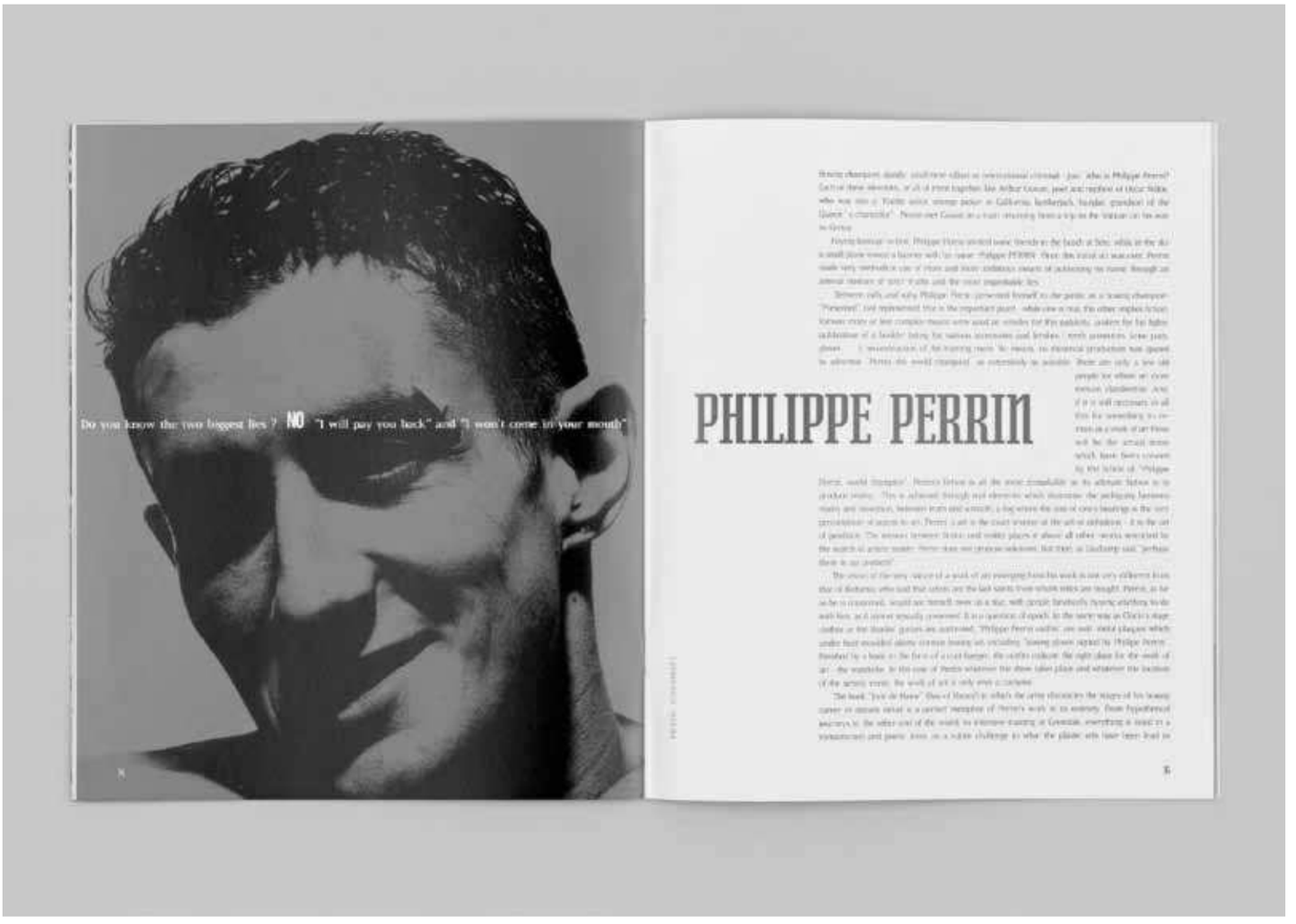
Art Direct

James Langdon
Rick Poynor
Jonathan Watkins
in conversation



JW

The first publication of Tony's that I really concentrated on was Le Cinq, a catalogue for an exhibition of French artists at Tramway in Glasgow in 1990. That was around the time that I became director at Chisenhale Gallery in London. I remember thinking what an unfamiliar thing it was. More like a magazine than a catalogue. The nature of the cover, the typeface changes, the pages with full bleed images …

Le Cinq
Tramway, 1990
270 × 230 mm

RP

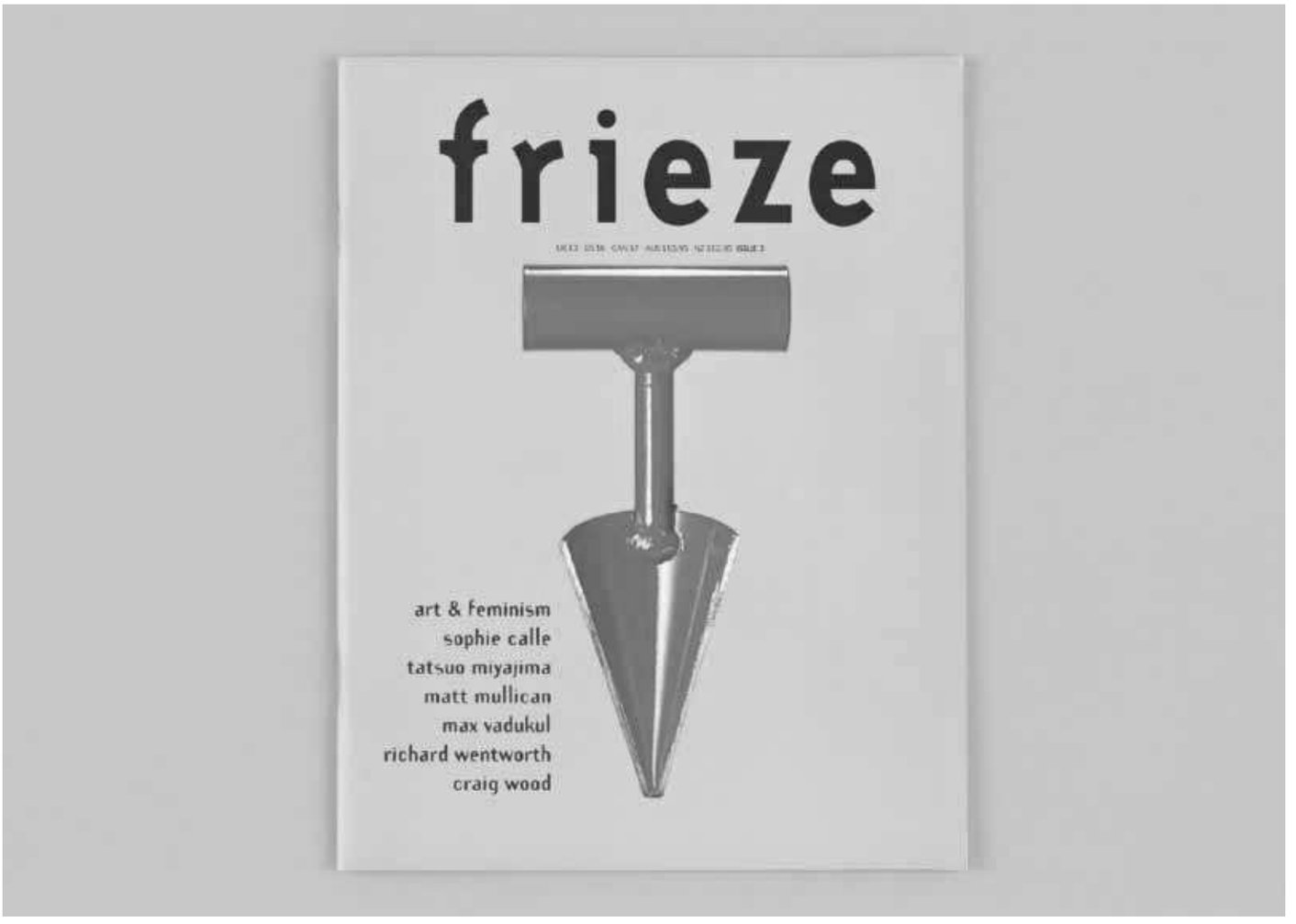
I agree that what comes through immediately from this is Tony's interest in magazines and magazine culture. Some of the devices that you've singled out, such as the use in an art context of a full-page photographic portrait of an artist, treated with a coloured background, certainly came from the contemporary style magazines. Tony made an exhibition, Five Years of The Face, at The Photographers' Gallery in 1985, so he obviously knew The Face very well. I think he was adopting that magazine sensibility because he wanted to make the material open, engaging, exciting. He wanted to pull you in. I'm not saying that there isn't a concern with image and fashion, but you never felt when you looked at the publications Tony made for the art world that you were on the outside of a difficult, hermetic scene. There was much more of a sense that he wanted to open things up.

JW

It coincided with the rise of Young British Art, and of a certain anti-academicism in our art world that was also reflected in Tony's design. How serious a lot of catalogues were in the 1980s, exhibitions with Latin titles and texts with too many footnotes! It had felt fusty and rather provincial, and Tony's work was like a breath of fresh air.

RP

You could say the same about Frieze magazine, where he was associate editor for a while. When Frieze arrived in 1991, those first issues had a kind of freshness, a brightness of colour and generosity of spirit. The message was that the young art world was vibrant and exciting. The early issues are remarkably close to Arefin's work in the choice of typefaces, use of colour, the space and openness. The cover of issue three is perhaps the best example. It shows a red garden tool from the collection of the artist Richard Wentworth, isolated against an extraordinarily intense orange background. If there were no credit, I would guess it had been designed by Arefin. The art direction of that particular issue is credited to Nashville, which I understand to be one of Tony's aliases, and TG — Tom Gidley.



JL

Tony was never the designer of Frieze exactly, but he was incredibly influential on the magazine, and on Tom Gidley's design from the beginning. Tom recalls that people have always assumed the early issues were designed by Tony, and he is comfortable with that. He himself hadn't trained as a designer and the work he was doing at that time was very directly informed by Tony. He explained to me how the collaboration began, 'Tony taught me enough about design to get the look of the magazine going. I was happy for Tony's aesthetic to influence us as much as it did. We used photographers he used and recommended, we commissioned writers he suggested on subjects he suggested. It was a very fertile, exciting time for all of us.' Prior to Frieze, Tony had been planning to launch a magazine, provisionally titled Hotel. We have several pieces of ephemera that he produced related to that.

Frieze magazine
#3, 1992



JW
We should also talk about the other Freeze, the catalogue for a 1988 group exhibition of young British artists, which Tony definitely did design. This is not a particularly distinguished publication perhaps, apart from what it says about Tony's position and his association with these artists.

RP
This catalogue does bind Tony to the history of that YBA moment. He knew the artists, was known by them, and the catalogue certainly became a crucial jumping off point for everything he did subsequently. But if we look at the design, it's clear that Tony is still learning. I think the cover is strong in its way; the mint green and bronze combination is interesting. There are very few design gestures, though. The strongest design statement is the cover.

Freeze
Curated by Damien Hirst, 1988
300 × 215 mm

JL
The acerbic combination of colours is typical and continues through much of the work he made in London.

RP
Inside it is almost a conventional catalogue. It shows the work perfectly acceptably. There's some rather over-spaced typography in the essay at the start. He wasn't educated as a designer, and he talked about learning in public, freely acknowledging his mistakes. Later he would have become painfully aware of these things, but at this point he was an amateur, an inspired amateur.

JW
How did you see Tony's arrival on the scene in the late 1980s? I saw it from an art world point of view, but how did it seem in the context of contemporary graphic design?

RP
Anyone interested in new developments in graphic design in Britain in the 1980s wasn't expecting those developments to come from the art scene. Art publishing was very conventional and there were fixed views about how designers should handle art. As a designer, it wasn't your role to intervene in any way and you would be expected to treat the art with a certain reverence. On the whole there was nothing wrong with art catalogue design. It had seriousness and clarity, but in the main it wasn't an area where graphic designers were free to experiment. At that point the place where that freedom existed was in the design of music packaging, and from around 1980, with the arrival of the style magazines, it was also happening there. Within the professional sphere of graphic design those areas were seen as peripheral and somehow not comparable to serious, problem-solving design. The people doing catalogue design then for the major art institutions and galleries were a subset of that mainstream design world. So when someone like Tony, shaped by the style, music and fashion subcultures of the day, found himself becoming a designer in the art world, it would have been natural for him to apply a freer, more intuitive way of designing, without reference to what the mainstream of design was doing and to what catalogue design traditionally had been.

JW
It would be interesting to speculate to what degree his background informed the freedom in the style of his design. He was somebody who had, with his family, emigrated from Pakistan via Bangladesh and had grown up in Slough. He wasn't by any means part of the establishment. He was coming in from the outside.

RP
He spoke about photography as being a way of learning about design — that by studying the photographic image and the way it is constructed, you can absorb certain principles that can then be applied to the broader design of the page itself …

JW
… which is very significant given that he had these very close relationships with photographers. Those creative partnerships were an important part of his practice. In London they included Nitin Vadukul and Anthony Oliver, whose work Tony often incorporated into his own.

RP
There is a typically vague story of how he came to land a two-year job as a curator at The Photographers' Gallery by being asked to stand in one day for a curator who wasn't there. To come out of nowhere, without an art education, and land a job like that was quite something.

JL
As well as Five Years of The Face Tony worked on another exhibition, Photography as Performance (1986). He also designed the catalogue, and contributed to an interview published there. Reading it I was very impressed by how articulately he expresses ideas about work in the show and the reasons for its selection. There's a point here, which is significant, about how he came to establish himself as the preferred designer for so many artists and curators. He was obviously very engaging and convincing when he talked about art.

JW
By the time he worked with us at Chisenhale, in 1991, it was quite something to have Tony Arefin design a publication for you. His reputation was established very quickly.

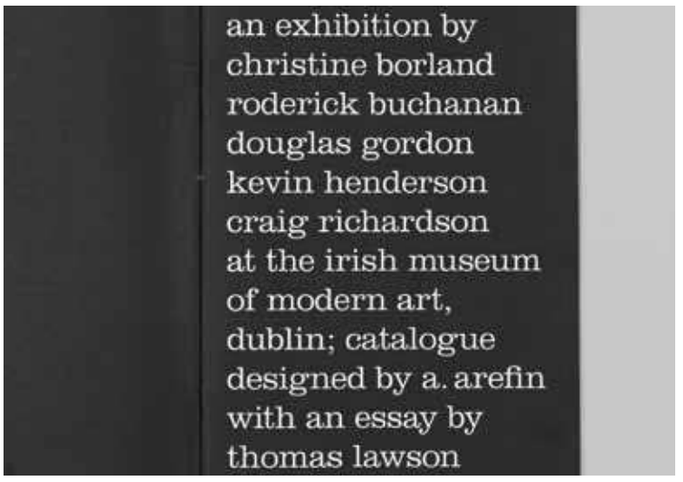
JL
Rick, when you wrote a profile on Tony's work for Blueprint magazine in 1992 you used the term ubiquitous to describe his position in the art world.

RP
He'd found a way of positioning himself that left other designers of that era looking slow-footed. He created a field of action for himself. As I said, no-one was looking to art catalogues as an interesting platform for graphic design, and here was someone who just seized the opportunity and did it. He arrived at the perfect moment, with his bright, accessible visual manner.

JW
Let's try to define the key ingredients of that visual manner. In the catalogues there is the matt laminated paper that he liked to use for covers, the familiar format of soft cover with a dust jacket, most often in a contrasting shade. There is the handling of photography. And then there was the Apple Macintosh. I remember being with him in the studio and being very excited by that, feeling that we were on the cusp of this technological shift. That in turn prompted the introduction of typefaces that we'd never seen before.

JL
It's important to understand that the Macintosh then was not as we know it now. I find it extraordinary that Tony formulated such a colourful and bold visual language on that miniature monochrome screen.

Following pages:
Various title pages


an exhibition by
christine borland
roderick buchanan
douglas gordon
kevin henderson
craig richardson
at the irish museum
of modern art,
dublin; catalogue
designed by a. arefin
with an essay by
thomas lawson


8 PHOTO & VIDEO
INSTALLATIONS
outer
space
JUDITH BARRY
ANIA BIEN
GENEVIÈVE CADIEUX
WILLIE DOHERTY
ULRICH GÖRLICH
JEFFREY SHAW
SUSAN TRANGMAR
KRYSTYNA ZIACH
SOUTH BANK CENTRE


TIM ALLEN
CLAIR JOY
ELIZABETH MAGILL
CLAIRE SCANLON
REBECCA SCOTT
SUZANNE TREISTER


the PRESENCE
of PAINTING


TONY BEVAN
HANNAH COLLINS
JEFFREY DENNIS
GLENYS JOHNSON
LISA MILROY
ANTHONY WILSON


SCATTER


CINDY BERNARD
MAT COLLISHAW
DOMINIQUE GONZALEZ-FOERSTER
MARCO MAZZUCCONI
BIRGIT PEHLMAN
CESARE PIETROIUSTI
SAM SAMORE
CATHERINE YASS
exhibit a
eight artists from europe and america


Miroslaw Balka
Stephan Balkenhol
Jean-Marc Bustamante
Asta Gröting
Juan Muñoz
Thomas Schütte
Franz West




Le Corbusier
ABR Stuttgart
Tony Arefin
Farrad Armaly
Art Orienté Objet
Judith Barry
Cosima von Bonin
Tom Burr
Clegg & Guttmann
Nigel Coates
John Currin
Stephan Dillemuth
Mark Dion
Peter Doig
Kate Ericson & Mel Ziegler
Anna Fremy
Christiane Geoffroy
Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster
Renée Green
Stewart Helm
Jim Hermann
Michael Krebber
Claude Lévêque
Thomas Locher
Eric Mirallès
Regina Möller
Jasper Morrison
Tania Mouraud
Christian Philipp Müller
Philippe Parreno
Raymond Pettibon
Premiata Ditta
François Roche
Martha Rosler
Ken Saylor
Rüdiger Schöttle
Jason Simon
Olivier Védrine
Heimo Zobernig


selected *images*
vivienne dick
micky donnelly
paul durcan
brian cronin
joan fowler
paul graham
alanna o'kelly
victor sloan


Ikon Gallery
Lucia Nogueira


Gereon Lepper
Chisenhale Gallery, London


JULY 17 AUGUST 25
Simon Periton Mike E. Sale Paul Stone
a summer place
curated by Stuart Morgan
SALAMA-CARO GALLERY


Jordi Colomer
Pepe Espaliu
Cathy de Monchaux
Lucia Nogueira
Carlos Pazos
Fiona Rae


under the sign of saturn
curated by stuart morgan
tony carter
marc c chaimowicz
hannah collins
david dye
godbold and wood
flora natapoff
john virtue
anne-marie watkins
nigel greenwood gallery
4 new burlington street



RP

The colour was startling at the time and it remains so now. He loved these blues, oranges, pinks and greens and the effects of their combination. He handled colour with zest and vitality. It's the same with type. He used type in a way that was not unusual in the context of magazine design, but was unexpected in art catalogues. He realised that these new digital typefaces by a new generation of designers could convey a feeling of the moment. The ultimate example of that is Template Gothic, which Tony loved. This was an American typeface introduced in 1990. A lot of people found it ugly, ungainly, lopsided, and from Tony's perspective that provocation was part of its power. Template Gothic is now absolutely identified with a particular moment in postmodern typographic history and for a while it was ubiquitous. But Tony picked it up in 1991, ahead of any British designer that I know of, and applied it in the formerly conservative sphere of the art catalogue. I remember seeing the Cornelia Parker catalogue for Chisenhale and thinking its typography was a rather radical gesture.

JL
There was also a transformative effect on Template Gothic itself in that catalogue. Coming from the type foundry Émigre, the typeface was most familiar when being employed in the dense and layered visual language characteristic of Émigre the magazine. Tony made it abstract and iconic. Isolated on the title page of the Cornelia Parker catalogue it seems even stranger.

RP
He never went in for the 'maximalist' style and the excess of some graphic design of that period, particularly in America. Yet the irregularity of the composition of that title page is still absolutely in the spirit of the typeface.

JW
That also reflected the kinds of exhibitions we were making, characterised by a certain minimalism. I liked a lot of empty space in the gallery and perhaps he was picking up on that. The correspondence between my curatorial style and his graphic style felt very satisfying.

RP
The black and white photographs in the Cornelia Parker catalogue are arranged with visual impact, and no captions to complicate the surrounding white page.

JW
His use of double page bleeds was very exciting for me. That has influenced my conversations with designers ever since …

Cornelia Parker
Cold Dark Matter
Chisenhale Gallery, 1991
290 × 230 mm



JL

Let's also consider these Chisenhale books as an example of Tony's fondness for working in series. These books all share the same format, and he worked in that way for other institutions including The Photographers' Gallery, the Serpentine and Ikon. Again, that arguably comes from magazines, and anticipates his own move into becoming a magazine designer.

Tim Maguire
Canal
Chisenhale Gallery, 1992
290 × 230 mm

French Window
Chisenhale Gallery, 1992
290 × 230 mm

Grenville Davey
Chisenhale Gallery, 1992
290 × 230 mm

just in time for the 21st century

FIONA DUNLOP



(Named) and not named

There are seven sculptures in this exhibition. By the time you see them they will all have names, but it is October now and at the moment more than half of them don't. There is **gold (Table), CAPITAL** and **1/5 Eye**, and then there is the two-cylinder piece, the mirror piece, the sieve piece and another, multi-part, piece. This could be a problem, you think. Making reference to a sculpture by using its name is quick, convenient. Without that title (and knowing there will be one in the future that will seem right when it comes) one must make such reference by resorting to cumbersome description. If this is just too awkward, the standard fall-back position, evidently employed in the list above, is to use simile: you know, the one that looks like a ... Desperation, perhaps, particularly if acknowledgement of similitude is assumed to confer a representational function upon the sculpture (it looks like an **x** because it is an **x**). Paradoxically, though, in Grenville Davey's case this last option has something going for it. The objects and images that trigger his sculpture are not worked over by another language in order to be obscured or effaced, but rather find themselves centrally embedded in the final sculptural form. **Cower**, which sits on the floor giving access to nowhere, retains the humour of its inspiration: Bugs Bunny picking up his rabbit hole and walking off with it. **Fat Edge** (1989), a steel, wallmounted disc described by Davey as an attempt to render the brush of a thumb across the surface of some malleable material, is also a 'light switch', and these two readings are not at all incompatible: "Whoever would have believed that a child could light a whole room by moving its finger?"

This folding of one reality upon another is also referred to in **gold (Table)**, one of the titles we do have. An upper-case 'T' denotes an object, but it is named parenthetically. It is necessary, but of secondary importance to the lower-case gold, which directs attention towards the sculptural qualities of the object's surface. **gold (Table)**'s kidney shape – it is straight down one side and doubly curved on the other – implies the merging of two, four-foot high cylinders. It is made of oak. Its flat top has a pattern of end-grain formed by gluing together many small, square-sectioned blocks of wood. There is a lipped rim running round it. Because it is chest-high, warm, inviting, you want to rest your elbow on it, and in this it is similar to some of Richard Deacon's public sculpture, where the familiarity and lack of sentimentality displayed by people in their relations with objects, while not being the

JW

To give some context, this was the start of a recession. Several galleries in the east of London closed and Chisenhale was at risk of being isolated. That serial strategy was to some extent a response to that precariousness, a way of establishing an identity and asserting a continuity in our programme — implying institutional strength.

JL

It wasn't a strict series. The format is constant but everything else could be changed: the typefaces, colours and the handling of photographs. Perhaps the most exciting examples are the catalogues for group exhibitions, where Tony would so confidently introduce imagery unrelated to the contents of the exhibition. That work with photography also anticipates his move into art direction. There was something that he seemed to be captivated by in collaborations that were very exclusive. He would commission photography, or use an image from a photographer friend, that only he would have access to, or produce an image himself. The cover of the French Window catalogue is a good example.

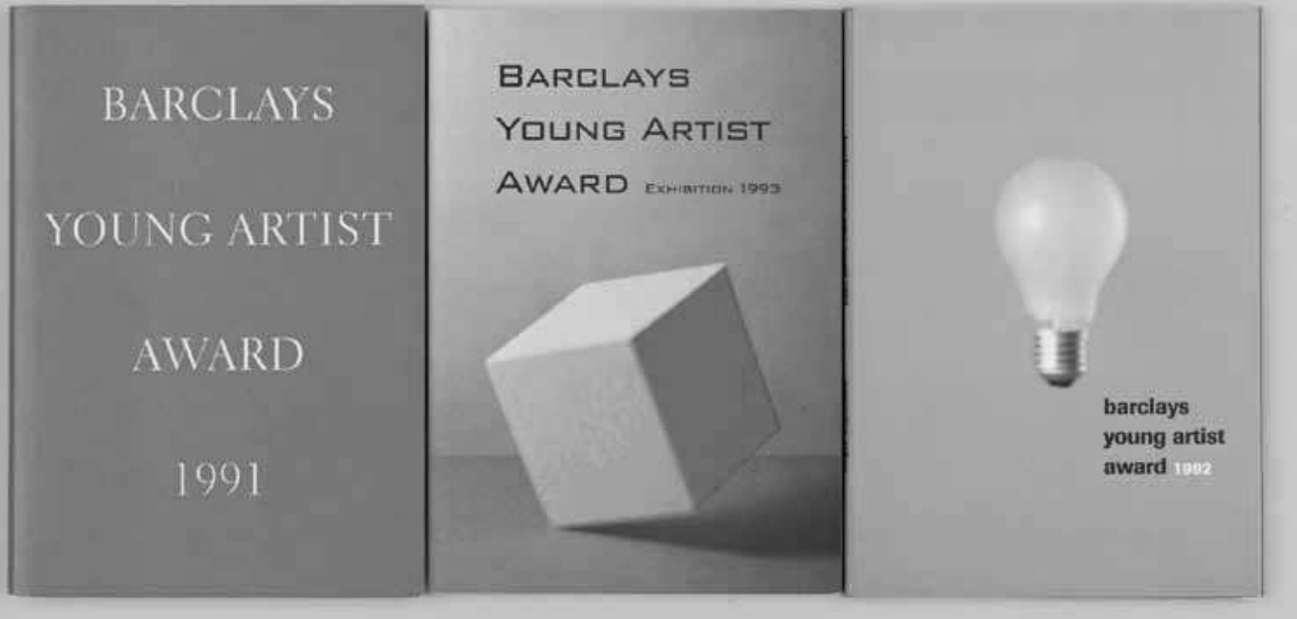
RP

Tony's art direction for the ICA also had these characteristics. What we see in these series is the emergence of the idea of gallery identity, which eventually became overriding as a marketing approach, and even rather constricting. It's now become a kind of template that is hard to break with. All institutions want this kind of consistency and visibility that reinforces their brand. But in these examples by Tony there is an innocence. It doesn't feel like a marketing precept being dogmatically applied. It's someone having fun, giving an institution a visual cohesion it didn't previously have.

French Window
Chisenhale Gallery, 1992
290 × 230 mm

Barclays Young Artist Award
Serpentine Gallery, 1991, 1992, 1993
Each 148 × 105 mm




BARCLAYS
YOUNG ARTIST
AWARD
1991
BARCLAYS
YOUNG ARTIST
AWARD EXHIBITION 1993
barclays
young artist
award 1992



TIM ALLEN

CLAIR JOY

ELIZABETH MAGILL

CLAIRE SCANLON

REBECCA SCOTT

SUZANNE TREISTER

JW
Tony left London for New York in 1993 to take on the role of art director at I.D. magazine. How do we account for what made him so attractive to I.D.? Why did they bring him in? As we've established he was using a language of magazines in his work in London, but how did he translate that back into the American context?

RP
America has such a highly developed design culture that they don't need to look outside for great design. So a designer coming in from outside would need to supply something new, a different perspective. Tony, being British, but also having a background in Pakistan, brought that package of influences with him. Bruce Mau had been the previous art director. I think Chee Pearlman, I.D.'s editor, felt a need to evolve. Mau had brought structure to the publication; perhaps she thought that Tony could inject an explosion of life and colour into that framework. Here is a copy of I.D. from June 1994, around a year after he took over the art direction. This layout could hardly be more Arefinesque, with photographs of products shown against a vibrant coloured background. Many designers are too inhibited to use colour in this direct, unselfconscious way. They would look at that and ask what the colour means.

JL
It's colour not as a means of classification, but colour just for the sake of colour, for the effect.

JW
We might again speculate on Tony's cultural background and its influence on his colour palette …

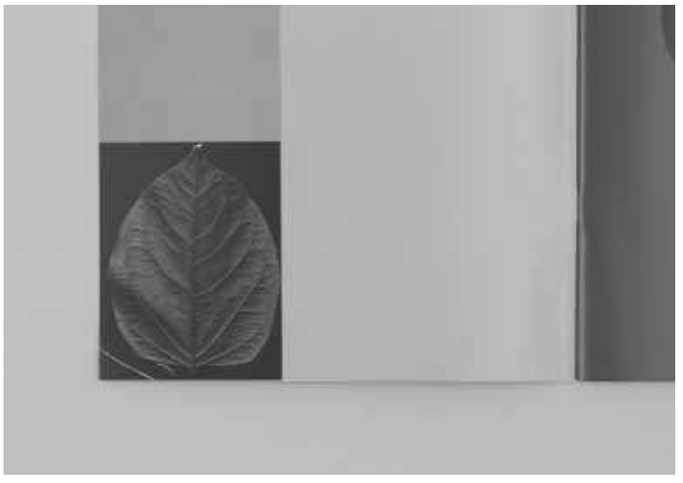
I.D. magazine
June 1994
275 × 230 mm

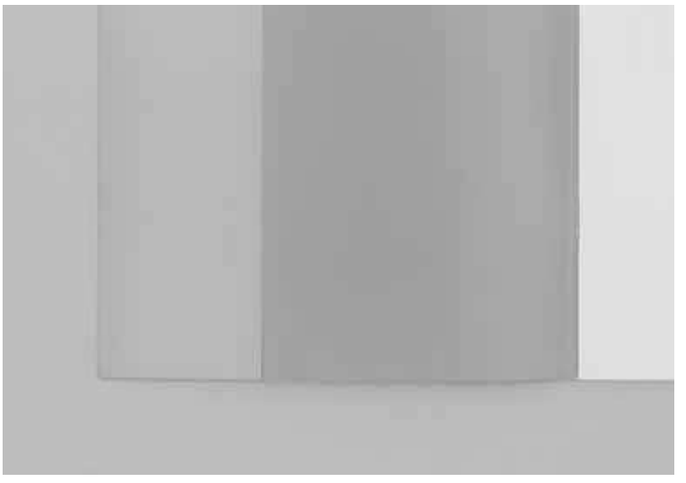
Decoy
Serpentine Gallery, 1990
210 × 210 mm

Following pages:
Various dustjackets







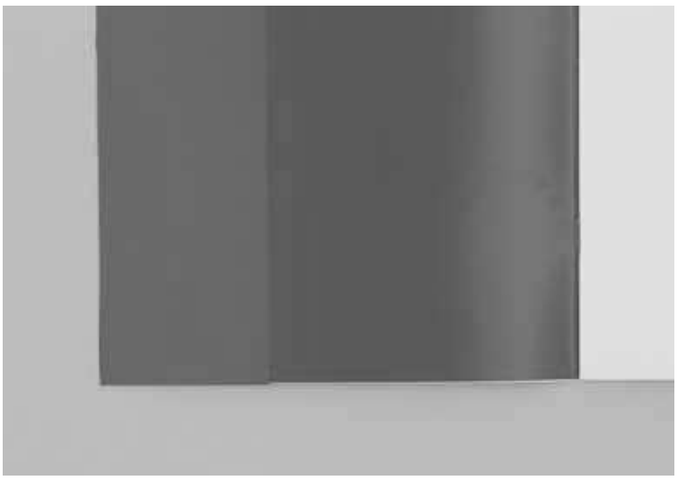
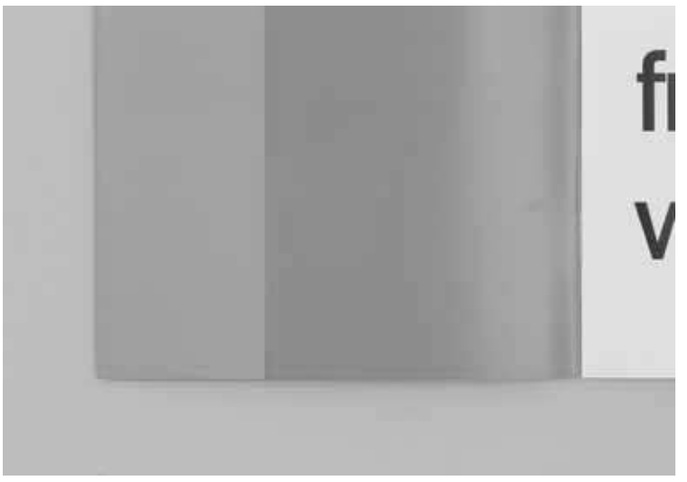
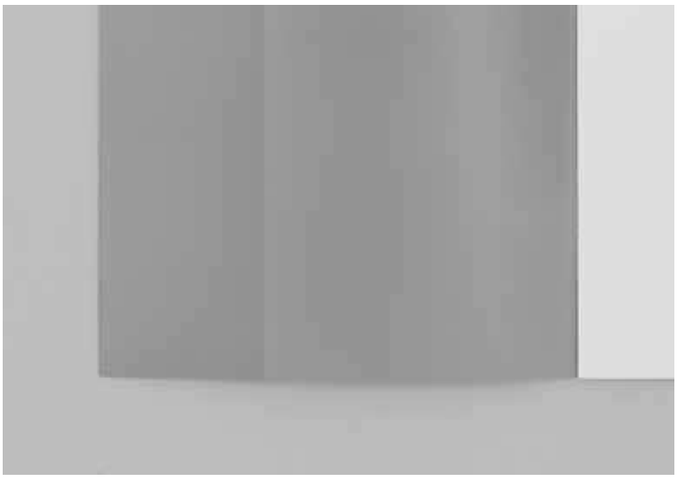


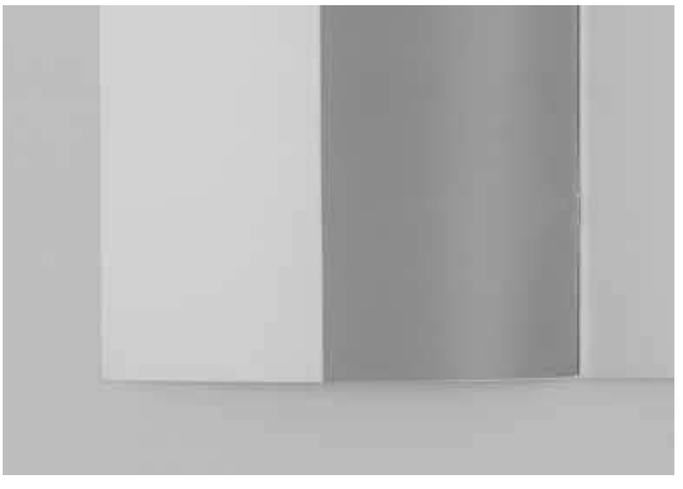


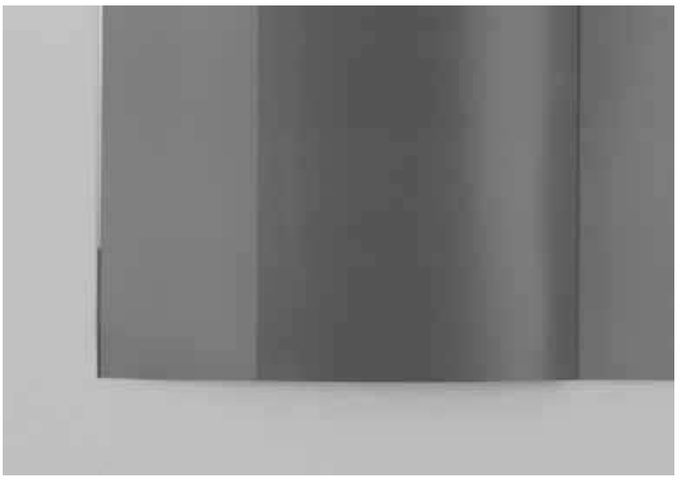
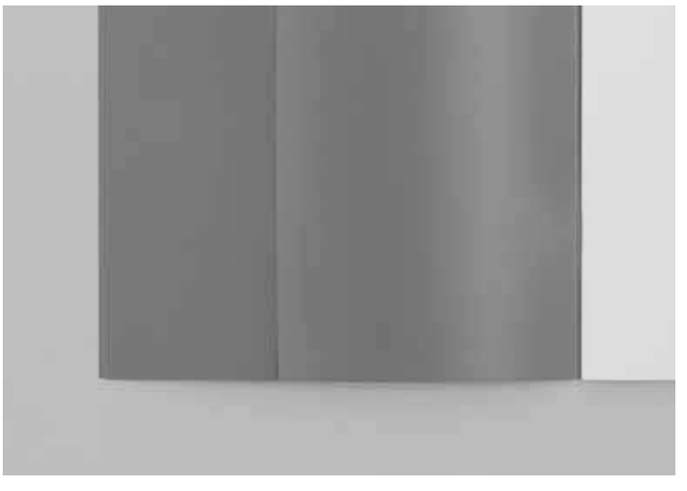




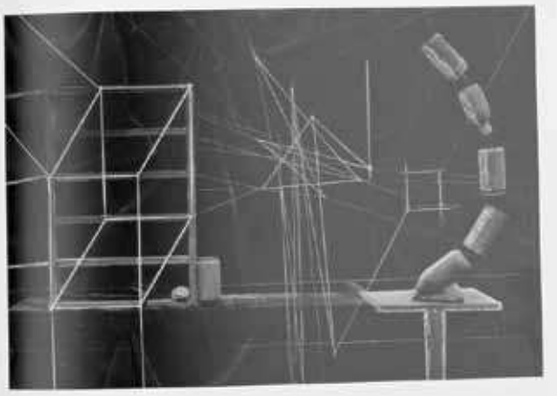




Zeke Berman







RP
I have to say that this was the point when I became less interested in Tony's output. I was a religious reader of I.D. magazine back then so I was following his work, but I wondered how much development there was. He had devised an approach and he repeated it.

JL
There is also the question of overproduction. He was so much in demand. Within a year of being in New York he was also art directing two other titles, Bomb and Blind Spot. Art + Auction followed in 1996.

RP
What is it you see in the magazines that he designed in his American period that sustains your interest?

JL
This is the third issue of Blind Spot. It is a portfolio magazine, each issue features a series of showcases of individual photographers. In this example the work is by Zeke Berman. Tony's habit of making very graphic title pages for essays in his art catalogues became a consistently applied strategy in this publication. There are always connections between type and image. That connection might be conceptual or purely visual. In this example it's not exactly an interpretation of the work, it's just a case of being prompted by it and being responsive. I don't assert that Tony was the originator of this approach, but that he was able to be consistently exciting and inventive.

RP
It's a strong spread. But I immediately think of American magazine typographers like Fred Woodward at Rolling Stone or the work that Fabien Baron did at Interview magazine. If what you want is fine detailing of ornamental display typography, getting impact out of the visual quality of letter forms, those designers are in another league. This is good work, but it's not exceptional of its kind at all.

Blind Spot magazine
#3, 1994
265 × 230 mm



JW

Tony's magazine work certainly showcased a side of him that is key. He was a collaborator. There was the collaboration with Frieze magazine. There were the photographers that we've mentioned, and other artists and designers such as Simon Patterson and Jasper Morrison. Likewise I felt, as a curating gallery director, that there was a collaboration between us. A very dynamic to-and-fro in the conversation. And of course one often saw Tony and Stephen Coates together.

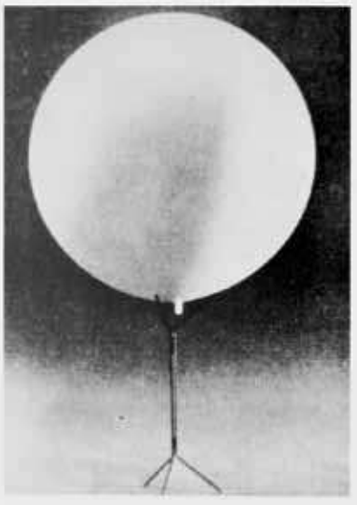
Jasper Morrison
A World Without Words
Published by aa, 1992
155 × 110 mm



Raincoat salesmanship



Gispen's factory demonstration



Piero Manzoni



Piaggio scooter

RP
Perhaps I can quote what I wrote at the start of a piece about Tony published in I.D. in 1993: 'Arefin supplies the intuition and most of the imagery, Coates the sense of structure and the watertight detailing.' There was always a certain cavalier attitude to Tony's work, and when they worked together Stephen brought a typographic craft and precision that gave the work more complexity and depth.

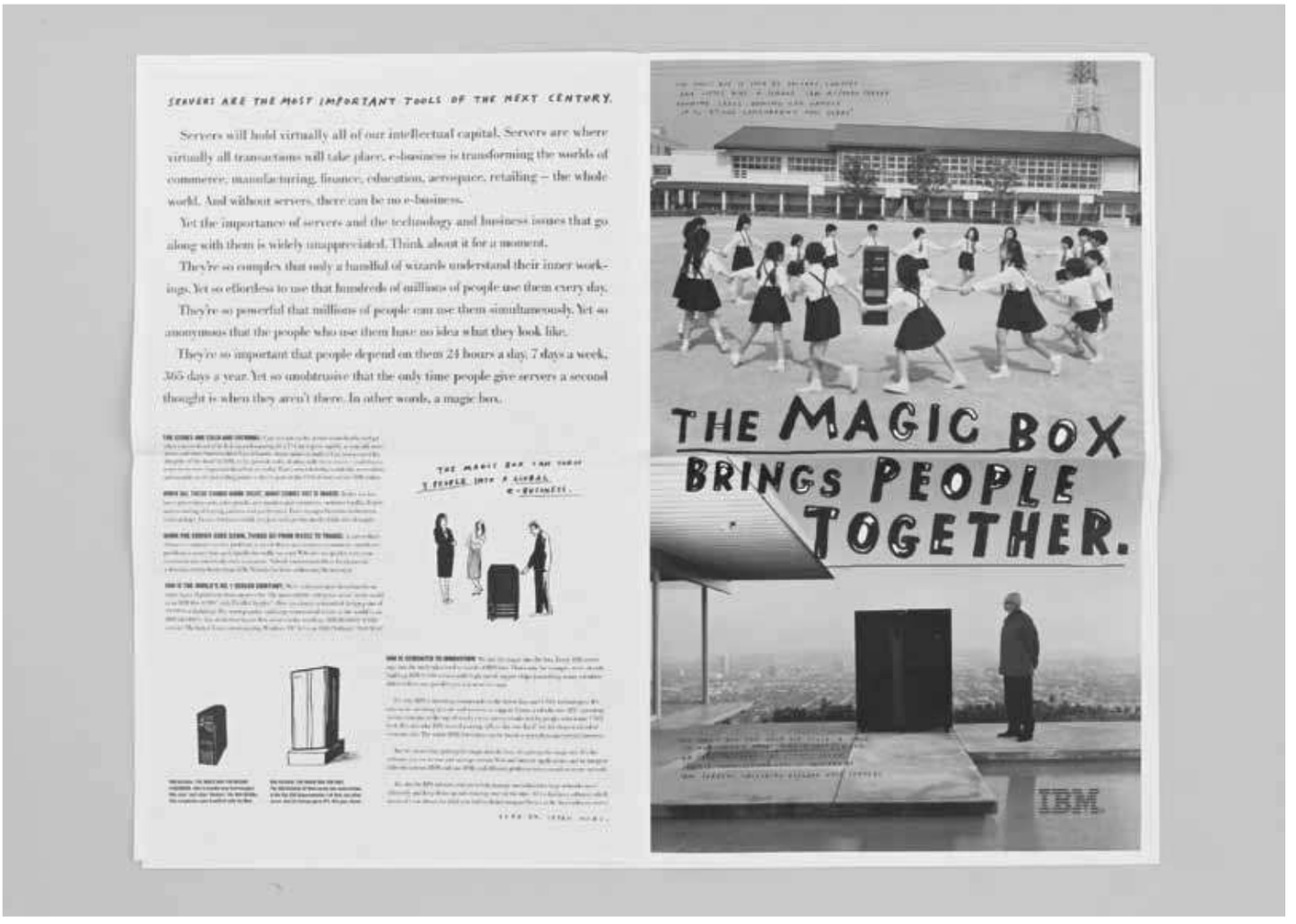
JW
I imagine that when Tony was in America he had many other collaborators who brought those elements to his work.

JL
Of course as an art director he was not in every case the person actually handling the mechanical process of designing. He worked with designers such as Miranda Dempster, Andrea Fella and Luke Hayman.

RP
Perhaps that role suited him best. We could say that the essence of his talent was to art direct.

JL
That is how I see it. I think there is a trajectory through Tony's work that shows him seeking out greater capacity for collaboration. We criticise him for being weak on the details, but that just reflects the fact that those details were not what excited or satisfied him. Or that his attention span was shorter, that he would engage with something and respond to it, but then move on to the next thing. And so he proceeded from art direction to creative direction. In the advertising world, it's a similar story. More resources, more possibilities to collaborate with and commission people.

RP
That certainly sounds plausible. Do we have any insight into how Tony actually worked in America?



JL

The IBM Magic Box campaign that Tony worked on while at Ogilvy & Mather in 2000 is a good example. Paul Davis, who drew the illustrations and lettering for that campaign, was based in London and had met Tony while in New York on holiday. Tony convinced him to miss his flight home and work on the pitch for that campaign. I understand that process was typically spontaneous. That instinct was the currency of the advertising world and the reason for Tony's success in it. He had this experience in the art world that he could draw on, that allowed him to bring in fresh work. This point comes back to something that I mentioned earlier, about how articulate a designer is being a decisive factor in getting their work realised.

Magic Box
Newspaper insert, IBM, 1999
550 × 340 mm

RP
Tony was an individual with social skills that some designers don't have. He had easy relations with people and was able to move fluidly between different areas of work. But I don't think we should make out that Tony's career path was inevitable. Lots of people are committed to careers in arts and culture and they don't leave that behind for advertising.

JW
But I think he was drawn to it because his aesthetic had been informed by that culture.

RP
There's clearly an influence from popular culture, as we have discussed. But that's not a straightforward thing to account for. There's a difference between the vitality of popular culture, which can be a place of resistance, and the hard-edged capitalist commercial culture that is manifested in advertising. I wouldn't want to connect those two areas too readily. There is no sense in which advertising was a logical or necessary fulfilment of Tony's potential. This becomes speculative because the story was cut short by his premature death. We don't have a satisfactory conclusion. But I actually see his move to advertising as a surprising one. It doesn't square with what I knew of him in London. I find it mysterious. We know the obvious financial benefits, but there are plenty of people who resist that.

JW
I never really felt a political, ethical position with Tony. But that being said I certainly felt that he was being transgressive in graphic design. I really don't know if he was betraying any long-held ideals by sliding into advertising.

RP
So can we say he was an opportunist? He didn't have an ideological direction that he was following. He took his chances as they arose.

JW
I don't think he was ideological.

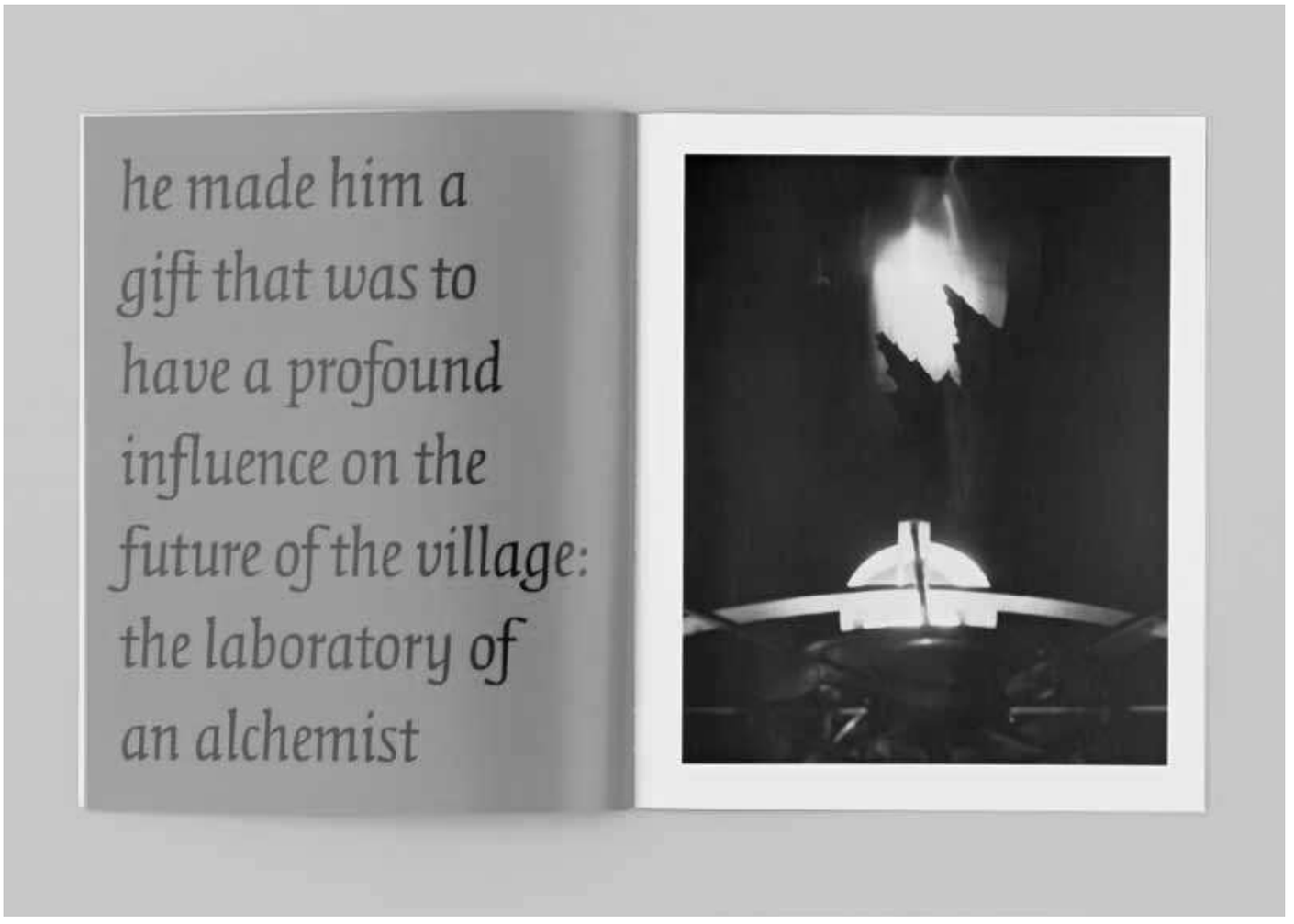
RP
It would have been interesting to see how he would have negotiated the last decade or more. He died in 2000, just before 9/11, which of course marked major shifts in culture that he might have responded to. We have had the global financial crisis. Design has become much more overtly political than it was in the 1990s.

JL
So his move to advertising was untimely.

RP
That is my view. His London work was such a contribution, a terrific body of work that we are rightly still talking about. I feel that he didn't fulfil the promise of that work. He left it behind too soon. It's nice that he went to work for an American design magazine, and he did a good job, but the really significant contribution was here — the interpretation through graphic design of the changing currents of the British art scene of the time. I think that if none of that work had been made, if we just had Tony's work from America, we wouldn't be having this conversation.

JL
What do you think about the nature of a project such as ours, in making this presentation of Tony's work? He was an influential designer, but his work is hardly visible presently. Because of the timing of his death, images of his work are not circulating on the internet, which has become the primary agent of dissemination for design. If you type Tony's name into a search engine there is a very inadequate reflection of him. I think we concur that his output was uneven, but there are parts of his work that are certainly worth remembering.

RP
Can you say more about who you think he influenced? Do you mean other designers?



JL

I believe that he has had an influence on art catalogue design. As you pointed out, that field has become a platform for interesting young designers, in a way that it wasn't when Tony was beginning as a designer, and his work contributed to that. There are designers working today who treat the task of mediating art without the reverence that you referred to in the beginning of the conversation.

Rosa Sanchez
Déjà Vu
Ikon Gallery, 1991
280 × 230 mm

Guilt by Association
Irish Museum of Modern Art, 1992
330 × 250 mm

TL: Tell me more

TELL ME MORE

about the history of your **association.**

(But it's different for us...)

As far as it makes sense, I will claim authorship of this text. I have given it what shape it has, attempted to create an overall structure. But it is important to understand that the bulk of it was written by the artists themselves, in response to a series of more or less insightful questions from me. The various quotations that give spine to the whole were also selected by the artists by way of casting other kinds of chronometers on those projects. Since all of us were to be travelling considerably some of these answers were produced individually, others were the result of group discussion.

How Still was my idea, a way to provide a wider historical reference outside the debate on contemporary art, but obviously close to it, while also providing a very funny moment in the overall piece. We all expect that Tony Arefin will have designed the book so brilliantly that it will be obvious that you may start reading what follows wherever you wish, and create the narrative you need to negotiate an understanding of the work presented here.



PORTFOLIO MAGAZINE

RP

Yes, I agree with that. It would be impossible to quantify, but perhaps there is a general influence in the gallery world in this country, on its expectations of design, which were transformed during that period. So even if contemporary designers haven't seen specific examples of Tony's work, they nevertheless gain from the decisive effect that he had on British catalogue design twenty years ago. Much of his influence now is implicit rather than explicit.

JL

There are some problems with the exhibition as a medium for this kind of presentation. Firstly, even though the earliest work that we are showing is less than thirty years old, there is the difficulty of finding sufficient examples of it to show. In another sense though, Tony's work lends itself so readily to being seen with a certain degree of abstraction. As we have discussed, many of the publications that he designed are not fully resolved, but in a context where there is only space to show one or two openings from a book, we extract only the most compelling work. It's a shortcoming of this mode of presentation, but I think Tony would have loved to see his work this way, distilled down to just the essentials.

JW

That exists with any exhibition. When I make an exhibition with anyone I tend to edit out work that is not so strong, showing things to their best advantage. Without question there is a lot of continuity in Tony's work, and even if we might think that his work later was not as groundbreaking as before there is still a remarkable symmetry in the story of his artistic development. His design, from the first, involved an appropriation of visual language from magazines and advertising into the art world and then subsequently he was welcomed into the worlds of magazines and advertising with open arms. It was not a move up or down within some aesthetic hierarchy, I think, from his point of view, but another kind of emigration.