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A Play Between Illusion and Awareness of Illusion

Vincent Vegas: Come on Mia, let's go get a steak.

Mia Wallace: You can get a steak here, daddy-o. Don't be a...

[Mia draws a square with her hands. Dotted lines appear on the screen forming a square. The lines disperse.]

Vincent Vegas: After you, kitty-cat.

Pulp Fiction (1994), directed by Quentin Tarantino.

The Editors

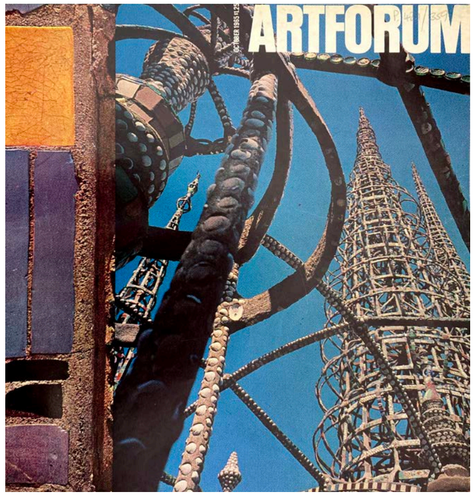
Our cover artist for *Inscription* 4 is the German conceptual photographer Natalie Czech. Czech has given us two covers – front and back – each of which is a reworking of an earlier magazine cover. We could call these assisted readymades: works in which parts have been combined and modified by the artist. In these two covers-made-from-covers, Czech's uses readymade art magazines, readymade pencils and photography.

On our front, Czech remakes the cover from *ARTFORUM*, November 1985, which itself features a detail from Bridget Riley's *Crest* (1964). Across this *ARTFORUM* cover, Czech places pencils: yellow Thin Lockbond Wallace Zephyrs, each marked 'Firm' and with an eraser at the end, and made in the USA. Onto the letter of the magazine's titles, Czech writes in pencil a question from the American poet Frank O'Hara: 'Is it true you said poems are made of words?' Pencils are usually the tools of an artist for making their mark, but here they make themselves visible, lying across the surface.

On our back, Czech reworks the cover of *ARTFORUM,* May 2007 which features Marina Apollonio's *Dinamica Circolare* ('Circular Dynamics'), a painted wooden disc and motor, from 1968. Eight Koh-In-All pencils lie across the surface of the cover. Around the edges of Apollonio's disc is a statement by the American poet Ariana Reines, which seems to answer O'Hara's question: 'Poetry's not made of words.'

The letters of the words used in the question and answer are highlighted on the pencil shafts. On the front cover, for example, the 'I' and the 's' are marked in black on the shaft of the pencil pointing to 'is'; the second pencil has the letters 'I' and 't' highlighted. On the back cover, the letters of 'poetry's' are marked out in red on pencils one and two – and so on.

ARTFORUM, launched in 1962, is square like *Inscription*. It's a format which, as art historian Kerr Houston observes, calls to mind a number of influences from mid-twentieth century art, including Kazimir Malevich, Piet Mondrian,



ARTFORUM, vol. 4, no. 2 (1965).

Kenneth Noland, Agnes Martin, Joseph Albers, Ad Reinhardt, Sol Le Witt[1] and, of course Bauhaus: 'Three days in Weimar', wrote the critic Paul Werthheim in his review of the 1923 Bauhaus exhibition, 'and you've seen enough squares for a lifetime'.[2] Another influence, Houston notes, is the jazz vinyl album cover. Harold Land's debut studio album from 1958, *Harold in the Land of Jazz* – featuring the Watts Tower in Los Angeles – is quoted directly in *ARTFORUM*'s cover from vol. 4, no. 2 (1965). *ARTFORUM* is actually a little smaller than a regular vinyl LP, whereas *Inscription* is exactly the same size, at 31.3 cm square. (There are practical reasons for this alignment: its size and shape serves to



Harold Land: 'Harold in the Land of Jazz' (1958).

1. Kerr Houston, 'A Note on the Design of *ARTFORUM*' in *Notes in the History of Art*, Bard Graduate Centre (Spring 2018).

2. Paul Wertheim's remark is recorded in Magdalena Droste's *Bauhaus: 1919–1933* (Cologne: Taschen, 2002), p. 106.

Opposite, and front cover of this issue: Natalie Czech, *A poet's question by Frank O'Hara* (2020) (Detail), copyright VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

contain and protect the record that comes with each issue).

Czech's cover art is not only a reworking of *ARTFORUM*. It also references her own previous work. She slants the pencils across the front image in a visual echo of Guillaume Apollinaire's famous 'caligramme', *Il Pleut* – a poem whose letters tumble down the page like droplets, and from which Czech has made an entire series of photographic pieces. She asks writers to compose a text across and around the poem, whilst maintaining the exact placement of Apollinaire's letters. She then picks out the letters with a crayon to highlight the shape of the poem once again, and photographs the finished piece against a background the same colour as the crayon. Critics have described her as a 'gleaner', who sifts her way through existing piles of language by zeroing in with laser-like precision on specific letters. She used this same gleaning technique with Frank O'Hara's concrete poem *A Small Bouquet*, whose letters are arranged in the form of a bunch of flowers. Asking collaborators to write through it so that this distinctive shape is at first obscured under layers of text, Czech then carefully retrieves it, picking it out using a crayon.

Czech is 'fascinated by poetry's potential to become imagery', and with the oscillation between these two registers.[3] As Vanessa Joan Müller observes, 'even a poem that has become an image still also remains text. The process of reading, of deciphering, becomes more clumsy when the visual moves into the foreground, and the pictorial element fades when the viewer becomes an attentive reader.'[4] Czech's work makes us conscious of moving between these positions, enacting the dialogue between these two pieces on our front and back cover, between O'Hara and Reines.

Is it true you said poems are made of words?

Poetry's not made of words.

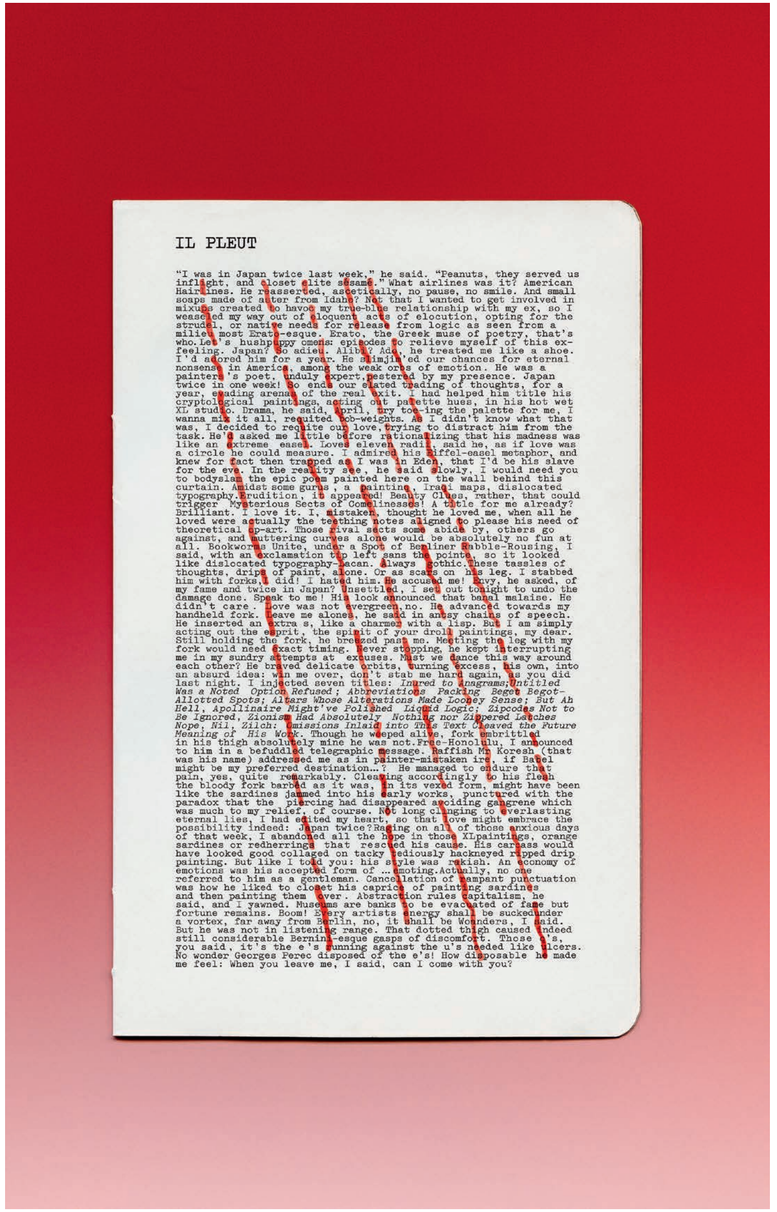
'A Poet's Question' answered with 'A Poet's Statement'. And written on the pencils on the back cover are words that emphatically underscore the point: 'Writes on: Glass, Plastic, Film, Lacquer, Metal, Paper, Wood etc.' Czech makes words tangible and concrete again. You can almost touch them.

3. Vanessa Joan Müller, 'The Visible Richness of Form' in *Natalie Czech: I have nothing to say. Only to show.* (Spector Books: Leipzig, 2021), p. 21.

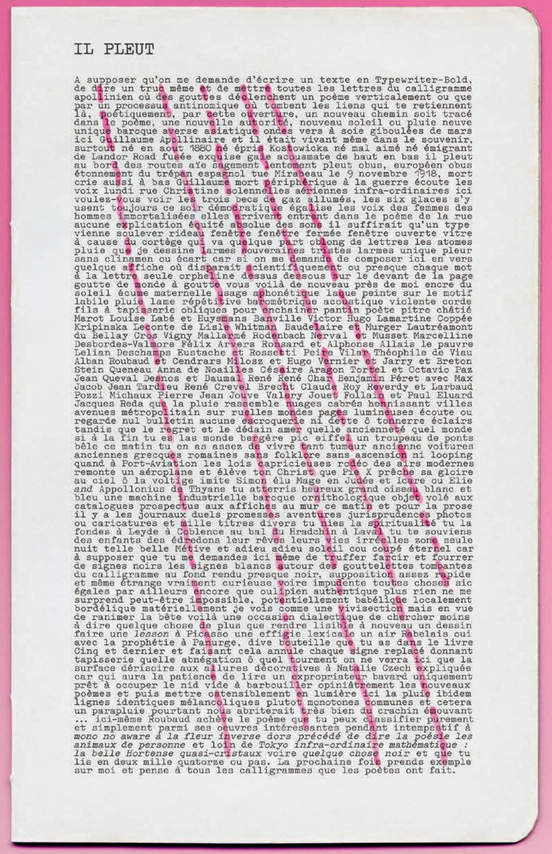
4. Ibid.

Images on pp. 87–89, 91–92 copyright VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn, courtesy of Kadel Willborn, Düsseldorf.

Guillaume Apollinaire, *Il Pleut* (1918).



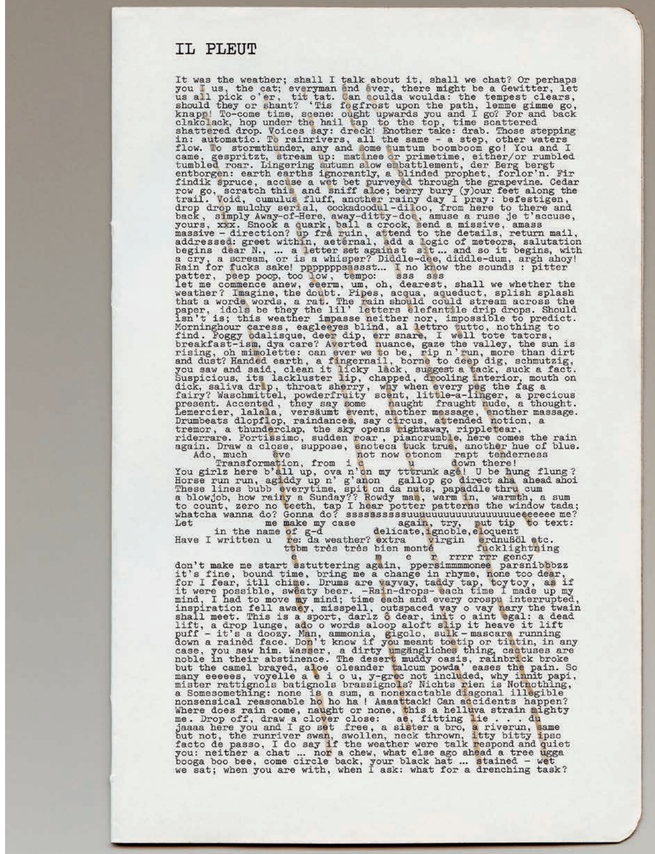
Il pleut by April Lamm (2012)
Acrylic paint on C-print, 84 × 54 cm.



IL PLEUT

À supposer qu'on me demande d'écrire un texte en Typewriter-Bold, de dire un truc même et de mettre toutes les lettres du calligramme apollinien où des gouttes déclenchent un poème verticalement ou que par un processus antinomique où tombent les liens qui te retiennent là, poétiquement, par cette ouverture, un nouveau chemin soit tracé dans le poème, une nouvelle autorité, nouveau soleil ou pluie neuve unique barque averse asiatique ondes vers à soie giboulées de mars ici Guillaume Apollinaire et il était vivant même dans le souvenir, surtout né en août 1880 né épris Kostowicka né mal aimé né émigrant de Landor Road fusée exquise gaie acquamate de haut en bas il pleut au bord des routes s'en sagement lentement pleut chus, européen obus étonnement du trépan espagnol tué Vireneu le 9 novembre 1918, mort crie aussi à bas Guillaume mort périphérique à la guerre écoute les voix lundi rue Christine solennelles aériennes infra-ordinaires ici voulez-vous voir les trois becs de gaz allumés, les six glaces s'y usent toujours ce soir démocratique égalise les voix des femmes des hommes immortalisées elles arrivent entrent dans le poème de la rue aucune explication équité absolue des sons il suffirait qu'un type vienne soulever rideau fenêtre fenêtre fermée fenêtre ouverte vitre à cause du cortège qui va quelque part chœng de lettres les atomes pluie que je dessine larmes souveraines tristes larmes unique pleur sans clinamen ou écart car si on me demande de composer ici en vers quelque affiche où disparaît scientifiquement ou presque chaque mot à la lettre seule orpheline dessus dessous sur le devant de la page goutte de monde à goutte vous voilà de nouveau près de moi encre du soleil écume maternelle usage aphonétique laque peinte sur le motif labile pluie lame répétitive barométrique acoustique violente corde fils à tapisserie obliques pour enchaîner pantin poète pitre châtié Marot Louise Labé et Huysmans Banville Victor Hugo Lamartine Coppée Kripinska Leconte de Lisle Whitman Baudelaire et Nerger Lautréamont du Bellay Cros Vigny Mallarmé Rodenbach Nerval et Musset Marceline Desbordes-Valmore Félix Arvers Ronsard et Alphonse Allais le pauvre Julian Deschamps Eustache et Rossetti Peire Vilas Théophile de Viau Alban Roubaud et Cendrars Milosz et Hugo Vernier et Jarry et Breton Stein Queneau Anna de Noailles Césaire Aragon Tortel et Octavio Paz Jean Queval Desnos et Daumal René Çené Char Benjamin Péret avec Max Jacob Jean Tardieu René Crevel Brecht Claude Roy Reverdy et Larbaud Pozzi Michaux Pierre Jean Jouve Valery Jouve Follain et Paul Eluard Jacques Reda qui la pluie rassemble nuages cabrés hennissant villes avenues métropolitain sur ruelles mondes pages lumineuses écoute ou regarde nul bulletin aucune escroquerie ni dette ô tonnerre éclairs tandis que le regret et le dédain amer quelle ancienneté quel monde si à la fin tu es las monde bergère pic eiffel un troupeau de ponts bête ce matin tu en as assez de vivre tant tumeur ancienne voitures anciennes grecques romaines sans folklore sans ascension ni looping quand à Port-Aviation les lois capricieuses rodéo des airs modernes remonte un aéroplane et élève ton Christ que Pie X prêche sa gloire au ciel ô la voltige imite Simon élu Mage en Judée et Icare ou Elie *and* Appollonius de Thyane tu atterris heureux grand oiseau blanc et bleu une machine industrielle baroque ornithologique objet volé aux catalogues prospectus aux affiches au mur ce matin et pour la prose il y a les journaux duels promesses aventures jurisprudences photos ou caricatures et mille titres divers tu mis la spiritualité tu la fondes à Leyde à Coblence au bal du Wradchin à Laval tu te souviens des enfants des édredons leur rêve leurs vies irréelles zone seule nuit telle belle Nétive et adieu adieu soleil cou coupé éternel car à supposer que tu me demandes ici même de truffer farcir et fourrer de signes noirs les lignes blancs autour des gouttelettes tombantes du calligramme au fond rendu presque noir, supposition assez rapide et même étrange vraiment curieuse voire impudente toutes choses sic égales par ailleurs encore que quelqu'en authentique plus rien ne me surprend peut-être impossible, potentiellement babélique localement bordélique matériellement je vois comme une vivisection mais en vue de ramener la bête voilà une occasion dialectique de chercher moins à dire quelque chose de plus que rendre lisible à nouveau un dessin faire une *leçon* à Picasso une effigie lexicale un air rabelais oui avec la prophétie à Panurge, dive bouteille que tu as dans le livre Cinq et dernier et faisant cela annule chaque signe replacé donnant tapisserie quelle abnégation ô quel tourment on ne verra ici que la surface dérisoire aux allures décoratives à Natalie Czech expliquée car qui aura la patience de lire un expropriateur bavard uniquement prêt à occuper le nid vide à barbouiller opiniâtrement les nouveaux poèmes et puis mettre ostensiblement en lumière ici la pluie ibidem lignes identiques mélancoliques plutôt monotones communes et cetera un parapluie pourtant nous abriterait très bien du crachin écouvant … ici-même Roubaud achève le poème que tu peux classifier purement et simplement parmi ses œuvres intéressantes pendant intempestif à *mono no aware à la fleur inverse dors précédé de dire la poésie les animaux de personne* et loin de *Tokyo infra-ordinaire mathématique : la belle Hortense oussi-cristaux* voire *quelque chose noir* et que tu lis en deux mille quatorze ou pas. La prochaine fois prends exemple sur moi et pense à tous les calligrammes que les poètes ont fait.

Il pleut by Jacques Roubaud (2014)
Acrylic paint on C-print, 84 × 54 cm.



IL PLEUT

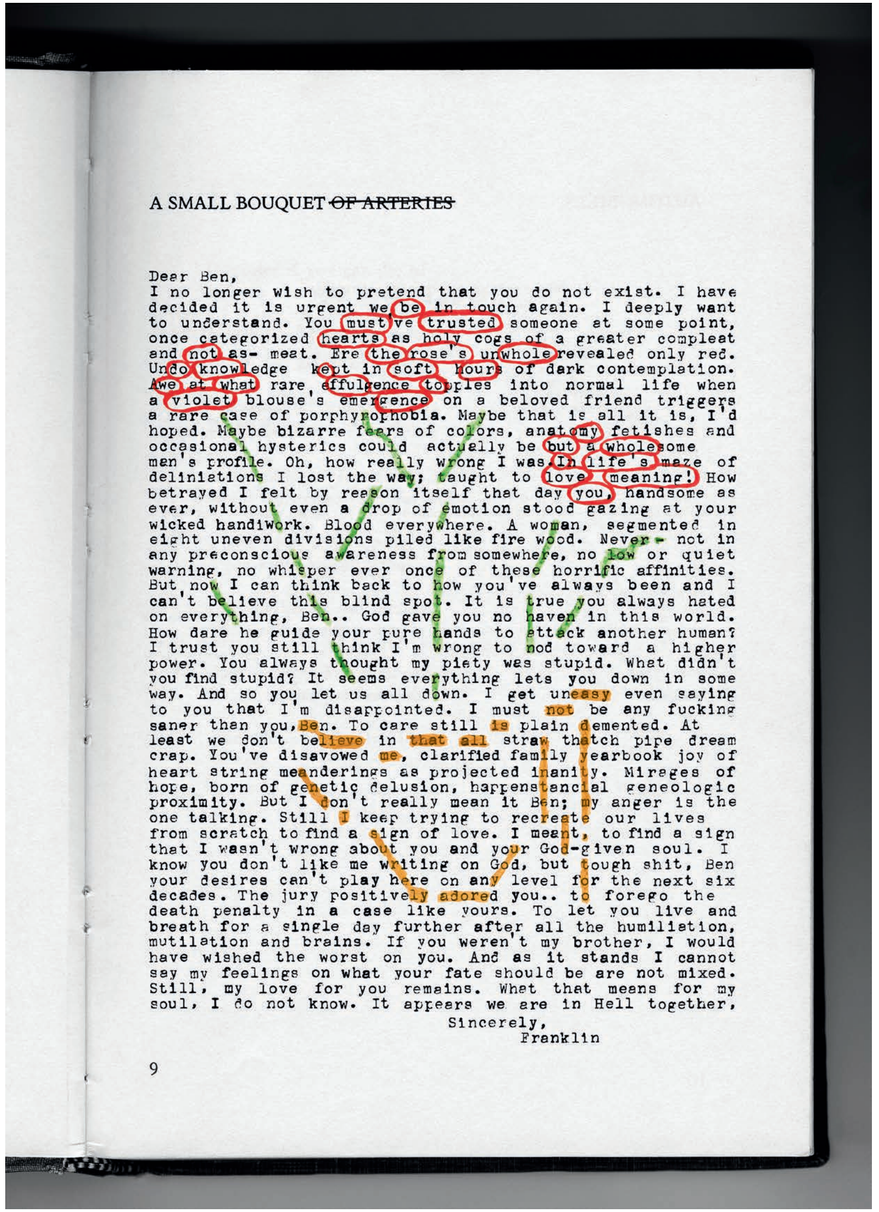
It was the weather; shall I talk about it, shall we chat? Or perhaps you & us, the cat: everyman and ever, there might be a Gewitter, let us all pick o'er, tit tat. Can could woulda: the tempest clears, should they or shant? 'Tis fegrost upon the path, lemme gimme go, knapp! To-come time, scene: ought upwards you and I go? For and back clakclack, hop under the hail tap to the top, time scattered shattered drop. Voices say: dreck! Another take: drab. Those stepping in: automatic. To rainrivers, all the same - a step, other waters flow. To stormthunder, any and some tuntum boomboom go! You and I came, gespritzt, stream up: matinee or primetime, either/or rumbled tumbled roar. Lingering autumn slow embattlement, der Berg bergt entborgen: earth earths ignorantly, a blinded prophet, forlor'n. Pir findik spruce, accuse a wet bet purveyed through the grapevine. Cedar row go, scratch this and sniff aloe; berry bury (y)our feet along the trail. Voix, cumulus fluff, another rainy day I pray: befestigen, drop drop mulchy serial, cockadoodul-dilco, from here to there and back, simply away-of-Here, away-ditty-doe, amuse a ruse je t'accuse, yours, xxx. Snook a quark, bail a crook, send a missive, amass massive - direction? up fra ruin, attend to the details, return mail, addressed: greet within, aeternal, add a logic of meteore, salutation begins dear N., … a letter set against sit… and so it begins, with a cry, a scream, or is a whisper? Diddle-dee, diddle-dum, argh ahoy! Rain for fucks sake! pppppppassst… I no know the sounds : pitter patter, pbep poop, too low, tempo: sss sss
let me commence anew, ewerm, um, oh, dearest, shall we whether the weather? Imagine, the doubt. Pipes, acqua, aqueduct, splish splash that's words words, a rut. The rain should could stream across the paper, idols be they the ill' letters elefantile drip drops. Should isn't is; this weather impasse neither nor, impossible to predict. Morningzour caress, eagleeyes blind, al letro tutto, nothing to find. Foggy odalisque, deep dip, err snare, I well tote tators, breakfast-ism, dya care? Averted nuance, gaze the valley, the sun is rising, oh mimesis!: can ever we so be, rip n' run, more than dirt and dust? Handed earth, a fingernail, borne to deep dig, schmutzig, you saw and said, clean it licky lick, suggest a tack, suck a fact. Suspicious, its lackluster lip, chapped, drooling interior, mouth on dick, saliva drip, throat sherry, way when every peg the fag a fairy? Wasalmitee, powderfruity scent, little-a-linger, a precious present. Accented, they say some naught fraught nuds, a thought. Lemercier, lalala, versskunt event, another message, another massage. Drumbeats klopklop, raindances, say circus, attended notion, a tremor, a thunderclap, the sky opens nightaway, rippleteat, riderware. Fortissimo, sudden roar, plancrumble, here comes the rain again. Draw a close, suppose, enoteca tuck true, another hue of blue.
Ado, much ove not now otonom rapt tenderness
Transformation, from i a u down there!
You girlz here b'all up, ova n'on my tttrunk ago! U be hung flung? Horse run run, agiddy up n' g'mon galloy go direct aha ahead aboi These lines bubb everytime, spit on da nuts, papaddle thru cum a blowjob, how rainy a Sunday?? Howdy ma, warm in, warmth, a sum to consss. Ztro no tech, tap I hear potter patterns the window tada; whatcha wanna do? Gonna do? sssssssssuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuueeeeeee me? Let me make my case again, try, gut tip to text:
in the name of g-d delicate,ignoble,eloquent
Have I written u re: da weather? extra virgin erdnußöl etc.
Transformation, from très très bien monté fucklightning
c m e n rrrr rrr gency
don't make me start stuttering again, ppersimmmones parrnibbzz it's fine, bound time, bring me a change in rhyme, none too dear, for I fear, itll chise. Drums are vayvay, taddy tap, toytoy, as if it were possible, sweety beer. -Rain-drops- back time I made up my mind, I had to move my mind; time each and every orospa interrupted, inspiration fell away, misspell, outspaced way o vay harry the twain shall meet c. This is a sport, Carlz & Dear, init o aint legal: a dead lift, a drop lunge, ado o words aloop aloft slip it heave it lift puff - it's a dooxy. Man, ammonia, gigolo, sulk - mascara running down a rained face. Don't know if you meant toetip or tintin, in any case, you saw him. Wasser, a dirty umgängliches thing, cattuses are noble in their abstinence. The desert muddy cassis, raindrick broke but the camel brayed, aloe oleander talcum powda, eases the pain. So many seeds, voyez-y à ci o u, grèves not included, ay imnt papi, mister rattignols batignols brassignols? Nichts nien is Nothothing, a Somesomething: none in a sum, a nonexactable diagonal illegible nonsensical reasonable hé ho ha ! Aaaattack! Can accidents happen? Where does rain come, naught or none, this a helluva strain mighty me. Drop off, draw a clover close: as fitting lie … du jasaa here you and I go eat free, a sister a bro, a riverun, same but not, the runriver swan, swollen, neck thrown, itty bitty ipso facto de passo. I do say if the weather were talk pompond and quiet you: neither a chat … nor a chew, what else ago ahead a tree ugga booga boo bee, come circle back, your black hat … stained - wet we sat; when you are with, when I ask: what for a drenching task?

Il pleut by Ashkan Sepahvand (2012)
Acrylic paint on C-print, 84 × 54 cm.

A SMALL BOUQUET

be
must trusted
hearts
not the rose's whole
do know e soft our
we what fful to
violet gence love
c r y
a ea l my
l l u but whole
l l r I life's
s y t love meaning!
s you,
t d e
o o w m
o o er—
u w r r low
s e e f
w h
e i t t y
t n e h n
h a a
t w n
h
e r
o easy
not
Be is d
lieve that all w a
me i y
a n t
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Frank O'Hara, *A Small Bouquet* (1950).



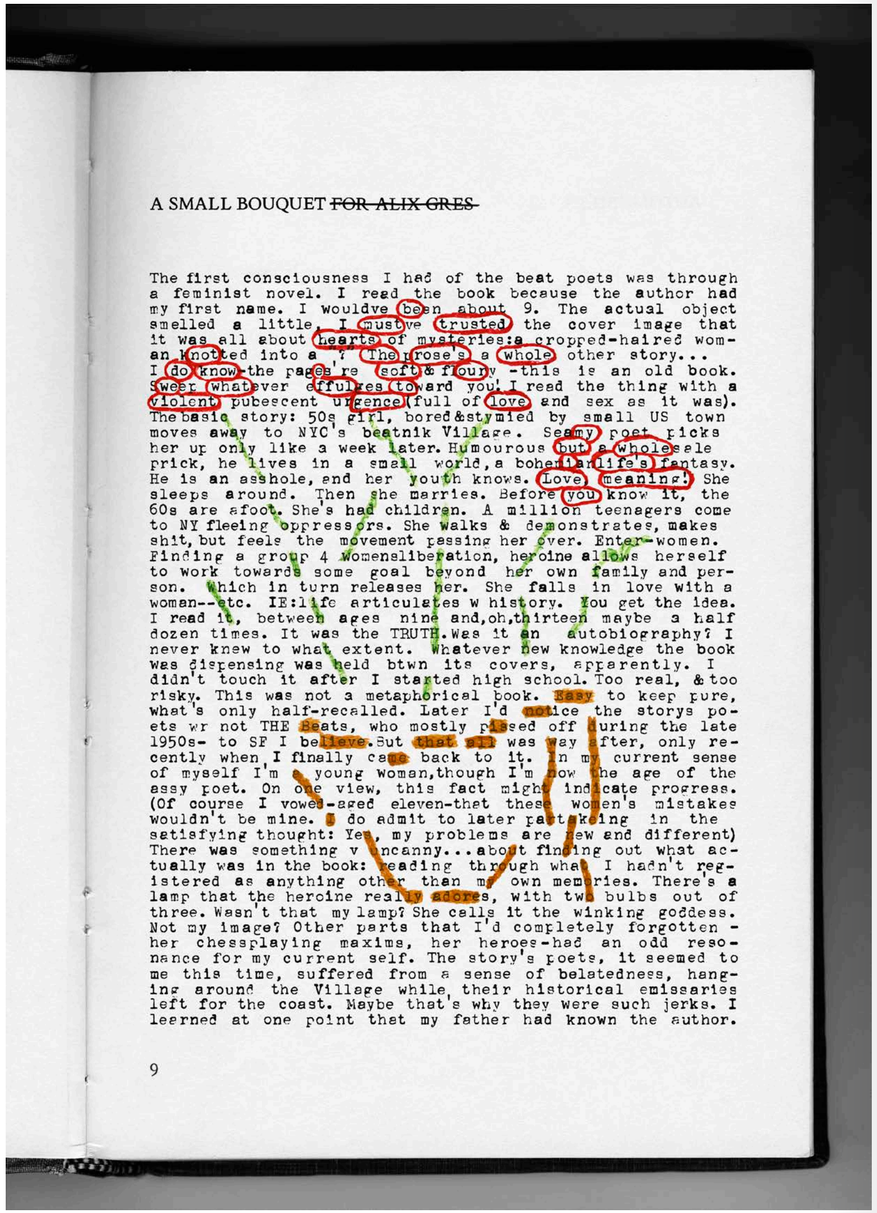
A SMALL BOUQUET ~~OF ARTERIES~~

Dear Ben,
I no longer wish to pretend that you do not exist. I have decided it is urgent we be in touch again. I deeply want to understand. You must've trusted someone at some point, once categorized hearts as holy cogs of a greater compleat and not as- meat. Ere the rose's unwhole revealed only red. Undo knowledge kept in soft hours of dark contemplation. Awe at what rare effulgence topples into normal life when a violet blouse's emergence on a beloved friend triggers a rare case of porphyrophobia. Maybe that is all it is, I'd hoped. Maybe bizarre fears of colors, anatomy fetishes and occasional hysterics could actually be but a wholesome man's profile. Oh, how really wrong I was. In life's maze of definitions I lost the way; taught to love meaning! How betrayed I felt by reason itself that day you, handsome as ever, without even a drop of emotion stood gazing at your wicked handiwork. Blood everywhere. A woman, segmented in eight uneven divisions piled like fire wood. Never- not in any preconscious awareness from somewhere, no low or quiet warning, no whisper ever once of these horrific affinities. But now I can think back to how you've always been and I can't believe this blind spot. It is true you always hated on everything, Ben.. God gave you no haven in this world. How dare he guide your pure hands to attack another human? I trust you still think I'm wrong to nod toward a higher power. You always thought my piety was stupid. What didn't you find stupid? It seems everything lets you down in some way. And so you let us all down. I get uneasy even saying to you that I'm disappointed. I must not be any fucking saner than you, Ben. To care still is plain demented. At least we don't believe in that all straw thatch pipe dream crap. You've disavowed me, clarified family yearbook joy of heart string meanderings as projected insanity. Mirages of hope, born of genetic delusion, happenstancial geneologic proximity. But I don't really mean it Ben; my anger is the one talking. Still I keep trying to recreate our lives from scratch to find a sign of love. I meant, to find a sign that I wasn't wrong about you and your God-given soul. I know you don't like me writing on God, but tough shit, Ben your desires can't play here on any level for the next six decades. The jury positively adored you.. to forego the death penalty in a case like yours. To let you live and breath for a single day further after all the humiliation, mutilation and brains. If you weren't my brother, I would have wished the worst on you. And as it stands I cannot say my feelings on what your fate should be are not mixed. Still, my love for you remains. What that means for my soul, I do not know. It appears we are in Hell together,

Sincerely,
Franklin

9

A small bouquet by Nathania Rubin (2011)
Oil pastel on C-print, 85×60cm.



A SMALL BOUQUET ~~FOR ALIX GRES~~

The first consciousness I had of the beat poets was through a feminist novel. I read the book because the author had my first name. I wouldve been about 9. The actual object smelled a little. I mustve trusted the cover image that it was all about hearts of mysteries:a cropped-haired woman knotted into a ? The prose's a whole other story... I do know the pages re soft & floury -this is an old book. Sweet whatever effulgres toward you. I read the thing with a violent pubescent urgence (full of love and sex as it was). The basic story: 50s girl, bored&stymied by small US town moves away to NYC's beatnik Village. Seamy poet picks her up only like a week later. Humourous but a wholesale prick, he lives in a small world,a bohemian life's fantasy. He is an asshole, end her youth knows. Love, meaning? She sleeps around. Then she marries. Before you know it, the 60s are afoot. She's had children. A million teenagers come to NY fleeing oppressors. She walks & demonstrates, makes shit, but feels the movement passing her over. Enter-women. Finding a group 4 womensliberation, heroine allows herself to work towards some goal beyond her own family and person. Which in turn releases her. She falls in love with a woman--etc. IE:life articulates w history. You get the idea. I read it, between ages nine and,oh,thirteen maybe a half dozen times. It was the TRUTH.Was it an autobiography? I never knew to what extent. Whatever new knowledge the book was dispensing was held btwn its covers, apparently. I didn't touch it after I started high school. Too real, & too risky. This was not a metaphorical book. Easy to keep pure, what's only half-recalled. Later I'd notice the storys poets wr not THE Beats, who mostly pissed off during the late 1950s- to SF I believe. But that all was way after, only recently when I finally came back to it. In my current sense of myself I'm a young woman,though I'm now the age of the assy poet. On one view, this fact might indicate progress. (Of course I vowed-aged eleven-that these women's mistakes wouldn't be mine. I do admit to later partaking in the satisfying thought: Yes, my problems are new and different) There was something v uncanny...about finding out what actually was in the book: reading through what I hadn't registered as anything other than my own memories. There's a lamp that the heroine really adores, with two bulbs out of three. Wasn't that my lamp? She calls it the winking goddess. Not my image? Other parts that I'd completely forgotten - her chessplaying maxims, her heroes-had an odd resonance for my current self. The story's poets, it seemed to me this time, suffered from a sense of belatedness, hanging around the Village while their historical emissaries left for the coast. Maybe that's why they were such jerks. I learned at one point that my father had known the author.

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A small bouquet by Alix Rule (2011)
Oil pastel on C-print, 85 × 60 cm.

Opposite, and back cover of this issue: Natalie Czech, *A poet's statement by Ariana Reines* (2020) (Detail), copyright VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

