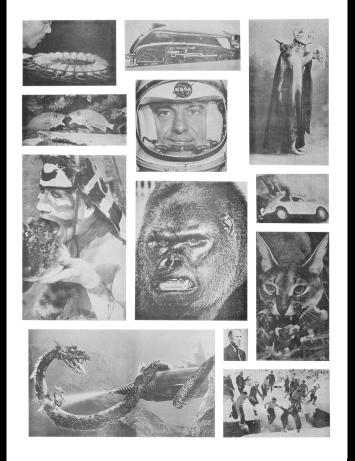


Portfolio



**NEWSPAPER** 

periodical

In 1968, Steve Lawrence started an art publication that he would go on to edit with his romantic partner, the photographer Peter Hujar, and Andrew Ullrick. At first, this publication existed without a title and without any sort of credits, but in 1969 the project found its name: Newspaper. It ran until 1971 for 14 issues and positioned found imagery alongside work by established artists that included Hujar, Andy Warhol, Diane Arbus, Peter Beard, Roy Lichtenstein, Richard Avedon, Yayoi Kusama, and Ray Johnson.

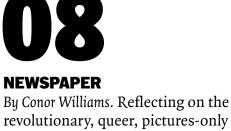
the pages on their walls.

The publication's images are stark and disparate. Many of them are collages: combinations of machines and landscapes, Ringo Starr and George Harrison's faces meshed together, a figure with a human torso and swan wings. Newspaper's firm focus on visuals feels hypnotic. Flip through the book quickly and it feels like a kaleidoscopic flicker film. Turn the book upside down, see what you find from a different angle. Even the advertisements - mostly for gallery shows or concerts - are just images. Only a small caption beneath a photo of The Velvet Underground clarifies that they've got something to plug. They blend right in.

"Through the years, perhaps as a result of the AIDS crisis, the significant loss of the publication's audience and editorship, and an ephemeral format which resists archiving, Newspaper faded into obscurity. It was not even found in the remains of Hujar's own archive," remarked photographer and researcher Marcelo Gabriel Yáñez, in an essay entitled 'Peter Hujar and The Brief History of Newspaper'. He continues, "In their current state, issues of Newspaper are crumbling, yellowed, and disintegrating under the acidity of the newsprint. To look at an issue is a process which seems a ritual, and it involves the body, and the clearing of a space large enough to hold its full 23×34" dimensions, a thrice unfolding, and the wide arcs an arm makes to flip a page. Every time that ritual ends, a crumble of newsprint is left behind." Yáñez has now edited a new edition of Newspaper that brings together all 14 issues, published by Primary Information.

Top left: Image by Gerald Laing Far left: Image by Lucas Samaras Left: Images by Steve Lawrence

Searching for some historical context, I asked Linda Rosenkrantz, author of Peter Hujar's Day, if she had any



Newspaper was essentially wordless. While it retained its title, captions and credits were rare, usually used to denote advertisements. It was composed solely of blackand-white images. Many of its contributors were photographers and visual artists. Newspaper was an incredibly impressive feat of curation. Favoring this artistic anonymity as well as a fairly contextless, randomly juxtaposed approach to the selection and sequencing of images, it gave its readers the freedom to draw their own conclusions. Or cut out their own conclusions and put

recollections of Peter Hujar's Newspaper. She responded, "Don't you mean Steve Lawrence's Newspaper?" I wasn't sure. She told me that the project had been primarily Lawrence's. The next day, she showed me a photo she had taken of him in Fire Island. He had long hair and a beard and he looked like he was in the middle of a big belly-laugh. "He had this hearty, Texas boy persona," Rosenkrantz told me. In the back of this new edition of Newspaper, Yáñez has contributed another essay, titled 'Steve Lawrence and Newspaper: A Timeline'. It seemed that we both had initially been focused on Hujar, overlooking what had been Lawrence's initiative. As evidenced by these shifts in perspective, solid data on the project proved hard to pin down. Yáñez admits in the essay, "Relying mostly on oral accounts, gossip, and fragments of information, what I know about Newspaper and about Lawrence is incomplete and full of contradictions." It's even unclear whether or not editor Andrew Ullrick actually existed, or if the name was some sort of pseudonym. That any information at all about Newspaper remains and has been so faithfully preserved is something to be deeply grateful for. I showed Rosenkrantz a section of the timeline Yáñez had created, mapping out the history of Newspaper as well as Lawrence and Hujar's relationship to each other. "Lawrence spends the summer with Hujar and the artist Paul Thek in the small community of Oakleyville on New York's Fire Island. Hujar photographs Lawrence and Thek there, along with friends Linda Rosenkrantz, Joseph Raffael, and Larry Saper," it read. Rosenkrantz remarked that she's probably the only one from that group who's still alive.

Today, under the spell of social media, users shoot contextless images into their brains every day. A still life of breakfast. A bevy of memes. Serious photojournalism. Lots and lots of advertisements. All in rapid scrolling succession, and all around us outside our phones, too. Reading Newspaper at the time of its existence was a different experience. For one thing, people's relationship to images was different. People's relationship to reading was different. Its readers waited from issue to issue, taking in each copy as a standalone work. In 2023, Newspaper is now an art book. Readers can take in its entire lifespan in one sitting if they choose.

Newspaper was and is aesthetically unique, totally playful, and deeply queer. It remains mysterious, too. We may never know everything about Newspaper, because the future it was meant for disappeared, even though its pages have survived - so look long and hard.

Newspaper is published by Primary Information, out now