

MODERN PAINTERS

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HILARIOUS!
Michael Haneke's
shot-for-shot
remake of *Funny Games*

HEARTWARMING!
The empathetic
cinema of
Albert Maysles

HANDMADE!
Four artists
discuss the politics
of craft

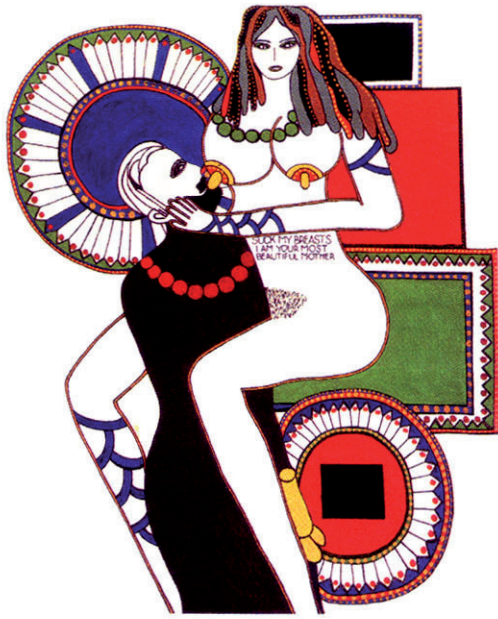
THE ECSTATIC
ART AND LIFE OF

DOROTHY IANNONE

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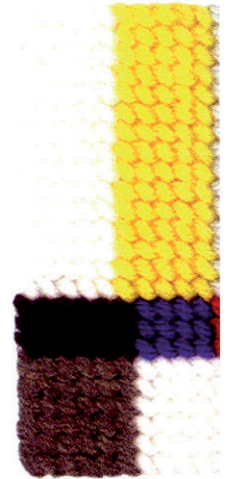
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66 DOROTHY IANNONE
 SUCK MY BREASTS, I AM YOUR
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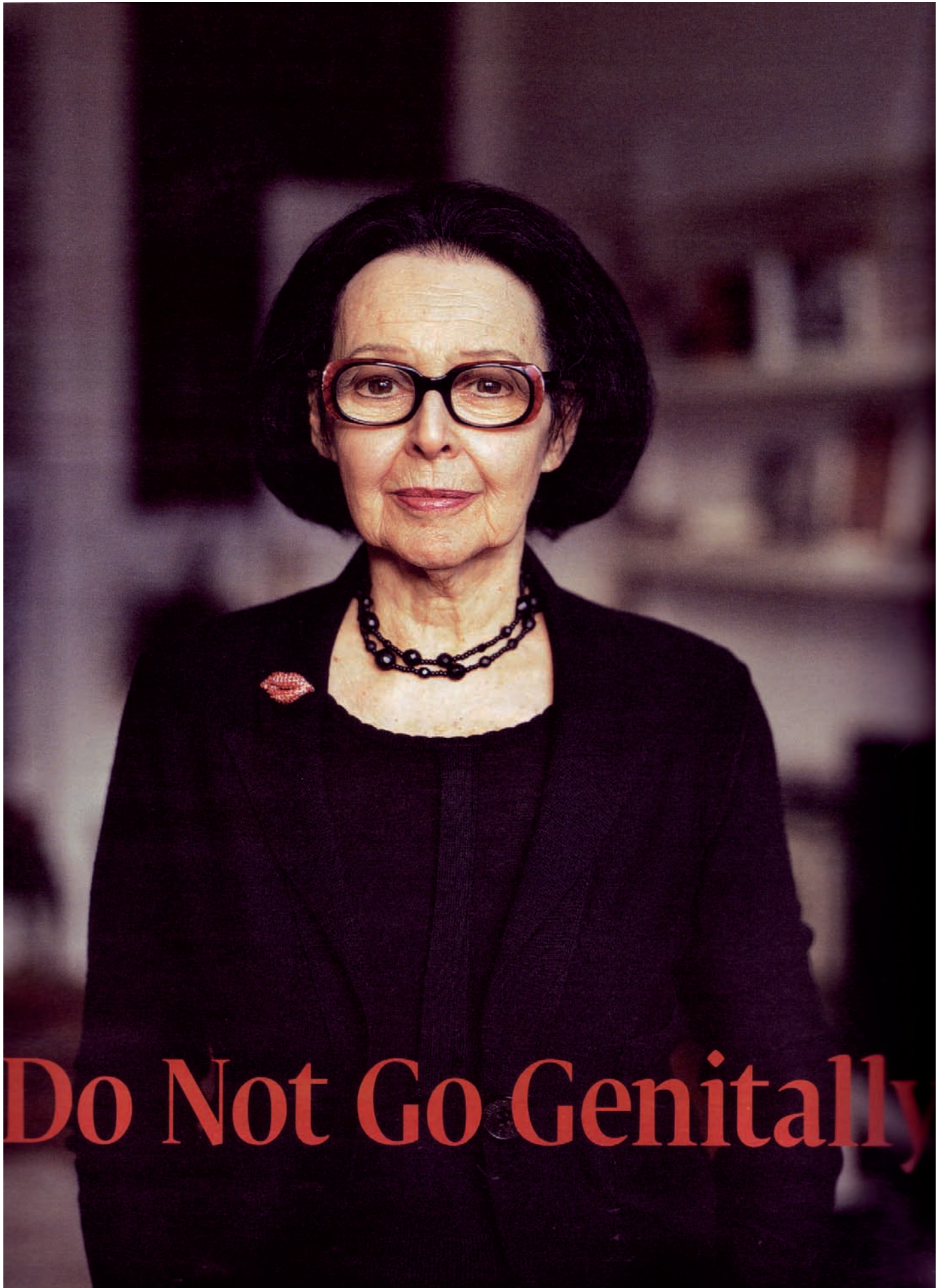
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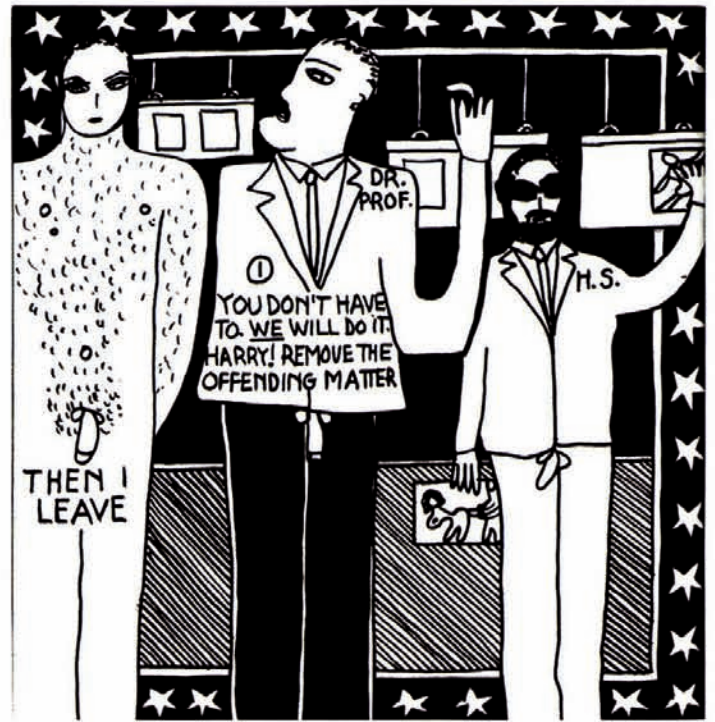
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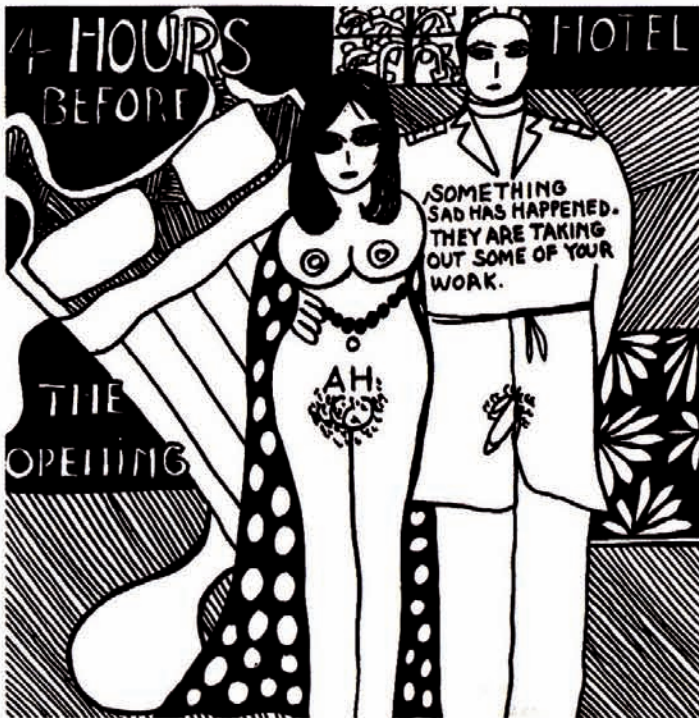
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In 50 years of making art, Dorothy Iannone has consistently flouted convention. With her sexually charged work finding new audiences today, the artist talks to Melissa Logan, a founding member of the iconoclastic collective Chicks on Speed.

Introduction by DOMENICK AMMIRATI Portrait by OLIVER HELBIG



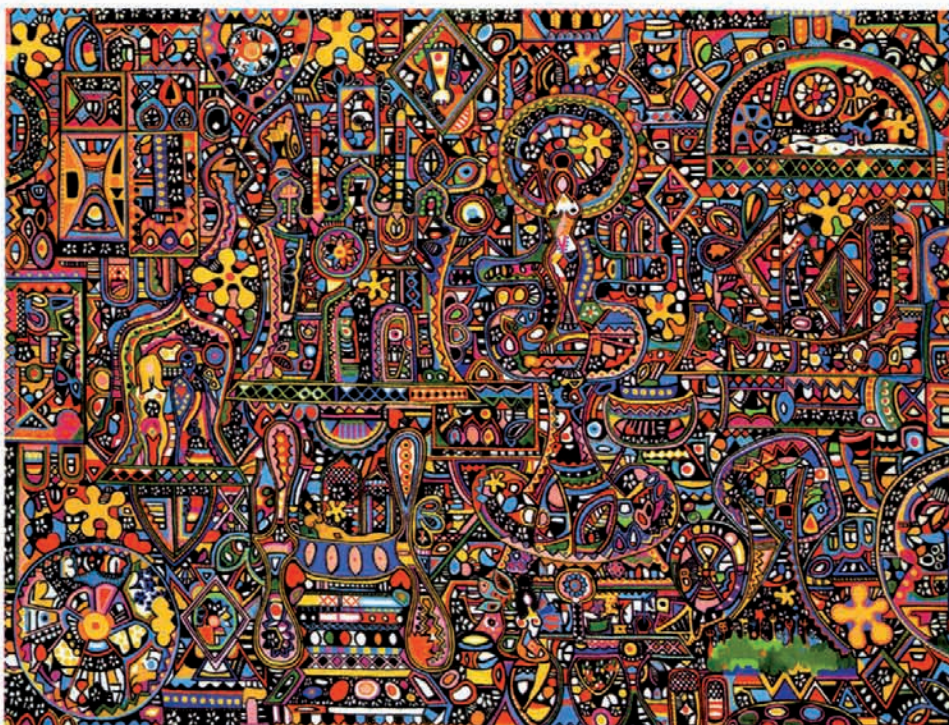
FACING PAGE: DOROTHY IANNONE IN HER HOME, BERLIN, NOVEMBER 2007 THIS PAGE: THE STORY OF BERN (OR) SHOWING COLORS, 1970. ARTIST'S BOOK, FELT PEN ON CARDBOARD, EACH PAGE 11 X 9 IN. COURTESY KUNSTHALLE WEIN.

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FACING PAGE: I HAVE GOT SUCH
A MARVELOUS COCK (I HAVE GOT
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COLLAGE AND ACRYLIC ON
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KUNSTHALLE WEIN.

For a long time we were in the dark about Dorothy Iannone. Her work was expunged, censored, and withdrawn from exhibitions on more than one occasion; after a healthy career in the 1970s, and despite a vantage as an American émigré at the heart of European Fluxus, she didn't show much or sell much. The graphic, celebratory sexuality and spiritual bent displayed in her paintings, books, and multimedia pieces endeared her to neither second-wave feminists nor the artworlds that began coagulating in the 1980s. With the new millennium, though, the pendulum swung: in recent years Iannone has found large audiences and great acclaim. From 2005 to 2006 alone, her work appeared in the Berlin Biennial, the Wrong Gallery's inaugural show at Tate Modern, the Whitney Biennial, and a pairing with fellow iconoclast Lee Lozano at the Kunsthalles Wien. And yes, she dated Dieter Roth.

Melissa Logan, a founding member of Chicks on Speed, could be Iannone's doppelgänger. Some 40 years the latter's junior, Logan too emigrated to Germany; makes provocative artwork with gender at its core, as part of CoS; and refuses boundaries between art mediums, and between art and life. The two met in Iannone's home in Berlin on Thanksgiving Day and again two weeks later to discuss sex, motherhood, being a foreigner, being a woman artist, and the evolution of their work. As a fly on the wall, I was amazed to see how much two people could have in common—and get along—yet see things so differently. —DA



MELISSA LOGAN: When did sexuality enter your work?

DOROTHY IANNONE: It took off when I followed my heart to Iceland in June 1967, but in New York I had already exhibited a few hundred wood cutouts of figures whose genitals were painted in, even when they were fully clothed. I made the Beatles, Bob Dylan, the Rolling Stones, Norman Mailer, the Kennedys, copies of Botticellis and Japanese woodcuts, circus freaks, everyone I could think of.

ML: Was anyone else depicting sexual organs at the time you were doing it?

DI: I wasn't aware of anyone. When Chrissie Iles

In the past, when my work was not censored outright, it was ridiculed, or described as folkloric, or just ignored. Now the response is more positive. —Dorothy Iannone

saw my video sculpture *I Was Thinking of You*, from 1975—where I'd painted a man and a woman making love and in the space of the woman's face integrated a monitor with a video of my face showing the stages of sexual arousal, including orgasm—she remarked that this was quite early for that kind of material. She mentioned a Vito Acconci piece, which I wasn't familiar with.

ML: Yah, *Seedbed*, 1972. He was in the gallery, lying under a platform built into the floor, jerking off. You could hear him talking through loudspeakers, fantasizing about the people walking above him.

DI: The difference with my piece is that when I made it, I was completely alone. I set up the camera, positioned my face in the monitor, and filmed.

ML: Exactly. With you, it is the most private part of oneself being exposed. Acconci gives it this twist of the perverse, taking on the persona of the flasher/crazy artist. Because he is a guy, it makes it more aggressive. I see *I Was Thinking of You* as a platform for going into another place.

DI: The sculpture is not a platform for going someplace else; it is someplace else.

That work embodies my longing for ultimate union with the beloved. The painted part of it shows a woman giving herself completely to the man she's making love with. Their genitals are painted in luscious colors, their environment is sparkling, birds and plants are flourishing. It's the morning of the world. And in that brief moment when the soul passes fleetingly over the face at the moment of orgasm, the woman shows, through the video, her readiness to give everything. In the text painted on the box, she tries to persuade him to surrender himself, too, so that they may achieve complete intimacy, or, as I later came to call it, "ecstatic unity."

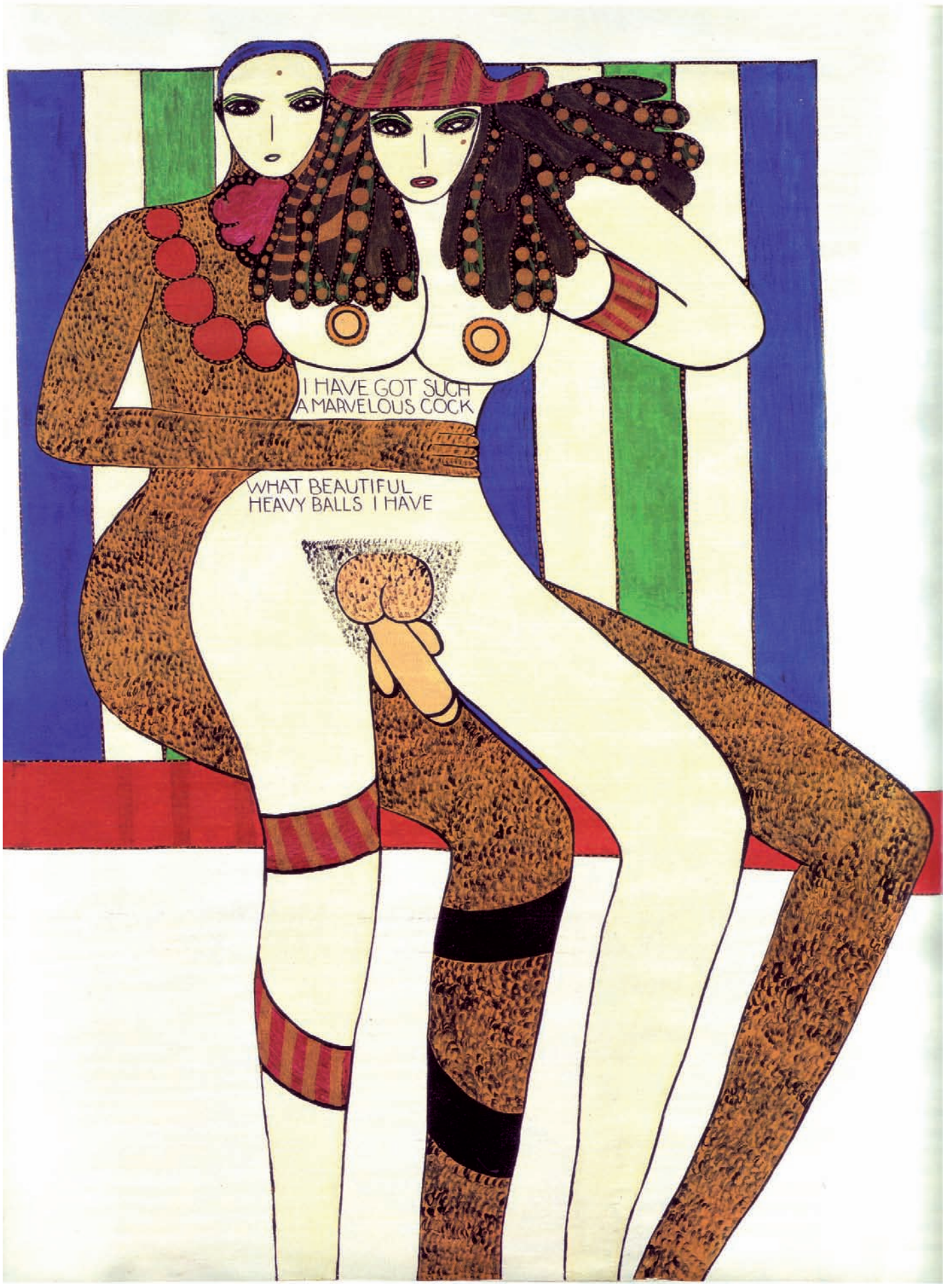
ML: Your paintings remind me of Carol Rama's, with snakelike forms coming out of sexual organs, but the theatrical order of yours makes hers seem spastic and in a psychedelic dream state. I love *I Have Got Such a Marvelous Cock* [1969/70]. The sexual partners are very confident and sure of themselves and what they are up to, but you don't lose playfulness or humor.

I see orgasm in your hands, so to speak, as having a metaphoric relation to truth. It's something that occurs outside time and space, and it's a synecdoche for the way that you share everything with the viewer in all your work. I love how the female is so happy, because the guy is really rubbing her happy spot on the painting, in *I Was Thinking of You*.

His dick is so nice and hard, and, yes, this looks like paradise, and makes me very happy and want to jump on something in the not too far future.

What is the difference in reception for *I Was Thinking of You* today compared with the first time it was exhibited, in 1976?

DI: That was at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, in Pol Bury's "Daily Bul" show. Apparently,





FACING PAGE: LOVE THE STRANGER, 1981. GOUACHE ON SYNTHETIC BOARD, 56 X 40 IN. COURTESY KUNSTHALLE WEIN.

THIS PAGE: DIALOGUES IV, 1967. FELT PEN ON CARDBOARD, 65 SHEETS, 14 X 14 IN EACH. COURTESY KUNSTHALLE WEIN.

the president of France at the time, Giscard d'Estaing, visited that exhibition. I was told afterward that my video just happened to be not functioning that day.

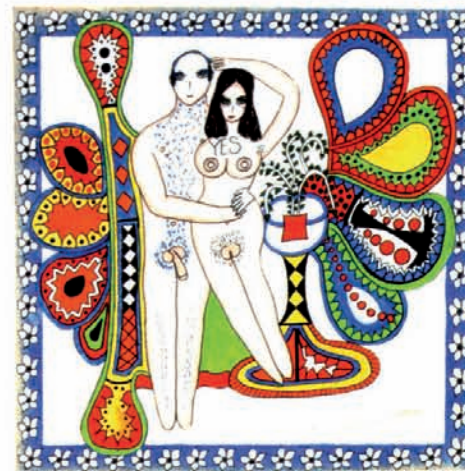
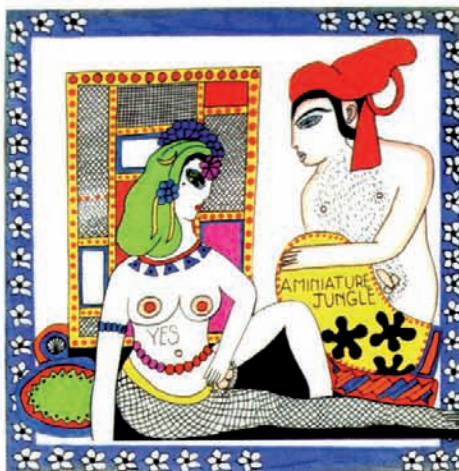
In general, one could say that, in the past, when my work was not censored outright, it was either mildly ridiculed, or described as folkloric, or just ignored. Now the response is more positive, but one can still sometimes feel the rejection of Eros. *I Was Thinking of You II* [1975/2005] was shown at Tate Modern. The English tabloids were, predictably, pretty nasty, and I read a review in a major German newspaper that was belittling. A third version [1975/2006] was shown at Chrissie Iles and Philippe Vergne's Whitney Biennial. The audience seemed so sophisticated the day I was there, and when Elizabeth Schambelan wrote in *Artforum* that it was one of the most truly transgressive works in the show, I was extremely happy.

ML: We recently had a show at the CAC Vilnius called "Shoe Fuck!" [2007]. *Frieze* printed a very superficial review of it, and the image they used, an installation shot, includes the title painting in the background. Blocking the important section of the painting—a Chanel heel penetrating my pussy—is a person. It is a press photo supplied by the museum, but in general I'm suspicious of people's willingness to explore intense themes; the review mentions feminism ironically, not as a driving force. Advertised in the same issue is "Black Pussy," an exhibition by Jason Rhoades at David Zwirner. It's unfortunate the artist is not alive, because I would have liked to talk to him about it. His pussy series is about language? Hmm. I guess it's one thing to talk about it, another thing to do it?

DI: My first experience with censorship in Germany was in Stuttgart in 1967, at the Hansjörg Mayer gallery—the police confiscated my entire show the morning after the opening. Then they invited critics and art historians to help determine whether the work was pornographic. Fortunately they said it had connections to ancient traditions of art. On the last day of the show the authorities returned the work. Hansjörg told me that if it had been judged pornographic, it would have been buried in an underground vault for one hundred years, after which time it would have been returned to me. It sounds surreal, I know.

At least in that case I got my work back. English customs officials actually burned a few of my artist's books in 1972.

ML: Do you feel that problems with censorship, or the cooling effect it might have had on people being



interested in your work, affected what you were doing in your art?

DI: Censorship in no way caused me to change the nature of my work. However, as a result of it, I did suffer a significant amount of exclusion from shows. And if you are not selling much work, you run out of places to store it! So there was a side effect: I started working on a smaller scale, and I went deeper into my writing and a form I had developed of integrating text with drawings. This was the period of *An Icelandic Saga* [1978, 1983, 1986] and *The Berlin Beauties* [1978], for instance.

ML: Because your work is so autobiographical, I wonder what kind of relationship you have to selling pieces.

DI: It's true that my life—my thoughts, feelings, and experiences—is my inspiration. But once experiences have been transformed through painting, writing, filming, or singing, well, then they become something else. Now it's a work of art that one is selling, no matter what the inspiration was.

ML: I wanted to ask you about Fluxus, which you were associated with. It seems pretty cool, but the guys come across as rather macho pigs. What was

it like making vulnerable work in such a phallogocentric scene?

DI: Macho pigs! You wouldn't say that if you had known them. And I never worked with them on anything. In fact, I began my "Fluxus Essay" [1979], "I am she who is not Fluxus."

ML: But they were your friends.

DI: Yes, some of them: Robert Filliou, Emmett Williams, George Brecht, Robin Page, Ben Vautier. They were all either so witty, so humorous, so radiant, or so knowledgeable. I wouldn't describe my work as vulnerable, though. The women I painted are self-assured, mighty beings who are in one way or another calling the shots.

Anyway, my friends were very supportive of my work. We had wonderful times together. It was like a golden age in Düsseldorf when several of us were living there—Robert and his wife, Marianne, and their daughter, Marcelline; Robin and his wife, Carol; George; Erik Kietman; and other Swiss and German friends. Dieter Roth and I were there because he was teaching at the academy.

ML: Oh yes, Kunstakademie. I studied in Munich at Akademie der Bildenden Künste from 1994 to 1998. One of the professors there made crude comments to us chicks, and I guess it was funny and perhaps complimentary. It's hard to really laugh, though, when there isn't one female professor on the payroll. So I was lucky enough to study with Ben Willikens, who was very anticollaboration and threw me out for my Chicks pieces—which were not the strongest, but compared with the noncontent being generated at the time... Anyway, we knew from that point on we were on the right track. *Dilettantismus und Unprofessionalität. The Assault on Culture*, by Stewart Home, became our bible.

DI: When I got married, I gave up a fellowship I had received to study for a doctorate in English literature at Stanford. It never occurred to me after that to go to art school. I must have known intuitively that only I could discover what I wanted to do.

ML: Do you see your work, which can be so personal and narrative, as resisting dominant forms of art history?

DI: My book *The Story of Bern (or) Showing Colors* [1970] has been described as a new form of art history. It tells the story in drawings and text of how my work was censored at the "Friends and Their Friends" ["Ausstellung der Freunde," 1969] exhibition at Kunsthalle Bern and how in protest Dieter removed all his work the morning after the opening and Harry Szeemann resigned as director. What arose from the personal became mythological.



It is funny how a certain 50 percent of the residents of the planet are quite overrepresented, and strange how long it took me to see that fact. —Melissa Logan

In an interview with me, Hans-Ulrich Obrist remarked that in my work I had anticipated docufiction. So if you invent new forms, you might even help shape the history of your own period.

ML: But in terms of history, it is funny how a certain 50 percent of the residents of the planet are traditionally quite overrepresented, and strange how it took me so very long to see that fact, because, I thought, it can't be true. First in interviews we were asked if we were feminists, and we thought that was very random: we were just doing what we wanted to do and happened to all be girls. Later we realized that this doing what we want is a privilege, and that this right is the real politics.

My father asked me years ago what my driving force is for creative work, and I said, "Cheekiness." Now I think that is a real motor. Our group is on a mission. Let's throw ourselves into the machine, because we have to see the world from the inside. We are not becoming what we hate; we are trying to know what we hate so we can love all the better!

DI: I always thought it was the nature of my work

that caused me to have so many difficulties, not that I was a woman. Although I was aware that painting the phallus, for instance, was unforgivable.

ML: Yes, I like the dicks; they are very to the point. Do you know *Rock My Religion* [1982–84], Dan Graham's film? A beautiful collage examining religious and sexual sides of culture through music. There's a section about how the Doors' downfall is blamed on the fact that Jim Morrison "exposes himself" twice onstage—the mystery is killed, and with that his sexual power. Oh the humble flaccid flesh...

DI: The women's movement in the US made me aware of how cheaply women were held in our culture, and I was sympathetic toward their efforts to gain equal rights, but I never considered myself a feminist, because I go my own way all the time. I did, though, make many works that can be described as feminist. The triptych *Follow Me* [1977], for example, contains a video of my face while I'm singing a song I wrote that recalls the glories of matriarchal times. Or there are silk-screen prints like *The Next Great Moment in History Is Ours* [1970], which is a variation on the wonderful title of an essay by Vivian Cornick that I saw in the *Village Voice* ["The Next Great Moment in History Is Theirs" (1969)]. But I did also

make a print called *Human Liberation* [1972], showing a woman with both arms raised—ONE ARM FOR WOMEN, ONE ARM FOR MEN, WHO ALTHOUGH THEY NEED IT LESS, NEED IT TOO.

When I came to Germany and for years afterward, it was a very inhibited and authoritarian place. It took some time before women's liberation reached this country.

ML: Feminist is still a swearword in Germany. Here they just have one outdated tabloid-heroine feminist, Alice Schwarzer. Yes, please talk, dear Alice; but no one person can represent all emancipated females in Germany. Girl gangs are all too seldom found here, as are females in good positions with loads of recognition and piles of cash. It's underestimated how good that can make society.

DI: When I began working in the '60s in New York, there were very few well-known women artists: Helen Frankenthaler, Joan Mitchell, Grace Hartigan, Marisol, Louise Nevelson... Probably I could name a few more. Yayoi Kusama did exhibit on 10th Street, across from my gallery, before I left New York. Only

FACING PAGE: CHICKS ON SPEED, SHOE FUCK! (DETAIL), 2007. INSTALLATION VIEW, CACVILNIUS. COURTESY CHICKS ON SPEED.

THIS PAGE: DOROTHY IANNONE, SHE DIDN'T LOOK BACK, 1972/2007. COLIACHE AND ACRYLIC ON BOARD, 26 X 32 7/8 IN. PHOTO: MARC DOMAGE, COURTESY AIR DE PARIS, PARIS.

DOROTHY IANNONE, AN ICELANDIC SAGA (DETAIL), 1978/1983/1986. INK ON CARDBOARD, 15 3/4 X 11 7/8 IN EACH. COURTESY KUNSTHALLE WIEN.



now since I've had a show with Lee Lozano at the Kunsthalles Wien have I gotten to know her work.

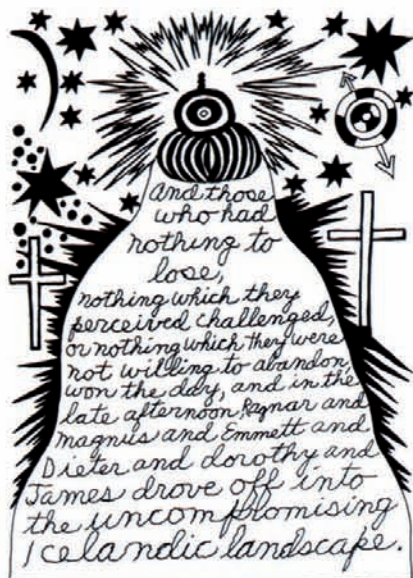
ML: You were making abstract paintings at that time—so different from what you soon began doing, with graphic sex and personal detail and text. How did your style develop?

DI: I plunged right in with oils around 1959, although at first I painted with my fingers and then with a palette knife. I don't think my paintings looked like anyone else's, but it was Abstract Expressionism. At the same time I was making very intricate felt-pen black-and-white drawings with plantlike forms. I loved Matisse and Léger and classical Indian erotic art, Stuart Davis, too. Over the next few years, figures began to emerge amid the abstraction. The very first time a man and a woman appeared together, they already had prominent sexual organs. They represented my husband and me. After that I began including lines from writing that I loved, like Wallace Stevens's "Sunday Morning" or from Shakespeare. This was the point I was at when I fell in love and almost overnight left my husband. Fortunately we didn't have children; otherwise, I don't think I could have left.

ML: It is a responsibility.

DI: Since I was so inspired and even obsessed with the high love of *Antony and Cleopatra*, I think that if I'd had a child before realizing my own aspirations, I would have passed all my longings on to my child.

ML: Actually, I love having a kid and being an artist.



The roles seem to work well together for me, especially because my husband and I share child-care duties. With our kid, Sid, we have a fifty-fifty deal, we like to say. We each adapt our lives 50 percent toward each other. He has to adapt to our lifestyle, not just us to his.

How did you make the move into multimedia?

DI: At the beginning of the '70s I started making "Singing Boxes." They were painted on the outside and contained an audiocassette player, with a recording of my singing. For a year or so, I also sang with Ralf Hütter from Kraftwerk at their studio one night a week. It was just a small step to building bigger boxes that incorporated a video player and monitor into the sculptures.

ML: Do you think living far from where one comes from forces a person to be more self-sufficient?

DI: In a way, I was really on my own in Europe, and I didn't have to answer to anyone who might have felt a right to interfere with my work. How has living in Germany affected you?

ML: I also think living in a foreign country with a different language is mentally freeing. Even for someone who is free-spirited, there are always, way in the back of one's mind, thoughts like, What will my mom think, the kids I grew up with, whoever? These boundaries are not there when there's no chance Dad is going to see a video of you masturbating or a painting of you fucking a Chanel shoe.

DI: I sent my mother an invitation to my first show in Germany, which had a reproduction of two of my cutouts, a man and woman in very sexual positions. She later showed me where she had kept it hidden for years. It's nice, though, that she didn't throw it away.

ML: The survival factor is more dangerous as well. You really are forced to be very serious in terms of a

career, because there is less of a buffer to catch a fall. That tension has forced me to be less compromising, and even aggressive about what is the right direction for the group or myself.

DI: I don't remember that I ever considered my work as a career. It almost seems that I trusted in providence to provide; whether I had money or not never really changed what I did or how I did it. Thanks to the help over the years of close friends, a few collectors, now and then a grant, and various gigs teaching at art schools—and my mother, who never suspected I was in need—I came through. Anyway, once the journey I had to make was clear to me, I would have done it wherever necessary.

ML: There's this beautiful quote your friend Jan Voss wrote about you: "She determined herself which hierarchy she would acknowledge and which to laugh away."

DI: Yes, that is a nice line.

ML: I'm wondering if you feel that hierarchies have changed for you personally, or if you think the hierarchies are different for people today?

DI: Let me see, what hierarchies could I say I acknowledge? Well, the greatest poetry, the greatest artists, the greatest love stories in history—those don't change. As for the ones I laugh away, how about the art market, for an opener?

Now that we've met, Melissa, I hope you'll come to visit again, and that we'll get to know each other and become friends.

ML: I'd love to come back the next time I'm in Berlin. Can I bring my husband and Sid, the little rascal?

DI: Yes, definitely. I want to see how Sid is pulling his 50 percent.

For more information on Dorothy Iannone, turn to Index, p. 110.