



Journal of European Periodical Studies

an online journal by ESPRit, European Society for Periodical Research

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Journal of European Periodical Studies, 9.1 (Winter 2024)

ISSN 2506-6587

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The *Journal of European Periodical Studies* is hosted by Ghent University

Website: ojs.ugent.be/jeps

To cite this article: Camilla Salvaneschi, 'The Soul Never Dies: On *Parkett's* Life After Death', *Journal of European Periodical Studies*, 9.1 (Winter 2024), 130–147

The Soul Never Dies: On *Parkett's* Life After Death

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ABSTRACT

The article explores the final issue and aftermath of *Parkett*, a Swiss art magazine published by Bice Curiger, Jacqueline Burckhardt, and Dieter von Graffenried from 1984 to 2017. By analysing the language, projects, thoughts, and ideas in that magazine's last communications and final edition, the study seeks to understand how the act of ceasing publication allows the art magazine, considered more broadly, to reconnect with its essence: an essence embodied by its artists, contributors, writers, and collaborators. This revitalization is then considered as a catalyst for a new phase of existence guided by the magazine's intrinsic qualities or 'soul'. The article aims to shed light on these aspects and discuss the potential longevity of the magazine's psyche, challenging the notion of magazines as ephemeral despite their physical attributes as a form of print media. The central inquiry revolves around whether the magazine can transcend its own cessation, exploring the feasibility of such continuity and contemplating potential avenues for its realization.

KEYWORDS

art magazine, *Parkett*, temporality, afterlife, soul, Switzerland, slow publishing

There is no afterlife for the soul, because we actually never left the world of oneness.¹

These words are written in Mariko Mori's artist's book published in 2019 on the theme of the 'afterlife'.² In it, texts intricately intertwine with forty-five drawings produced by the artist over a fourteen-year period in Okinawa, Japan. Aptly titled *The Soul Never Dies*, the book is a sacred space for contemplation on matters of spirituality. A white box, in which the book is encased, serves as a symbolic threshold, segregating internal reflections from the external world — a metaphorical door or gate unveiling truths about the eternal life of the soul. The book's pristine white cover, crafted from Japanese cotton paper, features an embossed and debossed drawing of light. Devoid of color, it embraces transparency through the intricacies of pressed paper, allowing light to filter through. The dominance of white extends to the pages within, interrupted only by drawings infused with translucent colours, capturing the luminosity of Okinawa's Sea. A silver Pantone-printed translucent paper provides a platform for the dialogue between the artist and the 'great light',³ representing the realm where life exists, transcending all dimensions and worlds.⁴

While this article appreciates the exquisite craftsmanship of Mori's artist's book, its focus lies not on the book itself but on the overarching concept contained within it — the eternity of the soul, as conveyed by the title. Borrowing from this narrative, the article aims to apply the concept of the afterlife, not in a religious, scientific or philosophical register related to a 'being', but to an inanimate object: the art magazine. By discussing the potential eternity of the magazine's soul, the hope is to challenge the perception of magazines as ephemeral. The essence, or soul, in question could be understood as the liveliness of the publication — exemplified by the continuous publication, research, and engagement with the contemporary as well as by the people that participated in producing the volumes — on the one side, and its body — represented by its tangible elements, the printed volumes, the physical pages, the ink, and the materials used in its production — on the other. The periodical's very life and identity is bound up in these various aspects; yet without the publication of new issues, this essence might be considered a finite one. Against this idea, this article posits the possibility that a magazine might transcend its own demise, continuing to exist in a kind of afterlife in the wake of its cessation.

As has been widely acknowledged, the art periodical is a highly specific medium,⁵ open and closed at the same time,⁶ which is 'issued at regular intervals, and exists serially across a span of time'.⁷ As such, each issue is rendered transient by the subsequent one,

1 Mariko Mori, *The Soul Never Dies* (Milan: Juxta Press, 2021), n.p. I want to extend my gratitude to Gabriele Guercio for inviting me to collaborate on the series of artist's books on the theme of the afterlife curated by him and published by Juxta Press (Milan). Working with him and the artists on this theme inspired the metaphorical use of the term 'afterlife' in this article. Additionally, special thanks to Gwen Allen and the anonymous reviewers for their careful reading of this essay and to Ellie Reed for her tireless work in bringing this issue to light.

2 Mori, n.p. For a philosophical elaboration of the term and meaning of 'afterlife', see Yujin Nagasawa and Benjamin Matheson, eds, *The Palgrave Handbook of the Afterlife* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), in particular Benjamin Matheson's 'Introduction' (1–18) and Part V on 'The Meaning of the Afterlife' (333–411).

3 Mori, n.p.

4 For images of the book and its design, see the designer's [website](#) at *Barnbrook* [accessed 29 November 2023].

5 On the peculiarities that characterize the magazine, see Megan Le Masurier, 'What is a Magazine?', *TEXT Special Issue 25: Australasian Magazines: New Perspectives on Writing and Publishing*, ed. by Rosemary Williamson and Rebecca Johnke (April 2014), 1–16 [accessed 29 November 2023].

6 Margaret Beetham, 'Open and Closed: The Periodical as a Publishing Genre', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 22.3 (1989), 96–100.

7 Gwen Allen, 'Introduction', in *The Magazine*, ed. by Gwen Allen (London and Cambridge, MA: Whitechapel Gallery and MIT Press, 2016), 12.

ensuring that the magazine is always current and up to date. Significantly, it is this very ephemerality that allows art magazines to observe and engage with art's perpetual flux and with contemporaneity. Its open-ended nature, though, is also the reason for its precarity. The lack of a fixed endpoint leads to the magazine's need to continuously reinvent itself, to maintain relevance, financial stability, and audience engagement. This analysis will focus on the balance between transitoriness and durability that are intrinsic to the magazine, using as a case study the Swiss art magazine *Parkett*, published by Bice Curiger, Jacqueline Burckhardt, and Dieter von Graffenried between 1984 and 2017. Since its establishment, *Parkett* was recognized as a major art publication: this was thanks to its refined and distinctive publishing practice, which centred on analysing artists' work through approaches that were both theoretical and practical, and which invited the artists surveyed in the issues to collaborate directly in the editorial process.

After a brief overview of *Parkett* during its active existence, this article will focus on the pivotal moment when it declares its cessation. The intent is to analyse the steps taken by the magazine to secure its own legacy, with a specific examination of the final issue. The vocabulary, projects, thoughts, and ideas embedded in this issue will be studied to comprehend how its construction allowed the magazine to reconnect with its essence, and with the artists, contributors, writers, and collaborators who participated in its pages, ushering in a new phase of existence in which its presence, a sort of entity beyond the body, continues to exist. By exposing both its shortcomings, notably its inability to continue sustaining regular publication, and its successes, where rhetoric and quantifiable achievements lie, the article sheds light on the ways through which the magazine moves forward to a time that has yet to unfold. The interruption of the magazine's regular temporal flow turns its transience into permanence, suggesting that the periodical never truly dies. The periodical's existence persists in its materiality, in the readers who continue to traverse its pages, and in the strategic initiatives it employs to ensure a posthumous life. However, a paradox emerges — when the periodical ceases publishing, can it still be deemed alive? If so, how does this post-publication life manifest itself?

***Parkett*: A Slow Publishing Practice**

Launched in 1984, *Parkett* had offices in both Zurich and New York. It was conceived as a “slow”, dual language publication’ in German and English.⁸ It had a flexible periodicity which evolved over the period of its publication, from annual to biannual to quarterly. Initially, each issue was devoted to a single artist, who collaborated in most of the editorial processes. However, as time progressed, the number of artists involved grew to four per issue.⁹ As explained by Bice Curiger in the first editorial: ‘We are aiming to produce a vehicle of direct confrontation with art, providing not only coverage about artists, but original contributions by them.’¹⁰ (Fig. 1)

Italian artist Enzo Cucchi, whose work was at the centre of the first issue, helped to ‘launch *Parkett* with original works and “his spirited *Coraggio Amici!* (Courage Friends!)’.”¹¹ This exclamatory sentence, which appeared in Bice Curiger’s opening letter

8 See Bice Curiger, Jacqueline Burckhardt, and Dieter von Graffenried, ‘Editorial’, *Parkett*, 100/101 (December 2017), 6–40 (6).

9 In 1989 the editors started focusing on two artists. The first issue was the one dedicated to Martin Kippenberger and Jeff Koons, although there were often issues on one artist alone until the early 1990s. Around 1996 there were three artists per issue and in 2009 there were four. The only exception with four artists before 2009 was in 2004 for the twentieth anniversary issues.

10 Bice Curiger, ‘Dear Reader’, *Parkett*, 1 (1984), n.p.

11 The exclamatory sentence was in Bice Curiger’s opening letter to the readers.

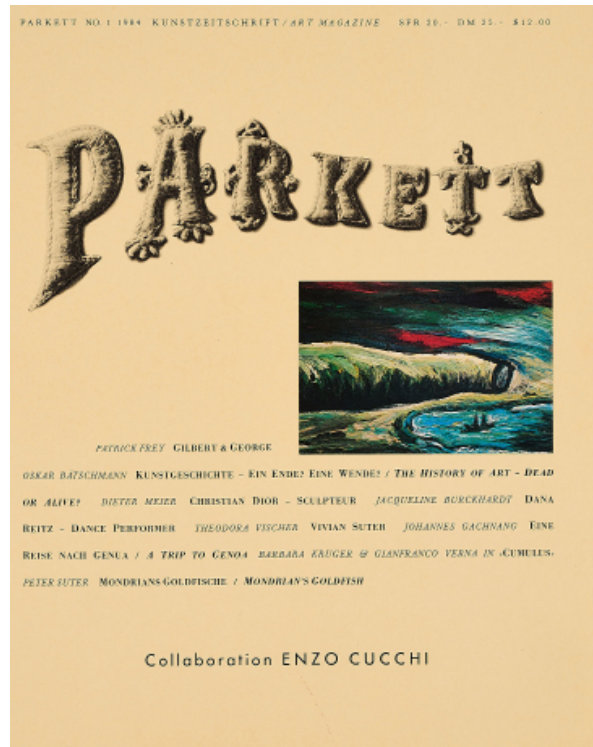


Fig. 1 Cover of *Parkett*'s issue 1 (1984). The work on the cover is by artist Enzo Cucchi. Courtesy of the artist and *Parkett*

to readers, was at the complexity of starting a periodical venture.¹² The mix of courage and resilience would also return in the following pages, with a dedication to professional cyclist Hugo Koblet (1925–64) who consecrated his career by winning the 1951 Tour de France.¹³ Besides this reassuring exclamation, Cucchi also designed the first sketch for *Parkett*'s logo. At his suggestion, it was written in capital letters and embroidered by Livia Curiger (Bice Curiger's mother) on white linen.¹⁴ As this case clearly exemplifies, artists were involved in each editorial process, selecting the writers who would talk about their work, laying out the pages dedicated to them,¹⁵ and designing the spines of the volumes, decorating them with images that would be pieced together across three or more issues. These images, playing with the nature of the periodical and its continuation through time, were meant to gradually reveal themselves to the reader or collector.

An artist's edition, which could take the form of a poster, an object, or a small sculpture, would accompany the publication.¹⁶ These artistic additions were either incorporated into special versions of the journal or presented as entirely separate and independent artworks.¹⁷ Produced in limited numbers, they were made available for purchase by subscribers, serving as a means to financially support the magazine's endeavours without relying on the need for extensive advertising.

Through the artists' contributions both within and beyond the confines of the magazine's pages, *Parkett* presented an alternative publishing model. This model was

12 Curiger, 'Dear Reader', n.p.

13 This is stated in Italian in the page after Curiger's letter to the readers. Under a picture of the cyclist is the sentence 'QUESTO NUMERO DI PARKETT È DEDICATO A HUGO KOBLETT (21.3.1925 – 6.11.64)' ['This issue of *Parkett* is dedicated to Hugo Koblet (21.3.1925 – 6.11.64)']. *Parkett*, 1 (1984), n.p.

14 Curiger, Burckhardt, and von Graffenried, 'Editorial', 9.

15 Conversation between the author and Jacqueline Burckhardt, 26 April 2017.

16 For information on *Parkett*'s structure and history see *Parkett*'s 'About' page [accessed 29 November 2023].

17 See 'Editions' on *Parkett*'s website; see also *Parkett: A Time Capsule. All Works and Books made by and with Artists for Parkett's 33 Years, 1984–2017. Vol. 1–100/101* (Zürich: Parkett Publishers, 2020).

founded on the principles of collection rather than mere consumption. Unlike the latter, which suggests an immediate use, collection emphasizes a lasting and curated accumulation of works, one that expands the magazine's structure, mission, and space — no longer confined to the printed page. As explained by the editors in their editorial to the last issue (no. 100/101) published in December 2017:

[*Parkett*] would not function as a detached news and information magazine; it would become involved and take a clear-cut, committed stand instead of adhering blindly to conventional notions of magazine production. In-depth, close-up inquiry into the art world and artistic production — that was the declared objective of our journal and artists would be our partners.¹⁸

Parkett was not just a tool to report and document the becoming of art through reviews and critical pieces. Instead, it served as a dynamic space for both the production and exhibition of art. As the editors emphasized, '*Parkett* deliberately goes against the grain of conventional art publications'.¹⁹ In a departure from other art magazines like *Artforum* (New York, 1962), *Kunstforum International* (Cologne, 1973), and *Flash Art* (Milan, 1967), which primarily informed readers about art's latest developments, *Parkett* placed artists at the epicentre of the editorial process. Here, artists were not merely subjects for analysis and debate but active contributors shaping a collective discourse and project. They presented novel interpretations of their work, fostering a dialogue with selected critics and writers. Furthermore, thanks to the possibility of curating the graphic layout, the pages dedicated to them were a hybrid between an artist's project and an exhibition on paper. As curator Germano Celant theorized with his concept of the book that becomes artwork,²⁰ the magazine here becomes a medium that simultaneously *reflects* upon art and *is* a work of art.

This approach echoed the innovative concepts put forth by art dealer Seth Siegelaub,²¹ and later by art librarian and curator Clive Phillpot. In his 1980 *Artforum* essay 'Art Magazines and Magazine Art', Phillpot speculates on the impossibility of defining periodicals 'concerned with the visual arts, on account of the diverse nature of these publications', which mixed theory with magazine art, i.e. 'art which is realized only when the magazine itself has been composed and printed'.²² This kind of art could be published in both artists' magazines and in 'magazines devoted to theory and praxis, as well as history and criticism'.²³ Keeping in mind art theorist André Malraux's concept of the 'Museum without Walls',²⁴ these authors recognized that the printed page was becoming an important space for showcasing an artist's work, with a unique

18 See Curiger, Burckhardt, and von Graffenried, 'Editorial', 6.

19 Ibid.

20 Germano Celant, *Offmedia: Nuove tecniche artistiche, video, disco, libro* (Bari: Dedalo, 1977).

21 On Seth Siegelaub's adoption of the magazine medium as a showcase for conceptual artists, see Gwen Allen, *Artists' Magazines: An Alternative Space for Art* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 2011), 202–03. For a comprehensive account of Siegelaub's work, see Leontine Coelewijn, Marion Benoit, Marja Bloem, and Patrick Kremer, eds, *Seth Siegelaub: Beyond Conceptual Art* (Köln: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König; Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum, 2016).

22 Clive Phillpot, 'Art Magazines and Magazine Art', *Artforum*, 18.6 (February 1980), 52–54 [accessed 30 September 2024].

23 Ibid.

24 André Malraux, *Museum Without Walls* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1967 [1965]).

circulation and ability to transcend the space and time of the traditional exhibition in a museum or gallery.²⁵

As discussed by Deborah Wye, *Parkett's* hybrid structure associates the publication with artists magazines like the Belgian *La Revue blanche* (1889–1903), which commissioned prints to be bound within its pages, or the 1960s New York-based magazine *S.M.S. — Shit Must Stop* — which transformed each issue into a small portfolio containing ephemeral artworks.²⁶ Nevertheless, *Parkett* does not conform to the established category of the artists' magazine. Unlike *La Revue Blanche* and *S.M.S.*, both of which were part of artistic movements, *Parkett* has been recognized itself primarily as a magazine focused on art criticism and history, each issue featuring direct collaboration with artists. The presence of longer essays and in-depth reflections on the artists' work, the adoption of innovative layouts and artistic designs, the use of precious papers and high-quality printing, all contributed to elevating the magazine to the status of a collectable publication. Owing to these specificities, Deborah Wye defined *Parkett* in 2001 as a 'variant genre',²⁷ one that incorporated elements from the artists' book and the exhibition catalogue.

Potentially and tentatively, an example that could be associated with *Parkett* is the French magazine *Cahiers d'Art* (1926–60; 2012–). Founded by Christian Zervos in Paris, *Cahiers d'Art* published ninety-seven issues from 1926 to 1960, collaborating with the most prominent figures in the history of art on an international level. From its first issues, the magazine identified itself by its juxtaposition of ancient and contemporary art, as well as its quasi-monographic and luxuriously illustrated volumes, which were displayed in a way that progressively supplemented the function of the art museum.²⁸ Accordingly, from 1934 the same appellation — *Cahiers d'Art* — was used to indicate two affiliated institutions: an art gallery and a publishing house.²⁹ Years after its demise, in 2012, the journal was purchased by the Swedish collector Staffan Ahrenberg and re-activated in collaboration with Samuel Keller, Hans Ulrich Obrist, and Isabela Mora.³⁰ Since its resurrection — a new life — the editors maintained its main features as well as the duality between regular and limited editions. The latter are conceived as collectible objects proper, accompanied by original artistic productions, signed and numbered by the artists and presented in luxurious boxes. In looking at *Cahiers d'Art* and *Parkett* comparatively, despite their intrinsic differences in terms of content, materiality, and approach, what emerges is a similar understanding of the space of the magazine as a site of display and a portable, small museum.

Another particularly crucial precedent, in this sense, is Marcel Duchamp's *Boîte-en-valise*, a carry-on-case, created between 1935 and 1941, which contained

25 Charles Harrison and Seth Siegelaub, 'On Exhibitions and the World at Large', in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, ed. by Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1999), 198–203 (199). See also Howardena Pindell, 'Alternative Space: Artists' Periodicals', *Print Collector's Newsletter*, 8.4 (September–October 1977), 96–121 and Gwen Allen, 'Magazines as Alternative Sites of Artistic Practice', in *The Handbook of Magazine Studies*, ed. by Miglena Sternadori and Tim Holmes (Hoboken: Wiley, 2020), 261–77.

26 To find out about *Parkett's* models, see Deborah Wye, 'Collaboration with *Parkett*: 1984 to Now', in *Parkett Collaborations and Editions since 1984* (Zürich: Parkett Publishers, 2001), 11–20. The catalogue was published on occasion of the *Parkett* Exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2001.

27 Wye, 18.

28 Chara Kolokytha, 'Christian Zervos et Cahiers d'art', *Archives de la Bibliothèque Kandinsky* [book review], *Konsthistorisk tidskrift/Journal of Art History*, 82.4 (2013), 339–42. For more information on the *Cahiers d'Art* and other contemporary periodicals, see Chara Kolokytha, 'The Art Press and Visual Culture in Paris during the Great Depression: *Cahiers d'Art*, *Minotaure* and *Verve*', *Visual Resources: An International Journal of Documentation*, 29.3 (September 2013), 184–215.

29 Kolokytha, 'Christian Zervos', 339.

30 On the launch of the new *Cahiers d'Art*, see the periodical's [website](#) [accessed 29 May 2024].

colour reproductions and miniature replicas of his past works, displayed as if in a portable museum. By condensing his oeuvre into a carry-on form, Duchamp challenged traditional notions of originality, permanence, and the aura of the unique art object. The box became a traveling museum, allowing the viewer to carry the artist's entire artistic output with them. Accordingly, *Parkett* elevates each issue into a curated collection by integrating limited edition artworks within the publication. In doing so, it intentionally positions itself as a small museum, a '*musée en appartement*', turning each release into a travelling yet permanent art exhibit.

This characterization was complemented by an approach to the periodical's individual editions, which were treated not merely as issues but rather as 'books', aligning them more closely with catalogues than with magazines.³¹ This specific terminology served to challenge the transient nature typically associated with art periodicals, addressing both its temporal dimension and its physical embodiment. Indeed, the editors' slogan — '*Parkett* is for keeps'³² — emphasized that the books 'belong on a bookshelf where they can easily be accessed'.³³ While being captured poetically in artist Franz West's 2004 edition, *2 x 20 Years of Parkett* (Fig. 2), this idea underscored the publication's significance as 'document/monument' as per Jacques Le Goff's conceptual framework.³⁴ In Le Goff's universal view of history, documents and monuments — written and material sources — allow us to enter and exit the past by giving meaning to historical discourse. Within the ensemble 'document/monument', memory and identity become the repositories of vital inner emotions characteristic of human affairs. It is within this understanding that Le Goff's theories resonate with the publication's conscious commitment to a sustained legacy. Reaffirmed at various junctures in the magazine's history through anthologies, special anniversary volumes, and lastly with its final issue, the publication shifts from temporary record to enduring monument, embodying a deliberate portrayal of the artistic zeitgeist for posterity.

The Periodical's Farewell: *Parkett*'s Last Issue 100/101

Parkett's last issue, published in December 2017, functioned both as a commemoration and a farewell. It marked a culmination, signifying the publication's acknowledgment that it had fulfilled its purpose and reached a mature decision to conclude its journey. The farewell process commenced several months prior to the issue's publication with the release of 'A Letter to Our Readers'.³⁵ In this letter, the editors expounded on the challenges of sustaining a publication in a globalized, digitized era. In particular, they emphasized that 'one of the major factors behind this decision is the radical change in reading behaviour brought about by our digital age'.³⁶ The predicament addressed was not a sudden revelation, but a concern discussed as early as 2001, a decade and a half before *Parkett* officially announced its cessation. This discussion took place during a roundtable on the theme of 'Obsolescence' hosted by the US-based journal *October*.³⁷ The proceedings of this roundtable found their way into the hundredth issue, a symbolic choice that laid bare the journal's vulnerabilities during a period of transformative change

31 See 'Parkett Books' on *Parkett*'s website [accessed 29 November 2023].

32 See Curiger, Burckhardt, and von Graffenried, 'Editorial', 21.

33 Ibid.

34 Jacques LeGoff, 'Document/Monumento', in *Enciclopedia Einaudi*, 16 vols (Torino: Einaudi, 1978), v, 38–43.

35 Beatrice Curiger, Jacqueline Burckhardt, and Dieter von Graffenried, 'Letter to Our Readers', *Parkett* (2017) [accessed 29 November 2023].

36 Curiger, Burckhardt, and von Graffenried, 'Letter to Our Readers'.

37 For the 100th issue of *October*, see *MIT Press Direct* [accessed 29 November 2023].



Fig. 2 Franz West, *2 x 20 Years of Parkett*, 2004. Bookshelf, reinforced steel, acrylic glass, four wheels, 120 x 60 x 30 cm. Reprinted in *Parkett*, no. 100/101 (December 2017). Copyright Archiv Franz West, copyright Estate Franz West. Courtesy of *Parkett*. Photo by Franziska & Bruno Mancina / FBM studio

in art, in readership, and of course in publishing.³⁸ During this critical moment, *October's* editors acknowledged a noticeable void in discourse where art criticism seemed eclipsed by the rapid expansion of the market and creative industry.³⁹ They also observed a lack of a unified public. However, it's worth noting that what *October's* editors lamented as a lack of public was not necessarily an absence; rather, it manifested as a fragmentation — an expansion and multiplication of both local and global audiences.⁴⁰ This fragmentation demanded that periodicals broaden their formats and outputs to respond to the diverse new technologies and requirements of contemporary art publishing.

Similarly to *October*, *Parkett* also revealed its vulnerabilities in the issue numbered 100/101, a disclosure that occurred following the decision and scheduling its ending. In doing so, *Parkett* embraced its reality and directed its attention towards future possibilities. As articulated by the editors in a letter to Karen Kilimnik:

Parkett will not go quietly. [...] The special double-issue 100/101 will be a focused, multi-vocal collection of thoughts, personal recollections, and future-oriented analyses tracing all the energy, objectives, and ideas that have consistently inspired and buoyed our undertaking of a periodic publication combined with special artists'

38 See George Baker, Rosalind Krauss, Benjamin Buchloh, Andrea Fraser, David Joselit, James Meyer, Robert Storr, Hal Foster, John Miller, and Helen Molesworth, 'Round Table: The Present Conditions of Art Criticism', in *Obsolescence: A Special Issue, October*, 100 (Spring 2002), 200–28.

39 Ibid.

40 Camilla Salvaneschi, 'Contemporary Art Magazines: The Archive in the Archive', in *International Perspectives on Publishing Platforms: Image, Object, Text*, ed. by Meghan Forbes (New York: Routledge, 2019), 151–73.

editions. Inquiries, conversations, and essays will spotlight the major changes and events that have shaped our expansive epoch.⁴¹

Surprisingly, in its last issue, titled 'Expanded Exchange', *Parkett* took an unconventional approach to its own demise. (Fig. 3) Instead of concluding in its customary open format,⁴² the periodical deliberately sealed itself, bringing closure not only to its physical structure but also to a narrative that had commenced thirty-three years before. By choosing the moment of its own demise, *Parkett* defied its own precarity, acknowledging its obsolescence in a radically changed publishing landscape. This act of self-awareness reveals both weakness and maturity. The weakness lies in its inability to compete with newer ventures, reinvent itself according to art's global expansion, keep pace with contemporary production, and meet readers' demands, all of which led to economic unsustainability. The maturity comes from recognizing these limits, controlling the narrative of its departure, and expressing gratitude to its audience, contributors, and collaborators.



Fig. 3 Marlene Dumas, *Art is / Always / having to say / Goodbye* (for *Parkett* 100/101), 2017. Indian ink on Arches 250gsm/m² [35 unique variants, 24 x 21 cm each]. Cover of *Parkett*'s issue 100/101 (December 2017) 'Expanded Exchange'. Courtesy of the artist and *Parkett*

This approach transforms a moment of precarity into an opportunity to create value for itself and its future. As argued by media scholar Pierre Bourdieu, cultural products are endowed with value through narratives that situate them within broader

41 See 'Artists' Statements', ed. by Bice Curiger, Jacqueline Burckhardt, and Dieter von Graffenried, *Parkett*, 100/101 (2017), 368–464 (396).

42 Beetham, 96–100.

and historical contexts.⁴³ The narratives, artworks, and individuals featured in *Parkett's* very last issue, along with the stories they uphold, not only enhance its existential legacy but also significantly boost its commercial value.⁴⁴ Without new production, *Parkett's* issues become rare collectible objects, carriers of the history of contemporary art over the past decades. This endows the magazine with a heightened status in the market, making it a coveted possession for collectors and institutions alike, not only ensuring its lasting financial and cultural impact, but also potentially increasing it.

Similar strategies have been employed by other notable publications. *Cahiers d'Art's* relaunch, which involved reprints of previous issues and new editions, treated the magazine as a collectable item proper, creating new hype around a long-time defunct publication. The French periodical ceased to exist many years before its revival was even considered, leaving readers with a sense of expectation and hope for an event that would never occur. To avoid this open-endedness, editors of other defunct publications have attempted to find alternative forms of closure. For instance, Wilfred Huet's *Gagarin* (2000–17), a Belgian biannual periodical containing texts by artists, created a special, collectable case for containing its thirty-three issues posthumously.⁴⁵ *The Exhibitionist: Journal on Exhibition Making* (2009–15), edited by Jens Hoffmann, reprinted its twelve issues in a single monolithic volume titled 'The First Six Years'. Hoffmann considered transforming *The Exhibitionist* into an anthology series to broaden its focus beyond the West, but never did.⁴⁶ Instead, he launched the online periodical *Duchamp's Socks*. Both periodicals had to address their legacy posthumously, attempting to create value and closure after their initial runs had ended. Conversely, with *Parkett*, the end was envisaged during its lifetime, maintaining a sense of liveliness even in its final issue.

Another approach to a periodical's demise can be found in the Brooklyn-based *Cabinet* (2000–), which published its final issue, number sixty-eight, in summer 2024. Titled 'The End', the issue features a yellow cover with a drawing of a man holding a poster that reads 'THE END IS NEAR IN A WAY – SO REPENT SOMEHOW'. This issue marks the end of *Cabinet's* print publication, as it transitions to an online-only format.⁴⁷ *Cabinet's* editors are bidding farewell to the physical presence of the periodical — its material body — while ensuring the continuation of its essence and soul in the form of an online publication. Despite the weighty symbolism of the cover, *Cabinet's* transition is not a closure, but perhaps the opposite. Its essence, research, and projects will persist, though without the tangible attributes that once made it a recognizable 'body' in the world.

Parkett's closure is definitive, a deliberate and reflective act which serves as a celebratory retrospective. It vividly revives the myriad ways in which the magazine contributed to the art world and highlights the numerous collaborations it fostered over its thirty-three-year existence. This choice creates a lasting legacy — material, social, and of course, economic. Melancholy and irony infused the pages of the last issue, starting with Sophie Calle's contribution: a photograph featuring a traffic signal displaying the word 'End'. In the work's description, also published inside the issue's pages, the artist expounds:

43 Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (London: Routledge, 1984).

44 On these matters, see Simon Sheikh, 'Circulation and Withdrawal, Part 1: Circulation', *e-flux journal*, 62 (February 2015) and 'Circulation and Withdrawal, Part 2: Withdrawal', *e-flux Journal*, 63 (March 2015) [accessed 20 June 2024].

45 *Gagarin's* website no longer exists. Some information can be found on *Printed Matter*; the case can be seen in the *catalogue* [accessed 20 June 2024].

46 Email conversation with the author, 10 April 2019.

47 The poster is written in capital letters. See *Cabinet's* website [accessed 20 June 2024].

My parents each took three months to die. Three months: time for the last gestures of love, time to become an orphan. But not the endless, grinding time of agony and despair, of seeing my flamboyant mother and my impeccable father fall from their heights. A week before they died, my mother refused to see an unwelcome visitor: 'Tell him I'm dead!' On the Tuesday before he died, my father complained: 'I'd like to go to that new place. We're losing time. Let's set a date, we keep delaying, delaying!' They died just in time, both of them: alive to the end.⁴⁸

In opting not to conclude quietly, *Parkett* similarly resolved to exhibit liveliness until the very end. This commitment is reflected in the deliberate cessation of the unfolding spines, which reuses Calle's 'End' sign as the last frame of a movie, marking the intentional halt in the magazine's trajectory and the definitive conclusion of its extensive journey. (Fig. 4)



Fig. 4 Spines of *Parkett*, issues 1–100/101. Courtesy of *Parkett*

As detailed by its editors, the decision to dissolve the magazine had become 'an occasion to take a clear-sighted look at the past, the present, and the future [of *Parkett*]'.⁴⁹ Similarly to many anthologies and special issues, which encapsulate the essence and cultural importance of the magazine within a defined period, this reflection aimed to offer a moment for contemplation, inviting readers to explore what its cessation would mean to them. It was different from previous celebratory issues, such as the twentieth anniversary issue (2004) in which the magazine's accomplishments were not recounted as a story, but through facts and figures.

Is there anything more material than concrete numbers? Anniversaries stimulate statistical considerations. Voluptuously round numbers whet an appetite for the revelation of all the other numerical beauties and insights that slumber within them: numbers reveal exciting imaginative dimensions hitherto buried under well-trodden routine. In the past two decades, 150 artists' collaborations have been created, and over 1,000 essays published and translated from French, Greek, Spanish, Russian, Italian, Dutch, Finnish, Portuguese, Polish, Japanese and Swedish — simple figures that testify to a long-term project that has left its mark the world over.

And what about the following figures? Since 1984, more than 600,000 single volumes bearing the distinctive PARKETT logo have settled on bookshelves in libraries and private collections all over the world. And supposing we multiply the 180–260 pages per volume by two or three readers each, then the individual collective has read or at least (we hope) enjoyed looking at an impressive total of 270–390 million pages. This is the stuff that dreams are made of.⁵⁰

The significance conveyed by these numbers is undeniable and did not require reiteration within the magazine's thirtieth anniversary in 2024. In this instance, the

48 See 'Artists' Statements', 449.

49 Bice Curiger, Jacqueline Burckhardt, and Dieter von Graffenried, 'Dear Reader', *Parkett*, 99 (January 2017), 5.

50 Bice Curiger, 'Editorial: The Faces of Knowledge', *Parkett*, 71 (2004), 5.

editors simply placed a prominent number thirty against the backdrop of an editorial centred on the theme of Performance. There is no explicit reference to the magazine's history, but a subtle connection between the transience of performance and that of the magazine can be discerned, particularly when considering the selection of artists with a 'marked interest in repetition and standards'.⁵¹

In contrast, the final issue distinguishes itself from preceding narratives as it departs from the typical editorial structure, dedicating each page exclusively to Parkett and its collaborators. What unfolds is a collective history that resonates with the 'chorality' inherent within magazine publishing.⁵² It is not by chance that the entire editorial is accompanied by archival images of the journal's editors with the artists, writers, designers, etc. who contributed to Parkett over the years. Even in its physical form, *Parkett's* last issue exudes dynamism. Throughout its existence, *Parkett* consistently emphasized the importance of its own materiality, tailoring its choice of paper to complement the varied content within its pages. The paper itself serves as a metaphorical partition, dividing the issue into three primary sections: the main issue, printed on thick, uncoated ivory paper, comprises editorials and articles; a practical section with roundtable discussions on contemporary publishing and statements from those involved in the magazine's production, presented on lighter paper with a rough, seemingly recycled finish; and a dedicated space for showcased artworks, printed on the same uncoated ivory paper as the first section but with a lighter weight.

The section titled 'Statements', which succeeds the transcripts of two roundtable discussions held in Berlin (24 March 2017) and New York (7 April 2017), brings together the editors, staff, designers, translators, and curators, who have, according to the editors, 'left their mark on the fortunes of the journal'.⁵³ In a remarkable convergence, each contributor, having presided over distinct epochs in the magazine's life, now finds unity under the aegis of a single issue. Here, they weave a collective tapestry, recounting the memories and encounters they cultivated. To 'convey consistency, compactness, and beauty, [and provide] an unobtrusive, distinguished framework for writers and artists', the designers played a pivotal role in shaping the graphic design of the magazine.⁵⁴ Within the pages of these statements, the designers themselves expound upon the fundamental concepts that underpin the aesthetic and design philosophy of *Parkett*. The same significance was extended to both the translators, who were crucial for the periodical since it consistently upheld two languages, and the curators who mounted *Parkett's* exhibitions. Gratitude resonates further for all those who made this publishing endeavour possible, including the readers and collectors.

The narratives shared within 'Statements' are succeeded by the 'Collaborations' section, which — which, along with the last part, comprises the magazine's regular columns titled 'Cumulus', 'Les Infos du Paradis', 'Balkon' — serves as the focal point of the issue. In alignment with *Parkett's* tradition, the columns engage artists in dialogue with art critics, fostering insightful discussions about their work. The artists highlighted in these columns include Jordan Wolfson, Katharina Fritsch, Maurizio Cattelan, Nairy Baghramian, and Pipilotti Rist. The issue closes with a series of 'Artists' Statements', transformed into a platform for articulating what *Parkett* signifies to them. For Thomas Hirschhorn and Rebecca Warren, the periodical was a 'mentor of sorts': both remember

51 Beatrice Curiger, Jacqueline Burckhardt, and Dieter von Graffenried, 'Editorial 94: 30 Years of Parkett', *Parkett*, 94 (2014), 4.

52 The word was used by Ntone Edjabe, editor-in-chief of the South African periodical *Chimurenga*. Skype interview with the author, 22 December 2017.

53 See 'Statements', ed. by Bice Curiger, Jacqueline Burckhardt, and Dieter von Graffenried, *Parkett*, 100/101 (December 2017), 90.

54 See Curiger, Burckhardt, and von Graffenried, 'Editorial', 27.

issue number seventeen (1988), in particular Peter Fischli and David Weiss's cat, which, when reproduced on the cover, served as a catalyst for venturing beyond the confines of conventional academia.⁵⁵ Fred Tomaselli's declaration that 'We will miss you *Parkett*'⁵⁶ is complemented by Doug Aitken's artistic presentation — a series of photos documenting the burning of a stack of *Parkett*'s issues. (Fig. 5) Aitken eats the ashes transforming them so that the magazine would be an 'even more permanent part of me'.⁵⁷ Carsten Höller injects a little dose of humour with the photo of a birdcage adorned with newspapers and magazines like *Wallpaper*, and asserting that he would never use *Parkett* for such a purpose!⁵⁸ Meanwhile, the South African artist Marlene Dumas bids the ultimate farewell through thirty-five gouaches — one of which was reproduced on the front cover of the issue — inscribed with the poignant words, 'Art is / Always / having to say / Goodbye'.⁵⁹



Fig. 5 Doug Aitken, 'Artist Statement', for *Parkett*'s issue 100/101 (December 2017) 'Expanded Exchange'. Courtesy of the artist and *Parkett*

Future Prospects: The Blooming of *Parkett*'s Afterlife

The issue evokes mixed feelings, with a palpable sense of sorrow marking the end of an era — or even a life. Aitken's act of eating the periodical's ashes is a clear testament to this sentiment. Yet, for those who contributed to this final chapter, there is also an anticipation, an eagerness for the uncharted freedom and the birth of something new; envisioning a continuation for the periodical post-closure seems almost inevitable. In the words of artist Josh Smith, *Parkett* stands as 'a beautiful collection of books which

55 See 'Artists' Statements', 414–15 (Hirschhorn) and 458 (Warren).

56 Ibid., 424.

57 Ibid., 388–89.

58 Ibid., 372–73.

59 One of the gouaches is presented on the cover of the 100/101 issue. For a complete image, see Marlene Dumas's [edition](#) on *Parkett*'s website [accessed 29 November 2023].

will be increasingly appreciated for evolving reasons for a long time'.⁶⁰ This sentiment is echoed by artist Luc Tuymans on the subsequent page, where he expresses the desire for the editors to 'prolong [*Parkett's*] endeavor by other means'.⁶¹ These examples illuminate the overarching theme of the issue — a farewell intertwined with the prospects opened up by *Parkett's* final issue. However, contemplation of moving into the future introduces a nuanced complexity when considering *Parkett's* demise. The paradox emerges: how does a publication, on the brink of cessation, envision a future beyond its own existence? Can it transcend the realm of its achievements and persist into a future that seemingly remains undefined without its presence?

These inquiries delve into the intrinsic nature of the art periodical, particularly its temporal essence and the delicate equilibrium it maintains between precarity and durability. Each edition serves as a sequential episode in the serialized story of contemporary art,⁶² presenting a progression that captures the essence of its time and moves the reader into a yet-to-unfold future.⁶³ This forward-reaching quality finds resonance in the philosophical musings of Martin Heidegger. In his contemplation of time and the present, Heidegger unveils a profound understanding of temporality as the essential fabric of human existence. Unlike the rigidity of a static present confined to a singular moment, temporality, in Heidegger's philosophy, extends dynamically across the continuum of time, perpetually moving toward its own unfolding. In this intellectual realm, the paramount element interwoven with the temporality of the present is the future. The present, rather than a fixed instant, becomes an ever-evolving trajectory toward a forthcoming time, a concept Heidegger terms the 'futural'.⁶⁴ It is within this philosophical context that *Parkett's* projection into the future acquires deeper significance, especially in the light of its own conclusion.

Remarkably, abandoning its traditional approach, the periodical, for the first time in its publishing history, turns its focus inward. Instead of seeking external topics for discussion, it directs its gaze towards its own essence, memory, and legacy — a reflective endeavour to harvest the fruits of its extensive labour. This introspective journey marks a significant shift in the temporal narrative of the periodical. No longer confined to a linear trajectory marked by distinct points, such as the emergence of its individual issues, it now assumes the circular form of a vortex.⁶⁵ This circular motion signifies the completion of a cycle initiated by the periodical itself, one that reverberates beyond its physical and temporal existence rather than ending.

Yet in this closure there is also an opening. Nestled between the salutations and acknowledgments of the final issue lies a page titled 'Future Prospects'. Here, the editors unveil plans for the periodical's website, assuring its continued existence as a repository of comprehensive information on its books and editions. Notably, readers are promised access to a wealth of digitized texts, totalling 1,500 in number.⁶⁶ Simultaneously, the audience is primed for an upcoming series of exhibitions where *Parkett's* editions will take centre stage. These exhibitions unfolded in prestigious venues such as David Zwirner's gallery (2022), significant perennial art exhibitions like the MBAL Triennale

60 'Artists' Statements', 443.

61 'Artists' Statements', 444.

62 John A. Walker, 'Art Periodicals since 1945', in *The Art Press: Two Centuries of Art Magazines*, ed. by Trevor Fawcett and Clive Phillpot (London: Art Book, 1976), 45–52 (45).

63 See for instance the definition of the periodical as *Zeitschrift* which identifies it as a process of 'writing in time'. (Octavian Eșanu and Angela Harutyunyan, 'Art Periodicals Today: Historically Considered', in *Art Margins*, 5.3 [October 2016]), 3–10.)

64 For Martin Heidegger's concept of time, see his masterwork *Being and Time*, trans. by Joan Stambauch (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996 [1927]).

65 For the idea of vortex, see W. J. T. Mitchell, 'Present Tense 2020: An Iconology of the Epoch', *Critical Inquiry*, 47.2 (2021), 370–406 (389).

66 'Future Prospects', *Parkett*, 100/101 (2017), 38–39 (39).

in Switzerland (2021–22), esteemed art fairs including Art Basel (2021), and major art institutions exemplified by the Luma Foundation in Arles (2021).⁶⁷ The latter, extending beyond a mere exhibition, acquired the entire corpus of the publication, encompassing its issues, a library housing several thousand volumes, and an archive replete with autographs, original photos, designs, and documents dating back to the pre-digital era. Additionally, the editors persist in their engagement with readers, creating *ad hoc* monothematic volumes about a specific artist, disseminating announcements of their latest events and presenting curated selections by esteemed guests.⁶⁸ These instances stand as poignant moments in which the publication, despite its formal cessation, continues to thrive, demonstrating its enduring presence and cultural significance.

Upon its ending, it is as if the rhythmic pulse of the periodical, once coursing through over 12,000 volumes distributed worldwide every four months, has transformed into an expansive physical presence. In its death, the periodical persists, existing within the tangible confines of its issues and editions, housed within its exhibition space in Zurich, living on through its digital representation on the website, and preserved within its accessible archive. No longer secluded behind closed doors, the archive has moved into an institution open for exploration. This transformation not only preserves its essence but also broadens its reach, allowing its rich and heterogeneous content to continue inspiring and engaging a wider audience. These expansive approaches have been described by the editors as metaphorical 'seed banks'.⁶⁹ The metaphorical use of 'seed'⁷⁰ to represent the beginning or source of something, as seen in the context of *Parkett's* afterlife, draws on the idea of growth and continuation. The editors envision these outputs as the very origins from which *Parkett's* influence will be able to radiate into its afterlife, sowing the fertile ground for potential growth and sustained inspiration across a spectrum of creative endeavours. In this allegorical notion stands their hope that these seeds will not merely endure but will also germinate, giving rise to a profusion of new and diverse projects and futures.

This concept harmonizes with Janice Radway's insightful exploration into the enduring legacy of periodicals, particularly within the dynamic realm of zines. In her 2011 article, 'Zines, Half-Zines, and Afterlives: On the Temporalities of Social and Political Change',⁷¹ the communication studies scholar elucidates the ephemeral nature of zines, characterized as they are by brief lifespans and constrained print runs. Despite these inherent constraints, zinesters navigate the transient nature of their creations through astute strategies — archives, websites, and curated printed collections — enabling the sustained influence of zines long after their physical manifestations fade into memory. This resilience resonates with the purposeful cultivation of *Parkett's* 'seed bank'. Both instances manifest a thoughtful determination to transcend the conventional lifecycle of publications, propelling their influence into immortality. The afterlife of a periodical then becomes a response towards its own ephemerality; a deliberate act of defiance against the transience that defines its nature. This response may reflect a certain anxiety about the precariousness of these publications, driven by a desire to forge a tangible history and secure recognition for their contributions within the evolution of art history. Simultaneously, it serves as a testament to their aspirations for a lasting impact in the future. There is a continuous move towards a tomorrow that is not guaranteed,

67 See the pages 'Museum Exhibitions' and 'News' on *Parkett's* website [accessed 29 November 2023].

68 Notably, in 2021, selections were curated by star-curator Hans Ulrich Obrist, and by artists Ed Atkins and Pipilotti Rist, to name a few.

69 Conversation between the author and Jacqueline Burckhardt, 26 April 2017.

70 For the full etymology of the term, see *Merriam-Webster* [accessed 29 November 2023].

71 Janice Radway, 'Zines, Half-Lives, and Afterlives: On the Temporalities of Social and Political Change', *PMLA*, 126.1 (January 2011), 140–50.

or that needs to be constructed by the editors themselves. Indeed, as artist Hito Steyerl suggests, history ‘exists only when there is a tomorrow’.⁷² The ‘tomorrow’ is what *Parkett* attempts to create through its last issue. A different tomorrow of course, in which the body stops ‘developing’ or ‘evolving’, while its essence — the soul — continues to be present.

Determining whether such an existence without the publication of new issues constitutes a meaningful life or merely a form of passive existence is a challenging endeavour. While these efforts can be viewed through a romantic lens of continuity and art historical significance, they also risk inducing boredom and overexposure to the periodical’s legacy. The key is to recognize that these transient undertakings are significant due to their intricate ties to contemporaneity and the art of a specific moment, contributing to its crystallization or monumentalization in time. Extending a publication’s life towards immortality carries its own risks: it may confront the fear of mortality, but in doing so, it could inadvertently strip away the very elements that give it meaning — in the case of *Parkett*, its engagement with artists, the documentation of contemporary art history, and the production of art itself.⁷³

In conclusion, despite its vitality and the decision to take its fate, memory, and history into its own hands, *Parkett*’s demise is also symptomatic of an anxiety about being forgotten or becoming irrelevant. Making a magazine always has much to do with precarity and becoming, as it has much to do with reading and interpreting the contemporary as it unfolds. Once this transience is over, the magazine can either embrace the eternity of its physical presence or attempt to remain alive through other initiatives; initiatives mostly afforded by the digital format, which highlight its contribution to art history. In the end, the result is similar: research, editing, and production have ended.

The magazine has stopped existing, yet another form of life persists. It remains alive, eternal as it were, in the echoes of its legacy — through print as well as within the online and physical archives activated after its demise — and in the chorus of people and professionals that gave life to its pages. While the soul may be envisioned as an entity, what truly endures, or seems to, is the memory of what made that publication so crucial for the history of art and still marketable today. Perhaps, rather than understanding a soul dualistically, with its physical embodiment and transcendent afterlife, what truly emerges from a magazine during its life and subsequent demise is its liveliness and the importance of its material and physical presence. Unlike magazines like *Gagarin* and *The Exhibitionist*, which have posthumously reiterated their endings by, respectively, creating a case to hold each of their issues and reprinting their entire run in a single monolithic volume, or *Cahiers d’Art*, which relaunched itself, *Parkett* has chosen to maintain a sort of presence, even before it actually stopped existing. The presence is a diluted one, of course; but it is also a reminder of how much the periodical has contributed to art and its historical narration. Whether this new life will endure is difficult to say; what is certain is that myth can be constructed through one’s past glories and accomplishments, but not founded on the feeble reverberations of an identity foreclosed to renewal.

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72 Hito Steyerl, ‘A Tank on a Pedestal: Museums in an Age of Planetary Civil War’, in *e-flux journal*, 70 (February 2016) [accessed 29 November 2023].

73 See Thaddeus Metz, ‘The Meaning of Life’, in *The Palgrave Handbook of the Afterlife*, ed. by Yujin Nagasawa and Benjamin Matheson (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 353–70.

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