

# Newspaper magazine and New York's 1960s LGBTQ community

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## 'We were ahead of our time': the making of *Newspaper*, New York's fabled photo magazine

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With the republishing of all 14 issues of the 1960s counter-cultural, pictures-only publication — which featured the work of more than 40 artists — Jessica Lack reflects on its powerful, wordless testimony to a community that would later be silenced by AIDS

In the summer of 1968, a magazine consisting of 16 pages of drawings, photographs, montages and no words was published in New York. Its editor, an unknown 22-year-old scenester named Steve Lawrence, let it be known that in subsequent editions of the untitled publication, contributors could print what they liked without censorship.

For the LGBTQ+ bohemia that thrived in Manhattan in the late 1960s, the short-lived magazine, which became known as *Newspaper*, was as loose and free as the egalitarian scene it inhabited. The periodical featured photographs by heavyweights [Andy Warhol](#), [Diane Arbus](#) and [Richard Avedon](#), but also work by [Paul Thek](#), Elizabeth Staal and the photographer and political activist Leni (Magdalene) Sinclair.

Printed in black and white, in a fold-out tabloid format, the proto-punk paper reflected the queer life and aesthetics of New York in the late 1960s. It was defined by a DIY ethos, witty subversion and a rejection of authority, and served as an alternative exhibition space at a time when photography was rarely shown in art galleries. Lawrence's lover, [Peter Hujar](#), and the photographer Sheyla Baykal were regular contributors who helped establish the magazine's anarchic tone.

There were portraits of Factory acolytes Brigid Berlin and Candy Darling; shots of Iggy Pop and the Stooges, and Mick Jagger dressed as the Cowardly Lion from *The Wizard of Oz*; and collages by Edwin Klein and [Yayoi Kusama](#). One issue featured a game by British artist [Gerald Laing](#) in which readers were invited to match ink prints of penises to 10 head-and-shoulder portraits. Readers — or rather 'viewers' hip to the underground scene — pasted collaged spreads (Lawrence called them 'Environments') on their bedroom walls.

*Newspaper* ran from 1968 to 1971 — a few short years during which the East Village LGBTQ+ scene morphed from a hedonistic downtown subculture to a politicised force through the formation of the Gay Liberation Front, the first of many US gay rights organisations to emerge in the 1970s and 1980s. As the publication evolved, it reflected the unsettling times.

Baykal contributed images of an anti-Vietnam War protest in Washington, D.C., while Diane Arbus offered up two torn prints of young men at a pro-war parade. In July 1970, the publication featured portraits of Allison Beth Krause, Jeffrey Glenn Miller, Sandra Lee Scheuer and William Knox Schroeder, the four students killed during a peace rally at Kent State University.

*Newspaper* came to a halt in 1971. 'I just ran out of energy,' said Lawrence. The final copies were handed out by the editor, dressed in drag and pushing a pram, during a psychedelic review at the Anderson Theatre on Broadway. By then, his relationship with Hujar was coming to an end, and Lawrence was showing signs of mental illness.

Lawrence died in 1983 at the age of 37, and Hujar died four years later. The publication might have disappeared with them, had it not been for the archivist Marcelo Gabriel Yáñez, who discovered a stack of yellowing copies of *Newspaper* in the home of Warhol associate Danny Fields in 2015.

Over the next few years, Yáñez painstakingly tracked down all 14 issues of *Newspaper* and pieced together a fragmented history of the magazine and its elusive editor. It is a narrative which, Yáñez admits, is riddled with unresolved contradictions, because many of the contributors have died from AIDS-related illnesses.

In an interview in the *Village Voice* in 1975, Lawrence ruminated on *Newspaper's* legacy. 'We were ahead of our time,' he said, observing that galleries were only just beginning to exhibit photography as an art form. Fifty-five years on, the magazine — with its unconventional, low-tech frankness and spirited examination of gender identity — can be recognised for the pioneering publication it truly was.

*Newspaper*, edited by Marcelo Gabriel Yáñez, is published by Primary Information