

Good or Trash
Galerie d'art
91 quai de Valmy

You're too sweet for me

Nolan Lucidi, Information Fiction Publicité, Iris Touliatou, Bruno Zhu

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What's in a 'no'? Among the lifestyle hacks, tips and tricks too enthusiastically ladled out as a means of getting through daily tribulations relatively unscathed and intact, 'don't be so negative' holds its head up high. After all, negativity isn't sexy. It doesn't sell. No one wants a party pooper. Seen from within the present context, that is – of art and its meandering ways, the party pooper status has undeniably been ascribed to conceptualism with its haughty demeanour, stick-up-its-ass attitude and austere aesthetics. As if it wasn't enough that we're already fully immersed in austerity politics, once upon a time a certain kind of art seemingly made the executive decision to go in the same direction and has obstinately stuck to its guns ever since. Mind over matter. Idea over form. If conceptualism were to have human attributes, it would be the lone kid in the playground who doesn't want to play.

Within the confines of this room, that lone kid has multiplied threefold and shapeshifted into none other than IFP (acronym for Information Fiction Publicité), the French artist collective, or rather association, founded in 1984 by Jean-François Brun, Dominique Pasqualini and Philippe Thomas (who left the group one year later). Encouraged by Ghislain Mollet-Viéville (aka GMV), collector and self-styled *agent d'art*, whose apartment at 26 rue Beaubourg in Paris was one in which minimal and conceptual referred not just to art forms, but to a way of life, they wholeheartedly engaged with conceptualism's logic and lexicon only to toy with its stone-cold heart. Together with GMV, who presided over IFP-as-association, they went so far as to question the conditions of being art, the monetary, fictive, display systems that made *something* a work of art.

The contact sheet (*Entretien GMV / IFP*, 1984) is the site of choice, the place where decisions are made. Among the varied configurations, an indistinguishable blur stands in for the artists' faces in one frame, the left-right movement made by their heads an instantly recognisable NO. A unanimous refusal. But of what? A refusal to participate, to play by the rules, to be an artist, to engage in artistic labour, to conform to expectations. The list is long. But in this very visual and staged NO lies a coy YES. A seductive, coquettish game of hard-to-get. NO means knowing your worth. It's a negative space that is more welcoming than its ice queen façade would have you believe. For it is this contradictory act of negation that propels IFP into artistry. Published in the December 1984 issue of the aptly-titled magazine *Artistes*, this particular photo was an advertisement, a fiction, and a piece of public information, carrying all the tell-tale signs of an IFP artwork without, as with all of IFP's output, ever officially claiming that status. The false promise of choice. A perfunctory denial.

Illusion slips in unnoticed. A lone photograph (*Untitled (exhibition view of Group work, 100 / 160 · 105 / 160)*, 2026) as a flimsy archive, a half-way point between creative labour and impending death. Iris Touliatou's lenticular print interlaces two frames from two consecutive days, taken midway during her most recent solo exhibition at David Dale Gallery last spring as part of Glasgow International. Depending on one's position, the composition is either a mix of office furniture (chairs, armchairs, sofas, a coffee table, a printer, a flatscreen TV on a mobile stand) spaced closely together in the brick-walled gallery, or... a mix of office furniture (chairs, armchairs, sofas, a coffee table, a

printer, a flatscreen TV on a mobile stand) spaced closely together in the brick-walled gallery. Except that one still contains the ghostly presence of bodies, freelancers that the artist hired to form a self-study group. Physical traces of an absence, of an already lived and disappeared past. The difference between two frames is so imperceptible that the joke is ultimately on the beholder. The documentation of a past exhibition relegated – although some might say, upgraded – to an artwork in the current one.

Illusion persists. Vitrine-like sculptures (*Pan Shot* series, 2026) stacked unevenly on the wall are the rowdy, rebellious teenage offspring of Donald Judd's own favoured form. They are as unspecific an object as one can get. Mirroring the panoramic camera movement used in cinema, turning on its own axis, they mimic the circular gesture of a head, scanning, mapping, noting. Inside the vitrines – whose diameter corresponds to the scale of a human head – Nolan Lucidi has inserted lenticular prints whose distorted features nevertheless allow glimpses of private images in domestic spaces and generic hotel rooms, a human eye, gay sex, or Minimalist sculptures sat in museums. He discredits the Minimalist Godfather's cold detachment by injecting the warmth of human bodies, the unreliability of the human eye, sexual desire and arousal directly inside the geometrically perfect shapes, and then goes so far as to install them at unequal distances from one another. Inspired by the camera movement of Chantal Akerman and Babette Mangolte's short *La Chambre* (1972), in which a camera pans around a New York apartment while Akerman stays in bed, eating an apple, watching, masturbating, sleeping, the sexual charge Lucidi's sculptures secrete have also something of *Jeanne Dielman* about them. In other words, they're Judd as drag, Judd as camp, Judd as turning in his grave.

What lesson could a 2-month-old possibly reap from the World Wide Web, if not the parable about the innocence of infancy derailed. Signalling a paradigmatic change in the distribution of information when it first appeared in the public domain in 1993, we're now subjugated to algorithms, facial recognition surveillance, deepfakes, usurpation of facial features for AI training, and worse. Isn't that the reason why it's advisable for parents to mask children's faces when posting them online? Frankly, who cares. The upcycled generic babygros (*Lesson for one to six months old*, 2026) pinned to the wall spell out the demise of civilisation – after all, everything is now weaponised – or its salvation. A haptic syntax that is just what it is until the moment it hits the floor again, and www becomes a pile of clothing to be quickly disposed of, or handed on. Like the figure of the *artiste*, unable to take itself too seriously.

Information. Fiction. Publicité. It all trickles down.

Now, isn't that just so damn sweet?

- Anya Harrison