

Flat i presents THE STUART SHERMAN PAPERS BOOK LAUNCH plus films
Thursday, 5 June 2025 at DE UITKIJK, Amsterdam

THE STUART SHERMAN PAPERS

Edited by Michiel Huijben and designed by Loes Verstappen. Texts by Sally Banes, Mark Bradford, Michiel Huijben, and Nicholas Martin. Photography by Nathaniel Tileston and Paolo Rapalino. Copy editing by Harriet Foyster. Lithography by Marc Gijzen. Published in an edition of 500 copies by Flat i, Amsterdam, 2025.

This collection of poetry, prose, and other texts is the first publication dedicated to the writing of the late performance, video, and visual artist Stuart Sherman.

Though well known in the 1970s and 80s for his performance work, in particular his *Spectacles*, Sherman’s expansive practice reached far beyond the stage. He wrote avidly, his experimental use of language serving as a testing ground for ideas, gestures, and signs, for the collision of objects and feeling. Through his poems, scripts, jokes, stories, and even student feedback, Sherman evoked whole worlds just as quickly as he disassembled them.

The Stuart Sherman Papers presents a selection of facsimile reproductions of text from his archive at NYU’s Fales Library. This collection of entries is not exhaustive but conveys the diversity in Sherman’s writing, which used the ever-expanding vocabulary of the English language as a plastic material to study the abundance of meaning that can be derived through playing with combinations, order, and proximity of words. The texts reproduced in this book leave his edits, scribbles, and notes to self intact, presenting the page as Sherman last engaged with it.

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Presented by Flat i and organised by Michiel Huijben. Poster and programme designed by Robert Milne. Films courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI) and the Estate of Stuart Sherman, New York. Thanks to Mark Bradford, Harriet Foyster, Matt Hinkley, Robert Milne, and Filmtheater De Uitkijk.

STUART SHERMAN (1945–2001) was a New York-based visual artist, performer, filmmaker, actor, playwright, and poet, best known for his *Spectacles*: programmes of short, mostly wordless choreographies performed on portable tabletops using a variety of everyday objects. He created over twenty *Spectacles* as well as larger-scale dramatic works, which he performed in theatres, galleries, living rooms, and on street corners throughout the US and abroad. In addition to his performance work, Sherman’s practice comprised an expansive variety of visual and literary media. Sherman died of AIDS in San Francisco in September 2001.

‘I don’t have an “aesthetic philosophy” as such, but I am passionately devoted to creating work which, though its roots may lie in my individual thinking and experience, transcends myself and touches what is essential and universal. But as I believe the essential and universal can assume infinite forms of outward expression, I try to create pieces whose forms, though clear and concise, allow the audience maximum latitude in their response and interpretation.

My creative process involves, often, picking a subject or object at random and then seeing what it suggests to me, both consciously and unconsciously. This may take the form of visualizing specific actions or images, or writing fragments of text. Constantly, through this period, I analyze what occurs to me and assess its multi-dimensional associative content—its relation to feeling, thought, spirit—always bearing in mind that my ultimate goal is to create a performance that resonates as variously and as deeply as possible.’—Stuart Sherman

Paris (0°Midnight)

Stars light the street lights,
The street lights light the café lights,
The café lights warm my chocolat,
My chocolat warms me.

København

One straight dark blue line sections the city into one straight dark blue line.

Amsterdam (Just Outside My Window)

An angel moults, flies naked across the canal and, fully feathered, descends
into a candy shop.
Inspired, I open the window and start to unbutton my shirt.

Vienna

Guarding absent treasure,
The old lions, yawning, roar.

A little boy, his pockets bulging, shovels sand into the lions’
shadows.

BERLIN

West

In the green parks weak young women eat expensive lunches and stare enviously
at the mighty statues fasting.

East

In the green parks strong young men eat inexpensive lunches and avoid the
envious stares of the mighty statues fasting.

PROGRAMME

7–11 P.M.

THE STUART SHERMAN PAPERS

BOOK LAUNCH with drinks

8 P.M.

ABOUT THIS BOOK by Michiel Huijben

8:15 P.M.

**STUART SHERMAN'S TENTH SPECTACLE
(PORTRAITS OF PLACES)**

1978, 29:40 min.

Camera: Mel Andringa.

'I have always been disappointed with the way people speak about their travels. They sum up places quickly in a few clichés, but would never have the nerve to do so about their own lives. Also, they speak as if the world existed outside of them; I don't think anything exists outside of them.'—Stuart Sherman

A Stuart Sherman *Spectacle* consists of many brief manipulations, each demonstrating a complex idea through a precise sequence of simple actions performed with common objects in an unusual context. The manner of the performance is rapid and informal.

In the *Tenth Spectacle*, subtitled *Portraits of Places*, each manipulation evokes the essence of Sherman's response to various world cities, including Paris, New York, Cairo, Istanbul, and Amsterdam, as well as such combination portraits as Tokyo/Milan, St. Petersburg/Los Angeles/Eden, and Toulouse/Lyon.

Sherman originally made drawings—ideographic renderings of relationships among objects, which he has subsequently realised more directly and three-dimensionally through his performance *Spectacles*. Through the medium of film, Sherman has been able to apply his *Spectacle*-vocabulary more broadly to the world-at-large by utilising diverse elements of the natural environment.

Produced at the University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa, 1980. Preserved by EAI in collaboration with the Fales Library & Special Collections, NYU and the Barbara L. Goldsmith Preservation Lab, NYU Libraries.

8:45 P.M.

VIDEO WORKS compiled by EAI, New York
1986–94, 25 min.

This selection of later video works by Stuart Sherman, produced in the 1980s and 90s, continue his idiomatic manipulations of everyday objects and situations. Throughout his artistic career, Sherman never limited himself to any one art form, and these works show his agility in adapting his practice to the unique syntax of video. Though he makes use of direct camera addresses and basic video editing, the conceptual witticism of his minimalist *Spectacles* performances is evident, as it is in his own poetic written encapsulations of each work.

BERLIN (WEST)/ANDERE RICHTUNGEN
1986, 6 min.

Camera/Editing: Martin Koerber.

'Between the video and its shadow falls the wall.'

SON OF SCOTTY AND STUART
1993, 5 min.

Camera: Dan Walworth. Editing: John McGheehan.
Performer: Scotty Snyder.

'Whom does the green chair most resemble—Scotty, me, or you?'

BILL RICE'S BEER GARDEN
1994, 5 min.

With: Bill Rice. Camera: Nancy Pearlman.
Editing: Dekart Video/Dieter Froese.

'Burp—it's spring!'

ME AND JOE
1994, 4 min.

With: Joseph Pallister. Camera/Post Production:
Dekart Video/Dieter Froese.

'Just the two of us, on tape forever.
(But my VCR's so out of shape!).'

8 EGGS
1994, 5 min.

With: Barbara Wise. Camera/Editing: Robert Beck.

'You've got to break a few eggs to make a video run along the cracks in a plateful of scrambled notes.'