

# Books

by Stefano Cernuschi

## Sigmar Polke: Alibis

Kathy Halbreich, Mark Godfrey, Lanka Tattersall, and Magnus Shaefer, eds.

 Publishing a true reference catalogue of an artist's work is something frequently attempted but infrequently achieved. This book is one of those rare, indisputable events. *Alibis* accompanies the mind-blowing, unsurpassed presentation of Polke's oeuvre at the Museum of Modern Art, which will be traveling to the Tate in London: one of the largest exhibitions ever to be mounted at MoMA, and arguably the densest, most revelatory show of the year.

Throughout his five-decade career, Polke consistently took a contrarian, skeptical, and questioning stance. Painstakingly, he made work that echoed the evolution of his thinking—"You can't exist in a vacuum, you are rooted in time," Polke declared in 2003—through an idiosyncratic, multifaceted practice.

So many ideas, in so many mediums, could result in cacophony. "Polke has made disorder his medium," Robert Storr pointed out in 1996. But disorder, in the end, proved the way for Polke, as an artist, to nail it. Get this book.

The Museum of Modern Art, New York

[moma.org](http://moma.org)

## Christopher Williams: The Production Line of Happiness

Mark Godfrey, Roxana Marcoci, and Matthew S. Witkovsky, eds.

 Conceptual zeal and formal excellence, both in execution and configuration, strikingly come together in Christopher Williams' photographs. The same energy fuels all the artist's books, including this one; more than just a catalogue for the artist's highly anticipated shows in Chicago, New York, and London, it conveys the distinctive interest in composition through disruption, and in association of meanings through the repetition of certain elements, that has underscored and informed much of William's work.

The act of displaying something, of getting meaning across by showing, carries a wealth of histories and codifications. And decoding this book is gratifying and rewarding.

On the cover, next to the barcode, and underneath its expensive caption, one finds an omen: "Yellow edition." Are more colors, more variations in store?

The Art Institute of Chicago, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, and Yale University Press, New Haven

[yale.edu/yup](http://yale.edu/yup)

## THE PARTICLES (of White Naugahyde)

William Leavitt

 "Don't you miss driving your car?" asks Jackie Macias, weekend visitor and structural reflex counselor, to Nina Alexander, the wife of Tom, an inventor. "We have a space flight simulator," Nina replies, "which is pretty trippy." The circumstances of this exchange merit a little explanation.

The Alexanders—husband, wife, and two kids—are auditioning for a NASA space program. If they qualify, they'll be sent to a space colony, plans for which are presumably at an advanced stage. While still stuck on Earth, their lives seem to be nevertheless somewhat lunar, starting with their home, one in "a track of houses at the edge of the edge of the desert." In the living room stands a slippery, greasy, annoyingly new-looking couch—a white Naugahyde sofa, around which hover

the characters of this play written, directed, and with a set design by William Leavitt. Never mind that the script is being published over two years after *THE PARTICLES* debuted in Los Angeles, in 2012: it's a catch.

Editions Patrick Frey, Zurich

[editionpatrickfrey.com](http://editionpatrickfrey.com)

## Art Basel: Year 44

 Art fairs, for all their faults, are unavoidable; art fair catalogues, much less so. Noticeably, their *raison d'être* and their weight are inversely proportional.

Facing facts, Art Basel has wisely digitalized its three catalogues, one for each edition. In their place, starting this season, it is publishing a yearbook. Once one gets past the slight discomfort of being introduced to a new solar calendar and having to think of 2014 as "year 44," the move is welcome.

Not only is the yearbook a single thing, to purchase and carry only once, it is also much more enjoyable to flip through, and much less visually and editorially stiff than the catalogues it replaces.

Furthermore, it is broader in scope, aspiring to portray not merely three art fairs, but "one year in the art world," A-to-Z, in just under 800 pages. Difficult to think how it could be outdone by competitors, at least until year 46 or 47.

JRP | Ringier, Zurich

[jrp-ringier.com](http://jrp-ringier.com)

## Franz Erhard Walther: The Body Decides

Elena Filipovic, ed.

 "I do not think man can exist without form or shape," Franz Erhard Walther predictably states in his lexicon of terms and concepts; ". . . without the dimension of 'formedness,' of space and material, of recalled historical forms, I have no parameters." And vice versa, for what is form without man? Since the 1960s, Walther has been creating work on the premise that artifacts couldn't really turn into art without a temporary activator of their potential—the human body, itself a "recalled form" underlying their very shape.

This very special relationship is thoroughly discussed and contextualized in this essential monograph, a publication that embodies and presents another principle of Walther's, that "volume must be found in the given situation": the catalogue is also a pop-up book, and by turning its pages, the reader unleashes its full potential as an artifact.

WIELS, Brussels, CACP Bordeaux, and König Books, London

[buchhandlung-walther-koenig.de](http://buchhandlung-walther-koenig.de)



Photo: Bea De Giacomo – Set: Rio Grande