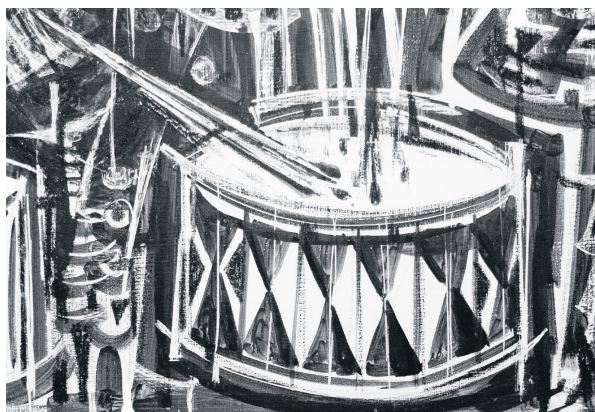


ROUNDUP

Artful Volumes

BOOKFORUM CONTRIBUTORS ON THE SEASON'S OUTSTANDING ART BOOKS.



Clockwise, from top left: Carmen Herrera, *Green and Orange*, 1958, acrylic on canvas, 60 × 72". Valentin de Boulogne, *Martyrdom of Saints Processus and Martinian*, 1629–30, oil on canvas, 118 1/4 × 75 1/2". Si Lewen, *untitled*, 1950–53, charcoal, crayon, tusche, and gesso on board, 12 × 18". From the fifty-five-part suite *The Parade*, 1957.

In **HIGHWAY KIND** (*Aperture*, \$50), we see Justine Kurland's on-the-road photographs as if through a film of fantasy—a very masculine, very American fantasy, about freedom and self-reliance and the big wide open. There are shots of trains running through majestic Western landscapes—a pass, a canyon—and of hobos sitting in trees or reclining on riverbanks. Like Joel Sternfeld and William Eggleston before her, Kurland pays special attention to the quotidian aspects of back-road American life: rail yards, litter-strewn campsites, tires piled outside auto-repair shops, the parking lot of a motel or a 7/11. There are wide vistas, and then there are cramped tents and cars and doorways: Machines look lost and people look surrounded (you could say *trapped*, you could say *framed*). Kurland comes back again and again to men lying underneath cars, fixing them—a tender blend of competence and submission. A similar contradiction between autonomy and the dependence it often requires is vividly conveyed in most of Kurland's shots, in part because it literally informed the way they were made. For six years, she lived in and worked out of a van with her young son Casper—no school, no regular routine, just following their whims and the warm weather. He's a constant but always resisting muse, his passion for trains guiding her subject matter, his self-protective frown recurring from portrait to portrait; she can't work without him and he can't live without her (she describes him once running off, screaming, "I don't need you! I don't need anybody!"). In this new collection, Lynne Tillman provides accompanying fragments of story. These have a lovely hard-bitterness, gently tinged with irony: "Bobby's nails and hands were covered in grease, gas and oil

embedded in the lines of his palms. He was easy reading for a palmist, his future simple: just a lot more dirt." Maybe because she shares it, Kurland seems to respect the fantasy her subjects build about themselves and their lives, even as she exposes the sheer effort it takes to maintain. —LIDUJA HAAS

The epic geographic scope of Canadian environmental photographer Edward Burtynsky's career is given ample display in **ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS** (*Thames & Hudson*, \$70), a volume that includes images of shipbreaking in Bangladesh, open-pit mining in Australia, quarrying in China, flood control in the Netherlands, oil refining in Azerbaijan, and irrigation in Texas. To document the grandeur and terrifying beauty of the Anthropocene, the photographer travels to locales far from population centers, where the dirty work of maintaining urban life goes on with a vigor and violence that is rarely glimpsed. Factories, shipping, mines, and dams feed and clothe us, as well as provide our ever-proliferating world of toys. An image of massed electronic detritus at a Chinese recycling plant is both painterly (think Fred Tomaselli) and unnerving—it requires at least as much effort, and does as much damage, to dispose of things as to make them. For the images in **SALT PANS: LITTLE RANN OF KUTCH, GUJARAT, INDIA** (*Steidl*, \$75), Burtynsky journeyed to a remote corner of India where salt is gathered from vast trenches when water below the surface rises and evaporates. The interlocking geometric shapes visible in these aerial shots have an abstract quality (think Piet Mondrian, or László Moholy-Nagy) that belies the grueling labor taking place below in this sun-blasted landscape. Because

of decreasing groundwater levels, the livelihoods of one hundred thousand workers are in jeopardy—but they are the subjects of these photos only by implication. Burtynsky typically reveals more about the human effects on landscape than the actual humans behind the transformations. By doing so, he foregrounds the collective, perhaps inevitable aspect of environmental change. The question the photographer poses is profound: In our own epoch, are we no more responsible than the great sheets of ice that covered continents during another time? —ALBERT MOBILIO

The catalogue for a recent exhibition, **CARMEN HERRERA: LINES OF SIGHT** (*Whitney Museum of American Art*, \$65), covers the artist's output from 1948 to 1978, a fruitful period during which she developed her singular style of hard-edged geometric abstraction. This work puts Herrera—now 101 years old and still painting—in the company of contemporaries like Ellsworth Kelly and Jack Youngerman, while also prefiguring Op art and Minimalism. The book's superb reproductions (and a design by Michelle Lee Nix that is as finely calibrated as the artist's paintings) complement perceptive essays by lead author Dana Miller and others. These include a thoughtful assessment by Edward J. Sullivan, who expertly extricates the painter from the limiting category of "Latin American artist," which Herrera has steadfastly resisted, while showing how affinities with artists from Brazil and elsewhere may illuminate her work. Herrera was born in Havana and briefly studied architecture in Cuba, an experience that crucially informed her creative thought. But her style took shape in her Paris years, from 1948 to 1954,



Clockwise, from left: Justine Kurland, *After Darius*, 2010, C-print, 30 × 40"; Edward Burtynsky, *Salt Pans #9, Little Rann of Kutch, Gujarat, India*, 2016, C-print, dimensions variable. Page detail from Anya Davidson's *Band for Life* (Fantagraphics Books Inc., 2016).

when she was part of a scene that produced an unprecedented flowering of abstraction by an array of international artists, in what was still the art world's capital. A jarring note here is the book's subtitle, "Lines of Sight," which perhaps alludes to the elongated triangular forms that are Herrera's stylistic signature. The phrase evokes an observer's unobstructed gaze at a distant point in space. But Herrera's abstract images are profoundly self-contained, independent of any one perspective. The arrowlike vectors she repeatedly creates speak to an inner-directed energy, and a tremendously concentrated focus, which has allowed the artist to endure and overcome many decades of neglect. —CHRISTOPHER LYON

Following Caravaggio's death in 1610, a generation of followers, known as "Caravaggisti," spread his dramatic style throughout Europe. None have commanded the same attention for their mix of *pittura dal naturale*—the vivid depiction of life—and its execution in the shadowy modeling in high contrast called *tenebrism*. Now, an ambitious exhibition and its accompanying catalogue, **VALENTIN DE BOULOGNE: BEYOND CARAVAGGIO** (The Metropolitan Museum of Art/Yale University Press, \$65), consider the work of France's most ardent Caravaggisto. De Boulogne was a seventeenth-century painter of psychologically engaged Baroque scenes who, like Caravaggio, used live models, animating his pictures of biblical stories, fortune-tellers, musicians, and gamblers' dens with sanguine naturalism. This monograph, with essays by Annick Lemoine, Patrizia Cavazzini, Gianni Papi, Keith Christiansen, and Jean-Pierre Cuzin, examines de Boulogne's

contribution in the context of his contemporaries and the bohemian community in Rome that blossomed during his time in the city. Though his approach can be discerned in nineteenth-century realists like Gustave Courber, de Boulogne is not treated here as simply an early signpost on the road to modernism, a temptation many art historians give in to when writing about Baroque painters. Instead, this volume conveys an immediate sense of de Boulogne's peculiar ingenuity and his compelling melancholic vision—what Lemoine describes as "a poetics of sadness." —ANDRIANNA CAMPBELL

If narratives about bands have anything in common, it is that they spend surprisingly little time describing or depicting the act of making music. As any member of a band might attest, life inside the group has all the conflict, compromise, joy, frustration, and banality of life in the larger world. Put another way: "Some days I feel like I'm not living up to my potential and others I think it's just a miracle I'm not lying in a ditch somewhere drinking paint thinner!" That's Linda, the tough-as-nails front woman for the noise-rock band Guntir, in Anya Davidson's superb, rollicking comic **BAND FOR LIFE** (Fantagraphics, \$30), which is part sci-fi (some characters are literal creatures, such as the three-eyed, insectoid Christophe) and part slice of life. Davidson is the heir to Jack Kirby and Jaime Hernandez: Her characters bound and leap dynamically in heightened displays of anger, excitement, and anxiety, but she artfully tempers their brash emotional outbursts by also portraying their tenuous bonds of camaraderie and intimate

feelings of self-doubt. Gutter punks have never received such fulsome treatment.

Moments of turmoil, much like our current one, inspire the identification of cultural works that are said to be "more important now than ever." Si Lewen's *The Parade*, a wordless comic first published in 1957, is a work that bears remembering always. *The Parade* is a wrenching modernist parable told in fifty-five figurative and abstract drawings that depict the horrors of war and their monstrous toll on our understanding of humanity. Lewen, born to Jewish parents in Poland in 1918, fled persecution in Europe and emigrated with his family to America, where he joined the army and served in World War II. He witnessed the atrocities at the Buchenwald concentration camp shortly after its liberation and was forever transformed by "seeing the world for what, I thought, it was: a slaughterhouse, a bordello, and an insane asylum, run by butchers, pimps, and madmen." The drama of *The Parade*'s narrative is amplified through subtle variations in shading and tone, which Lewen created by scratching into gesso on board, and the quiet progression of images (he has described them as being "in dialogue" with one another) conveys the emotional intensity of so many Käthe Kollwitz prints. The comic has just been reissued as **SI LEWEN'S PARADE: AN ARTIST'S ODYSSEY** (Abrams, \$40), an ingeniously designed, double-sided accordion-fold book: On one side, the narrative of *The Parade* flows unbroken; the other side comprises an essay by Art Spiegelman, extracts from Lewen's unpublished memoir, photographs, and a selection of Lewen's extraordinary paintings. —NICOLE RUDICK

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