

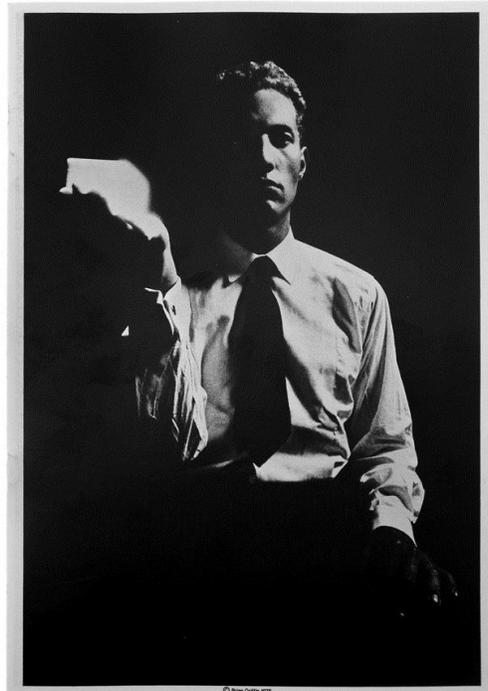
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HATJE CANTZ

Brian Griffin Copyright 1978

By Jeffrey Ladd

February 4, 2016



A couple weeks ago Bernd Detsch at [Art Book Cologne](#) Offered me a curious little booklet by the British photographer Brian Griffin. It was 34 pages Including the cover, staple-bound with seventeen black-and-white photographs Accompanied By curious line drawings in the page margins. There was seemingly no title except for a tiny script below the cover image did Stated © Brian Griffin 1978th

I have admired Brian's work for some years after buying a paperback copy of his book *Work* published in 1989 by his imprint Black Pudding. That book has Remained a favorite of mine, and one I recommend oft as to overlooked gem in the photobook world.

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His commissions for corporate portraiture began when he was 'discovered' by the Swiss Art Director, Roland Schenk of Management Today. His book *Open* which featured in Parr / Badger's *The Photobook: A History Vol II*, of which Badger describes Griffin's style of portraiture as "... always slightly subversive, its surreal qualities gently 'biting the hand it feeds him'."

A press release for his upcoming show at Steven Kasher Gallery describes his work a bit more succinctly than I can: "When Margaret Thatcher came to power in 1979, business and labor which empowered what belittled. To capture the heroes and victims of Thatcherism and globalization, Griffin invented a new photographic style, Capitalist Realism, parodying Socialist Realism. Griffin's photographs embody the essence of the decade, modish white-collars, rock bands suited up in business-casual and tin lunch-pail toting masons. Inspired by the bureaucratic and claustrophobic world of Kafka, by the French filmmaker Jacques Tati and by German Expressionist cinema, Griffin turned the workplaces in which he photographed into stages and his subjects into actors. "

I decided to ask Brian Griffin a few questions about this quirky little find. Jeffrey Ladd : You refer to this as a 'zine what it intended as a promotional piece for your professional commissions or an artistic statement?

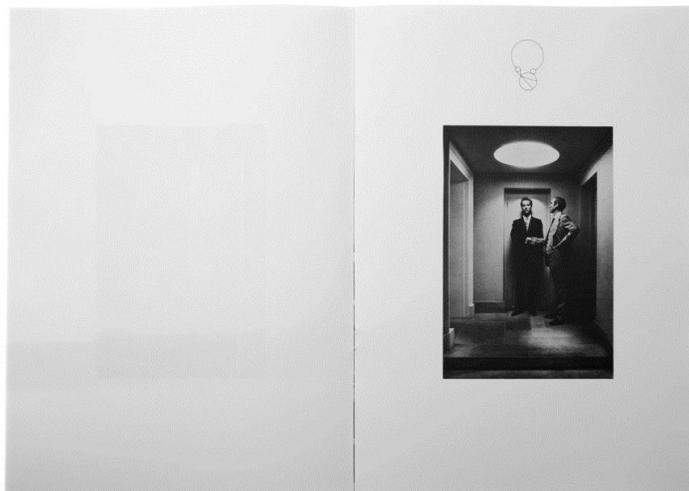
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Brian Griffin : It was an artistic statement. The whole book is a self-portrait of me at the time, with symbolic representations.

JL : How many were made?

BG : Maybe 500 copies. JL : Was it ever officially for sale?

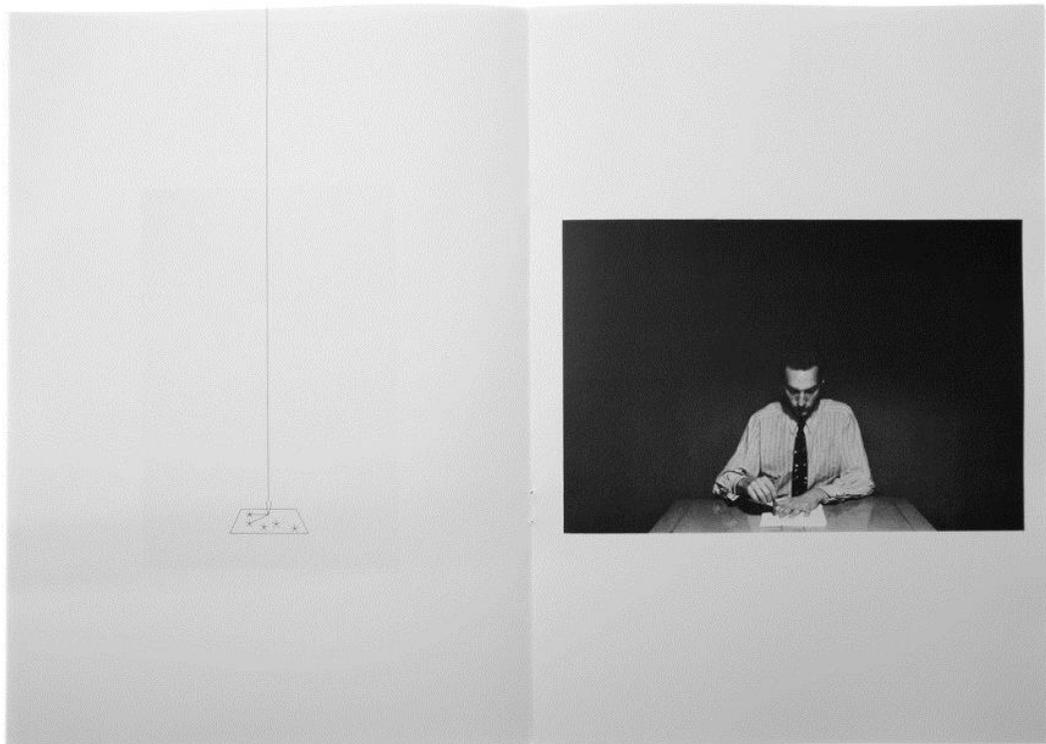


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BG : It was for sale at £ 1 but I only sold one! I then stored it for 30 years!

JL : There are large differences between the selection of images in the printed 'zine than on your website. Were there limitations to the printing cost or another reason did Caused this different edit?

BG : To my website I added Further images from the time as to afterthought. The images thatwere included in the 'zine were my favorites for this project at the time. JL : I am curious about the four images towards the end did appear as full page bleeds. What prompted the diversion in design?



BG : When the images expand to full bleed it which meant to take us into another zone.

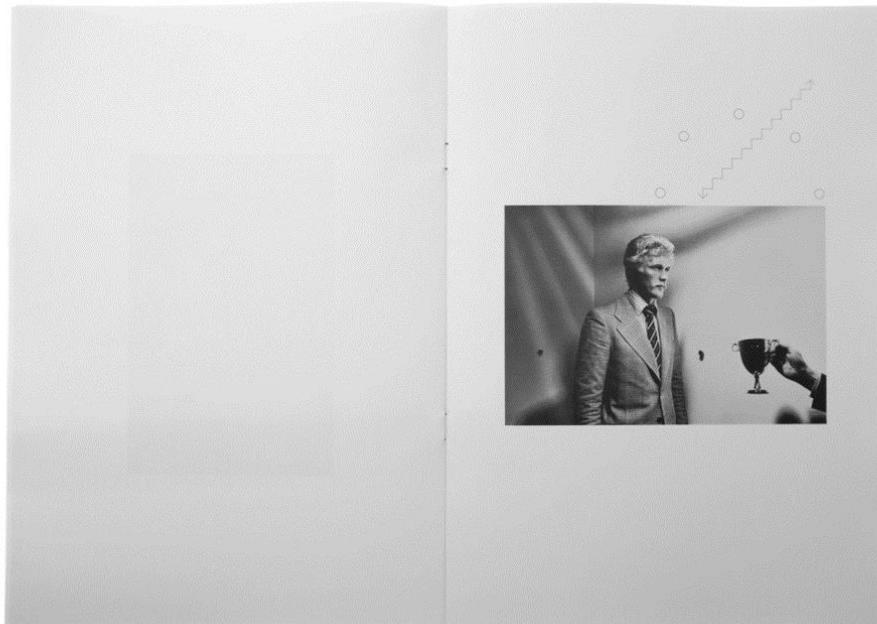
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JL : Were most of the subjects friends of yours? On your site you mention Simon Callow the film actor was a subject, who are the others in the photos?

BG : Charles Woods and Martin Cropper were friends. Martin Cropper is featured on the front cover and five other images. Charles Woods in two.

JL : There are two photos made near the ocean, They seem to greatly differentiate from the others.

BG : Those two were from a press session made for the band "The Pop Group" and shot near Weymouth. You have to remember I did was young, enthusiastic and really into expressionism. I was just starting to work on my music photography and that's how I met Barney. JL : On your website it mentions that "Barney Bubbles (who what to English graphic designer known for his album cover art and design) came to my flat in Chiswick London one evening and we came up with the concept for this' zine. "He Contributed the graphic drawings?

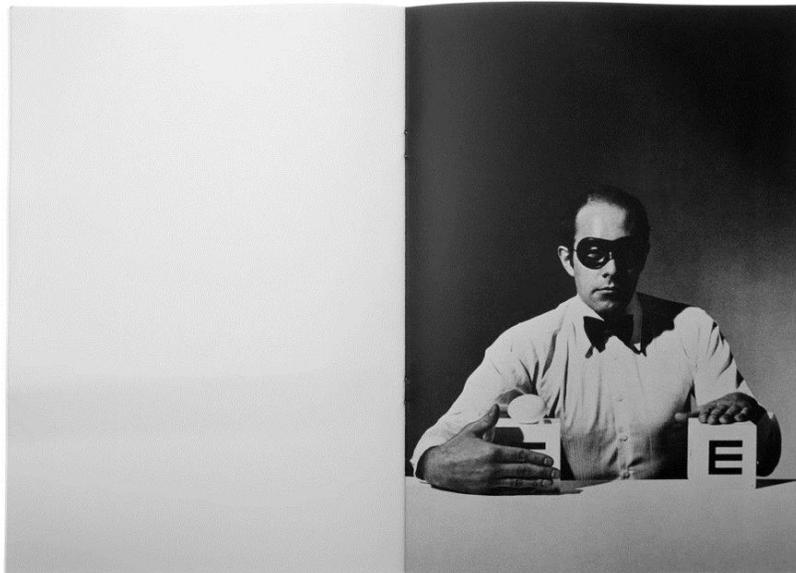


BG : Yes, each graphic symbolizes what I felt about Each image and Barney Could only use a line, Which of course Could be curved.

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JL : One Could Easily mistake the book for having no title. Originally what Brian Griffin Copyright 1978 Intended to be the title?

BG : That was the original title. That was a Barney'ism! JL : I had heard that this might be the first British self-published books from a photographer of your generation. Do you know if this is true?



BG : Yesterday I asked my friend Martin Parr to verify this, and to his knowledge, it is.

JL : Thank you Brian One last bit for music fans, one photo did Appear in *Copyright Brian Griffin 1978* is from a shoot for photos did graced the band Devo's *B Stiff* ep in 1977<sup>th</sup>

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