

## PAST IMPERFECT

PAST IMPERFECT explores the relations between the radical output of the conceptual art of the 1960s and 1970s and everyday life, gradually moving on to include how radical ideas from the past are linked to those of today. In all corners of life—politics, literature, intelligence, science—radical actions, even if they seem to have disappeared into oblivion, influence and shape the public arena.

This publication is the result of a research, intensely guided by curiosity, amazement and suspicion, accepting the risk of being totally incomplete or overly thorough. PAST IMPERFECT searches for hidden pasts by lifting stones and poking underneath; collecting cases around notions on disappearance (persons, information), perfection, excessive control, compulsion and withdrawal—as varied as causal developments (Ford boxes), state fiction and ambiguity (Absolut), coincidental histories (from aubergines to Hotel Angst), preservation and destruction (from Amanda Lear to Howard Hughes), dark politics (Elvis meeting Nixon), the haunting of artifacts and economical speculation (Corbis), erasure (from Alfred Loos' archives to Willem de Kooning's drawings), protection (Walden's utopia), the impossible made possible (Houdini), ... and much more.

*Lisette Smits & Bik Van der Pol, ed.*



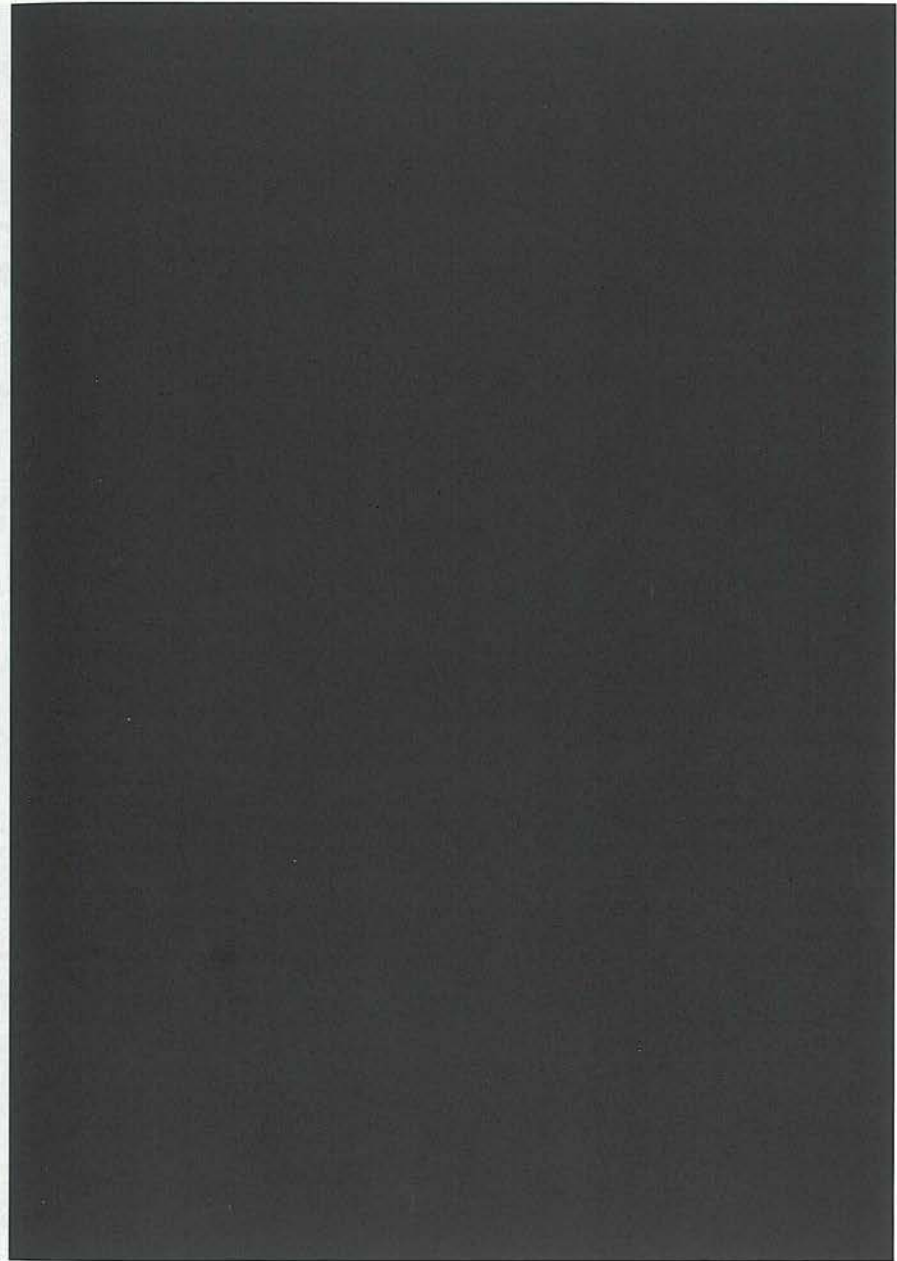
PAST IMPERFECT...

STEALTH  
H&M  
ABSOLUT  
STOCKHOLM  
SYNDROME  
AUBERGINE  
FORD BOXES  
POLKA

*Jason Coburn*

CASCO ISSUES N°9







F-117A in Aviation Museum, Belgrade. photo Bik Van der Pol

## STEALTH'

The F-117A Nighthawk stealth fighter is one of the most advanced planes in the world, and has the reputation of being 'invisible' due to its sharp angles and radar-absorbing skin. The only F-117A ever to be lost in combat was during the 1999 Kosovo campaign. Its remains are housed in Belgrade's Aviation Museum and small pieces of its wings are on sale to the public.

source: [www.usatoday.com/tech/world/iraq/2003-03-20-stealth-fighter\\_x.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/tech/world/iraq/2003-03-20-stealth-fighter_x.htm)

## H & M

Hennes & Mauritz's 2000 Claudia Schiffer lingerie campaign was the company's highest-profile campaign with requests for unused posters going beyond expectations. Claudia Schiffer was distributed on billboards in 13 European countries plus the United States. In Germany, over 100,000 posters and billboards featured the super-model. In Stockholm, the annual H&M lingerie campaign is attacked every year.

<http://www.lucire.com/2000/1117fe0>  
photos: Bik Van der Pol

## ABSOLUT

Absolut is a Swedish vodka that was designed in the 1980s. It is not only an example of the 'Swedish middle way'—between

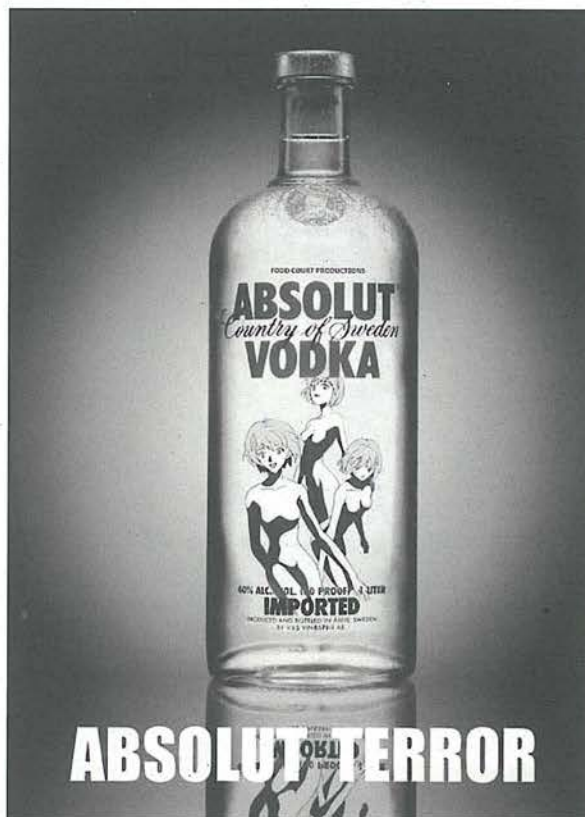


capitalism and socialism, and an economically healthy society and a controlled one—it is an illustration of Sweden's ambiguous relationship with alcohol. 'There is probably no country in Europe with stricter laws against alcohol than Sweden. Even today, the state-run Swedish Wine and Spirits Corporation—the old liquor Monopoly—is banned from advertising its products at home. Yet, against all odds, the Swedes succeeded in pulling off an impossible trick: they conquered the American market with this vodka.'

This is what they did: commissioned by the Swedish state, Absolut was invented, given a taste, a history,

a bottle and a campaign 'that brought about a revolution in American advertising'. And we all know how the huge profit from this vodka was largely invested in an image: Absolut Whatever. 'When Sweden applied for membership in the European Union at the end of the 1980s, the government demanded that, out of respect for the success of Sweden's alcohol policy, an exception be made to the Union's liberal rules and regulations. The Swedes wanted to keep their Monopoly. They also wanted to hang on to their strict ban on marketing and advertising of alcohol: a fine old Swedish tradition since the days of Ivan Bratt, explained one diplomatic





Neon Genesis Evangelion Gallery (Rei)

delegation. Profits and alcohol don't mix, you see.

"So", said one of the Brussels bureaucrats in summary, "you the Swedes, owners of a state-run monopoly that spends more money advertising a single liquor product than anyone else in the world, you want to avoid a commercialization of the alcohol industry? Or have I misunderstood

the Swedish point completely?" [...]

On January 1995, the Wine and Liquor Monopoly lost its unique and sole right to produce and import alcoholic beverages, more than eighty years after the company was founded. Absolut had destroyed the Monopoly. The party was over. It was time for the Swedes to start drinking.

quotes taken from: ABSOLUT. BIOGRAPHY OF A BOTTLE, by Carl Hamilton.

Published by TEXERE LLC. 1994, 2000

## STOCKHOLM SYNDROME

The Stockholm syndrome is the psychological response of a hostage, or an individual in a hostage-like situation (e.g. dependent children, battered wives etc) where the individual's life a) depends on the good will of the more powerful person (captor, partner, child molester), b) who has the power to put the individual's life in danger or at least the power to worsen the individual's prospects for the future life, and c) occasionally exercises this power in order to show that he or she is able to use it, if the victim will not conform to the more powerful person's will.

The syndrome is named after the Norrmalmstorg robbery of Kreditbanken at Norrmalmstorg, Stockholm, in 1973. In this case, the victims became emotionally attached to their victimizers and even defended their captors after they were freed from their six-day ordeal. The term was coined by the criminologist and psychologist Nils Bejerot, who assisted the police during the robbery and referred to the syndrome in a news broadcast.

Famous cases of the hostages with the syndrome are a.o. Patty Hearst (held hostage by the Symbionese Liberation Army in the mid-1970s, and arrested with her



Patty Hearst after arrest for terrorist activities, 1975  
www.mugshots.com

captors; she was convicted and imprisoned, but received a Presidential pardon from Bill Clinton in 2001), and Elizabeth Smart (a girl kidnapped and sexually abused by a mentally ill man who threatened her as his wife in 2002–2003; she spent many months living on the streets of Salt Lake City, physically unrestrained).  
from: WIKIPEDIA, the free encyclopedia.

## AUBERGINE

The architect Adolf Loos published a little magazine, *DAS ANDERE* (The Other), which was subtitled 'a paper for the introduction of Western culture to Austria'. This Western culture could not be described, but was made up of surface details, which together gave the outline of a fabled and highly desirable state of affairs. [...] All the time, the manners of the Anglo-Saxon countries are assumed as a model, as a standard of reference. The right way to do things is the way they are done at the heart

### DAS ANDERE

EIN BLATT ZUR EINFÜHRUNG  
ABENDLÄNDISCHER KULTUR  
IN ÖSTERREICH GESCHRIEBEN  
VON ADOLF LOOS



of civilization, and that was either in London or in New York. [...] And, sometimes, this insistence is taken to extreme lengths: Loos rediscovers the aubergine, familiar in Europe since the sixteenth century, as the American eggplant and arranges to have American-type aubergine fritters served daily for a week in a named vegetarian restaurant in the hope of inspiring Viennese housewives and restaurateurs into emulation.

source: ADOLF LOOS: THE NEW VISION, by Joseph Rykwert, in: STUDIO INTERNATIONAL, number 957, volume 186, 1973

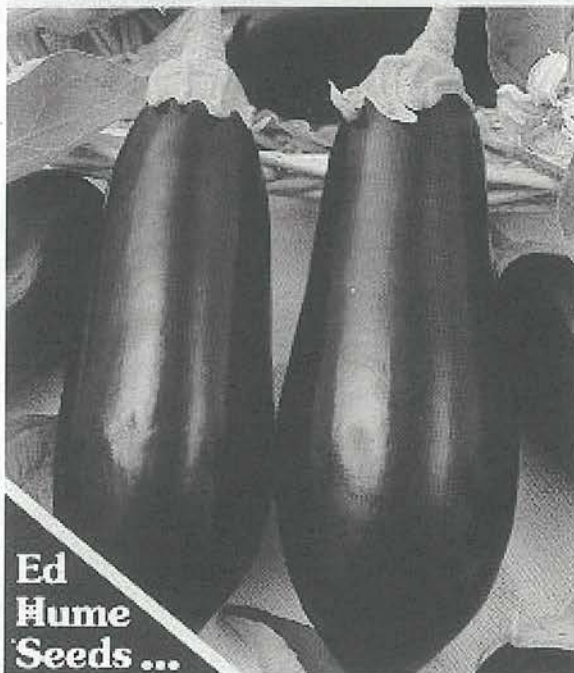
## FORD BOXES

Henry Ford's family, which migrated to the US, was originally from Cork, Ireland. Looking for a location to cover the European market, Ford decided to set foot on the ground of his forefathers and started a factory in Cork in the early 20th century.

A large number of Cork's inhabitants were working here, and subsequently, when the factory closed in 1984 it had radical consequences for the lives of the people of Cork. The influence of Ford on the industrial, economical and architectural landscape of Cork can still be found in the traces of wooden boxes that were used to deliver car parts for the Ford T Model to Cork. These boxes were, legally or illegally, appropriated and transformed

## EGGPLANT Twilight Hybrid

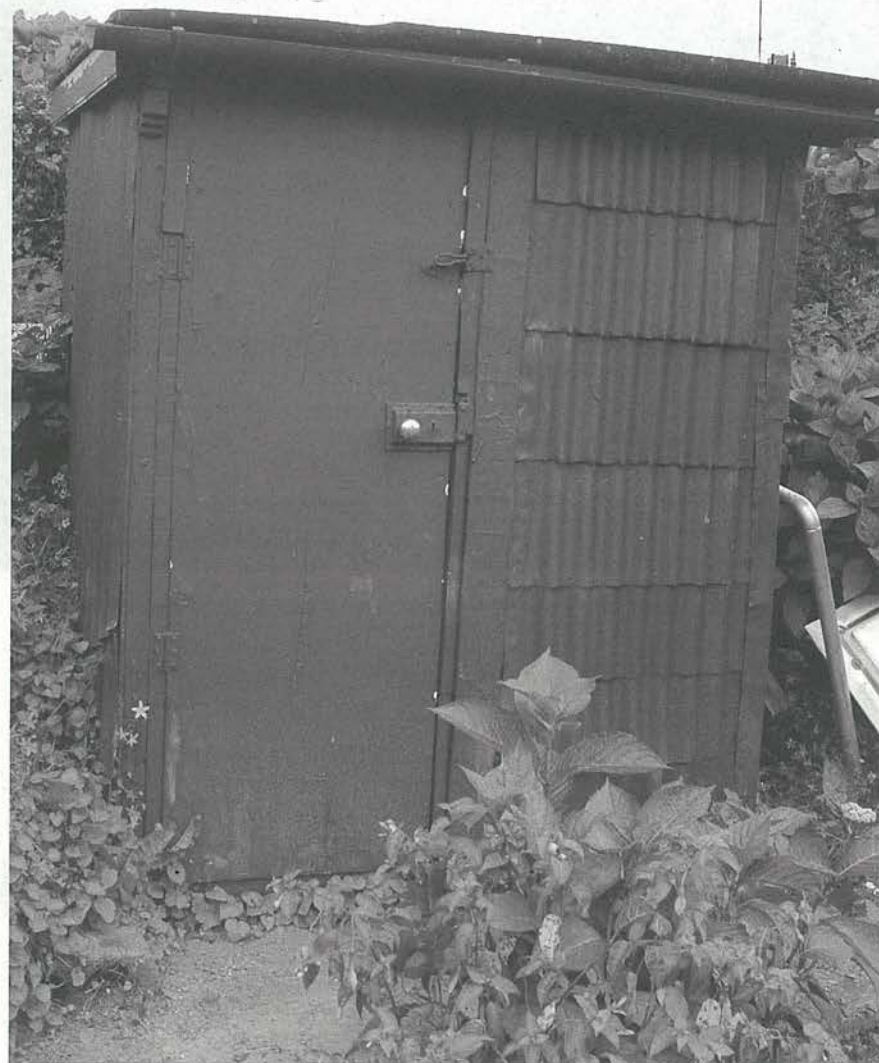
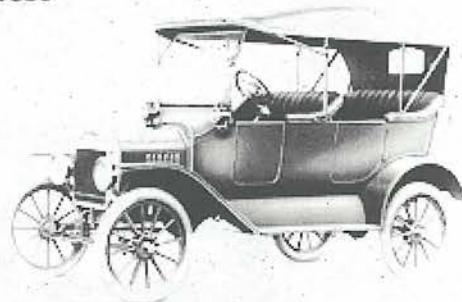
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Ed  
Hume  
Seeds ...

**"...any color,  
as long as  
it's black"**

Henry Ford



Ford boxes, Cork, Ireland



into dog kennels, garden sheds and summerhouses. On the cliffs around Cork one can find many of these former summer houses, which, in time, have been turned into permanent housing. This property—being originally an inventive

re-use of left over material from the assembly line—nowadays forms an important part of the economic bubble of Cork, as the value of real estate has ever since been largely increasing.  
photos: Bik Van der Pol



THE POLKA

## POLKA

The story of the Polka, like many dances, is one of migration and social transformation. It emerged in the mid 19th century as a popular 'Society Dance', a social ritual dating back to 16th century 'Court Dancing' or 'Danses Basses' which were dances for the upper classes. Society dances were immensely popular and their enormous scale makes them forerunners of the massive acid house warehouse parties of the late 1980s and subsequent dance party extravaganzas such as the SENSATION events held yearly at the Amsterdam Arena. Society dances were surrounded with complex rituals relating to deportment and social graces. It wasn't enough to know how to execute the dance moves, one also had to be well versed in the rules of engagement and behavioural nuances which even extended to the use of the toilet. Shakespeare was a dedicated

dancer judging by the many references he makes to dances in his plays.

'They bid us to the English dancing schools/ And teach  
la voltas high, and swift corantos', the Duke of Bourbon in HENRY V

Some of the dances pre-dating the Polka were the Quadrille (originally a card game for four people, the name of which was given to a dance introduced into the French ballets circa 1745), the Galliard (derived from a tradition of wedding dances where the bride had to dance barefoot with everyone present; and as an open house was often kept at the time of a wedding, the experience was often unpleasant for the bride), the Galopade (a quick stepping dance of Hungarian origin), the Gavot, and the Polka's immediate predecessor the Waltz. Whereas the Polka was generally accepted with great enthusiasm across Europe, this would not have been possible without the Waltz, a controversial dance that was embraced and rejected with equal measure. The Waltz's popularity began in Vienna at the start of the 19th century. It is thought to be based on an Austrian folk dance called the Ländler, which was imported to the taverns along the Danube by musicians arriving downstream from the countryside. An example of the Ländler can be seen in dance party in *THE SOUND OF MUSIC* where Maria and the Captain have their first moment of intimacy. The Austrian gentry interpreted the Ländler into the Waltz, but how this transformation came about remains unclear. One theory is that its spinning movements were an expression of the industrial revolution and the new wealth it generated for the industrialists. More likely was that the Waltz broke the rules of society dancing and created a social revolution because dancers could hold each other close and with anyone who requested; previously dancers were kept at arms length with only the finger-tips touching (as in the Gavot or the Minuet). When the Waltz arrived in London, the fashion of imperial dresses meant that dancers not only held each other, but men could feel the woman's body because of the thin flowing silk gowns and minimal corsetry à la Jane Austen. It was an outpouring of bodily intimacy in reaction to 20 years of devastation caused by the Napoleonic wars. At the Congress of Vienna in 1815, Europe's politicians and royalty met at the Hoffberg Palace (the imperial residence of the Hapsburg emperors) to reshape Europe after Napoleon's downfall. At night they would retire to the opulent ballrooms and dance until the early hours. One senior delegate was asked, 'How goes the congress?' to which he replied: 'It doesn't go—it dances!'



THE SOUND OF MUSIC, 1965

The origins of the Polka are more certain and romantic. It is a folk dance originating from several places: Bohemia (now part of the Czech Republic), Poland and Hungary. Its invention is credited to Anna Slezak, a peasant girl from Elbeteinitz in Eastern Bohemia circa 1830. It was composed to a folk song called *STRYCEK NIMRA KOUPII SIMLA* (Uncle Nimra Bought a White Horse). Anna Slezak called the dance the Madera due to its quick and lively nature. Joseph Neruda, a local school-master is said to have been walking in the woods when he heard a beautiful melody and walking towards it he saw Anna Slezak performing the Madera. He asked her to repeat the dance and song so that he could note down the steps and the melody. The following week in Elbeteinitz the students and village girls were performing it. By 1835 the Madera had been renamed the Polka (meaning half step) and had entered the ballrooms of Prague and Vienna, and by 1840 the dance arrived in Paris where it was an instantaneous success. Within months Paris had run Polka-mad with a fanatical following of 'Polkeurs' dancing the Polka in the ballrooms and publicly in the streets. When it arrived in London a couple of years later, it came as an already established dance, and though the excitement did not run wild in the streets, it was enthusiastically received with hardly any opposition (as was the case with the Waltz).

In 1848, civil unrest spread throughout Europe. Workers and student rebels brought Vienna, the home of the Waltz, under siege. Johan Strauss the Younger composed Polkas in support of the rebels, whilst his father wrote Waltzes in support of the imperial forces. The siege in Vienna was brought to a bloody end six months later by the imperial army of the eighteen year-old fledgling emperor, Franz Joseph the First. As a result the Polka (as well as Strauss the Younger) enjoyed even more popularity across Europe as an expression of a new revolutionary spirit. Within recent political discourse there has been a tendency to focus on economic aspects of migration specifically the flow of money as a result of the movement of people. The story of the Polka and related society dances perhaps shows how collective experiences (both mainstream and sub-cultural) are enhanced by migration through contact with other cultural ideas and values. Similarly, it provides an example of the difficulty in policing the boundaries and proliferation of cultural activity.

Jason Coburn



THE SOUND OF MUSIC, 1965



THE SOUND OF MUSIC, 1965

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