

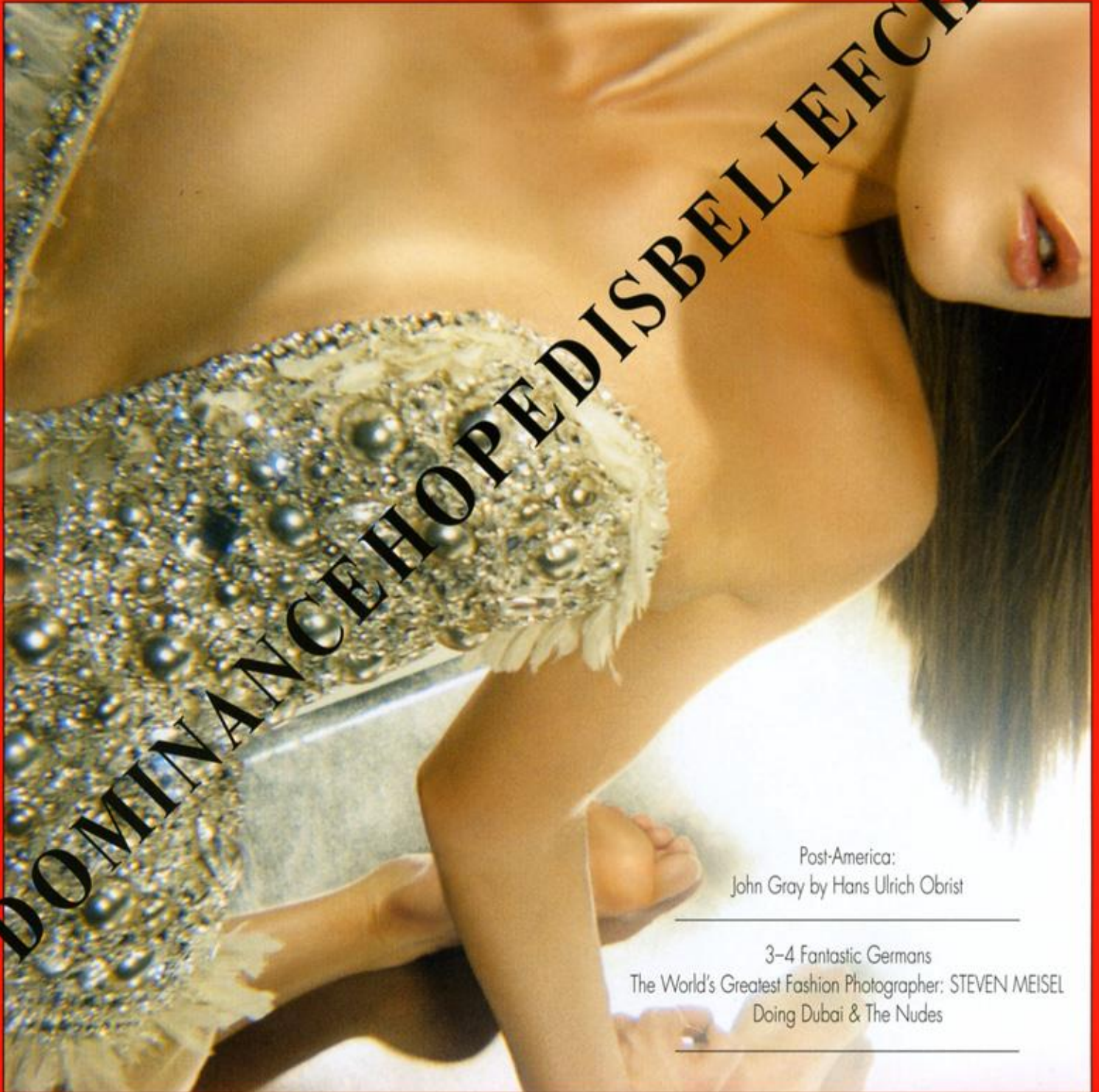
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CONTEMPORARY CULTURE

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Post-America:  
John Gray by Hans Ulrich Obrist

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3-4 Fantastic Germans  
The World's Greatest Fashion Photographer: STEVEN MEISEL  
Doing Dubai & The Nudes

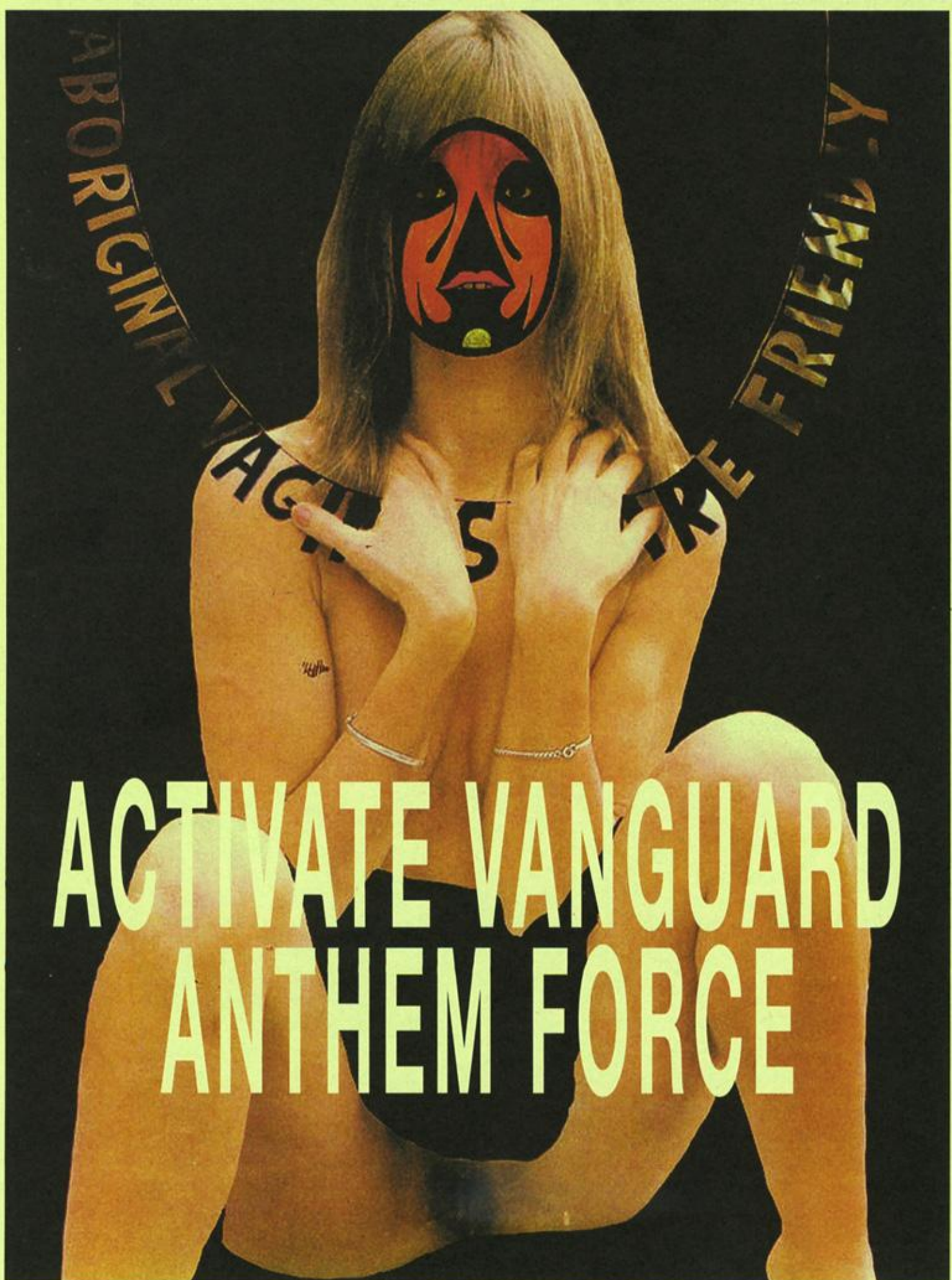
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The background is a collage of images. At the top, a person's legs and arms are visible, wearing a white bikini top and a purple and white patterned skirt. Below this, a person's back and shoulder are shown with two colorful tattoos. The first tattoo, on the upper back, reads "ALL VIVID" in a multi-colored, outlined font. The second tattoo, on the shoulder, reads "ALWAYS FOCUSED" in a similar multi-colored, outlined font. To the right of the person's back, there is a small, square inset image showing a still life with flowers and a wooden structure. The overall background is dark, with some abstract shapes in pink and yellow on the left side.

# The Berlin Review

REFLECTING ON TEN EVENTS, PROJECTS, AND PEOPLE  
FROM THE PAST SIX MONTHS IN BERLIN

MAN RAY/RODCHENKO  
NEUE NATIONALGALERIE  
ALEX FLACH  
CLAIRE FONTAINE  
DEXTER SINISTER  
JEAN PIGOZZI  
ELMGREEN & DRAGSET  
ASSUME VIVID ASTRO FOCUS  
FORGOTTEN BAR PROJECT  
RAUMTAKTIK



# ACTIVATE VANGUARD ANTHEM FORCE

A summer of love according to art collective  
ASSUME VIVID ASTRO FOCUS



#### ITEM IDEM Interview

Since you've been in Berlin for the summer has the city influenced the production of your latest show at Peres Projects?

Absolutely, but not as much the art environment as the people themselves. Somehow this time in Berlin was the perfect match to our current emotional state. The city gave us so much – sweetness, smoothness, gratitude, friendship, warmth, laughs, delicateness, roughness, beardedness, sun, beach, lake, rain, inner challenges, wide streets, dark streets, friends biking together at night, bike accident, stitches, dinner parties, chain massage parties, carpet parties, dessert dinners, dedication, dancing for eight hours non-stop, burying artworks in Treptow Park. It's like this endless book of never-to-forget memories and generosity, and our show was pretty much a reflection of our time in Berlin, a celebration of the city and its people.

I often see your work through the Wagnerian term "Gesamtkunstwerk," where all combined forces and mediums become one synthesized and perfected form of art. Music, though, appears to be the "mother of all media" in your practice, the one that unifies them all.

Our work is music-like; it's the medium that's most perfect for reaching the viewer and transmitting ideas. The way it does so is very corporeal and entices an immediate and

shareable reaction, using our bodies as an instrument of its manifestation. The relation between abstract and figurative elements in our work is like composing a song.

Can you explain?

Well, figuratively, one element is enriched, contradicted, enhanced, hidden, juxtaposed, or clashed by the other. But there's the abstract absorption/understanding of music – it is ethereal, and not an object – that is universal and we want to achieve that with our work.

Extending this idea of "total artwork," you also value the importance of the collective effort in your method. Does the ablation of the individual identity help benefit a larger cause, the community? What is avaf secretly marching towards?

We want our identity and the viewer's to be forgotten, and performance and participation allow this. We want you, the music, the neons, the masks, the wall, to become one – and not only in a contemplative way.

In what kind of way?

A more active and physical one. We want to be inclusive, not exclusive – one of our ambitions is to have other people assume avaf's identity and make works on their own under our alias without us knowing. We're sick of the glorification and rise of the celebrity, this whole star fucker bullshit. We want people to concentrate on our projects not our personalities. And also as we work with so many different people, it wouldn't be fair to relate our work to just avaf's core members all the time. It would be way too easy for art critics. We want people to dig our

work and not ourselves. The art world is too restrictive, and we've been considering new approaches to reach beyond it. Maybe it'll be a non-profit community-oriented organization that will provide a more permanent link to our ideas. We've been thinking of having a space, which, through installation, or social interaction, or events – or all of it – could somehow maintain a more permanent exchange with existing communities.

Is there any previous project or influence that comes to mind when thinking of this?

Yeah, Gordon Matta-Clark's restaurant, Food. Or Beuys' endless lectures. It could even be a simple collage night with your friends, just as long as it's a destination or gathering place for ideas and exchange.

There seems to be an escapism in your work, something halfway between mystical research and the quest for a treasure island. Spaces seem only to be corridors leading to more sacrosanct representations, almost like idols or totems, or the pyramid at the Peres show.

We couldn't disagree more with the word ESCAPISM. It's quite the opposite – we want to bring CONSCIENCE. People hardly realize this in our work, the fight against detachment, class, and elitism in the art world. We sense that visitors usually share this frustration with the traditional art space – it being detached from their lives, economically and socially. Visitors want to be included not excluded. Art as we know it so far, is loosing its function and power. There's a new generation of artists and art viewers who know there are other levels not fulfilled at all by the traditional art space. We want to make people conscientious of what gives them pleasure, so they know that exists inside of them and they can somehow pursue it and perpetuate it. We don't see it so much as a trippy, druggy environment so much as a space of inner knowledge. The current speed with which we process, absorb, transform, and share information has no precedent, and we believe that the amount of knowledge and accessibility can make us better human beings. We believe there's a new kind of human being and the world as we live in now-



adays is not satisfactory for this new breed. Unfortunately we still have old world rulers taking care of the politics of the body, of the mind, of knowledge, and laws. The idea of contamination is key to our projects. And we believe that is inbred in people's lives already. We are here to exchange knowledge; we are here to spread our views and meet other people who share those views.

So how do you embrace this contamination?

We're like an über emotional computer. In our installs we want people to lower their barriers and promote a sense of community. We want to entice alertness and conscience. It's very much related to anthropophagy: the act of devouring the Other also means knowing yourself. A communal celebration of awakening. The celebratory rituals we propose are rituals of consciousness. You connect with yourself in order to fully connect with others and the rotating neon pyramid in the show is a symbol for all of this.

But your recycling use of pop culture symbols and aesthetics is very playful. How do you conduct the visitor's attention to its intended destination, without losing his or her focus?

We have a utopian, obsessive behavior of trying to bring everything in. Ideas and information disseminate rapidly and reveal

themselves in this infinite, accumulative unfolding, looping process. You have the feeling that you are distancing yourself from your starting point but in fact you are just going deep into the core existence of it. We see the installation as a space of diversity and multiplicity, and the dialogue with a particular place's architecture is the first guideline we follow, either by enhancing, contradicting, or challenging it. The next step is to blow it. It's like being inside the shell of an exploding bomb; the space fixes your presence like a comfortable, amicable trap but then the contents burst you into a million tiny pieces.

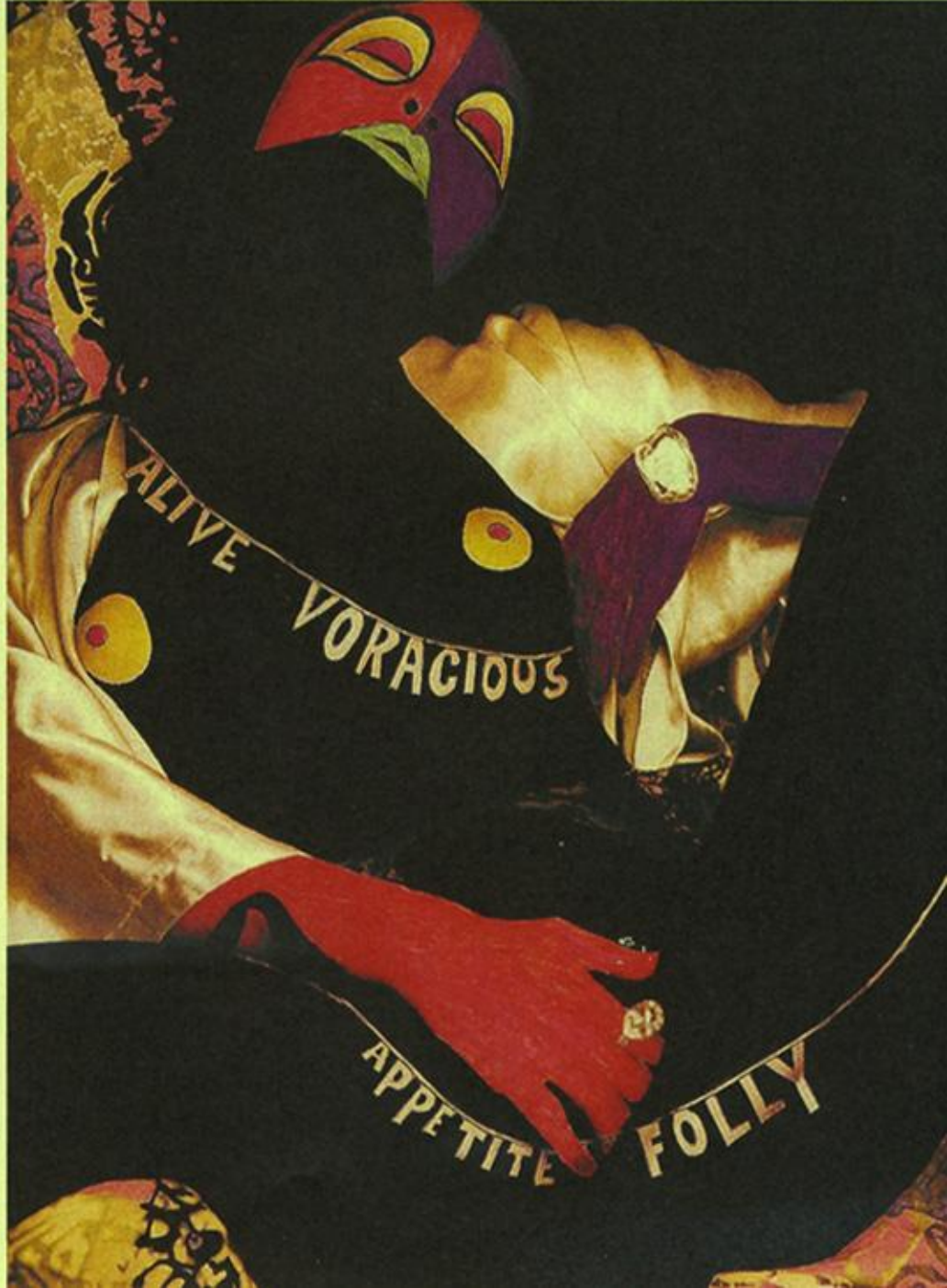
I like your to-do lists. Do you have an example of one from your time spent in Berlin?

1. use temporary broken walls from previous show, transform back area into enclosed room for rotating pyramid sculpture;
2. soundtrack for pyramid room: black meteoric star? glass candy's "ms broadway" shout mix from deitch? tamiko jone's "let it flow"? manuel göttsching's "e2-e4"?
3. produce painted cardboard hand made flags with avaf initials combo sentences letters
4. create colored tunnel structure made out of apparent wood studs for visitors to crawl thru and lead to pyramid room, ask philip to help us with that;
5. block both entrances to our room and make the area outside pyramid room just viewable from the window

(like a vitrine) or thru holes on the tunnel structure; 6. cover interior of pyramid room with reflective mylar material from moca or survival blanket (cheaper?); 7. decide performance for opening (to be seen only from street): yorgos? baltazar? hanayo? steev? yusi? colof? labby?; 8. laser directed onto pyramid so beam is shot all over when pyramid rotates? check security; 9. work on new images for collage wallpapers and canvases: details from tricky's drip paintings from deitch show, details from deitch graffiti, details of avaf tapestry, vava's fabric, maori prints, totof's clothes scans – do an all over color abstract show (apart from crawling girls drawings); 10. install canvases as stand alone with wood studs support around and above tunnel structure;

11. install collage wallpaper hanging stiff from ceiling like memphis reference; 12. hand made masks: papier mache children book reference with monster face? different geometric shapes masks (like pic of bruno gregori's progetto molle?); 13. incorporate neons from athens show, check if one of them is broken or not; 14. have one avaf designs turned into graffiti painted on wood panels, dismember kunsthalle vienna placards; 15. image for invite: artboredom shit pic or taboo magazine girl drawing?; 16. go to that party shop on hauptstrasse to get more decorations; 17. research: richard lindner, exyzt, hiro yamagata, alchemia, tenori-on, colored plastics, colored ropes, dumpster, richard bernstein, frederick kiesler; 18. youtube: captain horlock, recent

grace jones' concert, amanda lear on stryxx, illegal late 80s/early 90s rave parties, toto coelo, "look around you"; 19. get copy of "luminous procuress" for basso; 20. project for glass pavilion: avaf endless lecture/slide show or heike's lecture on berlin (speaking from inside a fake berlin wall sculpture with just her head visible); 21. visit teufelberg; 22. try to find colored trash bags jerry got us around kottbussertor; 23. yorgos: "gold thessaloniki" video or installation with fabric sheets popping out of the gallery windows onto the ceiling?; 24. ask federico to fix our bikes; 25. ask nd baumecker about doing opening's after party at kantine; 26. incorporate studio's piss bottles in the show? bring piss bottles to jan's kunstkompost.



Previous page (clockwise): aboriginal vaginas are friendly (crawl girl 04), 2008; arms viable and fast (crawl girl 01), 2008; a very anxious feeling (crawl girl 09), 2008  
This page (clockwise): all vivid always focused (crawl girl 08), 2008; alles vorzüglich fantastisch (crawl girl 07), 2008; alive voracious appetite folly (crawl girl 03), 2008; all images courtesy Peres Projects