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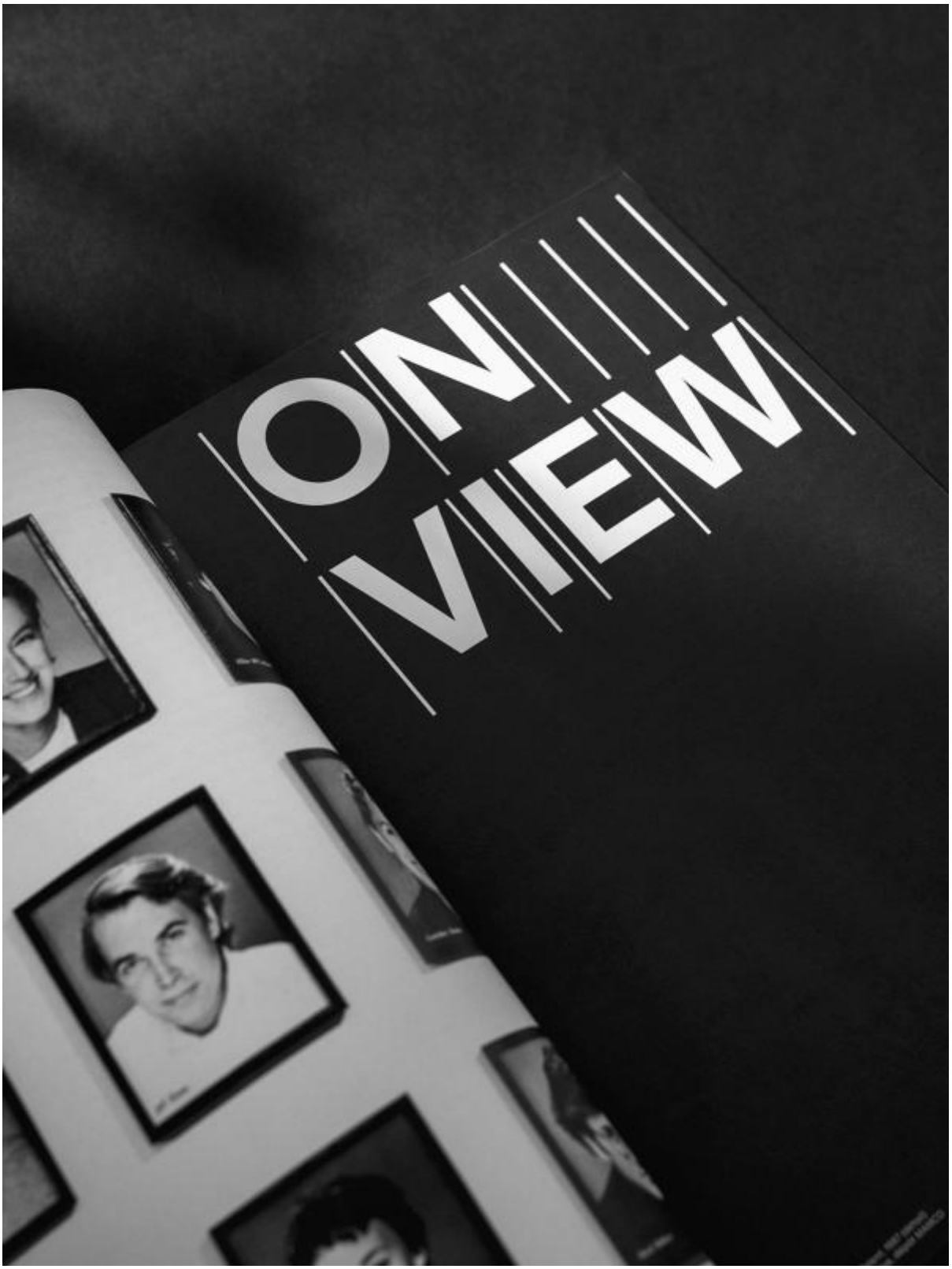


In-House

Lionel Bovier, Provence, Randy Kennedy

Provence talks to those behind in-house art magazines, to gauge the changing relationship the industry has with print. Art world versus art industry. It’s definitely an industry, not a world. Get the difference? Read what Lionel Bovier, director of MAMCO, Geneva, and Hauser & Wirth’s Randy Kennedy, have to say about their new, shiny magazines.

ON
VIEW



MAMCO JOURNAL, 2017–

LIONEL BOVIER

PROVENCE: In 2016, you were appointed director of MAMCO Geneva. New task in hand, you retreated from your role at art-book publishing house JRP, which you founded in Geneva in 2004, but has since moved to Zürich. In 2017, you started the *MAMCO Journal*, the museum's in-house semestrial. What motivated you to found this publication?

Lionel Bovier: I wanted to be pragmatic: how to better inform our audience. Better than sending invitation cards, or newsletters. How to better communicate information such as dates, artists' names, and sponsor's names? In brief, how to gather a community around the complex matters such as those dealt with in a contemporary art museum? I wanted something that would be, in that sense, «easy», cheap to produce, and that would deal with present, future, and pasts projects. I devised a format with my art director, Gilles Gavillet, that would tick these various boxes: seventy-two pages, printed on reel-fed press, something that stays under a certain weight and size to allow mass distribution without raising costs, something structured *like* a magazine. Both editorialized and organized around temporality, that's why we have the «on View» section. There's also «Preview» and «Rear View», as well as «Highlights» of the collection and «Feature» articles. All the programming and institutional information is gathered on the cover, to make sure it also serves as a scheduling tool.

PROVENCE: Did you miss working with print, or were you thinking strategically? Does the magazine function as a tool to better inform visitors of the institution?

LB: I was thinking about ways a museum can address its audience more intelligently and generously, more so than by traditional means, as well as how it can also be a «guide». It always made me sad to compare the output of collective intelligence present in museums with the way they communicate ...

PROVENCE: Is the magazine a tool that allows everyone to have a piece of «Air de MAMCO» at home?

LB: Hopefully, yes, it provides that as well. There were many other publications of a similar caliber, ranging from the commercial gallery magazine to institutional productions, so we needed to have a certain tone and style to distinguish ourselves. We looked at everything we could put our hands on, including some defunct publications we liked. We found that many of those failed to find their «format». When you design a format, the modes of distribution and the economy of production are just as important as parameters as the design or the content. once a publisher, always a publisher. I guess, I had to find a form that was right and that worked in terms of content, production, fabrication, and distribution.

PROVENCE: In a press release from 2018, Hauser & Wirth's in-house magazine, *Ursula*, for example, claimed that they will include articles on «living artists, historical work, and dispatches from the worlds of literature, design, architecture, food, and books» as well as featuring the gallery. Are you planning on diversifying the magazine's content, or do you plan to focus solely on the museum's exhibition schedule?

LB: We're working with a team probably twenty times smaller than Hauser & Wirth's, so we won't venture into making *MAMCO Journal* into an independent publication. It should remain something that is intrinsically part of what the museum produces. In that sense we also have opposing branding strategies: Hauser & Wirth expands its brand to virtually include the entire cultural sphere, whereas we're trying to explain precisely what our museum does throughout the year.

PROVENCE: How is the magazine distributed, and how high is the print run?

LB: We print 15,000 copies. Some are sent to our mailing list (anyone can request to receive it at home, twice a year), the rest is distributed at the museum's premises and through partners.

PROVENCE: The *MAMCO Journal* is free to those who purchase entrance tickets, how much does the magazine cost to produce otherwise?

LB: The overall cost of production is rather low, around 20,000 CHF per issue, but of course, there are editing and design costs on top of this, and distribution costs.

PROVENCE: Is the magazine a replacement for catalogues and other publications a museum would otherwise be printing?

LB: No, we still produce books that are connected to the exhibitions or the museum's activities. We will be launching a new series of publications dedicated to the collection this fall (co-published with DAP) and we recently published, most often with Ko?nig, monographs on Rene? Danie?ls, Rasheed Araeen, Greg Parma Smith or Ecart. We also did an artist's book with Vaclav Pozarek and a newspaper about the «Situationist» show we did last year. We are working on an Irma Blank monograph as well as on a Rosemarie Castoro one. of course due to budgetary constraints, we can't do a book for every exhibition ... Anyway I always had an ecological concern regarding book production: I dislike catalogs and there's nothing more annoying to me than a useless book. When you think of the collective efforts necessary to make a book, you don't want to waste them on a ugly, repetitive, or poorly edited one.

PROVENCE: What are your thoughts on publishing the magazine's content digitally?

LB: We're still researching the real value of an app[lication] that would house the content purely digitally. At the moment, each issue of the journal is available to download on the museum's website as a PDF.

PROVENCE: Do you run advertisements?

LB: We discussed this thoroughly. I saw the advantages, but decided that the disadvantages outweighed them. So, no.

PROVENCE: Is there any one article in particular that stands out as having allowed you to explore an exhibited artist in particular depth?

LB: We were happy to publish an essay by Christophe Cherix on Kelley Walker and Tristan Garcia on Wade Guyton, and (to reprint and translate into English) the excellent text Ingrid luquet-Gad did on Rene? Danie?ls for the *Les Inrockuptibles*, the French cultural magazine. But I also think the AA Bronson interview, or Elise lammer and Karima Boudou's discussion on Adrian Piper are really interesting in the way they address complex issues in such simple ways. I'd love to expand a bit more on this aspect, reinforce the «Feature» section, but it's a problem of time and resources.

PROVENCE: Remember *COLORS*? The in-house magazine from the United Colors of Benetton? It was one of the most successful in-house magazines of the 1990s. In fact its readers often didn't associate it with its mother brand. It matured, went from being «just an in-house magazine» to one of the most important and influential magazines of its time. Something *ACNE* Papers or *COS* definitely aren't doing today. Were you a COLORS reader at the time? What made it so unique?

LB: I was an occasional *COLORS* reader. I did enjoy some [fashion] brand magazines in the 1990s. I think they were thinking about expanding their brand through printed content in a way that is not dissimilar to what gallery or auction houses magazines are trying to do today. Benetton marketing strategy was uniquely interesting in the 1990s. They were offering much more than a new means of communication method, they were marrying the brand with concerns of the zeitgeist. I don't know if this is healthy, economically speaking, (I don't think it is), but it is, in any case, morally questionable.

PROVENCE: PROVENCE AW19/20 focuses on the exhibition review— what role does this format play for you personally and for the *MAMCO Journal*?

LB: Reviewing exhibitions remains important for the artists and the curators, but in terms of reaching an audience, it completely lost its grip. Some American museums now invite social networks influencers to view a show days before they inform the critics, if you see what I mean ... With *MAMCO Journal*, we're trying to develop a specific visual language by using images of art works on show at MAMCO. That's our way of reviewing the shows.



Ursula, 2018–

RANDY KENNEDY

PROVENCE: You are a journalist and novelist who joined Hauser & Wirth for special projects in 2018, after which you became the executive editor of the newly founded in-house quarterly, *Ursula*. You were at *The New York Times* for twenty-three years as an arts editor and writer. Catherine Davis then joined the team as managing editor having worked

for Interview and Spin in the same role. What are the «special projects» at Hauser & Wirth?

Randy Kennedy: «Special projects» means editorial endeavors, principally the magazine, which will soon publish its fourth issue, meaning it's coming up on its first full year! I also assist with other writing and editing at the gallery, sometimes for catalog essays and historical research. It feels very much as if I work for a publishing company embedded in a gallery—which is the case, because Hauser & Wirth Publishers has been an integral part of the gallery from the start. It's a gallery that loves, and believes in, the printed word.

PROVENCE: Some five to ten years ago, we were puzzled by curators and museum directors joining galleries. Recently, Philip Kaiser became director of exhibitions at Marian Goodmann and a few years ago, [Paul] Schimmel joined forces with Hauser & Wirth—perhaps less successfully. And now, newspaper and magazine editors are joining gallery magazines and publications. I think that's great. Perhaps the museum and print landscape are equally crumbling? Can you comment?

RK: The newspaper and magazine business is, as we all know, still going through very tough times, as the digital revolution upends the advertising-based model that fueled great magazines and newspapers for so long. I have many friends and colleagues who have worked for great publications that now no longer exist. Watching the business shrink is heartbreaking and also deeply troubling as a matter of the political and civic good in democracies. I think museums, by contrast, are thriving, with some exceptions, as cultural destinations—maybe in part because of a desire among the public for a tactile, physical cultural experience amid a very digital life. As the art gallery business grows, it seems only natural that some galleries will want to take on more ambitious publishing projects, and that good writers and editors and curators will seek out the most serious among them. I don't think this replaces or supplants traditional journalism but, at its best, it can exist alongside it and create meaningful things for people to read and see, to help them understand and enjoy art.

PROVENCE: Hauser & Wirth take great care of the information and categorization of its artists. over the years, they've published truly perfect, scholarly books and *catalogue raisonne?s* on its artists, but does one want to have the complete package from one source? Hauser & Wirth is not the only blue-chip global chain gallery doing this, but is perhaps the one doing all of this in such a sophisticated manner.

RK: The reason I was interested in working for Hauser after a long career in journalism was very much because of their reputation as a high-quality publisher. over the years, they have made many books that I love and have on my shelves (and I'm a very picky book collector.) They believe in the value of scholarship and, as I said above, prize the printed word. Art thrives in discourse. The more publications and writers and thinkers out there trying to make sense of our time, the better!

PROVENCE: You stated to *artnet News* that *Ursula* «will be about art that's being made by the gallery's artists and art that's coming out of estates, but it will also feature a lot of writing about living artists, historical work, and dispatches from the worlds of literature, design, architecture, food, and books.» What is the magazine's main target group?

RK: I'd say the magazine has several audiences—of course its collectors and clients, as well as curators and scholars and museum directors who follow the gallery's work. But we're also trying to find an audience in a much larger segment of the art world, among informed people who also subscribe to *Artforum, Frieze* and *Texte zur Kunst* and passionate magazines like yours. I don't think there's any reason that a great art magazine can't come out of a gallery publisher. It will never be an independent voice in the way that traditional magazines are, but

within its own mission, it can become another home for worthy writing, thinking, and images.

PROVENCE: You also said «I'm trying to commission writers who don't normally write about art or don't write about it that often, but who may have a real affinity for a certain work or period, or who have a great idea for an essay.» Is this working well?

RK: In our issues so far, we've already had writers whom I love and revere. People who are decidedly not traditional «art» voices. Luc Sante, for example, writing about the stranger byways of Belgian surrealism; Alissa Bennett, whose zines have a cult following, writing about death and obsession; the jazz critic Ben Ratliff writing about the influence of an obscure bebop piano player on Bruce Nauman, Robert Ryman and Frank Stella.

PROVENCE: How do you distribute the magazine?

RK: We distribute with traditional magazine distribution companies and also by subscription. We're on the racks in large bookstore chains—Barnes & Noble, WHSmith, for example—and also in museum shops, hotels, airport lounges and many other places where we think our potential audience will be. We also have a large mailing list for clients and other friends of the gallery.

PROVENCE: A few years ago, when fashion brands started advertising in art magazines, I noted a Hauser & Wirth advertisement in an issue of lifestyle magazine *The Gentlewoman*. The spread depicted a photo of artist Rita Ackermann in her studio. «Rita Ackermann represented by Hauser & Wirth» was written underneath. No exhibition details or other information. I though that was truly great, cut all the unnecessary information and simply stressed the fact that this artist and that gallery work together. I mean—who really cares who has an exhibition where and with whom. That kind of information is no longer suitable for the print magazine, not since it lost its role as a means of news distribution. Now it functions as a tool for in depth research, long-term projects and investigation, but not for disseminating information like exhibition dates. Unfortunately, most gallery adverts still look quite medieval; often a photo of a piece of art shrouded by too much text— miles away from a good fashion advertisement. Why found one's own in-house magazine and not disperse all of Ursula's content as advertisements, advertorials and other collaborative formats in preexisting magazines and newspapers? Are you involved with Hauser & Wirth's advertisement campaigns? Do you have such campaigns? In Switzerland at least, Hauser & Wirth also advertises on billboards, something that's only usually done by public institutions. It seems that Hauser & Wirth is really taking its role as aninstitutionseriously.

RK: I'm not involved with Hauser's ad campaigns. With the magazine, there's a strong desire to create something that doesn't simply replicate or echo ad campaigns, but that exists in its own right and adds something extra and different to the world. It's in keeping with the spirit of what the gallery does in locations like Somerset and los Angeles and elsewhere—projects and programs that are not directly linked to the business of selling art but that provide a kind of public resource for the art-loving public.

PROVENCE: Does *Ursula* carry advertisements, and if yes, advertisements from other galleries?

RK: Yes, we do carry advertisements from brands that seem to have some affinity with the gallery's sensibility—fashion brands, restaurants, hotels, jewelry designers and other makers of high-quality goods. We carry complimentary ads for museums in which Hauser artists are showing. We would very much like to carry more complimentary museum advertising, but it can become very complicated and tricky trying to be fair and equitable to as many museums

as possible, so we have had to limit it in this way so far.

PROVENCE: In PROVENCE SS19, we interviewed Esther Schipper who mentioned the challenges that come with managing a large team all the while trying to stay personally connected to each collector, which is often expected. Would you describe Ursula as a tool to help maintain these connections?

RK: It is definitely a way to stay connected to and to provide high-quality information to collectors, who have responded so far with great enthusiasm. I'd hope it's useful publication for the collectors as well as for a much larger audience.

PROVENCE: Historically speaking, do you know of the truly great in-house magazine? A magazine that fundamentally changed the role this publishing format plays? I was reading about the very first in-flight magazine, by Pan Am, and that in-flight magazines are generally the most read, since each copy is perused by roughly fifty different passengers. In fact, I also recently read that companies producing in-flight magazine are the only ones growing in the print sector—makes sense. It's surprising however, that no inflight magazines have managed to leave their in-flight status behind to become truly great magazines in themselves. I mean, no one picks up *SWISS Magazine* at a restaurant looking to read a great travel magazine—it would be interesting though. What's your long-term vision for *Ursula*?

RK: I'm not all that familiar with the history of in-house magazines but I've been a magazine fanatic since youth. I had a subscription to *Harper's Magazine* when I was in high school, in a small town in rural West Texas where even the local library didn't even carry it. In college, I avidly read magazines with great voices and great looks, like *Spy* and Adam Moss's wonderful, tooshort-lived *7 Days*. I loved *Ray Gun*, which looked like no other music magazine of its day, as well as *i-D*, *Granta*, *The Paris Review*, and dozens more.

PROVENCE: *COLORS*, the in-house publication for United Colors of Benetton, was the most successful in-house magazine of the 1990s. In fact, its readers often didn't connect it to its mother brand. It matured from being an in-house magazine to one of the most important and influential magazines of its time. Were you a *COLORS* reader at the time?

RK: I did read *COLORS* but I have to say that, maybe because I grew up in such a small, isolated, conservative place, fashion magazines intimidated me, well into college. I was always more comfortable with literary magazines, or music magazines. But I remember looking at *COLOR*S and recognizing that it was a «real» magazine with a distinct editorial voice and, of course, a highly influential visual style. It helped me to look at the world, in my earlier years in New York in particular, with a more informed and interested gaze.

PROVENCE: In this edition of PROVENCE we focus on the exhibition review—what role does this format play for you personally and, of course, for *Ursula*? Do you have traditional exhibitions reviews?

RK: I don't think a gallery-published magazine like *Ursula* can do traditional exhibition reviews. It just doesn't make sense. It's not the right platform, and there are so many other formats that already do it so brilliantly. But, there's a universe of other things that a gallery-published magazine can do just as well, if not better, than traditional magazines—that might struggle to find homes in magazines that depend on newsstand sales; explorations of archives and historical scenes that might seem too esoteric for traditional magazines; poetry (to which we have devoted a standing feature; we commission new poetry for each issue); conversations between artists and other creative figures; portfolios of Hauser artists, as well as under-recognized artists outside the gallery, reported pieces about subjects like design, architecture, experimental film, classical and avant-garde music, performance, literature, philosophy,

economics, even science and technology—all of which matter deeply to wellread, highly informed people in the art world. There are so many things that I dream of reading or seeing in the magazines that I pick up—and that I think or hope I would also love. I consider myself incredibly fortunate that I get the chance to put some of those things into the world in the pages of the kind of publication I've always loved. Good magazines and good writing matter, now maybe more than ever as information seems to become increasingly unstable. Joan Didion said it best: «We tell ourselves stories in order to live.»

PROVENCE

Magazine, Zürich

LIONEL BOVIER

Director of MAMCO Geneva

RANDY KENNEDY

Journalist, novelist and executive editor of the newly founded Hauser & Wirth in-house quarterly, *Ursula*

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