

## Art:



### EVERYMAN'S GIRL

by Arthur Secunda  
and Jan Thunholm

**C** "SHE" IS RESIDING at the Museum of Modern Art in Stockholm this summer. A truly social product of her environment, "She" was made for many by many. A female Colossus of Gargantuan proportions,

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"She" reclines on her back, legs spread apart, with breasts hovering just below an otherwise austere looking ceiling. "She," painted and decorated in pure bright poster-colors, is probably the most enormous lady in waiting (with the possible exception of the Statue of Liberty) in the world today. There is always a brisk line waiting to enter her body by way of her vaginal portal. So voluptuous is "She" that she is capable of receiving, containing and entertaining up to 150 people simultaneously.

"She" is the baby of artist Niki de St. Phalle of Los Angeles, New York and Paris, whose concept and unique direction are largely responsible for bringing "She" to passive and helpless life. Nevertheless, the prodigious execution of this Lillith was a collaborative effort. Niki took care of the outside, while Swiss kinetic sculptor Jean Tinguely and Swedish artist P. O. Ultvedt joined hands to try and make the interior as homey a place as this bizarre environment would permit. As a team, this group worked together in creating "Dylaby" in Amsterdam in 1962.

Upon entering "She's" genitalia, one is at first appropriately shrouded in darkness. Soon, moving, grinding black and white wheels are discerned, and as one's eyes become accustomed to the eery light, macabre architecturally satirical discoveries may be made. There is an art gallery, then a bar where glass is being continually crunched in typical Tinguelian style. Further on, one can see a movie, then retire to a secluded corner with love seat generously provided. Literally speaking, when one enters "She's" bowels, one is awed by a mysterious dome from which drops a brittle ladder. This, it turns out, is the navel, and incidentally, a kind of exit with a wonderous view outside the museum's elegant front doors. For the record, "She" is also called, somewhat presumptuously, "The Cathedral!"

Visitors to this strange shrine appear curiously amused in modern Sweden. One can only surmise the criticism and indignation of such a display in California, following the ridiculous goings-on by the Board of Supervisors during the recent Edward Kienholz exhibition at the Los Angeles County Art Museum.

The overall effect of this massive work seems to be that of an adult fun-

house, whose exterior is, in effect, a piece of painted sculpture, while the interior ends up being a sort of international bourgeois playboy club. Related in a general way to the recent history of "happenings," "She's" meaning is intensive if shortlived, as if the plan is to provide a memory survival of an art event, not unlike the now famous manifestations which took place at the Grande Saison Dada on the 14th of April, 1921, that were to change the context of art history during the next 40 years.

The feeling throughout "She," both inside and out, is free and spontaneous, a kind of unreflected though well organized dialogue with every fantasy that erotic 20th century man's fanciful leisure produces. It is an ironic fact that "She" is more revealing, sociologically speaking, about the contemporary male than it is about the female. This, despite the fact that the creator in this case was a female, albeit a female who sees the world as her male chieftains would have her see it.

Superficially it would seem as if "She" is not so much a solemn homage as an earthy, lusty, materialistic event made for and by people who love life and a good time. In short, for people who are content. Even the inscription on "She's" legs, "*Honi Soit qui Mal y Pense;*" is a pun-like reminder not to seek depth of thought. It is rather a bizarre gag, woven in decorative beauty.

The truth is that this enormous characterization is a self-portrait with the most poignant implications. "She" is a double for "we," flat on our backs in primeval position, victimized, helplessly mauled over, laughed at, exploited and used, painted as we paint ourselves, objectified as we find ourselves objects, and in a sense laughing on the outside while dying on the inside. Our Brobdingnagian and Lilliputian relationships to "She" will be discussed and felt for a long time. And I believe that as a social document history will show it to be more in the tradition of Bosch than Duchamp.

*Arthur Secunda is a noted artist and print-maker living in Los Angeles.*

*Jan Thunholm who teaches art at Uppsala University in Sweden, is a noted art critic.*



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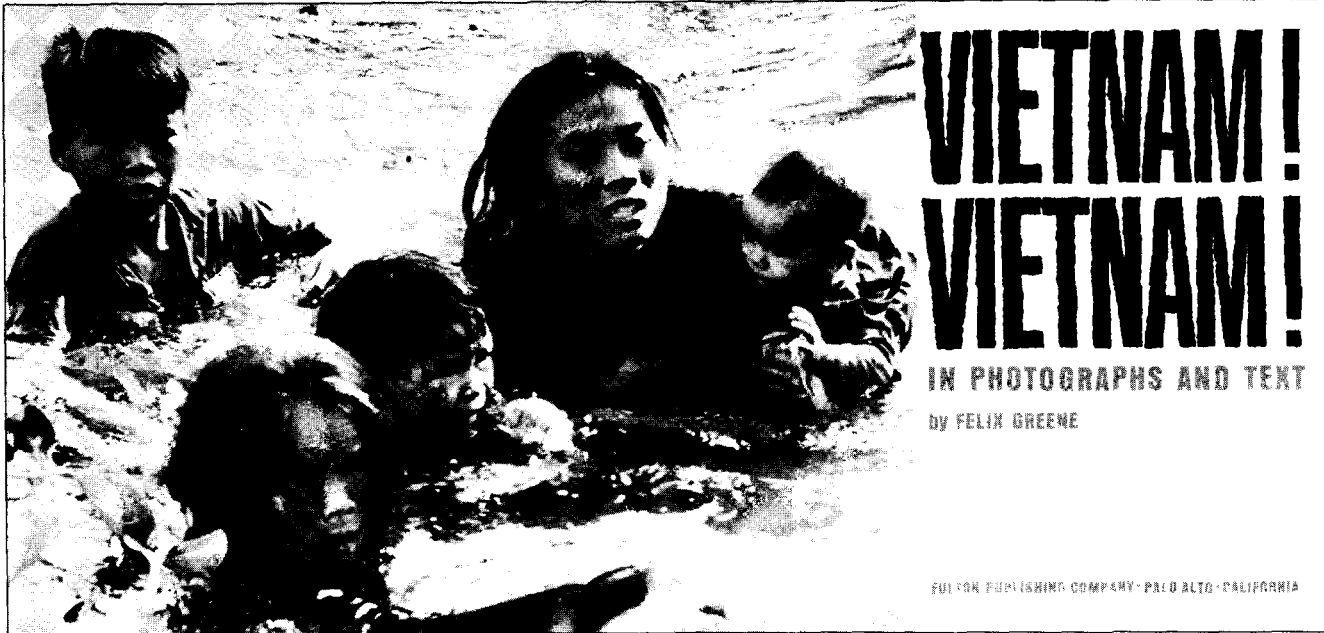
*Left:*  
Slide,  
and fake art  
exhibition in  
right leg.

*Below:*  
Walking out of "  
in foreground are  
Niki St. Phalle at  
Jean Tinguely—  
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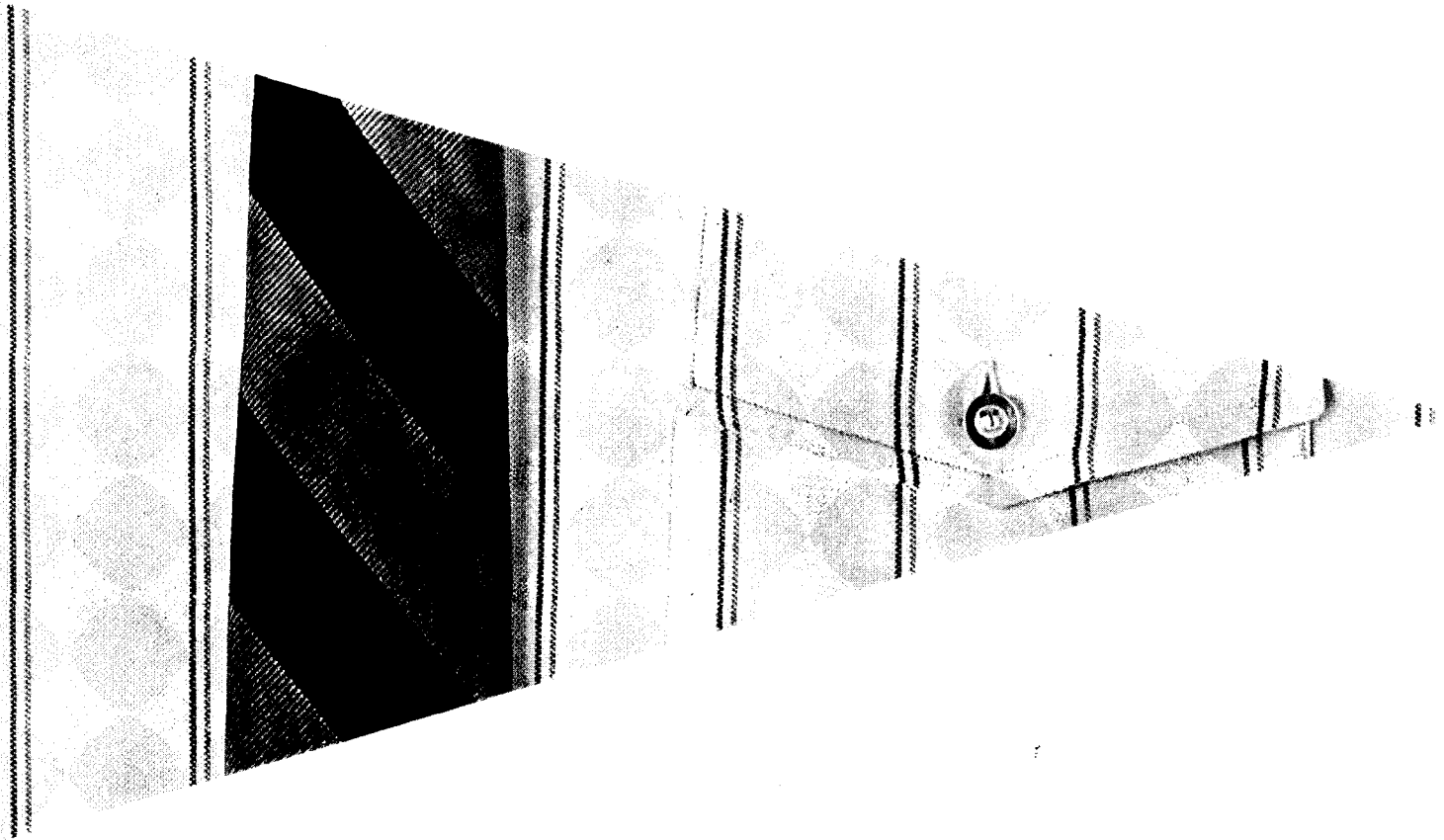
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