of the mutual impact of artwork and exhibit space, which I address further in part 2.

The show at the David Mirvish Gallery surprised some of his previous colleagues. Marjorie Harris, for instance, recalls, “It was to me anyway an incredible surprise ... Well, it made sense — absolute logic — but I wasn’t thinking of Arnaud as an artist. As a photographer he was very artistic, but not the kind of unleashed artist he became.”⁶⁵ Seeing the serial portraits collected in one large-scale grid crystallized the experimentation that some of his

⁶³ “Course Schedule: The Baldwin Street Gallery of Photography,” May 17–June 24, 1978. LAC, Ottawa, R7959-5584.

⁶⁴ Maggs, “Personal Journal.”

⁶⁵ Marjorie Harris, discussion with author, October 4, 2017.

colleagues would have witnessed during his commercial shoots. “Arnaud was a little bit mysterious as well,” Harris remembers. “You were never quite sure what he was doing or why. And it wasn’t until I saw his wall at David Mirvish Gallery that [I thought] ... ‘Oh, for crying out loud, look! I’ve seen some of these shots before.’ And of course he’d been taking them all along and then he went into it in that serious way of using people as graphic design.”⁶⁶

Although *64 Portrait Studies* was an early work, upon reflection, Maia-Mari Sutnik feels it cemented Maggs as an artist. “I thought that his breakthrough work really was *64 Portrait Studies*,” she explains. “I felt there was such a breakthrough in terms of how we were looking at portraiture.”⁶⁷ A writer, photographer, and friend of Maggs, Michael Mitchell similarly pointed to *64 Portrait Studies* as an important project for him. “He certainly had an impact with those first head portraits [*64 Portrait Studies*], which were done with that weird sort of burlap background. You know, this is before he figured it all out,” Mitchell remembered. “And they certainly caught people’s attention. I found them sort of ugly myself, and I liked them much better when he went to a purer statement, with the white backgrounds.”⁶⁸ Mitchell’s reflections on this early work underscore that Maggs was still working through his visual and conceptual choices around serial portraiture. Over the next several years his experiments in portraiture would lead to more rigorous systems and procedures, which I address in greater depth in part 2.

Following its first exposure at the David Mirvish Gallery, portraits from *64 Portrait Studies* were included in various group shows. In the early part of his career, Maggs’s work was

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Sutnik, discussion.

⁶⁸ Michael Mitchell, discussion with author, July 27, 2017.

sometimes exhibited in the context of photographic portraiture. The exhibition *Sweet Immortality* (1978), for example, showed his images alongside portraits by thirty-one others, including Tom Gibson (1930–2021), Clara Gutsche (b. 1949), Gabor Szilasi (b. 1928), and Sam Tata (1911–2005). Maggs was represented in the exhibition by a frontal view and a profile from *64 Portrait Studies*. At the same time, his output aligned with Canadian artists whose creative investigations made use of conceptualist language and extended the possibilities for photography in art. With projects such as *64 Portrait Studies*, Maggs had adopted conceptual art strategies through grid-based photographs that challenged conventional portraiture.

In 1979 curator Karyn Allen brought together a range of these artists whose work tested traditional approaches and questioned preconceived ideas about photography, in an exhibition called *The Winnipeg Perspective, 1979 — Photo/Extended Dimensions*. She included the frontal and profile images of Caitlan Maggs from *64 Portrait Studies*, a series of early photographic lighting tests, and written notes from one of Maggs's journals. These were shown alongside conceptual projects by Sorel Cohen (b. 1936); Suzy Lake (b. 1947); Barbara Astman (b. 1950), who was also included in *Sweet Immortality*; and Ian Wallace (b. 1943). Works in the exhibition were indicative of similar experimentation happening nationwide. From the mid-1960s onward, artists across the country were engaging with the procedural methodologies of conceptual art. For instance, in their work Roy Kiyooka (1926–94), Carole Condé (1940–2024) and Karl Beveridge (b. 1945), and Bill Vazan (b. 1933) explored photographic seriality, image/text relationships, and information-based systems. N.E. Thing Co., founded in Vancouver in 1966 by Iain Baxter (b. 1936) and Ingrid Baxter (b. 1959), exemplified the administrative aesthetic of

conceptual art practice. Their art activities were shaped by the visual language of design and bureaucratic record keeping.

Part 1 of this dissertation has laid the foundation with an extended discussion of the impact Maggs's commercial practice had on his art practice while part 2 will examine his relationship to the strategies of conceptual art and make links between the vocabulary of conceptualism and his early careers in graphic design and commercial photography.

Significantly, the disciplinary intersections in Maggs's biography, particularly during his period of transition to fine art, point to the vital role that design, illustration, and commercial photographic practice played in his development as an artist, which will be my focus in part 2. Rather than emerging as an artist "out of the blue, as if from nowhere,"⁶⁹ to borrow his own language, Maggs the artist instead evolved out of decades of practice in creative industries.

⁶⁹ Stainback, "Q and A," 112.

Chapter 3: Illustrations

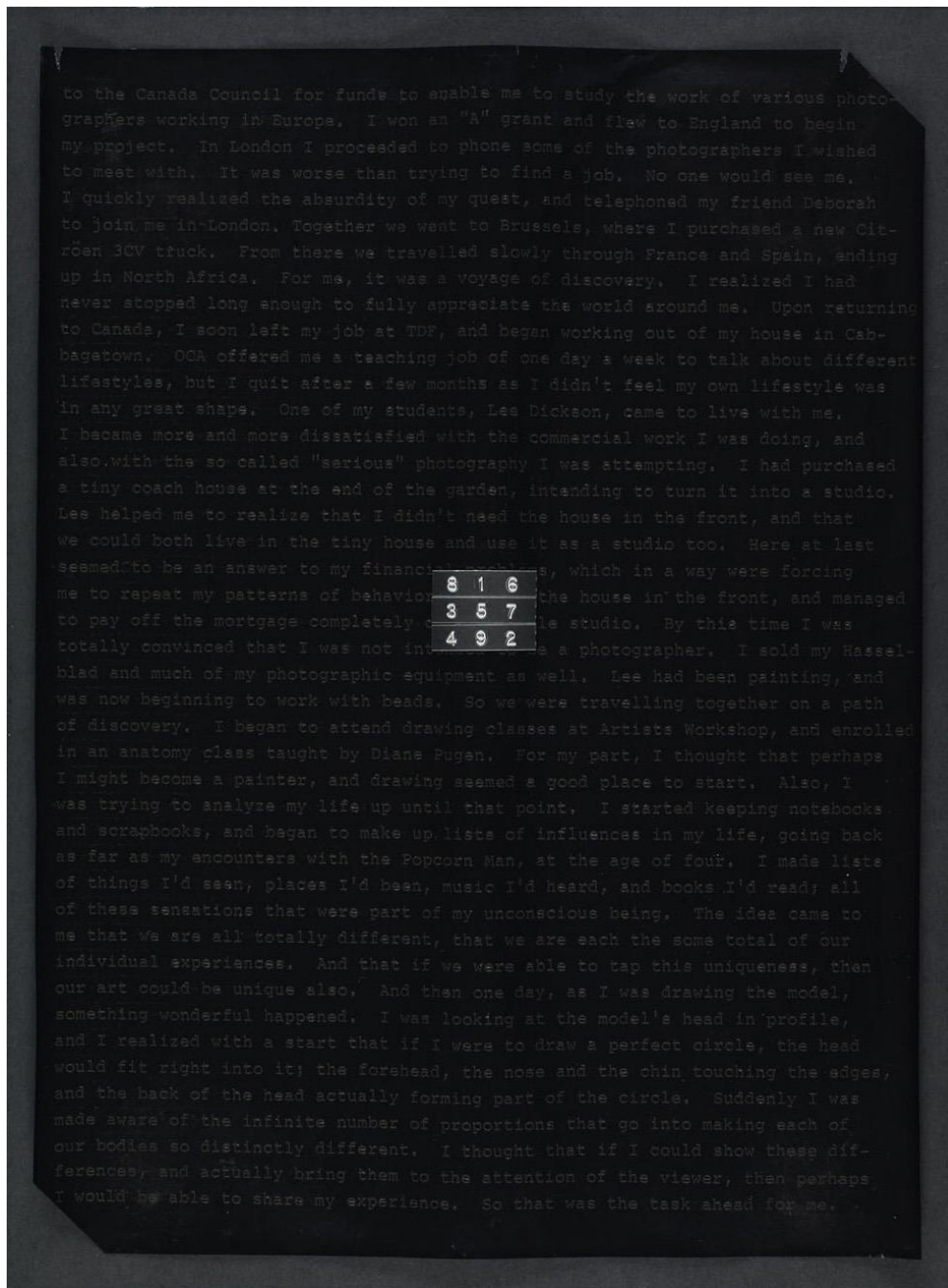


Figure 3.1 Arnaud Maggs, 15, 1989 (detail: panel 8). Framed carbon paper with embossed plastic label tape, 23.7 x 31.8 cm. Library and Archives Canada (LAC), Ottawa, R7959-6395, e010949462-v8. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figure 3.2. Arnaud Maggs, *Scrapbook (1)*, 2009. Chromogenic print, 48.5 x 67.5 cm. MacLaren Art Centre, Barrie, ON. Purchased with the support of the Canada Council for the Arts Acquisition Assistance program and a bequest from John Reesor, 2010. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery. Photo by André Beneteau.



Figure 3.3 Arnaud Maggs, *After Nadar: Pierrot: The Collector*, 2012. Chromira print mounted on Dibond, 96 x 75 cm (framed). Purchased with the assistance of the Ivey Foundation Contemporary Art Fund and the support of the Canada Council for the Arts Acquisition Program, 2012. 2012/11.8. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.

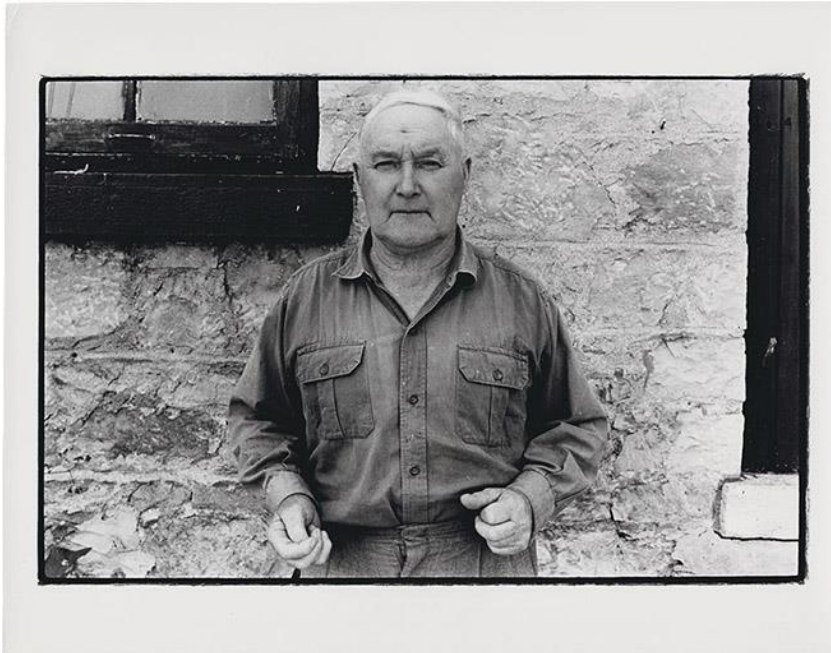


BABY PICTURES, AN EXHIBITION OF PHOTOGRAPHS BY ARNAUD MAGGS
NOV 27 TO DEC 20, 1971 BALDWIN STREET GALLERY OF PHOTOGRAPHY
23 BALDWIN ST, TORONTO 364 2630 OPEN SAT SUN & MON, 1 TO 6

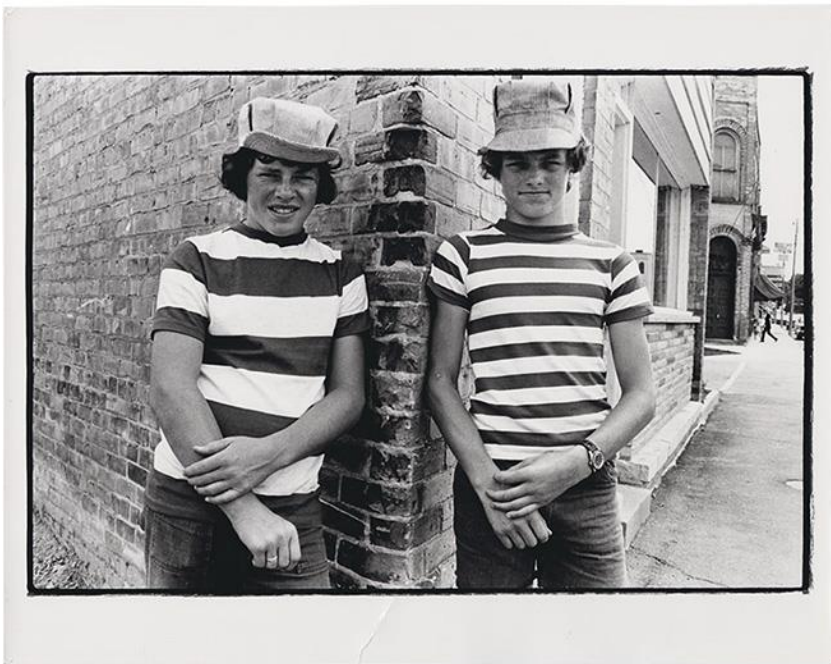
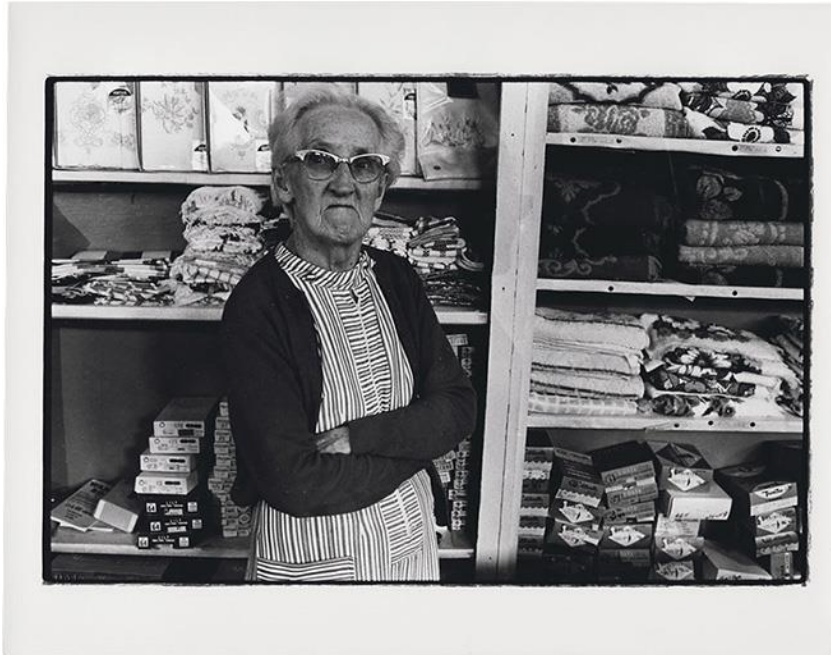
Figure 3.4 *Baby Pictures: An Exhibition of Photographs by Arnaud Maggs, 1971.* Photomechanical print on wove paper. LAC, Ottawa, R7959-541. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



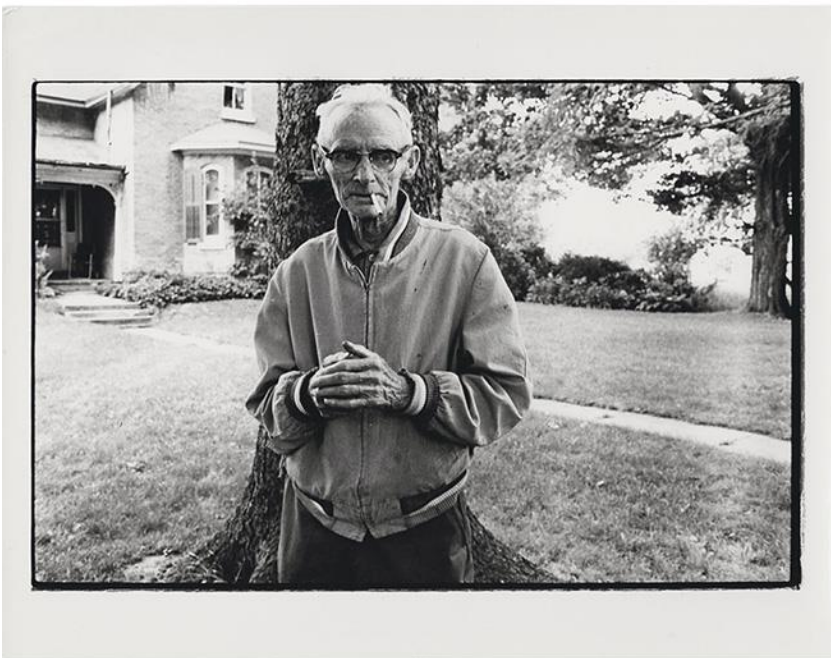
Figure 3.5 Arnaud Maggs, “Additional baby pictures used in solo show at Baldwin St. Gallery showing Laurie, Toby, and Caitlan,” n.d. Gelatin silver negatives, 35 mm each. LAC, Ottawa, R7959-4035. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figures 3.6 and 3.7 Arnaud Maggs, *Brussels*, 1971. From *People of Brussels*, Brussels Centennial, Brussels, ON, 1973. Gelatin silver prints, 20.3 x 25.4 cm. LAC, Ottawa, R7959-2801 and -2795. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figures 3.8 and 3.9 Arnaud Maggs, *Brussels*, 1971. From *People of Brussels*, Brussels Centennial, Brussels, ON, 1973. Gelatin silver prints, 20.3 x 25.4 cm. LAC, Ottawa, R7959-2807 and -2799. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figures 3.10 and 3.11 Arnaud Maggs, *Brussels*, 1971. From *People of Brussels*, Brussels Centennial, Brussels, ON, 1973. Gelatin silver prints, 20.3 x 25.4 cm. LAC, Ottawa, R7959-2803 and -2800. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figure 3.12 Arnaud Maggs, images of Norman McLaren from *Canadian Filmmakers*, June 1972. Gelatin silver negatives, 35 mm each. LAC, Ottawa, R7959-3504. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figure 3.13. Arnaud Maggs, images of Norman McLaren from *Canadian Filmmakers*, June 1972. Gelatin silver negatives, 35 mm each. LAC, Ottawa, R7959-3505. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figure 3.14 Arnaud Maggs, photographs for Merrell Dow Pharmaceuticals' Nicorette ad campaign, 1987, by SMW Advertising (creative director: Michael Paul; art director and designer: Dick Silverthorne; writer: Bill Parker; photographer: Arnaud Maggs). © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figure 3.15 Arnaud Maggs, "The Definitive Eye: A Portfolio of Five Canadian Artists," *Canadian Art* 5, no. 3 (Fall 1988), 90–91 and 96–97. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.

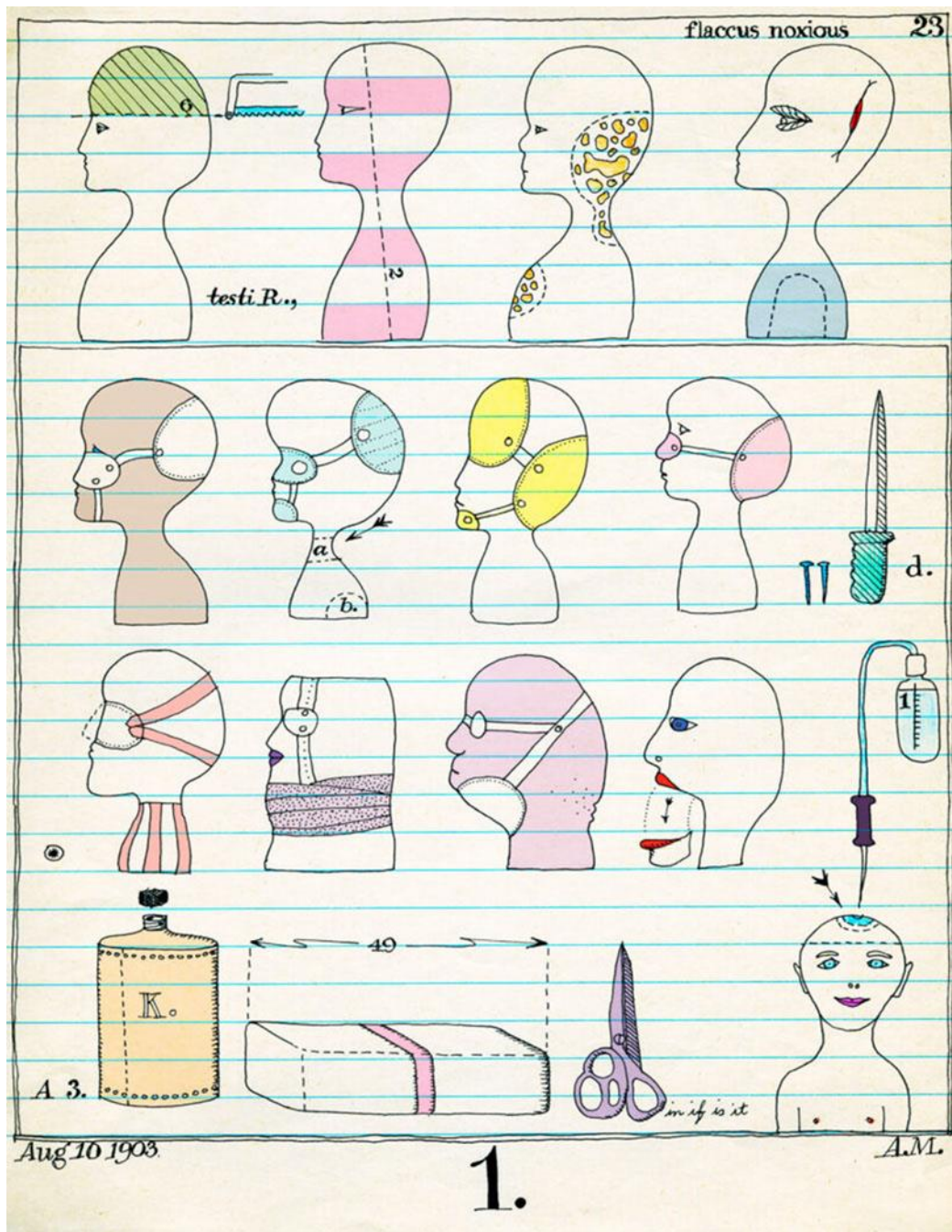
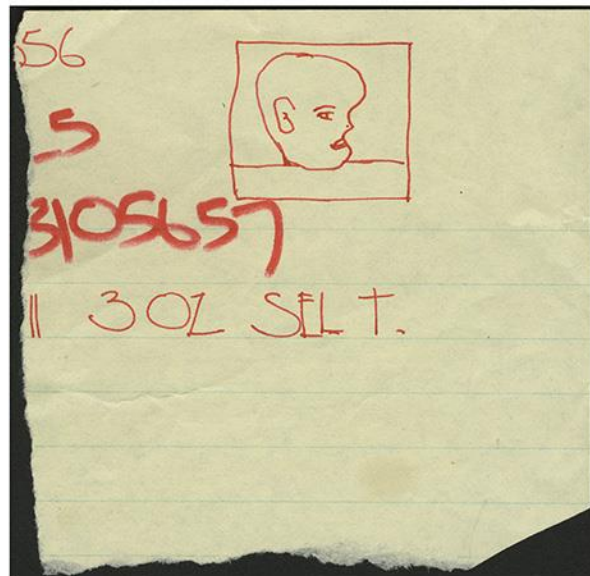
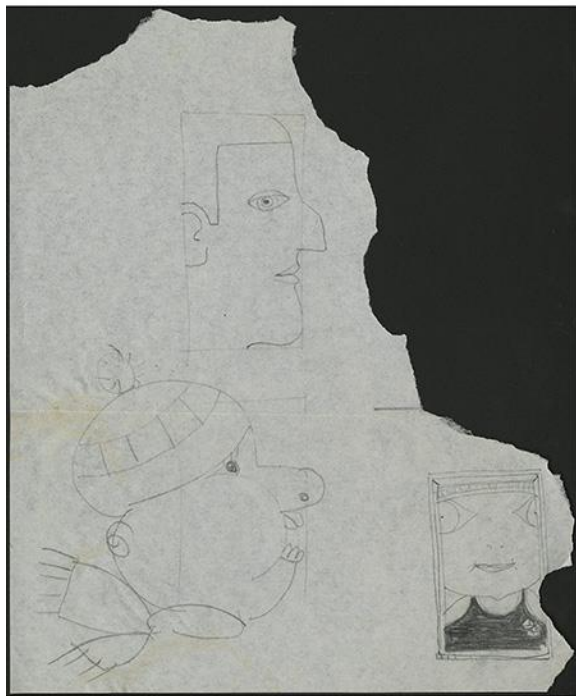
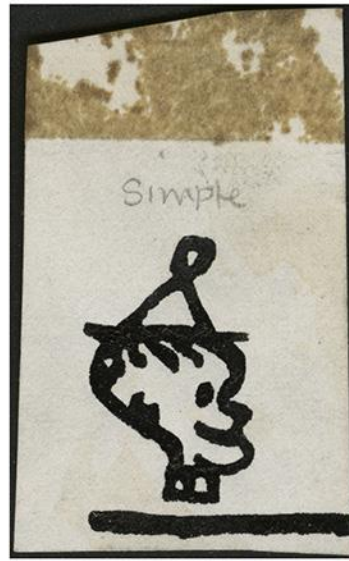
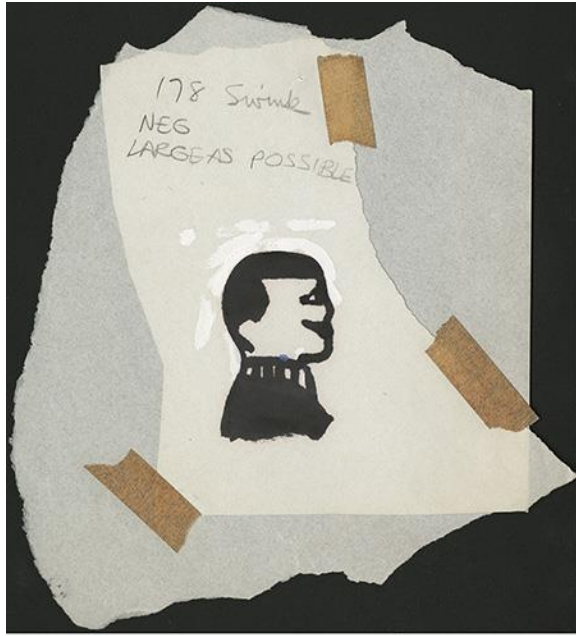


Figure 3.16 Arnaud Maggs, *Drawing for Myself*, 1964. Crayon and ink on paper. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figures 3.17–3.20 Arnaud Maggs, *Man in Profile* (top left), n.d. Marker pen on wove paper, 17 x 16.2 cm (support); *Tiny Profile* (top right), n.d. Black ink on wove paper, 4.4 x 2.7 cm (support); *Three Framed Faces* (bottom left), n.d. Pencil on tracing paper, 18.3 x 22.2 cm (irregular); *Impulse Doodle* (bottom right), n.d. Pen and red ink on wove paper, 8.2 x 8.4 cm. LAC, Ottawa, R7959-397, -435, -431, and -447). © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figure 3.21 Arnaud Maggs, *Three-Quarter Moon*, n.d. Pen and ink on wove paper, 5.4 x 4.2 cm. LAC, Ottawa, R7959-450. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.

Figure 3.22 Metal engraving (detail), October 12, 1975. Metal, 10.0 x 15.0 x 0.3 cm. The full plate is inscribed "My lovely Lee Marie Oct. 12 75, ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ ABCDEFG" and features a portrait of Lee Dickson next to the drawings isolated here. LAC, Ottawa, R7959-5461. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.

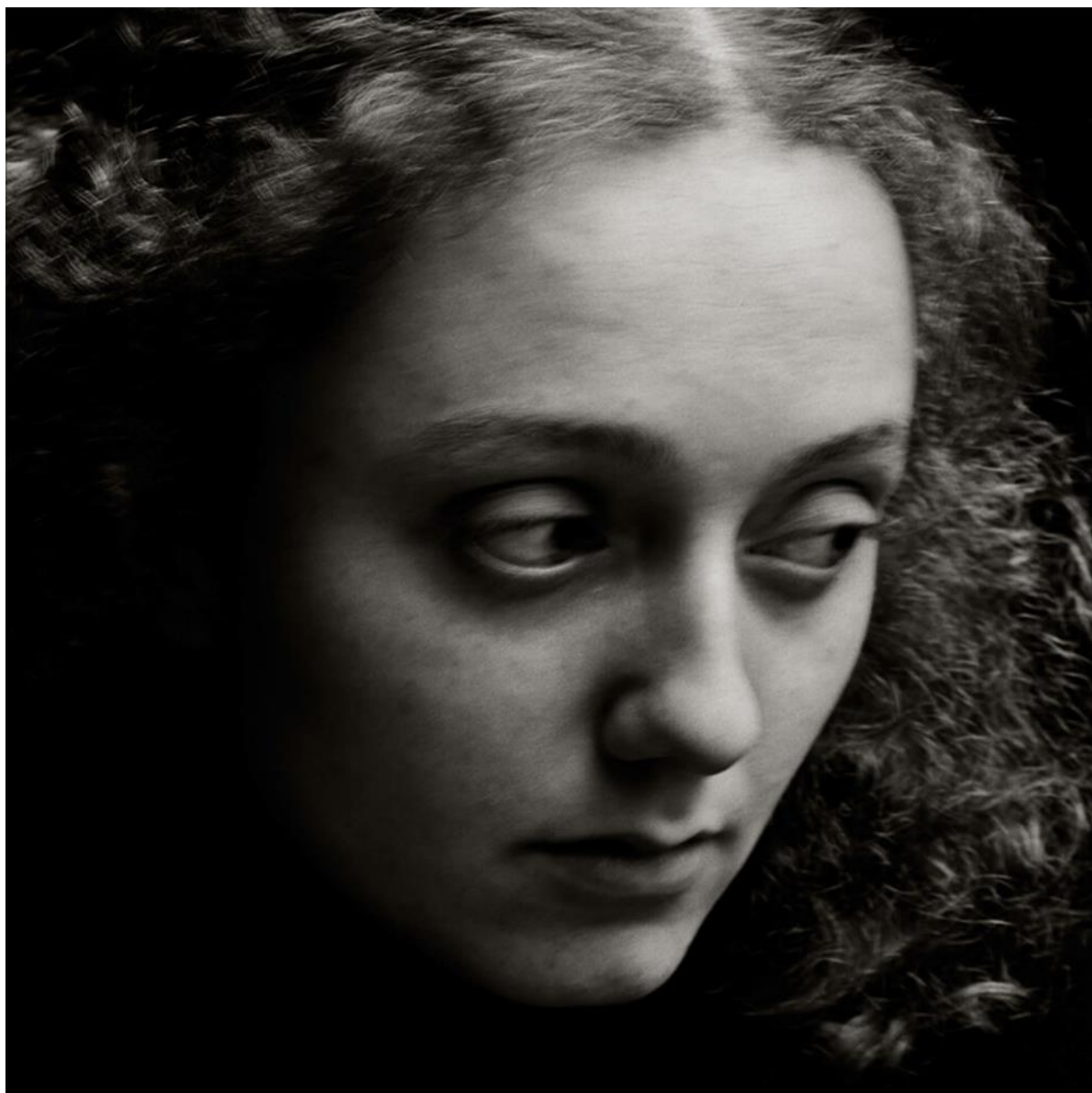


Figure 3.23 Arnaud Maggs, *Julia Mustard IV*, 1975. Gelatin silver print, 36.8 x 36.8 cm. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figure 3.24 Edward Weston, *Nude on Sand, Oceano*, 1936. Gelatin silver print, 18 x 24.2 cm. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, 33721; gift of Dorothy Meigs Eidlitz, St. Andrews, New Brunswick, 1968. © Center for Creative Photography, Arizona Board of Regents.

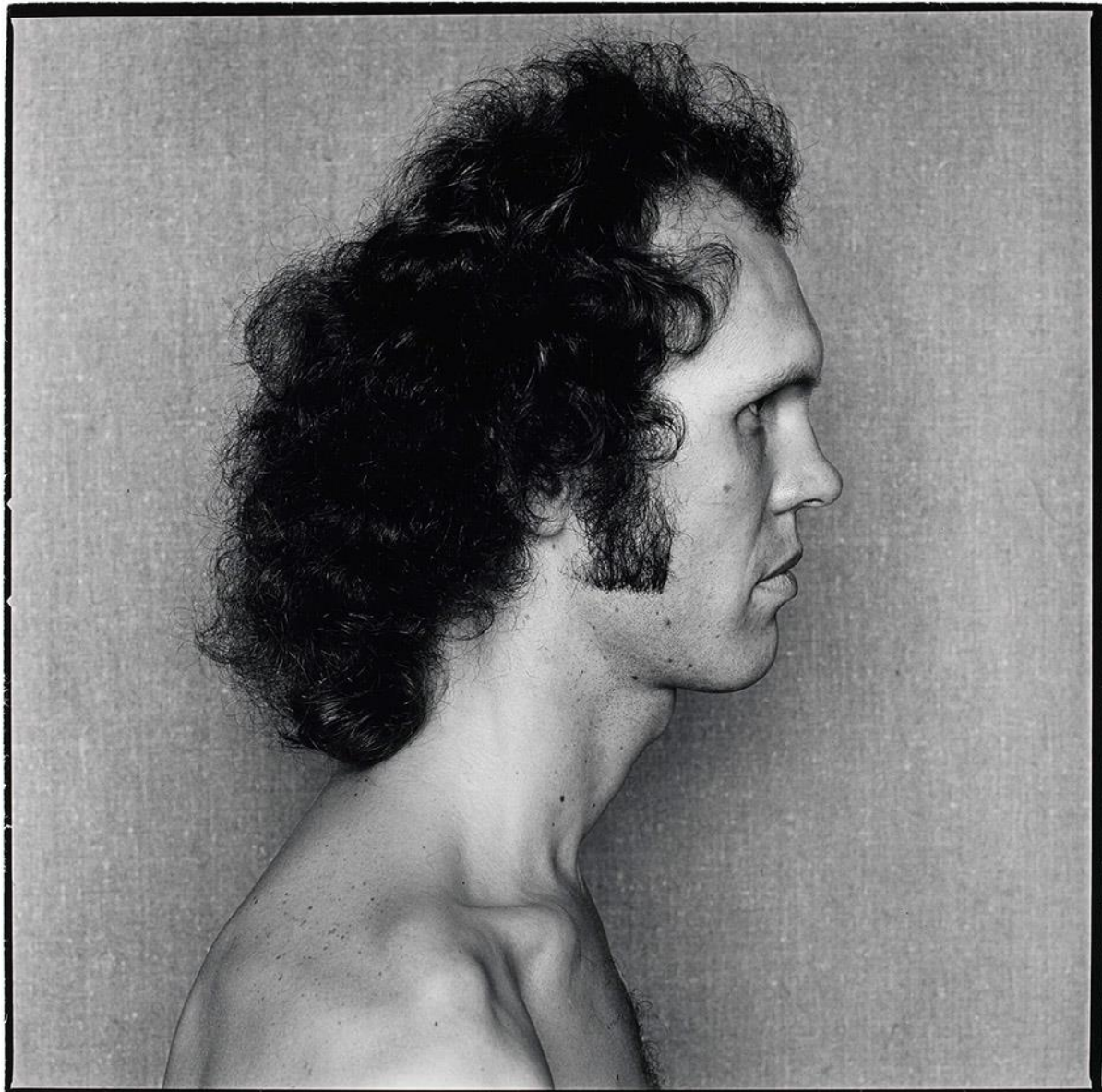


Figure 3.25 Arnaud Maggs, *64 Portrait Studies, 1976–78* (detail), 1976–78. Gelatin silver print, 40.4 x 40.4 cm; image: 37.9 x 38.2 cm. CMCP Collection, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, EX-85-100.1-64; purchased 1985. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figure 3.26 Arnaud Maggs, *Spine*, 1988. Xerox copy on paper, 35.5 x 21.5 cm. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.

PART 2

Once a Designer, Always a Designer: Commercial Practice and Conceptual Praxis

4. Designing Conceptualism

“When an artist uses a conceptual form of art, it means that all the planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair,” artist Sol LeWitt famously argued.

“The idea becomes a machine that makes the art.”¹ When describing *64 Portrait Studies, 1976–78*, Maggs adopted language similar to LeWitt’s: “It’s as if a machine could have done it ... as if there’s no photographer involved.”² Serialization, repetition, and the organizational structure of the grid are dominant tropes of both minimalism and conceptual art — and they were strategies used regularly by Maggs in his artwork.

Conceptual art emerged in the late 1960s and defined a set of aesthetic strategies for artists that included repetition, seriality, procedural systems, and the use of photography. Conceptual art production has frequently been framed in terms of dematerialization and the deskilled artist. In 1967, for instance, Lucy R. Lippard and John Chandler asserted that in conceptual art the idea — the “thinking process” — was foregrounded above all else.³ Likewise, Benjamin Buchloh credits conceptual art with challenging the status of the art object. “Because the proposal inherent in Conceptual Art,” he asserts, “was to replace the object of spatial and perceptual experience by linguistic definition alone (the work as analytic proposition), it thus constituted the most consequential assault on the status of that object: its visuality, its

¹ Sol LeWitt, “Paragraphs on Conceptual Art,” in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), 12. Originally published in *Artforum* 5, no. 10 (Summer 1967): 79–84.

² Robert Enright, “Designs on Life: An Interview with Arnaud Maggs,” *Border Crossings* 31, no. 2 (June/August 2012): 43.

³ Lucy R. Lippard and John Chandler, “The Dematerialization of Art,” *Art International* 12, no. 2 (February 1968): 31–36. The article was subsequently reprinted in *Conceptual Art*, ed. Alberro and Stimson, 46–50; all quotations here are from that version.

commodity status, and its form of distribution.”⁴ Similarly, Eve Meltzer explains, “sometimes artists ... chose language as their medium — if not words themselves, then forms that appeared to be like language (e.g., grids, signs, text), which by 1970 came to fall under the sign of ‘information.’”⁵ Distinguished, then, by a shift in emphasis from object to idea, conceptual art prioritized textual and linguistic conventions, contributing to what Buchloh termed an “aesthetic of administration.”⁶

There is a shared assumption that conceptual art developed in reaction to a Greenbergian emphasis on the inherent material qualities of the medium, exemplified by expressionistic painting, for instance. As Lippard and Chandler suggest, “the idea that art can be experienced in order to extract an idea or underlying intellectual scheme as well as to perceive its formal essence *continues from* the opposing formalist premise that painting and sculpture should be looked at as objects *per se* rather than as references to other images and representation.”⁷ Or, to put it more succinctly, “the medium need not be the message,” they insist.⁸ For his part, Buchloh traces a number of aesthetic shifts from the traditional studio aesthetic to the administrative aesthetic of conceptual art, including how conceptual art would negate the aesthetic positions of both pop art and minimalism. He declares: “Conceptual Art came to displace even that image of the mass-produced object and its aestheticized forms in Pop Art, replacing an aesthetic of industrial production and consumption with an aesthetic of

⁴ Benjamin Buchloh, “Conceptual Art, 1962–1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions,” *October* 55 (Winter 1990), 107.

⁵ Eve Meltzer, *The Systems We Have Loved: Conceptual Art, Affect, and the Antihumanist Turn* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 7.

⁶ Buchloh, “Conceptual Art, 1962–1969.”

⁷ Lippard and Chandler, “Dematerialization of Art,” 49 [emphasis in original].

⁸ *Ibid.*

administrative and legal organization and institutional validation.”⁹ Artists aligned with conceptual art, such as LeWitt, would regularly refute the import of visuality in statements and writing on the subject, and the objects of conceptual art were often seen in terms of the informational, as evidence. Douglas Huebler (1924–97) likewise privileges the idea over visuality: “I object to the fact that art has been predicated, since Impressionism at least, on our experience with the world being located in the eyes ... Art is not necessarily a visual experience.” Addressing his work as a system, he asserts that “it’s like reaching into the world and then bringing back and suspending what you brought back from its normal role, and having it serve art — the art being the thing that comes into your head — and not being about a visual thing ... the art has to be located in the idea and away from the visual appearance.”¹⁰ Although the material substance of some conceptual artworks was rendered almost non-existent, the art object would of course fail to dematerialize entirely. Instead, these kinds of statements underscored what might be considered a de-emphasis on the art object, which allowed some artists to circumvent the museum and gallery system and subvert the object’s commodity status.

Conceptual art’s modes of presentation and dissemination operate within the conventions of graphic design, an industry Maggs knew well. As Anne Rorimer asserts, conceptual artists have frequently engaged books and magazines as sites in/on which to

⁹ Buchloh, “Conceptual Art, 1962–1969,” 119.

¹⁰ Douglas Huebler, interview by Patricia Norvell, July 25, 1969, in *Recording Conceptual Art: Early Interviews with Barry, Huebler, Kaltenbach, LeWitt, Morris, Oppenheim, Siegelau, Smithson, Weiner*, ed. Alexander Alberro and Patricia Norvell (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 142, 147. See also Buchloh, who records similar views by Joseph Kosuth. Craig Owens contends that “the eruption of language into the aesthetic field — an eruption signalled by, but by no means limited to, the writings of Smithson, Morris, Andre, Judd, Flavin, Rainer, LeWitt — is coincident with, if not the definitive index of, the emergence of postmodernism”; Craig Owens, “Earthwords,” *October* 10 (Autumn 1979): 126.

challenge traditional exhibition space.¹¹ Artists such as Dan Graham (1942–2022), Joseph Kosuth (b. 1945), Lawrence Weiner (1942–2021), and Ed Ruscha, among others, would design their work specifically for magazines or as artist’s books in order to circumvent the gallery system. Magazines and books offered a vehicle for their ideas. Emphasizing conceptual artworks as linguistic propositions, Rorimer affirms that artists’ use of the page supported their aims to “eradicate illusionistic representation and autonomous materiality.”¹² Graham’s *Schema* (1966), for example, was a self-referential series of “poems” designed to be absorbed into the magazine’s own image. As Graham explains,

I used the magazine page as my medium. ... It is completely self-referential. Instead of relating to the white cube of the gallery, the work involves the “materiality” of its own self-referring information. As magazine information is disposable, the pages defeated the monetary aura of gallery art and also had the virtue of positioning art in a popular and publicly accessible domain. Placing work in the context of the magazine page allowed it to be read in juxtaposition to art criticism, art reviews, and art magazine reproductions of art objects installed in exhibition spaces. Presented as such, *Schema* (March 1966) framed the publication, showing its intrinsic ties to the gallery/magazine publicity structure. Reciprocally, this piece exists only by its own presence in the informational literalness of the magazine image.¹³

Radical experimentations such as these, where artists flirt with art’s obsolescence — in this case by disguising the work in the existing design framework of the magazine — characterize conceptual art activity and illuminate clear and obvious ways in which design and conceptual art production are intertwined. Employing graphic design strategies was an affront to art norms and conventions, and it underscored the many dualities in conceptual art, including for example, objectivity and subjectivity. Similar assertions have been made about photography’s

¹¹ Anne Rorimer, “Siting the Page: Exhibiting Works in Publications – Some Examples of Conceptual Art in the USA,” in *Rewriting Conceptual Art*, ed. Michael Newman and Jon Bird (London: Reaktion Books, 1999), 11.

¹² *Ibid.*, 25–26.

¹³ Dan Graham, “Focus: Dan Graham,” *Artforum* 51, no. 1 (September 2012), <https://www.artforum.com/events/dan-graham-5-193282/>.

role in conceptual art. “Though frequently presented in photographic form as an objective statement of facts,” Heather Diack explains, “conceptual art effectively problematized the very possibility of either objectivity or fact.”¹⁴ She expands:

...the turn to photography upended the notion of objectivity. The photograph’s unavoidable links to perspectival manipulation and the distortion of the lens, for example, as well as the troubling gaps between the real and representation, obstinately interfered with fantasies of so-called pure information.¹⁵

Likewise, conceptual art’s presentation in the guise of graphic design allowed for a similar challenge to objectivity and fact. In order to avoid the creation of an autonomous art object, this work and others assumed the graphic design presentation of the site, embedding art in a context of supposed informational clarity. This strategy subverted expectations of both art and design, disrupting assumptions about the transparency of visual communication.

For works like *Schema*, Graham’s workflow mimicked that of commercial art and graphic design studios. In this particular example, acting as a kind of art director, the artist passed along his instructions to the editor and designer to execute the work. Maggs also explored the book as a format for his artwork, though not until the 1980s. Like Graham, he also worked with others to execute the design. One of his many notebooks, from 1985, reveals page after page of licence plate numbers seen on 2CV trucks he encountered in various locations around France. Working with prominent Canadian graphic designer and typographer Ed Cleary (1950–94), he developed a book maquette for *25 Trucks Like Mine* (fig. 4.1); each page featured a single licence plate number set in a rectangle with rounded corners, much like an actual licence plate.

¹⁴ Heather Diack, *Documents of Doubt: The Photographic Conditions of Conceptual Art* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2020): 14.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 22.

Maggs's title is closely aligned with Ed Ruscha's first conceptual photobook, *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* (1963; fig. 4.2), which documented gas stations in what would become his characteristic deadpan way. Pointing to the significance of Ruscha's own commercial art background on his art practice, Jennifer Quick asserts that his books were shaped by the commercial artist's archive, or clipping library, frequently referred to as an "image morgue."¹⁶ Interestingly, despite the dominance of photography in Maggs's artistic practice, his book maquettes were non-photographic, text-based exercises in record-keeping. Another of Maggs's maquettes, *138 Small Towns and Villages in the Aveyron* (fig. 4.3), simply recorded in alphabetical order the names of towns and villages in the region of France where he owned a home. These works are closely associated with the vernacular of administration that is characteristic of much conceptual art. But ultimately, as I will address further in chapter 5, Maggs displayed these kinds of informational, systems-based numberworks on the gallery wall.

Many have destabilized the notion that conceptual art was meant to thwart the art market. Curator and librarian Clive Phillpot outlines common misconceptions about conceptual artist's books, including that they were democratic, affordable, and bypassed the gallery system.¹⁷ Although Ruscha's practice, for instance, initially operated under those terms, Phillpot suggests that artist's books often required significant overhead and were therefore commodified by

¹⁶ Jennifer Eileen Quick, "Back to the Drawing Board: Ed Ruscha, 1956–68" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2015), 111–15.

¹⁷ Clive Phillpot, "Books by Artists and Books as Art," in *Artist/Author: Contemporary Artists' Books*, ed. Cornelia Lauf and Clive Phillpot (New York: Distributed Art Publishers, 1998), 36. *One for Me and One to Share* also identifies misconceptions regarding accessibility and market forces. An edited volume, the book comprises multiple essays, often from opposing viewpoints, emphasizing the complexity of artist's book and multiples production and dissemination; Dave Dyment and Gregory Elstrand, eds., *One for Me and One to Share: Artists' Multiples and Editions* (Toronto: YYZ Books, 2012).

galleries and art publishers. Alexander Alberro is likewise quick to dispel the mythology of the dematerialized art object and its subversion of the art market: “To be sure, artists and dealers had to grapple with the problem of how a collector would be able to purchase and possess a work during the early history of conceptualism, but there was never a moment when they did not seek to market the art.”¹⁸ He underscores an interesting paradox in conceptual art — that authorship is both negated and exploited — and he convincingly establishes the central role of publicity in both its distribution and creation. While Alberro discusses the work and involvement of several artists, including Graham, Kosuth, and Weiner, his arguments centre on Seth Siegelaub (1941–2013), a New York dealer whom he credits as the mastermind of pioneering exhibition and dissemination strategies linked to conceptual art.¹⁹ Invoking post-Marxist thinkers Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (who coined the term *informatization*), he outlines a shift in the 1960s toward what he refers to as a “new moment of advanced capitalism,” which is fast-paced, post-industrial, and characterized by “providing services and manipulating information.”²⁰ And Alberro makes a firm link between informatization and conceptual art, asserting that “conceptualism’s unusual formal features and mode of circulation in many ways utilize and enact the deeper logic of informatization.”²¹ Seth Siegelaub’s *The Xerox Book* serves as a useful example here.

¹⁸ Alexander Alberro, *Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), 4.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 2. Alberro cites *Empire*, a book that addresses the process of informatization. The authors identify a shift from industry to service that insists on a central role for “knowledge, information, affect, and communication.” *Ibid.*, 5n, citing Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 285. Likewise, art historian and scholar John Roberts also refers to *Empire* in his discussion of the subjectivity and increasing immateriality of labour, in *The Intangibilities of Form: Skill and Deskilling in Art after the Readymade* (New York: Verso, 2007), 210–15. However, he is critical of its authors, suggesting that their conception of immaterial labour in the “information revolution” places too much emphasis on resistance and fails to accurately recognize how immaterial labour fits in with productive and unproductive labour; 212–13.

²¹ Alberro, *Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity*, 3.

Conceived by art dealer Siegelau in 1968, *The Xerox Book* was at once group exhibition and promotional tool. He invited a number of artists to participate in the project and asked that they engage with Xerox technology conceptually. He was keen on xerography for its informational quality: “I chose Xerox as opposed to offset or any other process because it’s such a bland, shitty reproduction, really just for the exchange of information. ... Xerox just cuts down on the visual aspects of looking at information.”²² Interestingly, the photocopied editions of *The Xerox Book* turned out to be too expensive, and Siegelau, despite trying, failed to secure corporate sponsorship from Xerox; in turn, he decided to reproduce the book using the offset lithographic process.²³ As Alberro suggests, Siegelau’s interest in xerography’s capacity for aesthetic negation “went in tandem with the deskilling practices that characterized much of the work of the artists he represented, and it fit into a much larger anti-aesthetic trend suspicious of the slick work of art.”²⁴ Siegelau recognized in conceptual art a split between “primary information” (the idea) and “secondary information” (the presentation).²⁵ Moreover, he not only understood but insisted that the presentation, or secondary information, could take many forms: documentation (in the form of photographs, maps, drawings, descriptions), artist’s books, magazine advertisements, interviews, artist’s talks, and reviews, among others.

Siegelau engaged, then, in a variety of strategic public relations tactics, or, as Weiner suggested in 1971, was the “advertising agency” for conceptual artists.²⁶ As such, Alberro

²² Ibid., 135, citing an interview of Siegelau by Patricia Norvell, in *Recording Conceptual Art*, ed. Alberro and Norvell, 39.

²³ Ibid., 136.

²⁴ Ibid., 135.

²⁵ Ibid., 56.

²⁶ Ibid., 4.

asserts, he played a “crucial role in the commercial packaging of conceptual art.”²⁷ While the artists themselves engaged in approaches that negated the significance of authorship, Siegelau’s strategies for publicity and promotion of the work in the artworld context exploited the name recognition of the artists and insisted on the significant value of authorship. And indeed, as Alberro argues, he “saw that the image of the artist (and its direct descendant, name recognition) had come to assume more and more importance, to the extent that it replaced the primacy of the artwork itself.”²⁸ Conceptual art production, then, is connected to advertising, publicity, and design. Further investigation into these disciplinary overlaps is important to underscore not only how graphic design has contributed to conceptual art production, but more so, how inclusion of the applied arts in conceptual art’s history might disrupt the idea that the informational cannot be aesthetic.

Maggs’s approach to artmaking aligns with the systematic and informational languages of minimalism and conceptual art. Significantly, however, his approach is a synthesis of both those influences and of modernist design strategies and the processes and procedures of photography. Maggs established systems and procedures for the conception, making, naming, and display of his artworks. Not all of the titles of his works reference a specific number of exposures, but many do. This strategy is in keeping with the self-referential and instructional naming conventions of artists associated with minimalism and conceptual art. Ruscha’s *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*, for example, announces the total number of images that comprise

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., 41.

the work. Likewise, the number of portraits that make up Maggs's *64 Portrait Studies* is indicated by the title. Although the total number of photographs making up *64 Portraits* was design-driven (as addressed in part 1), subsequent works relied on a more rigorous system, related to the number of photographic exposures on a roll of film. Take, for instance, *Ledoyen Series, Working Notes* (1979; figs. 4.4–4.5), which is a series of black-and-white profiles and frontal views of twenty Parisian chefs and sous-chefs. *Ledoyen Series* marks a pivotal moment for Maggs. It was this shoot in Paris that prompted him to develop a procedure for photographing that factored in the number of sitters, the kinds of poses he wanted — frontals and profiles, for example — and the number of exposures. His sequential approach to image-making with this series would come to define his overall approach to portraiture, introducing more explicitly the themes of duration and time that would subsequently reappear throughout his practice.

In part 1 I established that Maggs's transition to fine art involved a prolonged period of evolution marked by introspection, exploration and experimentation, and overlap with his commercial photographic practice. The Ledoyen chefs offer an additional useful example of his overlapping interests and practices. Maggs was initially drawn to chefs for their formal potential. "Because they would be all dressed the same way," he explained, "it would hold the work together in a graphic sense."²⁹ The idea came to him following an editorial commission he received from *The Canadian* magazine for its November 12, 1977 issue, to photograph the head chef of the Ledoyen restaurant in Paris.³⁰ The result was a full-page image of a chef standing in

²⁹ Arnaud Maggs, "Arnaud Maggs," Kodak Chair Lecture Series, Ryerson University, February 11, 1994, sound recording, Toronto Metropolitan University Archives and Special Collections, maggs_1.mp3, 00:14:52.

³⁰ Enright, "Designs on Life," 50.

front of the restaurant's entrance (fig. 4.6). The chef's uniform — including his tall hat — stands out in contrast to the darkness of the doorway. *Ledoyen Series, Working Notes* sits at an intersection between the editorial portraiture Maggs did for magazines and the systems-based portraits he made as an artist. Likewise, in addition to depicting the same subject matter, it signals the impact that his early careers in graphic design and commercial photography had on his visual language as an artist.

As a commercial photographer, Maggs would take many images; his final selections would be made upon reviewing negatives or contact sheets. It was an approach he carried forward to *64 Portrait Studies*, as he sought to use only neutral images for the final project. For *Ledoyen Series, Working Notes*, he organized a session to photograph the chefs outside Restaurant Ledoyen, on the iconic Parisian street Avenue des Champs-d'Élysées. Intending to repeat the approach he took with *64 Portrait Studies*, he planned to shoot multiple rolls per chef and later edit and select appropriate frames to arrange in a grid. But as they began to queue for their turn in front of the camera, Maggs realized time would be an issue. He needed to adapt his approach. "My first thought was 'the soup will burn!'" he recalled. "I quickly realized that I didn't have the luxury of executing my first plan."³¹ Maggs typically used two cameras: when shooting on 35 mm film, he used a Nikon F2 without a built-in light meter; when using 120 film — as he did for the Ledoyen chefs — he used a Hasselblad 500C, which produced square-format images.³² The 120 film would allow twelve exposures per roll. Maggs made a calculation based on the number of exposures and determined that he would photograph two

³¹ Charles A. Stainback, "Q and A with Arnaud Maggs," in *Arnaud Maggs: Identification*, by Josée Drouin-Brisebois (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 2012), 114.

³² Mike Robinson, email discussion with author, July 8, 2021.

chefs per roll; each would be captured three times in profile and three times looking straight ahead. This approach informed ensuing projects, including *Kunstakademie* (1980; figs. 4.7 and 4.8), which Maggs had planned in advance of the shoot. He allotted one roll of film for every two sitters, allowing him to photograph six frames of each.

Maggs received contact sheets of the Parisian chefs from the lab with the negatives neatly cut into strips of three. “I was surprised,” he admitted, “because it made them a sequential work, and I had never thought of working that way.”³³ It was after seeing the frames arranged like that that he “decided I had to show them all.”³⁴ Unlike the photographs that comprise *64 Portrait Studies*, Maggs chose not to enlarge the Ledoyen images. He printed the work in fellow artist Suzy Lake’s darkroom. “He was disappointed by the details in their uniforms when printing his standard portrait grid sizes [which were enlargements],” she explains. “But soon he became very excited by the contact sheet format.”³⁵ In this work, in addition to alternating between profiles and frontal views, Maggs’s arrangement was thus informed by the processes and procedures of photography itself.

Ledoyen Series, Working Notes also pushed Maggs to see the contact sheet as fundamental to the artwork. The series was mounted in 1979 in a solo exhibition at YYZ, an artist-run gallery in Toronto. It was the first work that Maggs exhibited in the contact-sheet format.³⁶ This was an important choice. The contact-sheet presentation not only declared the significance of his process but modified it going forward. The contacts provided evidence, so to

³³ Enright, “Designs on Life,” 50.

³⁴ Maggs, Kodak Chair Lecture Series, 00:17:02–52.

³⁵ Suzy Lake, email discussion with author, May 14, 2020.

³⁶ Karyn Elizabeth Allen, *Arnaud Maggs: Photographs, 1975–1984* (Calgary: Nickle Arts Museum, 1984), 8.

speak, of the order of events. Following *Ledoyen Series*, *Working Notes*, Maggs no longer selected images after the fact from a large collection of possibilities. Still analytical and framed by an interest in classification and physiognomy, his process was now bound by sequential exposures.

Exhibiting contact sheets also revealed evidence of a different kind. Any mechanical difficulties were laid bare, emphasizing the particularities of the medium and the process. See *Kunstakademie*, for example, where one of the students — at the bottom of the fifteenth column — is missing a third frontal view. Or see his portrait of Jane Jacobs from *48 Views* (1981–83; fig. 4.9) where one of the profile images of Jacobs in the top row is cut off just above the shoulders. Moreover, shifts in position or displays of personality and emotion in his sitters over the course of the shoot were captured by the system rather than eliminated in a selection process, as was the case with *64 Portrait Studies*. The many frames comprising *Ledoyen Series*, *Working Notes* certainly show movement in the head and shoulders of some of the chefs. Some — as demonstrated by figure 4.5 — could not help but smile in front of the camera. Neutrality was no longer guaranteed. Indeed, as David MacWilliam suggests in his review of the work, “Maggs allows the subtle, individual differences of each subject to dominate and to provide a candid yet gentle comment on human nature.”³⁷

The systems and procedures involved in his serial portraits define the early part of Maggs’s artistic career. However, hangovers from this period are also evident in his later works. For example, the numbers comprising *The Complete Prestige 12” Jazz Catalogue* (1988) follow a logical numerical order. Similarly, there are identifying numbers on each of the labour tags that

³⁷ David MacWilliam, “Arnaud Maggs,” *Vanguard* 8, no. 10 (December 1979/January 1980): 28.

Maggs photographed for *Travail des enfants dans l'industrie: Les étiquettes* (1994). His hanging scheme for the work also calls for the tags to be installed in numerical order. (These works are discussed further in chapter 5.)

We are conditioned to view the grid as a rationalist concept. In Western art and science there is a long history of the grid as a tool for the organization and presentation of data. Considered a rational, distancing device, the grid is thought to signal objectivity. Far from being a neutral device, however, this approach to presenting information is entwined with power structures and discriminatory systems of classification connected to colonialist anthropological and ethnographic study. In art histories, the grid has iconic status. It is associated with the rigorous systematization seen in works by conceptual artists such as LeWitt and Hanne Darboven (1941–2009) and the typological examinations of the Bechers. The grid also offered a presentation framework for minimalist artists, including Carl Andre, whose work directly inspired Maggs. Describing the grid as “inexpressive,” Amy Goldin asserts that it “offers nothing more (or less) than a seamless experience of measured space, the experience of visual order itself. A grid is an isolated, specified, unlocalized field, free from any added rationale or emotional activity.”³⁸ Largely focusing on modern abstract painting, Goldin offers an analysis of pattern — how it is created and how it functions — and positions the grid as its fundamental structure. Similarly, Rosalind Krauss, in an often-cited polemic aptly titled “Grids,” proclaims that “flattened, geometricized, ordered, [the grid] is antinatural, antimimetic, antireal.”³⁹ Both Goldin and

³⁸ Amy Goldin, “Patterns, Grids and Painting,” *Artforum* 14, no. 1 (September 1975), 54.

³⁹ Rosalind Krauss, “Grids,” *October* 9 (Summer 1979), 51.

Krauss insist on the grid's tendency to flatten and emphasize surface. In his design work and his art projects, Maggs used the grid to structure his ideas and to shape the visual outcome, capitalizing on the analytical and objective potential of the format. His grids, however, are simultaneously sites of expressive potential.

Maggs's early careers anticipated the dominance of the grid in his artwork. After all, the device is integral to the practices and processes of both graphic design and photography. While often implicit — particularly in the energetic illustrative design of the mid-century — an underlying grid offers structure to layout designers and is fundamental to typography. “You can’t avoid it,” designer Jim Donoahue insisted.⁴⁰ Similarly, in *Design with Type*, Carl Dair asserts that the arrangement of diverse elements into a cohesive visual unit is central to typographic design.⁴¹ The dominant schools of thought in twentieth-century design informed Dair's ideas, and *Design with Type* offers a practical overview of how to apply Bauhaus principles. Dair identifies two primary factors in the development of a typographic unit: first, the central aim of achieving strong visual impact; second, the need for cohesion, or a unified whole.⁴² According to him, three key considerations define this task: relationships of harmony and contrast, relationships of structure, and relationships of space.⁴³ Dair also discusses Gestalt principles of composition, including the proximity and similarity of units and the continuation of form. His lessons were helpful as Maggs was developing his skills as a young designer, but they also informed his artistic approaches, which can be characterized by their considered attention to

⁴⁰ Jim Donoahue, discussion with author, August 10, 2017.

⁴¹ Carl Dair, *Design with Type* (New York: Pellegrini & Cudahy, 1952), 44–45. This book was later expanded and republished in 1967 by University of Toronto Press.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 45.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

structure and space and the interplay of similarity and difference, notably evident in his use of the grid.

Graphic designer Fidel Peña recognized a way of thinking in Maggs that is connected to design and the grid. “The way he thought, to me, was very much like a graphic designer,” he explains. “He gridded things, almost the way you would do a layout for a book.”⁴⁴ Maggs’s way of working as a photographer was also shaped by the grid view. Michael Mitchell asserts that “Maggs has always been introduced to his latest imagery via the grid of the medium-format contact sheet. He came to accept the form, as generated by his medium, as a part of his message. It was tidy, systematic and controllable.”⁴⁵ As noted earlier with the Ledoyen chefs, it was the contact sheet that initially prompted Maggs to shift to a sequential process for his portraits, which, as Mitchell suggests, necessitated that the format become part of his message. Following the Ledoyen series, the gridded structure of the contact sheet became a significant mode of display for Maggs’s artworks. *Kunstakademie*, for example, exists as both contact-sheet prints (fig. 4.7) and as large-scale individual images installed in a grid formation (fig. 4.8).

Given the enormous scale of many of his installations, the grid also became a useful tool for achieving a consistent look across all frames. Maggs preferred natural light for his portrait sessions, which often meant he was dealing with shifting lighting conditions during a shoot. Mitchell recalls:

He didn’t make that stuff easy for himself, my god. He insisted on using natural north light, and inevitably the light would fluctuate in the Noble Street studio. And then it was a nightmare to print those things, because there were whole rolls of film, and the density of the frames was not all the same. I made the mistake once of saying to

⁴⁴ Fidel Peña, discussion with author, May 15, 2017.

⁴⁵ Michael Mitchell, “Abracadabra,” *Canadian Art* 27, no. 3 (2010): 144.

Arnaud, “Why don’t you use studio strobes?” which is what I use. And he wouldn’t. He was a real purist that way. That’s the painter’s light — the north light, natural light.⁴⁶

As a result, Maggs and his assistants would go through a process of test printing and assessing the options in a grid layout to ensure consistency. “The overall ‘colour’ had to work,” explains Katuska Doleatto. “You could have darker and lighter images within the grid, but it’s because they worked with ones that were in the surrounding area that it would work overall.”⁴⁷ Putting them up in a grid, Mike Robinson confirms, allowed them to “see the transitions in lighting and contrast.” And once you did that, he says, “you could be predictive for the next roll.”⁴⁸

Robinson’s burning maps and printing notes (fig. 4.10) for *Joseph Beuys, 100 Profile Views* (1980) demonstrate the complexity of the adjustments made to accommodate for the lighting changes during a shoot. This attention to detail and comparison of similar images recalls Maggs’s selection process as an illustrator. Indeed, the production processes and technologies that he used as an illustrator and graphic designer share similarities with photographic post-production strategies, illuminating parallels between his ways of working and seeing in each discipline. Attention to detail through comparison and use of a grid in the photographic printing process, for example, parallel his conceptual preoccupations, revealing how practice informs concept. This convergence of the commercial and the conceptual underlines the multifaceted nature of Maggs’s practice and points to the fundamental role his early careers had on shaping his artistic vocabulary.

⁴⁶ Michael Mitchell, discussion with author, July 27, 2017.

⁴⁷ Katuska Doleatto, discussion with author, February 28, 2020.

⁴⁸ Robinson, discussion.

Although Maggs's work sometimes shares a deadpan serial aesthetic with that of conceptual artists such as Ruscha, he can hardly be called an anti-photographer. Maggs maintained a dual interest in both concept and craft, resulting in a persistent interplay at the intersection of modernism and conceptualism, which aligns his work with the Bechers, and also Canadian artists such as Michael Snow (1928–2023) and Suzy Lake. Indeed, as Lake notes, his “work was curated into conceptual exhibits and his skilled shooting and printing maintained the respect of traditional photographers.”⁴⁹ Pre-dating Maggs's artistic explorations, Snow similarly defies easy categorization. Interestingly, he too had a background in design, which he studied at the Ontario College of Art (now OCAD University), and worked briefly in the field in the early 1950s.⁵⁰

Indeed, a number of artists aligned with conceptual art worked in graphic design before or during their careers as artists. Ruscha is one such individual. He did layouts and production work for an advertising agency in the 1960s and, starting in 1965, paste-ups for *Artforum* magazine. LeWitt and Huebler also worked in the design field in the early parts of their careers. Huebler worked briefly as a commercial illustrator and designer in New York City in 1950.⁵¹ LeWitt was a designer in New York in the mid-1950s, working for *Seventeen* magazine when Maggs was in the city trying to build his own design career. It is unlikely that Maggs worked directly with LeWitt, as they were both early-stage designers, but in retrospect Maggs was

⁴⁹ Lake, email discussion.

⁵⁰ Martha Langford, *Michael Snow: Life & Work* (Toronto: Art Canada Institute, 2014), <https://www.aci-iac.ca/art-books/michael-snow/biography/#education>. A magazine cover designed by Snow was included in the *Canadian Art* special issue on graphic design, which as noted previously, also showcased Maggs's design and illustration work. *Canadian Art*, special issue on graphic design (May 1960): 154.

⁵¹ Mary Gunter Haviland, “Documenting Douglas Huebler: His Early Conceptual Works, 1968–1975” (PhD diss., University of Virginia, 2015), 16.

aware of the overlap in their design careers and their time in New York: “Marvin Israel was art directing *Seventeen* magazine at the time, and I remember doing illustrations for him. A very young Sol Lewitt [*sic*] was working there, also doing paste-ups.”⁵² LeWitt would sometimes create column illustrations for *Seventeen*, and so too did Maggs; their artwork even appeared in the publication at the same time. The September 1954 issue, for example, featured an illustration by Maggs that was repeatedly printed in 1954 atop both the “Sessions for Singles” and “Pop-Album Contrasts” columns (fig. 4.11). A playful drawing of a cake by LeWitt closed off an article celebrating the magazine’s tenth year of publication (fig. 4.12). This celebratory article also featured photography by Diane and Allan Arbus, coincidentally putting together Maggs’s and Arbus’s work in the same publication during the years before they each transitioned away from commercial practice.⁵³ The illustrations by both Maggs and LeWitt were in keeping with the decorative style of illustration that was in fashion in the 1950s.

Michael Snow’s stint as a designer was short-lived. Martha Langford claims that he “learned to hate the business” and was determined instead to become an artist.⁵⁴ Whether it was sculpture, painting, photography, film, or music, an emphasis on materiality characterizes much of Snow’s artwork. He returned to Toronto after a number of years in New York around the time that Maggs was shifting his focus away from commercial photography. Snow’s first retrospective exhibition, *Michael Snow / A Survey*, was mounted at the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO) in 1970. Among his early conceptual explorations of photography included in the

⁵² Stainback, “Q and A,” 110.

⁵³ For Diane and Allan Arbus’s photographic contributions to the issue, see: “Happy Birthday!” *Seventeen* 13, no. 9 (September 1954): 100-101, <https://www.proquest.com/magazines/happy-birthday/docview/2007363999/se-2>.

⁵⁴ Langford, *Michael Snow*, <https://www.aci-iac.ca/art-books/michael-snow/biography/#education>.

retrospective was *Authorization* (1969; fig. 4.13), a performative work that interrogates the act of photographing. Snow was still in New York when he made *Authorization*, and as William Wood asserts, it “enacts a LeWitt-like serial process.”⁵⁵ Although it is unclear whether Maggs saw the exhibition at the AGO, Snow’s emphasis on process and seriality is indicative of the kinds of investigations happening in the United States, Canada, and locally in Toronto that helped inform his own ideas about art in the 1970s. Wood likens Maggs’s later portraits to Snow’s procedural approach in *Authorization* and *Venetian Blind* (1970; fig. 4.14), another serial work wherein he documents the act of photographing.⁵⁶ *Venetian Blind* was arranged, unsurprisingly, in a grid format.

Suzy Lake, who was also working in Toronto in the 1970s, likewise explores the conceptual and material possibilities of photography. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Maggs used Lake’s darkroom in her home studio at Queen Street and Lansdowne Avenue. He was printing *Ledoyen Series*, *Working Notes* and Lake was making *Are You Talking to Me?* (1978; fig. 4.15). Though Lake’s work is performative, often exploring representation and body politics, both artists employed the conceptual strategies of seriality and repetition. In 1975 Lake was asked if her art is expressionistic. Her response: “I like working in a logical and systematic way.” She was then asked if she is a conceptualist. She replied: “I place too much importance in maintaining my information within a *visual* format to be characterized as such ... Perhaps in a

⁵⁵ William Wood, “Dated Conceptualism: Toronto, London, Guelph,” in *Traffic: Conceptual Art in Canada, 1965–1980*, ed. Grant Arnold and Karen Henry (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2012), 60. Wood asserts that Snow “had ties to LeWitt.”

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 61.

very broad sense I am a conceptualist. Perhaps I am a broad in a very conceptualist sense.”⁵⁷

The questions asked of Lake suggest a dichotomy — or at least signal a kind of tension — between the expressive and the conceptual. Her answers, however coy, point to the inadequacies of a “one or the other” opposition, and they hint at the expressionistic and conceptual interplay in her work.

Isabelle Graw has taken up this notion of conceptual expression through an examination of the conceptual gestures in the expressionistic painting of Julian Schnabel (b. 1951) and signs of expressive painting in the conceptual work of Adrian Piper (b. 1948), for instance.⁵⁸ “Series and systems,” Graw asserts, “do not preclude emotionality.”⁵⁹ The disciplinary overlaps in Maggs’s practice and the interplay between formalism and conceptualism in his work point to the importance of graphic design in conceptual art production and to the potential for expression in conceptualist language. Maggs’s work contributes to growing and expanded interpretations of conceptual art in these areas.

Maggs wanted to be an artist, and although *64 Portrait Studies* garnered attention and facilitated inclusion in group shows, he did not find an easy role within the Toronto art scene.

Those around him recall his struggle and desire to belong. “He didn’t seem to fit in. He seemed

⁵⁷ Véhicule Art and Simon Fraser University Centre for Communication and the Arts, *Véhicule Art: In Transit* (Montreal, QC/Burnaby, BC: Véhicule Art/Simon Fraser University, 1975), unpaginated exhibition catalogue [emphasis in the original].

⁵⁸ Isabelle Graw, “Conceptual Expression: On Conceptual Gestures in Allegedly Expressive Painting, Traces of Expression in Proto-conceptual Works, and the Significance of Artistic Procedures,” in *Art after Conceptual Art*, ed. by Alexander Alberro and Sabeth Buchmann (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 119–43.

⁵⁹ Isabelle Graw, “Conceptual Expression: On Conceptual Gestures in Allegedly Expressive Painting, Traces of Expression in Proto-conceptual Works, and the Significance of Artistic Procedures” in *Art after Conceptual Art*, ed. Alexander Alberro and Sabeth Buchmann (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 129.

like he was an outsider and he felt like outsider,” Lee Dickson explains. “I really got the sense that he wanted to belong.”⁶⁰ Curators Philip Monk and Maia-Mari Sutnik agree, and they also point to the fragility of the photography scene in Toronto. Monk recalls:

Personally I didn’t really see him fitting in. He inhabited another world, which was the photography world, and in some ways the photography world was very separate from the art world. At that period they had their own galleries, like the Baldwin Street Gallery, which I don’t think I ever went to. The crossover really came in the eighties, so I think he was already long established in the photography world. And you know, I don’t know whether he saw it, but that was where he achieved his identity via his credentials, where he showed people that paid attention — they were the photography curators. They were the institutional galleries that dealt with photography as work, rather than the Art Gallery of Ontario, for instance.⁶¹

Similarly, Sutnik explains:

I think when he came onto the photography scene, he was absolutely trying to position himself somehow ... Putting himself into context and meeting other artists — I think that became very important, because the scene was pretty frail here. TPW [the Toronto Photographers Workshop] was working up, but what did we have? We didn’t have that many places where photographers or artists of any kind could show. Institutions like the AGO, which was much smaller at the time, had a very limited capacity and took only specialized interest. Emerging photographers or artists were not even on the radar screen. Although [the AGO] did show Suzy Lake and Karl Beverage ... the receptivity was not all that huge, and this is why the parallel galleries began — galleries like Gallery 44 came along, and there were so many others that have now disappeared that were small artist-infused centres ... that came to allow artists and particularly somebody like Arnaud, just emerging, coming on to the scene, to show.⁶²

The photography realm, as Monk explains, was a separate world at the time. It was in the art scene where more provocative and pronounced countercultural positions were being taken.⁶³

Maggs’s approach to portraiture as an artist was challenging and radical in many ways; it countered the kind of flattery produced for advertising and editorial portraiture, and his use of

⁶⁰ Lee Dickson, discussion with author, June 29, 2017.

⁶¹ Philip Monk, discussion with author, July 7, 2017.

⁶² Maia-Mari Sutnik, discussion with author, June 26, 2017.

⁶³ For an overview of Toronto’s art scene in the late 1970s, see Philip Monk, *Is Toronto Burning?: Three Years in the Making (and Unmaking) of the Toronto Art Scene* (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2016).

the grid — especially in his later work with the added inclusion of archival material — offered a critique of systems and structures of power. Nevertheless, he took a more conservative stance than some conceptual artists, which in part helps to explain his position on the periphery. Maggs was also new to the art scene. Both Monk and Sutnik acknowledge the limited platforms available to artists in Toronto for the exhibition of their work, particularly photographic work. This historical context emphasizes the challenges faced by emerging artists like Maggs who were attempting to find a place for themselves and their work in a tenuous environment. Informed by his commercial portraiture practice, one of Maggs's primary strategies for achieving a sense of belonging and acceptance in the art community was to seek out and document his fellow artists.

Maggs consciously aligned himself with artists through photography. In 1980, while in Europe for a solo show at the Canadian Cultural Centre in Paris, he sought out the prominent German conceptual artist Joseph Beuys (1921–86) for a portrait project. The story of how his Beuys portraits came to be is oft repeated. Indeed, as Sutnik asserts, the details are “now the stuff of legends.”⁶⁴ In 1979 Maggs had seen a retrospective of Beuys's work at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York City. Deeply affected, he felt compelled to travel to Düsseldorf to photograph the artist. “I saw the exhibition at the Guggenheim in 1979 and was blown away by it,” he told Robert Enright in 2012. “[It] was a full-scale show, with chunks of lard as big as cars and train tracks with switches. It was amazing and I had never thought that big. There was also a video about him, which is when I decided I had to photograph him.”⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Maia-Mari Sutnik, “The More One Looks the More One Sees,” in *Arnaud Maggs*, by Doina Popescu, Maia-Mari Sutnik, and Sophie Hackett (Göttingen/Toronto: Steidl/Scotiabank Photography Prize, 2013), 110.

⁶⁵ Enright, “Designs on Life,” 50.

Rather than contacting Beuys in advance, Maggs arrived unannounced on his doorstep. As he explained, “I went to his house and rang the doorbell. And he answered the door himself, wearing his hat.”⁶⁶ Maggs showed Beuys his work and suggested that he would like to photograph him. But Beuys said he was too busy. “I didn’t want to get turned down after coming all that way,” Maggs recounted, “so I looked him dead in the eye and said, ‘Well, I have all the time in the world.’ It stopped him. ‘In that case,’ he said, ‘come by next Wednesday at ten.’”⁶⁷ He photographed Beuys in both frontal and profile views, resulting in two massive grid-based portraits, each comprising one hundred gelatin silver photographs of the famous artist in front of a textured background: *Joseph Beuys, 100 Frontal Views* and *Joseph Beuys, 100 Profile Views* (both 1980).

In *Joseph Beuys, Frontal Views* (figs. 4.16 and 4.18), Maggs captures Beuys from the shoulders up, the artist’s emblematic hat atop his head, looking directly at the viewer. In *Profile Views* (figs. 4.17 and 4.19) he presents a series of side views of Beuys, his gaze directed to the right. “His strategy,” Maggs explained, “was to somehow defy the camera and make every picture look exactly the same.”⁶⁸ Viewed from a distance, Maggs’s grids register as large units, but displayed in the order in which they were taken, the gridded portraits encourage analytical viewing. The viewer scrutinizes details, measuring similarities and differences between the images, looking for moments of disruption in the exhaustive repetition of frames. While shifts from one portrait to the next are very minimal in *Profile Views*, over the course of the hundred

⁶⁶ Arnaud Maggs, “Arnaud Maggs,” Kodak Chair Lecture Series, Ryerson University, February 11, 1994; sound recording, Toronto Metropolitan University Archives and Special Collections, maggs_1.mp3, 00:20:08.

⁶⁷ Enright, “Designs on Life,” 50.

⁶⁸ Maggs, Kodak Chair Lecture, 00:22:17.

photographs Beuys's posture gradually stoops. The frontal views are similarly revealing.

"Looking very closely and spending some time with them," Maggs asserted, "you see different things in Beuys's eyes. You see fatigue, you see openness, and you see wariness — you see everything."⁶⁹ Monk argues that Maggs used grids "to reveal something of the human subject that one portrait alone could not accomplish. In these works, the grid, as much as the camera, becomes a tool for seeing."⁷⁰ Certainly the back-and-forth interrelations between images become fundamental to the experience of his work. His views of Beuys are important initial examples of Maggs's intentional effort to engage with fellow artists through his photography. But his portraits of Beuys are significant not just because they convey a prominent artist, but also because they underscore duration — a thematic preoccupation that would reappear in Maggs's work.

Rosalind Krauss, who insists that the grid is "emblematic of modernity" because of its ubiquity, argues that "the grid serves not only as emblem but also as myth."⁷¹ Moreover, she asserts that she might be "accused of stretching a point beyond the limits of common sense, since myths are stories, and like all narratives they unravel through time, whereas grids are not only spatial to start with, they are visual structures that explicitly reject a narrative or sequential reading of any kind."⁷² Yet sequential ordering within the grid format is an important part of the Beuys portraits. *Joseph Beuys, 100 Profile Views*, for example, registers initially as a large visual unit, but the work is then read sequentially, starting from the top left frame. As

⁶⁹ Ibid., 00:24:10.

⁷⁰ Philip Monk, "Life's Traces," in *Arnaud Maggs: Works 1976–1999*, by Philip Monk, Arnaud Maggs, and Maia-Mari Sutnik (Toronto: Power Plant, 1999), 22. See also Sutnik, "The More One Looks the More One Sees," 109.

⁷¹ Krauss, "Grids," 52, 54.

⁷² Ibid., 54–55.

scholar Hannah Higgins asserts, Krauss's argument that the grid guarantees the autonomy of the art object "requires that nothing is happening in the picture, no matter how abstract. The ultimate grid picture appears as an image of pure space as opposed to events in time."⁷³

Although the camera freezes time, the grid affords the possibility of emphasizing duration, allowing Maggs to explore the expressive and narrative capacities of the device.

A narrative and rhythmic relationship between frames in sequential imagery recalls the storyboard or comic strip format, which as curator Joel Smith explains, developed around the same time as photography.⁷⁴ And indeed, comics had a direct influence on Maggs's artistic exploration. His *Downwind Photographs* (1981–83; fig. 4.20), for example, documents his sitters from behind at an angle. The pose was inspired by "Downwind Jaxon," a character from *Smilin' Jack*, a comic by Zack Mosley that Maggs loved as a child.⁷⁵ The comic strip format relates to the grid and serial imagery, of course, but Mosley never revealed Downwind Jaxon's face, and it was this particular restricted view that inspired the *Downwind Photographs* series. The format also relates to motion.

Scholar, curator, and artist David Company addresses the relationship between photography and cinema in *Photography and Cinema* (2008), including an examination of photographic seriality and sequence. In his chapter aptly titled "Stillness," Company offers a history of stillness as it relates to both photography and film. Perhaps predictably, Company

⁷³ Hannah B. Higgins, *The Grid Book* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009), 222.

⁷⁴ Joel Smith, "More than One: Sources of Serialism," in *More than One: Photographs in Sequence* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 10. Smith provides an overview that charts various circumstances and motivations that have contributed to serial and sequential photography, including but not limited to the mass-market comic strip.

⁷⁵ Maia-Mari Sutnik, "Portraits by Arnaud Maggs," in *Arnaud Maggs: Works, 1976–1999*, by Philip Monk, Arnaud Maggs, and Maia-Mari Sutnik (Toronto: Power Plant, 1999), 15. An image of Downwind Jaxon from *Smilin' Jack* appears on page 14.

begins with a discussion of the link between cinema and the chronophotographs of Eadweard Muybridge (1830–1904) and Étienne-Jules Marey (1830–1904), who are frequently cited as the “fathers” or “grandfathers” of cinema and whose work anticipates movement and relates to the film frame. As Company explains, “to cinema, Muybridge’s grids of consecutive photographs looked pre-animated, as if awaiting motion to come. Marey’s images resembled translucent film frames layered on top of each other.”⁷⁶ The work of Muybridge in particular exemplifies serial photography wherein the singular, autonomous image is deemphasized in favour of a series or sequence. As László Moholy-Nagy argued, the photographic series was “the logical culmination of photography — vision in motion” and that within the series, “the single picture loses its separate identity and becomes part of the assembly.”⁷⁷

Maggs’s work similarly favours the series and regularly employs the strategy of repetition. In keeping with Moholy-Nagy’s argument, in Maggs’s work the single picture is arguably less important on its own and is instead significant as part of a larger whole. Blake Stimson points out that “serial photography has regularly been said to be like film or to be a precursor to film.”⁷⁸ As he argues, “the experience one gets in the movement from one image to the next to the next to the next, in a Muybridge series, for example, has routinely been understood to be cumulative, to develop as a synthetic experience of continuous time.”⁷⁹ Photo historian Marta Braun likewise insists on the significance of the sequence in Muybridge’s grids:

⁷⁶ David Company, “Stillness,” in *Photography and Cinema* (London: Reaktion Books, 2008), 22.

⁷⁷ László Moholy-Nagy, “Image Sequence/Series,” in *The Cinematic*, ed. David Company (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), 83. Originally published as László Moholy-Nagy, “image sequences; series” in Moholy-Nagy, *Vision in Motion* (Chicago: Institute of Design, 1947), 208.

⁷⁸ Blake Stimson, “The Pivot of the World: Photography and Its Nation,” in Company, *The Cinematic* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), 93–94.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

In fact, the sequential ordering of the images on the plate dictates our perception of the relation among the individual images even when there is no relationship. The sequence endows its component parts with movement because we believe any sequence to be inherently orderly, logical, and progressive. It is the sequence that cues us to believe that the action represented was ongoing and that it took place in exactly the order we see reproduced. The sequence invites us to cooperate in creating the illusion of motion ... Our faith in the sequence allows us to suspend our disbelief. But the fact is that the pictures are arranged.⁸⁰

An emphasis on time in a cinematic sense is quite subtle in Maggs's work. But as he moved toward a system based on sequential exposures, his gridded portraits, such as those of Beuys, became chronological representations that accentuate duration.

Time and duration are inherently part of narrative. There is an interesting way that sequential imagery and the grid format can play with durational gaps and stretches. However minute those gaps and stretches may be in Maggs's portraits of Beuys, the sequential, gridded arrangement of the frames moves the work away from the mugshot associations of his earlier portraits by hinting at narrative possibilities and exploring the expressive potential of the grid format. Terri Weissman addresses how photographers can "extend time through the production of durational viewing experiences, which might involve creating books, making slide shows, producing films, online sites, or other structures where images move from one to the next such that they become inextricable from a narrative succession."⁸¹ A sequentially ordered grid likewise offers a durational viewing experience. Describing this durational effect as "photo-chronographic viewing," Weissman asserts that the approach is "often guided by an awareness that the present is a dynamic of past and future."⁸² Monk equates the emphasis on time in

⁸⁰ Marta Braun, *Picturing Time: The Work of Etienne-Jules Marey (1830–1904)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 237–38.

⁸¹ Terri Weissman, "Photography and the cinematic" in *Global Photography: A Critical History*, Erina Duganne, Heather Diack, and Terri Weissman (New York: Routledge, 2020), 292.

⁸² Ibid.

Maggs's work to an emphasis on death. "In the end, what comes across in these collective images is the work of time and therefore the work of death on the body," he contends.⁸³ This emphasis on time and death is critical to the interpretive potential of *André Kertész, 144 Views* (1980) as well.

Later in 1980, Maggs photographed the renowned Hungarian-Canadian photographer André Kertész (1894–1985). *André Kertész, 144 Views* (figs. 4.21–4.23) is a powerful example of Maggs's ability to unsettle conventional interpretations of the grid as purely analytical, rigid, and inexpressive. Consistent with his procedural approach to image-making at this time, Maggs devised a system for both photographing Kertész and presenting the final images. He factored in the number of images on a roll as well as a system of rotation. The rotational system at work explicitly plays with conventions for understanding time. On the floor of his studio, Maggs mapped out a circle of twelve equally spaced markers — a clock face — that would serve as a guide for Kertész during his portrait session.⁸⁴ He intended for Kertész to make twelve rotations around this clock and captured twelve views of Kertész twelve times over, ultimately resulting in 144 frames of the famous photographer, from all sides. For eighty-six-year-old Kertész, carrying out Maggs's instructions was something of an endurance test. As Sutnik points out, "it is evident by frame no. 89 that Kertész's challenge was not to fall asleep."⁸⁵ While many of Maggs's grid-based portraits emphasize duration, the motion blur in frame 89 of *André Kertész*,

⁸³ Monk, "Life's Traces," 22.

⁸⁴ Sutnik, "The More One Looks the More One Sees," 112.

⁸⁵ Ibid. Sutnik also recounts how Kertész arrived "visibly 'stressed'" as a result of taking the stairs instead of the elevator to Maggs's studio, which at the time was on the fifth floor of an industrial building.

144 Views stands out and underscores the effect of time, making the viewer aware of the physically demanding nature of the photo session.

Maggs also meticulously planned the hanging scheme for the work (fig. 4.24). Repeated views run diagonally across a square grid. The frontal views of Kertész, for example, cut across the centre of the work, from the bottom left corner through to the top right. According to Maggs, Kertész referred to the final work as a “portrait mosaic.”⁸⁶ Maggs’s rotational system seems to crack open the grid and insist on a dimensional quality that resists the flattening potential of both the grid and photography. According to Goldin, “grids generate ... emotional distance — a sense of the presence of objective, pervasive law.”⁸⁷ But Maggs’s gridded portraits are not empty of emotional resonance. As Higgins asserts, “nothing in the act of organizing materials (whether visual or otherwise) necessarily renders them more rational, if by rational we mean devoid of sensory or social complexity or spiritual affect.”⁸⁸ Indeed, the opposite can be true. *André Kertész, 144 Views* appears to be at once still and moving. When the individual frames come together in the final installation, the rotation creates a rolling or fluttering effect throughout the composition, enlivening the grid, amplifying an emphasis on duration, and engaging the expressive power of the grid format.

While in Düsseldorf, Maggs met and photographed Bernd and Hilla Becher at the Staatliche Kunstakademie in Düsseldorf. The Bechers were esteemed educators renowned for their methodical photographic documentation of industrial structures in Germany. Characterized by

⁸⁶ Arnaud Maggs, note regarding *André Kertész, 144 Views* (Dec. 8, 1980), 1981, Estate of Arnaud Maggs.

⁸⁷ Amy Goldin, “Patterns, Grids,” 51.

⁸⁸ Higgins, *Grid Book*, 189.

meticulous objectivity, their systematic portrayals of such structures, including water and winding towers, blast furnaces, and coal bunkers, are notable for both their typological approach and their essential role in creating visual records, bridging the realms of documentary photography and conceptual art. Aligning himself with the Bechers enabled Maggs to position himself within the wider context of photographic documentation and conceptualism. While in Düsseldorf, Maggs also produced *Kunstakademie*, another serial portrait with 444 exposures — six views each of seventy-four students (figs. 4.7 and 4.8). Now a prominent member of the Düsseldorf School of Photography, Thomas Ruff was a student at the Kunstakademie when Maggs visited the school. While Maggs did not photograph Ruff for his project, his contacts were displayed in the halls, and Ruff's subsequent large-scale portraits featured some of the same students.⁸⁹ Details 192 and 197 from *Kunstakademie*, for example, show profile and frontal views of Thomas Bernstein, who later features in a number of portraits by Ruff, including one from 1984 (figs. 4.25 and 4.26).

Back in Toronto, Maggs continued to document artists, which helped to position him within the local community and strengthen his network of contacts in Canada's art world. It also allowed him to continue to work in portraiture — a familiar and comfortable domain, given his previous experience in editorial portraiture. Beginning in 1981, Maggs worked on three grid-based portrait works using members of Canada's art and cultural community as his subjects: *48 Views*, *Turning*, and *Downwind Photographs* (1981–83). One of few self-portraits was also made in this period, in the style of *Turning* (fig. 4.27). A remarkable 162 people sat for Maggs for *48 Views*, with each being photographed forty-eight times, resulting in a work comprising 7,776

⁸⁹ Enright, "Designs on Life," 51.

images (fig. 4.28). His subjects included a wide range of artists, designers, writers, curators and gallerists, and cultural figures, including Catherine Carmichael, Christo, Alex Colville, Jane Jacobs (see also fig. 4.9), Geoffrey James, Michael Mitchell, Guido Molinari, Michael Snow, Gabor Szilasi, Paul Wong, Dennis Burton, Timothy Findley, Karyn Allen, Jane Corkin, Martha Langford, Ann Thomas, and Northrop Frye. Massed together, these portraits not only exemplify Maggs's taxonomic interests, they create an exhaustive visual archive — a kind of who's who — of the Toronto arts and culture scene. As Mitchell recalls, "He certainly wanted the larger community to recognize him as an artist, and I think was important to him what painters thought, and even, probably, literary people."⁹⁰

Documenting these very people in his artwork allowed Maggs to stake a position for himself in the scene. As noted in chapter 2, he would capitalize on his commercial connections to expand these projects. Yousuf Karsh, for example, was photographed for *The Canadian* and for *48 Views* (figs. 2.50 and 2.51). Lee Dickson believes the body of work that Maggs began with *64 Portrait Studies* and continued with *48 Views*, *Turning*, and *Downwind Photographs* is his best, precisely because of the record it affords. "It's a great gift to the art community that he did it," she asserts.⁹¹ Mitchell feels similarly, pointing to their value as an important record:

To me it was like a map, certainly of Anglo culture in Canada at the time, or non-Quebec culture. It had everybody in it ... I kept saying to [curator] Jessica Bradley, "You've got to come and see this piece and you've got to buy it for the National Gallery, because it's the country."⁹²

Sutnik also highlights the significance of *48 Views*, *Downwind*, and *Turning* as documents:

I saw it like an archival document ... turning an archive into an art statement. That wasn't very much done at that time. Archives are something that — mining the archive

⁹⁰ Mitchell, discussion.

⁹¹ Dickson, discussion.

⁹² Mitchell, discussion.

is something that has happened in the last fifteen years or so. But at that time, I thought he was kind of developing and creating an archive, which I thought was fabulous.⁹³

She further identifies in this work a powerful artistic extension of the documentary record, underscoring Maggs's ability in *48 Views*, *Turning*, and *Downwind Photographs* to challenge the conventional boundaries between documentation and artistic expression. Likewise, photographer Paul Orenstein asserts:

Turning was really important, and I thought the work was great because it was challenging the notion of the portrait where you're looking into the eyes of the subject. ... [Instead] you're looking at a topography or a non-traditional representation of a head. That was huge. To me that was a powerful separator, because the portrait is convention. Now, whether it needs challenging or not, I don't know, but that was a really cogent challenge as far as I'm concerned.⁹⁴

In works like *48 Views*, Maggs established more rigid procedures. Rather than photograph all the frontal and profile views separately, as he did with Joseph Beuys, the Ledoyen chefs, and the students at the Kunstakademie in Düsseldorf, Maggs had his subjects alternate between frontals and profiles. Noting that he found the "process a little bit boring" in works such as *Joseph Beuys, 100 Profile Views*, he felt that alternating the views "was far more interesting."⁹⁵ For *48 Views* his subjects readdressed the camera for each exposure, for a total of forty-eight frames, which Maggs determined would fit perfectly on a 16 x 20 sheet.⁹⁶ Just as he had done for *André Kertész, 144 Views*, for *Turning* he marked out a system of rotation that, like a clock face, established twelve key locations for his subjects. He photographed them at

⁹³ Sutnik, discussion.

⁹⁴ Paul Orenstein, discussion with author, August 9, 2017.

⁹⁵ Ben Portis, "Evidence of Existence: A Conversation with Toronto-Based Photographer Arnaud Maggs," *Art on Paper* 12, no. 5 (May/June 2008): 66.

⁹⁶ Maggs, Kodak Chair Lecture, 00:12:15.

each “hour,” documenting the rotation from twelve o’clock to eleven o’clock in twelve frames — which, as noted earlier, could make for a trying session for his sitters.

Maggs’s meticulous approach to those sessions comes to the forefront in anecdotes shared by some of those who posed for him. Mitchell, for instance, recounts with a laugh: “It’s very clinical. I remember when Geoffrey James first posed for Arnaud, and I said, ‘Well, how was the session, Geoffrey?’ I’ve known Geoffrey for years — as long as Arnaud, pretty much. And he said, ‘Oh, it was like going to the dentist.’”⁹⁷ Likewise, Caitlan Maggs recalls her father’s attention to detail when posing for *64 Portrait Studies*:

I remember going in and feeling like, “Oh my god.” He wouldn’t let me smile and I felt so glum in the photo. I felt like I looked like shit. I was, like, eighteen, and I said, “My god, I look horrible in these photographs.” But he was a stickler for — he was so precise — for light and every detail. He would comment, “Fix your hair,” and stuff like that. He was very attentive to all the little details.⁹⁸

These anecdotes illuminate Maggs’s exacting approach to his artmaking and highlight his precision. He was methodical, directing sitters through his process in order to ensure adherence to his predetermined procedure. Curator Ann Thomas similarly recalls the posing experience as tedious:

I remember “sitting” and “standing” for him — he was incredibly directorial. You stood here and then you shifted and he took his time. ... [There] was something you kind of resented about it, because it might have only taken twenty-five minutes, but by the time you got to ten minutes, the next ten minutes was like thirty minutes, because he was just so. Of course I realized a whole lot happens to you when you’re posing for something like that, and it actually reveals itself in the work. So, needless to say, I became a very huge fan of his work. And not only that work — the people — but the hotels, the signs, anything that is able to make you look again. ... The sameness is being questioned by photographing similar things.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Mitchell, discussion.

⁹⁸ Caitlan Maggs (choreographer and Maggs’s daughter), in discussion with the author, September 14, 2017.

⁹⁹ Ann Thomas, discussion with author, July 12, 2017.

While Thomas's account outlines the intensive nature of the sessions, Maggs's approach, as she asserts, ultimately contributed to revealing portrayals of each subject. Indeed, it is the revelatory quality of these portraits that transformed her reaction to his work. Before sitting for Maggs, Thomas had seen his work at the National Film Board's gallery on Kent Street in Ottawa. "I really didn't get the work," she explains. "I kept thinking that it was like the Bechers' work." But Maggs's portraits of Northrup Frye from *48 Views* (fig. 4.29) and the work from his *Turning* series changed her perspective:

I went through such an interesting transformation with his work. You know how sometimes you see something and you don't quite get it, you think, "This is kind of rigid," and then it just — The work that absolutely turned me around was his series on Northrup Frye. It wasn't only that one; it was also when he did *Turning* that I suddenly started to get a really profound connection to his work, because it was taking the portrait and giving it dimension. It was adding time to the experience and the portrait. ... When I looked at each of those portraits in *Turning* — each individual within that portrait sequence — it made me really think about the portrait, the genre of portraiture. So I had a very different take on it; I felt that I was being faced with something really quite challenging — in a very positive way — that didn't really have the connection to the Bechers that I had initially seen it having. So there was [*Turning*], and then the Northrup Frye [from *48 Views*] blew me away, and that was because I realized — and the Beuys, I like the Beuys very much too — the Northrup Frye ... when you see this sequence, it's forty-eight portraits, I think, and at one point you realize that his attention is shifting from the photographer, or [it] hasn't been with the photographer and now it is shifting to the photographer: this slightest implication of a change of consciousness ... What other portrait can you say reveals as much about internal activity?¹⁰⁰

Thomas's recollections highlight the transformative potential of Maggs's approach for both the sitter and the viewer. Informed by the practices and procedures of his careers in design and commercial photography, Maggs's decisions about procedure meaningfully contribute to the expressive capacity of the work.

¹⁰⁰ Thomas, discussion.

Chapter 4: Illustrations



Figure 4.1 Arnaud Maggs, *25 Trucks Like Mine*, book prototype, cover and interior spread, 15 x 15 cm each page, n.d. Library and Archives Canada (LAC), Ottawa, R7959-5469. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.

TWENTYSIX

GASOLINE

STATIONS

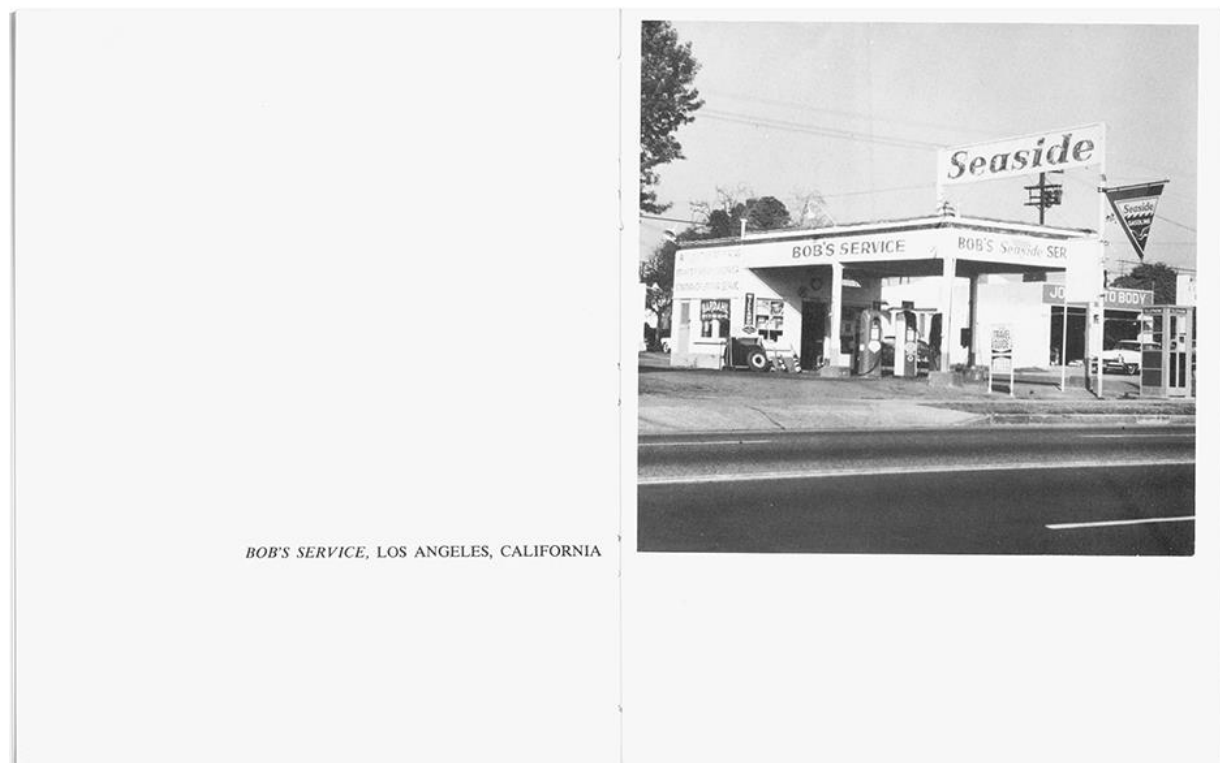


Figure 4.2 Ed Ruscha, *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*, 1963. Artist Book, 7 1/16 x 5 1/2 x 3/16 inches (17.9 x 14 x 0.5 cm). © Ed Ruscha. Courtesy of the artist and Gagosian.

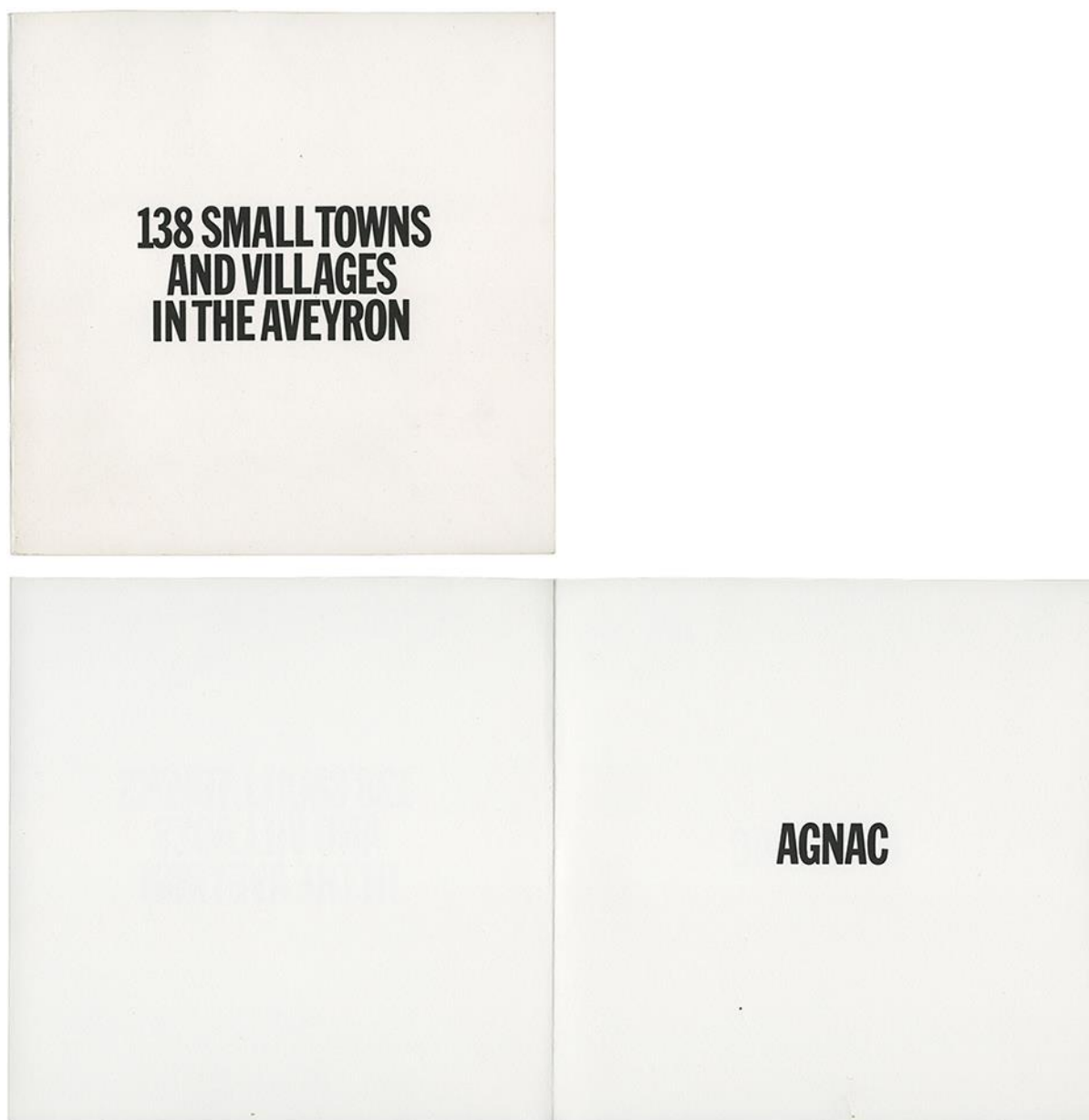


Figure 4.3 Arnaud Maggs, *138 Small Towns and Villages in the Aveyron*, book prototype, cover and interior spread, 15 x 15 cm each page, n.d. LAC, Ottawa, R7959-5466. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.

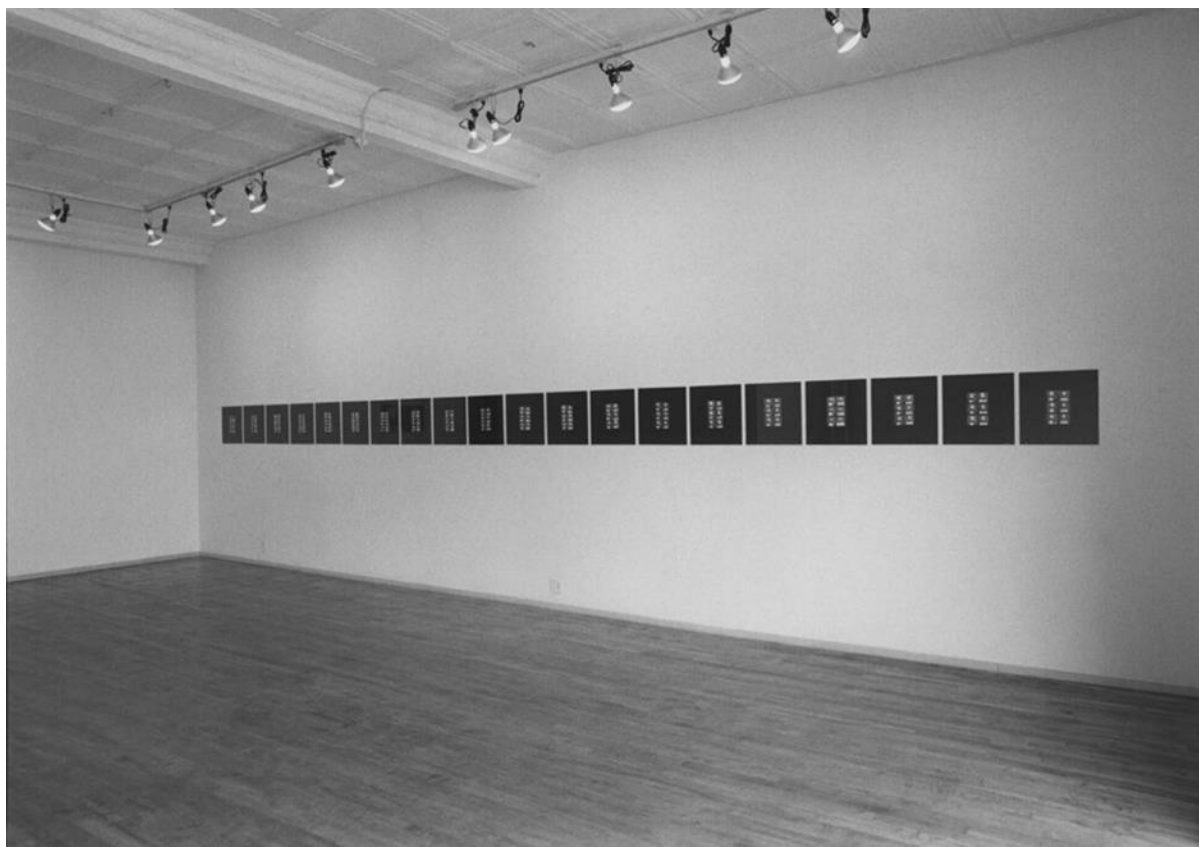


Figure 4.4 Arnaud Maggs, *Ledoyen Series, Working Notes*, 1979. Twenty gelatin silver contact prints, 40.3 x 40.3 cm each. Installation at YYZ Artists' Outlet, Toronto, 1979 [photographer unknown]. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.

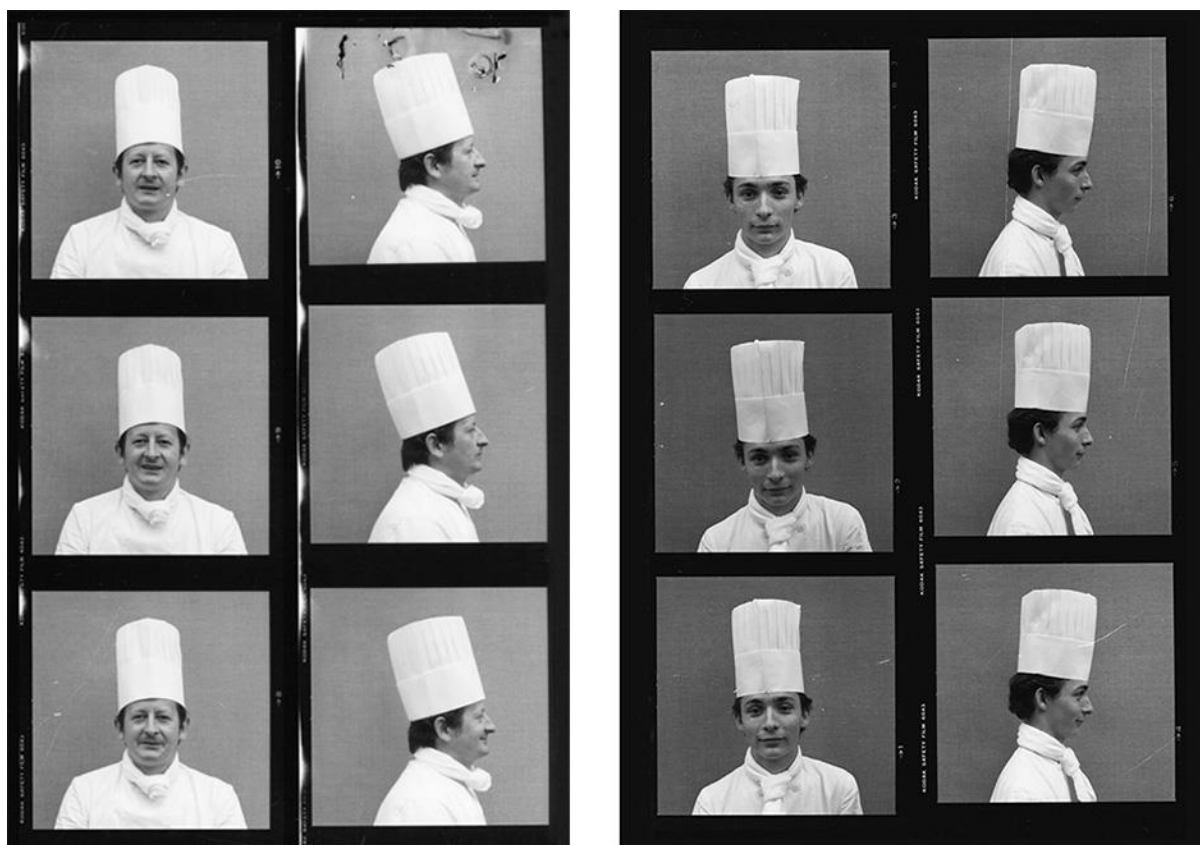


Figure 4.5 Arnaud Maggs, *Ledoyen Series, Working Notes (1 of 2) and (2 of 2) (details)*, 1979. Twenty gelatin silver contact prints, 40.3 x 40.3 cm each. LAC, Ottawa, R7959-2066. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.

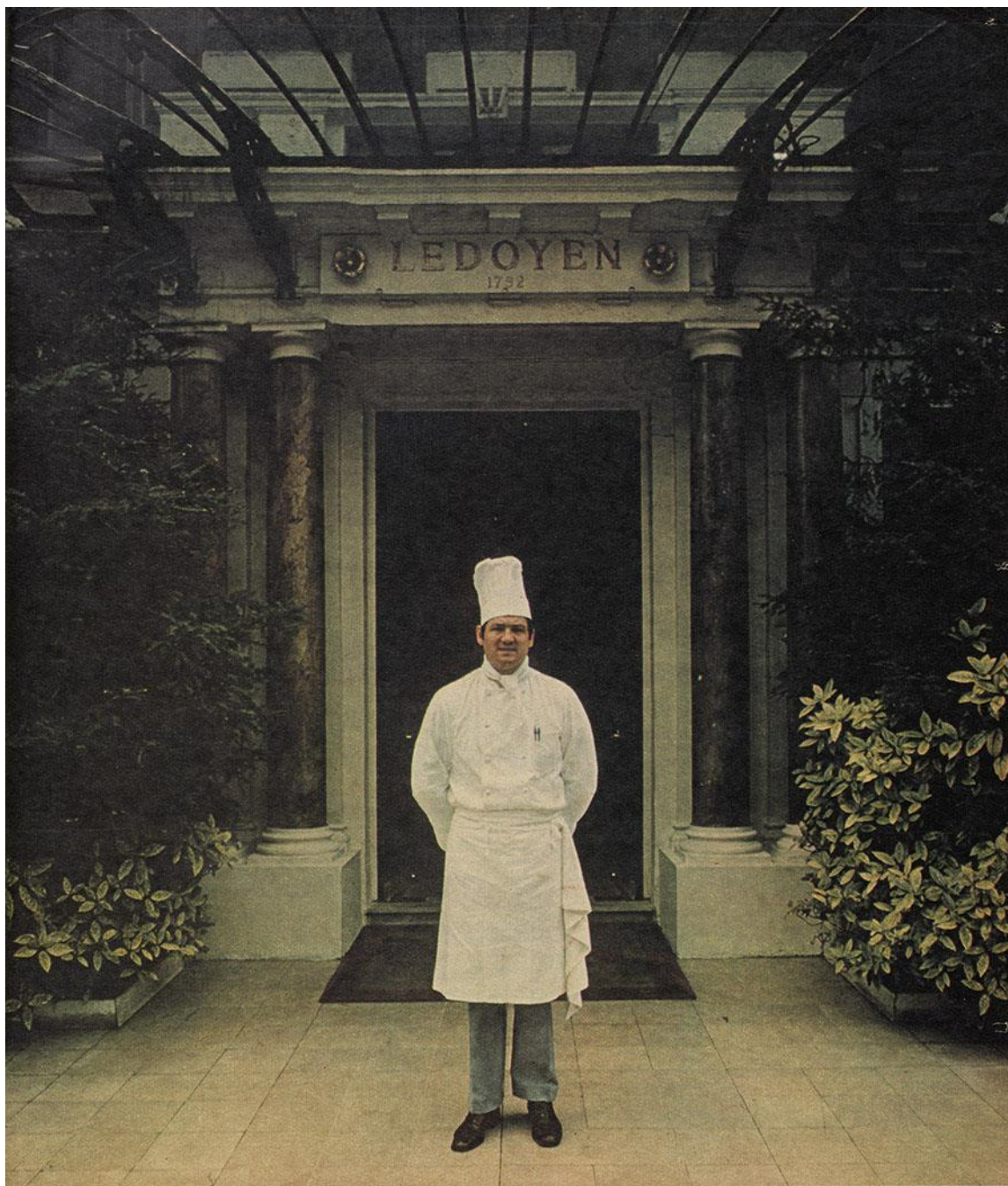


Figure 4.6 Arnaud Maggs, photograph for "Restaurant Ledoyen," *The Canadian*, November 12, 1977, 23. LAC, Ottawa, R7959-671. Courtesy of *The Canadian*, *Toronto Star*. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.

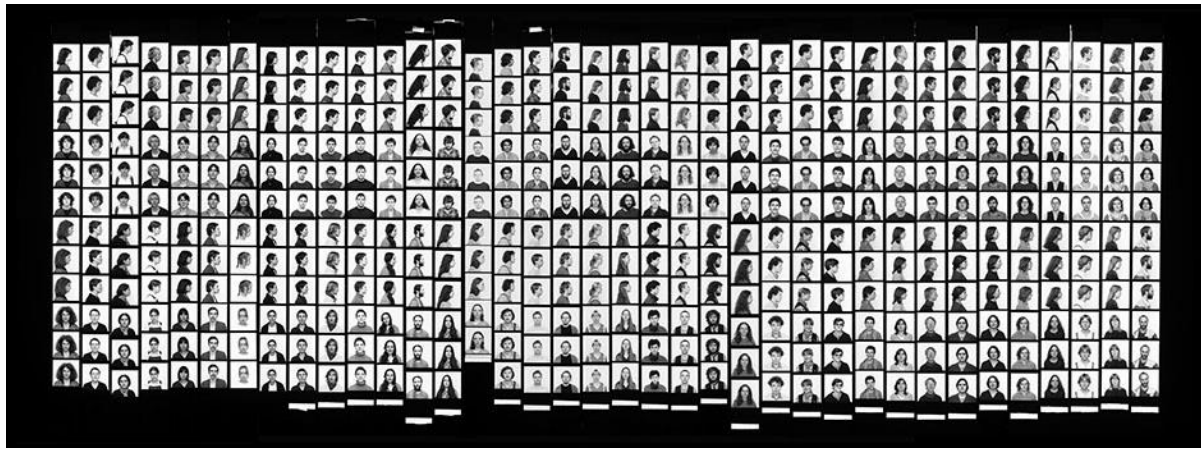


Figure 4.7 Arnaud Maggs, *Kunstakademie*, 1980. Gelatin silver contact prints, 1.0 x 2.4 m (ten contact sheets, 40.64 x 50.80 cm each, cropped and mounted to create a single work). © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.

Figure 4.8 Arnaud Maggs, *Kunstakademie*, 1980. Gelatin silver prints, 40.32 cm each; overall dimensions 1.7 x 15.95 m. Installation at National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, 2012. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery. Photograph by Laurence Cook.



Figure 4.9 Arnaud Maggs, *48 Views, Jane Jacobs*, 1981–83. Gelatin silver contact print, 40.6 x 50.8 cm.
© Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.

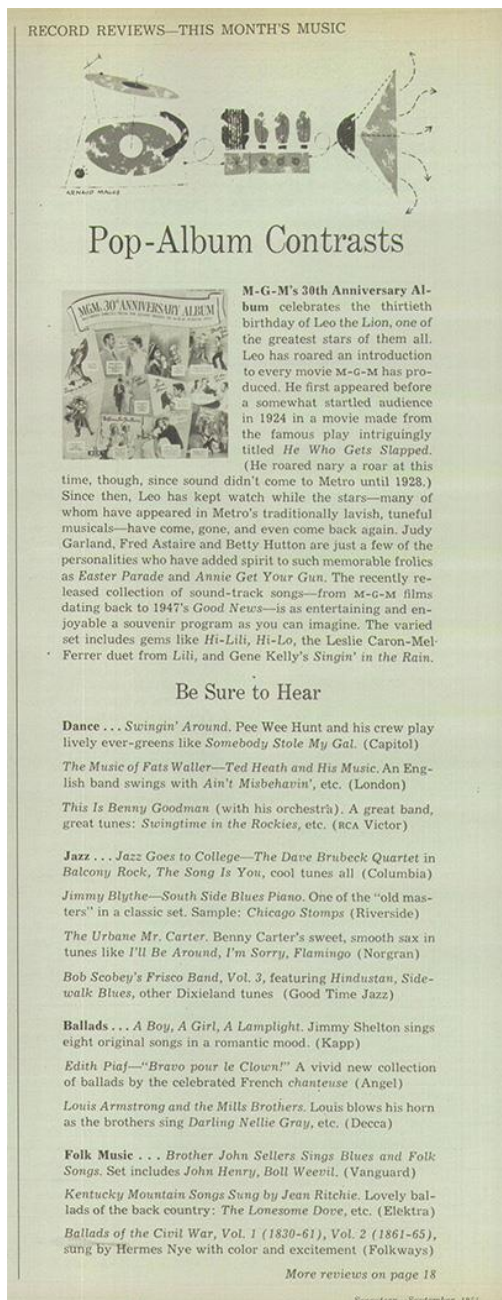


Figure 4.11 Arnaud Maggs, column illustration for "Pop-Album Contrasts," *Seventeen* magazine 13, no. 9 (September 1954), page 14. This illustration appeared above both the "Session for Singles" and "Pop-Album Contrasts" columns in the magazine and saw repeated use over a few months in 1954. Courtesy of *Seventeen*, Hearst Magazine Media, Inc. Image published with permission of ProQuest LLC. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission. Image produced by ProQuest LLC as part of ProQuest® Women's Magazine Archive. www.proquest.com. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.

Figure 4.12 Illustration by Sol LeWitt for "Happy Birthday!" *Seventeen* magazine 13, no. 9 (September 1954), page 160.

Figure 4.12 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. It showed a small line drawing by Sol LeWitt of a birthday cake at the end of a column of text on page 160 of *Seventeen* magazine 13, no. 9 (September 1954). This issue of the magazine can be accessed here: <https://www.proquest.com/magazines/happy-birthday/docview/200736399/9/se-2>.



Figure 4.13 Michael Snow, *Authorization*, 1969. Instant silver prints (Polaroid 47) and adhesive tape on mirror in metal frame, 54.6 x 44.4 x 1.4 cm with integral frame. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, 15839; purchased 1969. © Michael Snow.



Figure 4.14 Michael Snow, *Venetian Blind*, 1970. Twenty-four Ektacolor prints in painted wood frames, 1.27 x 2.38 m. Canada Council Art Bank, Ottawa. © Michael Snow.



Figure 4.15. Suzy Lake, *Are You Talking to Me? #4*, 1978/2010. Four gelatin silver, selenium toned, fibre-based prints with photo oil, 94.6 x 62.23 cm; 90.8 x 46.9 cm; 95.2 x 54.6 cm; 93.3 x 63.1 cm. Courtesy of Suzy Lake and Georgia Scherman Projects, Toronto. © Suzy Lake.

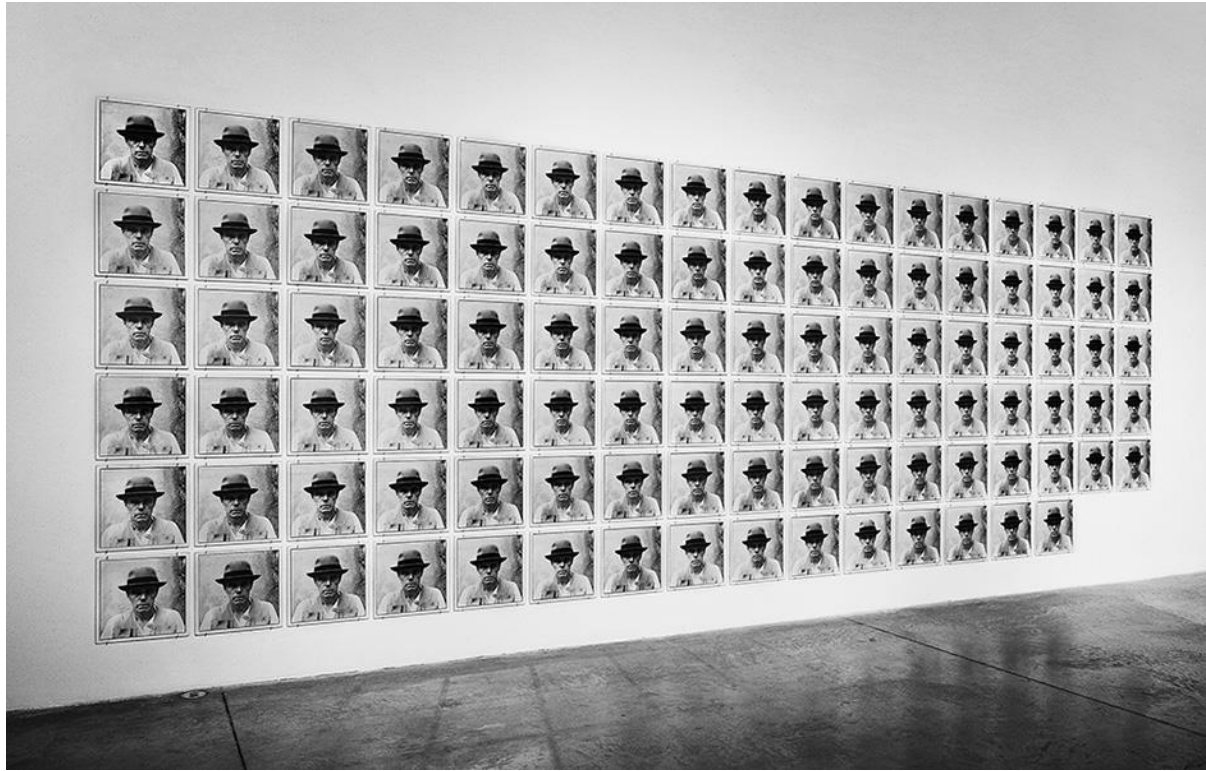


Figure 4.16 Arnaud Maggs, *Joseph Beuys, 100 Frontal Views*, 1980. One hundred gelatin silver prints, 40.3 x 40.3 cm each. Installation at the Power Plant, Toronto, 1999. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figure 4.17 Arnaud Maggs, *Joseph Beuys, 100 Profile Views*, 1980. One hundred gelatin silver prints, 40.3 x 40.3 cm each. Installation at the Power Plant, Toronto, 1999. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.

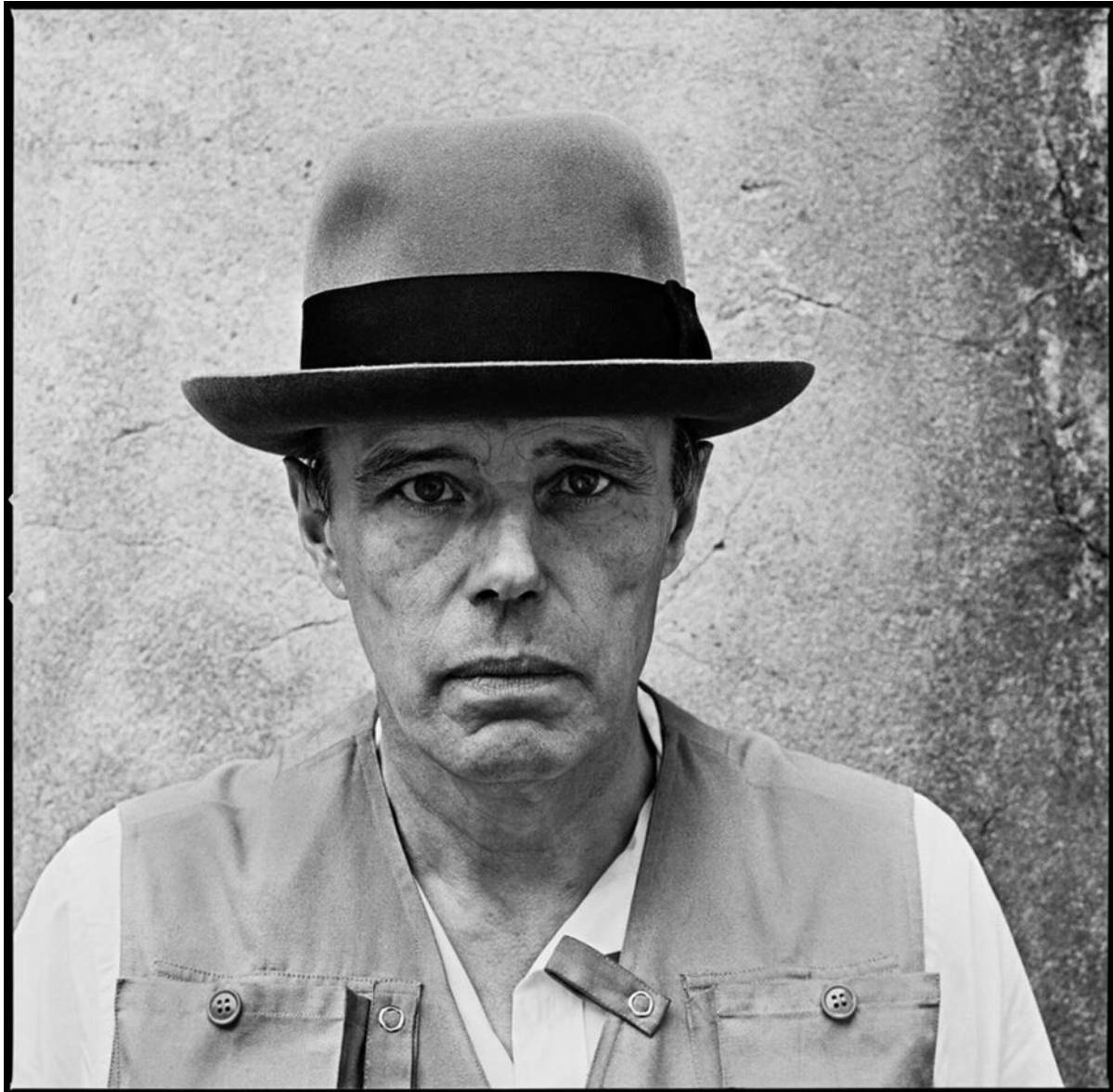


Figure 4.18 Arnaud Maggs, *Joseph Beuys, 100 Frontal Views* (detail), 1980. One hundred gelatin silver prints, 40.3 x 40.3 cm each. Art Gallery of Hamilton, 1988.3409; gift of the Volunteer Committee, 1988. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figure 4.19 Arnaud Maggs, *Joseph Beuys, 100 Profile Views* (detail), 1980. One hundred gelatin silver prints, 40.3 x 40.3 cm each. Art Gallery of Hamilton, 86.3113; gift of the Canada Council Art Bank, Walter and Duncan Gordon Charitable Foundation, Viola Depew, and Friends of the Gallery, 1986. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figure 4.20 Arnaud Maggs, *Downwind Photographs* (details), 1981–83. Gelatin silver prints, 40.3 x 40.3 cm each.
© Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.

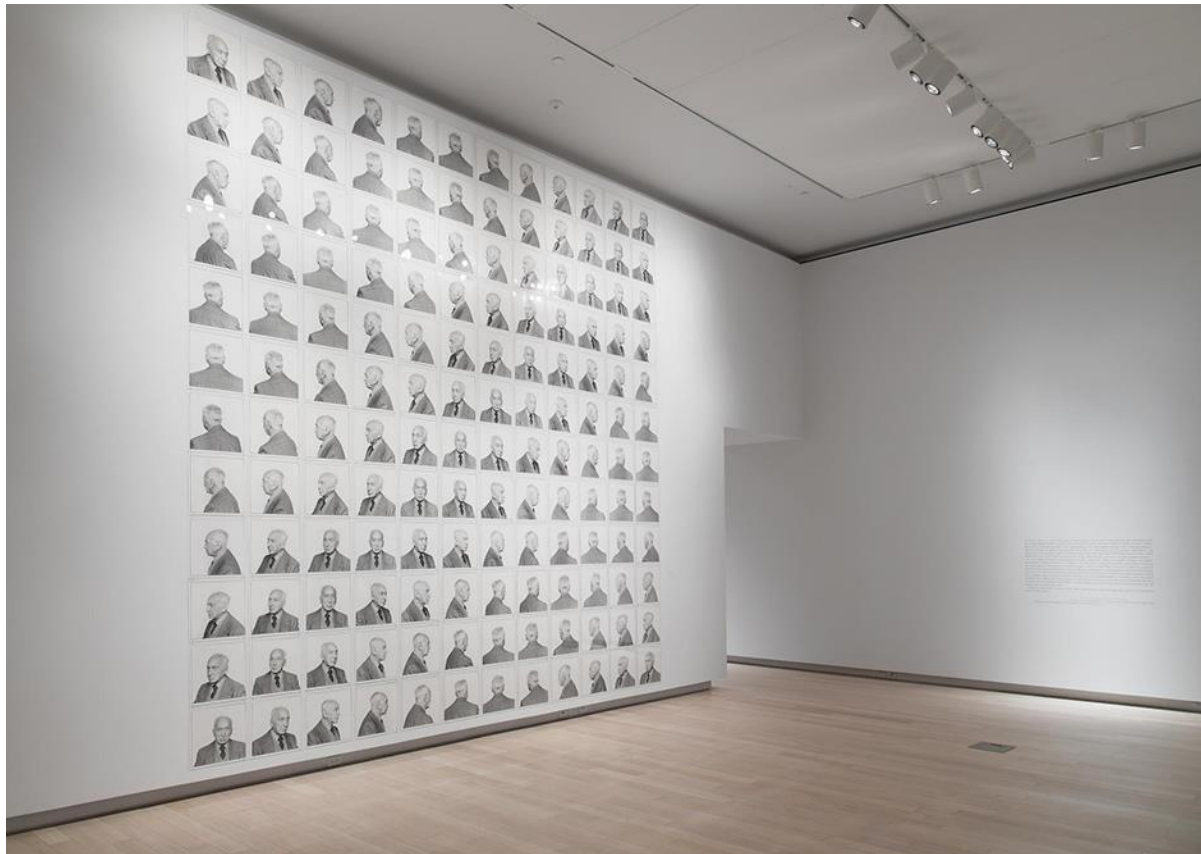


Figure 4.21. Arnaud Maggs, *André Kertész, 144 Views*, 1980. Gelatin silver prints, 40.3 x 40.3 cm (each). Installation at *Scotiabank Photography Award: Arnaud Maggs*, The Image Centre, Toronto, May 1–June 2, 2013. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery. Photo © Eugen Sakhnenko, The Image Centre.

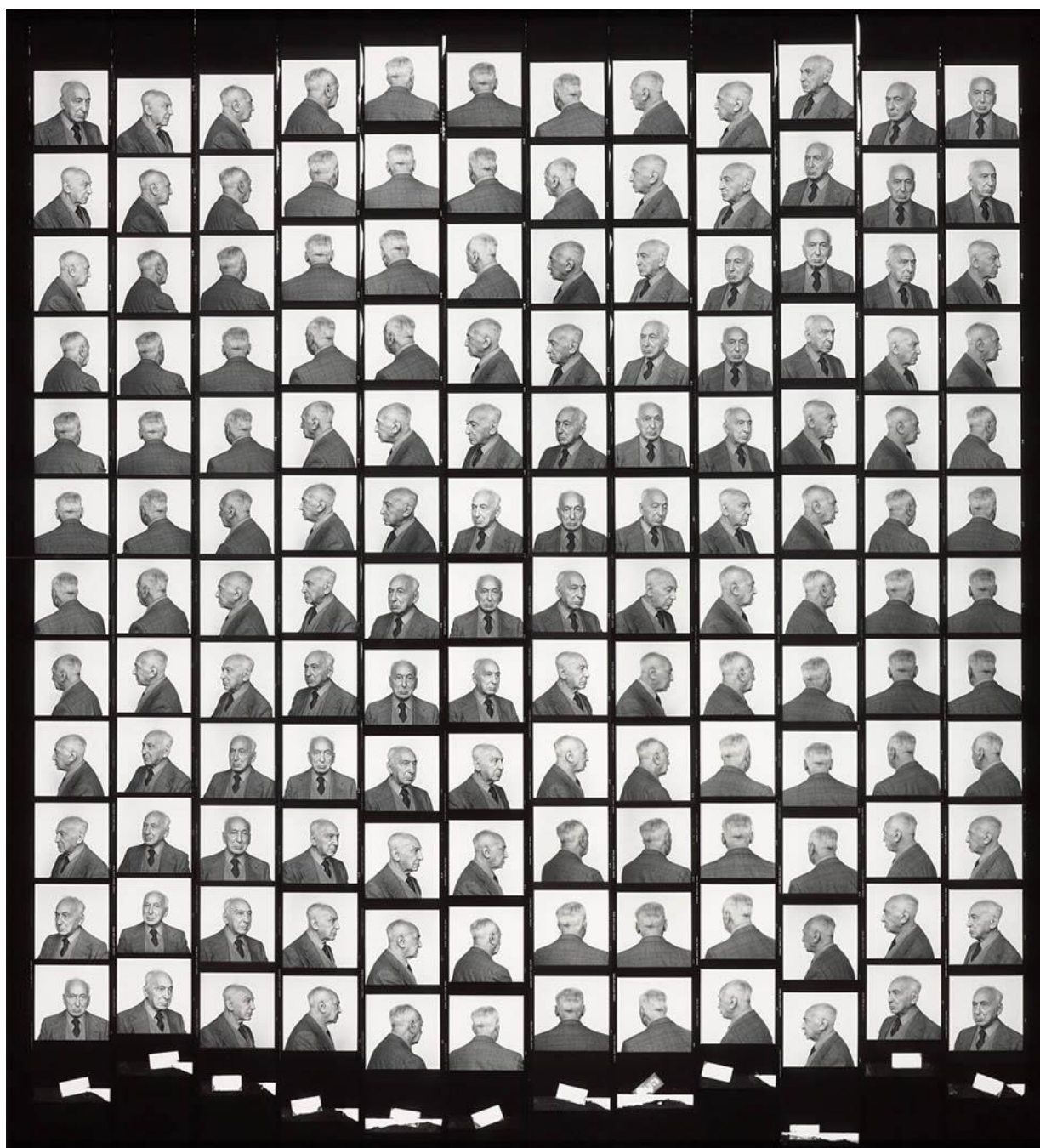


Figure 4.22 Arnaud Maggs, *André Kertész, 144 Views*, December 8, 1980. Four gelatin silver prints, 86.9 x 79.9 cm. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, 37045; purchased 1993. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.

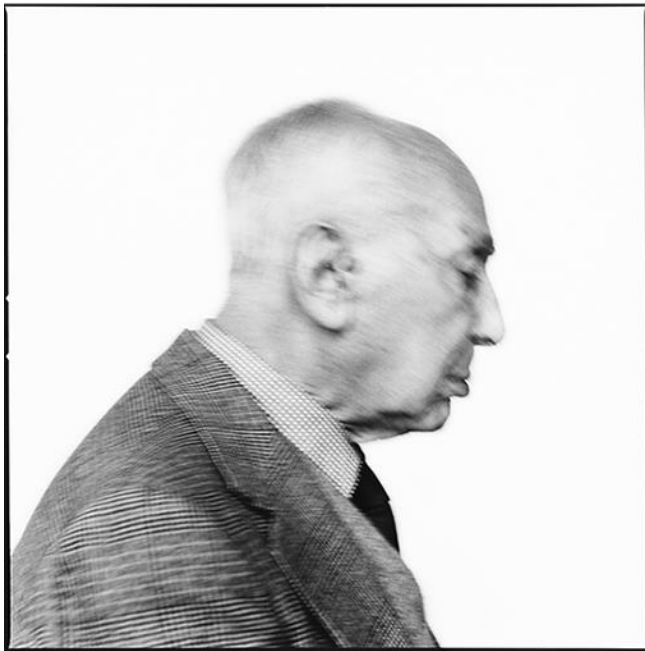
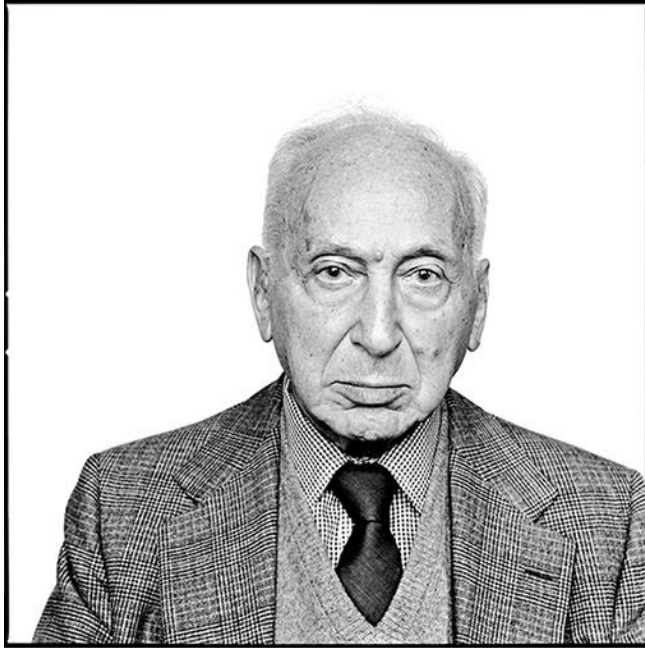


Figure 4.23 Arnaud Maggs, *André Kertész, 144 Views* (details), 1980. Gelatin silver prints, 40.3 x 40.3 cm each.
© Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figure 4.24 Arnaud Maggs, *André Kertész, 144 Views*, template for installation, c. 1980. Gelatin silver print with digital numbers, 87 x 80 cm. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figure 4.25 Arnaud Maggs, *Kunstakademie* (details 192 and 197), 1980. Gelatin silver prints, 40.3 x 40.3 cm each.
© Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.

Figure 4.26 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. It was a colour portrait of Thomas Bernstein by Thomas Ruff: Thomas Ruff, *Porträt 1984 (T. Bernstein)*, 1984, from *Porträts*, 1983–86. C-print, 24 x 18 cm. The image can be found online here: Anne Cibola, *Arnaud Maggs: Life & Work* (Toronto: Art Canada Institute, 2022).
<https://www.aci-iac.ca/art-books/arnaud-maggs/>

Figure 4.26 Thomas Ruff, *Porträt 1984 (T. Bernstein)*, 1984, from *Porträts*, 1983–86. C-print, 24 x 18 cm.



Figure 4.27 Arnaud Maggs, *Self-Portrait*, 1983. Twelve gelatin silver prints, approx. 40.4 x 40.4 cm each. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, 42556.1–12. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery. Photo: National Gallery of Canada.

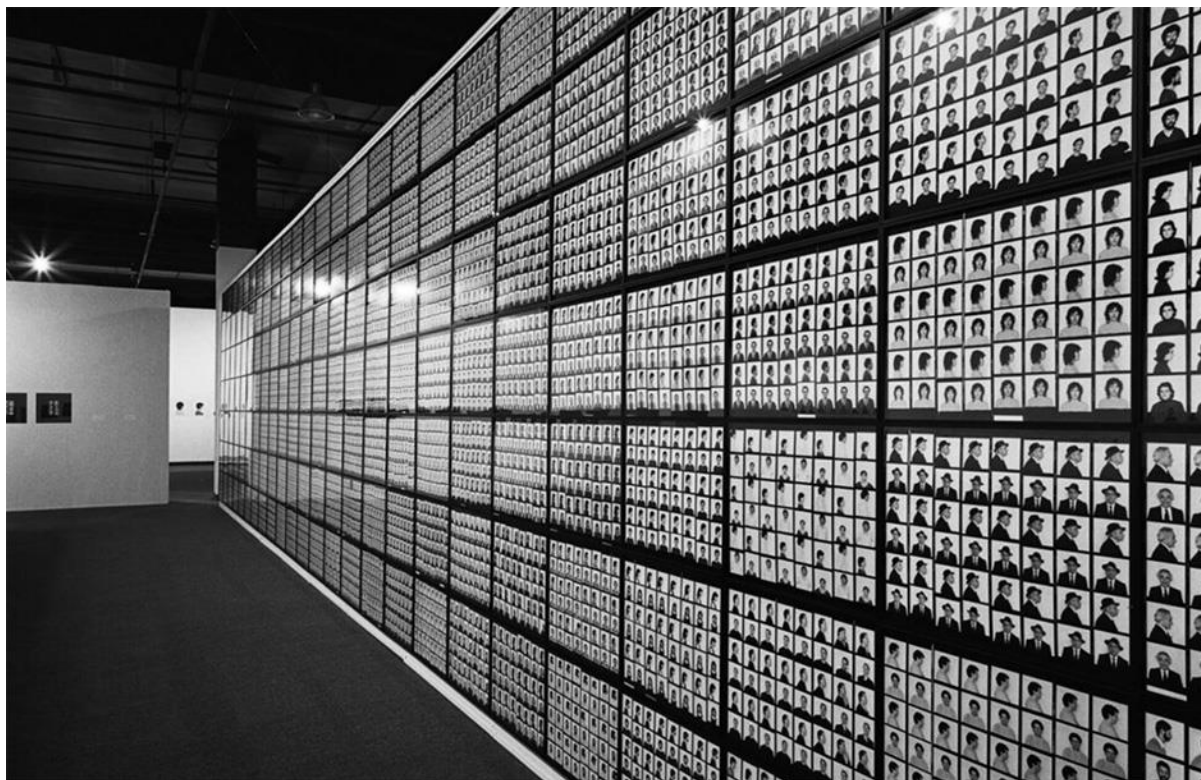


Figure 4.28 Arnaud Maggs, *48 Views*, 1981–83. 162 gelatin silver prints, 4.1 x 9.45 m (40.6 x 50.8 cm each). Installation at Nickle Arts Museum, Calgary, 1984 [photographer unknown]. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figure 4.29 Arnaud Maggs, *48 Views, Northrop Frye*, 1981–83. Gelatin silver print, 40.64 x 50.80 cm.
© Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.

5. From the Page to the Wall

Maggs's period of exploration of the human head through portraiture culminated in an important exhibition for him at the Nickle Arts Museum in Calgary in 1984, which included over 13,000 exposures: *Arnaud Maggs: Photographs, 1975–1984*. His first touring exhibition, it travelled to Hamilton, Winnipeg, and Edmonton in 1986 and 1987. Maggs designed the show and the related publication himself, bringing into relief further interconnections between his art and design practices, as well as the significance of space and scale to his conception of his work. Curator Karyn Allen asserts that Maggs “extended his sculptural interest in human physiognomy into his concern for the installation, in which the viewer perceives the work in a highly precise, organized framework.”¹ By leading the installation design and organization, Maggs revealed his ongoing dedication to structure and the significant emphasis he placed on presentation of his artworks. His notebooks from the 1970s foretell his keen interest in the format and presentation of his work: “I have been obsessed by scale and feel [—] much thought should be given to the photograph as a physical object. It is not enough to just take a picture, it must be presented well.”²

The Nickle Arts Museum exhibition also exposed Maggs's interest in controlling the narrative and reception of his work. “He had an absolute exacting notion of how [the exhibition] should be at the Nickle. He received the blueprints of the space first,” Allen explains. “It was the only exhibition I’ve ever done, except with Christo, [where the artist] wanted to

¹ Karyn Elizabeth Allen, *Arnaud Maggs: Photographs, 1975–1985* (Calgary: Nickle Arts Museum, 1984), 8. Allen's essay expands on the meticulous planning Maggs engaged in “over a number of years” to curate the exhibition.

² Arnaud Maggs, “Personal Journal: Beginning 1975,” unpaginated notebook, 1975–81, Library and Archives Canada (LAC), Ottawa, R7959-5522, R7959-137-3-E, vol. 839.

absolutely curate the work and how it was installed.”³ Reflecting on each part of Maggs’s life and work as “a perfect design,” Canadian photographer John Reeves (1938–2016) addresses the exhibition: “It was wonderful to see someone get the opportunity to make his statement fully. Love it or hate it, the Nickle show was a seamless presentation of exactly what Maggs meant to say photographically, it was another perfect design.”⁴ His observation underscores the interrelationship between Maggs’s graphic design career and his way of thinking as an artist. Space and scale are intimately linked and both are central principles of composition, which is a key consideration for graphic designers. Maggs extended his understanding of composition and design from the page to the wall. The cohesion of the Nickle exhibition was a direct result of his years of working in graphic design. Maggs’s keen awareness of spatial relationships was fundamental to communicating his artistic intentions, and the exhibition demonstrates the integration of his design and artistic sensibilities in his output.

Maggs’s photographic artworks are characterized by their monumental scale. Most often grid-based and serial in nature, the sheer size of the works is commanding and his expansive installations have the potential to envelop the viewer, inviting bodily engagement. He first exhibited *Joseph Beuys, 100 Frontal Views* at the Optica gallery in Montreal in 1983. Unmounted and unframed, for installation the prints were secured directly to the gallery wall, using squares of Plexiglas and tenterhooks. In their original configurations, the Beuys works were arranged in a grid of five rows of twenty images (fig. 5.1). Maggs derived the initial

³ Karyn Allen, discussion with author, August 4, 2017.

⁴ John Reeves, “Arnaud Maggs,” in *About Face* (Toronto: Exile Editions, 1990), 34.

hanging scheme (fig. 5.2) directly from *5 x 20 Altstadt Rectangle* (1967; fig. 5.3), a minimalist metal floor sculpture by Carl Andre that he had seen at *Minimal + Conceptual Art aus der Sammlung Panza* (1980), an exhibition from the Panza Collection mounted at the Kunstmuseum Düsseldorf.⁵ Understanding the value of developing a well-balanced visual unit and connecting to the problem-solving that is at the core of design disciplines, Maggs edited many of his artworks according to spatial constraints.⁶ For example, in 1989, when he installed the Beuys frontal views at the Stux Gallery in New York City, space restrictions prompted an adjustment of the hanging scheme for the work. Still including all 100 frames, Maggs rearranged the work in six rows, the top five rows consisting of seventeen photographs and the sixth of only fifteen. In this new arrangement he left two spaces empty at the right end of the last row. The revised scheme changed the artwork's meaning, albeit subtly. It resulted in a composition that was no longer one of discrete, closed units. Instead, Maggs shifted the focus from the finite — a time capsule — to the infinite. As he explained, "It sort of says: 'This can continue.' It's open-ended a bit."⁷ The adjustment reveals the interpretive potential afforded by the grid arrangement itself. But it also highlights the extent to which Maggs valued spatial harmony.

As Michael Mitchell contends, for Maggs "the installations shared equal intention with his art."⁸ Maggs himself, reflecting on a couple of group exhibitions, wrote: "Group shows in general I do not find attractive. More and more I see the importance and necessity of designing

⁵ Arnaud Maggs, "Notebook," unpaginated notebook, LAC, Ottawa, R7959-295-X-E, vol. 835, item 4004078.

⁶ Anne Cibola, "Old Works/New Works: When Contemporary Photographic Artworks Held by Canadian Public Institutions Change after Accession," (MA thesis, Ryerson University, 2014), 65–85.

⁷ Sarah Milroy, "Maggs Dusts Off Some Old Mugs," *Globe and Mail*, May 12, 2004, R4.

⁸ Michael Mitchell, *Final Fire: A Memoir* (Toronto: ECW Press, 2019), 363. When Mitchell and I discussed Maggs in 2017, he made a similar point: "His installations were hugely important; they were as much a part of the art, and he spent a lot of time on them. They had to be just so"; discussion with author, July 27, 2017.

a show. The installation is much a part of the work.”⁹ Revealing just how viscerally he experienced space, designer Nigel Smith recalls Maggs telling him that “ugly spaces made him feel physically ill.”¹⁰ Because of that sensibility, Maggs would develop his exhibition plans and lay out his artworks in response to the space. As noted in part 1, *64 Portrait Studies, 1976–78* comprised sixty-four portraits directly because of the space available to him on the main wall at the David Mirvish Gallery.

Indeed, Maggs considered much of his work site-specific. “[M]y works have usually been site specific, especially at the Susan Hobbs Gallery,” he explained. “Not too many galleries in the city have such a huge wall. It’s 50 feet long and 12 feet high.”¹¹ As just one example, the grand scale of that wall allowed Maggs to put the two large-scale grids that constitute *Les fractures de Lupé* (1999–2001; fig. 5.4) in dialogue with each other. As installed, the grid on the viewer’s left featured the front sides of thirty-six invoices, each outlining banal purchases made by the Lupés, a couple from Lyon, France, in the 1860s. To the right, Maggs mirrored that collection, this time showing the versos. His comment about the Susan Hobbs Gallery at once captures the importance of that particular wall to the development of many of his artworks and points to the limitations of working to that size. Work developed for that site could not easily be displayed elsewhere. As he acknowledged, the length and height of Susan Hobbs’s wall was unmatched in many gallery spaces. Just as spatial restrictions prompted him to formally and permanently adapt his hanging scheme for *Joseph Beuys, 100 Frontal Views* in order to maintain visual balance and coherence within the space, Maggs was also willing to temporarily

⁹ Maggs, “Personal Journal.”

¹⁰ Nigel Smith, discussion with author, July 10, 2017.

¹¹ Enright, “Designs on Life: An Interview with Arnaud Maggs,” *Border Crossings* 31, no. 2 (June/August 2012): 47.

edit down a work — provided the total number of images was not part of the title — to ensure that it fit well and read effectively in an exhibition context.¹² Given the scale of his work, this kind of flexibility was important. Josée Drouin-Brisebois, for instance, recalls how the design of *Identification*, an important survey exhibition of Maggs's work mounted at the National Gallery of Canada in 2012, required a modified approach to showing *Les factures de Lupé*:

In terms of the layout, [exhibition designer] David Bosschaart very much wanted walls that were just sort of freestanding, so that was the division between the spaces. It actually created a very airy space, which was great. But it meant as well, in terms of the selection of works, that we had to have works that fitted on those walls. So the grid works functioned very well.

At one point, because we were going from the first room with portraits to the second room with the objects — the found objects at the flea market — I decided to show the front and the back of *Les factures de Lupé* [opposite each other]. That was something that Arnaud wasn't sure about, because usually he would show either one or the other, the front or the back. Or he would show them next to each other. And to have them shown so you were facing one and then the other one was behind you ... [But] he was convinced when we saw it, actually. He quite liked it because there was this — there was play, you know, in terms of how you experienced the work. When you had your front to one, you had your back to the other. You couldn't compare them the same way. You almost had to have a memory of it. He quite liked that.¹³

Maggs's understanding of exhibition space showcases his recognition of the dynamic relationship between an artwork and its environment, emphasizing the significance of context in shaping the presentation and reception of his art. Although the page differs from the gallery wall, his keen emphasis on the relationship between his work and the wall signals the impact of his graphic design experience on his ways of thinking and working as an artist. His astute understanding of "what a wall could tolerate"¹⁴ reveals the enduring influence of Carl Dair's

¹² Accounts by Katisuka Doleatto, Susan Hobbs, Spring Hurlbut, Doina Popescu, and Maia-Mari Sutnik confirm Maggs's willingness to adjust an artwork in response to the space; Cibola, "Old Works/New Works," 73.

¹³ Josée Drouin-Brisebois, discussion with author, July 12, 2017.

¹⁴ Spring Hurlbut, quoted in Cibola, "Old Works/New Works," 73.

early lessons in harmony, contrast, structure, and space and of Maggs's own decade of practice in layout design in shaping his engagement with space and scale. Likewise, Maggs's commercial photography practice contributed to how he engaged with scale.

Maggs's relationship to scale was affected by the grid structures and seriality of conceptual art and minimalism, and his decision to print large-scale photographs is certainly in keeping with the oversize images characteristic of contemporary photographic output from the 1970s onward. But his commercial photography practice also formed his understanding of scale and an image's relationship to space, even if subtly. When Maggs worked as a fashion photographer, review of the edited final image with the art director would typically take place via slide projection. As publisher Jonathan Eby explains, "Generally with fashion, when fashion comes in we will edit the take and then consult the photographer with our edited version of the take. At the time we were using slide projectors — we'd do a screening."¹⁵ Viewing the final image on a screen would dramatically increase its scale and put the work on a wall within a built environment. Exposure to enlarged versions of his images through the commercial photography workflow gave Maggs valuable insights into how scale and space affect the visual impact and perception of an artwork, offering another example of how his commercial practice influenced his conceptual approach as an artist.

When determining the scale of each individual print, Maggs was careful to establish both visual and conceptual weight. *Contamination* (2007; fig. 5.5), for example, is a series of ten chromogenic prints that documents mould growth on the water-damaged pages of a Yukon gold rush ledger from 1905. Emphasizing the importance of the subtle details to his conception

¹⁵ Jonathan Eby, discussion with author, November 3, 2017.

of the work, Maggs printed each image at 84 by 104 centimetres (fig. 5.6). Like peering through a microscope, his enlargements read as specimens. The scale draws attention to the delicate blooms of pink mould and the soft staining on the pages, which is key to their impact. “It’s amazing to see in those a kind of fleeting beauty,” curator Ann Thomas declares.¹⁶ Prints for his final project, *After Nadar* (2012) — which will be addressed in more detail later in this chapter — are similarly large-scale. Their size is also fundamental to the work and helps to make a powerful connection with the viewer. As Katuska Doleatto suggests, “You almost feel like you can walk into this space that he was in.”¹⁷ That bigness amplifies the theatricality of *After Nadar*, in which Maggs performs Pierrot. It simultaneously places his body in a relationship with the viewer’s own, underscoring human vulnerability and the theme of mortality that inflects the work.

Maggs’s process was at once intuitive and methodical. He would print an image in multiple sizes to test the possibilities before determining its final scale. The goal, according to Doleatto, was to ensure that the work had impact. “Anything too small can just look insignificant,” she says.¹⁸ Standard photographic paper sizes also contributed to his decisions. Many of the individual prints that form his grid-based artworks, for instance, are printed on 16 x 20 sheets of photographic paper. As Doleatto explains, twenty inches (50.8 cm) marked the maximum height for the individual photographs that formed a grid.¹⁹ Anything larger made the grid cumbersome and led Maggs to linear hanging schemes. Underscoring that his artistic

¹⁶ Ann Thomas, discussion with author, July 12, 2017.

¹⁷ Katuska Doleatto, discussion with author, February 28, 2020.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

explorations were shaped by both commercial and conceptual practices, his use of scale was both structural and conceptual, and it helped amplify the emotive and thematic resonance of his artworks.

By the mid-1980s, Maggs was seeking new subjects, and in doing so he turned his attention back to typography. His “numberworks” from the 1980s focus on banal, seemingly arbitrary systems of documentation and identification. Though still directly informed by the same preoccupations with shape, scale, and classification, Maggs replaced the human head with number- and letterforms. During this time he also explored painting and printmaking and experimented with different formatting strategies, including the book form. The book maquettes addressed in chapter 4 were completed during this time of typographic experimentation. *Arnaud Maggs Numberworks*, which included a range of number-form explorations, was mounted at the Macdonald Stewart Art Centre in Guelph, Ontario (now the Art Gallery of Guelph), in 1989. In 1990, work from this period also featured in a group exhibition at the Art Gallery of Hamilton titled *Numbering*, curated by Ihor Holubizky.

During this period, Maggs was working out of a studio on Noble Street in Toronto, with a view of the train tracks that cut across Queen and Dufferin Streets and head up through the Junction neighbourhood. An avid trainspotter, Maggs would regularly record the numbers seen on the rail cars that went by his window. Eleanor Johnston, his partner at the time, recalls his ongoing and enthusiastic interest in number forms and their aesthetic relationship with each other. “I’d come home and he’d be so excited. He’d go, ‘Look at the numbers I got today,’” she

remembers. “Look at this number, look at this number.”²⁰ Holubizky corroborates the aesthetic pleasure for Maggs that was connected to trainspotting. “Maggs sees an inherent beauty and pleasure in numbers,” he notes, “a seductive resonance in appearance, repetition, and visual plays.”²¹ These numbers became the material for his book-form explorations.

Recalling his initial interest in painting when he decided to become an artist, Maggs also chose to translate number sequences into large-scale paintings in the mid-1980s. According to Johnston, he was focused on achieving a particular, indescribable surface quality in these experiments. “He’d be working on this black,” she explains. “He wanted to get it just so. He was looking for a surface, and it could be that he would know it when [he saw] it, but he didn’t know how to describe it.”²² In *3269/3077* (1986; fig. 5.7), for example, individual white numbers sit on a black ground, with one large numeral per panel. Maggs arranged the panels in a two-row, four-column grid measuring 183 x 244 centimetres, giving the appearance of two stacked four-digit numbers, 3269 and 3077, as the title suggests. Maggs consulted painter Malcolm Rains to assist in his pursuit of the perfect black ground.

Arnaud had a perfectionist attitude to his work, and I mean this in a nice way. He called me because he was trying to achieve a perfect black surface to some panels he was painting, and to keep his drying surfaces dust-free he put the wet panels in a dark closet. He created two problems for himself by doing so. First of all, the black he was using was ivory black, which is a notoriously slow dryer, and he compounded the drying time by not exposing the panels to daylight, because oil paints need exposure to light to oxidize and harden.²³

²⁰ Eleanor Johnston, discussion with author, February 25, 2020.

²¹ Ihor Holubizky, *Numbering* (Hamilton, ON: Art Gallery of Hamilton, 1990), 23.

²² Johnston, discussion.

²³ Malcolm Rains, email discussion with author, September 17, 2023.

But, according to Johnston, Maggs never quite found the elusive texture he was after. He was more interested in achieving a flat black surface than in revealing the hand of the artist through visible brushwork. Rains speculates that this was the reason he chose not to push further with painting. “I may be completely wrong,” he muses, “but I think he abandoned painting because it involves handiwork. By that I mean brushstrokes and touch. That’s how we can distinguish a Rembrandt from a Vermeer. Arnaud found his solution in Marcel Duchampian readymades.”²⁴ Although Maggs’s experiments in painting were short-lived, his focus on number- and letterforms persisted.

Maggs’s interest in systems of classification became more refined and overt during the 1980s and ’90s, and he continued to use the camera as a cataloguing tool. *The Complete Prestige 12” Jazz Catalogue* (figs. 5.8 and 5.9), for example, uses photography to convey an existing classification system. By contrast, in his *Hotel* series (figs. 5.11 and 5.12) he uses photography as a means to record cultural artifacts and invent his own typology: an archive of disappearing signs. His interests in lettering, signage, and presentation and the formal and intellectual processes of design — including ordering, for example — were finding a place in conceptual art to be reconsidered. These works emphasize disciplinary overlaps in his career and, more broadly, the intersections between design and art. Significantly, they highlight that these connections are not just intellectual references; rather, they are also rooted in Maggs’s years of practice.

The Complete Prestige 12” Jazz Catalogue (1988), for example, engaged Maggs’s analytical interest in the relationship between the individual frames and the larger arrangement

²⁴ Ibid.

of the work as a whole. The *Jazz Catalogue* comprises 828 Cibachrome 8 x 10 prints of the four-digit numbers used to catalogue the 7000 series of 12-inch vinyl jazz albums put out by Prestige Records in New York. Arranged in a grid format, this was a large-scale installation, to put it mildly. First shown at YYZ Artists' Outlet in Toronto in 1988, the installed size was approximately 11 x 38 feet (3.35 x 11.6 m). Each individual print is unframed, and Maggs's installation plan called for them to be attached to the wall at the top using tape. "They're sort of hung like shingles," he explained. "The second one hides the tape of the first one."²⁵ Though subtle, the resulting installation is somewhat interactive. The paper has the potential to rustle lightly as visitors move around the gallery and cause the air to circulate. This, coupled with the sheer scale of the work, encourages physical interaction. Akin to the rotational ripple that moves through *André Kertész, 144 Views* (figs. 4.25–4.27), the movement of the prints enlivens the grid and the catalogue record. The work brings together Maggs's interests in graphic and typographic forms and in collecting, and emphasizes his consistent preoccupations with systems of identification and classification — themes that can be seen in earlier projects, including *64 Portrait Studies* and *Ledoyen Series, Working Notes*.

Bemused as he was by the seemingly arbitrary nature of some catalogue numbering systems, Maggs's goal for *The Complete Prestige 12" Jazz Catalogue* was to draw attention to the system used by the record label. His strategy was to emphasize the numerical signifiers rather than the jazz itself. As he explained, "I made the cataloguing system assume more importance than what it's cataloguing."²⁶ By placing the signifiers on the gallery wall at an

²⁵ Arnaud Maggs, "Arnaud Maggs," Kodak Chair Lecture Series, Ryerson University, February 11, 1994; sound recording, Toronto Metropolitan University Archives and Special Collections, maggs_1.mp3, 00:45:21.

²⁶ Ibid., maggs_2.mp3, 00:00:02.

exaggerated scale, Maggs further amplifies attention to the system, and, moreover, he underlines it as a construct. Each rectangular print of the *Jazz Catalogue* features four large white numerals set in Franklin Gothic Condensed type on a black ground. Just as he did with 3269/3077, Maggs establishes maximum contrast between figure and ground. His typographic approaches to 3269/3077 and *The Complete Prestige 12" Jazz Catalogue* recall his minimalist cover for the 13th Art Directors Club of Toronto annual (1961) (fig. 1.30), which features just the number thirteen in large black figures on a white ground.

Maggs's *Köchel Series* (1990) functions similarly to the Prestige collection in that it too represents an existing catalogue record. His subject was the Köchel catalogue (Köchel-Verzeichnis), a numbering system devised by Austrian musicologist Ludwig von Köchel (1800–77) for chronologically cataloguing all of Mozart's compositions. Providing a shorthand reference system for the composer's output, the register assigns each work a K or KV number. Köchel catalogued over 600 compositions, but rather than representing all of them, Maggs defined limits for the works in his series. Just as he did with his portraits, Maggs signals these parameters in his titles: *Köchel Series: Eighteen Piano Sonatas (for Ed Cleary)* (fig. 5.10) and *Köchel Series: Six Quartets Dedicated to Haydn*. *The Complete Prestige 12" Jazz Catalogue* and *Köchel Series* demonstrate how conventions of design and conceptual art come together in Maggs's work: here typography is critical to the system that defines the work. In each of Maggs's *Köchel Series* prints, a single K number — K.333, for example — is set in a modern serif typeface, underlined with a thin hairline, and letterpressed in black ink on white rag paper. Maggs worked with Ed Cleary on the typography for the series, and he dedicated *Köchel Series: Eighteen Piano Sonatas* to the designer.

Maggs would continue to collaborate with designers, including Cleary. While walking the streets of Paris in 1991, he photographed more than 300 vertical hotel signs. He narrowed that photographic collection to 165 signs to produce his *Hotel* series (fig. 5.11), which also demonstrates the lingering influence of his early design practice and the lessons imparted by Carl Dair. Cropped close to their subjects, Maggs's photographs are tall and narrow, mimicking the proportions of the original objects. Indeed, the scale of the prints — usually either six or eight feet tall — intentionally approximates the signs themselves.²⁷

As addressed in chapter 3, aligning with his previous experiences in commercial design studios and on commercial photography sets, Maggs relied on specialist contributions in the production of his artworks. Mike Robinson's expertise, for example, ensured that the printing of these large-scale images met Maggs's exacting standards. As Robinson explains,

When you're enlarging a 35 mm negative at a distance from longer than maybe fifteen feet, focusing is brutal. It had to be very precise. ... It was Tri-X film and you needed the grain sharp, because you can see the grain — it's quite large. So the trouble with it is, if it's out of focus in the slightest, it goes mushy. So you want a tight grain.

[Arnaud] had bought this eight-hundred-dollar Schneider enlarging lens — the best enlarging lens he could find, a 50 mm lens. And still it would take us forty-five minutes to focus on it between the two of us. Arnaud would be at the easel with a very expensive grain focuser and I'd be at the enlarger, and we'd go, "Eek, eek, eek." We'd focus on the T, then we'd go over to the O and check that. And over to the E and over to the H. It was all about geometry. No matter what we tried, he couldn't get everything sharp. ... So basically we'd get two prints a day. But one was a test print ... It was brutal.

Anyway, I brought to it my knowledge of optics from a lens-resolution testing assignment I had [back in school]. I said, "Arnaud, I've got this lens that I bought at a flea market for ten dollars." It was a Nikon 64 mm enlarging lens. I knew that if I had a slightly longer focal length lens it would flatten the field out more. And it worked.

²⁷ Ibid., 00:06:46.

So the Nikon lens I paid ten dollars for was able to resolve the entire text across the page, across the sheet. It drove Arnaud crazy that he paid so much money for this other one. Anyway, Arnaud liked me for my problem-solving ability.²⁸

Aligning with his lifelong interest in collecting, *Hotel* functions as an act of preservation, enabling a photographic afterlife for the once ubiquitous signs. In this way, this series recalls Hilla and Bernd Bechers's encyclopedic record of disappearing industrial structures in Germany. One hundred years earlier, in response to Baron Haussmann's program of modernization, Eugène Atget had photographed the streets, buildings, and gardens of historic Paris and its environs, collecting images of a disappearing city. Like Atget's photographs, Maggs's series offers a record of a threatened Parisian icon. Maggs was drawn to them as symbols: "They're all vertical, and we're not used to reading in a vertical way. So after a while they became almost like icons — like symbols. ... I realized that we don't read them, we just recognize them."²⁹ To maintain this emphasis on form, he avoided signs that also featured the hotel's name, opting instead to photograph only generic signs that simply conveyed the word *hotel*.

The images were compiled in a book project designed by Cleary and published by Art Metropole (Toronto) and Presentation House (Vancouver) in 1993. As with *The Complete Prestige 12" Jazz Catalogue* and *Köchel Series*, Maggs's hotel series nods to his career in graphic design and signals his enduring interest in typography and letterforms. But more than that, the taxonomy of letterforms shaped the conceptual framework for the project: he organized the photographs by lettering style. Each page of the book comprises five similar hotel signs (fig. 5.12). When Maggs first exhibited the photographs at Art Metropole in conjunction with the

²⁸ Mike Robinson, discussion with author, August 3, 2017.

²⁹ Maggs, Kodak Chair Lecture, maggs_2.mp3, 00:05:02.

book launch, he likewise organized the exhibition prints by lettering style. As Dair asserts in *Designing with Type*,

Two typographic elements which resemble each other, either in their size, form, weight, color, or structure, will create a field of attraction for each other across intervening space. If the elements are powerful enough to hold visual attention against the competition of other elements ... then their attraction for each other can create a unifying force through the entire composition.³⁰

Aware of that unifying force, Maggs initially grouped like signs together to insist on their resemblance and draw attention to the similarities between them. “They’re all different,” he explained, “but there’s a similarity.”³¹ As in much of his artwork, his arrangements impose a further formal logic on the collection and encourage viewers to pay attention to subtle differences between images. These examples demonstrate the enduring impact of Dair’s concept of a visual unit. It was a structural, spatial, and conceptual strategy that shaped Maggs’s work as a designer and an artist. Typography and graphic design principles were incorporated into his photographic artworks, illustrating interconnections between his applied and fine art practices and revealing how commercial practice informs conceptual praxis.

In 1992, in addition to solo exhibitions of his *Hotel* series in Vancouver and Toronto, Maggs was included in *Beau*, a group exhibition of photographs acquired by the Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography in Ottawa and curated by Martha Langford. He was also part of *Special Collections: The Photographic Order from Pop to Now*, curated by Charles Stainback for

³⁰ Carl Dair, *Design with Type* (New York: Pellegrini & Cudahy, 1952), 110. *Design with Type* was later expanded and republished in 1967 by University of Toronto Press.

³¹ Ibid., 00:07:00. In more recent years (see *Identification* at the National Gallery of Canada, for example), when only a small collection of images from the *Hotel* series was included in an exhibition, Maggs would showcase variety in his groupings.

the International Center of Photography in New York. The show travelled throughout the United States, stopping in Evanston, Illinois; Tempe, Arizona; Norfolk, Virginia; Miami Beach, Florida; Stony Brook, New York; San Francisco, California; and Lincoln, Nebraska. It had one stop in Canada, at the Vancouver Art Gallery. *Special Collections* brought together a range of artists who were working in or with photography, including those typically associated with conceptual art, such as John Baldessari (1931–2020), the Bechers, Huebler, LeWitt, and Ruscha, among others. Maggs was the only Canadian in the exhibition; Stainback selected *48 Views* for inclusion, which was installed in a large, dramatic grid formation in the show.

In 1993 Susan Hobbs opened her gallery on Tecumseth Street in Toronto, and Maggs joined her roster of artists. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, it was the fifty-foot wall at the Susan Hobbs Gallery that shaped Maggs's output in the 1990s and beyond. In 1994 he was honoured with the Les Usherwood Award, a prize that recognizes exceptional contributions to the creative community in Canada. Declaring his large-scale photographic portraits "stunning pieces of graphic design," Ken Rodmell pointed to both the analytical and affective qualities of Maggs's artwork: "Seemingly clinical and detached, these marathon works of monk-like concentration and intellectual rigour told us something about ourselves that was at the same time brutal in its accuracy and yet touching."³²

In the 1990s, Maggs began using found paper ephemera as his subjects, producing large-scale works that re-present historical materials largely sourced in France. Defined by

³² Ken Rodmell, "Les Usherwood Award," *Directions '94*, 1994, <https://theadcc.ca/archive/les-usherwood-award-1994>.

photographic documentation and exploration of memory and history through the use of these found materials, the evocative potential of the grid is amplified further still in some of these ephemera-based works. As Hal Foster stresses, archival artists both use and produce archives, which “underscores the nature of all archival materials as found yet constructed, factual yet fictive, public yet private.”³³ Maggs’s materials are themselves records: labour tags, correspondence on mourning stationery, receipts, ledgers, and notebooks. His work offers traces of the past, making lost memories material and visible, even if only partially. Maggs “calls us to attend to the world around us, deciphering meaning in the telling details,” Sarah Milroy contends. “It’s a call to looking.”³⁴ Both archives and memories involve inconsistencies and contradictions. Similarly, works such as *Travail des enfants dans l’industrie: Les étiquettes* (1994), *Notification xiii* (1996), *Les factures de Lupés* (fig. 5.4), and *The Dada Portraits* (2010) involve dualities, oscillating between presence and absence, life and death, and the real and the imagined. They demonstrate how the artistic use of archival material offers rich potential for explorations of memory — a conception of memory that involves both the past and the future. Projects such as these inflect conceptual frameworks with evocative and emotive content, again revealing the often overlooked dialectic in conceptual art between the analytical and the expressive. *Notification xiii* and *Travail des enfants dans l’industrie: Les étiquettes* are arranged as large-scale grids and, like much of Maggs’s work, they rely on the formal and conceptual possibilities of the format. They are also expressive works of remembrance that engage with

³³ Hal Foster, “An Archival Impulse,” *October* 110 (Autumn 2004): 5.

³⁴ Sarah Milroy, “Photographer Arnaud Maggs: An Eloquent Witness to Time and Change,” *Globe and Mail*, May 31, 2013, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/art-and-architecture/photographer-arnaud-maggs-an-eloquent-witness-to-time-and-change/article12286898/>.

the themes of presence and absence and life and death that form a common thread for the artist. Both format and subject were informed by his practice as a designer, revealing a sophisticated marriage of influences and careful attention to the role of presentation in contributing to the affective capacity of the work.

Notification xiii (fig. 5.13) comprises 192 chromogenic prints arranged in eight rows of twenty-four and is representative of Maggs's large-scale colour work that documents the graphic details and marks of age on found paper ephemera. It is one of three versions that Maggs made using late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century mourning stationery envelopes that he found at Parisian flea markets and shops and through dealers. The first of the three *Notification* works that Maggs created was exhibited in 1996 on the large wall at the Susan Hobbs Gallery. Purchased by the National Gallery of Canada in 1998, *Notification xiii* was included in the Gallery's *Identification* exhibition in 2012.

Part of a public demonstration of grief, the black edging of the envelopes in the work signalled that the sender was in mourning. *Notification xiii* is a particularly poignant example of Maggs's use of found objects and photography to create a visual archive. Structured as it is in a grid formation, the repetition and patterning encourage analytical reading of the envelopes, but it also contributes to a striking graphic presence, which is amplified by the limited, high-contrast palette of black, white, and red. Maggs's analytical eye — his interest in slight variations of form — compelled him to collect the envelopes. "I had always admired their design," he told Robert Enright, "and then one day in a shop I found 10 of them ... I noticed that they were all different in little ways, and it immediately dawned on me that I had a piece."³⁵

³⁵ Enright, "Designs on Life," 53.

Maggs sought out as many mourning envelopes as he could. They are bold and graphic, offering an obvious connection to his interest in form. On the backs of the envelopes the black edging meets to form an X. “All the ingredients are there,” Hurlbut explains. “The handwritten text — he loved the formality. And turning them over and discovering the X — he knew that was going to be an amazing graphic device.”³⁶ As Maggs suggested, “For me, this signals a crossing out, a sign that this person no longer exists. Graphically speaking, there is nothing stronger than an ‘X.’”³⁷ The dramatic X’s — punctuated on some of the envelopes with round wax seals (fig. 5.14) — present a striking visual representation of death.

Notification xiii and his earlier work *Travail des enfants dans l’industrie: Les étiquettes* both offer paper ephemera as stand-ins for absent bodies. *Travail des enfants* (fig. 5.15) is a collection of early twentieth-century labels documenting the work of child labourers in France’s textile industry. Through these works, Maggs puts historical content in front of contemporary eyes — a re-remembering. But he photographed only the backs of the envelopes in *Notification xiii*, denying the viewer access to their entirety. We cannot see the names of the senders or the recipients. “Someone has died but we cannot know whom,” Russell Keziere contends, “the identity is erased.”³⁸ Though the human presence is felt in the work, photography renders it anonymous. In so doing, *Notification xiii* serves as a site of both memory and imaginative projection. Indeed, art historian Sarah Bassnett argues that in *Notification* “absence has a

³⁶ Spring Hurlbut, discussion with author, February 28, 2020.

³⁷ Charles A. Stainback, “Q and A with Arnaud Maggs,” in *Arnaud Maggs: Identification*, by Josée Drouin-Brisebois (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 2012), 115.

³⁸ Russell Keziere, “Convergence Without Coincidence,” in *Arnaud Maggs: Notes capitales*, by Arnaud Maggs and Russell Keziere (Paris: Services culturelles de l’ambassade du Canada, 2000), 36.

transactive function.”³⁹ The framed X’s in Maggs’s *Notification* *xiii* wait to be filled in by the viewer. According to Bassnett, the anonymity compels viewers to “substitute their own loved ones for the absent bodies.”⁴⁰ Akin to the contradictory nature of memory itself, Maggs’s work navigates presence and absence, and reality and imagination.

The labour tags that are the subject of *Travail des enfants dans l’industrie: Les étiquettes* recall the shape of a headstone (see fig. 5.16). Philip Monk, who observed the similarity, asserts that with the tags “brought together like a mausoleum wall, Arnaud Maggs has built the young workers a public memorial.”⁴¹ Likewise, the envelopes of *Notification*, arranged row upon row, recall the shape of flat markers in a cemetery. The grid format extends their memorializing function. As noted in the Introduction, curator Catherine Bédard argues that in Maggs’s work, the “minimalism [of the grid] is woven through with an eminently human and sensuous content, yet shown with all the appearance of documentary objectivity.”⁴² He creates tension in the affective and analytical possibilities of the grid itself. Exploiting these oppositions, Maggs disrupts conventional views of the grid as a distancing device.

His approach to ordering was directly informed by commercial practice as a graphic designer, and as the recollections of designers, photographers, friends, and family attest, it was a defining characteristic of both his way of working and his motivations. Time and again in my discussions with those who knew and worked with Maggs, the persistent legacy of his practice

³⁹ Sarah Bassnett, “Archive and Affect in Contemporary Photography,” *Photography & Culture* 2, no. 3 (Nov. 2009): 243.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 249.

⁴¹ Philip Monk, “Life’s Traces,” in *Arnaud Maggs: Works, 1976–1999*, by Philip Monk, Arnaud Maggs, and Maia-Mari Sutnik (Toronto: Power Plant, 1999), 26.

⁴² Catherine Bédard, “Arnaud Maggs, Front and Back,” in *Arnaud Maggs: Notes capitales*, Arnaud Maggs and Russell Keziere (Paris: Services culturelles de l’ambassade du Canada, 2000), 27.

and interest in design was underscored. “To me, I always saw him as a designer,” Fidel Peña insists. “The way he thought, to me, was very much like a graphic designer.”⁴³ “I feel that too,” confirms designer Claire Dawson.⁴⁴ As Peña expands,

He’d plan things and he gridded things. Perhaps he was acting like a conceptual artist, but I never saw him like that. ... That’s why I think he was so open to deviating from things. Because it was a way to be playful with things, which is what we do as designers. We might have a very rigid grid and we plan things out, but unless we bring in that playfulness, it’s going to be a very boring piece.⁴⁵

Likewise, Mike Robinson, who was both Maggs’s assistant and his friend, insists on the enduring impact of design on Maggs’s practice. For him it was fundamental to his decisions around both subject and how to represent it:

This was the best piece of advice he ever said: I said, “What do you photograph? How do you choose?” And he said, “Photograph your passion.” And that’s always stuck with me. So if you think about Arnaud’s work and you realize that, whatever it is, he’s photographing his passion. You’ve got to ask, what is it that excited him? And every bit of work is always about form, it’s all about design. Every bit is about design. It’s not documentary, not at all. This is all about design. It’s all about laying it out.⁴⁶

Maggs’s daughter, Caitlan, feels similarly. Reflecting on his ongoing interest in found material, she posits that it was his interest in design that led him to his subjects:

He was also getting his ideas from — it was all his interest, again, in design. Because he would go to all these flea markets in France and look for stuff, look for material that would inspire his next show. Then he would find things that he liked and they were often old little artifacts that were [examples of] design, really, if you think of it. If you look at the envelopes, that was design. If you look at the numbers, the children’s tags, and the Mozart thing, it was all design that he was photographing. He was photographing design.⁴⁷

⁴³ Fidel Peña, email discussion with author, May 21, 2020.

⁴⁴ Claire Dawson, email discussion with author, May 21, 2020.

⁴⁵ Peña, email discussion.

⁴⁶ Robinson, discussion. Similarly, Eleanor Johnston pointed to his love of form in our discussion: “Because he was more — it was more like being an aesthete. He loved the forms of things.”

⁴⁷ Caitlan Maggs, discussion with author, September 14, 2017.

Michael Mitchell also recognized the impact of design on Maggs's way of viewing and organizing material in his artwork. He asserted:

Arnaud was always primarily a designer. He used photography kind of like a designer, and I would say — this is going to be sort of sacrilegious ... I worked with a lot of various kinds of designers — and I would say that I came to see designers not really as creative people primarily, but as people who were desperately interested in order, and that's really what it's about — creating order. And of course that's what Arnaud did, right? With all these typologies he did, and everything else, it was ordering things and comparing things.⁴⁸

These insights help to illuminate the intertwining of practice and praxis, demonstrating that Maggs's artistic motivations and output were indeed shaped by his decades of commercial production.

Reactions to works such as *Travails des enfants* and *Notification* signal the affective power of ephemera in combination with Maggs's approach to arrangement. Nigel Smith, for instance, who worked with Maggs on some of his early exhibition catalogues, describes the *Notification* series as "magical" and underscores its move away from the neutrality of the earlier portrait grids: "I think this work [*Notification*] is so much more powerful. Maybe it's just because it's colour ... It seems more beautiful. And also because I think it's tinged with such profound sadness and it's so rich in its story."⁴⁹ Likewise, Ann Thomas, who became the senior curator of photographs at the National Gallery of Canada in 1994, asserts that pieces such as *Travail des enfants* and *Notification* were so compelling that they drew more focused attention from the museum on his work: "Those were works we could not resist. ... He was just becoming

⁴⁸ Mitchell, discussion.

⁴⁹ Smith, discussion. By contrast, Smith's reaction to the portraits is less enthusiastic: "They're pretty tough portraits, eh? There's some very interesting, rough-looking folks in some of these rogues' galleries ... I don't think it's that successful. I think a little beatification goes a long way — well, even if it's uglification. But the neutrality of it I don't think helps."

too irresistible in a way, the works that he was doing then.”⁵⁰ The National Gallery purchased *Travaux des enfants dans l’industrie: Les étiquettes* in 1995 and *Notification xiii* in 1998 to add to their collection of his works, which already included a range of early portraits, *64 Portrait Studies*, and *Köchel Series: Six Quartets Dedicated to Haydn*, which they purchased the year it was made (1990). Demonstrating his growing status as a fine artist in Canada, the National Gallery further expanded their Maggs holdings during this time with the acquisition of additional early portraits as well as *Köchel Series: Eighteen Piano Sonatas (for Ed Cleary)* in 1996–98 through donation. As Thomas insists, his approach to *Travail des enfants* and *Notification* was innovative:

I think he was really quite pioneering. You know, he had a rigour, an obviously very methodical way of working. But also I can’t think of anyone who has worked with archival documents in the way he does ... He brought this designer sense of order, that kind of sensibility to very fragile human documents, documents that told about the lives of the children ... but not in a kind of rhetorical way. He just presented things.⁵¹

Thomas’s observations underline, as others have during my interviews, the significance of design to Maggs’s way of working as an artist. Moreover, they suggest that it is the merging of his design sensibilities with his subject-matter choices that is at the heart of his innovative approach.

In 1997 Maggs married fellow artist Spring Hurlbut, who had been his partner since the late 1980s. Theirs was a creative relationship. Dividing their time between Toronto and France, the two spent their summers exploring French flea markets. Maggs and Hurlbut navigate similar

⁵⁰ Thomas, discussion.

⁵¹ Ibid.

thematic terrain in their work: time, life and death, loss. In the 1990s Hurlbut started a number of projects that used antique cribs. *Le Jardin du sommeil* (2009), for example, is a later project that features 140 antique metal cribs and cradles from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Arranged in rows, the empty cribs evoke a graveyard. Similar to *Travail des enfants*, the work serves a memorializing function and engages with both history and imagination. Maggs found the tags used in *Travail des enfants* when the pair were sourcing cribs for her projects. The same year they married, Maggs produced *Répertoire*.

Répertoire (fig. 5.17) is a grid of forty-eight chromogenic prints, each one documenting a spread from Parisian photographer Eugène Atget's address book of nearly a hundred pages.⁵² Rather than developing out of Maggs's own collection, *Répertoire* engages with archival material from an institution. Atget's notebook is held by the Museum of Modern Art in New York; unlike the labour tags and mourning stationery of his earlier projects, the address book is an object that Maggs could not own. In this and subsequent projects that relied on material from museum collections, photography enabled him to collect the otherwise uncollectable. The pages of the book reveal the names and addresses of clients and prospects written in Atget's own hand (fig. 5.18). Maggs's documentation of Atget's book begins with the exterior front cover and ends with the exterior back cover. Each 20 x 24 print is framed. When installed, the thin white frames are butted right up against each other, emphasizing the structure of the grid. Challenging both authorship and portraiture, Maggs offers a picture of Atget — a hero of his — not through his likeness but through documentation of the form and contents of his

⁵² Some pages had been torn out of the original notebook, which Maggs noted were likely removed by Atget himself. Ontario Arts Council grant application, May 15, 1999, "OAC" folder, Estate of Arnaud Maggs.

handwritten notebook. “*Répertoire*,” Maggs explained, “provides us with a revealing and intimate trace of the man.”⁵³ The arrangement of the work mimics the flat plane of two-page spreads from layout design. As he so frequently did in his work, Maggs uses the grid in *Répertoire* to invite the viewer to look back and forth between images, to notice details.

Just like Maggs, Atget got a late start as a photographer; it was his second career, following some years as an actor. Though heralded as a pioneering artist, Atget was a working photographer who saw himself as a documentarian. He made photographic records for use by artists, illustrators, designers, architects, and librarians, among others, many of whom are listed in his notebook. He also documented the streets, buildings, and gardens of his city, creating an enduring record of *vieux Paris*. Atget’s notebook is a business record. “It tells us what kind of clients Atget had and wanted,” Maggs wrote. “Many of the names have been crossed out with large ‘X’s, leading us to speculate on the reasons why.”⁵⁴

Maggs would have been drawn to the X as a graphic symbol — the ultimate cancellation. It was, after all, a dominant element of the *Notification* works, in which he explored the connection between that graphic letterform and death. However, though the X functions powerfully as a symbol of death, Martha Langford asserts that in Atget’s book the cancellations are equally about life: the marks are very much connected to the mundane realities of business operations. “Atget’s cancellations might have meant ‘moved,’ or ‘out of business,’ or ‘waste of time,’” she explains.⁵⁵ Maggs would likely have been drawn to the record

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Martha Langford, *Scissors, Paper, Stone: Expressions of Memory in Contemporary Photographic Art* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2007), 274.

for its familiarity as well. After all, he himself kept notebooks that logged the names of sitters, the dates of their session, and the corresponding artworks, sometimes including process details related to the shoot or printing; he recorded practical and reflective details about visits, upcoming meetings, and telephone calls with friends, curators, and artists; and he tracked some of his editorial commissions, including dates and client details.

Maggs drew attention to the practicalities of working as an artist and insisted on their significance to understanding Atget and his practice. “*Répertoire* shows us another side of Atget, one we don’t usually think about — his day-to-day existence, his rejections and disappointments, his need to keep solvent,” he explained. “We see him as a human being, probably very weary.”⁵⁶ This intimacy lends the work its power. Upon seeing it when first exhibited at the Susan Hobbs Gallery in 1996, critic Gary Michael Dault declared Maggs’s *Répertoire* “a stunningly handsome and deeply moving document.”⁵⁷ *Répertoire* is a recognition of the enduring tension between art and commerce and the fine and applied arts — something, of course, with which Maggs himself was quite familiar. “I think Arnaud understood that his entire life as a professional artist was mixed up with commercial work that he *had* to do and his own vision,” Hurlbut explains, “but there was a lot of merging of those things too.”⁵⁸

By 1999 Maggs had been working as an artist for twenty years. The breadth of his work was displayed in an important solo exhibition at the Power Plant that year. Beginning with *64 Portrait Studies* and ending with *Répertoire*, the exhibition showcased his dedication to systems of classification, the conceptual and structural use of the grid, and his fascination with

⁵⁶ Stainback, “Q and A,” 115.

⁵⁷ Gary Michel Dault, “Making an Art of Documentation,” *Globe and Mail*, September 13, 1997, C19.

⁵⁸ Hurlbut, discussion.

letterforms. “He was actively involved [in the exhibit planning],” curator Philip Monk recalls, “and it was a very smooth collaboration.”⁵⁹ Maggs continued to show his work in Canada and abroad. *Notes capitales*, a solo exhibition of his work, was mounted at the Canadian Cultural Centre in Paris in 2000. *Notes capitales* featured works related to his *Hotel* and *Notification* series, as well as *Répertoire*. In 2006 Maggs was recognized with the Governor General’s Award in Visual and Media Arts. In 2010 his work was included in *Traffic: Conceptual Art in Canada, 1965–1980*, an important travelling group exhibition that helped to define conceptual art activity in this country.

From the mid-1990s onward, Maggs would continue to reanimate historical objects through photography. Works such as *Cercles chromatiques de M.E. Chevreul* (2006), for example, extend his thematic exploration of time. Figure 5.19, details from the work, displays a circle of seventy-two pure hues — *les couleurs franches* — proposed by Michel-Eugène Chevreul (1786–1889), a prominent French chemist who was part of a group interested in exploring the human perception of colour. The hues are presented in this plate at their maximum chroma, or saturation. Maggs’s series captures eleven of twelve colour wheels from Chevreul’s 1861 atlas titled *Exposé d’un moyen de définir et de nommer les couleurs*. He photographed a copy of the book held in the Rare Book Collection of the Robertson Davies Library at Massey College in Toronto. Chevreul puts forward a detailed system of analysis that defines a nomenclature for and classification of colour, something that appealed to Maggs’s career-long interest in systems of classification and identification. The plates display desaturation of colour through the

⁵⁹ Philip Monk, discussion with author, July 7, 2017.

incremental addition of black, with each stage showing increasingly subtle differences between the shades. Ultimately the chromatic wheel is rendered colourless. It is a process Maggs described as akin to “passage from day to night, from positive to negative, from life to death.”⁶⁰

Chevreul’s plates were etched and printed using a four-colour aquatint process by René-Henri Digeon. As Alexandra Loske points out, the 14,420 shades represented in the colour wheels “makes these plates masterpieces of color-printing in the later nineteenth century.”⁶¹ Maggs would have been drawn to the circle forms, but also to the craftsmanship of the award-winning prints. The original book measures 36 cm in height; at 101 x 84 cm, Maggs’s images are dramatic enlargements. The work highlights ever-present themes in his art practice: time and duration. The exaggerated size of the plates amplifies the condition of the atlas pages, drawing attention to their handling over the years — the lives they had lived, so to speak. The scale and sequencing of Maggs’s colour wheels encourages physical engagement from the viewer. Hung in a row, *Cercles chromatiques de M.E. Chevreul* emphasizes the exploration of time. Step by step the viewer follows the incremental shifts from maximum brightness to black, each step inching toward darkness.

Cercles chromatiques is an extension of an important earlier exploration of colour classification, *Werner’s Nomenclature of Colours* (2005; fig. 5.20 and 5.21), in which Maggs photographed the colour charts from a book of that name published in 1821. It was the effort of a flower painter named Patrick Syme (1774–1845), who expanded upon the work of German

⁶⁰ Martha Langford, “Arnaud Maggs, Turning Colours,” in *Arnaud Maggs: Nomenclature* (Oshawa, ON: Robert McLaughlin Gallery, 2006), 24, citing Maggs’s artist’s statement, “Cercles chromatiques de M.E. Chevreul,” 2005; curatorial files, Robert McLaughlin Gallery.

⁶¹ Alexandra Loske, *Color: A Visual History from Newton to Modern Color Matching Guides* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Books, 2019), 96.

geologist and mineralogist Abraham Gottlob Werner (1749–1817) to develop a handbook of colour for use in the arts and sciences. With series of charts organized by colour, it served as a useful guide for field studies. “For instance, a scientist might be trying to describe a reddish white bird that he had discovered that day,” Maggs explained. “He would look up in his book, find a similar colour, and say ‘ah yes, it is similar to ‘the egg of a grey linnet’ or ‘the back of a Christmas rose.’”⁶² He marvelled at the book’s practicality, but also at its poetry. This duality reveals itself in the work, which includes fourteen dramatic enlargements of the colour plates from the original book. Characteristic of his work from this period, both *Werner’s Nomenclature of Colours* and *Cercles chromatiques de M.E. Chevreul* relate to Maggs’s enduring interest in graphic design, and they explore the aesthetic and conceptual potential of historical objects as subjects. As Michael Mitchell asserts, “He’s become a flaneur who frequents flea markets, especially in France, and a celebrator, archivist and explorer of the deeper meanings of life’s ephemera.”⁶³

The Dada Portraits (2010) is a series of black-and-white diagrams, each of which Maggs labelled with the names of key artists from the Dada movement. As seen in *The Dada Portraits: Marcel Duchamp* (fig. 5.22), their names are set in a narrow sans serif typeface and centred beneath the drawing. Twenty oversize “portraits” comprise the work, and the series is hung in a row. Spring Hurlbut first drew Maggs’s attention to the nineteenth-century French carpenters’ diagrams at a flea market in France. He “was initially very excited ... But his excitement soon

⁶² Arnaud Maggs to Kitty Scott, December 17, 2003, “Chalmers” folder, Estate of Arnaud Maggs.

⁶³ Michael Mitchell, “Abracadabra: Arnaud Maggs Makes Portrait Magic,” *Canadian Art* 27, no. 3 (Fall 2010): 142.

turned to dismay,” Mitchell explains. “The drawings were perfect themselves. Whatever could he do to legitimately claim authorship?”⁶⁴ *The Dada Portraits* are an extension of the visual archive works that Maggs began in the 1990s, in which he makes use of paper ephemera both formally and conceptually. It is also an extension of his photographic portraiture. This time, however, Maggs makes the portraits through visual association. “It is possible to interpret these complicated drafting plans as constructs: Cubist heads, Constructivist faces, and Dada experiments,” he wrote.⁶⁵ The complex network of overlapping lines and the semicircular shapes in Plate 49, for example, reminded Maggs of the faceted motion in Marcel Duchamp’s *Nude Descending a Staircase* (1912). This series of portraits is a naming project in the readymade tradition of Duchamp. Capturing the often-nonsensical spirit of Dada, Maggs attaches a name to each drawing, thereby declaring the work a portrait through the act of labelling. Once Maggs began to see portraits in the architectural drawings, as Mitchell points out, he determined that the male artists were seen in profile and the females were frontal views (fig. 5.23)⁶⁶ — a structural and conceptual remnant from his analytical photographic portraits.

The Dada Portraits continue Maggs’s dialogue with the art historical past. Though rooted in history, they also mark a departure from some of his other ephemera-based work. By ascribing names to unrelated diagrams, Maggs’s portraits are mischievous inventions rather than documentation. “Taxonomies and systems of identification have previously been the foundations of my work,” Maggs wrote. “This new project is about altering a system, and

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Arnaud Maggs, unsent project statement, May 1, 2010, “OAC” folder, Estate of Arnaud Maggs.

⁶⁶ Mitchell, “Abracadabra,” 142.

imposing my own system in its place.”⁶⁷ In the early part of the twentieth century, typography often played a central role in artistic expression. Many artists, including the Dadaists, explored ideas through poetry and typographic form. Aligned with the strategies of the Dadaists themselves, Maggs appropriated found material and relied on typographic interventions to reshape the meaning of his source images

The Dada Portraits is also a design project. Maggs commissioned Claire Dawson and Fidel Peña of Underline Studio to execute the typographic treatments for the title names of each work. His goals were twofold: he wanted a sans serif typeface that was reflective of the Dada period, and he wanted to ensure that the typography did not take over.⁶⁸ Ultimately, the artists’ names were set in Akzidenz Grotesk Light Condensed. Originally introduced in 1898 and later expanded in the 1960s, Akzidenz Grotesk was a mainstay of modern graphic design, beginning in the 1920s, and it offered the neutrality that Dawson and Peña were after for *The Dada Portraits*. “Akzidenz Grotesk Light Condensed felt like a nice combination of being from the period,” Peña explains, “but also contemporary and conspicuous enough to not overpower his work.”⁶⁹

Maggs died on November 17, 2012, at the age of eighty-six, at Kensington Hospice in Toronto. Before his death his art career was recognized with a 2012 survey exhibition titled *Arnaud Maggs: Identification*, at the National Gallery of Canada. He was also honoured with the second annual Scotiabank Photography Award. A related exhibition at The Image Centre (IMC,

⁶⁷ Maggs, unsent project statement.

⁶⁸ Peña, email discussion.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

previously the Ryerson Image Centre), Toronto, was mounted in 2013. In 2012 Maggs completed his final artwork, *After Nadar*. Together, these final projects represent the culmination of his interests in collections and history, and they emphasize how he foregrounded the presentation of his work, particularly when using found materials.

The exhibition at the National Gallery included work from each stage of Maggs's art career. It underscored collecting and presentation as central to his way of thinking and working as an artist. As Josée Drouin-Brisebois, who curated the exhibition, stresses, examples of his archival source materials were incorporated to "evince the shift that occurs as Maggs photographs and further transforms found objects by altering their scale and ordering them to create typologies."⁷⁰ To advance this aim, Drouin-Brisebois developed plans for three vitrines at the gallery but pitched the idea to Maggs that he could organize one of them himself. "He got very excited about that," she explains. "We shipped boxes of material from his studio ... and [during installation] Arnaud just started playing like he was a little kid."⁷¹ Although Maggs's collections were featured in home decorating magazines in the 1960s, these vitrines connected his personal collection with a viewing public in physical space for the first time (fig. 5.24). The inclusion of archival material and items from his collection emphasized the significance of objects and space to his work. As Drouin-Brisebois asserts, the vitrine arrangement was "a work of art in and of itself."⁷²

⁷⁰ Josée Drouin-Brisebois, "Arnaud Maggs: Portrait of a Working Artist," in *Arnaud Maggs: Identification* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 2012), 30.

⁷¹ Drouin-Brisebois, discussion.

⁷² Ibid.

The IMC exhibition highlighted Maggs's return to portraiture, featuring *The Dada Portraits* (2010) and *After Nadar, Pierrot Turning* (2012; fig. 5.25). *After Nadar, Pierrot Turning* and its companion work *After Nadar* (2012; not shown at the IMC) are self-portraits. Though Maggs appeared before the camera throughout his career, these are among the rare self-portraits that he deemed artworks. They follow only two other explicit self-portraits made by the artist. The first is *Self-Portrait* (1983; fig. 4.34), which, like *After Nadar: Pierrot Turning*, comprises twelve images of Maggs in rotation. The other is the text-based *15* (1989; fig. 3.1), in which he details his life story. Much in the same way that *15* is connected to storytelling and mythologizing, Maggs's final self-portraits are performative.

After Nadar (fig. 5.26) is a series of nine autobiographical self-portraits of Maggs dressed in costume as Pierrot, the Italian *commedia dell'arte* character celebrated in French pantomimes of the 1800s. In this final artwork, Maggs continues to connect to history, particularly the history of art and photography. This time, though, he inserts himself in the story, simultaneously negotiating both historical and contemporary territory. As the title suggests, the works were modelled after a series of portraits by prominent nineteenth-century photographer and caricaturist Nadar (Gaspard-Félix Tournachon) and his brother, Adrien Tournachon (fig. 5.27). The brothers made over fifteen images of Charles Deburau performing as Pierrot. Maggs had a costume custom-made for his photographic performance: the loose clown attire characteristic of Pierrot. Exaggerated buttons adorn the front of his voluminous shirt, just as they do in Deburau's costume, and oversized buckles on his slippers mimic those seen peeking from beneath Pierrot's wide-leg pants in the nineteenth-century photographs. Though it is absent from Deburau's Pierrot, Maggs's costume features the added theatrical

flourish of a pleated ruff that frames his painted face. His creamy white costume and white face paint pop dramatically against the warm black studio backdrop.

When Maggs first turned to fine art, he consciously aligned himself with artists. In *After Nadar*, he makes explicit historical references. In so doing, he similarly asserts a position for himself within the context of the history of photography. *After Nadar* engages deliberately with the medium's past, demonstrating his understanding of historical context. The strategic incorporation of both historical references and the self pays homage to Nadar and situates Maggs in the ongoing story of the medium. His alignment with Nadar in particular is interesting for a number of reasons. Akin to Maggs — and Maggs's high school inspiration, Lucius Beebe — Nadar is often attributed various titles: journalist, playwright, caricaturist, photographer, and even aeronaut. As Sophie Hackett points out, "the two men have led parallel lives in some ways, working in the graphic arts — Nadar as a caricaturist and Maggs as a typographer and graphic designer — before moving on to photographer, reinventing themselves at mid-life."⁷³ Moreover, Nadar's photography career straddles both art and commerce. Resonating with Maggs's early commercial careers in design and photography, photo studios in the late eighteenth and early twentieth centuries were largely commercial enterprises that focused on portraiture. Like Maggs, Nadar understood the power of publicity, and it has been suggested that his prowess in this domain helped to revive his brother Adrien's struggling photography studio. But despite the commercialism at the core of early photographic studios, Nadar's work is cemented in the art historical canon, mirroring Maggs's aspiration to transcend the

⁷³ Sophie Hackett, "Arnaud Maggs Takes a Turn as Pierrot," in *Arnaud Maggs*, by Arnaud Maggs, Doina Popescu, Maia-Mari Sutnik, and Sophie Hackett (Göttingen/Toronto: Steidl/Scotiabank Photography Prize, 2013), 115.

boundaries of commercial art. Furthermore, Maggs — and another of his inspirations, Andy Warhol — shared Nadar’s fascination with celebrity and documenting prominent figures. His choice to directly reference his predecessor is both intentional and fitting.

Maggs positions several artists in conversation in *After Nadar*: himself, Nadar, and Debureau, and to this list Robert Enright adds Maggs’s friend Katuska Doleatto, herself an artist and Maggs’s assistant for the shoot.⁷⁴ Maggs’s contemporary interpretation of the historic images portrays the artist in full colour and at a grand scale, creating a compelling invitation to his performance. Following the approach he took in most of his later works, the *After Nadar* images are hung in a row. Uncharacteristically, however, there is no defined order.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, narratives emerge, which, Hackett asserts, “seem to add up to a life, an autobiography acted out before our eyes.”⁷⁶ The series offers a visual summation of the artist’s biography. Though Maggs is performing, the work also captures his mischievous spirit; it is at once serious and playful.

Reactions to the work were mixed. Art writers and curators relished the layered references and the sense of mischief. Robert Enright refers to the series as a “complicated loop of aesthetic reiterations.”⁷⁷ Philip Monk suggests that a “game is afoot,” asking “who is hunting/haunting and imitating/honouring whom here? It’s like a pantomime unfolding before us.”⁷⁸ And Hackett explores the work as a playful rumination on the life of an artist: “Here is a character who has worked and loved and collected and played and looked at the world around

⁷⁴ Enright, “Designs on Life,” 44.

⁷⁵ Hackett, “Arnaud Maggs Takes a Turn,” 115.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Enright, “Designs on Life,” 44.

⁷⁸ Philip Monk, “Elegiac Pantomime: Arnaud Maggs After Nadar,” *Canadian Art* 31, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 86.

him with deep and compassionate curiosity. Maggs Pierrot clearly enacts the perils and joys of a life in art, but also of a life lived artfully.”⁷⁹ Past colleagues from his careers in design and commercial photography remain unconvinced by the performative self-portraits. Paul Orenstein, for example, acknowledges that the work was challenging to reconcile: “The stuff with the clown thing at the end, I don’t get that at all.”⁸⁰ Keith Branscombe admitted, “Those photos of the clown, I find those unpleasant ... I think it’s to do with clowns — I’ve never liked them.”⁸¹ Similarly, Jim Donohue found the work to be “a little bizarre,” but as he insisted, “that was Arnaud ... Arnaud was one of those guys who when you’re talking about him you’re talking about a really interesting guy who was unpredictable in where he’d go and what he’d do.”⁸²

Maggs first encountered the historical images at the National Gallery of Canada’s bookstore in 2011: “I just looked at [Nadar’s photographs] and thought, this is going to work for me.”⁸³ He performs for the camera a number of roles related to his own life story. “I did my version of the Pierrot the Photographer,” Maggs told Enright, “and all the others are self-referential.”⁸⁴ In addition to *Pierrot the Photographer* (fig. 5.28), the series includes *Pierrot and Bauchet* (holding an oversized prop advertising Bauchet film), *Pierrot the Archivist*, *Pierrot the Painter*, *Pierrot the Collector*, *Pierrot the Musician*, *Pierrot the Storyteller*, *Pierrot in love*, and finally *Pierrot receives a letter*. A variety of props and cues signal details of his life and career.

⁷⁹ Hackett, “Arnaud Maggs Takes a Turn,” 116.

⁸⁰ Paul Orenstein, discussion with author, August 9, 2017.

⁸¹ Keith Branscombe, discussion with author, September 14, 2017.

⁸² Jim Donohue, discussion with author, August 10, 2017. Marjorie Harris shared similar views: “You know the sort of silly picture of him where he dresses up as the clown ... that was so Arnaud”; discussion with author, October 4, 2017.

⁸³ Enright, “Designs on Life,” 55.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

For instance, in *Storyteller* (fig. 5.29), Maggs's Pierrot, perusing a vintage book, seems to delight in the contents of its pages, just as Maggs did upon seeing Nadar's *Pierrot the Photographer*. He appears twice in *Pierrot the Archivist* (fig. 5.30). Maggs as Pierrot stands next to a stack of archival boxes, his gaze fixed upon his own photographic self-portrait, a frontal view.

The power of *After Nadar* is its demonstration of photography's capacity to represent the past, the present, and the future all at once. Most affecting is Maggs's *Pierrot receives a letter* (fig. 5.31). In this photograph, Maggs makes another direct reference to his own practice. Pierrot holds up a single mourning envelope from the collection that formed Maggs's *Notification* series. His worried brows are pronounced and the black X of the envelope is centred on his chest. *After Nadar* "is the curtain call," says Mike Robinson. "He knows he's dying."⁸⁵ *After Nadar* will always be inflected with poignancy, knowing that these autobiographical and memorializing self-portraits were completed very shortly before he died. The work was first shown at the Susan Hobbs Gallery in March 2012, just eight months before his death.

⁸⁵ Robinson, discussion. It was his box camera that Maggs posed with in *Pierrot the Photographer*.

Chapter 5: Illustrations



Figure 5.1 Arnaud Maggs, *Joseph Beuys, 100 Frontal Views*, 1980. Installation in its original configuration at the Canadian Centre of Photography, Toronto, 1982. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.

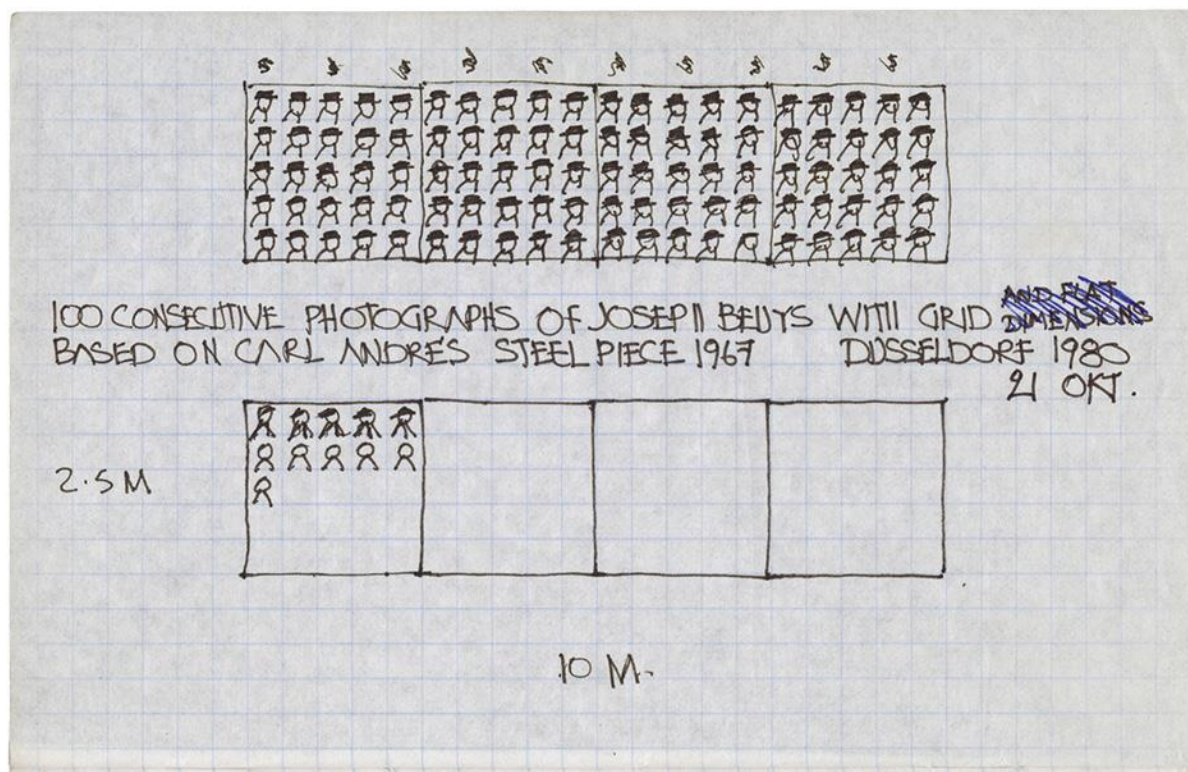


Figure 5.2 Arnaud Maggs, layout sketch of *Joseph Beuys, 100 Profile Views*, c. 1980. Ink on paper, 11 x 17 cm. Library and Archives Canada (LAC), Ottawa, R7959-5460. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.

Figure 5.3 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. It was an installation view of Carl Andre's floor sculpture *5 x 20 Altstadt Rectangle*: Carl Andre, *5 x 20 Altstadt Rectangle*, 1967. Hot-rolled steel, 0.5 cm thick; 2.5 x 10 m. Panza Collection, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York. The image can be found online here: Anne Cibola, *Arnaud Maggs: Life & Work* (Toronto: Art Canada Institute, 2022). <https://www.aci-iac.ca/art-books/arnaud-maggs/>

Figure 5.3 Carl Andre, *5 x 20 Altstadt Rectangle*, 1967. Hot-rolled steel, 0.5 cm thick; 2.5 x 10 m. Panza Collection, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, 91.3667. © Carl Andre / VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / CARCC Ottawa 2024. Photo by Sally Ritts, © Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York. All Rights Reserved.



Figure 5.4 Arnaud Maggs, *Les factures de Lupé, Recto 1/3* (left) and *Les factures de Lupé, Verso 1/3* (right), 1999–2001. Thirty-six Fuji Crystal Archive photographs, 52 x 42 cm each. Installation at Susan Hobbs Gallery, Toronto. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery. Photo by Isaac Applebaum.



Figure 5.5 Arnaud Maggs, *Contamination*, 2007. Chromogenic prints, 84 x 104 cm. Installation at Susan Hobbs Gallery, Toronto. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery. Photo by Isaac Applebaum.

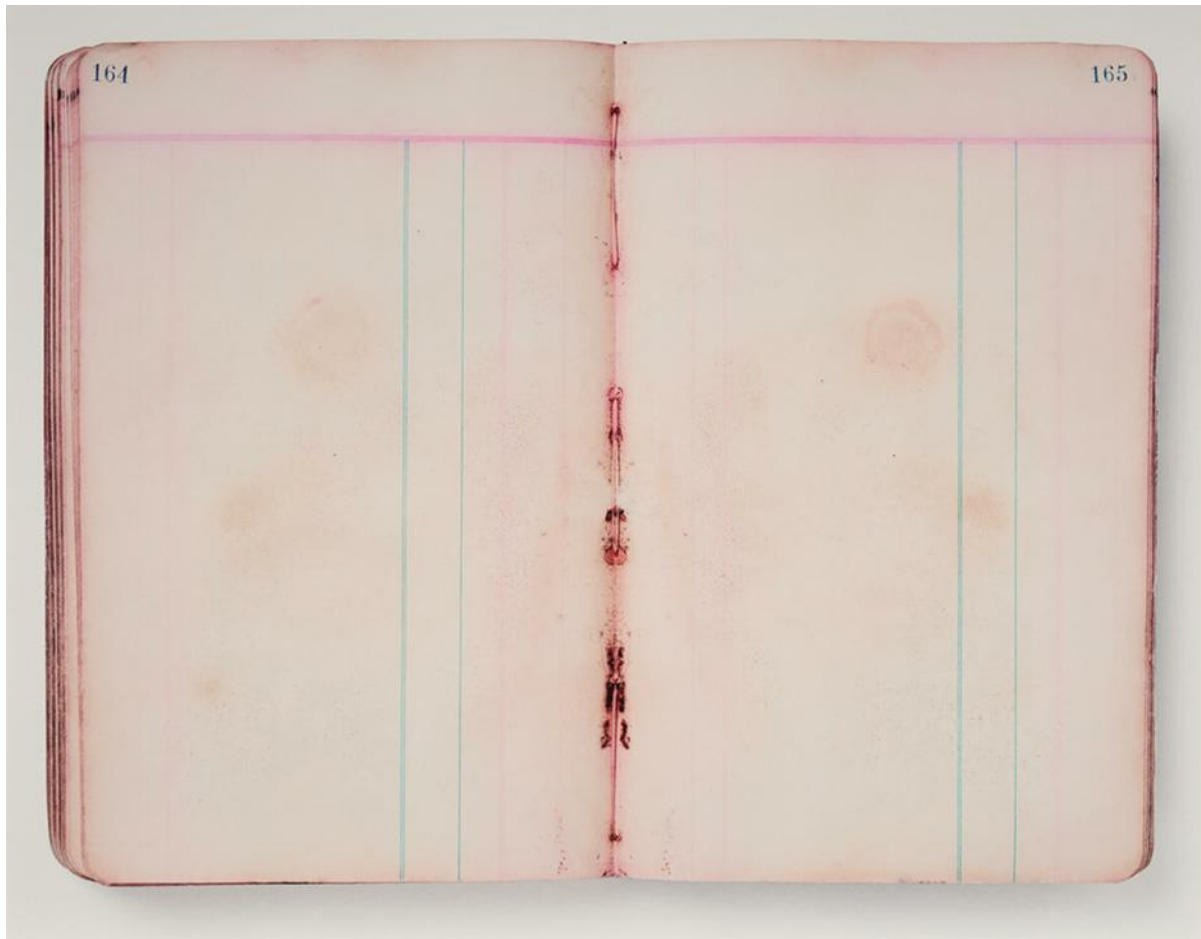


Figure 5.6 Arnaud Maggs, *Contamination 164/165*, 2007. Inkjet print, 84 x 104 cm. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, 45662.1-15; purchased 2013. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figure 5.7 Arnaud Maggs, *3269/3077*, 1986. Eight panels, oil on canvas, 183 x 244 cm (overall). Art Gallery of Hamilton, 1994.41; gift of the artist, 1994. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.

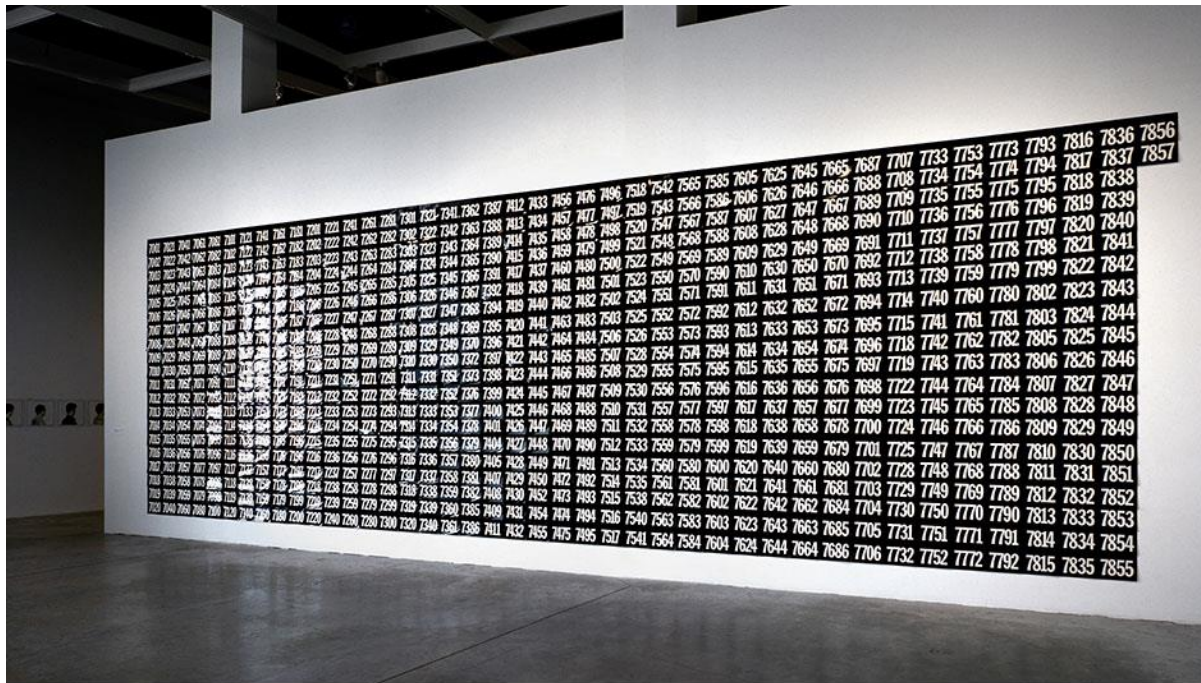


Figure 5.8 Arnaud Maggs, *The Complete Prestige 12" Jazz Catalogue*, 1988. 828 azo dye prints (Cibachrome), 20.3 x 25.4 cm each, 4 x 10.5 m installed. Installation at the Power Plant, Toronto, 1999. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; gift of Spring Hurlbut, Toronto, 2013. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery. Photo by Gabor Szilasi.

Figure 5.9 Arnaud Maggs, *The Complete Prestige 12" Jazz Catalogue* (detail), 1988. 828 azo dye prints (Cibachrome), 20.3 x 25.4 cm each, 4 x 10.5 m installed. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; gift of Spring Hurlbut, Toronto, 2013. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.

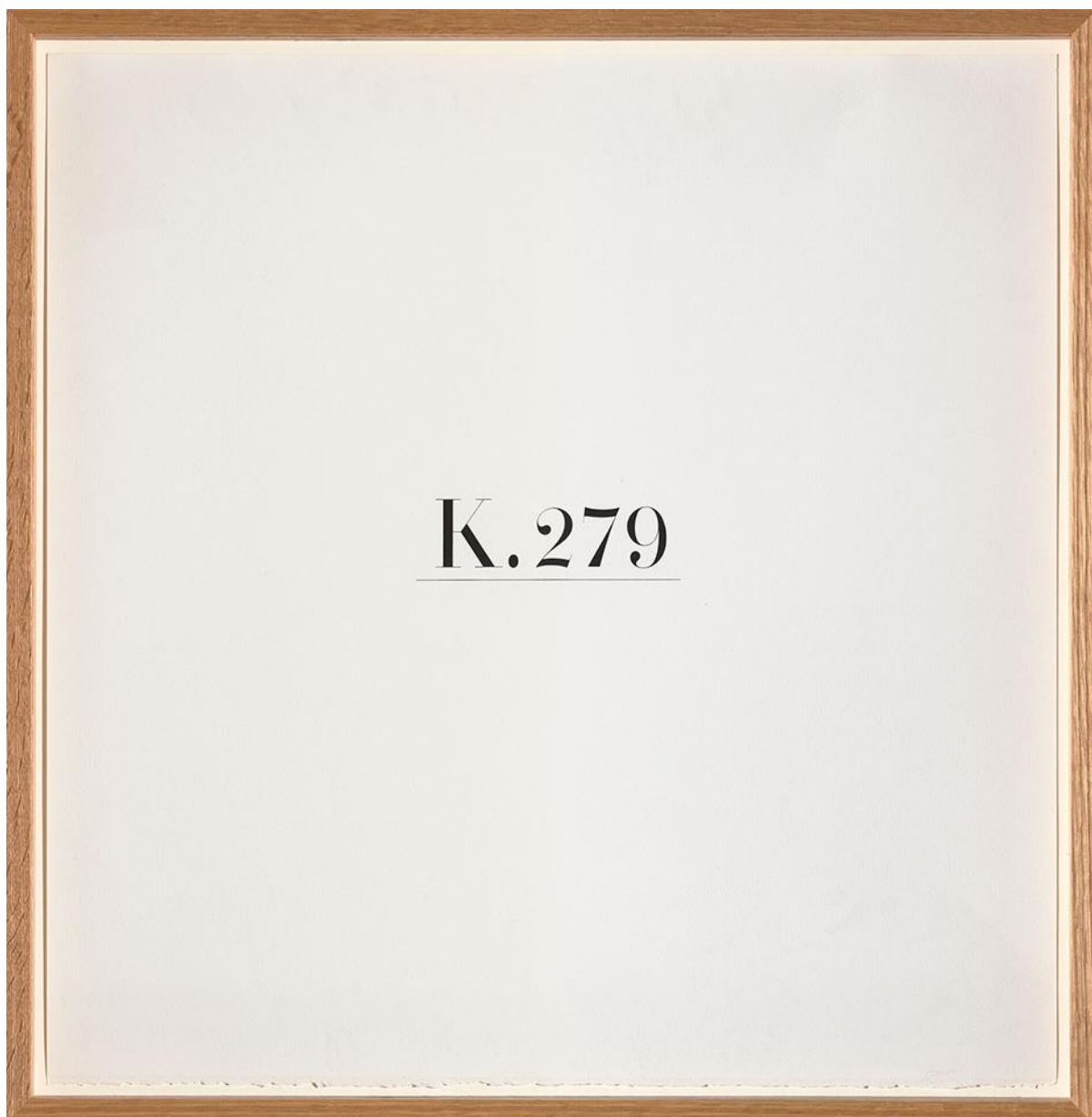


Figure 5.10 Arnaud Maggs, *Köchel Series: Eighteen Piano Sonatas (for Ed Cleary)* (detail), 1990. Letterpress photo-engraving on wove paper, approx. 51 x 51 cm (approx.). National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, 38375.1; gift of the artist, Toronto, 1996. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.

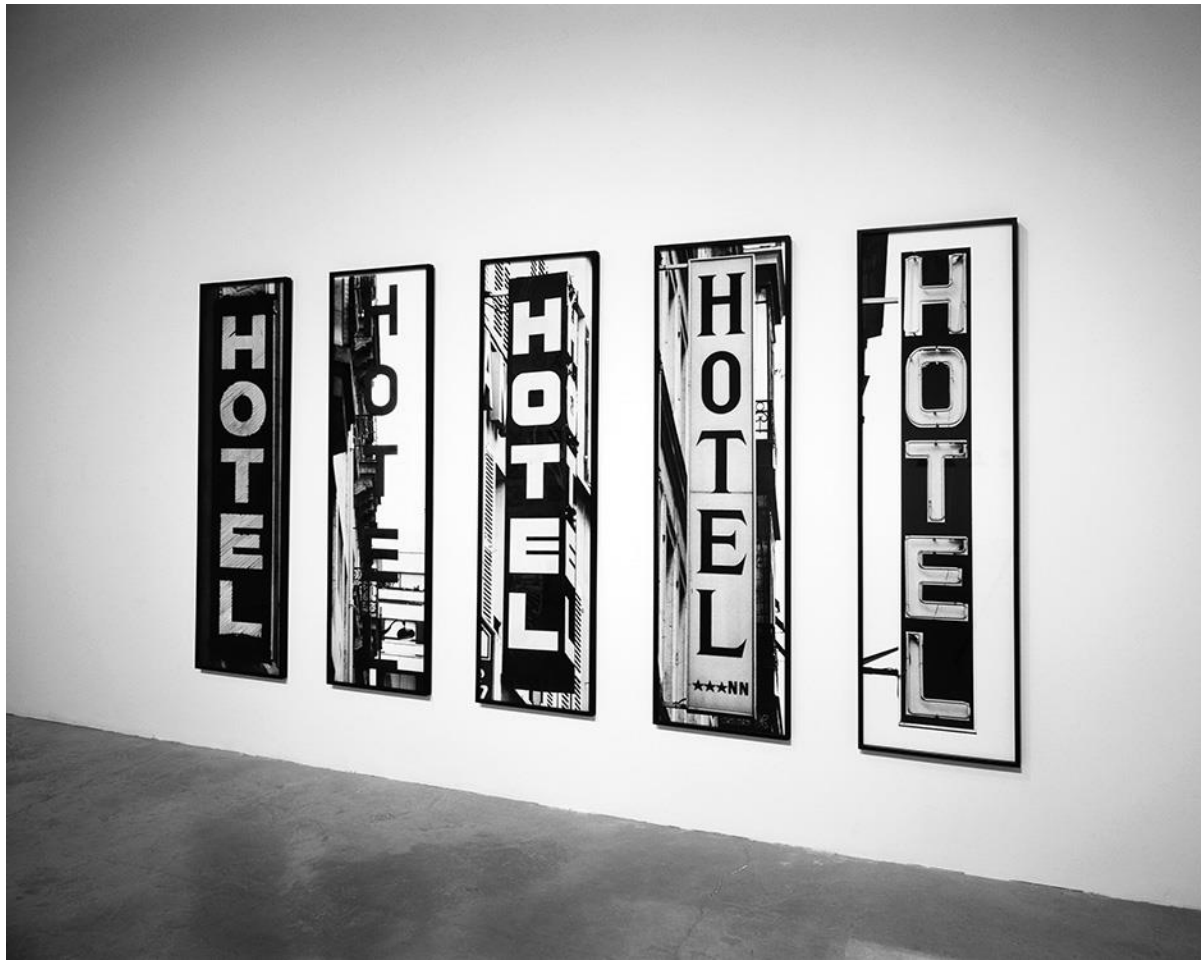


Figure 5.11 Arnaud Maggs, *Hotel Series* (details), 1991. Gelatin silver prints, 185.1 x 53 cm each. Installation at the Power Plant, Toronto, 1991. This arrangement shows Maggs's move toward displaying a selection of signs that shows variety; the fourth sign features a serif typeface, whereas the others are sans serif faces. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery. Photo credit: Arnaud Maggs.

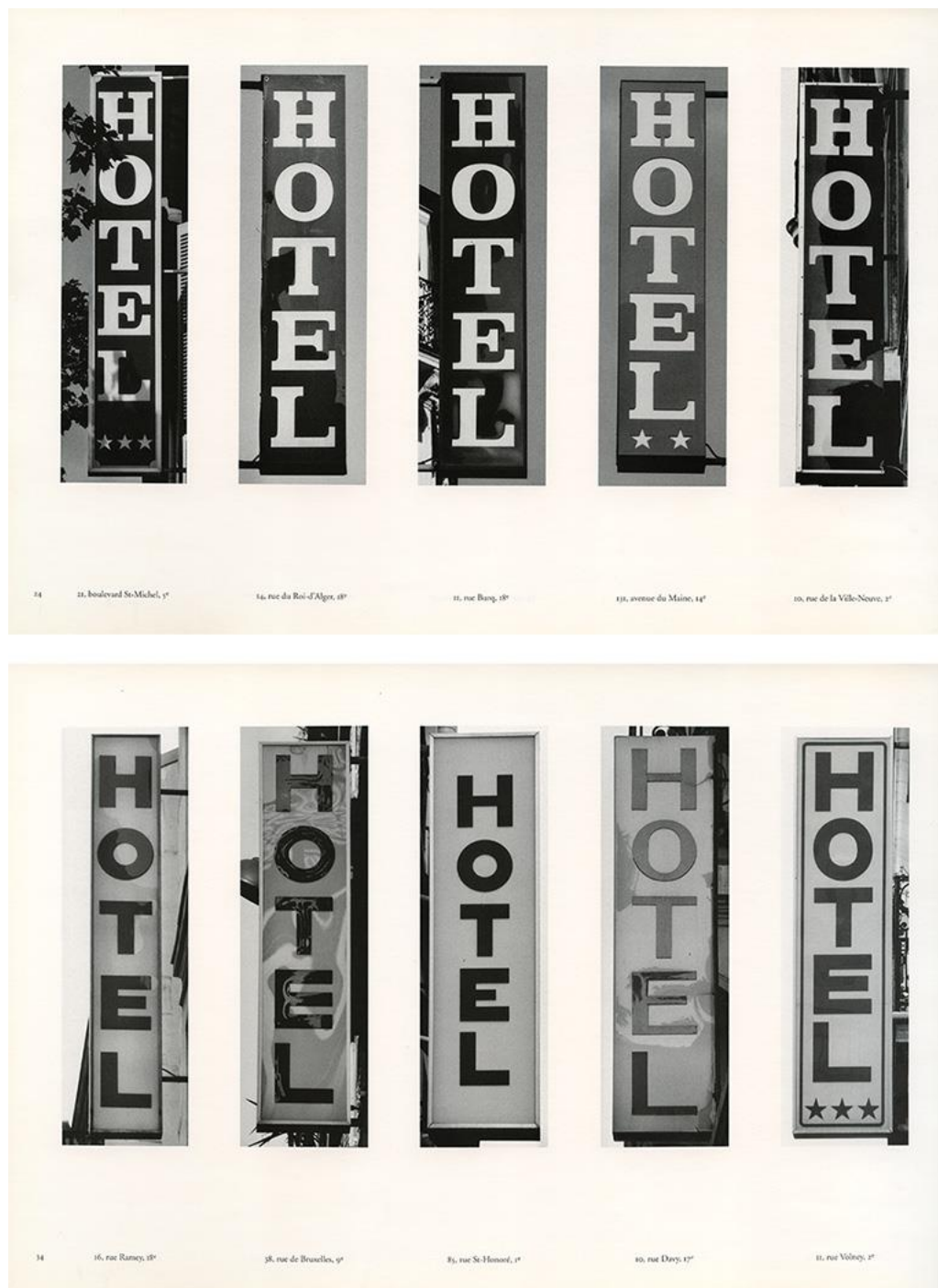


Figure 5.12 Arnaud Maggs, pages 24 and 34 from Arnaud Maggs and Bruce Ferguson, *Hotel* (Toronto: Art Metropole, 1993). Designed by Ed Cleary. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.

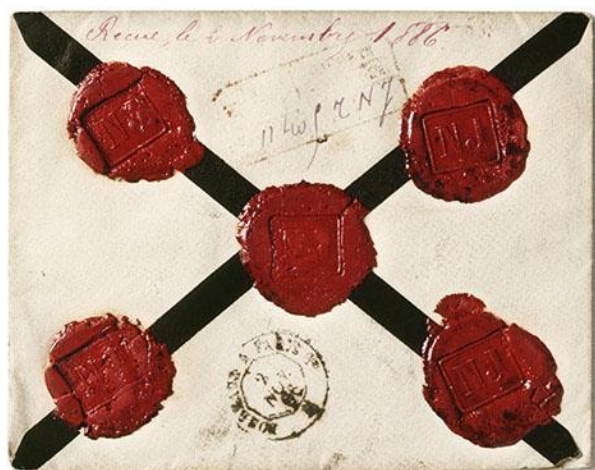


Figure 5.13 Arnaud Maggs, *Notification xiii*, 1996 (printed 1998). 192 dye coupler prints (Fujicolor), laminated to Plexiglas, 3.23 x 12.2 m (installed). National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, 39759.1-192; purchased 1998. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery. Photo by Laurence Cook.

Figure 5.14 Arnaud Maggs, *Notification xiii* (detail), 1996 (printed 1998). 192 dye coupler prints (Fujicolor), laminated to Plexiglas, 3.23 x 12.2 m (installed). National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, 39759.1-192; purchased 1998. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.

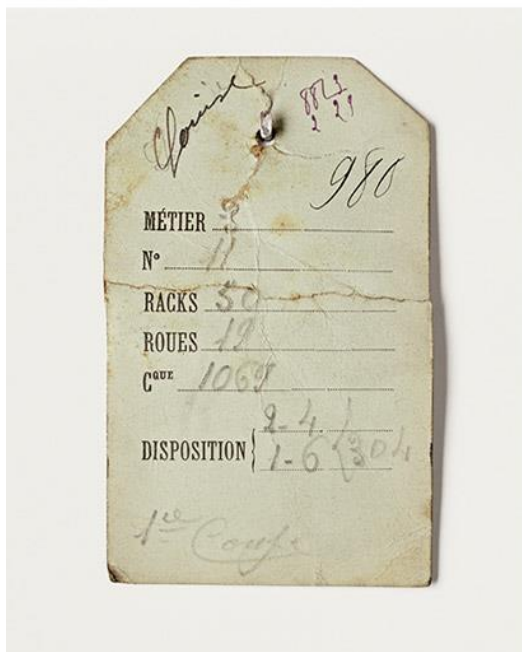


Figure 5.15 Arnaud Maggs, *Travail des enfants dans l'industrie: Les étiquettes*, 1994. Chromogenic prints, 50.8 x 40 cm each, 30.5 x 13.2 m installed. Installation at Susan Hobbs Gallery, Toronto. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery. Photo by Isaac Applebaum.

Figure 5.16 Arnaud Maggs, *Travail des enfants dans l'industrie: Les étiquettes* (detail), 1994. Chromogenic print, 50.8 x 40 cm. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figure 5.17 Arnaud Maggs, *Répertoire*, 1997. Forty-eight chromogenic prints (Fujicolor), laminated to Plexiglas and framed, 250 x 720 cm overall. Installation at Susan Hobbs Gallery, Toronto. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, 2003.81.1–48; gift of the artist, 2003. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery. Photo by Isaac Applebaum.

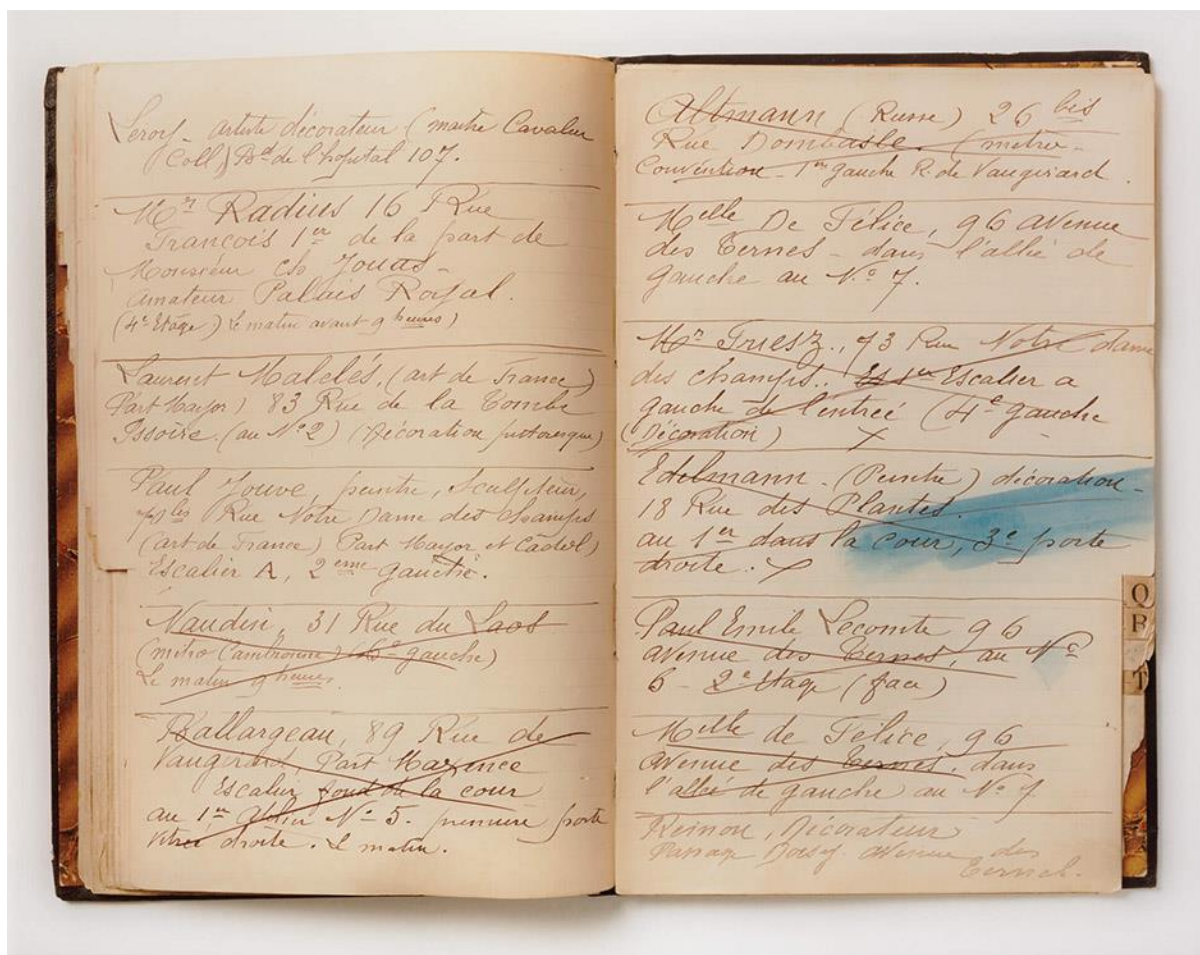


Figure 5.18 Arnaud Maggs, *Répertoire*, 1997. Forty-eight chromogenic prints (Fujicolor), laminated to Plexiglas and framed, 250 x 720 cm overall. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, 2003.81.1-48; gift of the artist, 2003. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figure 5.19 Arnaud Maggs, *Cercles chromatiques de M.E. Chevreul* (details), 2006. Eleven archival pigment prints, 99.1 x 81.3 cm each. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.

GREENS.				
N ^o .	Names	Colours	ANIMAL.	VEGETABLE. MINERAL.
54	Grass Green		<i>Scorpaenus Tobilis.</i>	<i>General Apperance of Grass Fields. Swedish Paper.</i>
55	Dark Green		<i>Neck of Mallard.</i>	<i>Upper Bark of Yew Leaves. Opals.</i>
56	Light Green		<i>Under Side of lower Wings of Orange tip Butterfly.</i>	<i>Upper Bark of Leaves of many Night Shade.</i>
57	Natural Green		<i>Neck of Elder Snake.</i>	<i>Ripe French Pear. Hyacinth like Lustre.</i>
58	Asparagus Green		<i>Brimstone Butterfly.</i>	<i>Variiegated Hares-shoe Geranium.</i>
59	Olive Green			<i>Foliage of Lignum vitae. Epideote Olive etc.</i>
60	Oil Green		<i>Animal and Shell of common Water Snail.</i>	<i>Songspirell Apple from the Wall. Beryl.</i>
61	Sisal Green		<i>Sisal.</i>	<i>Ripe Codrums Pear. Irish Pitcher Apple. Crass Min.</i>

ORANGE.				
N ^o .	Names	Colours	ANIMAL.	VEGETABLE. MINERAL.
76	Dutch Orange		<i>Crest of Golden Crested Wren.</i>	<i>Crucians. Marigold. Streak of Red Opaloid. Spindle tree.</i>
77	Buff Orange		<i>Streak from the Eye of the Hine Fishes.</i>	<i>Stamina of the large White Orchid. Nat-white.</i>
78	Opaloid Orange		<i>The Neck Buff of the Golden Pheasant. Belly of the Purple Nod.</i>	<i>Indian Grass.</i>
79	Brownish Orange		<i>Eyes of the largest Fleishly.</i>	<i>Style of the orange Lily. Dark Brazilian Topaz.</i>
80	Reddish Orange		<i>Lower Wings of Tiger Moth.</i>	<i>Hemimelic. Buff Mahoeus.</i>
81	Deep Reddish Orange		<i>Gold Fish. Intre abstracted.</i>	<i>Scarlet Leadington Apple.</i>

Figures 5.20 and 5.21 Arnaud Maggs, *Werner's Nomenclature of Colours – Green* (left) and *Werner's Nomenclature of Colours – Orange* (right), 2005. Paper mounted on aluminum; UltraChrome digital photograph, 111.2 x 81.6 cm. Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa, ON, 2005MA7a-m; purchased with assistance of a Canada Council for the Arts Acquisition Assistance grant, 2005. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.

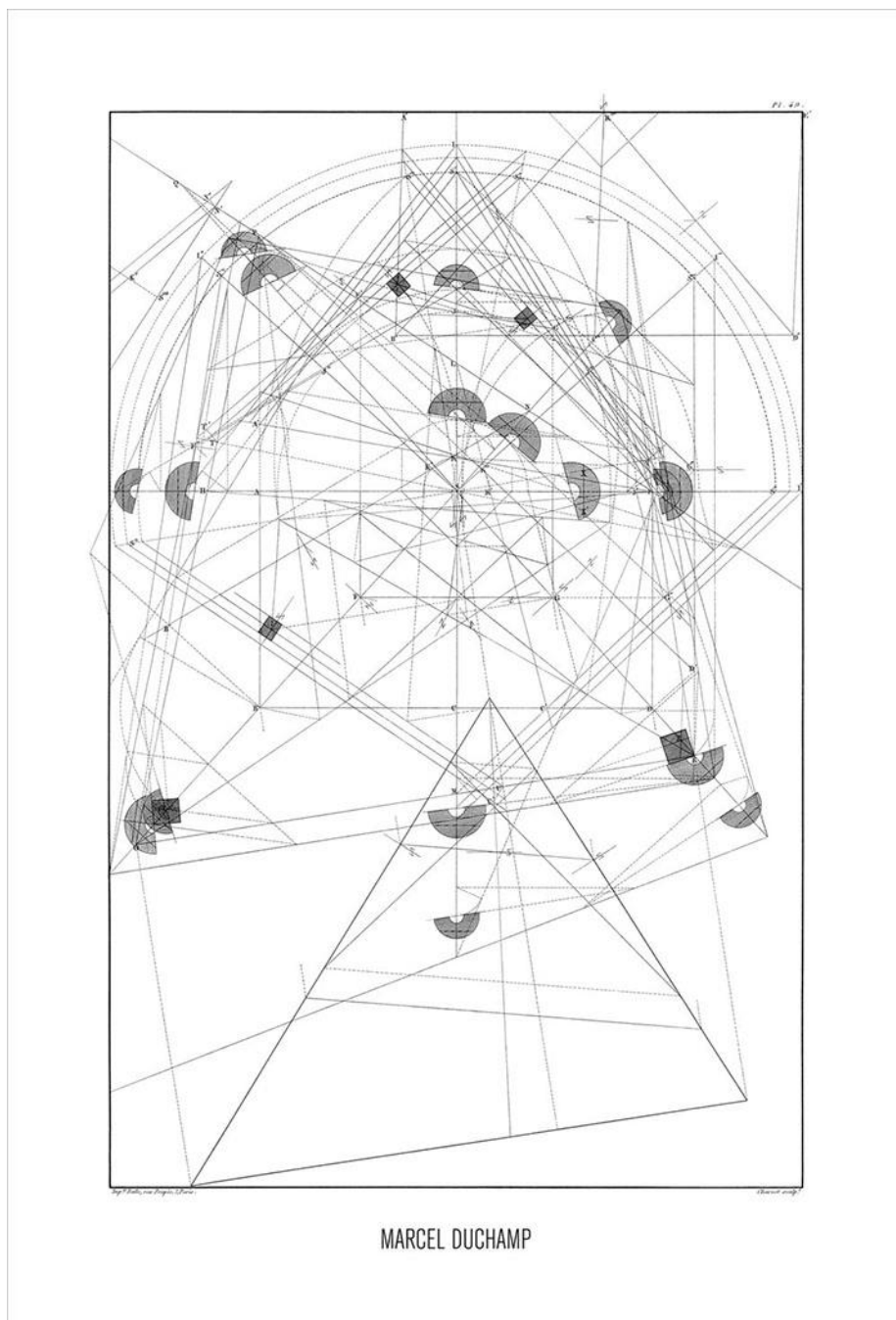


Figure 5.22 Arnaud Maggs, *The Dada Portraits: Marcel Duchamp*, 2010. Archival pigment print, 103.5 x 72.1 cm.
© Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.

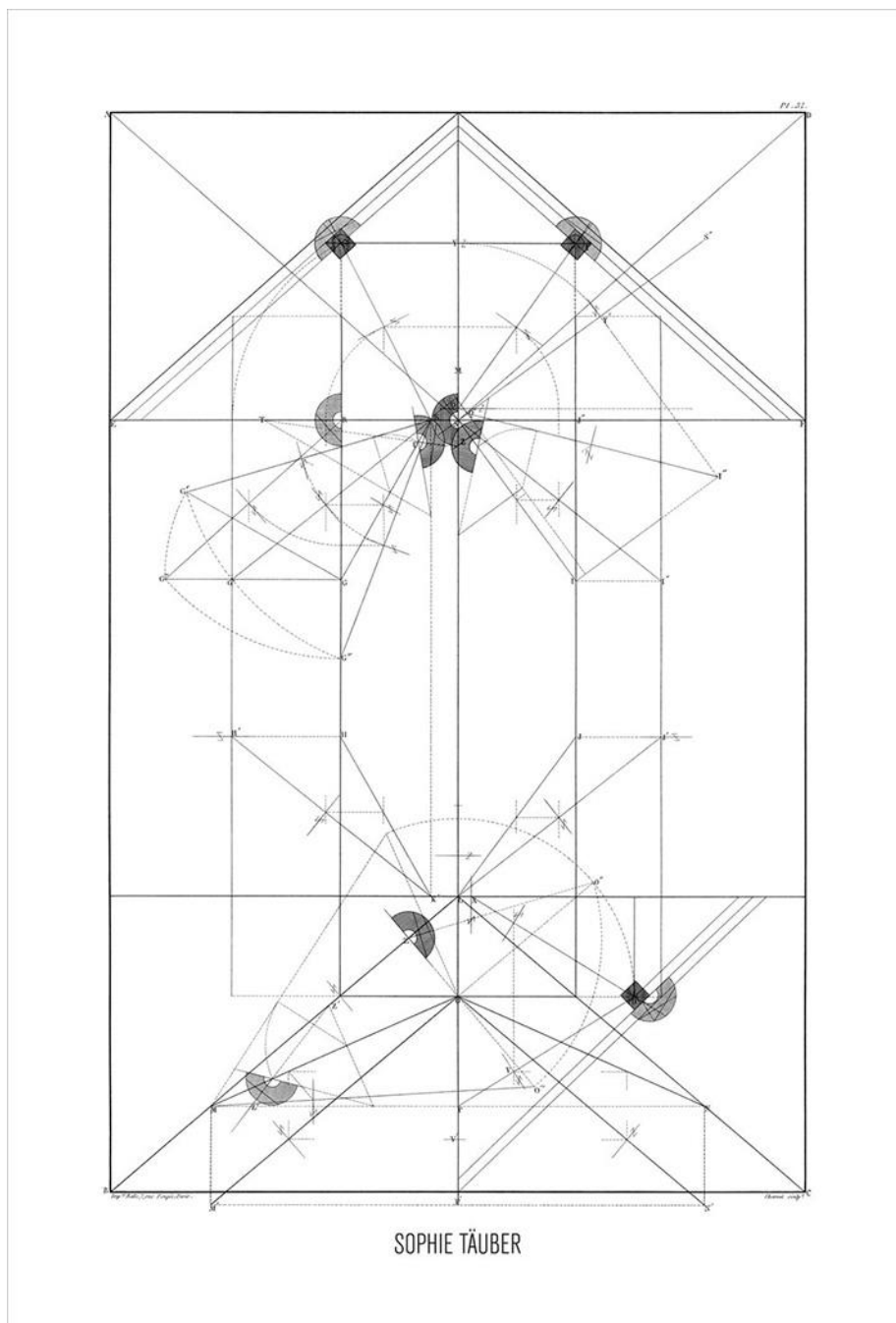


Figure 5.23 Arnaud Maggs, *The Dada Portraits: Sophie Täuber*, 2010. Archival pigment print, 103.5 x 72.1 cm.
© Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figure 5.24 Still from the film *Spring & Arnaud*, 2013, directed by Katherine Knight and Marcia Connolly. Courtesy of Katherine Knight. © Site Media.



Figure 5.25 Arnaud Maggs, *After Nadar: Pierrot Turning*, 2012. Twelve chromogenic prints, 49.53 x 42.55 cm each, 1.5 x 1.7 m installed. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figure 5.26 Arnaud Maggs, *After Nadar*, 2012. Nine Chromira prints mounted on Dibond, 96 x 75 cm each (framed). Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, 2012/11.1–.9; purchased with assistance of the Ivey Foundation Contemporary Art Fund and support of the Canada Council for the Arts Acquisition Assistance Program, 2012. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figure 5.27 Adrien Tournachon, *Pierrot photographe*, ca. 1854–55. Salt paper print, 27.3 x 20.1 cm. Musée Carnavalet, Histoire de Paris, PH4837.



Figure 5.28 Arnaud Maggs, *After Nadar: Pierrot the Photographer*, 2012. Chromira print mounted on Dibond, 96 x 75 cm (framed). Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, 2012/11.6; purchased with assistance of the Ivey Foundation Contemporary Art Fund and support of the Canada Council for the Arts Acquisition Assistance Program, 2012. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figure 5.29 Arnaud Maggs, *After Nadar: Pierrot the Storyteller*, 2012. Chromira print mounted on Dibond, 96 x 75 cm (framed). Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, 2012/11.7; purchased with assistance of the Ivey Foundation Contemporary Art Fund and support of the Canada Council for the Arts Acquisition Assistance Program, 2012. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figure 5.30 Arnaud Maggs, *After Nadar: Pierrot the Archivist*, 2012. Chromira print mounted on Dibond, 96 x 75 cm (framed). Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, 2012/11.1; purchased with assistance of the Ivey Foundation Contemporary Art Fund and support of the Canada Council for the Arts Acquisition Assistance Program, 2012. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.



Figure 5.31 Arnaud Maggs, *After Nadar: Pierrot receives a letter*, 2012. Chromira print mounted on Dibond, 96 x 75 cm (framed). Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, 2012/11.4; purchased with assistance of the Ivey Foundation Contemporary Art Fund and support of the Canada Council for the Arts Acquisition Assistance Program, 2012. © Arnaud Maggs, courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery.

Conclusion

If one of the definitions we have concerning art is that it serves its public by reflecting and explaining the world at a particular moment in history, it is hard to believe that design does not serve in a similar way. In any case, the issue has become blurred since art currently seems mostly about money, and designers seem to be increasingly concerned about ethics, the environment, and their effect on the world. There seems to be much confusion about what we mean when we use the word art. I have a recommendation. We eliminate the word art and replace it with work...

— Milton Glaser¹

An underdeveloped history of applied art can lead to a skewed understanding of artistic motivations and development, an aggrandized notion of the artist as genius, and a denial of the productive interconnections between disciplines in the fine and applied arts. Canada needs a more comprehensive history of its visual culture, one that traces activity and development in both the fine and applied arts and explores their intersections. Such a history would help to dismantle traditional art historical biases, by more thoroughly recognizing overlaps between creative disciplines and acknowledging the importance of the applied arts in shaping, supporting, and — let's be honest — sustaining artistic activity in this country. As the limited literature on Canadian design history and the near-absence of material on Canada's editorial and fashion photography industries demonstrate, it is a challenge to contextualize the work of artists like Maggs, whose production straddled a range of disciplines over the course of his career. The dearth of material results in a limitation that extends beyond Maggs to others who

¹ Milton Glaser, *Art is Work* (New York: The Overlook Press, 2000), 7. See also, in the same publication, "Design and Ambiguity," 263.

have been excluded from the history, particularly those who may not have achieved success, as Maggs did, in the fine arts.

My purpose has not been to argue for the art status of design or commercial photography. However, Glaser's proposition remains relevant to the focus of this dissertation, as it underscores the significance of *work*. Maggs was a designer, a photographer, and an artist. It was all work — the noun. And it was also all work — the verb. Both connotations are fundamental to my assertions. Throughout my examination of Maggs's career and his career narrative, I have insisted that commercial practice need not be hidden or erased. Indeed, I have maintained that a close examination of Maggs's biography, including his commercial work history and related industry shifts, is necessary in order to more thoroughly understand both his artistic output and his motivations for shaping his career narrative in a particular way. My research, including the extensive interviews I conducted, firmly establishes Maggs's contributions to the applied arts in Canada in the realms of design and illustration and commercial photography, and demonstrates that his creative activity was framed by consistent visual and conceptual preoccupations over the course of his entire practice. Anecdotes from those who knew and worked with Maggs are particularly valuable in clarifying his motivations during periods of transition, which are underexamined in the literature. It is my view that this oral history helps to unsettle the mythology around his career narrative. What emerges instead is a picture of an artist whose formal and conceptual languages evolved over decades of *work*.

My examination of Maggs's early careers traces his trajectory alongside the changing landscapes of design and photography in the 1960s and '70s, addressing broader shifts in the perceptions of design, illustration, and photography. Contextualizing Maggs's work within

larger trends expands an understanding of his motivations, which again helps to offer a counternarrative to commonly published accounts of his career trajectory. Beyond Maggs, however, the related oral history contributes to expanding the limited history of the applied arts published in Canada. Interviews with fellow designers were challenging to secure, given the distance between now and then and the reality that many of Maggs's colleagues have died. But the insights I did record help to strengthen the characterizations of Maggs and also illuminate the shifting environment of design in the 1960s, both broadly and specifically at places he worked in Toronto. There remains, however, ample opportunity to further extend scholarship around Canada's design history in order to offer deeper analyses of the careers of well-known Canadian designers such as Carl Dair, Allan Fleming, Theo Dimson, Ed Cleary, and Jim Donohue, among others, as well as to better include the contributions of under-celebrated designers and art directors such as Keith Branscombe, Barry Zaid, and Doug and Hedda Johnson, for example. As noted in my introduction, Maggs met his first wife, Maggie Frew, at Brigden's Ltd., where she was employed as a fashion illustrator. The absence of information about women in Canadian design and illustration is glaring, presenting an additional opportunity for investigation and research.

Though the temporal distance is not as great, insights from colleagues at Canadian magazines who worked with Maggs when he was a commercial photographer were equally valuable, though also difficult to secure. Although literature is available about Canada's magazine and communications industries, particularly as it relates to American magazine publishing, little attention is given to the practitioners who contributed to shaping the way magazines looked. My research offers expansion here. Insights from Maggs's colleagues at the

time, including Jonathan Eby, Marjorie Harris, Paul Orenstein, and Donna Braggins, underline the shifting of the landscape during this period and offer clarity around the mutually influential relationships among photographers, editors, and art directors. Their anecdotes illuminate the kinds of assignments Maggs undertook for these publications and, moreover, they reveal the role he played in establishing the photographic look of magazines. My research in these domains points to the need for further exploration and analysis of the work and working relationships of designers, photographers, art directors, and editors who played a significant role in picturing the nation in the twentieth century, to borrow a term from Carol Payne, whose own research into the National Film Board of Canada's Still Photography Division has contributed to the knowledge base we currently have on working photographers.

My research has explored the intersections between Maggs's careers, which help to enrich an understanding of his work. His commercial practice, and his early exposure to Dair's lessons about the importance of establishing a visual unit, shaped and defined the formal and conceptual inquiries that came to characterize his works of art, including his thematic explorations of classification, his fundamental approaches to structure and spatial organization, and his emphasis on process and procedures, as well as his strategies of seriality and repetition. The intersections between art and design in Maggs's career offer examples of the intimate relationship between conceptual art and graphic design, and they point to the need for further exploration into the role that commercial practices have played more broadly in shaping conceptual art production.

As addressed in part 2, Maggs was equally concerned with both form and concept, and his later work in particular uses conceptualist language to explore expressive content. This

contributes to what sets him apart from other conceptual artists, and it is also, in my opinion, what shapes the interplay in his work that is frequently acknowledged by curators in the literature. Maggs's artistic practice frequently modelled the working relationships within commercial practice, whether it be through capitalizing on the labour and expertise of assistants or by working with designers on maquette layouts or typographic treatments. Counter to some conceptual art activity, however, his approach was not defined by a radical critique of artworld conventions and consumerism, as is the case with artists such as Barbara Kruger (b. 1945) and Jenny Holzer (b. 1950), for instance.² In many ways Maggs was not trying to challenge or circumvent the system; arguably, in fact, he was trying to be part of it. Further exploration of his activities in contrast to the more overt anti-market positions of artists like Kruger or Holzer will open up new possibilities for understanding both Maggs's work and conceptual art.

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Appendix A: Interviewees

Karyn Allen (curator), Toronto ON, August 4, 2017

Donna Braggins (art director and associate dean), Oakville ON, July 4, 2017; October 11, 2018

Keith Branscombe (art director and designer), Cobourg ON, September 14, 2017

Claire Dawson and Fidel Peña, Underline Studio (designers), Toronto ON, May 15, 2017

Lee Dickson (artist and Maggs's partner), Toronto ON, June 29, 2017

Katiuska Doleatto (artist and Maggs's assistant), Toronto ON, February 28, 2020

Jim Donohue (designer), telephone, August 10, 2017

Josée Drouin-Brisebois (curator), Ottawa ON, July 12, 2017

Jonathan Eby (publisher and editor), telephone, November 3, 2017

Marjorie Harris (writer and editor), telephone, October 4, 2017

Spring Hurlbut (artist and Maggs's wife), Toronto ON, February 28, 2020

Eleanor Johnston (Maggs's partner), Toronto ON, February 25, 2020

Katherine Knight (artist and filmmaker), Toronto ON, May 23, 2017

Suzy Lake (artist), email discussion, May 14, 2020

Martha Langford (art historian), Montreal QC, May 31, 2017

John Macfarlane (editor), telephone, September 8, 2020

Caitlan Maggs (choreographer and Maggs's daughter), Montreal QC, September 14, 2017

Michael Mitchell (writer and photographer), Toronto ON, July 27, 2017

Philip Monk (writer and curator), Toronto ON, July 7, 2017

Paul Orenstein (photographer), Toronto ON, August 9, 2017

Malcolm Rains (painter), email discussion, August 2023

Mike Robinson (photographer and Maggs's friend), Toronto ON, August 3, 2017

Nigel Smith (designer), Toronto ON, July 10, 2017

Maia-Mari Sutnik (curator), Toronto ON, June 26, 2017

Ann Thomas (curator), Ottawa ON, July 12, 2017

Rhiannon Vogl (curator), Ottawa ON, July 14, 2017

Barry Zaid (designer), email discussion, July 5, 2017