

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

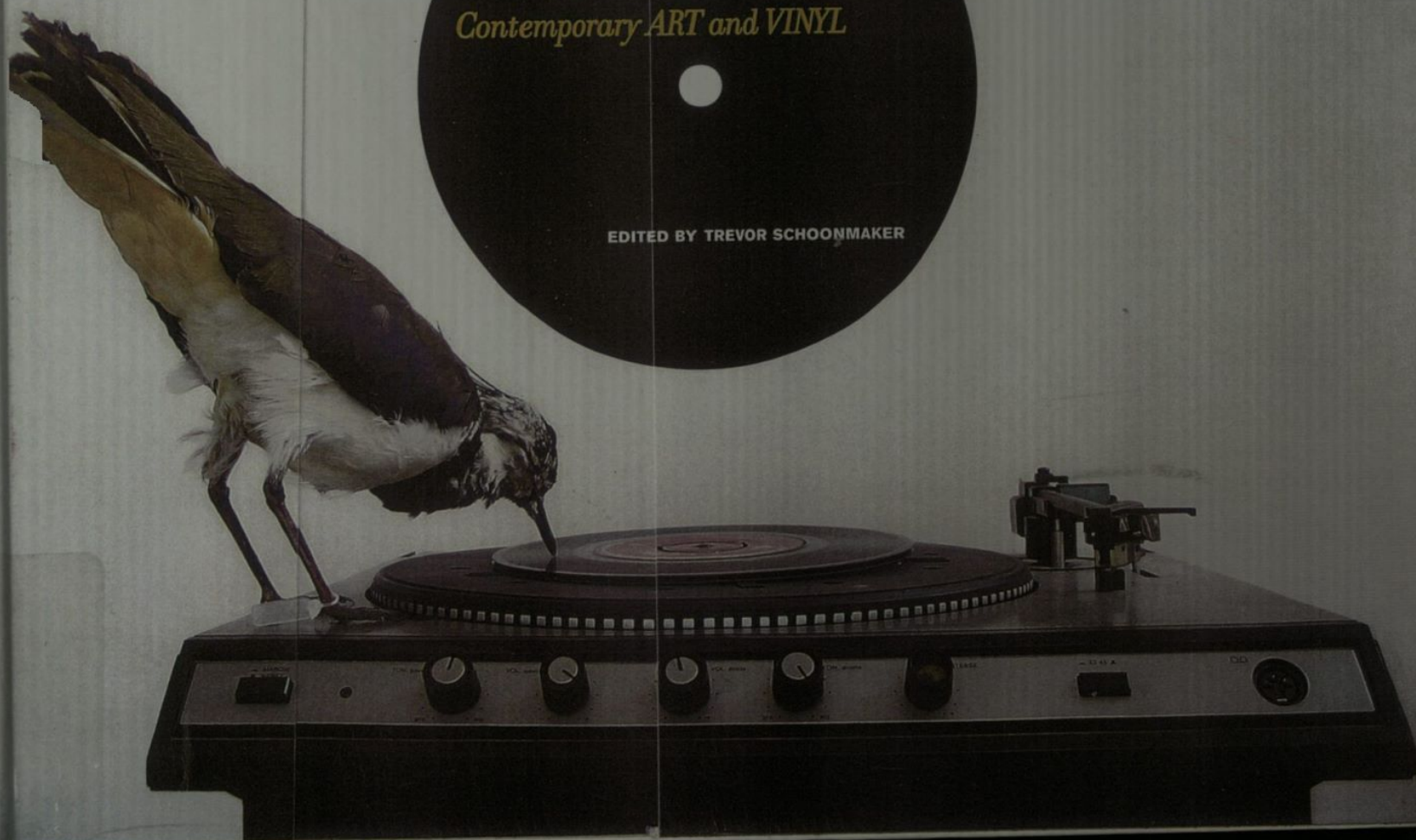


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THE RECORD

Contemporary ART and VINYL

EDITED BY TREVOR SCHOONMAKER



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The Record: Contemporary Art and Vinyl is the first museum exhibition to explore the culture of vinyl records within the history of contemporary art. Bringing together forty-one artists from around the world who have worked with records as their subject or medium, this groundbreaking exhibition examines the record's transformative power in the years from the 1960s to the present. Through sound work, sculpture, installation, drawing, painting, photography, video, and performance, *The Record* combines contemporary art with outsider art, audio with visual, fine art with popular culture, and established artists with those exhibiting in a U.S. museum for the first time.

The Record is organized at a time when downloadable digital files are replacing the once-popular compact disc and vinyl sales are experiencing a significant resurgence, as younger generations once again take inspiration from record culture. Over the last fifty years a staggering number of artists has worked with vinyl records, and for many artists in the digital age, the record takes on a power and significance that moves well beyond the medium's traditional use into a space of innovative artistic production. The exhibition considers the vinyl record as a lens through which to view the world.

The catalogue, published in conjunction with the exhibition, presents original essays and artist statements that balance personal reflection with critical exploration and scholarly analysis. These texts and an extensive timeline explore the historical impact of the record on art and music and the ways in which the medium has helped shape our individual and collective identity.

THE RECORD

Published on the occasion of the exhibition *The Record: Contemporary Art and Vinyl*, organized by the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University and curated by Trevor Schoonmaker, Patsy R. and Raymond D. Nasher Curator of Contemporary Art

Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University September 2, 2010–February 6, 2011

The Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston April 15–September 5, 2011

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RIGHT: **William Cordova** *Greatest Hits (para Micaela Bastidas, Tom Wilson y Anna Mae Aquash)*, 2008 (detail). Column of 3,000 reclaimed vinyl records, Peruvian gourds, VHS tape, cigar, pennies, candle, record covers, wooden base; 156 x 72 inches (396 x 183 cm). Collection of the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University. Gift of Marjorie and Michael Levine (T '84), 2009.6.1. Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Peter Paul Geoffrion. [CAT. 5]

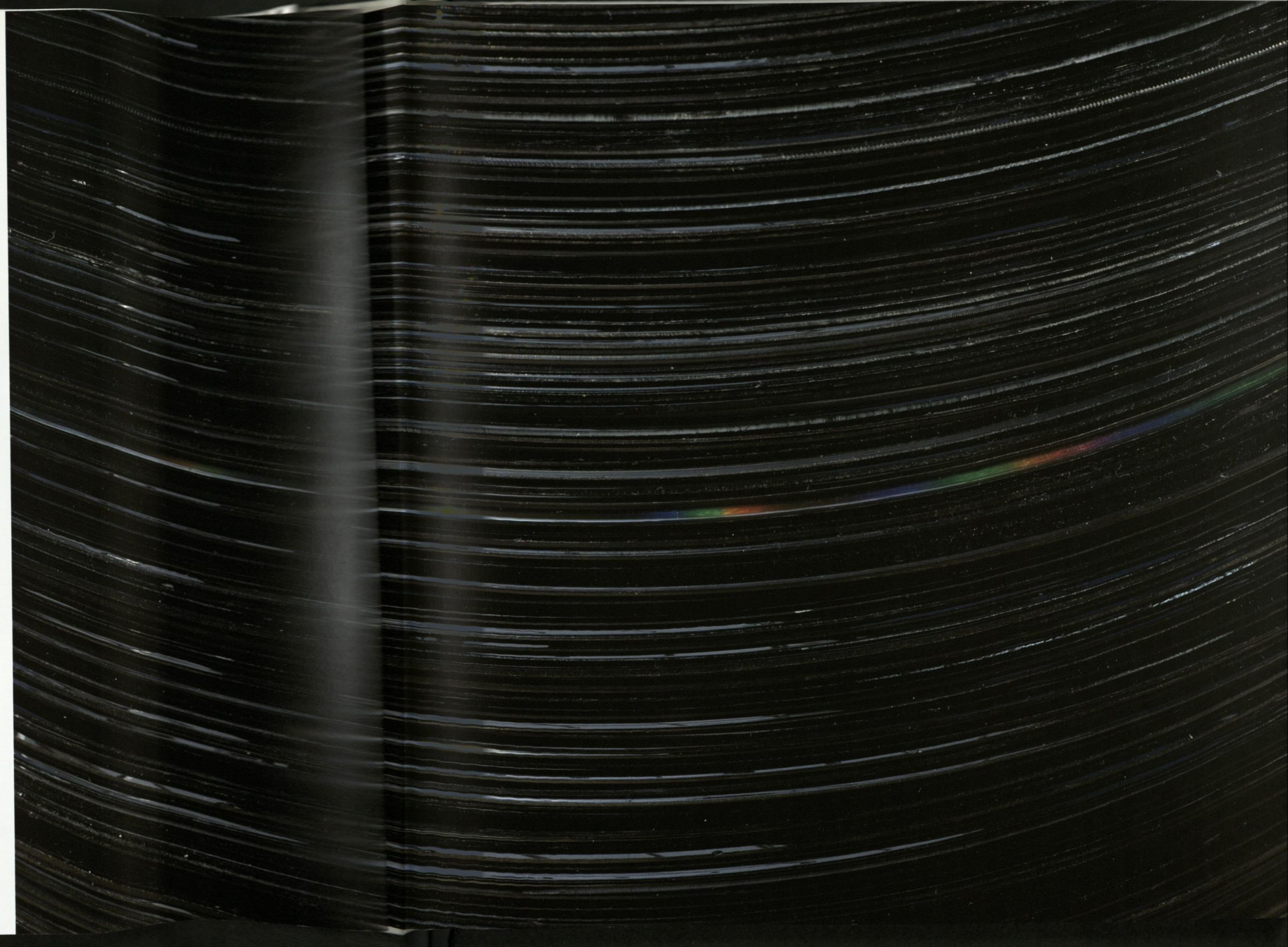
PAGE 2, LEFT: **Satch Hoyt** working on *Celestial Vessel* in Durham, N.C., 2009. Commissioned by the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University. Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Dr. J Caldwell. [CAT. 33]

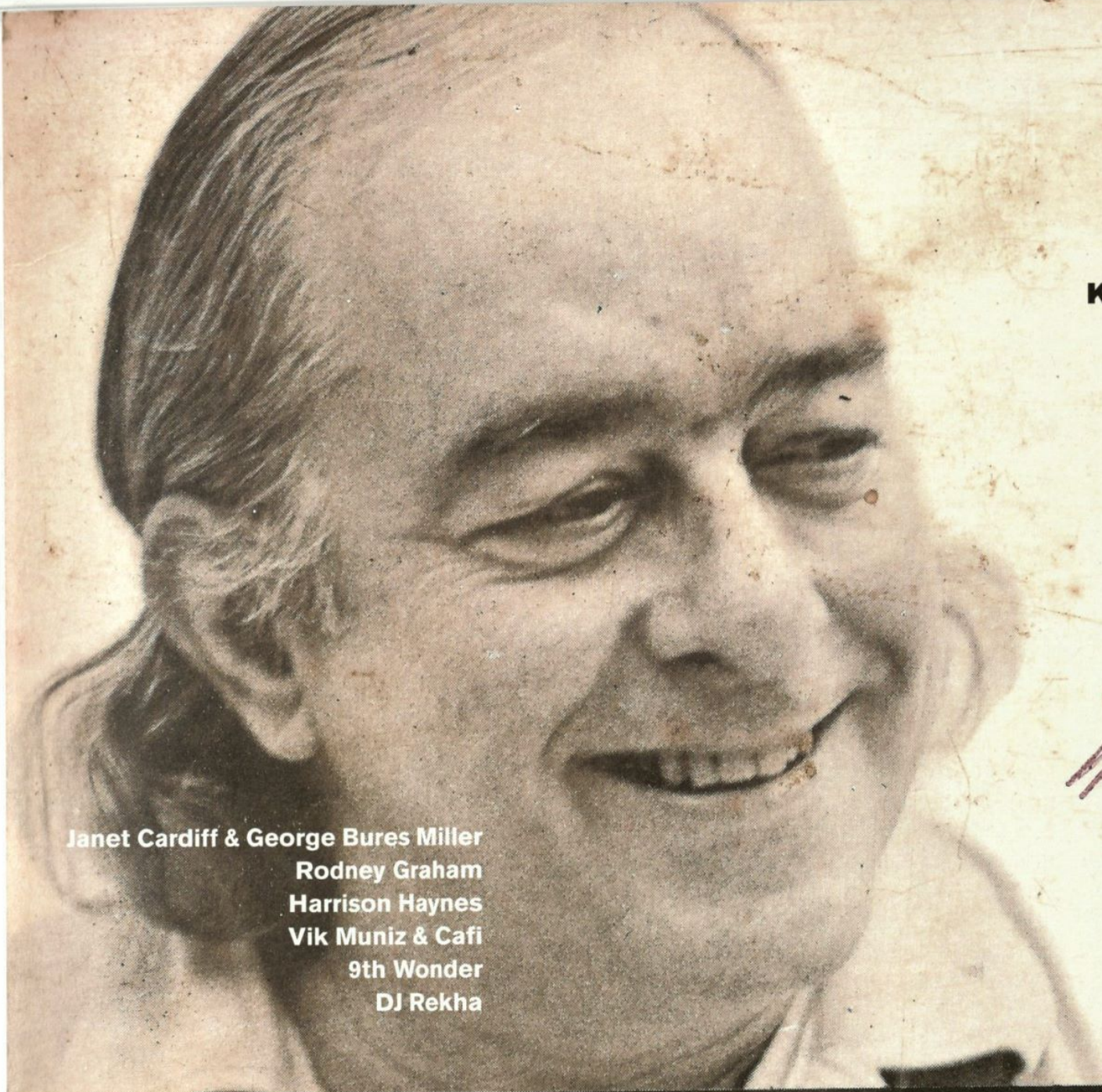
PAGE 2, RIGHT: **Dave Muller** *Jake's Top Ten (Nostalgia)*, 2003. Acrylic on paper; framed, 86.75 x 38.75 inches (220 x 98 cm). Courtesy of the artist and Blum & Poe, Los Angeles. Photo: Joshua White. [CAT. 79]

PAGE 6–7: **Felipe Barbosa** *Autographs*, 2008–09. 36 color digital prints mounted on PVC, 4 x 6 inches each (10 x 15 cm). Courtesy of the artist; Galeria Arte em Dobro, Rio de Janeiro; and Sara Meltzer Gallery, New York. [CAT. 3]

PAGE 12: Record pressing plant. Courtesy of Erika Records.

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Janet Cardiff & George Bures Miller
Rodney Graham
Harrison Haynes
Vik Muniz & Cafi
9th Wonder
DJ Rekha



Laurie Anderson
Felipe Barbosa
David Byrne
William Cordova
Moyra Davey
Kevin Ei-ichi deForest
Jeroen Diepenmaat
Sean Duffy
Yukio Fujimoto
Jack Goldstein
Gregor Hildebrandt
Satch Hoyt
Jasper Johns
Taiyo Kimura
Tim Lee
Ralph Lemon
Christian Marclay
David McConnell
Mingering Mike
Dave Muller
Ujino Muneteru
Robin Rhode
Dario Robleto
Ed Ruscha

Malick Sidibé
Xavier Simmons
Mark Soo
Meredyth Sparks
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Beware of Gramomania:
The Pleasures and Pathologies
of Record Collecting
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Home of the Blues, House
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DO-IT-YOURSELF

BARBARA LONDON

IN THE LATE-1960s SPIRIT OF COUNTERCULTURE AND REVOLUTION, many artists fashioned a rough-and-ready “maximalism” in opposition to the then-current and more formalized Conceptualism and Minimalism. They took up the latest consumer technologies for “alternative” practices, which were relatively low-cost, easy to operate, and readily available—an array of photocopiers; Polaroid, portable video, and Super 8 cameras; and audio gear became fair game. Merging a strong sense of independence with these accessible tools, they navigated a range of disciplines. Visual artists and garage bands with homegrown agendas were equipped to play around with image and sound. They commandeered abandoned buildings, turning vacant garages into minitheaters for raw screenings and raucous performances. Some produced inexpensive artist books and ephemeral art, like single records. Most dreamed of democratic media distribution. They distributed self-made postcards, flyers, books, vinyl records, audio cassettes, and videotapes by hand and via mail. What distinguishes these artists’ product is immediacy and accessibility—users instantly had something in their hands to read or to pop into a media device to play whenever they wanted. Collectability and resale were of little concern back then when interests focused on experience.

My own work with media began in the early 1970s as a young curator in the Museum of Modern Art’s Department of Prints and Illustrated Books, where I initiated a collection of “bookworks” and a survey exhibition of that form.¹ (My research netted such disparate items as early zines and artists’ self-published records, which the museum’s library happily accepted.) In a bankrupted New York that had become a haven for renegade art-

1. Generally self-published and self-distributed, bookworks were made as affordable art.

BARBARA LONDON is a curator of media and the founder of the video-exhibition and -collection programs at the Museum of Modern Art. She has organized more than 120 exhibitions, including one-person shows featuring Nam June Paik, Bill Viola, Joan Jonas, and Laurie Anderson, and thematic projects such as *New Video from China*, *Anime!*, *Automatic Update*, and *Looking at Music: Side 2*.

ists often doubling as musicians and poets, my interests settled on the “cutting edge” and on how artists utilized gear in a perpetually shifting state of upgrades.

Up-to-date information could be gleaned by nosing around makeshift venues and by talking with artists. I discovered a dynamic counterculture (philosophical descendants of the Beats and the Woodstock generation) flourishing in Manhattan’s then-desolate Tribeca and Soho. I trundled along from Printed Matter² to Jaap Rietman’s bookstore³ and pored over the latest artist books and records; I climbed dank staircases to enter dusty lofts for impromptu screenings of the latest black-and-white videos and for interdisciplinary performative experimentations. A joint passed around eased viewers into unhurried events that stretched way into the night. On other evenings I heard art bands at CBGBs and watched experimental films at Max’s Kansas City.

I often stopped by to see what Nam June Paik was up to with his contrarian approach to art and technology. His loft was several blocks from Canal Street, an ideal spot for an artist fascinated by the detritus of modern living. During the day, the shops along Canal unloaded secondhand electronics and machinery parts onto the sidewalks. The helter-skelter piles of rusted motors and TV carcasses were the palimpsests of the Fluxus energy in Paik’s assemblage installations. I usually had to crawl over and through a maze of electrical wires, tubes, and old circuitry to find Paik, who was sometimes standing in rubber boots so as not to be electrocuted. At the center of his labyrinth was an editing system, on which he captured chance distortions on his TV screens. Some of his discoveries were achieved by bundling cables with Scotch tape. For Paik, Scotch tape was Tao.

One of my favorite works by Paik was *Beatles Electroniques*, an early black and white “music video” made with experimental filmmaker Jud Yalkut between 1966 and 1969. Paik grabbed bits from the 1964 film *A Hard Day’s Night*, distorting the footage through an image processor that he made with engineer Shuya Abe. In the video, snippets of the Beatles’ faces are caught in a loop of warped abstraction. To accompany the imagery folding over onto itself, Paik created a soundtrack with Kenneth Lerner of fragmented words repeated again and again. While the original film is an upbeat paean to Beatlemania, Paik’s appropriation and repetition are closer conceptually to Andy Warhol’s silkscreened paintings of Marilyn Monroe, which Warhol first created in 1962, and Steve Reich’s sound loop of words drawn from a well-publicized racial incident in his 1966 sound composition *Come Out*.

2. Founded as a for-profit alternative arts space in 1976 by artists and artworkers, Printed Matter reincorporated in 1978 to become an independent nonprofit organization dedicated to the promotion of artists’ publications, as well as to the examination of those publications in the landscape of contemporary art. The organization is recognized as an essential voice in the conversations and debates of the increasingly diversified art world.

3. The store carried the latest bookworks and a treasure trove of art books from around the world.

Fig. 23. **Laurie Anderson** “Let X=X,” 1982 (detail). Flexi-disc. *Artforum*, New York. Courtesy of the artist and Sean Kelly Gallery, New York. © Laurie Anderson.

Music was a key element in many interdisciplinary experiments like Paik's, and thus the downtown scene of music and art had many interconnected demimonde figures. In 1974 Patti Smith—who was just starting to find her voice and appear in clubs—and fellow musician Lenny Kaye self-published their first 45 record, which included the songs "Hey Joe" and "Piss Factory." Other artists were testing technical limitations as much as subject matter. Many picked up a guitar and formed bands, put emphatic words to song, and published records with their own or friends' artwork on the covers. Richard Hell and Tom Verlaine (founding members of the band Neon Boys, which morphed into Television and then Hell's the Voidoids) collaborated on an artist book, *Wanna Go Out?*, in 1973. It was purportedly written by Theresa Stern (identified inside in a portrait photo that is a pastiche of Hell and Verlaine) in true, soon-to-be-defined punk fashion—as Stern declaims on the back cover, "Like myself, my poetry is so alive it stinks." The book, which was their first art project, affected how Hell and Verlaine went on to develop their musician personas. Wearing torn shirts fastened with safety pins, they brazenly stormed the stage and angrily stared out from album covers (usually self-designed) featuring candid photographs by Robert Mapplethorpe and Roberta Bailey.

Another artist, Jimmy DeSana, concentrated on photography that offered a clearly constructed realm as an alternative to the "real" world. Along with Cindy Sherman, Richard Prince, and Laurie Simmons, DeSana used the self-reflexive and critical principles of minimal and conceptual art in his photographs to present personas that confronted romantic notions of beauty and manliness as promulgated by the media, including the recording industry. (DeSana's characters tended to be engaged in what might be considered reprobate acts, which mischievously spiced up familiar, everyday domestic settings.) An integral member of the downtown music and art scene, capturing and defining its grit, DeSana made artist books, took photographs, and regularly published his more journalistic photos of the music scene in the *Soho Weekly News*. He described his take on photography and "reality" in a 1986 interview with Diego Cortez: "A photograph is how much you want to lie, how far you want to stretch the truth about the object. And, as photography is always based on real objects, it lends itself, by means of technique or manipulation, to explorations of what may appear to be an absence of reality, balancing on an ambiguous line between concrete and abstract space, between reality and illusion in a way that no other medium is able to do."⁴

4. Diedrich Diederichsen, "Glad Rag," *Artforum*, April 2002.



Fig. 24. **Nam June Paik** *Listening to Music through the Mouth*, 1962. Gramophone cabinet with old running device, 31 old records; 41 × 19 × 17 inches (106 × 49 × 43 cm). Collection of the Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wein. © Nam June Paik Estate. Photo: MUMOK, Lisa Rastl/Lena Deinhardstein.



Laurie Anderson *Laurie Anderson Playing Viophonograph*, 1977. Black and white photograph by Bob Bielecki, 11 × 14 inches (28 × 35 cm). Courtesy of the artist and Sean Kelly Gallery, New York. © Laurie Anderson. [CAT. 2]

Art and music, combined in such freeform, unruly fashion in the 1970s, were soon joined in their most famous marriage with the launch of MTV in 1981. A handful of media-art pioneers were ready for this transition to MTV's broader audiences. A good example is Laurie Anderson, a classically trained violinist whose art practice evolved in tandem with technology. She shared a do-it-yourself aesthetic and a strong community-minded spirit with her downtown New York peers. When her "O Superman" single, produced by the independent New York label 110 Records, reached the top of the pop charts in England in 1981, Anderson signed with Warner Records and made her first music video just in time for the start of MTV. Multimedia artist and animator Perry Hoberman—who had been turning obsolete technologies, such as 3-D slide systems, into droll animated-narrative installations—joined Anderson as the video's artistic director. Accommodating the TV set's still-small scale, they concentrated on close up shots of Anderson onstage and showed silhouettes of her shadow-puppet hands. A tiny speaker inside her mouth emanated a prerecorded violin solo that she modulated with her lips. She described her work in a 1982 interview: "My goal is to make images, and it is very different from making ideas; the information comes at you differently. So it is more important to look at my work and accept or reject it in terms of sensual things as opposed to how it adds up logically. I think it *does* add up logically, but it is an arrangement of things you get first through your senses and not through your brain."⁵

The next generation of artists looked to the earlier trailblazers for inspiration. Christian Marclay was one of many who admired such performance artists as Laurie Anderson, appropriated sounds the way DeSana and Prince grabbed visuals, and were inspired by the raw energy of punk. Marclay's do-it-yourself spirit came out of an interest in the found object. He studied visual art (rather than music) before launching his turntable career in Boston in 1979. In a paean to Duchamp, he named his first band The Bachelors, even; a second band was called Mon Ton Son.⁶ Focused more on the concept of noise, Marclay was connected to what some called performance-electro-acoustic-avantgardistic-improvisation-based art. Settling in New York in the early 1980s, he found more energy in the city's new music scene than in the art world, and followed the nightly happenings in clubs like the Pyramid or 8BC.

Marclay began performing with composer-instrumentalist John Zorn in his "big-game pieces" (what Zorn has described as complex systems that harness a wide range



Fig. 25. **Laurie Anderson** "O Superman"/"Walk the Dog," 1981. 45rpm record. Warner Bros. Records Inc., New York. Courtesy of the artist and Sean Kelly Gallery, New York. © Laurie Anderson.

5. Michael VerMeulen, "Say Hello to Laurie Anderson," *TWA Ambassador*, Oct. 1982: 72.

6. The Bachelors, even, was borrowed from Marcel Duchamp's work *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even* (*The Large Glass*), 1915–23. Mon Ton Son is French wordplay on "mine, yours, his" or, alternatively, "my tone sound."



Christian Marclay Performance view of *Record Players*, The Kitchen, New York, 1982. Courtesy of the artist and Paula Cooper Gallery, New York. © Christian Marclay. Photo: Paula Court. [CAT. 47]

Ghost (I Don't Live Today), 1985 (still). DVD, 5:00 minute loop. Collection of the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University. Gift of Christian Marclay and Paula Cooper, 2009.7.3. Courtesy of the artist and Paula Cooper Gallery, New York. © Christian Marclay. [CAT. 48]

of “improvisers” in flexible compositional formats). Continuing his work with turntables, Marclay devised new sounds by cutting flea-market finds—old LPs—in two and then gluing the parts together to create new compositions. During performances he garnered loud and gritty sounds on his turntables, which he sometimes slung across his chest like a guitar, by moving the stylus back and forth over the bumpy grooves of his mishmash LPs.

Marclay moved on to make *Recycled Records*, a media-art project he pursued from 1980 to 1986. Using a jeweler’s saw to cut small sections out of one LP and inserting the parts into another, he transformed records into sculptural objects with bold geometries. From vinyl sculptures he turned to *Body Mixes*, another project that juxtaposed halves of two different record covers. By merging genders and visual and musical styles, he created grotesques that were the antithesis of what the recording industry demanded in promoting its stable of good-looking stars: MTV-ready sex appeal.

Today there is a groundswell of that same energy that existed in the early 1970s. There are many artists with a do-it-yourself attitude, a twinkle in their eye, and a healthy sense of skepticism who are pursuing boundary-breaking forms, many of which revolve around music in different permutations. Objects that might seem dated to viewers now—crude offset flyers and album covers and the fleeting analog sounds and images of the small TV screen—are again becoming familiar tools in the media-art world. The youngest generation of artist-pioneers is poised to reinvent the avant-garde, and is bound to invent a new version of the record in the process.

Fig. 26. Christian Marclay
playing his *Phonoguitar*,
1983. Courtesy of the
artist and Paula Cooper
Gallery, New York.
© Christian Marclay.
Photo: Steven Gross.





Christian Marclay *Recycled Records*, 1980. Collaged vinyl record, 12 inches diameter (30 cm). Courtesy of the artist and Paula Cooper Gallery, New York. © Christian Marclay. [CAT. 39]

Chris



Christian Marclay *Recycled Records*, 1984. Collaged vinyl record, 12 inches diameter (30 cm). Courtesy of the artist and Paula Cooper Gallery, New York. © Christian Marclay. [CAT. 43]



Christian Marclay *Recycled Records*, 1983. Collaged vinyl record, 10 inches diameter (25 cm). Courtesy of the artist and Paula Cooper Gallery, New York. © Christian Marclay. [CAT. 41]

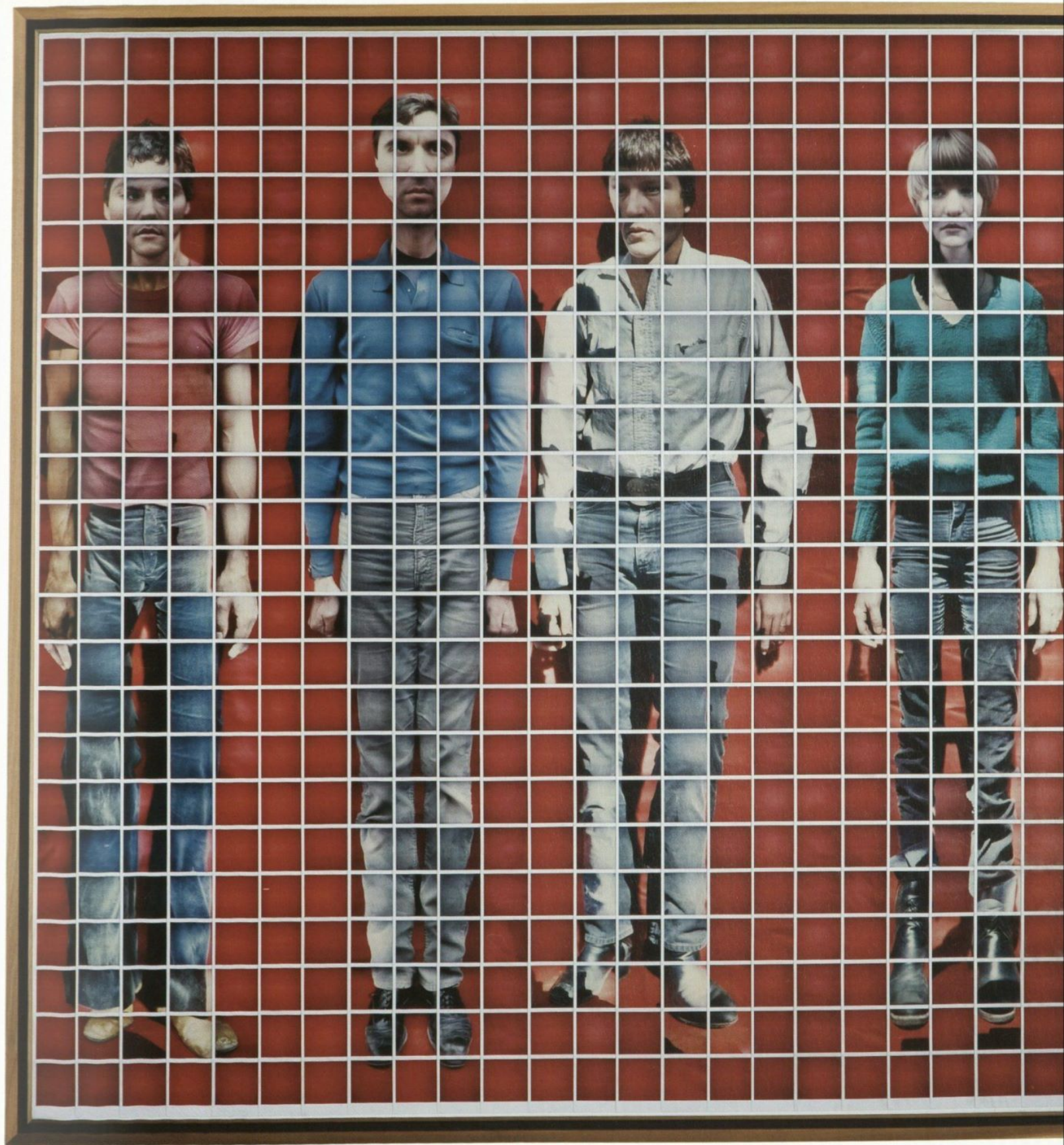


Christian Marclay *Recycled Records*. Collaged vinyl records, 12 inches diameter each (30 cm). Courtesy of the artist and Paula Cooper Gallery, New York. © Christian Marclay.
CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: 1983. [CAT. 42] 1985. [CAT. 45] 1986. [CAT. 46] 1985. [CAT. 44]



ay Recycled Records, 1983. Collaged vinyl record, 7 inches diameter (18 cm). Courtesy of the artist and Paula Cooper Gallery, New York. © Christian Marclay. [CAT. 40]

re Songs About Buildings and Food, 1978. Polaroid SX-70 prints (photomontage for album cover), 90 x 90 inches (229 x 229 cm). Courtesy of the artist. [CAT. 4]



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