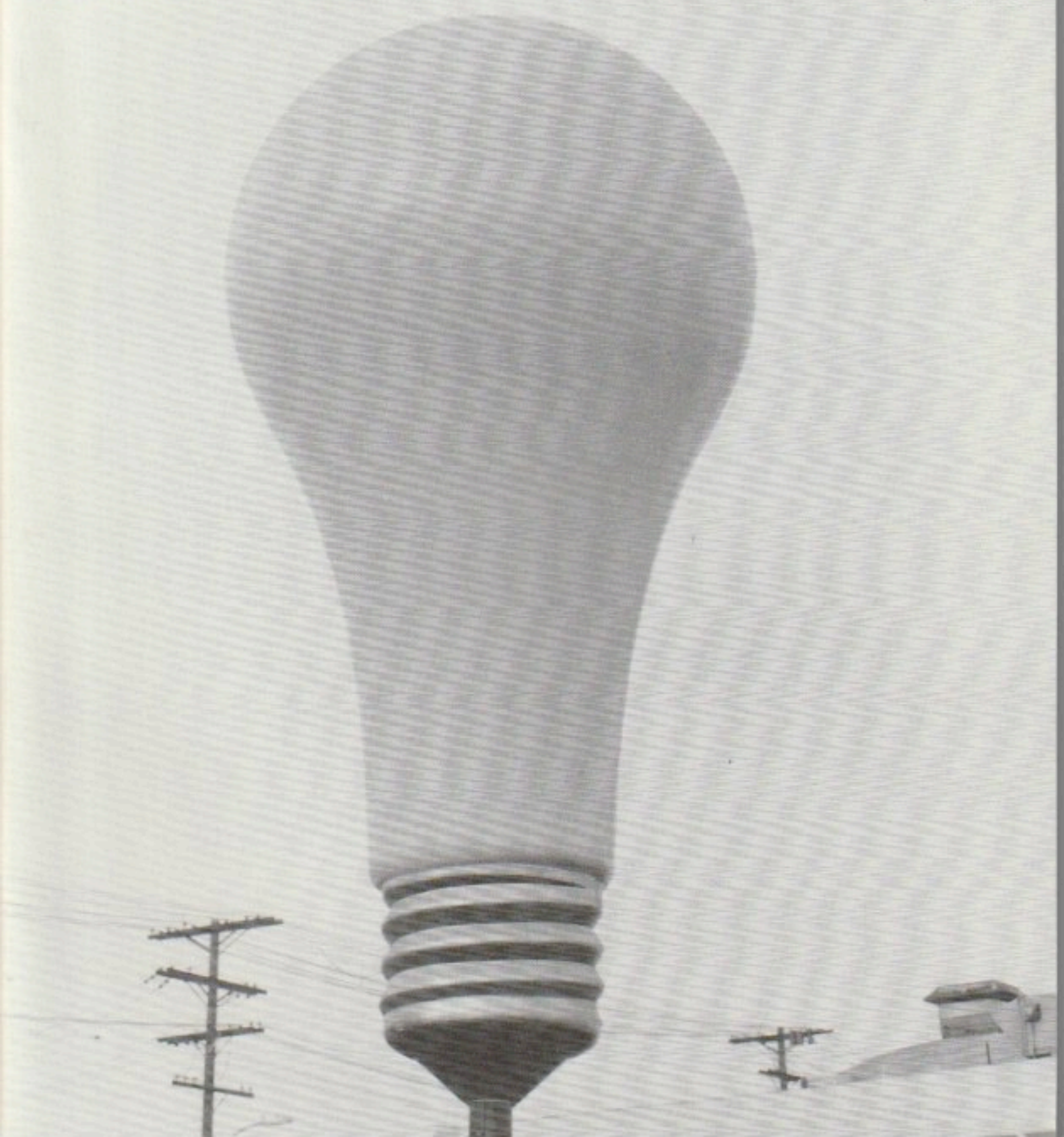


REAL LIFE

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Associated Press

Strollers near a shrubbery replica of the Great Wall, which was installed in Tienanmen Square in Beijing in preparation for the coming National Day as well as the 13th Communist Party congress.

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REAL LIFE MAGAZINE

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FRONT COVER Thomas Lawson: Light in LA.

I have a clipping from the New York Times, a smudgy photograph of three genetically identical bulls. I keep it in my studio, part of the disordered pile of random images I regularly sift through looking for useful connections. I'm sure this picture holds a clue to something I've been looking for; it keeps returning to the surface, demanding attention yet never quite managing to translate into something useful. I find myself looking at these bulls over and over again because the certainty of perfection they embody is so alarmingly ludicrous. In this they seem of a piece with so many of the "success" manias of the eighties, great accomplishments that need never have happened.

Part of the fascination of the picture undoubtedly has to do with its grubby, nondescript rendering of a grandiose, yet pointless ambition. Just what is the benefit of having three identical bulls? And if there was a point wouldn't you want to show them off to better advantage? And if they are identical in every way, does that mean the bullshit is too? There is no end once the questions begin. Is this the same scientific approach to farming that improved cattle feed by adding sheep brains to the mix, thereby creating the new "mad cow disease" and terrifying the British public into giving up its beef habit? Or, to change the subject, is there a similarity between this and the desire to build three hugely vulgar casinos in Atlantic City where one would more than suffice? Or again, to bring it all closer to home, does the picture resonate because the three bulls make me think of that perfect marriage of theory and practice, the sculpture in edition? That they seem to have that indistinct, yet definitively inflated sense of importance one associates with any number of "successful" artists of the past decade?

When Susan and I first started publishing this magazine in 1979 the big issue in the art world was still originality, as now it is the supposed impossibility of the same. Both are essentially trumped up issues to mask a fear of the processes of history, which is to say the processes of aging. What Western culture craves is the stasis of perfect reproduction, an endless renewal

of the same thing. With that comfortably in place it can then be declared that time is banished, communism defeated, and all the evils of the world put to rest. Fortunately for our safety and sanity this illusion of perfection constantly slips out of reach, proves as fugitive as my blurred picture of perfect bulls. But it is rarely art which accomplishes this, more often it is the brute realities of life; the inevitable intrusion of sickness, pain and death reconcile most of us to the realization that a craving for perpetual youthfulness is an unforgivably kitsch nostalgia. Yet the culture as a whole has such an investment in denying the realities

of the body in favour of a fantasmagoria of untroubled sexuality and familial bliss that the requirement that artists work against the current manifestations of this ideology in the culture that enfolds them takes on a moral imperative.

As editors we have tried to follow that injunction, rejecting current plati-

tudes as the arse-licking they invariably are. When we first started the magazine the pious rectitude of post-minimalism held sway in the art world, and we confronted that with the shameless thievery and media fascination of appropriationist work. When that in turn became acceptable enough for the pages of *Artforum* and *Art in America* and the walls of the Whitney Museum, we went looking for other artists, other ways of working. We have managed never to be of the mainstream, but much of what we have published has gone on to find acceptance there temporarily. With luck and perseverance, we will continue on this path for the decade to come.

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For this issue, to celebrate our survival and see how things have changed, we asked all those who have been part of our history to send in something new. We asked that contributions be short, taking up one or two pages. Some people went over, others never showed up at all. In the end we think it's a pretty good issue, a fair reflection of possibilities as we go into a period of continued battle over the direction of our shared culture, and the impact that culture has on our lives.

