New Picture
The Work of Bea Feitler

curated by Marte Eknæs and Nicolau Vergueiro

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ROOM 1, WALL (clockwise from entrance)

Ms. Magazine covers (all reproductions)

Production elements for Ms. Magazine cover, Do Women Make Men Violent?, 1974.1 (reproduction)

Bea Feitler and Gloria Steinem xerox (with annotation by Charles Churchward), 1974, Photographer unknown.2

Ms. Magazine blank flat with grid, 1970-1975.1 (reproduction)

ROOM 1, VITRINE


Studio G pamphlet, 1960.2

Vanity Fair prototype box set, 1960.2

Rolling Stone, January 1981, photo by Annie Leibovitz.

Bea Feitler Driving, 1970’s, original print by Annie Leibovitz.2

O Homem Nú paperback book, Fernando Sabino, 1960.2

Young Bea Feitler Animated, 1950’s, original print, photographer unknown.2

Young Bea Feitler with Woodcut, 1950’s, original print, photographer unknown.2

ROOM 2, TABLE

Ms. (original magazines)

ROOM 2, VITRINE 1

Harper’s Bazaar (original magazines)

Bea Feitler and Ruth Ansel by Richard Avedon, 1965.1 (reproduction)

Bea Feitler portrait by Bob Richardson 1960’s.1 (reproduction)

Bea Feitler at Bazaar offices/reference wall diptych, 1965, photographer unknown.2

ROOM 2, VITRINE 2

Lesbian Images, Jane Rule, 1976, Hardcover book.2

Cameo metal etching plate, date unknown.2

Wonder Woman book endpapers, 1972. (reproduction)

Bea Feitler’s cameo, date and photographer unknown.2

Bea Feitler and Richard Avedon working of Diary of a Century, contact sheet, 1969, photographer unknown.2

Bea Feitler and Richard Avedon with Hire the Handicapped Poster, 1967.2


Original drawing by Bea Feitler, c. 1967 – (sketch for George Harrison poster).2

Diaghilev and the Ballets Russes endpapers, 1970. (reproduction)

George Harrison poster by Richard Avedon, 1968. (reproduction)

The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater program, 1971, photos by Bill King.2

Calvin Klein newspaper print ad, 1975, photo by Chris von Wangenheim. (reproduction)

White Women, Helmut Newton, 1972, Hardcover book.2

Hand print for Hire the Handicapped poster, 1967, by Richard Avedon.2

Bill King and Brazilian models, 1970, by Bea Feitler.2

Study for Hire the Handicapped poster, 1967, Photo by Richard Avedon. (reproduction)

Setenta magazine spread, 1970, photos by Bill King. (reproduction)

Bea Feitler on couch with Annie Leibovitz reflection, 1970s, by Annie Leibovitz.2

ROOM 2, WALL (clockwise from entrance)

Bea Feitler Night Portrait, 1970s, by Antonio Guerreiro.2

Harper’s Bazaar covers (all reproductions)

Harper’s Bazaar spreads (all reproductions)

Bea Feitler and Andy Warhol, negative print, photographer and date unknown.2

Bea Feitler in The Virgin Islands, 1969, photographer unknown.2


1 Bea Feitler papers; New School Archives and Special Collections Archive.
2 Collection of Bruno Feitler
VISUAL THEMES

CENTERFOLD - The centerfold of the double page becomes a basic structure for the division of time in the magazine narrative and also functions as structure for framing [...]. For a lot of photographers, the mere idea of defacing an image with the centerfold’s gully, or cropping it, as to obtain a better frame was, and continues to be, unacceptable. To watch how graciously and carefree Bea walked in this heretical terrain, is a pleasure. (AS)

SCALE SHIFT / PLAY - The contrast of scale is [also] very present [in Bea Feitler’s collaborative work]. Comparing large and small in graphic and photographic spaces, Bea and Ruth [Ruth Ansel, Bea’s co-art director at Harper’s Bazaar] take advantage of the proximity of the monumental and the fragile to create impossible scenes situated between the comic and the sublime. (AS)

TYPOGRAPHY - Bea treated typography as architecture and as image. Like architecture, it reinforced the structure and rhythm in the visual field. Like an image, it could function by itself, or with other images, creating a visual discourse, sophisticated and playful. (AS)

SILHOUETTE - A recurring personal trademark of Bea [...] was the feminine profile/silhouette. [...] [T]wo aspects are of interest here. Firstly, the profile is a generic sign, capable of bridging he individual and the female collective. Secondly, it is a form dipped in the shadows … in the mystery and the unknown. The relation of Bea and her profiles can be seen as an obsession with the unexplored potencies of the female identity… (AS)

HARPER’S BAZAAR

As an art director at Harper’s Bazaar, Bea’s work was, in her own words, “to imagine the scenarios of the fashion editorials to be published. To motivate the presented fashion with the set decor that frames it. To establish the models’ poses with the photographers. And to produce the layout, the pagination, of all texts and photos.” (BF)

Richard Avedon relayed the affinity between [Bea Feitler and Ruth Ansel]: It was 11pm, past all closing deadlines for the April 1965 issue, but the photos for the cover, taken by Avedon of model Jean Shrimpton wearing a helmet, didn’t work. “Ruth started to say that we could cut a helmet shape in fluorescent paper, but she never finished the sentence because Bea, humming a Wagner aria, was already doing so. Rubber cement, colorful swatches. An eighth of an inch between the pink helmet and gray background. No, a sixteenth of an inch. I was there but don’t know what happened! Everything took place in minutes, the moment was completely magical; to watch Bea, the classic, and Ruth, the modern, working as if they were one single person.” (BF)

DIARY OF A CENTURY

“A book is a thing that remains. A magazine is a thing of the moment”. (Bea Feitler)

To Bea the book [Diary of a Century, 1970] was a ‘labor of love’, which entailed two poorly paid years and intense dedication, compensated by her presence in the book’s credits. This is the origin of something which she was the only designer able to attain, and would make a point to do so ever since: credit on the frontispiece, in the same landing as the authors and/or editors, and often times even royalties, reaffirming her belief that “contemporary books should be fifty-fifty in terms of words and images.” This conquest reveals somehow the importance that Bea’s work had to her. (BF)

“IT doesn’t matter what I make, whether it’s aesthetic or commercial, it all comes from my guts.” (Bea Feitler)

MS. MAGAZINE

“Any woman who is committed to being an individual is a feminist. Any woman who is intelligent is feminist. Any woman who values herself has to be feminist. I was never involved in the movement. I think I was liberated before any women’s lib.” (Bea Feitler)

If feminism in the United States gained power in the early 1970’s, and if Ms. Magazine was its principal mouthpiece, then the power and popularity of the feminist movement in the United States is in direct consequence of the magazine’s graphic project. Exaggeration? Not so much. (AS)

If at Harper’s Bazaar Bea flirted with pop culture, at Ms. it was a torrid romance, with no hesitation to make mistakes or exaggerations. The publication’s territory was that of heterogeneity. ‘The read is blunt, immediate: all black and white, or rather green and pink. (AS)

Ms.’ approach, in its graphic production, seems to distance itself from that of magazines and to approximate it to that of fanzines, which, not by chance, were also staking grounds in the 1970’s, propelled by another radical movement – punk. (AS)

Suzanne Levine, editor of Ms. 1972-1988, remembers that Bea would convince people to cut their texts to give more space to images […] Levine remembers that there was no authority at Ms., that the work was more horizontal rather than vertical. Which, without a doubt, gave Feitler even more freedom to bring art, fashion and rock ‘n’ roll into the magazine. (BF)

The publication was, according to Charles Churchward - Bea’s assistant at the time, also part of the emergence of thematic magazines. […] [T]here were no models or basis to be followed: almost everything was experimental. (BF)

ROLLING STONE

Bea’s link with Rolling Stone was through Annie Leibovitz. In 1975, the photographer insisted that Bea was to design a photo editorial special called Capturing the Soul. Seven Master Photographers And the Tools of their Magic Trade, with the works of Henri Cartier-Bresson, Ansel Adams, Richard Avedon, Helmut Newton, Andy Warhol and Ken Regan, and images of these photographers taken by Leibovitz. (BF)

The first big impact was the magazine’s 10th anniversary issue, published on December 15th, 1977. Therein, the layout of Annie Leibovitz’s photo article was a brazen virtuoso demonstration in the selection and creation of a multi-level dialogue between the seemingly arbitrarily unarranged photographs. Bea’s attentive eye, distilled a mound of photographs, re-associating them in thematic meta-discourses, that not only helped reconstruct the decade’s history of American entertainment [as depicted in the article], but also revealed deeper structures in Annie Leibovitz’s work. The mock layouts, energetically and willfully annotated and marked, demonstrate well how malicious Bea was with the montage, re-elaboration and refinement in the photo selections as well as in the dialogue between the images. […] Bea constructs a second layer discourse from these image selection transforming them into an openly monothematic grouping in a semantic banquet. (AS)

Bea marked the magazine’s appearance in an indelible manner. Her impact was impressive, as with the magazine’s transformation from the tabloid to the present format she made in 1981. (AS)