



This is Happening Press



Some Like It Cold

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This is Happening Press No.2

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This project stems from a longstanding interest in the form of the street poster, or merchant poster, particularly the sort produced by commercial letterpress printing shops such as the Colby Poster Printing Company in Los Angeles, California. Between the years 1948 (when Colby was founded) and 2012 (when it was dissolved), the Colby Poster became a ubiquitous fixture of the “autoscape” of this city, and perhaps also one of its most emblematic signposts. Comprised of bold letterpress typography floated over fields of bright, often gradated, silkscreened color on 14 × 22 inch or 22 × 28 inch sheets of heavy cardboard paper stock designed to withstand the elements, these posters were supremely efficient at communicating their messages from a distance to a public in passing. Typically employed to advertise such localized and time-sensitive events as swap meets, street fairs, trade shows and small-scale musical concerts or boxing matches, these posters have also served purposes of political propaganda, as well as the more oblique expressive ambitions of artists. In 2013, shortly after Colby closed its doors to the public, along with designer Brian Roettinger, we mounted an exhibition centered on the company’s aesthetic output titled *In the Good Name of the Company*. This show featured a number of regionally representative figures like Al Ruppertsberg, Alexis Smith, Sam Durant, Eve Fowler and C. R. Stecyk III, scattered in amongst a range of anonymous promotional fare. Our aim was not to simply level the categories of art and non-art in this way, but rather to highlight the exchanges occurring between them in relation to the ground-up overhaul of urban experience that was begun in the postwar years and that has impacted especially the public sphere of so-called “street-life.” The Colby poster clearly registers the confluence of communication systems and transportation systems within the landscape of cities

rebuilt to the measure of the automobile—those drive-through cities that are a hallmark of our postmodernity.

During the planning of the exhibition and our subsequent work on the catalogue, we had numerous conversations about Ed Ruscha's *Every Building on the Sunset Strip* (1966); Robert Venturi, Denise Scott-Brown and Steven Izenour's *Learning from Las Vegas* (1972); and perhaps most of all Marshall McLuhan's *Understanding Media* (1964). Of particular interest were McLuhan's thoughts on humanity's general passage from a culture dominated by printed matter into the age of electric and electronic media. The first order is characterized by him as inwardly-oriented, exclusively concentrated and guided by a linear logic, whereas the second is immersive, distracting, and given to simultaneous intake. Because words are written in straight lines—one letter, one word, one sentence at a time—the delivery and reception of meaningful content must follow accordingly; but post-typographic man will increasingly be plunged into an informational vortex of “allatonceness,” as he puts it.¹ It would be hard to deny that this point has been reached, yet the contemporary relevance of McLuhan should not be limited to the accuracy of his various prognostications. Rather, it is his sensitive historical appraisal of the break, brought about by technological advancement, between one mode of being and another that continues to matter for us. This is an understanding of media relayed by one who can still remember what came before and imagine what will come after—both of which are becoming increasingly difficult. Stored within the already antiquated and no longer secure memory technology of the book, it would seem that McLuhan's theory was bracing for its own impending erasure from the first moment. It is a reminder that “before the end something is coming to an end,” as the media theorist Friedrich Kittler put it some years later.² The idea of “allatonceness” is itself one of the “last things before the last,” now citing the title

of Siegfried Kracauer's historiographical study.³ The words run together with no pause for reflection; soon, one imagines, they will collide, landing one atop another.⁴

The element of time-sensitivity is a point of connection between McLuhan's writing and the street poster, and it is on this basis that their merger has here been attempted. Both are essentially in the short-term business of informing on “coming attractions,” and destined to quickly become artifacts, relics and ruins of the past, once those attractions have come and gone. The urgency of this equation is especially acute in the case of McLuhan's 1967 follow-up to *Understanding Media*, the profusely illustrated design-object that is *The Medium Is the Massage*, from which we have derived a good part of the content for this new series of works. If the first book already reads as a kind of final communiqué from the “Gutenberg Galaxy,” then its sequel pushes insistently toward the next stage, rethinking the form of the book on the whole as a device of visual literacy. Produced in close collaboration with the designer Quentin Fiore and the publisher Jerome Agel in an open appeal to a general, non-specialist public, McLuhan's core ideas are here distilled into a series of compelling sound-bites, replete with all sorts of punning slogans and neologisms reminiscent of ad-speak, which are then juxtaposed with a range of pictorial material, much of it culled from the pages of the daily papers and magazines. Currency is of the essence; some of the news included in *The Medium Is the Massage* had only just broken as the book went to print. In anticipation of its public release, Agel inserted this covertly self-endorsing claim into his regular column in the monthly journal *Books*: “McLuhan's next book ... will be published this autumn by Bantam Books and will include observations on events as recent as the last week in August.”⁵ That this sort of instantaneous topicality is antithetical to the long-range view of most books was of course the selling point to a “post-literate” readership. And,

to us, it suggested a snug fit with the approximately one month lifespan of most street posters.

In tandem with McLuhan's research came the advent of "media studies" as well as invigorated attention on the part of visual artists to print media, acknowledging the dynamic formal matrix of printed communication, which only grows more pronounced in our current "paradoxical" stage of communication.⁶ McLuhan's words form the substrate of our posters. However, the decision as to which words to use was guided less by questions of meaning than the facts of design pertaining to their original placement on the page. This is to assert the book on the whole, the visual object and not just its linguistic contents, as our primary source. Fiore's approach to layout is resolutely non-academic, unsystematic; any standardized template is discarded in favor of continual permutation, kaleidoscopically twisting image to text ratios. "Typophotography" is how Laszlo Moholy-Nagy defined the future of printing in reference to his first Bauhaus picture book project *Painting Photography Film* (1925), and the designation remains relevant here. According to him, a gain in the pictorial dimension of printed language is the inevitable outcome of a succession of technological steps—"One man invents printing with movable type, another photography, a third screen-printing and stereotype, the next electrotype, phototype, the celluloid plate hardened by light."⁷ *The Medium Is the Massage* follows this progression through evermore fluid and accelerating channels of reproduction, until every last bit of typography becomes pictographic. Those words of McLuhan's that most "jump off the page"—detached from their text blocks, scaled up in size, rendered in bold font, reversed from black on white to white on black, and so on—are the ones that we seized for our project. This language was then sent to Tribune Showprint, a poster printing company in Indiana (founded in 1878) that bears an evident stylistic affinity to Colby, to reformat in letterpress type-blocks as they saw fit, with minimal compositional

direction in reference to the original source. Thereafter, several more layers of silkscreened information were added by us atop the posters we received back in the mail. This includes a variety of handwritten texts and hand-drawn pictures, as well as a wealth of readymade material gathered from old books and the Internet, some of which reinforces McLuhan's original thoughts and some of which undermines them. Basically, what we have set out to do here is answer to 1967 from 2017, across the divide of a half-century.⁸

The Medium Is the Massage turned fifty years old this year, which lends a certain formal urgency to this re-visitation. As it happens, this 4.25 × 7 inch trade paperback size book, for all its vaunted attention to topical issues—can we call it planned obsolescence for the literary milieu?—was graced with an enduring shelf life. But what is it exactly that has endured? A *New Yorker* cartoon by Robert J. Day that appears within its pages depicts two schoolgirls engaged in conversation, the gist of which is related in the caption below: "It isn't that don't like current events. There have just been so many of them lately."⁹ Many have in fact been duly noted by McLuhan, Fiore and Agel: on page 139, a press photograph from September 19, 1959 shows Marilyn Monroe applauding the arrival of Russian premiere Nikita Khrushchev at a Hollywood gala in his honor; on pages 148–49, a reproduction of the front page of *The New York Times* from November 10, 1965, bears the tagline: "Johnson Restates Goals in Vietnam"; page 130 features the iconic shot of high school student Mattie Howard getting arrested, on May 17, 1963, in front of the Carver theater in Birmingham, Alabama; and UK prime minister Harold Wilson's July 23, 1966 visit to the Cavern Club in Liverpool, where the Beatles played their first gigs, is recalled on page 137. *The Medium Is the Massage* emerged in a period of geopolitical instability and social unrest, amidst the Cold War, the Vietnam War, and also a host of civil wars – race wars, gender wars, generational wars, political wars and culture wars. These various conflicts are here itemized as

“an inventory of effects,” as per the book’s subtitle, that find their technical cause in changing modes of communication brought about by new media. The solid-state integrated circuit board (pictured as such on page 19, and then as a miniaturized chip on page 64) is proposed as emblematic of this new order, heraldic insignia for the Information Age.¹⁰ Connecting the development of radio to television to the computer, it leads us from then to now, and channels all those no-longer current events into our own breaking news.

All information technology is in the business of memory storage, and in the age of big data we can say – at least, on principle—that nothing is any longer forgotten. Everything that has been recorded can be instantaneously re-accessed, refreshed.¹¹ Yet to those of us who still relate to the world described in *The Medium Is the Massage* as a young world, and moreover as the world of our youth, this book is a time capsule with an existential, and even perhaps a fatalistic, charge. Everything in it that might have struck us as new upon first encounter must now be reevaluated as “toys in the attic,” so to speak. On this point, it is worth noting that initially the book was conceived as a young person’s guide to media—“Do you believe that a children’s book could be developed from *Understanding Media*?” Agel asks McLuhan in a letter from 1965—and even after its target range was broadened to mass-market proportions, a childish element would continue to stir in its pages.¹² This is made evident, first of all, in their preponderance of cartoons, those aimed at adults, like the *New Yorker* example cited above, seamlessly integrating with the storybook illustrations from *Alice in Wonderland* that are also abundantly featured (on pages 42–43, 140–41 and 153). We have followed this aesthetic cue in the design of our posters, digging deep into the archives of infancy for old copies of *The Adventures of Asterix*,¹³ *Mad Magazine*,¹⁴ *Zap Comix*,¹⁵ and the like.¹⁶ And wherever we have composed our own original graphics, the style is consciously indebted to *Schoolhouse*

Rock, the educational series of animated short films inserted into Saturday morning television programming between the years of 1973 and 1985. These various citations were mixed and matched with some of the same spirit of casual, on-the-fly irreverence that drove *The Medium Is the Massage* toward its rapid completion.

As Marshall McLuhan’s son Eric recounts it, the “massage” in *The Medium Is the Massage* was the outcome of a printing error, a typo, that his father enthusiastically ratified as not only a concrete manifestation within the book of a non-ideational content, deposited in the course of its production-line manufacture, but one that actually improves on the original idea.¹⁷ Mediation, as such, does not produce discrete messages; it must be grasped as a total process. The observation that whole systems of thought can be undone by the inadvertent substitution of a single letter calls for a non-hermeneutic, more structural, systems-based analysis. Retroactively, this un-spelling of “message” brought forth the “mess-age” as a necessary complement to the “mass-age.”¹⁸ McLuhan’s enthusiasm for information technology is often overstated. His 1968 follow-up project with Fiore and Agel, *War and Peace in the Global Village*, proves the point; it is a noticeably more downbeat affair, deeply sunk in the messy morass of the mass. This desultory perspective is not absent from *The Medium Is the Massage*, as noted, but here it is evenly leavened with optimistic appeals to think differently. To this end, the figure of the artist is frequently invoked as a model for our occupancy of the 20th century, which requires a cool-headed overview. “The groundrules, pervasive structure, and overall patterns of environments elude easy perception,” writes McLuhan. “Anti-environments, or countersituations made by artists, provide means of direct attention and enable us to see and understand more clearly.”¹⁹ The artist is able to glimpse the larger “mosaic” of experience precisely by ignoring the meanings routinely assigned to each discrete part. It makes

perfect sense that the artistic references in this book incline overwhelmingly toward what was then described as “Neo-Dadaism”: a picture of John Cage amidst a selection of his quotes appears on page 119; a stage shot of the Nico and The Velvet Underground from Andy Warhol’s 1966 event *Exploding Plastic Inevitable* on pages 108–09; a 4-page spread of Nicki de St. Phalle’s Nana, a monumental sculpture of a spread-legged female figure, also from 1966, on 130–34; and the use of the word “happening,” which recurs throughout, calls to mind the time-based compositions of Allan Kaprow.²⁰ All of the above sought to blur the boundaries between art and life through media-savvy confrontations with public opinion. The irrational childish gambit of pushing the limits is here asserted as a viable *modus operandi*, a pragmatic means of self-preservation.

Today, when the mess threatens to completely swallow the mass, these words from *The Medium Is the Massage* bear repeating: “there is absolutely no inevitability as long as there is a willingness to contemplate what is happening.”²¹ We have repeated them here, these words and others, recirculating a range of insights gleaned from art right back through it. And hopefully we have done so with the cheerful indifference that is the first rule of any attempt to contemplate what actually is happening and our last saving grace in the face of its very worst outcome.

— Christopher Michlig, Jan Tumlir, 2017

Notes

1 — “Ours is a brand-new world of allatonceness. ‘Time’ has ceased, ‘space’ has vanished. We now live in a global village... a simultaneous happening. We are back in acoustic space. We have begun again to structure the primordial feeling, the tribal emotions from which a few centuries of literacy divorced us.” Marshall McLuhan, *The Medium is the Massage*, 1967 (San Francisco: Hardwired, 1996), 63.

2 — Friedrich Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, 1986 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 1.

3 — Siegfried Kracauer, *History: The Last Things Before the Last* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1969). This book, Kracauer’s final project, is literally one of his “last things before the last.” The manuscript was left unfinished at the time of the author’s death in 1966, and only published in 1969 after extensive editorial intervention by Paul Oskar Kristeller.

4 — In poster 5, *The Kracauer-Kittler Axis (HOW!)*, we run the Kracauer and Kittler quotes together on a signpost. This is an attempt to locate McLuhan’s “allatonceness” at the intersection of two meditations on the end of time from two very different generations.

5 — Jerome Agel, quoted in Jeffrey T. Schnapp & Adam Michaels, *The Electronic Age Book: McLuhan / Agel / Fiore and the Experimental Paperback* (NY: Princeton Architectural Press / Inventory Books, 2012), 85.

6 — Still one of the most cogent theorists of this paradox is Jean Baudrillard: “We are in a false situation now, it’s true; you have to work within the paradox, the paradox of communication, which is in effect that everywhere there is communication and no one any longer

has anything to say to anyone, or almost, whilst the paradox of language or of the work of art would be that there is something to say but the medium is no longer there. The message is there but the medium no longer responds. Or else in the opposite sense the medium is there, but there is no longer any message. Finally, we will now be in this paradoxical situation perpetually.” Jean Baudrillard, “The Work of Art in the Electronic Age,” *Baudrillard Live: Selected Interviews*, ed. Mike Gane (London / NY: Routledge, 1993), 150. The above quote is lifted from an interview conducted with Baudrillard by the French television production company La Sept in 1988. This interview was given a title that clearly associates it with Walter Benjamin’s 1936 essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”—or as it has more recently been translated, “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility.” Here, Benjamin expressed a measured optimism in regard to the emancipatory potentials of new media, but this is entirely eclipsed by the time we get to Baudrillard. Any reading of McLuhan today is inevitably affected by the steadily souring tone of media studies in general.

7 — Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, *Painting, Photography, Film* (London: Lund Humphries, 1969), 38. There are numerous passages in this book that have proved relevant to this project, both in regard to the subject of McLuhan and to the form of the poster. For instance: “Gutenberg’s typography ... moves exclusively in a linear dimension. The intervention of the photographic process has extended it to a new dimensionality, recognized today as total. The preliminary work in this field was done by the illustrated papers, posters and by display printing.” (39)

8 — This back and forth is scaffolded by our initial decision to re-print text from the original book with a technology that

pre-dates McLuhan's critical project. The printing press here employed is an artifact of the "Gutenberg Galaxy." Tribune Showprint uses Babcock flatbed presses, identical to those used by weekly newspapers in the 1800s. Since McLuhan's time, it has become increasingly evident that the development of information technology does not follow a straightforward course. Old media are absorbed into new media, but the same is true in reverse. For instance, vinyl records have reappeared alongside MP3 files, with download codes included inside their covers. Not only can we no longer think of anachronism in general as an aberration of time, it may well have become our temporal norm. As the saying goes, "Everything old is new again. This is a subtext that runs right through all of our posters, but especially poster 28, *Repetition and Difference 1: Signpost (... "AS WE BEGIN,*) and poster 46, *Repetition and Difference 2: Want ad (DEVELOP A POWERFUL MEMORY?)*.

9 — This caption appears in poster 33, *Brian O'Blivion / Straight (to) Video ("IT ISN'T THAT I DON'T LIKE CURRENT Events. THERE HAVE JUST BEEN SO MAY OF THEM LATELY.")* Placed above those printed words is a still from the 1983 film *Videodrome* that features the protagonist, played by James Woods, inserting a videotape straight into his belly. The film was directed by David Cronenberg, who, like Marshall McLuhan, is associated with Toronto—hence the mention of "breaking news from Toronto." The Canadian city often serves as the setting for Cronenberg's work and the influence of McLuhan is pervasive throughout it. This is especially true of *Videodrome*, which is full of explicit references to the field of media studies, many of them assigned to the virtual figure of Brian O'Blivion, a clear stand-in for McLuhan in the film.

10 — A rendering of such technology appears in poster 31, *Micro and Macro Intelligence (Solid integrated circuit ENLARGED several hundred times)*. Our image relates to a relatively primitive type of circuitry—a schematic for an infamous phase-shifting guitar effect pedal introduced briefly by Univox in 1968, and subsequently cloned, copied and bootlegged. The Uni-Vibe phase shifter was known for its throbbing, hypnotic pulse and lo-fi sweep, and was most notably used by Jimi Hendrix, and David Gilmore of Pink Floyd. Not "enlarged several hundred times," the more modest enlargement of this device is hinted at by the actual scale of our drawing, noted at its margins. Breaking with the line of technological progression, the schematic points at a tendency in the opposite direction—a low-fi pursuit of authenticity.

11 — And what happens to the actual territory that is mapped out with such virtual precision? The ecological costs of informational expansionism are noted by Benjamin Bratton in this telling anecdote: "Some years ago I was at a panel with HP research scientist Stanley Williams, who recounted a remarkable assignment he once had. He was part of a group of computer scientists who had been asked by the US Department of Energy to propose an architecture for a computer that would be capable of a high fidelity predictive simulation of the entire planetary climate, and of monitoring and simulating the entire planetary climate in real time. The group concluded that such a machine would require zettaflop computing, that is, a system capable of 1021 floating-point operations per second. At the time, the fastest supercomputers were measured in petaflops (10 to the power of 15); on-tap exaflops (10 to the power of 18) are still years away. Williams discussed how it is possible that zettaflop computing would demand a very different processing architecture

from one based on silicon transistors and might instead be based on photonics and nanoswitches hybridized with silicon to increase performance without loss of volume and power. He spoke of layers and layers of nanoscale wiring weaving into dense synaptic computing fields. Could it be done? Somewhat anticlimactically, Williams also shared the conclusion of the group's report: based on current technology technology, the necessary specifications would mean that the computer would not only be roughly the size of Paris, but it would consume so much energy that it would be the single most significant anthropogenic climatic event that it itself would be modeling! Short of fundamental breakthroughs, his anecdote underscores the paradoxical recursivity that undergirds the demand for global ecological omniscience, especially for an accidental megastructure such as *The Stack*." Benjamin Bratton, *The Stack: On Software and Sovereignty* (Cambridge, Massachusetts / London: The MIT Press, 2015), 102. We have reproduced Bratton's diagram of *The Stack* in poster 63, *The Business of the Future (IT IS THE BUSINESS OF THE FUTURE TO BE DANGEROUS – A. N. WHITEHEAD)*

12 — Jerome Agel, quoted Jeffrey T. Schnapp & Adam Michaels, *The Electronic Age Book: McLuhan / Agel / Fiore and the Experimental Paperback*, 49.

13 — Created by the team of René Goscinny and Albert Uderzo in 1959, the characters of the diminutive Asterix and his overweight sidekick Obelix are the prime movers of a band of Gauls whose comic book adventures consist in beating back the Roman occupation, circa 50 BC. Recalling memories of the French Resistance of the war years while also extending toward, and then past, the revolts of May 1968, the long-

running *Adventures of Asterix* is rife with allegorical implications. In poster 51, *Art 1: I Love Anti-Enlightenment (Art)*, we invoke its two protagonists as champions of artistic advancement. Here we take a cue from Walter Benjamin, who has equated the avant-garde artist with the barbarian on the basis of their shared lack of tradition and rejection of socially sanctioned values. Accordingly, the words that issue from the mouth of Asterix are drawn from the writings of the Italian Futurist F. T. Marinetti: "Let's kill the moonlight." And, as if in reply, Obelix shouts out the title of a stage production mounted by Kazimir Malevich, Mikhail Matiushin and Aleksei Kruchenykh in St. Petersburg in 1913. *Victory Over the Sun* was billed as "the first Futurist opera" in an attempt, on the part of the Russians, to assert their Futurist precedence – to "claim space," in the language of the subcultural studies.

14 — The rival agents of the comic strip *Spy vs. Spy* stand in opposed corners of poster 53, *Art 3: (YOU CAN GET AWAY WITH)*. Introduced to *Mad Magazine* by Cuban expatriate Antonio Prohías in 1961, these identical antagonists, distinguished only by their contrasting outfits, spoke eloquently to the schizoid condition of the Cold War, and did so precisely by saying nothing. The wordless, purely visual nature of this comic was our first associational prompt to bring it into the context of advanced art. But no less compelling is the geopolitical "backstory" it brings to this context. Following the reference to *The Adventures of Asterix* in poster 51, *Art 1: I Love Anti-Enlightenment (Art)*, and then to the cartoons of Ad Reinhardt in poster 52, *Art 2: Reinhardt Representing (is ANYTHING)*, can we see Prohías's black and white doppelgangers as channeling the alternating currents of art and anti-art?

15 — Poster 23, *Zap (EXTENSION OF THE SKIN...)*, reproduces Robert Crumb's

cover illustration for issue no. 0 of the underground comic book *Zap*, published in 1969. The naked figure drawn there, having literally “plugged in,” wiring his body to an electrical socket, becomes electrified and radiant. Following McLuhan, we could say that, like a light bulb, he has become pure information.

16 — Like many, we were initiated into the world of art through comics, but it would be a mistake to think that they merely served as a stepping-stone to a higher plane. The example of Ad Reinhardt demonstrates just how reversible the exchanges between these two realms of creative endeavor can be. Mike Kelley, whom we cite in poster 38, *The Un-Professional (AMATEUR)*, made a career out of this. The dirt-pile rising from the bottom of this poster is derived from Kelley’s *Garbage Drawing* series from 1988, and these in turn are derived from Mort Walker’s *Beetle Bailey* comic strip. In these works, Kelley voids Walker’s frames of everything but their depictions filth. This is not simply to suggest that comics are base, but that it is precisely their baseness that has always been most valuable for so-called “high art.” This view is shared by art historians like Albert Boime, whose analysis of the scatological caricatures of Jacques-Louis David is sourced in Kelley’s own writing. “The political cartoon and its progeny stand at the crossroads of neoclassicism and modern art.” Albert Boime, “Jacques-Louis David, Scatological Discourse in the French Revolution, and the Art of Caricature” *Arts Magazine*, February 1988, 72.

17 — Eric McLuhan: “Actually, the title was a mistake. When the book came back from the typesetter’s, it had on the cover ‘Massage’ as it still does. The title was supposed to have read ‘The Medium is the Message’ but the typesetter had made an error. When Marshall saw the typo he exclaimed,

‘Leave it alone! It’s great, and right on target!’” This explanation is sourced from the official Marshall McLuhan website: <https://marshallmcluhan.com/common-questions/>

18 — See poster 2, *A Fortuitous Typo (... the massage?)*. In this and the following work – poster 3, *La Vogue Mallarmé (AND)* – we introduce the motifs of scotch tape and scissors, a nod to our pre-digital background in the culture of cut-and-paste. The irreversible nature of the operations conducted with these implements insured that error would find its way into the final product and perhaps define it.

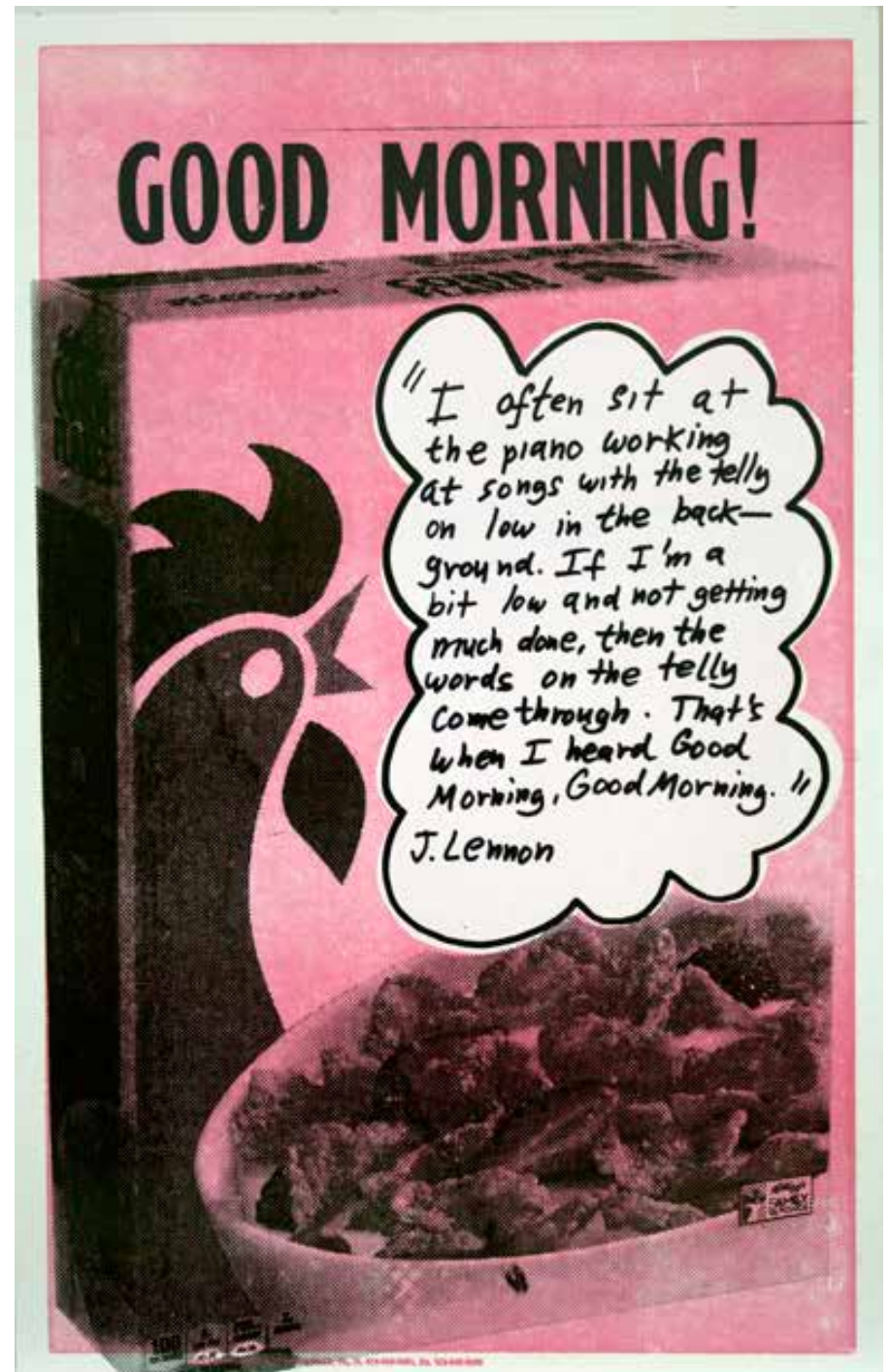
19 — Marshall McLuhan, *The Medium Is the Massage*, 68.

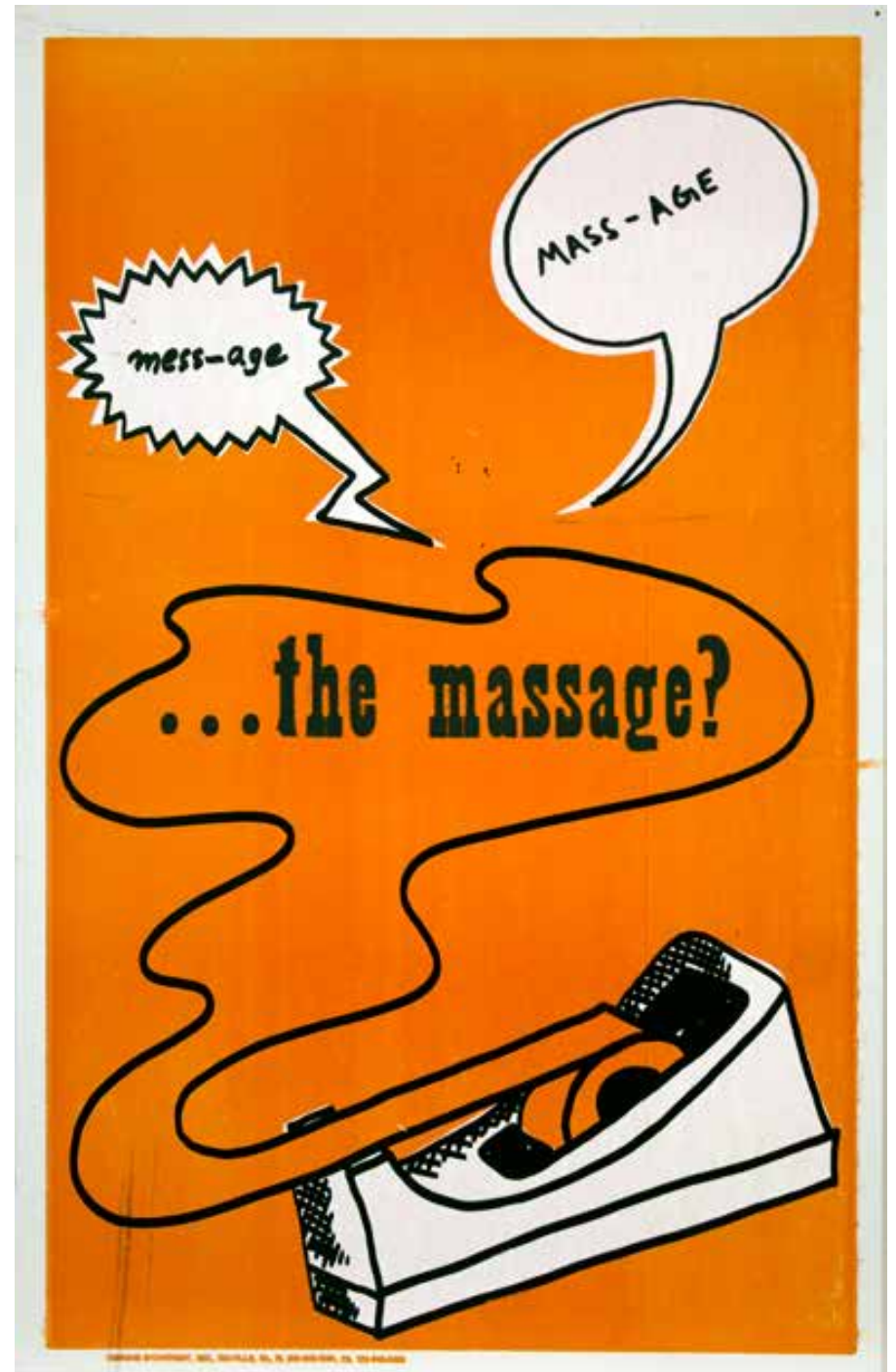
20 — Kaprow is not mentioned by name in *The Medium Is the Massage*, and the form of the “happening” with which he is routinely associated might well have originated in the hippie counterculture before landing in the official precincts of art. Nevertheless, the various exchanges between these two milieus are insistently noted in the book. The rediscovery of everyday life as a quasi-absurdist enterprise links all of McLuhan’s, Fiore’s and Agel’s artistic references. These figures were inspired as much by the historical avant-gardes as the anti-war demonstrations, guerilla street theater performances, be-ins and love-ins that defined their contemporary moment. For Kaprow, the happening was above all a way out of the existential isolationism of his Abstract Expressionist forbears. In his essay “The Legacy of Jackson Pollock,” Kaprow suggests that the only way forward for art is out of the closed confines of the canvas. Here he provides a listing of the potential contents, culled from the real and existing world, that could be included in a happening. “Objects of every sort are materials for the new art: paint, chairs, food, electric and

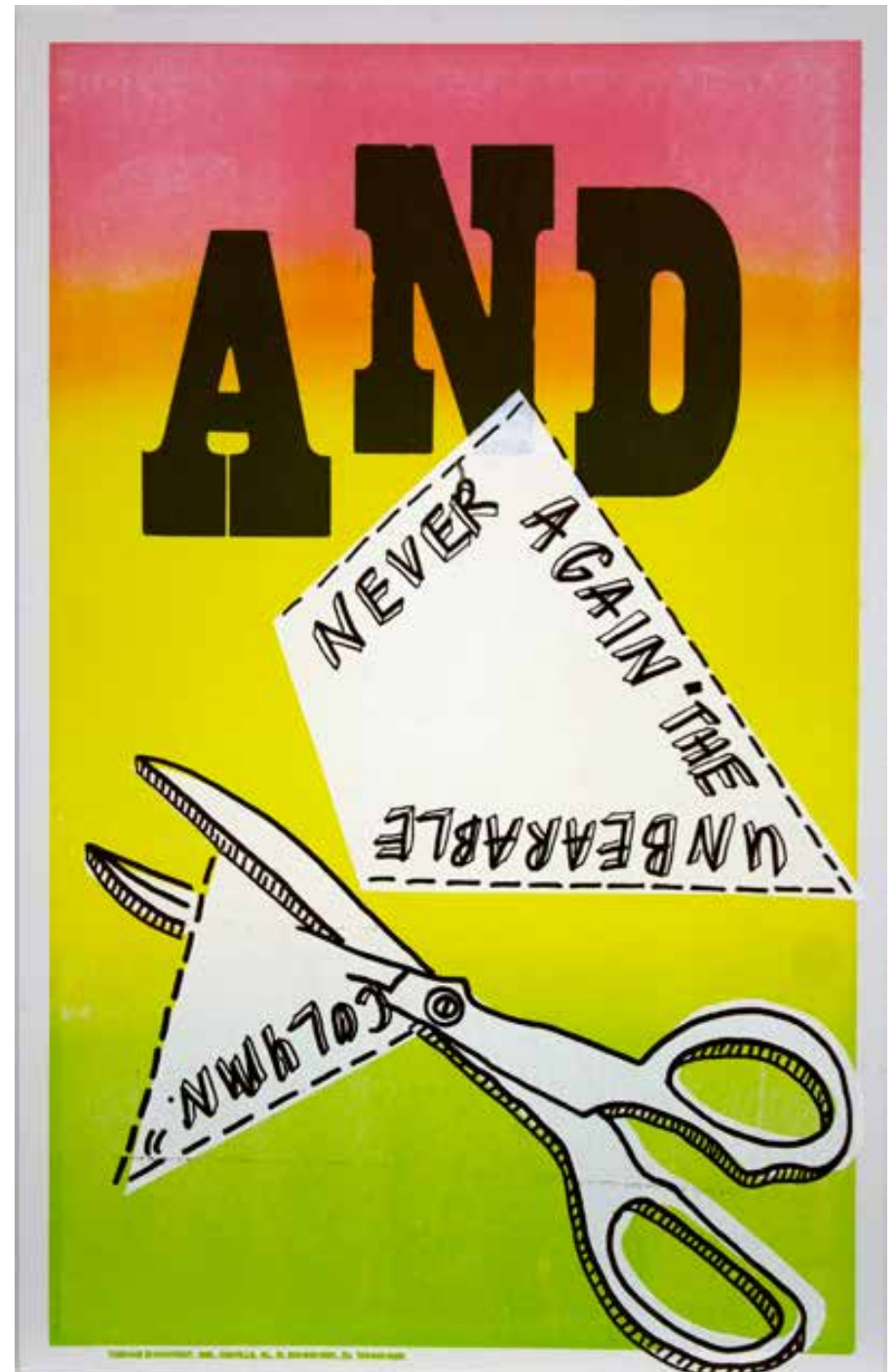
neon lights, smoke, water, old socks, a dog, movies, and a thousand other things that will be discovered by the present generation of artists.” Allan Kaprow, “The Legacy of Jackson Pollock,” 1958, *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*, ed. Jeff Kelley (Berkeley / Los Angeles / London: 1993), 7-9. We have quoted this list in poster 20, *What’s Happening, Allan Kaprow 1: The Web (Is an EXTENSION)*, inserting its contents into the confused tangles of a spider’s web. This evidently unraveling structure—which reappears in poster 36, *Arachnid Acid 1 (enviro)*, and poster 37, *Arachnid Acid 2 (NMENT)*—is derived from images documenting the impact of LSD on a spider’s spinning abilities. Kaprow’s list is also invoked in poster 14, *What’s Happening, Allan Kaprow 2: Anti-Happening (THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO INEVITABILITY AS LONG AS THERE IS A WILLINGNESS TO CONTEMPLATE WHAT IS HAPPENING)*, but here all of its contents are put under a negative sign. Finally, in poster 41, *What’s Happening, Allan Kaprow 3: Rebus (“BECAUSE SOMETHING IS HAPPENING BUT YOU DON’T KNOW WHAT IT IS DO YOU, MISTER JONES”—Bob Dylan)*, we turn from Kaprow to popular song, listing the various objects mentioned in Bob Dylan’s “The Ballad of a Thin Man” (1965) as a constellation of images floating over his lyrics. Not satisfied with the suggestion through paint of our other senses, we shall utilize the specific substances of sight, sound, movements, people, odors, touch. Here, the event of the happening is refracted through the prism of one—the normalized subject of Mister Jones—who cannot understand any part of it precisely because he is trying too hard to do so.

21 — See poster 14, *What’s Happening, Allan Kaprow 2: Anti-Happening (THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO INEVITABILITY AS LONG AS THERE IS A WILLINGNESS TO CONTEMPLATE WHAT IS HAPPENING)*. This line, which might be described

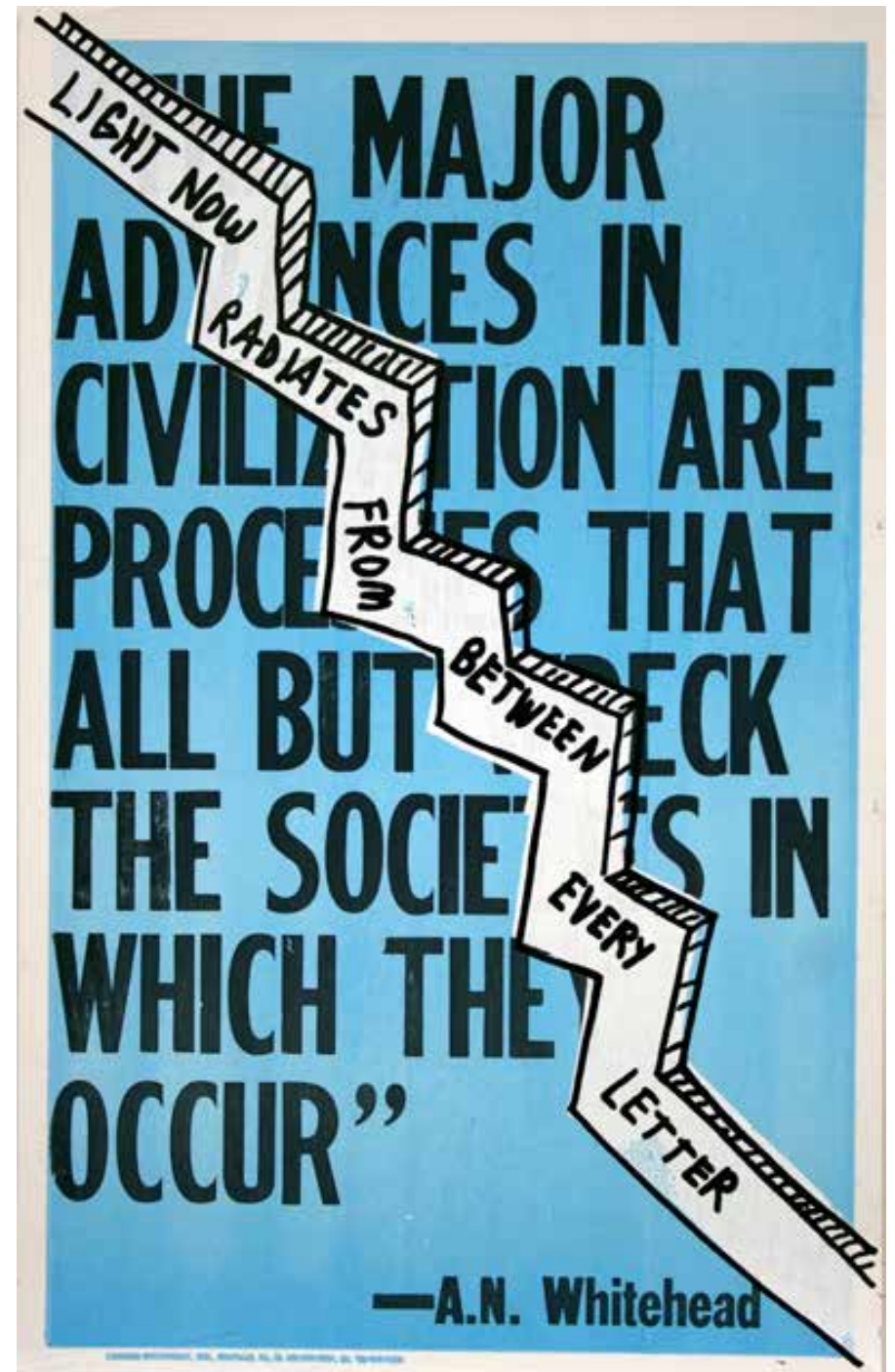
as the mantra of *The Medium Is the Massage*, works against the critique of McLuhan as a technological determinist. Contemplation is here not simply proposed as a means of understanding the existing order of things, but to break with it. The “anti-environments” and “countersituations” formulated by the various artists, writers, and musicians cited in the book suggest that contemplation must above all be playful, a game, as a way to defuse the fatal charge of “reality.”

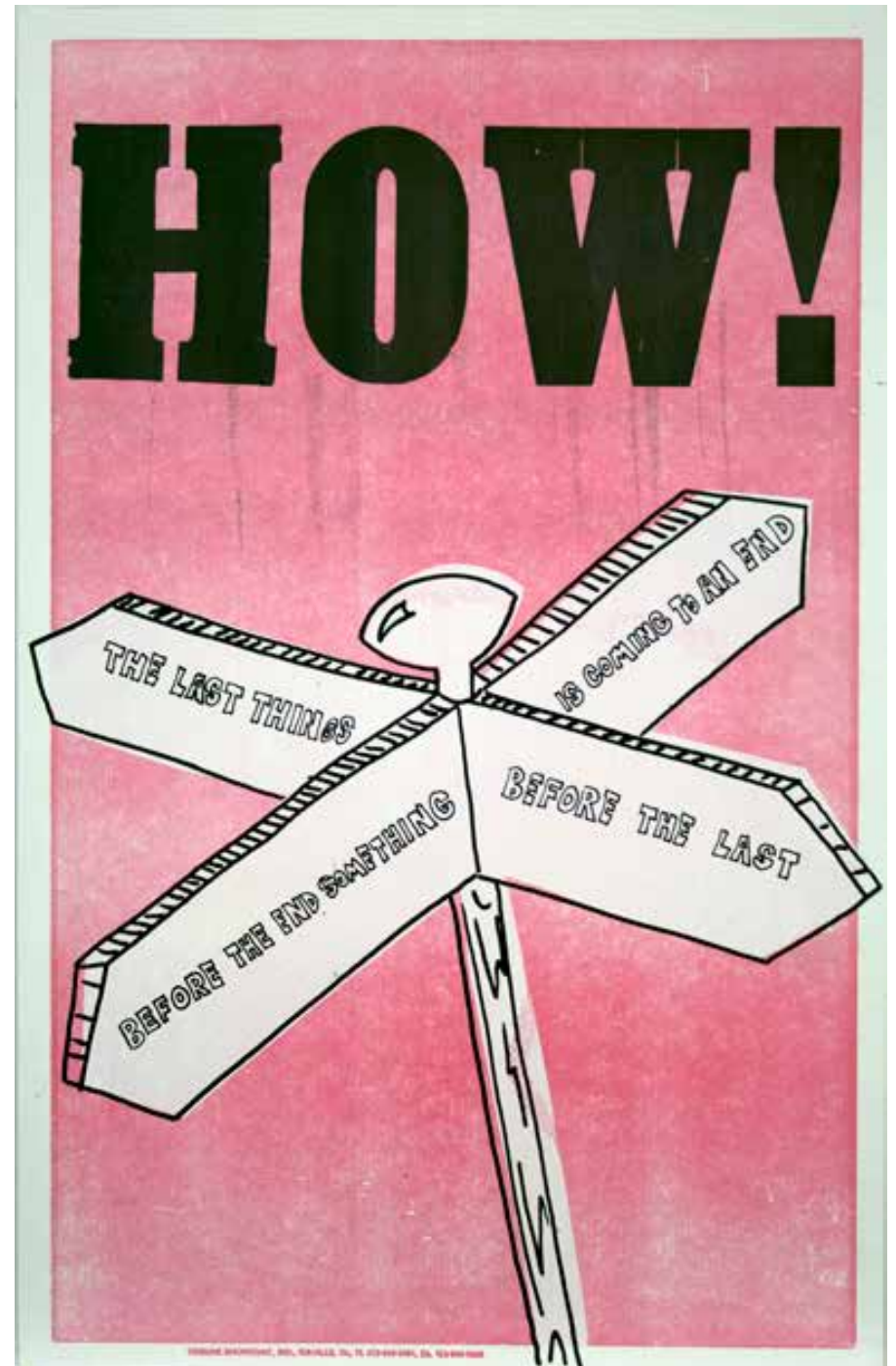






From Genesis to Revelation ("THE MAJOR ADVANCES IN CIVILIZATION ARE PROCESSES THAT ALL BUT WRECK THE SOCIETIES IN WHICH THEY OCCUR" — A.N. Whitehead)





Visceral Thought / Theoretical Porn ("In the study of ideas, it is necessary to remember that insistence on hard-headed clarity issues from sentimental feeling, as if it were a mist, cloaking the perplexities of fact. Insistence on clarity at all costs is based on sheer superstition as to the mode in which human intelligence functions. Our reasoning grasps at straws for premises and float on gossamer for deductions.")

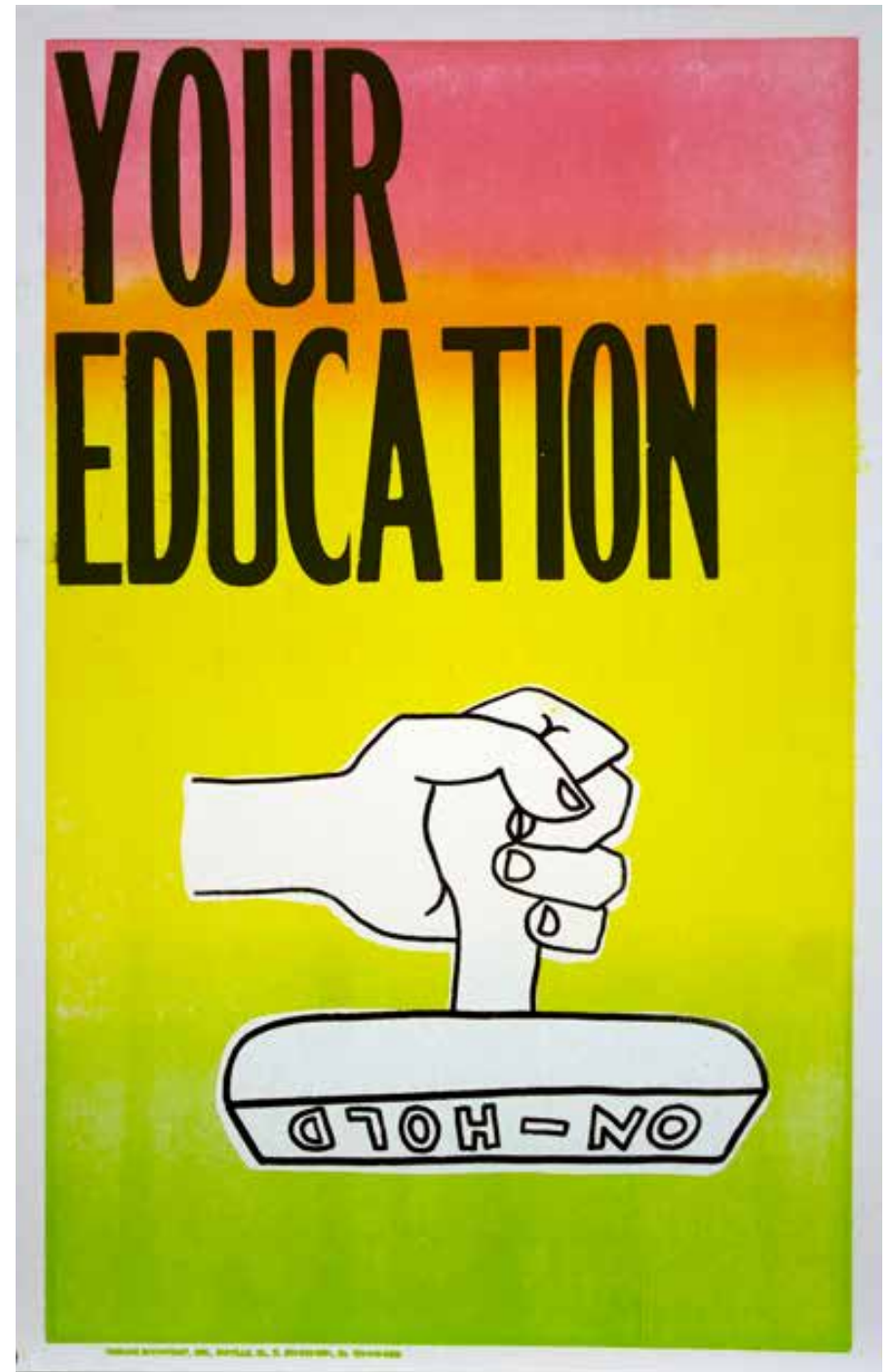
— A.N. Whitehead)





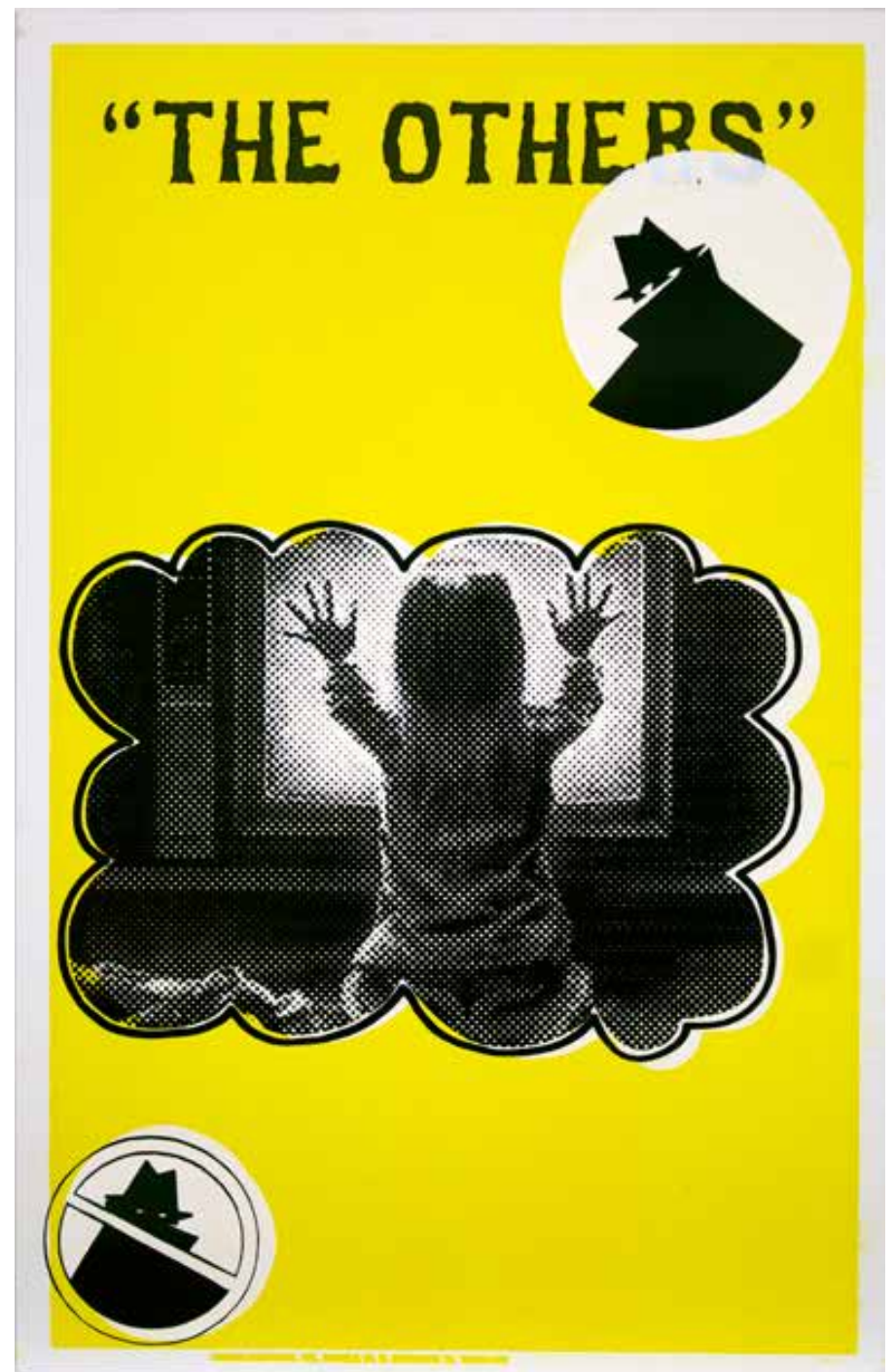








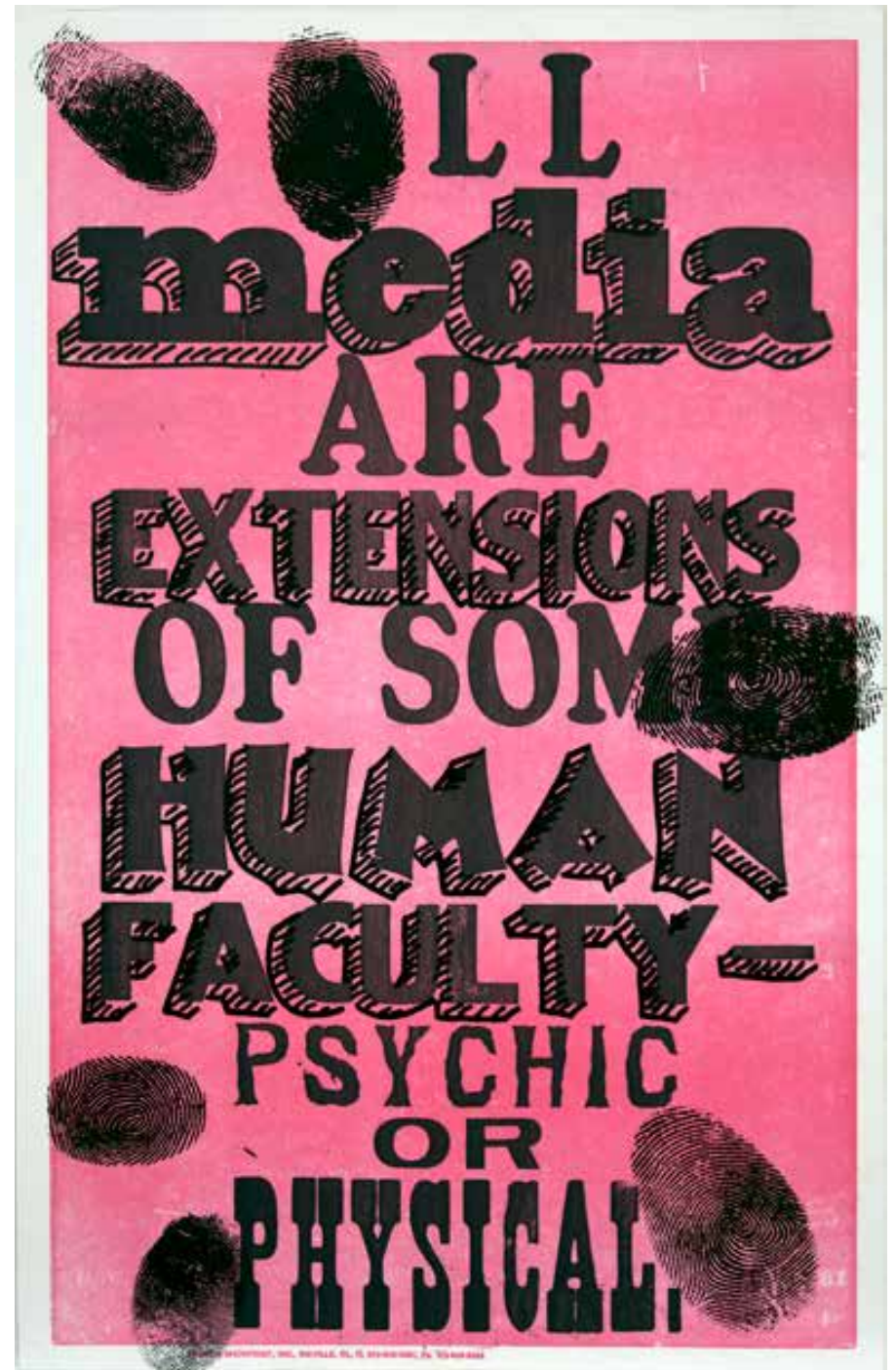




What's Happening, Allan Kaprow 2: Anti-Happening (THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO INEVITABILITY AS LONG AS THERE IS A WILLINGNESS TO CONTEMPLATE WHAT IS HAPPENING)

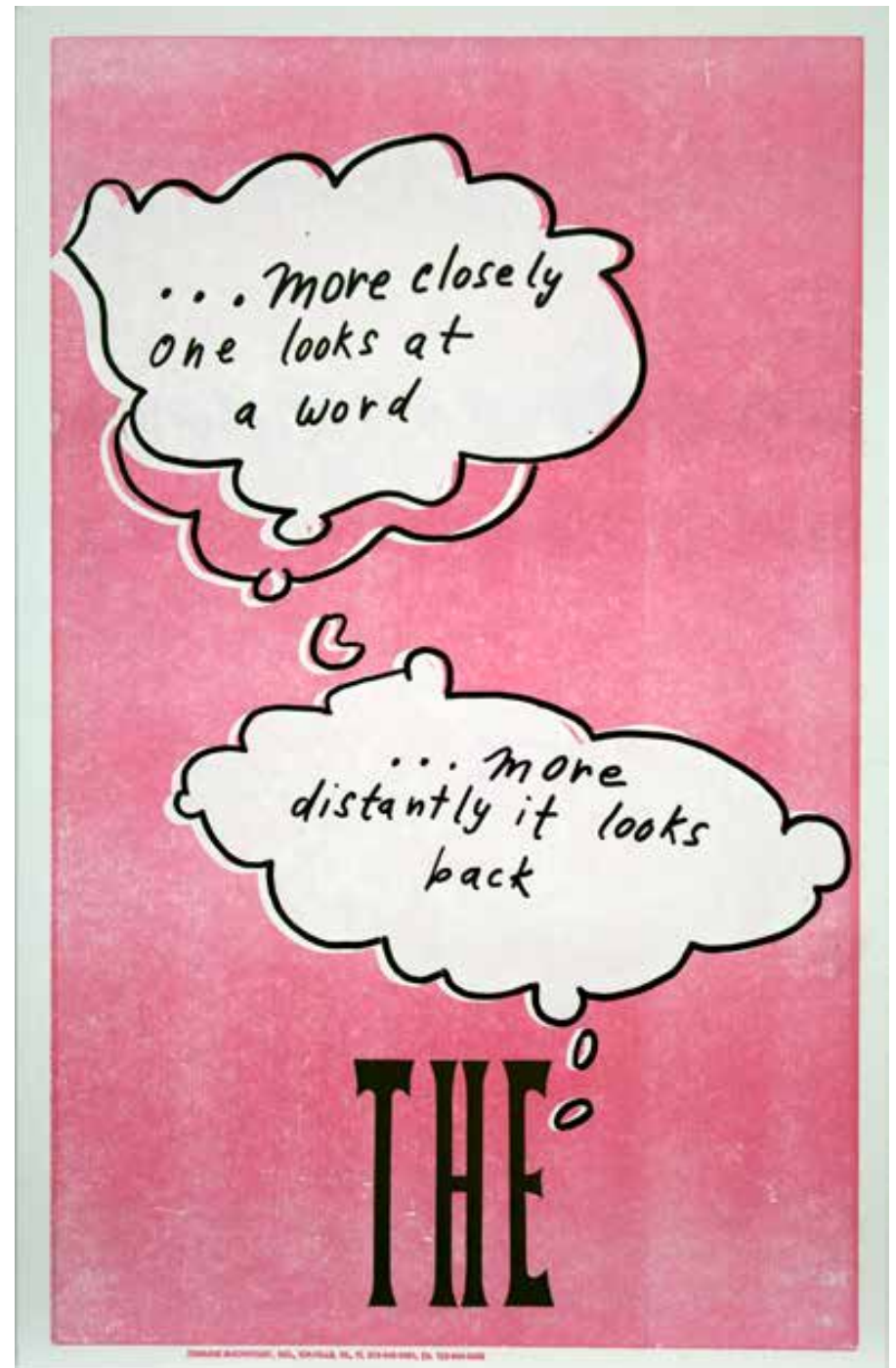


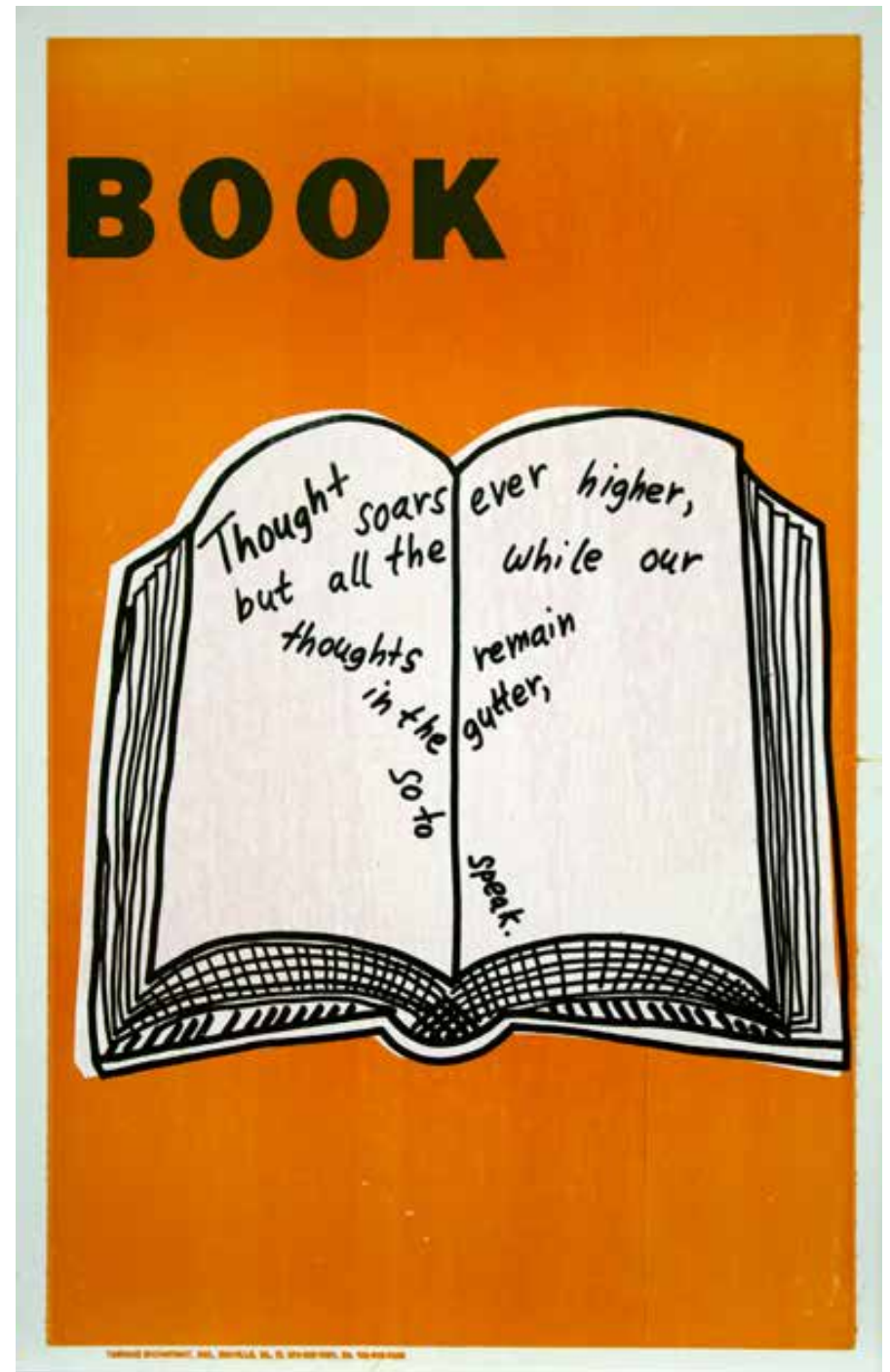
Dirty Screen (ALL MEDIA ARE EXTENSIONS OF SOME HUMAN FACULTY PSYCHIC OR PHYSICAL)

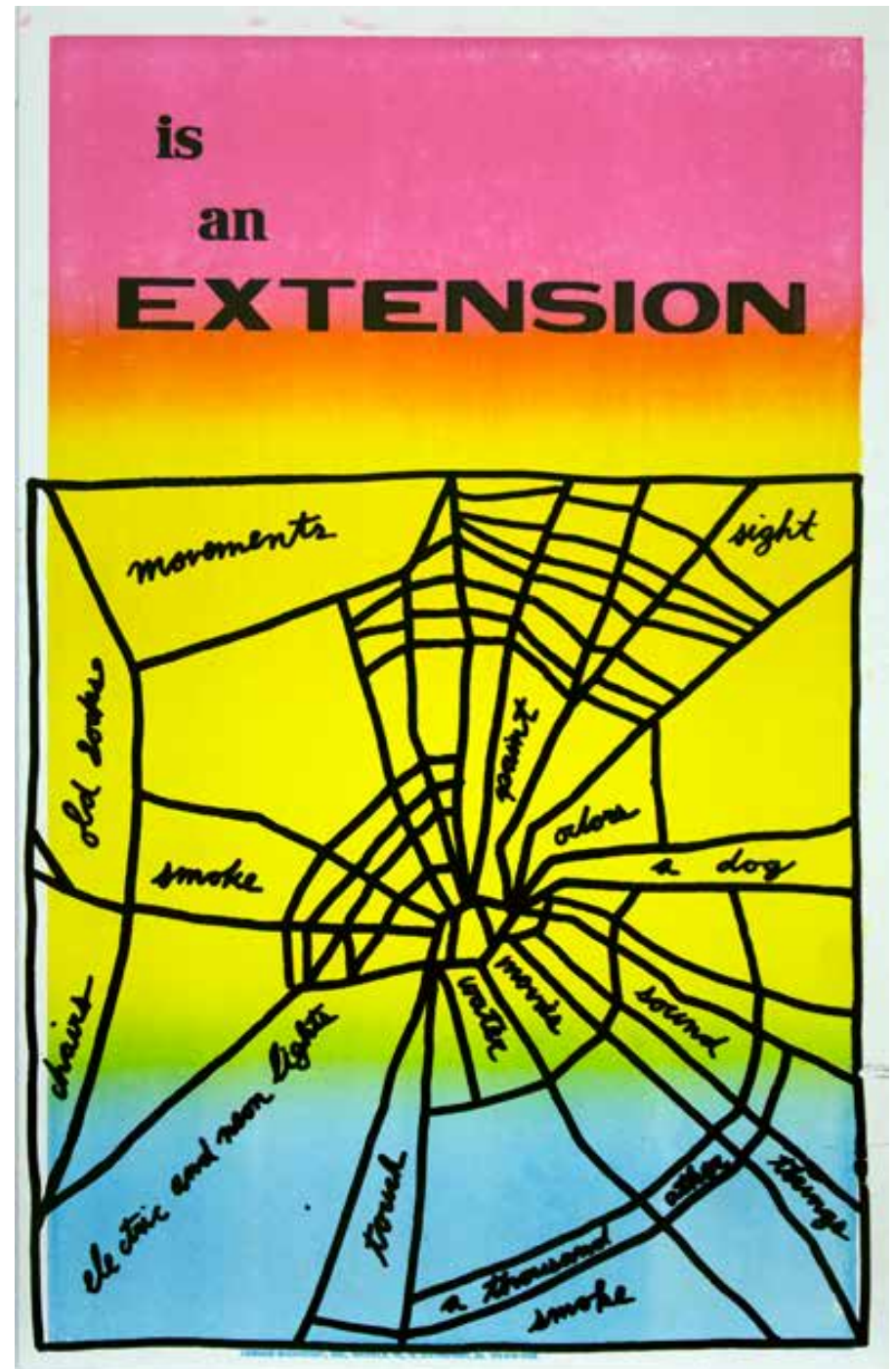




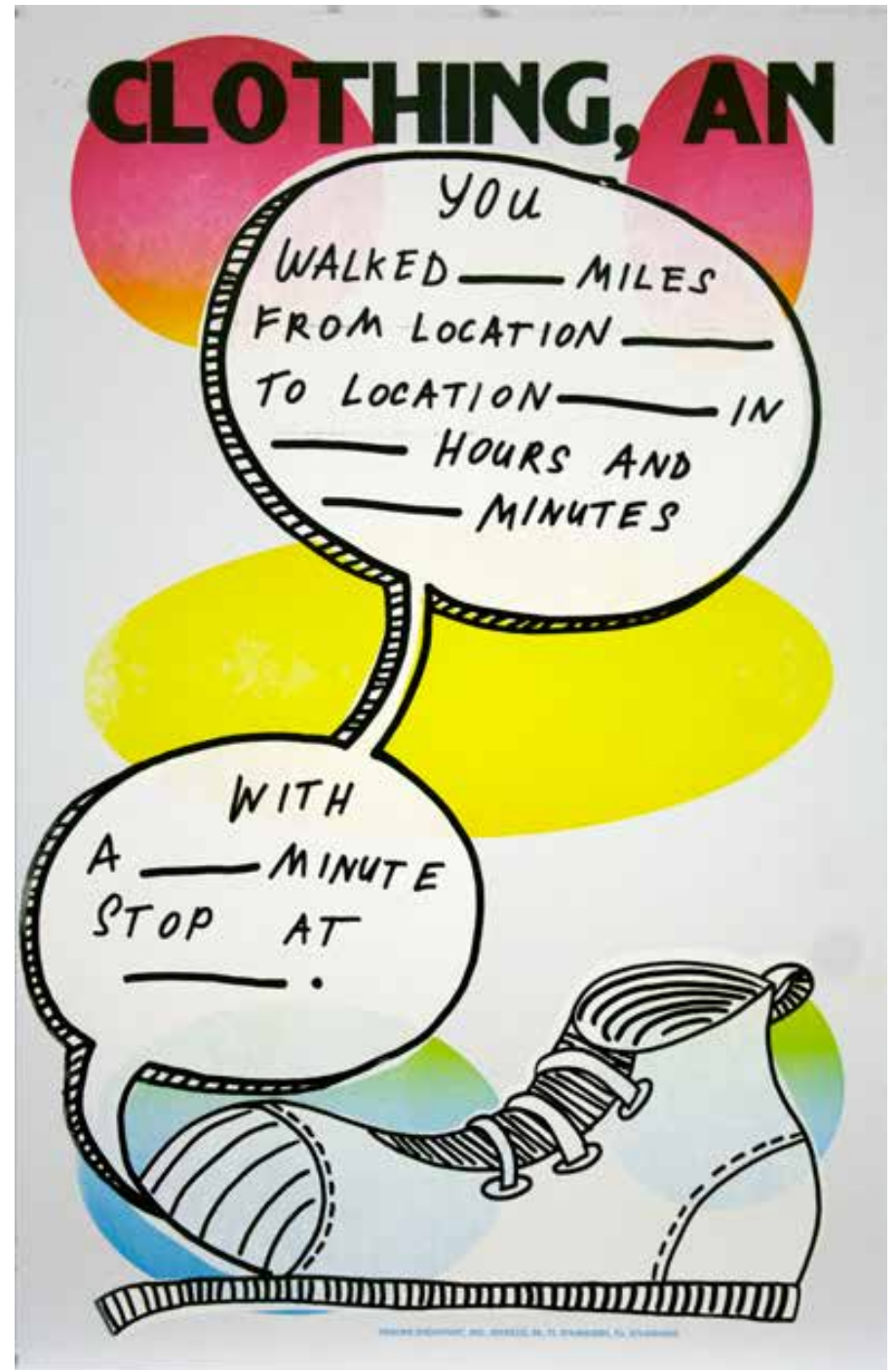


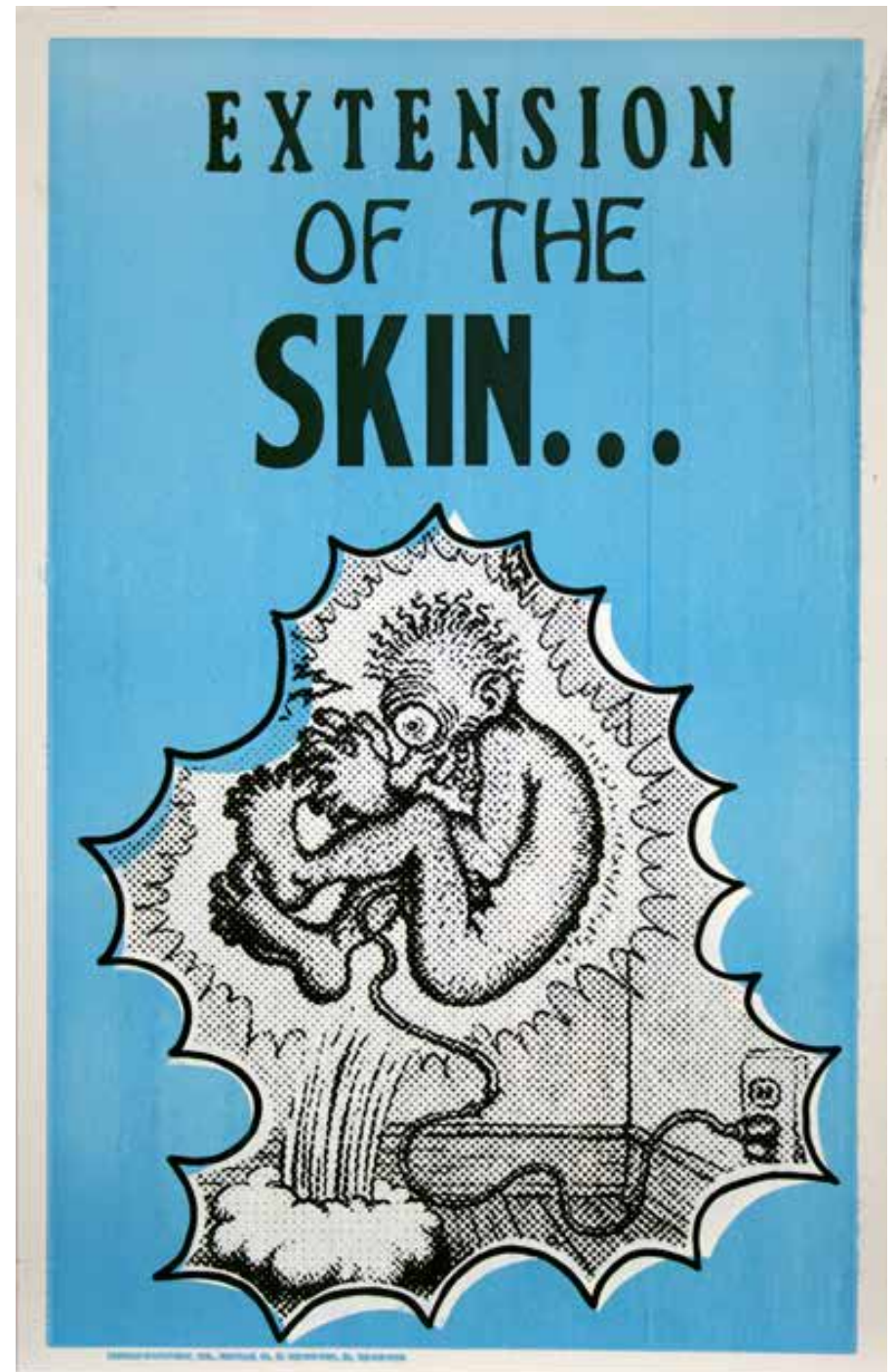








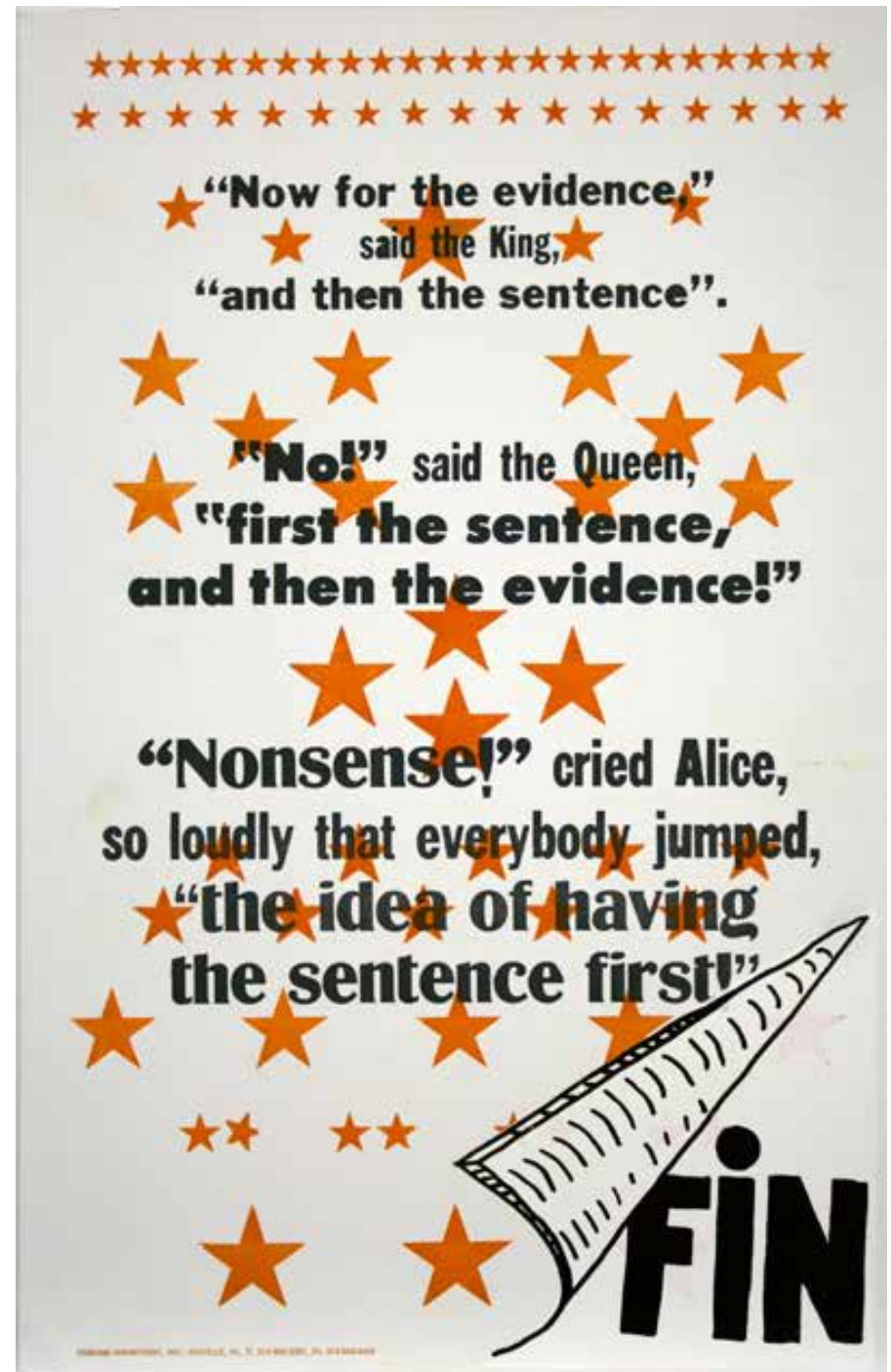




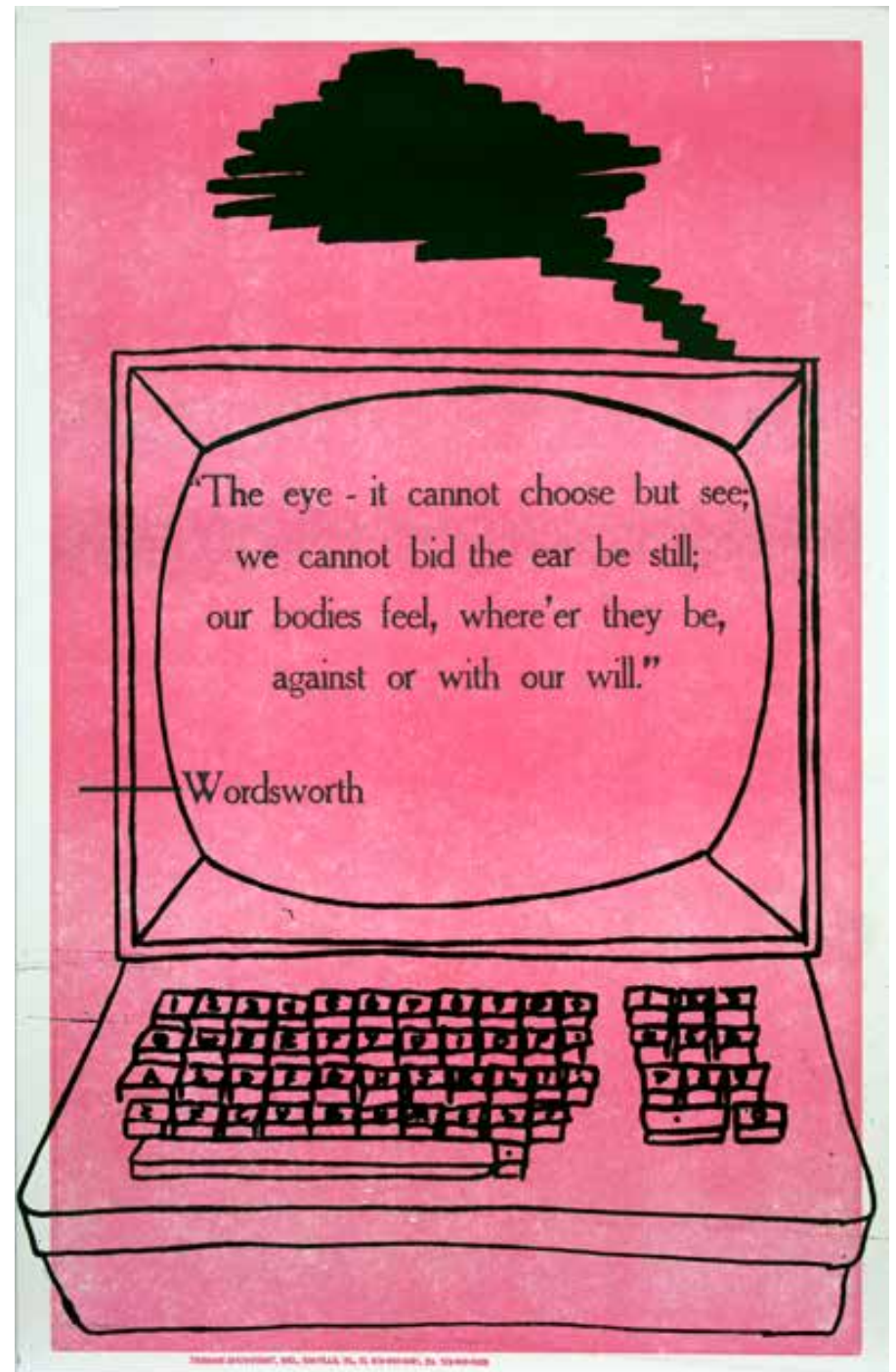


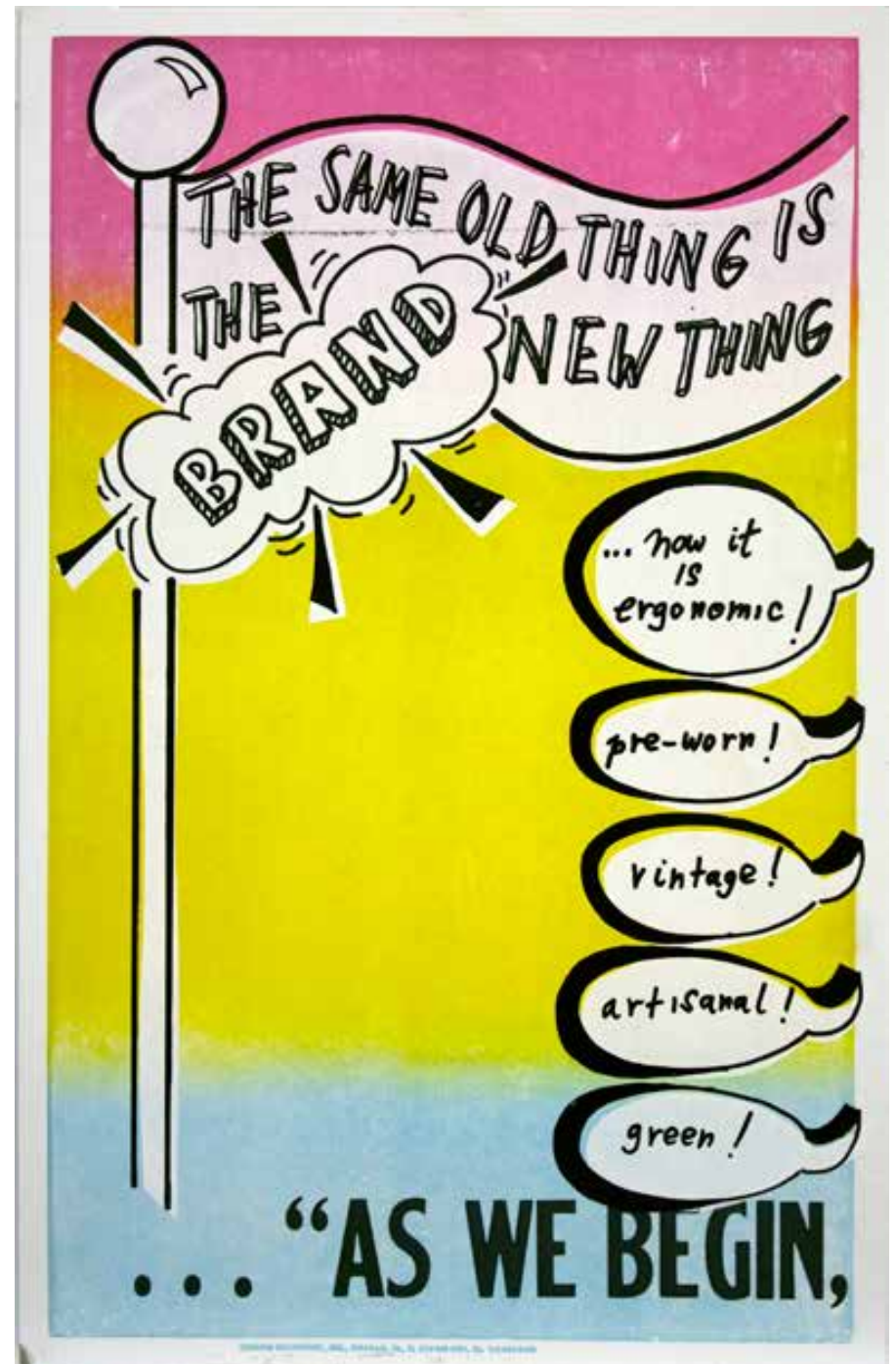


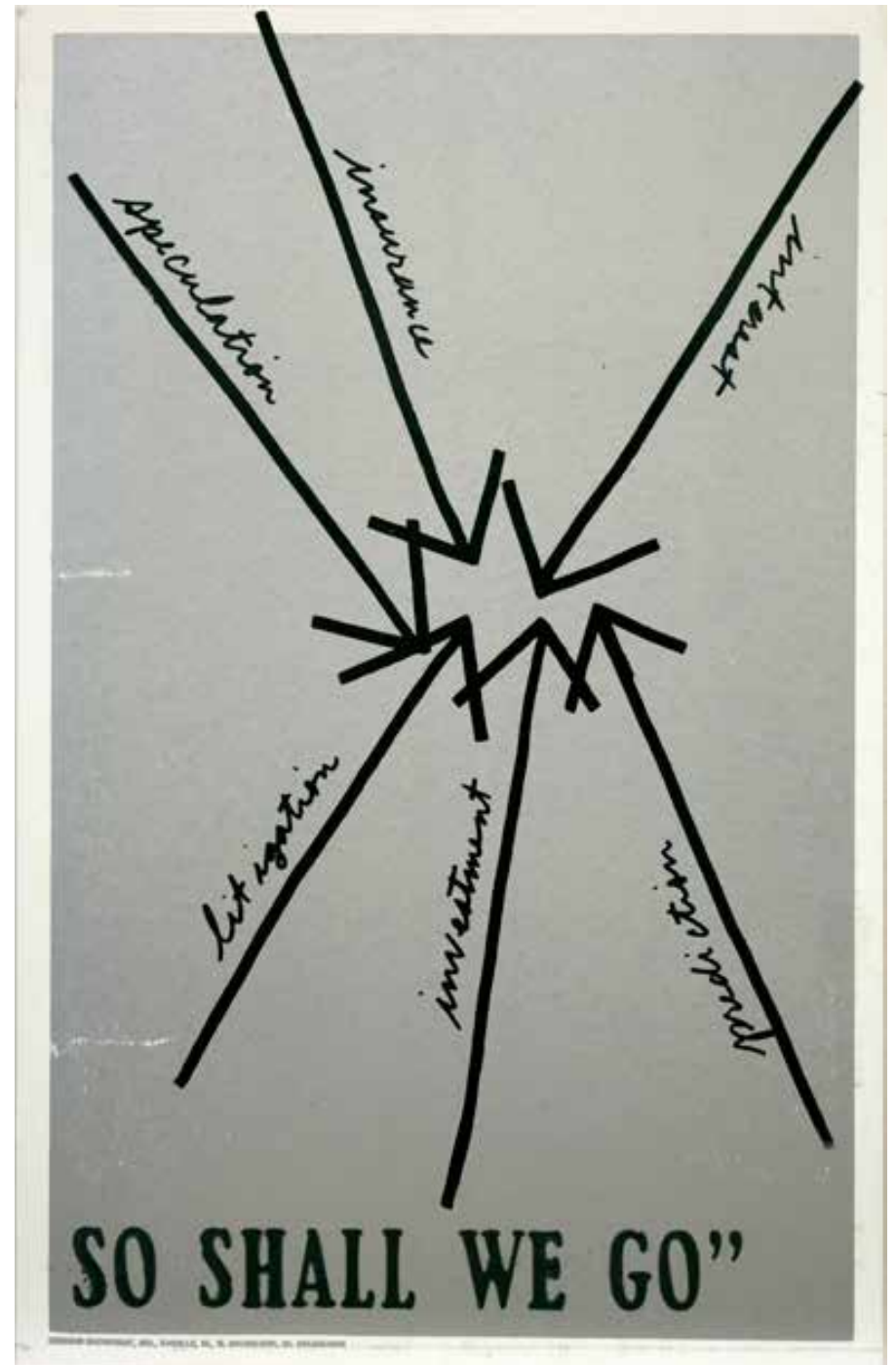
Thinking Backward (“Now for the evidence,” said the King, “and then the sentence”. “No!” said the Queen, “first the sentence and then the evidence!” “Nonsense!” cried Alice, so loudly that everybody jumped, “the idea of having the sentence first!”

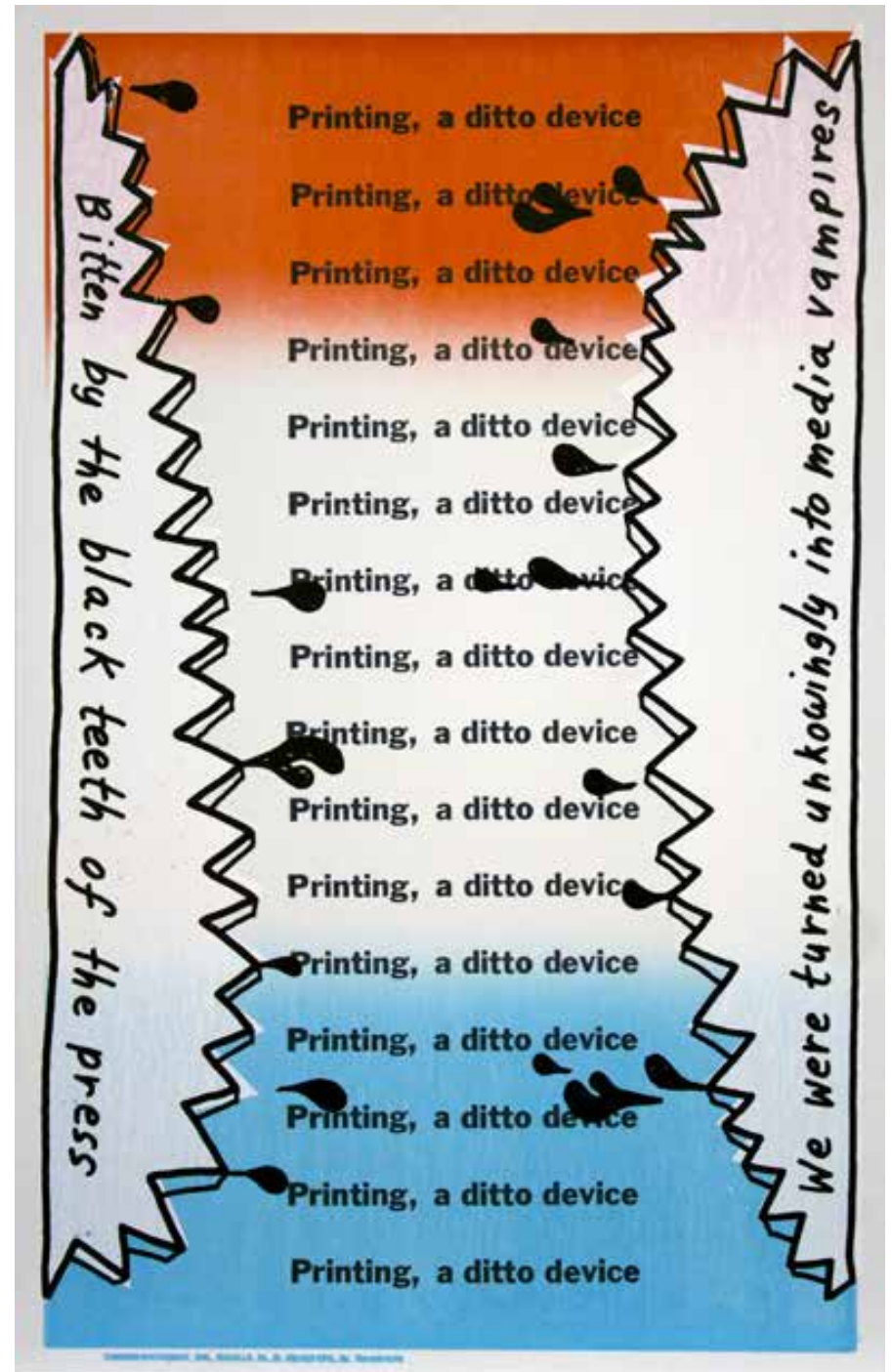


Adventures in Sensory Deprivation 3: The Monitor ("The eye—it cannot choose but see; we cannot bid the ear be still; our bodies feel, where'er they be, against or with our will." —Wordsworth)





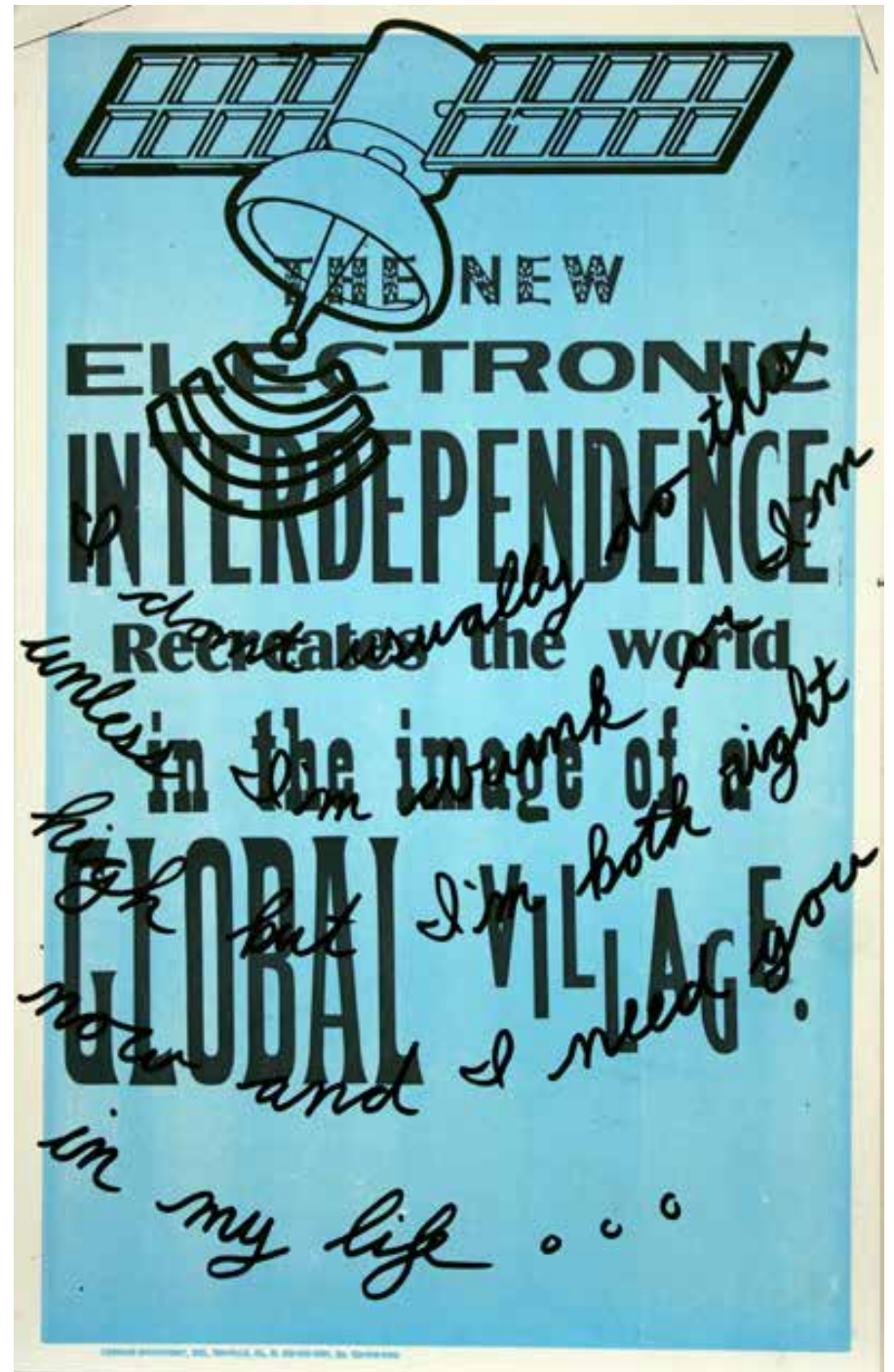




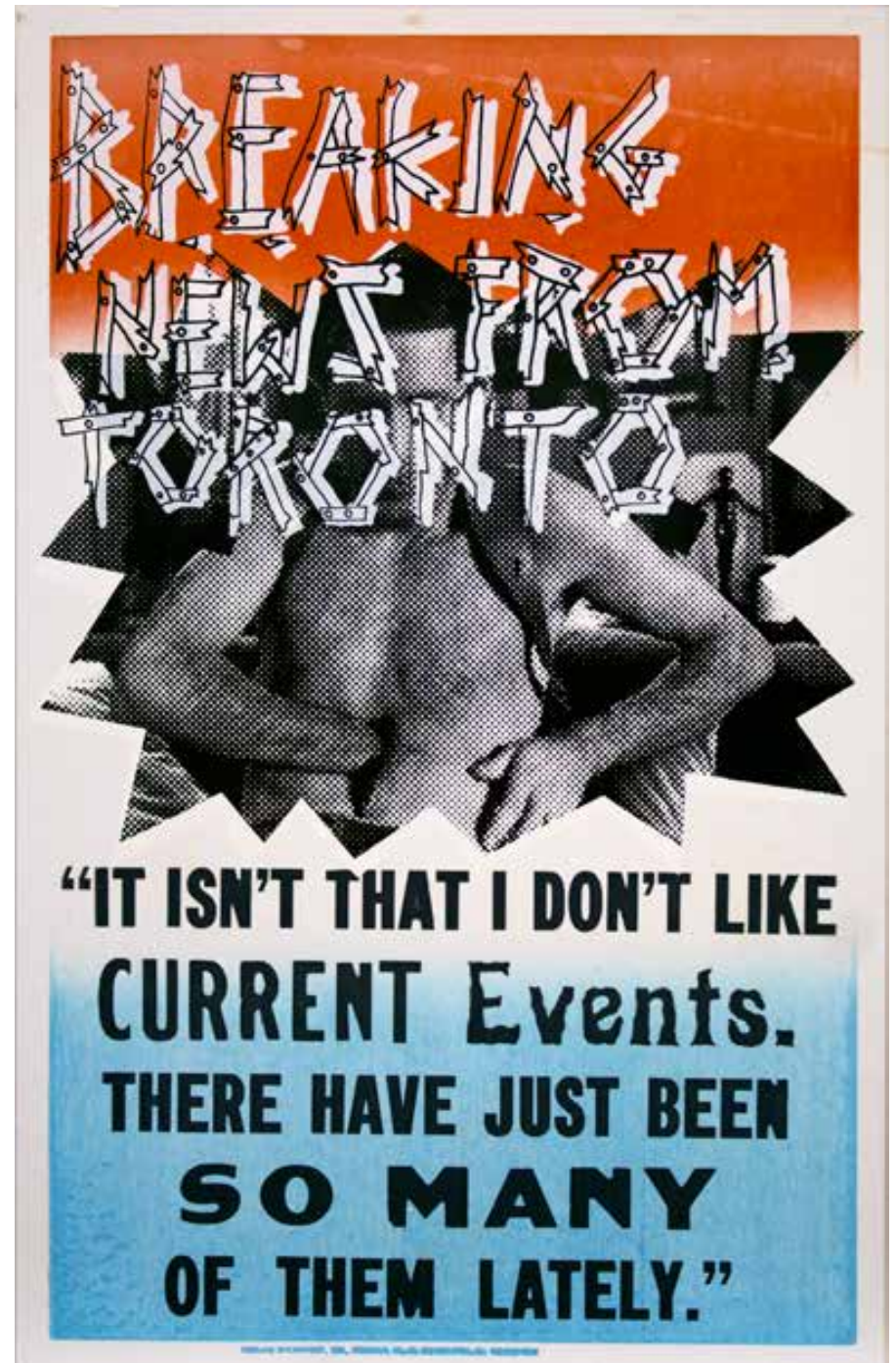
Micro and Macro Intelligence (Solid integrated circuit ENLARGED several hundred times).

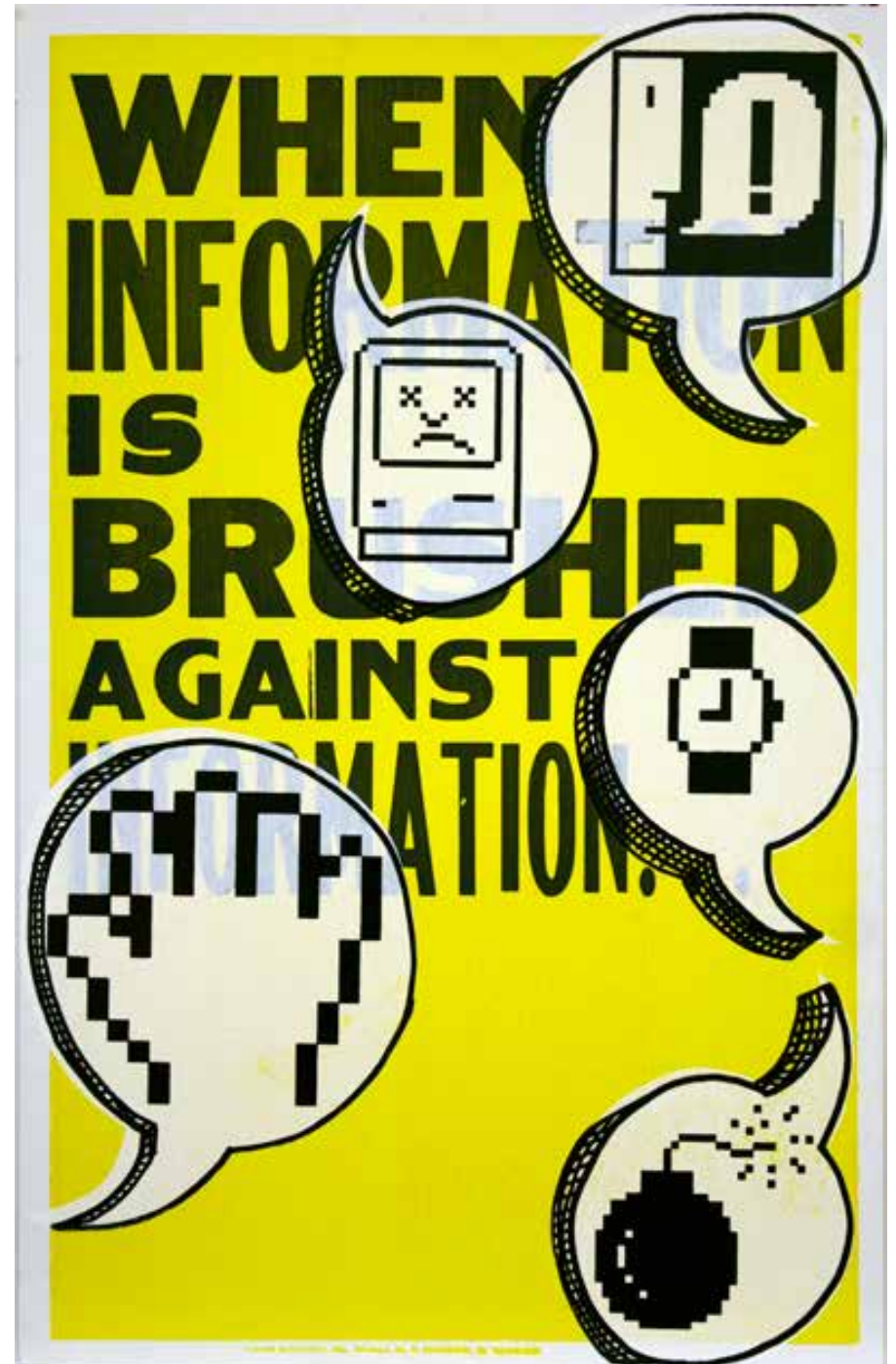


Gucci Mane Is Streaming (THE NEW ELECTRONIC INTERDEPENDENCE Recreates the world in the image of a GLOBAL VILLAGE)

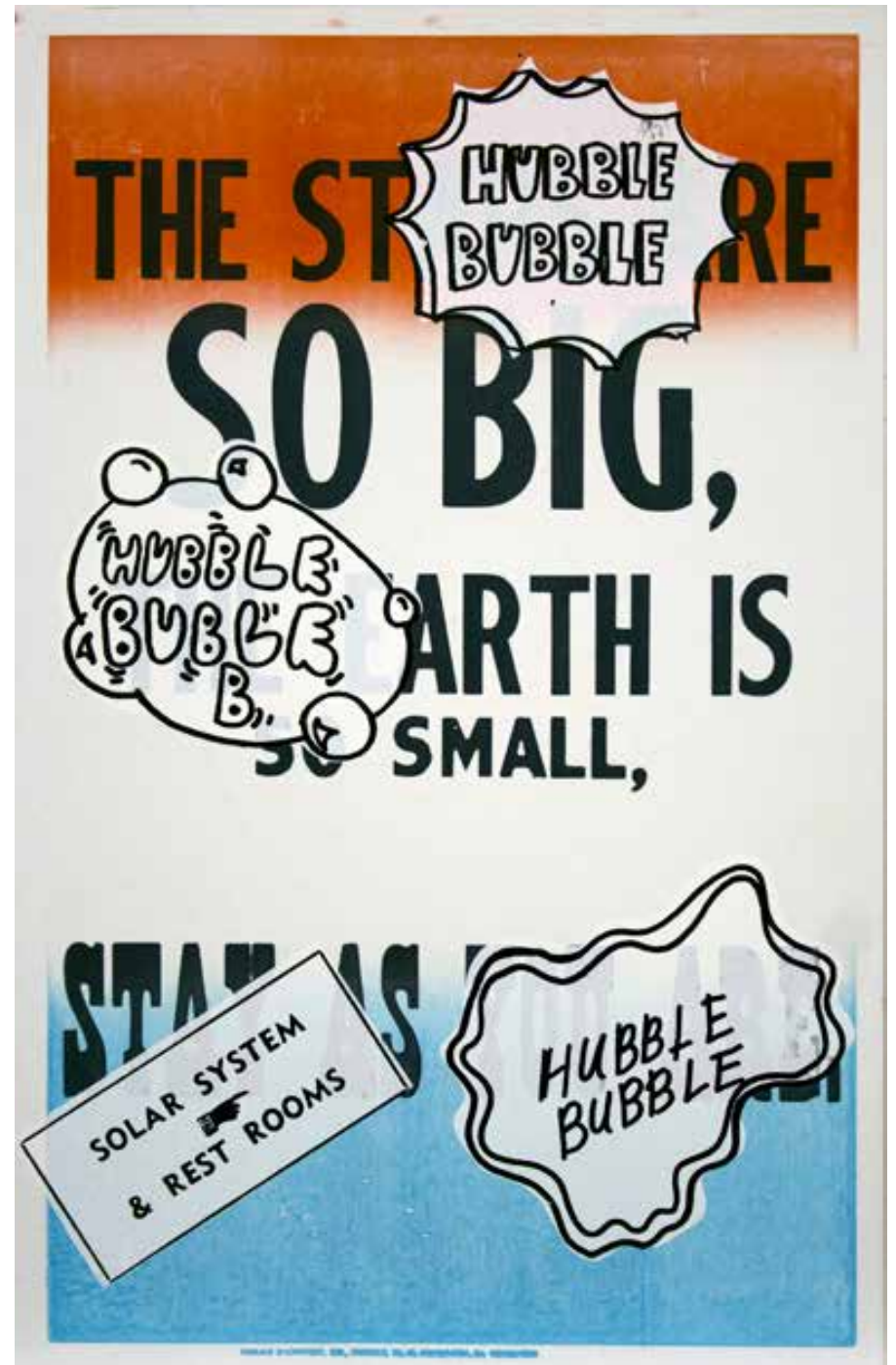


Brian O'Blivion / Straight (to) Video ("IT ISN'T THAT I DON'T LIKE CURRENT Events. THERE HAVE JUST BEEN SO MANY OF THEM LATELY.")



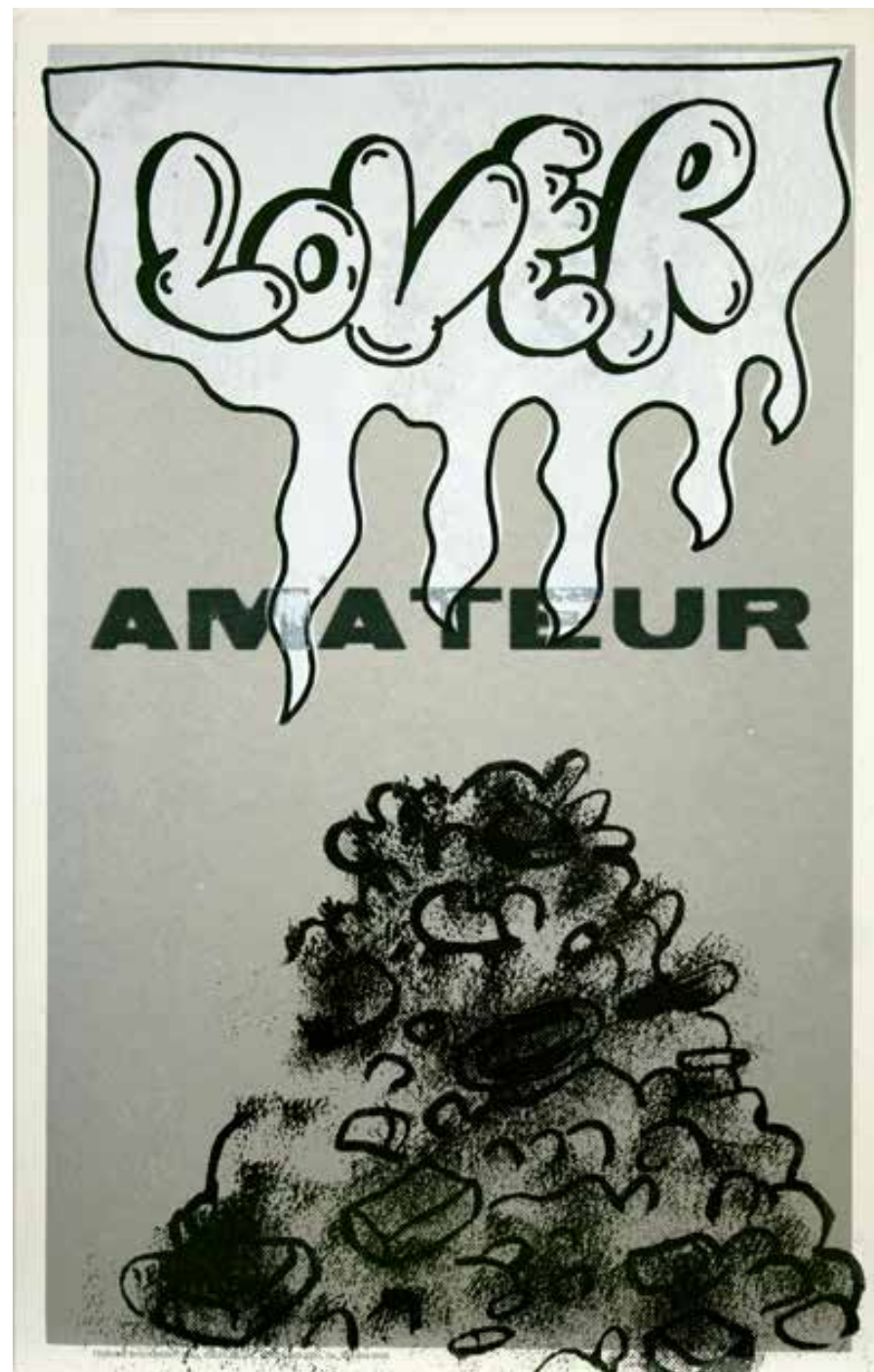


Remote Viewer (THE STARS ARE SO BIG, THE EARTH IS SO SMALL,
STAY AS YOU ARE.)

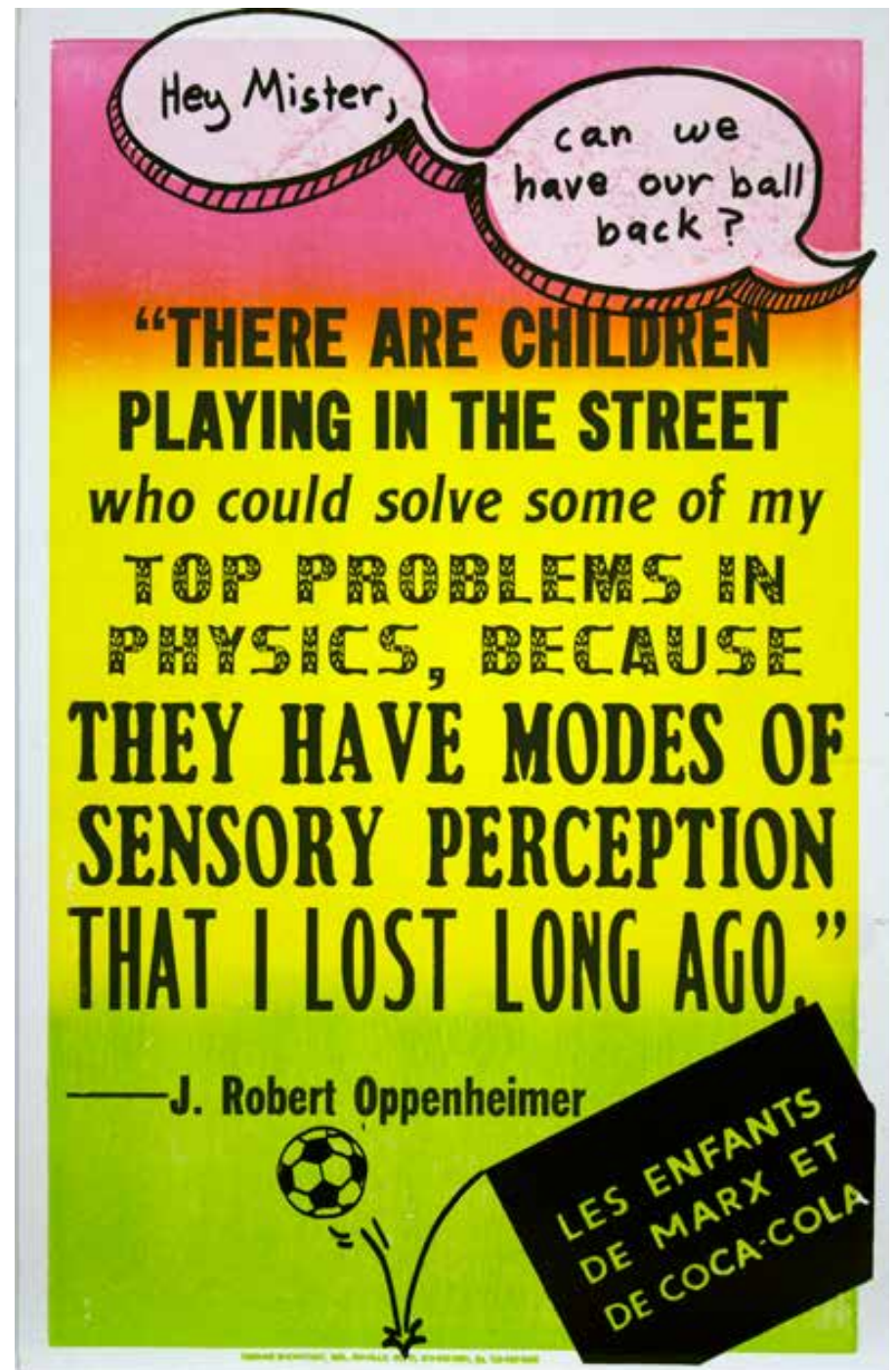








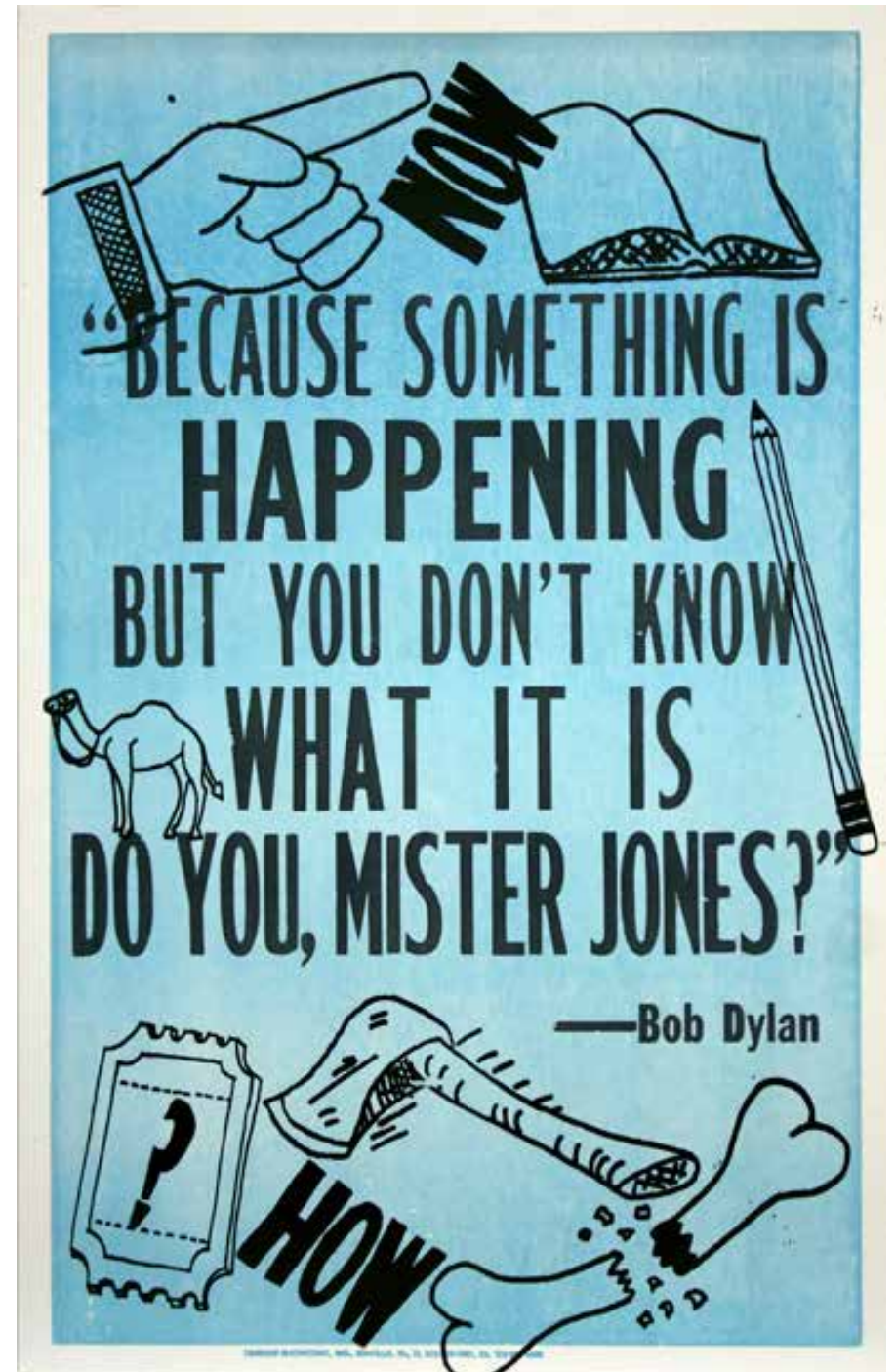
Top Problems in Physics (THERE ARE CHILDREN PLAYING IN THE STREET who could solve some of my TOP PROBLEMS IN PHYSICS, BECAUSE THEY HAVE MODES OF SENSORY PERCEPTION THAT I LOST LONG AGO.” — J. Robert Oppenheimer)



*The Monolith ("The thing of it is, we must live with the living."
—Montaigne)*



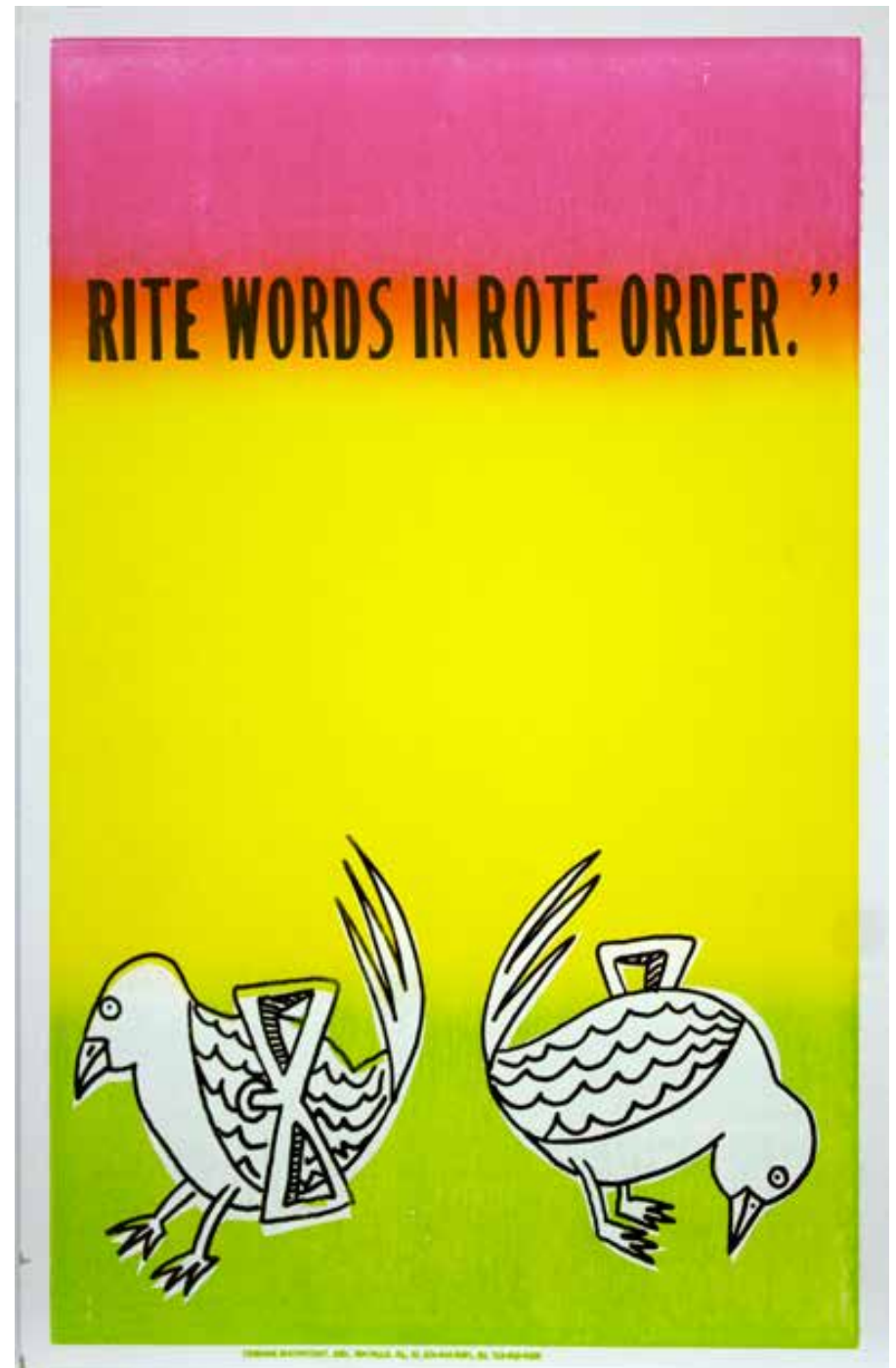
What's Happening, Allan Kaprow 3: Rebus ("BECAUSE SOMETHING IS HAPPENING BUT YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT IT IS DO YOU, MISTER JONES" —Bob Dylan)



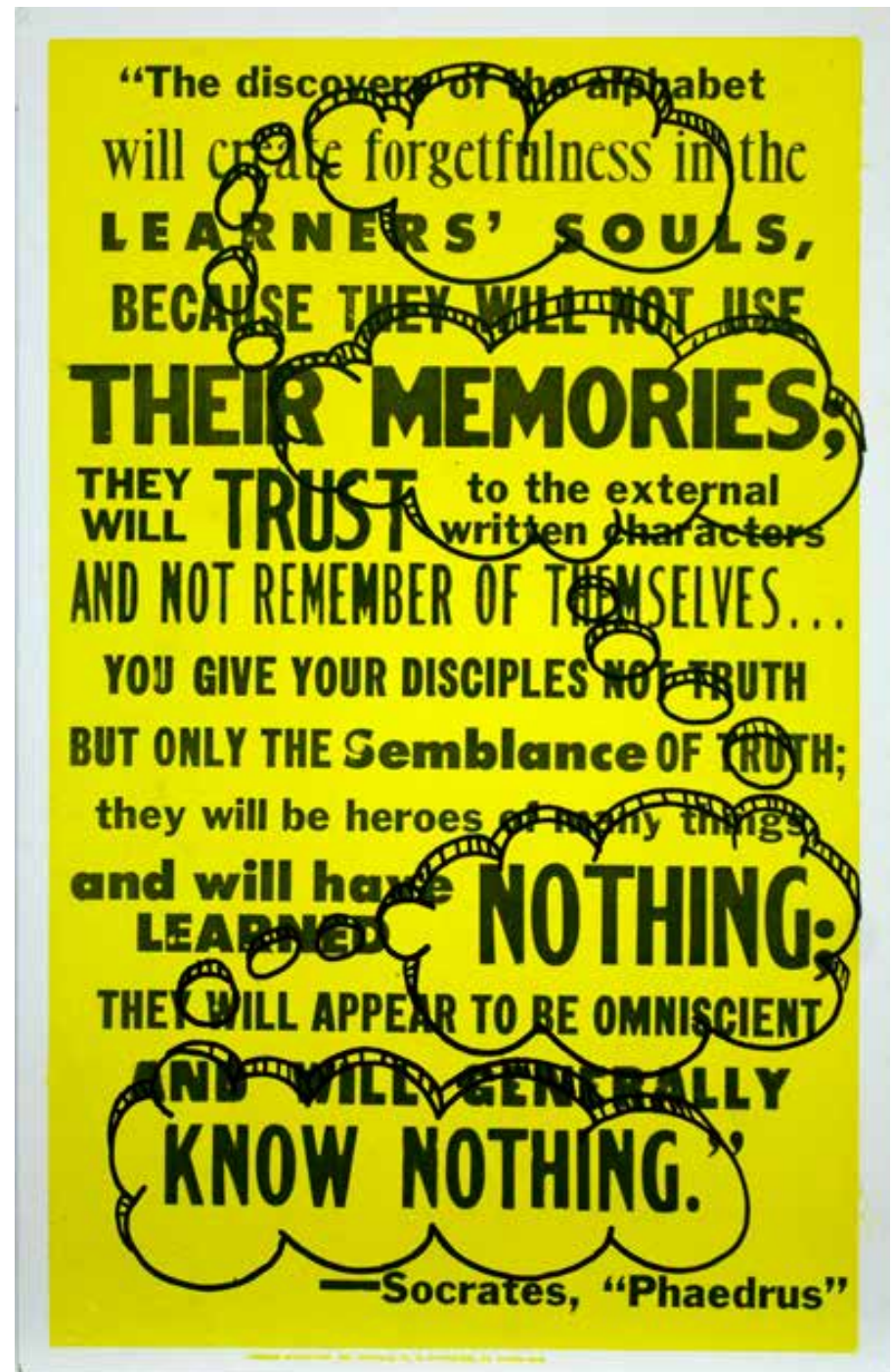
Adventures in Over-Extension 3: Cash from Chaos (THE HELL OF IT IS THOSE PUNKS PUMP OVER FIFTEEN BILLION DOLLARS INTO THE ECONOMY EVERY YEAR)

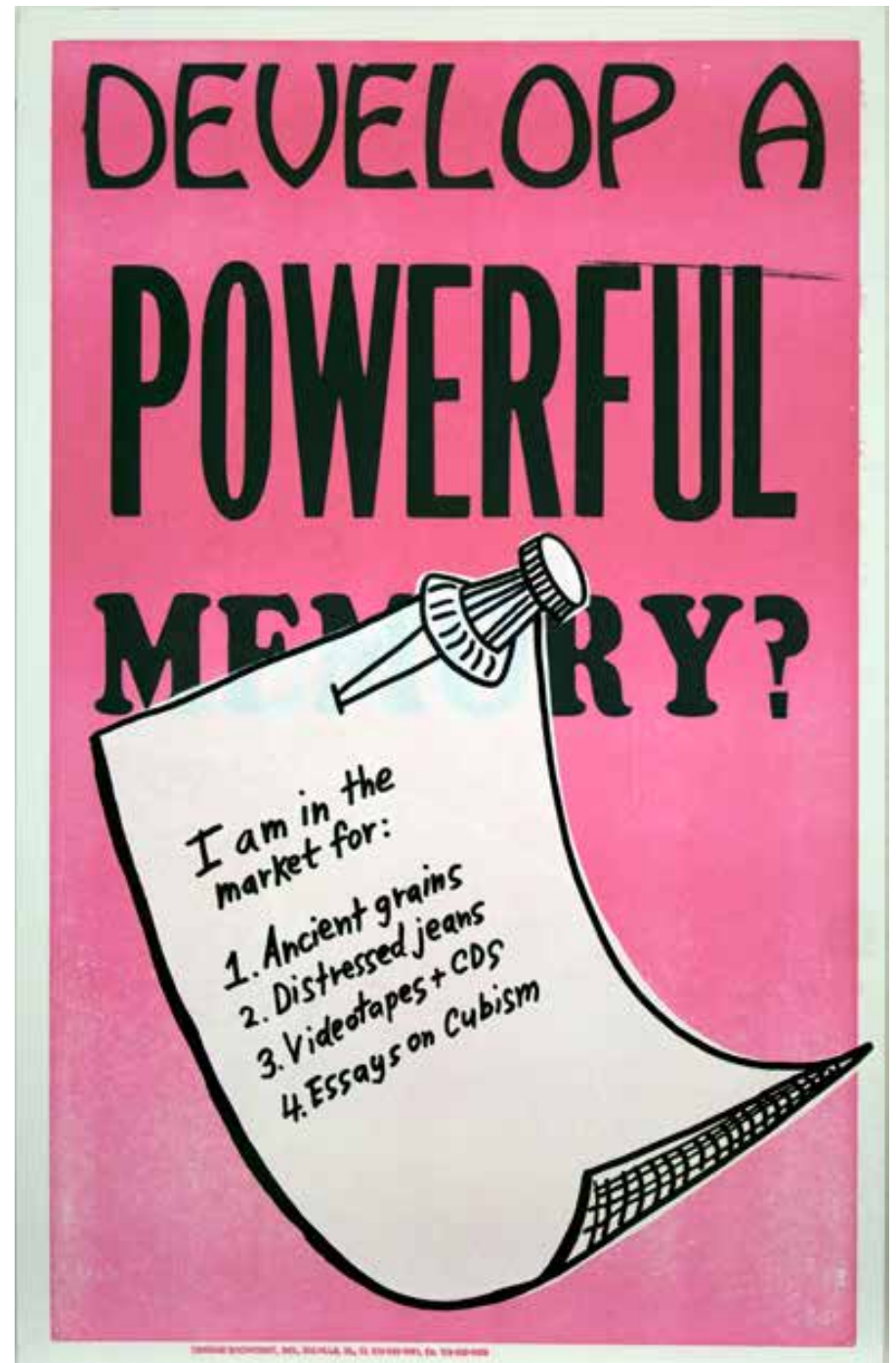






Devious Characters (LEARNERS' SOULS, BECAUSE THEY WILL NOT USE THEIR MEMORIES; THEY WILL TRUST to the external written characters AND NOT REMEMBER OF THEMSELVES... YOU GIVE YOUR DISCIPLES NOT TRUTH BUT ONLY THE Semblance OF TRUTH; they will be heroes of many things and will have LEARNED NOTHING; THEY WILL APPEAR TO BE OMNISICENT AND WILL GENERALLY KNOW NOTHING. — Socrates, "Phaedrus")









Small and Big Sounds (JOHN CAGE: "One must be disinterested, accept that a sound is a sound and a man is a man, give up illusions about ideas of order, expressions of sentiment, and all the rest of our inherited aesthetic claptrap." "The highest purpose is to have no purpose at all. This puts one in accord with nature, in her manner of operation." "Everyone is in the best seat" "Everything we do is music!" "Theatre takes place all the time, wherever one is. And art simply facilitates persuading one this is the case." "They (I Ching) told me to continue what I was doing, and to spread JOY AND REVOLUTION.")

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"One must be disinterested, accept that a sound is a sound and a man is a man, give up illusions about ideas of order, expressions of sentiment, and all the rest of our inherited aesthetic claptrap."

"The highest purpose is to have no purpose at all. This puts one in accord with nature, in her manner of operation."

"Everyone is in the best seat"

"Everything we do is music."

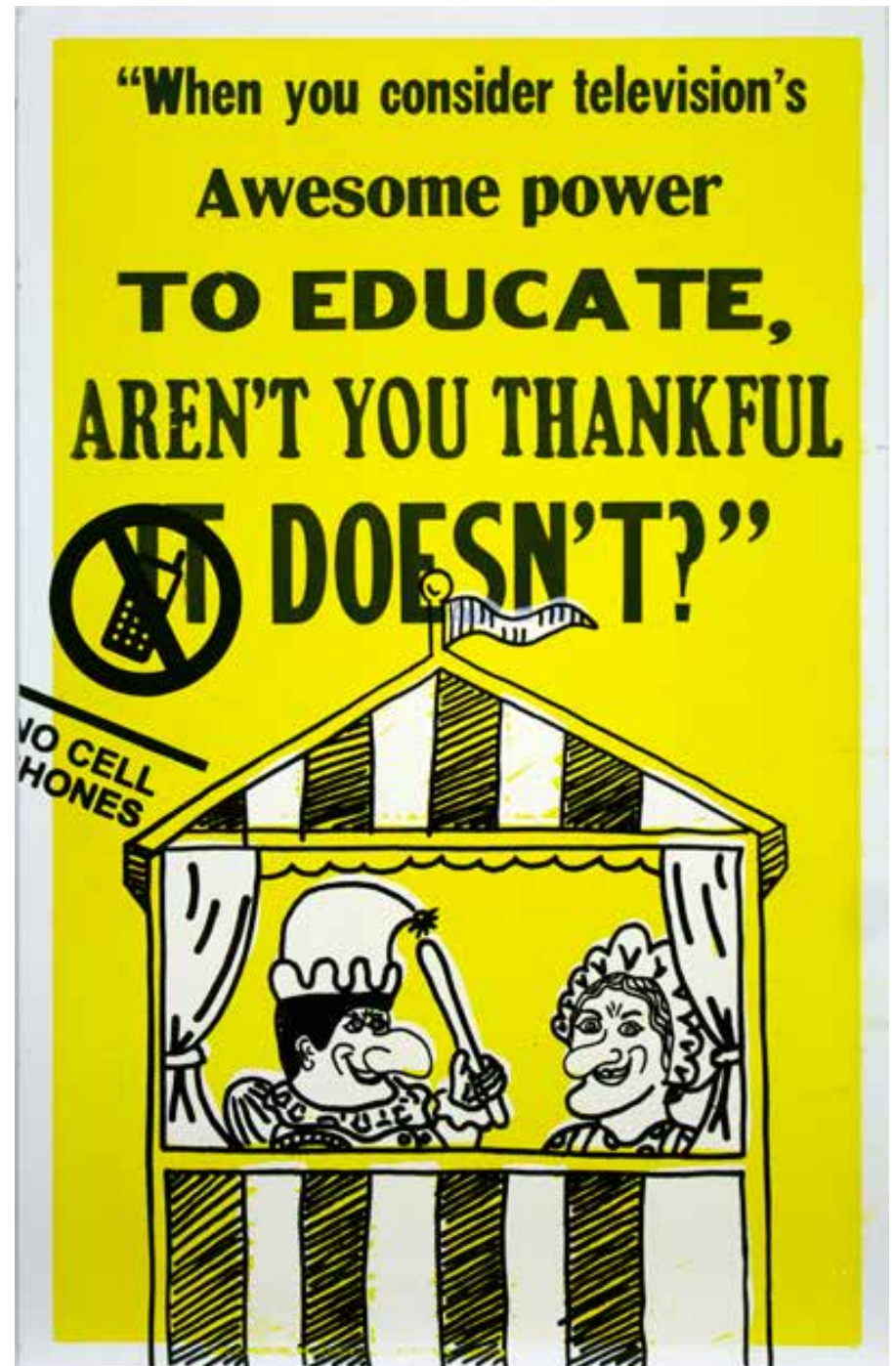
"Theatre takes place all the time, wherever one is. And art simply facilitates persuading one this is the case."

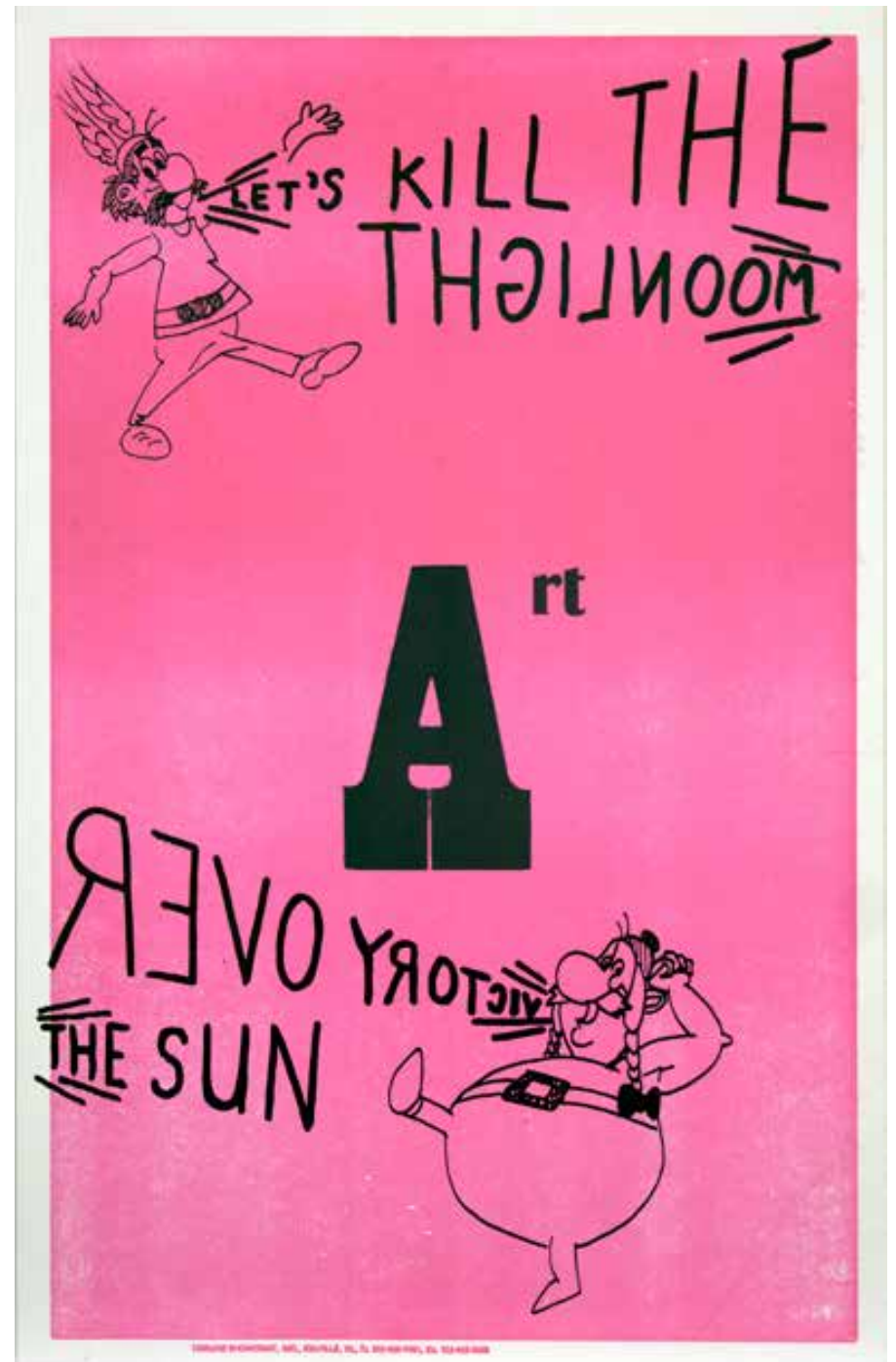
"They (I Ching) told me to continue what I was doing, and to spread

**JOY
AND
REVOLUTION."**

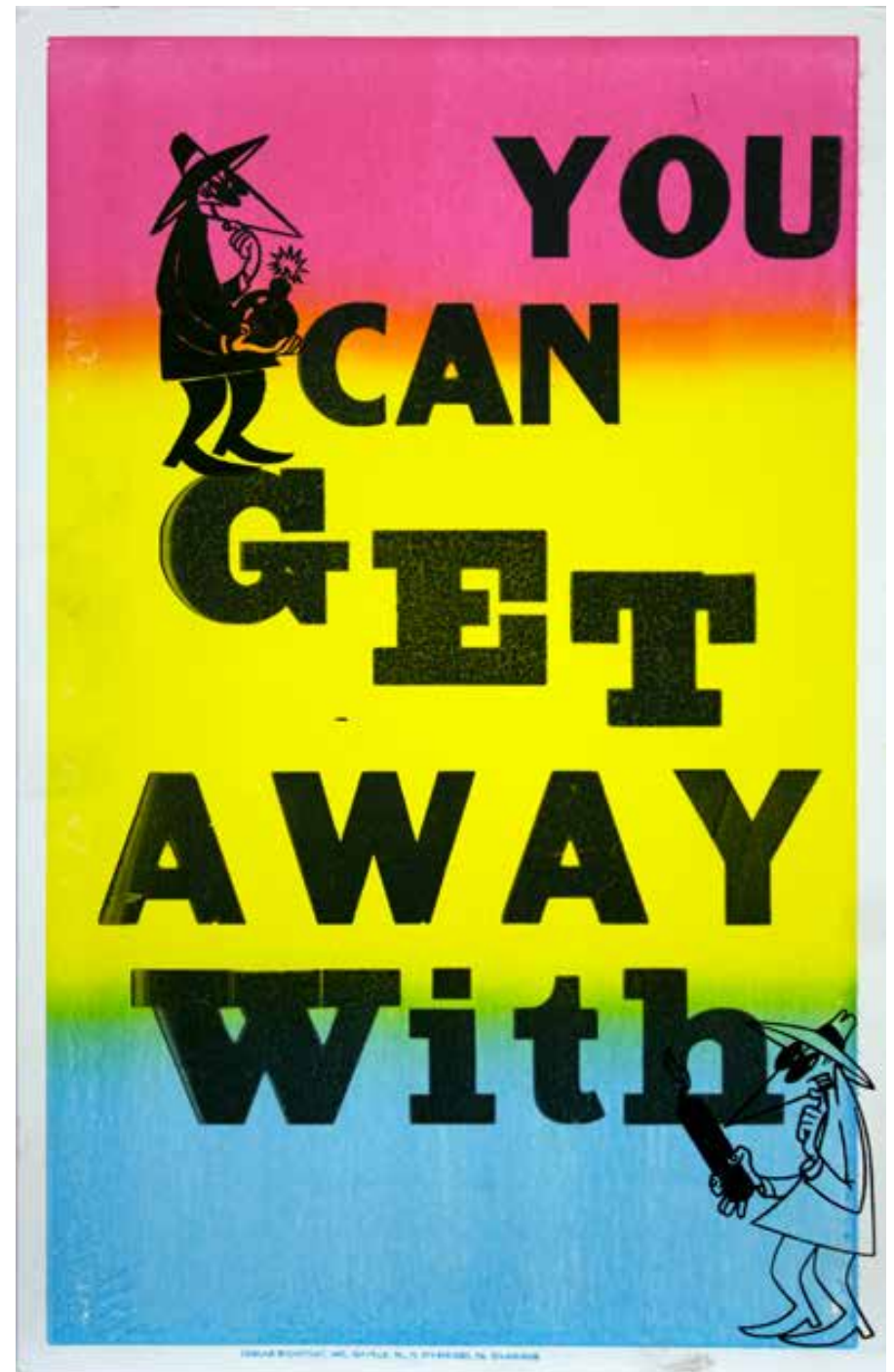
Handwritten annotations: THIS IS AN OLD, THIS IS A ROW, THIS IS A ROW

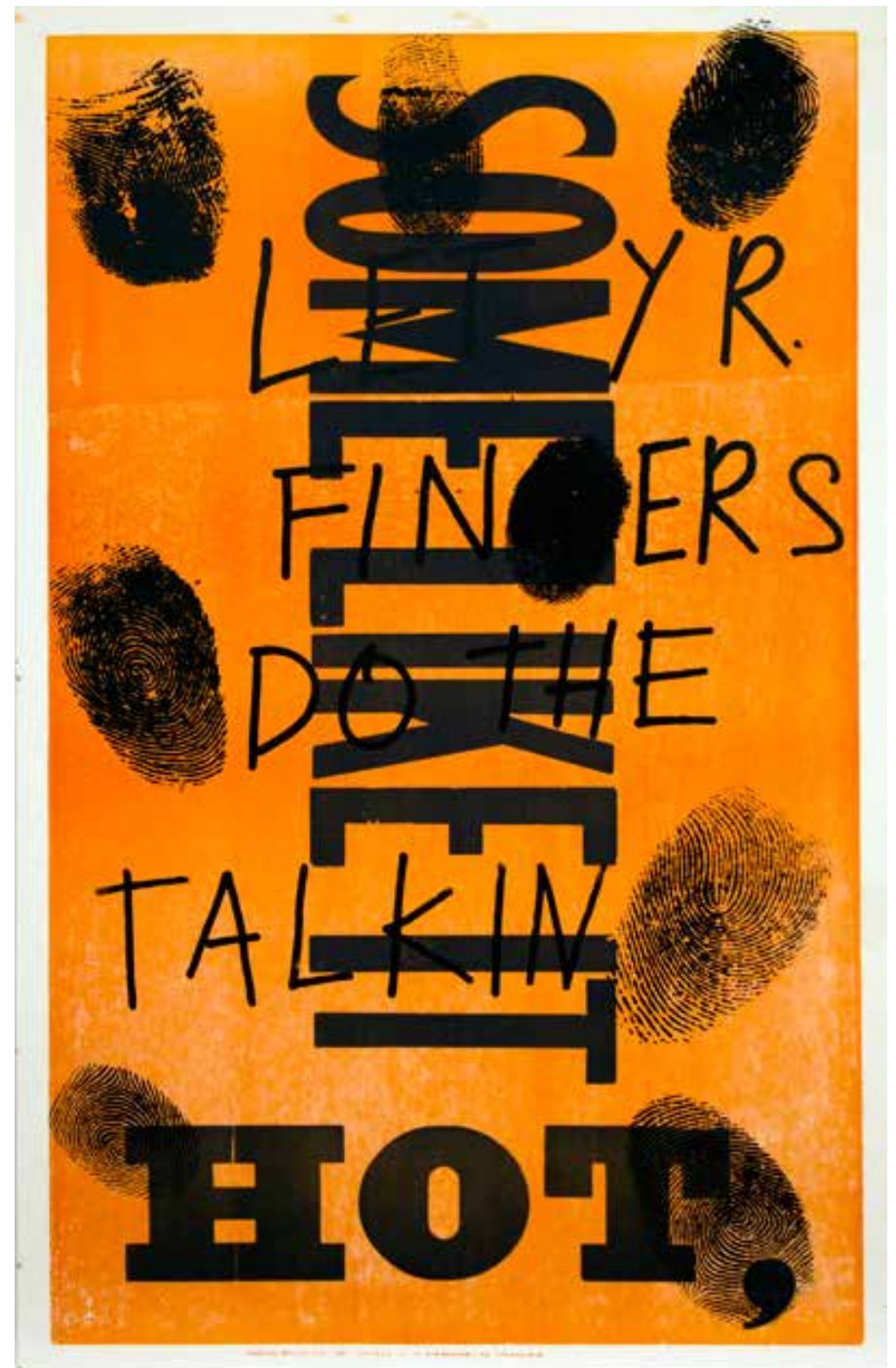
The Children's Channel ("When you consider television's Awesome power TO EDUCATE, AREN'T YOU THANKFUL IT DOESN'T?")





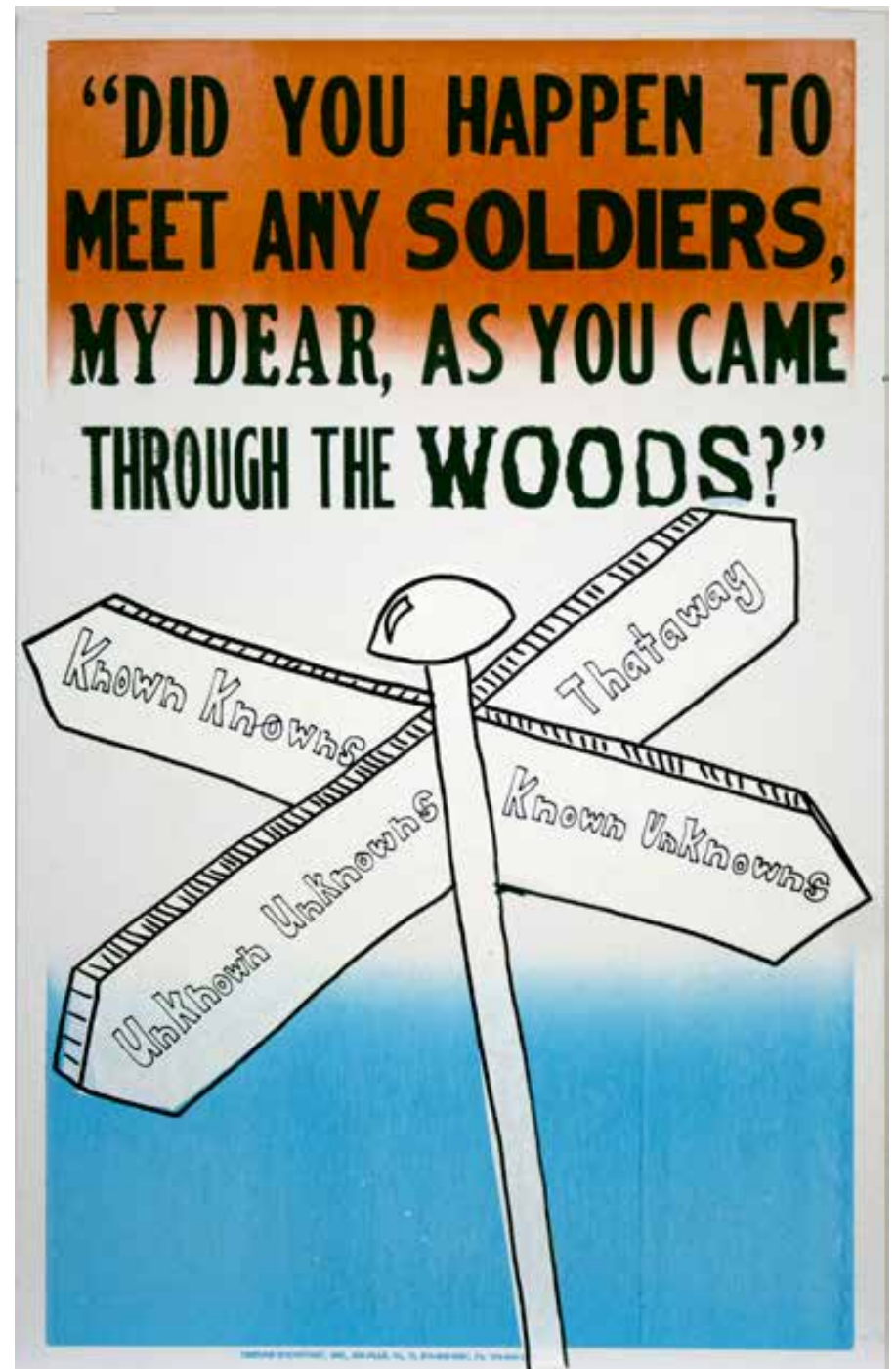


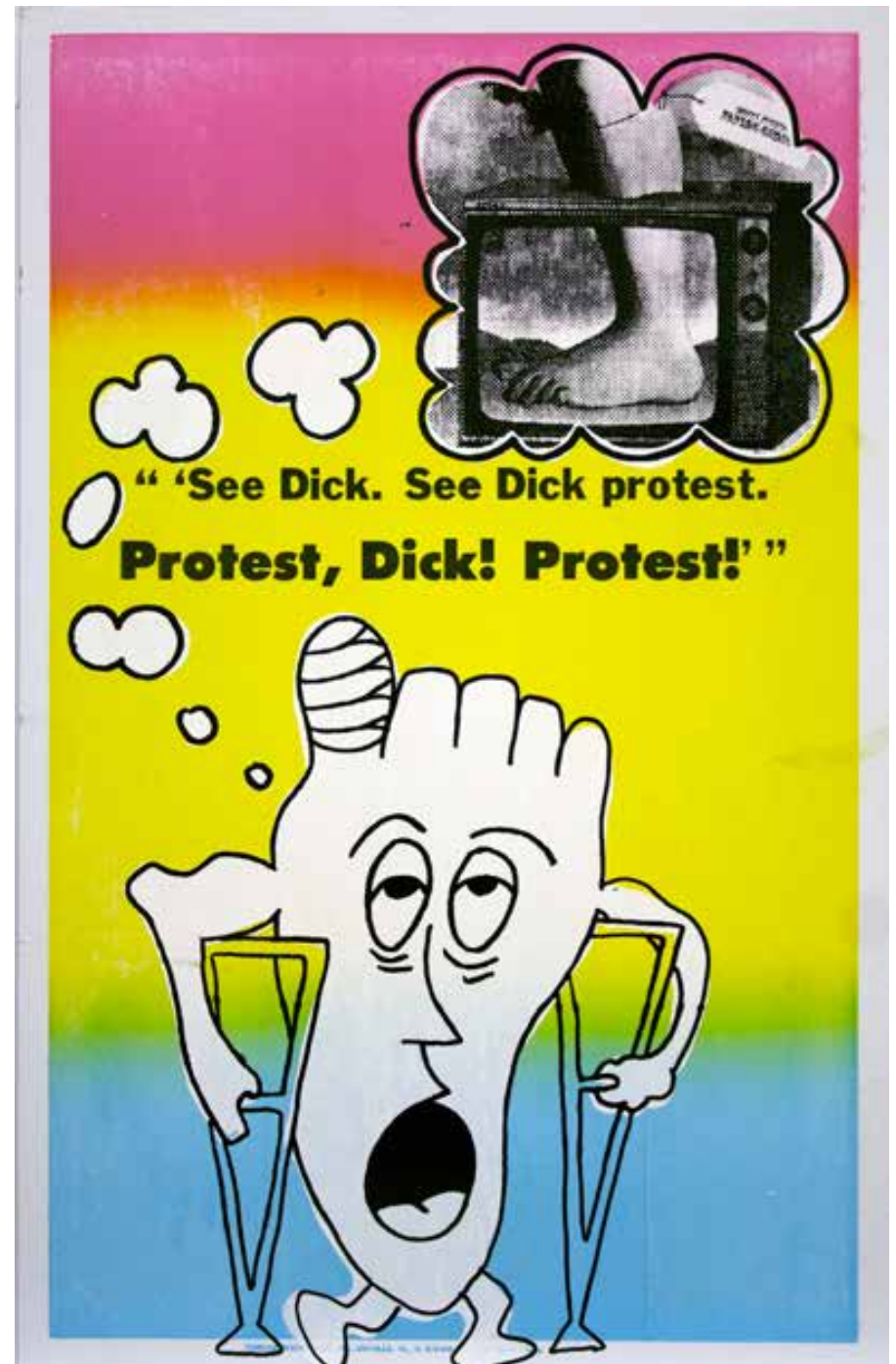




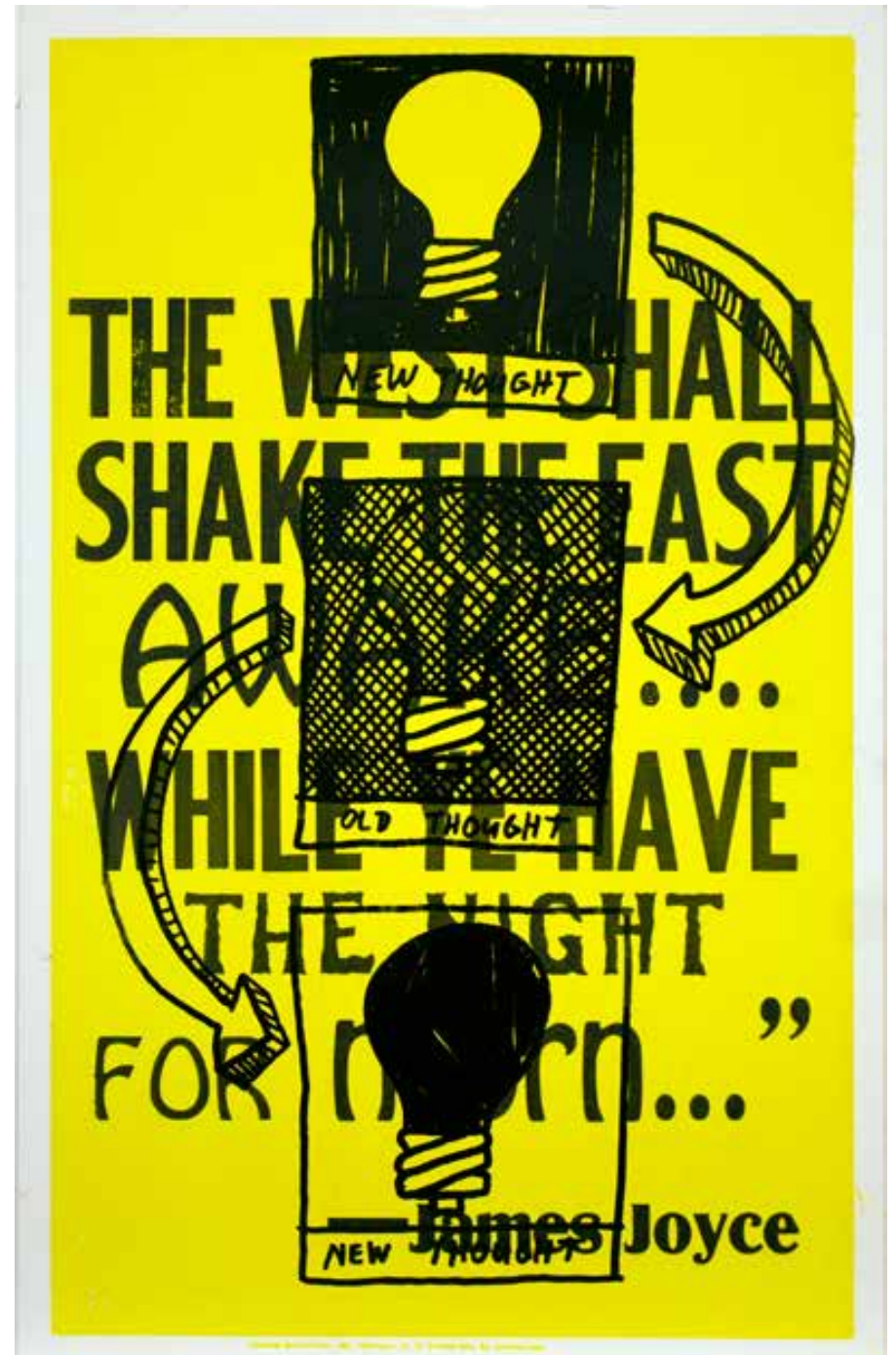


Rumsfeld's Address ("DID YOU HAPPEN TO MEET ANY SOLDIERS, MY DEAR, AS YOU CAME THROUGH THE WOODS?")

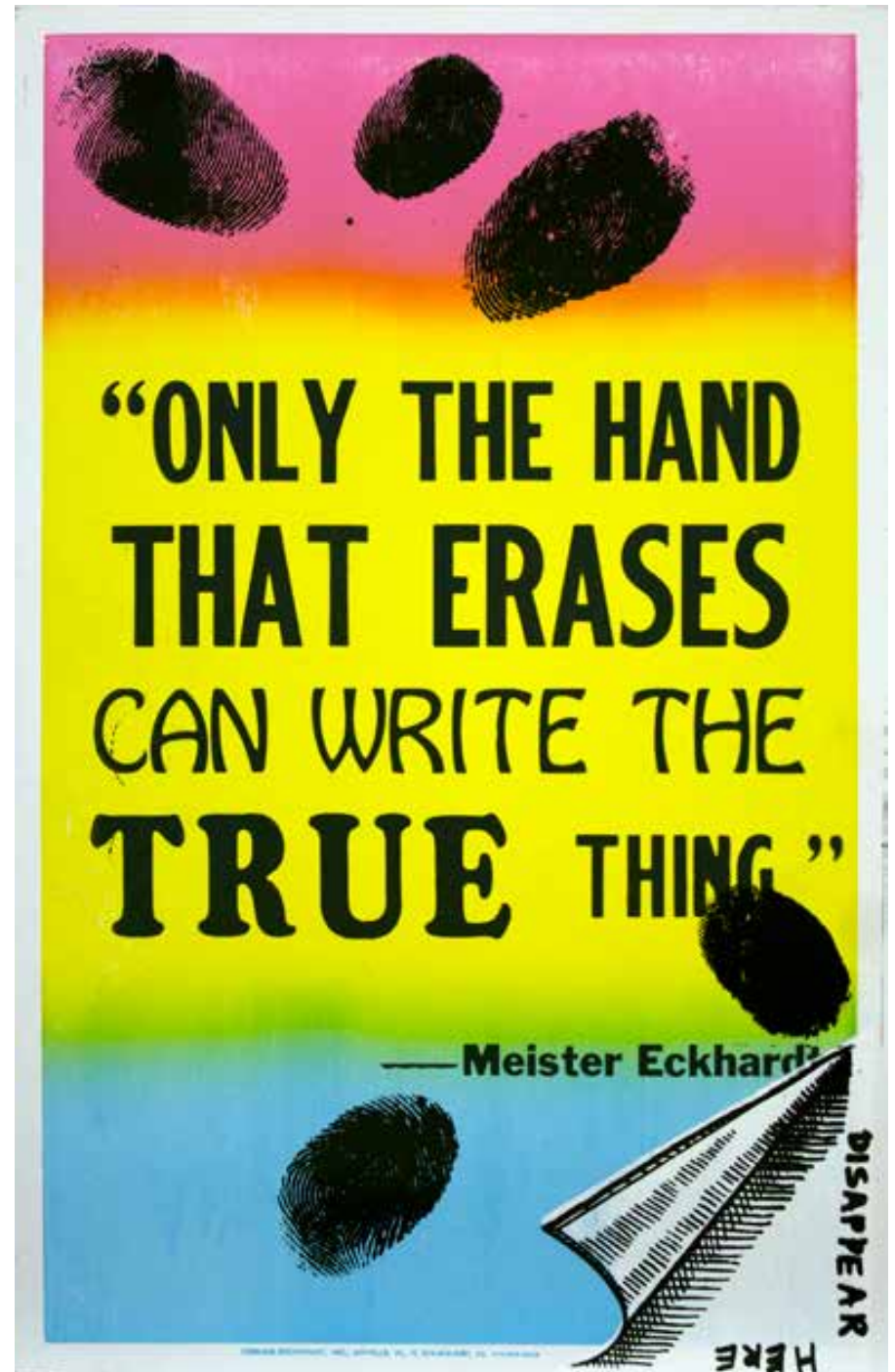




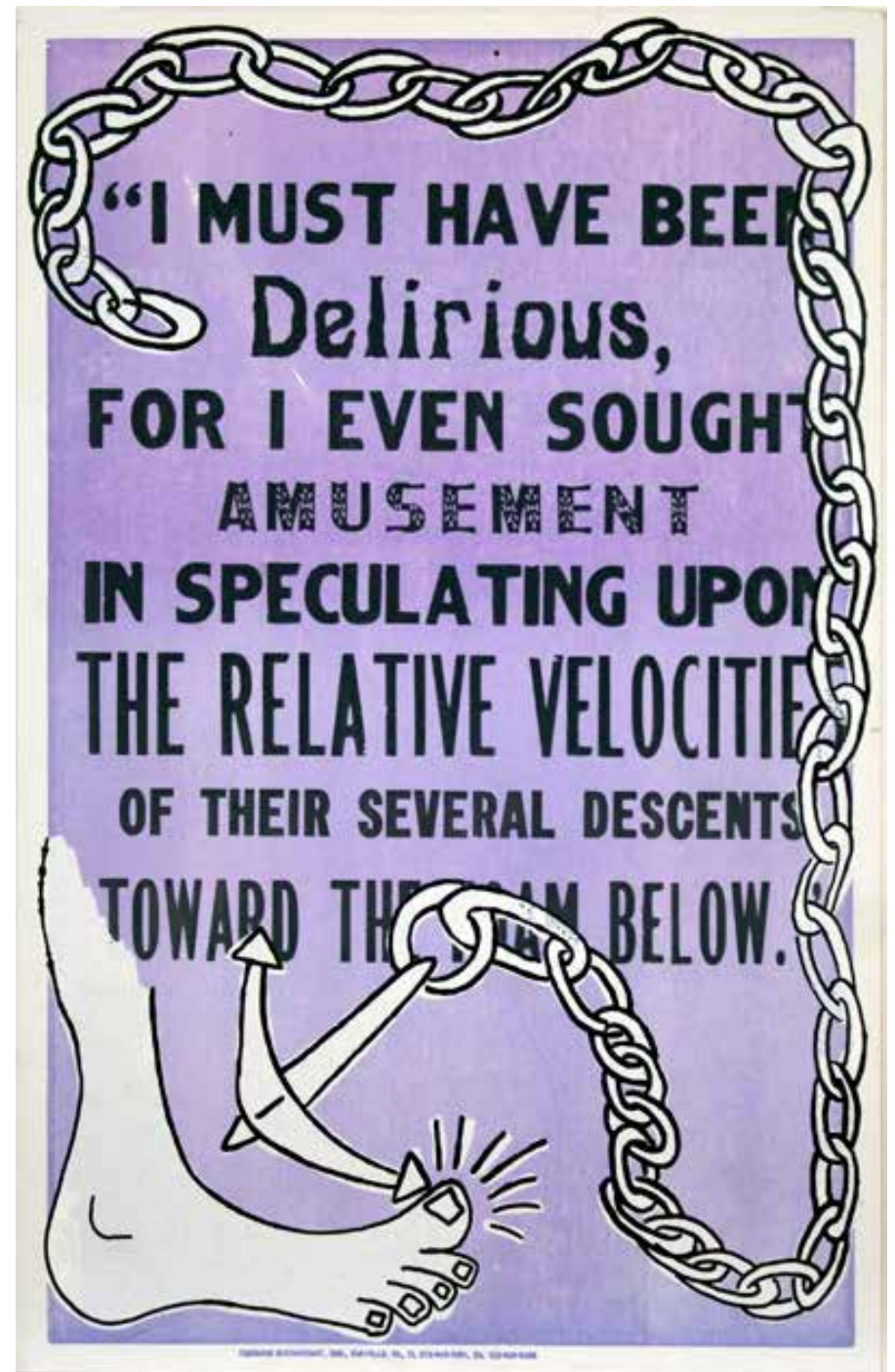
Pure Information (THE WEST SHALL SHAKE THE EAST AWAKE...
WHILE YE HAVE THE NIGHT FOR MORN..." —James Joyce) Include



The Silent Piece (“ONLY THE HAND THAT ERASES CAN WRITE THE TRUE THING” —Meister Eckhardt)

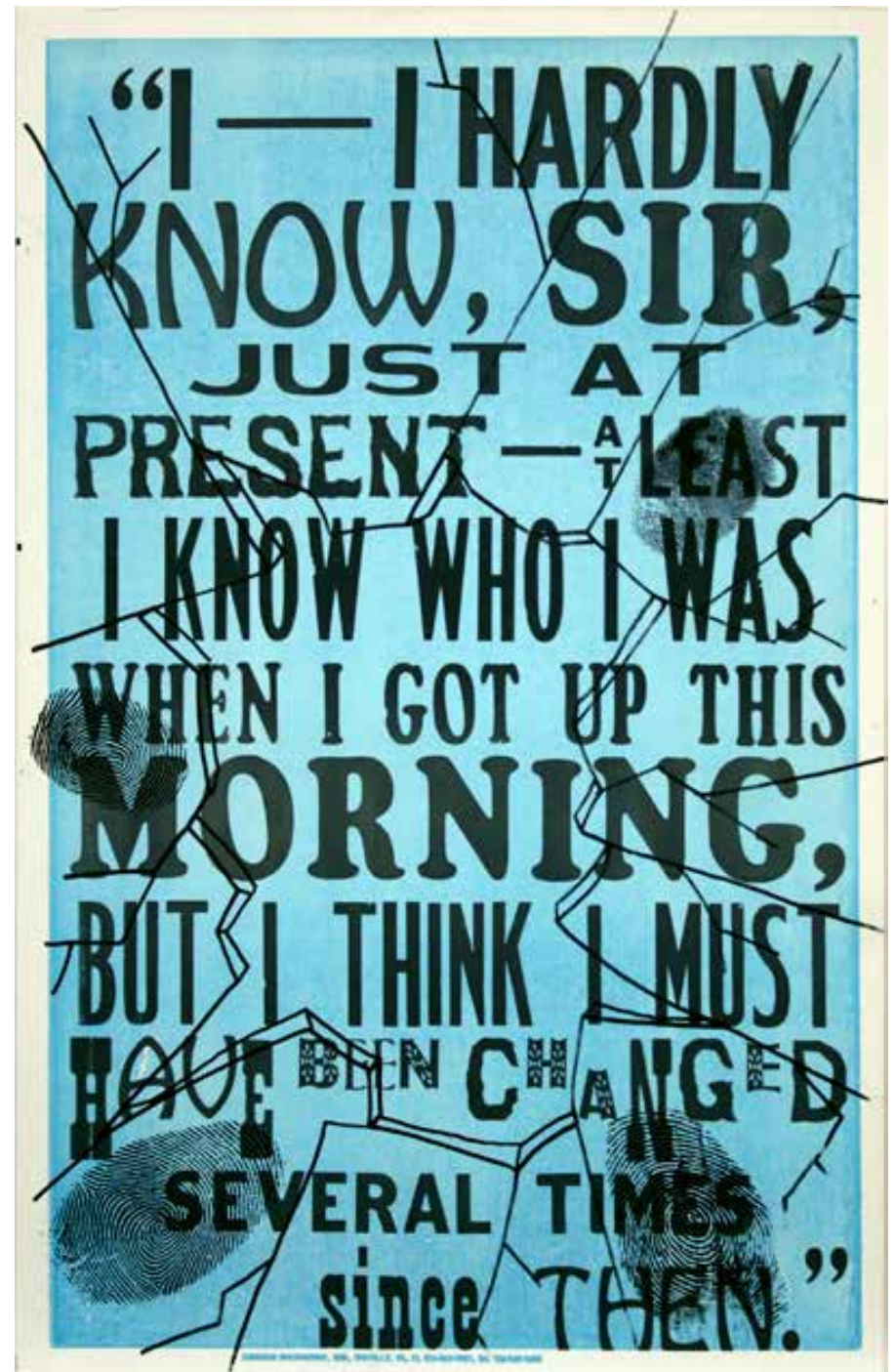


Weltschmerz ("I MUST HAVE BEEN Delirious, FOR I EVEN SOUGHT AMUSEMENT IN SPECULATING UPON THE RELATIVE VELOCITIES OF THEIR SEVERAL DESCENTS TOWARD THE FOAM BELOW.")

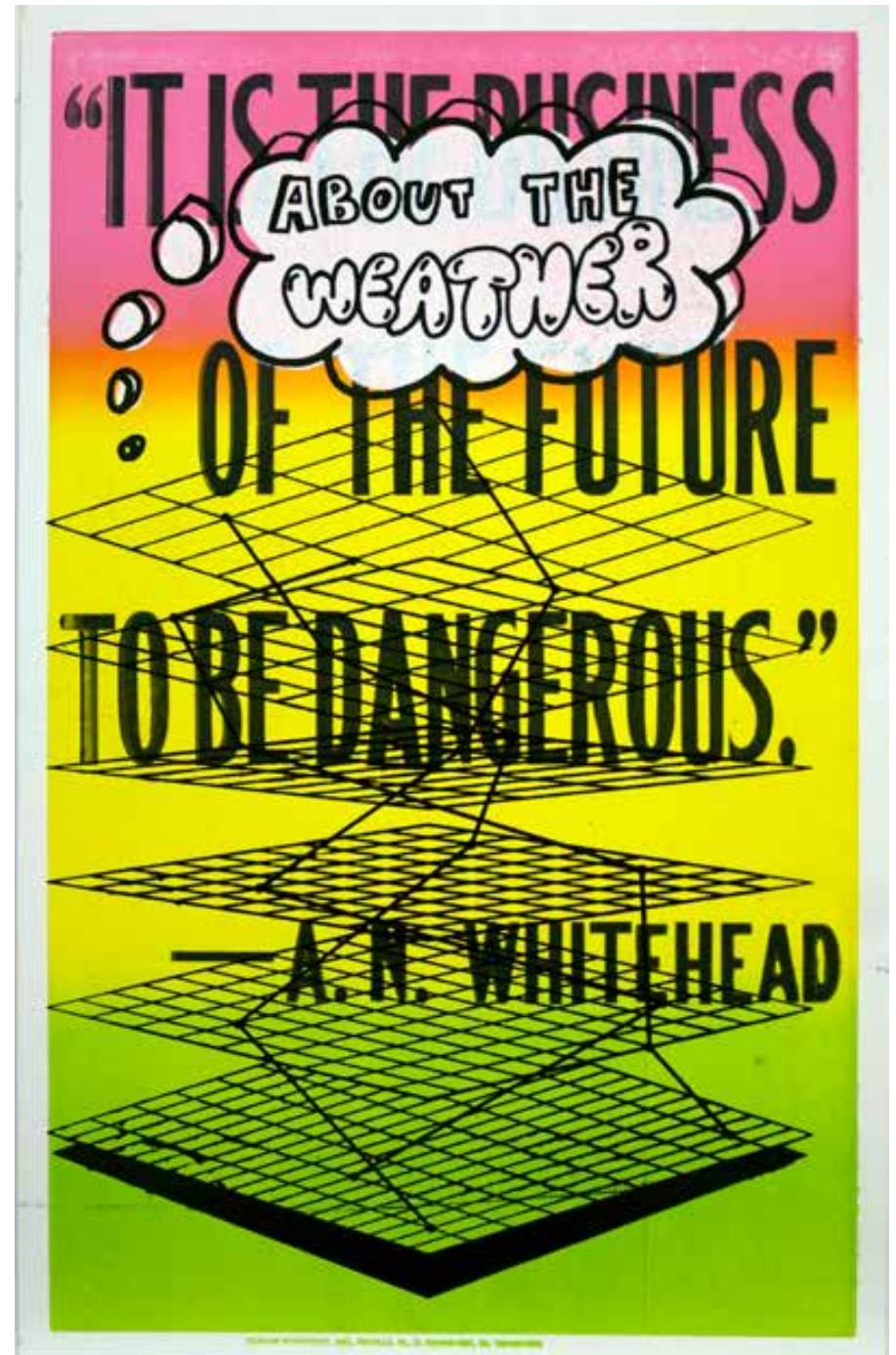




Broken Dirty Screen ("I—I HARDLY KNOW, SIR, JUST AT PRESENT —AT LEAST I KNOW WHO I WAS WHEN I GOT UP THIS MORNING, BUT I THINK I MUST HAVE BEEN CHANGED SEVERAL TIMES SINCE THEN.")



The Business of the Future ("IT IS THE BUSINESS OF THE FUTURE TO BE DANGEROUS." — A. N. WHITEHEAD)



All works by Christopher Michlig & Jan Tumlir
Silkscreen and letterpress on poster board
14 × 22 inches
2017