



General Idea: A Retrospective 1969-1994

Jean-Christophe Ammann, AA Bronson, Louise Dompierre, Elisabeth Lebovici, David Moos

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General Idea was founded in Toronto in 1969 by Felix Partz, Jorge Zontal and AA Bronson as a generic identity to free the artists “from the tyranny of individual genius.” Under the leadership of their fictitious muse Miss General Idea, and inspired by William Burroughs' conception of the “image virus,” the collective interrogated media image culture through now legendary projects like *File* magazine, as well as paintings, installations, sculptures, mail art, photographs, videos, ephemera, TV programs and even a beauty pageant. General Idea came to an end in 1994, when Partz and Zontal died of AIDS. Today General Idea can be seen to anticipate the later art collectives of the 1970s as well as aspects of Relational Aesthetics in the 1990s. This volume presents an overview of the Canadian collective's bold mingling of reality and fiction and their frequently transgressive, parodic incursions upon both art and society. It traces such prevalent themes of their oeuvre as the mystique of the artist and the creative process, glamour as a creative tool, art's relationship to media and mass culture, architecture and archaeology, sexuality and AIDS. Including newly commissioned essays and reprinted texts, this volume is richly illustrated with documents and reproductions of the most significant projects realized by General Idea between 1969 and 1994.

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