

1 Death in the Making

ROBERT CAPA

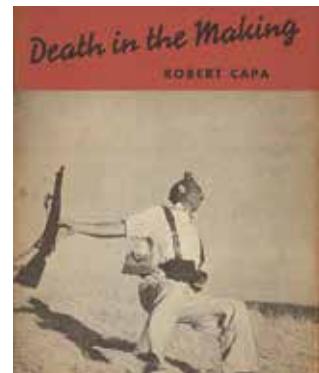
Robert Capa's (1913-1954) *Death in the Making* opens with a striking image: soldiers peering out of a troop train, fists raised, wide smiles. The caption reads: "They did not know that this was now a war. They could not have known what was in store for them." So begins a powerful documentation of the first year of the Spanish Civil War.

The book was first published in February 1938 – whilst the conflict was ongoing – to pay tribute to civilians and soldiers fighting against fascism. The publication was also dedicated to Gerda Taro – Capa's fellow photo-journalist and professional partner, who was killed at the Spanish front in July 1937. Together, they recount the emotions and harrowing realities of conflict.

The images are a testament to human resilience in the face of crisis, to sacrifice and tremendous courage. Capa's impactful photographs of Madrid show soldiers

waiting on the outskirts of the city, engaging in games of chess and writing letters home. "When they arrive, there will be no guarantee that the sender is still alive," he notes. Inside the capital, Capa reflects on the human impact of conflict: civilians living amongst wreckage, destroyed buildings and subways. The collection captures momentary victories alongside a sense of terror – blurred soldiers run into combat.

This new edition has arisen for multiple reasons – not least because the subject matter resonates with today's world. On the front cover is Capa's famous *Falling Soldier*, which records the death of a Republican militiaman in 1936. It is now listed as one of the 100 most influential images of all time. Cything Young, Curator at ICP, New York, notes: "If any photograph at the time could represent the beauty of sacrifice for cause, it was that one."



Words
Eleanor Sutherland

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damanieditore.com

2 The Architecture of Bathing

CHRISTIE PEARSON

"There must be quite a few things a hot bath won't cure, but I don't know many of them." Writing in praise of the humble bathtub in her 1963 novel *The Bell Jar*, Sylvia Plath celebrates the remedial delights of bathing and the near-spiritual experience of a good soak.

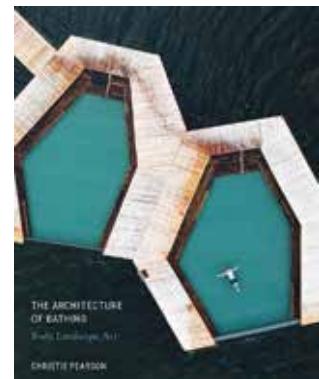
Christie Pearson, in *The Architecture of Bathing: Body, Landscape, Art*, also evangelises the art of immersion. Bathhouses have a long history as places of congregation: of cleansing, sex, prayer and healing. The story of where and how people bathe communally, writes Pearson, is an age-old one about intimacy and commons, from the ancient Roman baths to the lesbian and trans bathhouse events, like Pussy Palace in Toronto.

A mix of critical theory, art and biography, Pearson's queer, eco-feminist readings take the plunge into many cultures across the globe. Travel to Jordan and find

tourists free-floating on the salt-rich Dead Sea. Or India, where neighbours wash daily side-by-side: "You walk into the river, submerge yourself three times, then walk back out." Cover to cover, the book is culturally saturated.

Like bathing, the artwork is all about full immersion. Carl Sagan and Allen Ginsberg notably visited sensory-deprivation tanks for their mind-altering properties. Similarly, Pearson's own projects explore the transformative potential of immersive experiences. In 2006 she collaborated on *THEWAVES*, a sound installation in the form of a city-scale party, in which a downtown swimming pool was turned into a Roman *thermae* for a one-off Night Swim, featuring DJ sets amplified above and below water.

The Architecture of Bathing, then, is inherently about sense and censure: an excellent study into the artistic, medicinal and spiritual qualities of public bathing.



Words
Jack Solloway

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3 Women in Concrete Poetry 1959–1979

ALEX BALGIU & MÓNICA DE LA TORRE

A tongue probes the keys of a typewriter on the cover of *Women in Concrete Poetry*, interrogating its gently concave surfaces. In a series of further images, the tongue catches itself on the striker bars, seeking out the pinched spaces in-between. Readers might interpret this as a gesture of wry, interrogatory humour – a comment on stereotypical contrasts between masculine rationality as the seat of language and feminine sensuality as an untameable force playing at its edges. Or, perhaps, this is an attempt to seek out new ways of interacting with the written word and its tools of production.

The work in question is *Poema* (1979), by the Brazilian artist Lenora de Barros – a suitable title inviting myriad interpretations. Concrete poetry as a genre has always veered between literature and visual art. Indeed, as the editors note in their introduction to this collection of work

by 50 women based in countries from Japan to Uruguay, most of them avoided "prescriptive pronouncements." Suitably enough then, the "poems" run from the shimmering and towering typewriter creations of Paula Claire and Ruth Wolf-Rehfeldt to the cursive, hand-printed constellations of Suzanne Bernard and Annalies Klophaus. Other pieces incorporate performed gesture.

At the centre of these intersecting aesthetic and cultural strands is Mirella Bentivoglio – an Italian text-based artist whose 1978 all-female exhibition *Materializzazione del Linguaggio* is a call to action, to which this volume responds. However, this publication moves beyond Bentivoglio's Eurocentric curation to incorporate a truly global range of artists, practitioners and writers. This selection is a must-have for lovers of the linguistic in art – the visual in language – and all the spaces in-between.



Words
Greg Thomas

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Artbook
artbook.com