

BOOK INFO:

- 6x9 inch full color
- Design by Atlantic Design Solutions
- Text by Anthony Carfello

FILE INFO:

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EXHIBITION INFO:

- Delusionarium 5 (Adaptation)* is part of a group exhibition series initiated in 2004.
- May 15 - June 12, 2021
- Night Gallery and as-is.la
- Curated by Jesse Benson and Becky Koblick

- Artists:
- Shagha Ariannia
- Cara Benedetto
- Jesse Benson
- Tanyth Berkeley
- Hildegard Duane
- Benjamin Echeverria
- Elizabeth Englander
- Elif Erkan
- Awol Erizku
- Mark Flores
- Daniel T. Gaitor-Lomack
- William E. Jones
- Sean Kennedy
- Tom Krumpak
- Tory J. Lowitz
- Brian Mann
- Star Montana
- David Muenzer
- Jeanette Mundt
- D'Ette Nogle
- Catalina Ouyang
- Puppies Puppies (Jade Kuriki Olivo)
- Mark Roeder
- Michael E. Smith
- Peter Wächtler
- Leila Weefur & 5/5 Collective
- Takako Yamaguchi

All the best,  
Becky and Jesse

GIOVANNI BRINO  
1936—2020

In the midst of his ongoing experimentations with describing, representing, and indexing built space, the Italian architect, professor, and author Giovanni Brino passed away in November.

Born in Oulx (Turin) into a family of demolition experts, Brino's six-decade-long professional career saw the completion of dozens of large-scale structural and environmental rehabilitations, each emphasizing the wider historical context while becoming pedagogical opportunities for his many students. He taught architecture at the Politecnico di Torino from 1970 to 2008 and created unique courses for universities across Italy, France, and Switzerland, as well as further afield with Curtin University of Technology in Perth and Kent State University in Ohio. Brino was a restoration consultant to the city of Marseille from 1988 to 2005, and advisor to the French Ministry of Culture for the restoration of the Villa Medici in Rome from 1988 to 1993. The subjects of his books range from the story of London's Crystal Palace to urban farming practices in Northern Italy to the oeuvre of his teacher, the modern designer and photographer Carlo Mollino. Most of his publishing, however, was dedicated to encyclopedic surveys: a databank of the painted facades throughout the entire province of Liguria; all of the colors on the buildings of Turin in the period of 1801–63; compendia of field-tested restoration techniques; as well as color studies and street furniture plans in response to dozens of different cities across Italy and France. Brino's dedication to cataloging color was shared by his wife, Dominique Bousquet, and the two spent years developing a color dictionary with over 20,000 entries.

Brino's practice of inventorying and classifying was first introduced to us in 2014 thanks to a colleague who had borrowed one of the architect's lesser-known books from the library of the Southern California Institute of Architecture in 1980 and never returned it. Despite all of Brino's activity and our overlapping interests in architectural history and visual culture, neither of us had heard of him. His practice and reputation remained rooted in Turin, even though his research and experiences briefly had revolved around the western United States. We had not seen those of his books that had been translated into English on any shelves, nor recalled Umberto Eco mentioning Brino's writing about Las Vegas in the same breath as Robert Venturi in the 1986 edition of the essay "Travels in Hyperreality." With a weak ability to read Italian, we poured over our pilfered copy of the first and only edition of Brino's *La città capitalista*. Los Angeles, a three-hundred-page register of architecture and advertising across the Southland that felt like an unearthed time capsule.

Brino first came to UCLA in 1972 on a Fulbright Fellowship to study the region's trademark suburbia in comparison with the private developments that he perceived to be creating similar conditions on the outskirts of cities such as Milan, Genoa, and, of course, Turin. He had theorized that as those cities grew more in relation to the autostrada than the piazza, the collective result would be sister sprawl. Brino penned articles while exploring Los Angeles's history and traversing its entirety, realizing first-hand how Southern California's built environment was a product of the profit-minded promotion of lifestyle. Some of these initial reflections were compiled in the Fiorucci Fanzine Brino authored on the occasion of the opening of the legendary store in Beverly Hills.

Brino's relationships with the architect and educator Ray Kappe and the planning and real estate expert Fred Case informed the final draft of *La città capitalista* that was published in Italian by Medicea Editrice (Florence) in 1978. Through twenty-seven essays and over one thousand images, the book conducts a forensic examination that breaks apart Los Angeles's form into the details that produce the whole, presenting the city as a quintessentially capitalist commodity formed by privatization and emphasizing that its processes of becoming could be repeated anywhere that lacked a commitment to a public commons.

With chapter headings such as "Post-Urban Culture," "Air Conditioning," "Mobile Homes," "Voluntary Region," "Street Art," "Vacationland," "Barbieland," or "Electrographic Architecture," one needs only to read the table of contents to have a sense of the operating logic of Brino's anthropological Situationism. Los Angeles is approached first as a list of ingredients in order to be seen from new perspectives and undo common assumptions. Billboards are definers of space, not fillers. The influence of Eastside murals is treated equally with that of Hollywood. Decades before urbanists would revisit them as unique, dingbat apartments are considered as significant a part of the overall landscape as the freeways. The Watts Towers are the only built work with its own chapter.

*La città capitalista* approaches the city through the pedestrian experience of a visitor in the mid-1970s, doing so with juxtapositions that candidly present the results of the city's competition, consumption, and division. The text includes and consumes dozens of architectural, historical, and critical reads of the city—from Arts & Architecture magazine to government documents to Ray Bradbury—and then counters or expands them in conversation with the mundane conditions of a quotidian life saturated with and defined by the promotional signage that features in many of the book's images.

When we first met Brino in Turin in 2016, he joked that the single chapter of *La città capitalista* that was entirely his was the first one, "Yellow Pages." While other sections are indeed his writing, he acknowledged a curatorial handling throughout the book that positions the author as editor and (re)organizer of existing understandings as much as that of first-person chronicler—a Studs Terkel version of writing about Los Angeles more than yet another outsider testimo-

nial. Navigating the city's domestic advertising index, however, was a direct experience worth recapturing. Using 128 selections from the actual Yellow Pages, a normally banal feature in any location at the time was framed as the principal summarizing introduction to a town defined by sales.

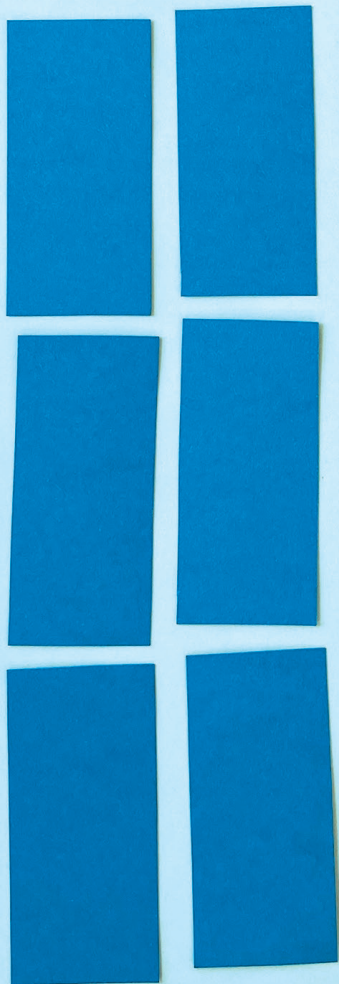
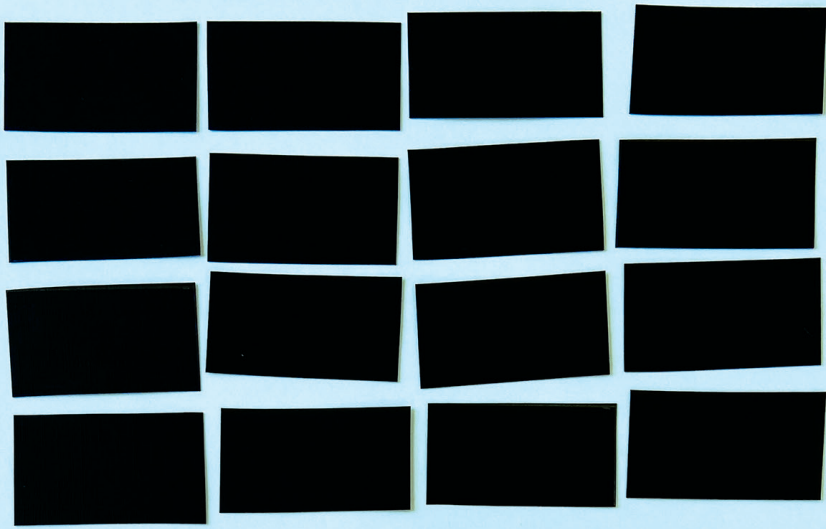
In appreciation of that vernacular outlook, a friend of Brino's at UCLA once tried to pass a copy of *La città capitalista* to Ray Eames, who scoffed at it as suspiciously Marxist. Italian, architect, 1970s, and commentary on capitalism are indeed the elements that usually lead to the work of Manfredo Tafuri or the like—while certainly not apolitical, nor conservative, Brino was not an active member of the Partito Comunista Italiano. He, the burgeoning restoration architect, viewed Los Angeles through the lens of commodification, class, and the marketing of lifestyle because that is what plainly resulted from the site analysis and as-builts, so to say. Years before "brandscaping" would enter the architectural lexicon, Brino charted a city shaped by advertisement, entertainment, and recreation.

Back in Europe, Brino used the book in his teaching as one of several case studies in how to approach urban space, demonstrating for his students that maintaining a materialist consideration of site on regional, historical, and cultural terms at all times contributes far more understanding to any effort than a singular focus on a singular solution—especially valuable in contrast to myopic tendencies in architecture, preservation, and development that can isolate locations from the conditions that form them. In this regard, *La città capitalista* is as much a "how to" guide for answering the question "Where am I?"—with Los Angeles as its example—as it is a document of this specific city in that particular era.

Nevertheless, *La città capitalista* has largely been lost to time, with the number of copies retrievable locally in the single digits. While Brino spoke proudly of having published the first history of Los Angeles in Italy, the fact is that non-Anglophone writing about the area's architecture and urban landscape has never found the same inclusion in the canon as, let's say, French directors have with filmmaking in the city. Brino's book exists today as a foreign artifact rather than an extension of the cultural criticism of Carey McWilliams and the structural take of Reyner Banham, or as a precursor to the L.A. School of the 1990s. Like Franco Rossi's astute Los Angeles film *Smog* (1962), it has been fated, in part, to the novelty of rediscovery.

Along with groups of our students, we have taken to moving through Los Angeles with *La città capitalista* in hand. Together, on-location, we use the book in line with the author's intentions: we name and document the forces we see in front of us and attempt to articulate how they act upon and determine the city. We share in a ground-up questioning process that subjects every visual and spatial arrangement to the same style of comparative reading that Brino practiced for decades. The students become familiar with the notion that no place is only that place in that moment; rather, everywhere is a node in a sequence of histories. And, in knowing that, a characteristic of Brino's work carries on.





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to pry it clear, / I mallet  
and chisel, pick and  
gad, / until the stone  
was dropping blood,  
but still I could not  
hear / the word the  
stone had said. // I threw  
it down beside the  
road / among a thou-  
sand stones / and as I  
turned away it cried  
the word aloud with-  
in my ear / and the  
marrow of my bones  
/ heard, and replied.

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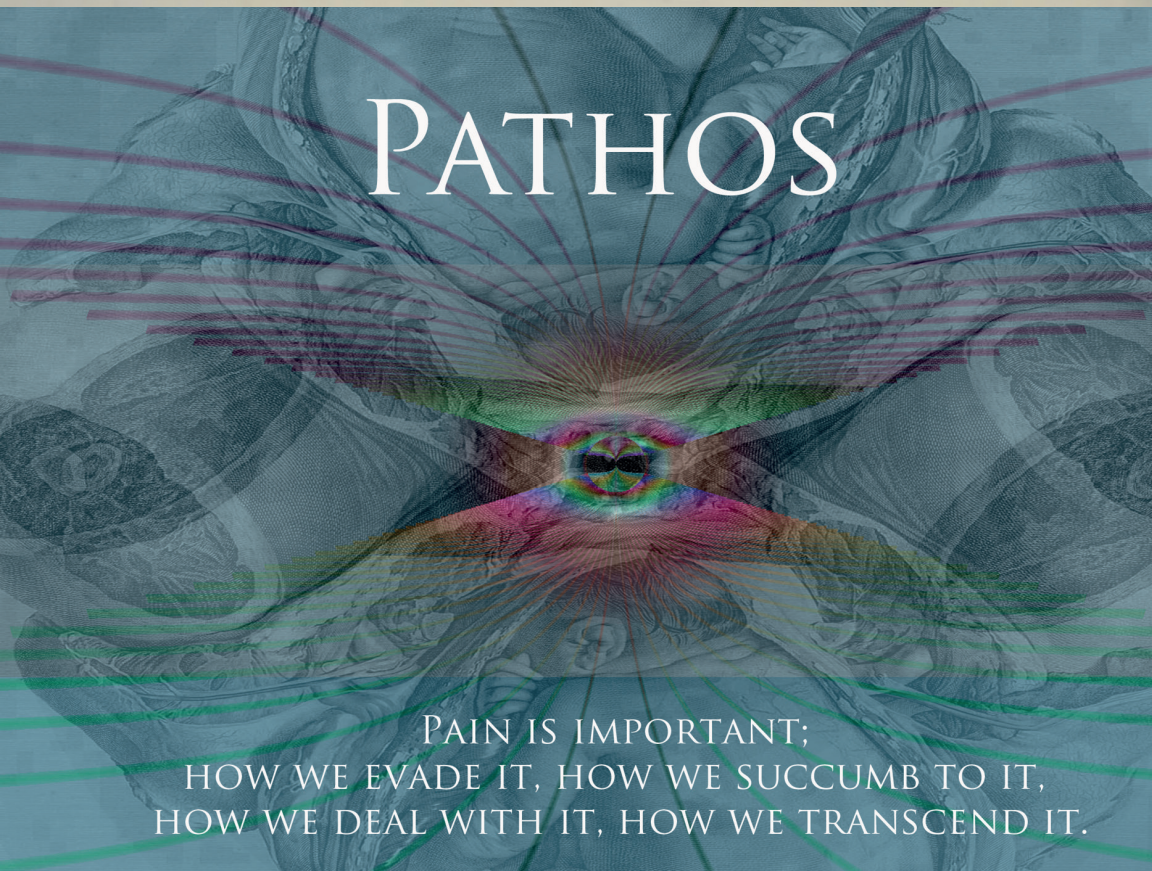
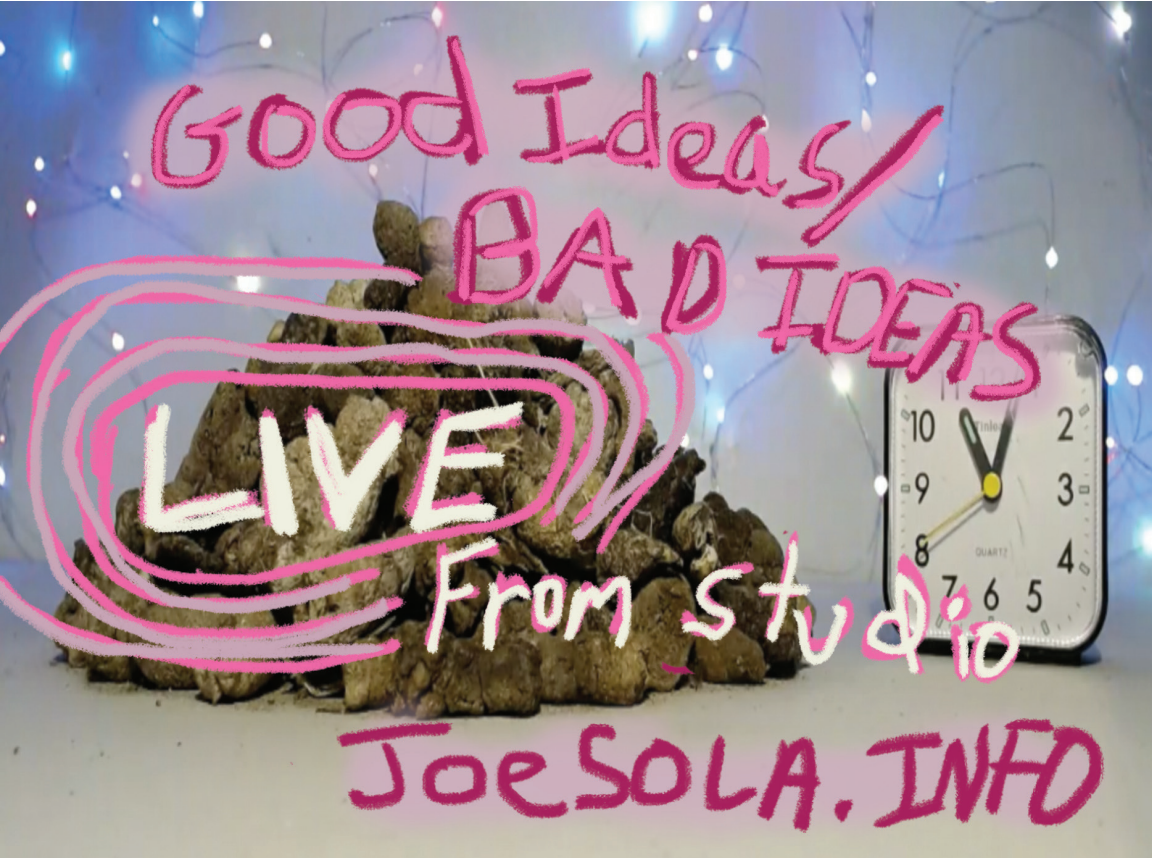
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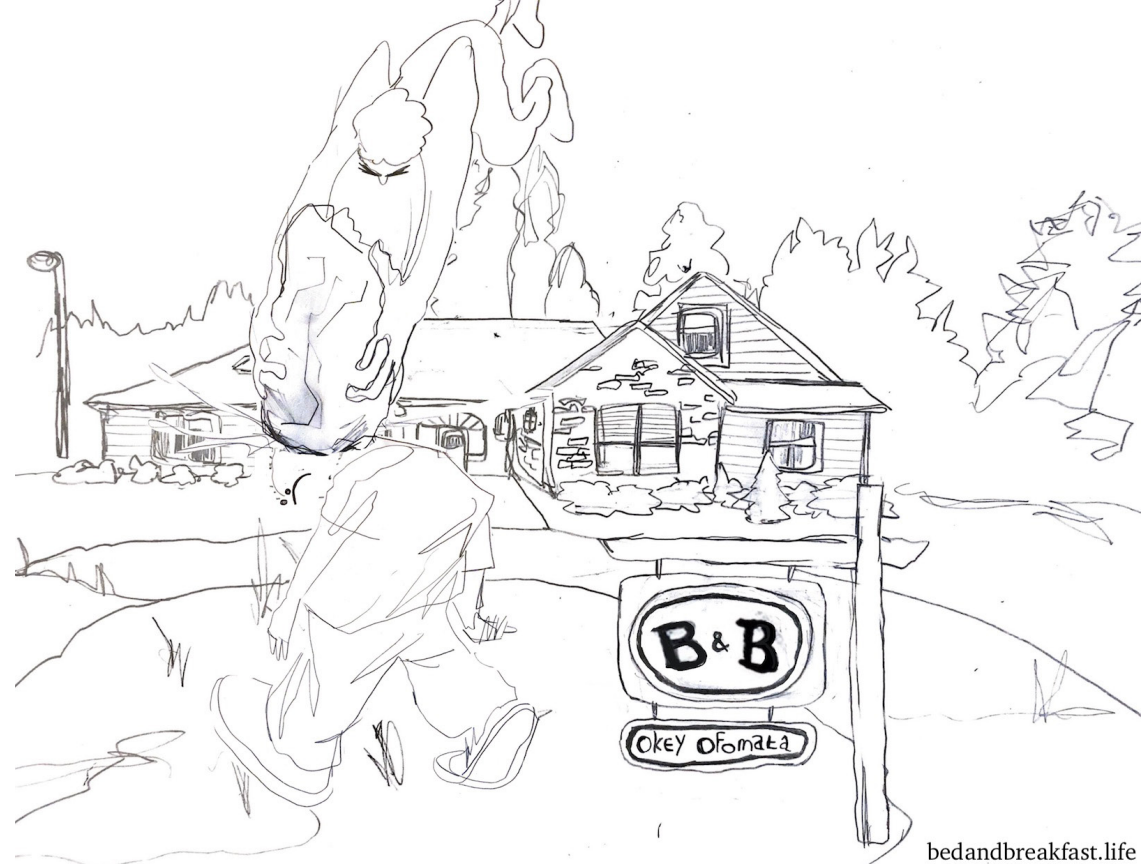
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FEEL LIKE SEEING THE GHOST  
OF A STRANGER, WEARING  
YOUR FAVORITE SHIRT, WHILE  
PASSING THEM IN TRAFFIC.

IF MY SON PICKS UP,  
(SOMETIMES DOES THIS  
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