

Working in their small apartment in Hollywood, California, Ewa Wojciak together with her partner Bruce Kalberg published NO Magazine (NOMAG), from 1978 to 1986. During a time when anyone could get on stage without having a band, they not only documented those temporal events of art, music, fashion and politics, but also staged and reinvented them. Following the L.A. Art Bookfair 2019 and after an interview on Montez Press Radio between V. Vale and Ewa Wojciak, we sat down with Wojciak for further discussion. The conversation that follows is partly about NOMAG, but also about the socio-economic changes in L.A., the punk culture during the Reagan Era, her work as founding art director of the L.A. Weekly, her current projects and more.

EW What's your next issue about?

AD The upcoming issue is dedicated to Love, and the issue afterwards will be dedicated to Economy.

EW And which issue am I in?

AD Economy [laughter]

EW I ran into somebody yesterday, a girl I used to know who was in a punk band called Mechanical Bride. She is a little bit older now, and I spotted her at the fair, standing at the side, and the first thing she said to me was: "I don't believe in love and I don't care if I ever have sex again" [laughter]. That stuck with me, so it's good that I am not going into the love issue. She said: "Love could never happen."

AD But is she right? Love could never happen?

EW That's what she said. I didn't say it. I think it happens, but economy, I don't know if economy happens either...I don't know...economy. What about economy?

AD The magazine is very open once we have a theme. For instance, we invited Harry Gamboa Jr. for a contribution, possibly he will write about how Chicanos became excluded from the art market in the early '60s in L.A.

EW That's true. But everybody became excluded by the art market, except galleries like Gagosian or Hauser & Wirth and you know, the big galleries. The art market is one thing, it's a closed club for collectors, that's my opinion, you know. It's a lot like artists being pushed out of the arts district, we are now in the arts district and I doubt there is any artist left working here, because nobody can afford to live here. And in New York there is a similar situation, you know...why everybody went to Brooklyn, right? It's just, I think, making a living as an artist...I don't know. I had an art teacher at my university who said, "Maybe three of you will continue to make art in ten years, come see me those three, whoever you are."

TL I had a professor at the university who told us as the first assignment to go and find an Art Forum from the year and month we were born and research the artist on the cover. Most of them were names no one has heard of. We were supposed to ask: "Where are they now? Are we doing this for one year or are we doing this because we think we are important enough to matter in 21 years?"

EW If you're doing things to matter then you shouldn't be an artist anyway. I mean for me, in design I get that, you have to consider the audience and you work for an audience, and maybe if you are an established artist you have to work for a gallery, you have to continue to look the same so that you become believable to a collector, right? And if you show them that you look the same, year after year, then you are a good investment, and they'll have you back. I don't know, I believe in knowing your audience and knowing where you belong, but that's also because I work as a designer, but I'm trained as an artist. I walk a grey zone depending on who I am talking to and depending what day of the week it is. So, I have a freelance practice, I have had a successful career. My magazines are kind of the flip of that, they were never made [to make money]. We always hoped that we would make money, but we never made a cent, and we never

really thought we would. Right now, selling at the fairs is probably the most money I have ever made on those magazines, and it took 15 years, which is crazy. But Harry is right about...Chicanos were excluded, blacks were excluded, women have been always excluded and I think there is a quest to even it out right now, but I...I'm really curious if it lasts, if it's like, you know, sort of like the moment or if it is actually something that people would commit to. Because with the governments and the way they are right now, not only here but everywhere, there is so much more racism and anger and craziness that...

TL One really interesting thing that you brought up the other day was that you and Vale started your magazine projects during the Reagan Era.

EW One of these stories about the Reagan Era...there was a really strange moment...where I remember...it was early maybe Sunday or Saturday morning...I think Sunday morning...and in those days when Bruce and I lived in this little apartment in Hollywood and...we were just waking up and Saturday night was always like a late night, there would be club, an after club and all this other stuff. I don't know what time it was, maybe noon or something, and the phone started ringing. I picked it up and it was a friend. They said, "You've got to turn on the TV," and after that somebody else called and said "Turn on the TV," so I turned on the TV. And on Sunday mornings they would have *The Evangelists*, they had Jimmy Swaggart, who was a really big evangelist on [TV]...and he was holding up a NOMAG on TV, a kind of preaching thing, and saying that the devil had come and this publication was the sign that the devil was in our children and we've got to fight the devil, and I don't remember what else, you know...and we were sitting on the edge of the bed and being just like "wow"...[laughter]. I remember Bruce saying, "This is so good, this is finally advertising, free advertising," and years later Bruce, and he was brilliant, funny and smart, and he said, "Let's try to get the magazine banned, let's try to get it banned, and if we do let's put it on the cover: *Banned in Los Angeles*, you wait and see, this will be really good." This was what he thought we could do [laughter].

The Reagan Era was a funny time in Los Angeles. It was right after I graduated from college, and what happened is they started cutting back all the funds for arts at school, they took away all the arts funding—they took a lot of different stuff away, but specifically for artists. So, it meant to that it was going to be harder to do art, even going to the school became harder. The other thing they did, which is currently very visible in Los Angeles, was that they let a lot of people out of hospitals early, because they cut the funding for mental hospitals, and that's where the whole homeless population comes from, they threw people on the street and they literally created the whole kind of downside of downtown. It was really neutral before then and then all of a sudden...it wasn't so much that there were many homeless people, they were mentally ill people, people with addictions, people who weren't stable, you know. Downtown at that time was just starting to grow. There was nothing here, a few artist's studios and industrial buildings and whole



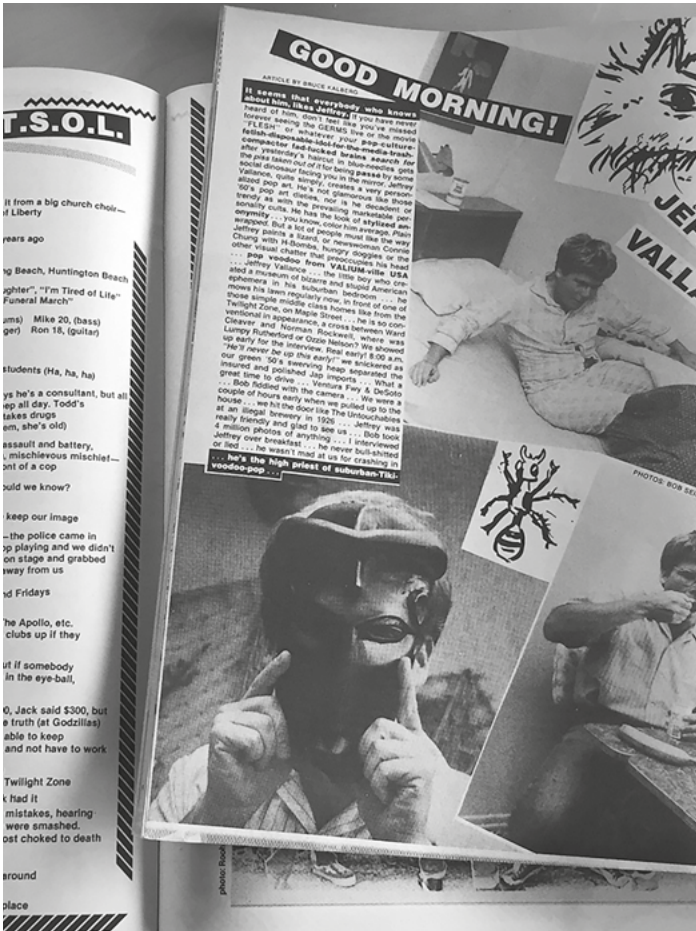
blocks of nothing...and then there were [all of the] homeless people. And then what happened is that a few artists moved down here with the promise that they would have studios. But people were starting to get hurt a lot, you know, cars were broken into, people were stabbed...I mean this kind of little dream, cheap rent thing didn't work out like it was supposed to. A lot of people moved down here, stayed down here, maybe for a year and then got back out...and this was supposed to be the Downtown boom and this is the third boom down here and this one's stuck. Now there are a lot of investments and money here, but in those days, there was nothing. So, there was a club called Al's Bar down here...and we used to go there...and we sold the NO Magazines out of our car trunk, or you just brought them to a show or whatever. A very different time, that's the Reagan Era, all those kids that just graduated from school and all the musicians...everybody felt that if you were creative...there was no support for you at all. Not that there was ever a huge system, but there was at least this kind of fantasy of freedom after the hippies, that you can hitchhike across the country, you could go to San Francisco, you could come to L.A., you could be free, be right, you could invent yourself, that's the whole new dream, the myth...you come here, you find yourself and get discovered and something happens. There was a period of time where that could actually happen a little bit for a few people. You know at that point, when the magazine was being printed, they killed that dream and so it meant you could do anything, and that's the punk. You could change your name. I didn't have to be Ewa, I could be Ewa Destruction, you could be Alice Bag and everybody took on a different name, right? You look at band names, they are all negative. The Destroyers, Suicidal Tendencies, The Screamers, but it's play, it's play against the system, sort of, you know? And anybody could get on stage, really anybody could, it's like...I decided I wanted to be in a band, I would take my three friends and we would figure it out...You didn't have to make music, we could just call it music, or we could call it performance, or we could call it...getting on stage and we are a band, you know? It didn't really matter and nobody really cared and that's also the big business, versus people that are just like...you know, we might as well be having some fun, because nothing good is gonna come anyway. It was also cheaper to live here in L.A., you know you could have an apartment here. In those days I think I paid for my apartment at the high point \$400, and I had a two-bedroom big apartment and people could come over. For \$400 dollars I lived really well. I know people who lived for \$200!

TL Vale said \$37 [laughter].

EW Vale has been in the same apartment for something like 45 years, he's never moved.

AD Crazy, when did it all change?

EW The '60s were like, the hippies right, and it was like everybody was younger and protesting...the '70s were...Most people went to school and then joined a band, I mean my friends there were either in a band or they were post-art school people. There weren't really any real jobs unless you went into entertainment, and for entertainment you have to be trained. That's actually my background, but I am not trained...My whole career is an accident of some sort. I trained for fine arts and I didn't know what I was gonna do with that, because I just wanted to draw, you know. But, when did it change here? So, the '70s was also disco, the big record company stuff here, Reagan, and you saw corporations, entertainment, cocaine...you know, a lot of high living kind of started to happen and a lot of people being very marginalized and a whole community being shut out of possibilities. And then in the early '80s I think a lot of the bands started, it started to be a scene, you know, rather than an accident. There were more clubs, more people, some bands started to form their own record companies, so they were pressing their own records and going out, there was lot of entrepreneurship, lots of stuff happening and it was fun, but in the art scene came a lot of cocaine and then came meth and heroin into that, and



that also was a big part of the L.A. culture at that point. And then in the '90s everybody was either in a rehab center, dead, or had totally changed their lives around, suddenly they were... their parents passed away and left them some money and they were concerned with real estate, a house, a baby or a better car... that was the '90s, you know? And then everybody was doing pretty well financially here in L.A. and out of the '90s comes all of those buildings and real estate stuff and in 2000 comes downtown, you know, all the kind of groovy companies. I mean, L.A. was always cool to the people that were here, but always looked down upon by New York, the people in San Francisco were just different, you know? I lived in San Francisco for two years. I found it to be like a big small town. L.A. is this weird place that you don't understand because if you're driving, which is what you have to do down here, you don't see it. It was just different, very, very different, and that's why the art here was so strong, because it had nothing to prove as a city. New York thought it would be the shit, but L.A. could do whatever it wanted, and you could come here and be free. And then New York artists started to come here, because they found it cheaper, and it's freer, it's easy to be cool here, it's easy to be, you know, Instagram hot. It's very easy here. I don't know New York, I never lived in New York, I only visited New York, but in L.A. it's an easy culture to work. You know, if you want to, you can rise, I think, very quickly if you are smart, you can manipulate media, you can do very well here, that's what we do. I don't think it's a bad thing, not a critique by me, I just think it's just a different... Mentality?

AD Yes, so you have a lot of entrepreneurs, you have a lot of young businesses here, you know, young people making it. Personally, I think a lot of stuff doesn't have, maybe, the substance. It has the look but it doesn't have a lot of depth, it's just an idea and somebody runs with it, but I mean, that's ok. I think people should be able to do stuff and make stuff, I think that's cool. What happens to people my age, a lot of them started to be shut out because they didn't make it big when they were younger, so now L.A. has become expensive, you see that with the Mexican community, they are being pushed out of a lot of areas, you see that with a lot of communities, and artists, they are always the first.

TL It seems like the big difference is maybe that in the '70s there was some power in having nothing left to lose.

EW I think so. Your generation, because of the media scene in the culture, it's a great equalizer. You know, so you got a like on Facebook, and you got a like on Instagram, right? And so you can't really fail because you are all sort of the same, you know you are all doing ok [laughter].

TL Or we are all trying hard to appeal to others with what we are doing.

EW But you think ok is normal, whereas we didn't think ok was so normal. So, what I'm saying is that there is an expectancy and we didn't have an expectancy at a certain level of lifestyle, right?

AD What do you mean, when you say you didn't have an expectancy of lifestyle?

EW I mean nobody I know expected to get rich. I mean that was never part of the conversation with anybody I know. I know now if people talk about, I am gonna turn this into that, I am gonna, ... you know, I am gonna show it here and there and I am gonna take that money and I'm gonna do this, and this and this... that's a normal conversation now, that's not unusual, right?

TL I mean, part of it is...we live with constant images of success. We're surrounded by a very singular, absolute image of what success looks like. But now you graduate from art school and you already start with *debt*...

EW That's the big difference.

TL So, you have to make money even just to have a home, which is no longer \$400 but two grand. So, money is already part of the classroom, and if you are playing that game then yeah, that is my criteria for success, no matter what. Whereas it seems there was a time when you had a multiplicity of criteria for success, one of which can just be doing what you wanna do, or making art with friends.

EW I think you are absolutely right, I mean coming out of school with debts, that's a huge, huge responsibility on people.

TL What was the socio-economic landscape for most of the people in the punk scene at the beginning in L.A.?

EW Well, I think at least, let's say a quarter, of L.A. kids had zero... but there were some really wealthy kids here too who were slumming. You always wondered why some people stayed up all night and then got up at 9 a.m. in the morning and went at a job, right...and some people didn't and you always wondered how they would do it. There were a lot of people who were on trust funds or came from wealthy homes. That existed here and that exists here still.

TL I guess people at the extreme ends of the socio-economic spectrum have the *nothing to lose* thing in common. If you're poor and have nothing left to lose you can say fuck it and stay up all night, and if you have a trust fund that's not going anywhere you can say fuck it and stay up all night.

EW Except there is a difference when there is a net at the bottom. It depends on how far you fall and how long you can do it because at some point you can't get go back, say dad [laughter], I need to live a little bit better, I need to change my life. There were definitely those people in L.A. And I think everybody else worked in the entertainment business. It's the biggest business in L.A. and a lot of people lived off entertainment or something related to it. Even the people who didn't want to be part of the music industry probably worked at some of those places, you know, they made music for the music industry, so...

TL A lot of people in the punk scene early on, like in the '70s, had a foot in entertainment or ended up in the entertainment business?

EW I can tell you about my career; I graduated from college with a master's in art, I came back to L.A., and I wasn't trained to do anything. I thought I could teach but I didn't have any idea how you even get that job or who you call, because nobody ever explained that. My first job was a temp job and they sent me to answer phones at a record company. I have the Hollywood story, I couldn't figure out how to answer the switch board,

I didn't know how to work at it, so they moved me into the mailroom two days later. There were a bunch of guys throwing boxes around and they gave me, this is pre-Internet, so they gave me envelopes to deliver to the different departments. I walked around and handed people their mail and on my walk I ran into an older gentleman who said, "Oh, I haven't seen you before," and I said "I'm new," and he asked, "What are you doing?" I said, "I just graduated art school," and he said, "Oh, I'd like to see your work." I mean, it's a crazy story. Two days later he gave me a job in the design department. I had never taken a design class. He was just a nice guy.

TL Was that before or after NOMAG?

EW That's before, and so I worked for two years at A&M Records, and I learned a lot. I was still really not sure what I was doing. I designed music books for The Carpenters, Parliament Funkadelic...it was just, I need to do this now. I thought of myself as a fine artist, not a designer, and then when the record company's layoffs came because they were losing money, I was laid off. Once again, I didn't consider myself a designer, even though it was my title at that point, and then I went to The L.A. Weekly. They were was just starting and within three weeks I became the creative director of this L.A. newspaper. I mean, I'm not stupid, so I learned, but I didn't really know what that meant either. But I had that job two years after graduation and it wasn't a bad job, it was a perfect moment and a perfect place and I hired all of my friends and I taught them to do what I do, all music and art people. Almost all of those people went on to be successful or in big bands. My friend Tom who worked for me was the head of Warner Bros. Art Department for 17 years. I mean, when I stand in that room at the book fair I see a lot of my life go by. So, I did design at the Weekly, and from there, I left after two and half years and I went to an international film company. I hired 64 people and directed an art department that did posters and ads for films. We did all the Stallone films, the Chuck Norris films, all the Charles Bronson films, the Bo Derek films, the Cassavetes films, I worked with Katharine Hepburn... So, I mean, I worked in entertainment, I ran a big art department, I did a lot of photo shoots and things, I worked in all those places where I would always bring in friends and show them how to





do stuff. People I knew had talent and were feeling something, they were fine artists or whatever. It's not that I am so wonderful, it's just the step I thought was cool, you know.

TL How did you negotiate working in an industry that seems standardized with a punk ideology that seems to like to fuck with that?

EW So, L.A. Weekly was totally non-formulated, it was totally free from the city control of operation. I mean, there was like, Mötley Crüe who was walking one day to drop ads, and I met Bruce there, we were doing NOMAG at night and then walking up to the Weekly that was like six blocks away from our house to work there. Almost half the people were coming back and forth like this to rehearse or to work, and we were making it up as we went along, 'cause nobody was making really real money. I mean, it was money enough to pay the rent but nobody was making big money. And then when I went to the film company it was okay money, but not good money. They didn't know what the heck they were doing there 'cause it was an international company. It was chaotic...they were a lot like the Weinstein Company was, these two dudes were big shots in Europe, they came here and just wanted to make it in the movie business. You know, and everybody comes because everybody here wants movies made... I'm not saying that they didn't know what they were doing, but it wasn't structured. I got to invent myself again and invite all my friends and [show them] how it worked, and I did that for a while. When I left there, I worked for CBS Television. That's a corporation that had a structure.

TL So, how did that job factor into the making of NOMAG? On a formal level? Or deciding what was going into NOMAG?

EW NOMAG, every story in NOMAG is an art piece...and that means even the photoshoots were...I mean we were both artists. We thought, ah this looks good, this could be a good background, this reminds us of this, let's tack this up, you know? Or let's get this band in because that's an interesting looking band, or interesting sounding band...and if you read NOMAG there isn't a straight interview in the whole thing. It's all kind of humor or when we got bored...because we would do the same thing...tape and then we would transcribe like this. Bruce would type and listen to this tape, type, and play it back, and then again. And then we'd send it out for typesetting. That's a process, it's a long

process and it gets boring, so then it started getting chopped off, or it became something else, so we were never a zine or fanzine, it has none of that in that. It's really using creative people and making art with creative people and hopefully out of that collaboration comes something else. So, it was really...I mean there wasn't any structure to it other than documenting the culture and what we thought would be interesting at the moment, or who I met or who Bruce met... and he had this incredible style of shooting the photos .He didn't speak much, he was very shy and he was often drunk and then he stopped drinking completely...people always thought that he was messed up and he would be like that guy in the corner just standing, so people would say things in front of him. That would happen when we brought bands into...we had this little studio, we built those sets and we would spray it black and put all that stuff up and then we would invite a band, and after a show the band was usually pretty wasted and he would sit around for two or three hours and get them a beer or whatever they wanted, and everybody talked...and we were taping the whole time. So, a lot of that kind of openness, when people don't think they're...I mean it's not that they didn't know they were being taped, but when people aren't in a formal setting, and he would shoot the photographs in the dark. So, you know, [with] a performance on stage [you] always know where the camera is, right? And musicians too, they are conscious of where they go...but at 3 in the morning, in a dark room, you don't know where the flash is or isn't, and you are just told to stand there, and you would figure that out first. Like we knew how that area or that section was, they did not, so it was about control, you know? It's not a free for all but, you know, it was friendly, it was very friendly and people loved to be a part of it because it was fun and they didn't have to worry about being a certain way, because it was fun.

AD When did you start with NOMAG after graduating? Since you had all these other jobs—as a designer, producer, editor—when did you find the time to do the magazine?

EW Oh, in the middle of the night [laughter]. We worked 24 hours. It wasn't a normal office, it wasn't normal working hours, it just wasn't that at all. Like I said it was a lot of the same people flowing in and out of our day job. Bruce eventually didn't work, or he worked for me and I would bring him freelance, I taught him how to design more formally as well. I mean, I learned first and then I just taught other people how to do it. It's always been kind of split. I teach at USC, I was asked for a guest lecture, and then the guest lecture turned into another critique at the end of people's work, and then the critique turned into “would you teach a class?” I always taught myself as an artist, and design was this thing that I picked up along the way, so I never called myself a designer. But what's funny about it is that now I am the director of the design department and head of graduate studies. I realized something I always try to teach to students—art is not on one side and design on the other. I mean I talked about this for years, this idea that you do not have to make a choice, you can actually sort of use all you know at one time. I don't even care what anybody calls me. Maybe it's me getting old, I don't know [laughter]. I just don't care, it's all art, it's all making stuff, you know? I like the people I like, I like the stuff I like, I go to galleries two or three times per month and then most of my friends are artists, or are artists making a living out of design.

TL Raymond Pettibon did a bunch of things in NOMAG, right?

EW Yeah, we were the first magazine to publish his drawings. Raymond and I hung out on my couch, I think maybe a couple of days after Mama Cass (Cass Elliot) died, she was in the Mamas and the Papas, and she choked on some chicken. I had never met him before, we sat on my couch for 10 hours talking about how Mama Cass died, then I made rice and he said “I gotta go” and then he disappeared for 2 days [laughter].

TL There's a lot of humor that comes out in NOMAG, like a very dark absurdist humor. Vale made this reference to Dada that I think was very fitting. I wonder what you think about this



aesthetic legacy, how it changed through the ages, and what it is now when there is sort of no more outside in the mainstream.

EW I think there is no subculture anymore, there is no more subculture. The internet makes everything old almost instantly. We absorb information so much quicker and spit it back out and make judgements about that, and you know, I think it is really hard to be a punk in anything other than your attitude...I mean, as a lifestyle it's long gone, as a political ideology, too.

TL Is there maybe something left, though, in sort of like, the absurdism or the sense of humor?

EW I mean, people are multi-dimensional, they're smart, they're funny, they are all kinds of things, so I'm not saying that it's the end of it, or that cool stuff does not happen anymore, cool stuff clearly happens still. Look at Printed Matter, for instance. There's a lot of amazing stuff to look at, I'm not at all dismissive of that, I read new stuff all the time. I mean, there is a lot of really great stuff, I just think that making stuff about rebellion, right now, I just think it is really difficult to do that, because rebellion, just like anything else, has been branded. It doesn't even have to do anything with advertising, or product, now even some movements are branded, think about #metoo, it's a brand now, with hashtags and all that stuff, so everything kind of like, has its edges already, of what it can and cannot be, edges that come by the brand. It needs that to exist, and then the second it does it's just an old idea, so it makes it difficult to be odd or weird, because you can only be that for a few minutes and then it starts being old [laughter]. It is just a different time/space I think. I remember once when we found something we were interested in and we would just carry it to other people's house, like a record or a magazine or a book, and we were like, “I read this, and you should read this too,” and there was this thing, this sharing that was personal. And now it's like, bands, they don't put out an album anymore, 'cause everything exists and has to be available immediately and for free, you can still find something that you are interested in, but it is not tangible anymore, and for me that is the biggest difference, and you cannot share that experience the same way. Now it's just like, “check this out, check that out.” I don't know, maybe people do and I just don't. It's just different, I think it's harder. You know,

I have been thinking, I want to do a last NOMAG issue, and I have been thinking on how to do it without it feeling just like an old thing, because the NOMAG for some feels like a new thing. I mean look at it, there is still something exciting, but if I am doing it I am not interested in, like, an anthology, or something like, “look how cool we were, how weird we were, how punk we were.” It's just like, it makes no sense to me, I don't think it would be interesting, I think if anything it would be boring because it would be like copying yourself in some weird way, so I think the only way to do something like that is to just kind of be me and bring in people I think are interesting and do it in as free a way as I can, which is hard because I am more trained than I was then, but I don't know, maybe that is ok, maybe that is just moving forward. I know it's a weird idea, but I have been thinking about it. For instance, take the artist Gary Panter, who created the first visual look of punk. It was his character called Jimbo, in this comic, and he is quite famous for his set designing of *Pee-wee's Playhouse*, he won Emmys for that. He said that he spent his entire adult life learning to draw like a child, and I always think about that; it's like this path to find this thing that brought you to create anything that is art, whatever that is, making sure that you find that moment that made you happy and you go from there, because it is so easy now to be lost and not know what to do, 'cause you already graduate with such a debt, so you know how the brands work, how things are supposed to be, and this is not necessarily real or true, because you are human, you have fantasy, ideas, and it is just about how do you get that, how do you find what matters to you? I think of that a lot, how to make art playful, how to not make stuff look, like, tortured, and as a designer that is really important to me, because a lot of design is tortured, it is just so heavy-handed.

AD What do you mean by *design is tortured*?

EW Tortured, where you overwork something, overthink something, and you do that in art too, I mean it is a personal taste of mine, it is how I am, but I think that artists spend a lot of time just filling things in, and in the end it didn't matter that they did all that, 'cause that's when people go like, “Oh wow, there is so much of these little details,” when you can make something just as cool, but faster and with less overthinking, I think about making things joyful, playful. Not wallpaper, just something that is closer to whatever drove you to be an artist. I think that that is more authentic, it's more truthful, and that is what I respond too.

TL Do you have something going on right now that is not a commercial project?

EW Yes, I made a book, *Darkness, Darkness*. Based on my life story, a narrative told abstractly through pictures. Some I took, some cool photos by my friend Hirioshi Clark and also photos I found. It's based on truth but is also a fiction. Sort of a false document. So that is a personal project, and I actually started another project last June, I just didn't have time to finish it. I am working on two projects right now...I love to push myself more. One is a book called *Oblivescence*, which is a word I came across which means “the active act of forgetting” and I just liked that idea and I wanted to make a book about forgetting Bruce, who I spent 32 years with, 32 crazy years. It's not a sentimental book, but it's more something with colors, because I wanted to challenge myself. I did one in black and white but I wanted to do something a little different this time, so I want to do this book badly. It is in color, which I think is really hard to work with for me, and then the other thing I wanted to do is this last NOMAG issue. I started that in November [2018], so actually I have started to reach out to a lot of the people that are still alive that were in the magazine, and everybody grew so excited, everybody I talked to, it is actually really cool. We'll see what happens, but I mean, I have to do it, you know? And now that I've involved other people I really have to do it, you know? I really want to have a show that is kind of definitive, because I have all these graphics we didn't use, and all this stuff from the magazine that never made it in, and I want to do something like, “Here it is,





- here is NOMAG,” almost like walking into the process, so that’s my idea. Let’s see if I can pull it off. I almost always hate saying stuff out loud before I do them, it’s like a weird jinx, but this is what I would like in the next few years to bring [out].
- TL How many of each issue of NOMAG got printed?
- EW I don’t know, I really don’t. I mean, I can tell you what it looks like. It’s enough to fill a station-wagon, and then the last two issues, enough to fill a van.
- AD Wow, so many?
- EW I don’t know how much that is, I mean, I know what 3,000 books look like, because I have seen it when we printed the novel. We printed 3,000 and I know what it looks like because I saw it, but [for the magazine] I don’t remember, I know that we printed more in the end than we did in the beginning, I feel like it wasn’t very much...
- TL Are they archived somewhere? Is there some kind of digital archive? Do you have any plans to archive it digitally, for posterity?
- EW Some guy, I cannot remember his name, but some guy who has bought NOMAGs from me digitalized them and put them online, with his phone number and a contact for something else, or some other thing he is doing, and that was like two years or three years ago, and somebody called me and said, “That’s really cool, you got NOMAGs online,” and then I said, “I don’t have NOMAGs online,” and they said, “Here’s the link.” And I looked it up and I knew the guy, and I kind of went nuts, not because I didn’t necessarily want that to happen, but the fact that it was without any permission...He never asked, and he was somebody I knew, it wasn’t even like somebody picked them up and did it, it was actually somebody that bought NOMAGs from me and had written me some emails, like a collector guy, and I found it really self-serving. Did you hear how one of the vendors from Printed Matter was involved in this robbery thing at the book fair? Something was stolen?
- TL I remember hearing about this but I don’t know anything about it.
- EW Ok, so Arthur Fournier, he sells, like, the more expensive stuff, he’s New York-based. Anyway, he told me yesterday that there was like a group of four guys that came over [to his booth] and they had this whole thing where one asks to look, and the next one passes to the next one, and the next one picks up something else and then drops this thing in a bag. They have it on film apparently, but the guys are wearing, like, hoodies. And so I asked, “What did they take?” And he said, “I lost \$5,500 of stuff in five minutes,” and I said, “Wow, but what did they take?” They took six Thrasher covers, which is like, who would ever think Thrasher would be such a thing that people like? And so he said it’s the large ones, from when the magazine first started, right? ‘Cause then they changed format, but in the beginning they were just bigger, isn’t that wild? It just seems really interesting, I mean, people stealing real art, and now they are stealing Thrasher covers. It just seems so weird to me, and in a print fair! It is just so odd! I just thought it was such an interesting story. I guess he was selling something. He came in and brought a Pettibon cover because it was part of a set that also was taken. The main thing was the Thrasher covers, so he is trying to replace bits and pieces from other people.
- TL I guess it makes sense though in some way. I mean, in that culture, especially right now around skate culture and punk culture, just like the collectors based around that are really obsessed, there is a lot of money being thrown at that.
- EW I know a lot of people that skate, and I think that is actually the closest thing to the punk stuff or the surf stuff. I mean, we weren’t into a sport but a lot of the hanging out with friends, and just the going illegally into spots, or even basing trips around destinations...that is very much a part of our culture. I mean, that is the closest thing and that is already being watered down.
- TL Watered down maybe, but still there is like an actual core.
- EW You think the spirit is still there?
- TL I mean, at the heart of it there is an actual commitment backing it up. There is something you actually do, you know? Like for the punk there is the music, there has to be some sharing of ideas and production, something more than just buying stuff.
- EW Also, there is such a severe risk to it, which is interesting. It’s a different kind of risk, but there is a fear that comes with a lot of people being totally fucked up, right? Because it’s like you wouldn’t be doing some of that stuff unless you were so fucked up!
- TL But there’s a learning curve. Like, you can’t just buy a thing and be a part of it; to be a part of it you have to commit, there has to be stakes, you have to give something up, and that is what makes the community so strong. And sure there’s plenty of people who just buy the thing and say, “Ok, I’m part of it now,” but not really.
- EW I went to the beach here, and there is a skatepark in Venice. I was showing a friend the Venice area, we stood at the skatepark for a while, and it is like so many of the people are so fucked up, and they were amazing to watch, but really blasted up, and I just thought, “Wow, this is insane.”
- TL Funny thinking about these cultures that were radical, raw, outside cultures, and now they are so franchised.
- EW So yeah, I guess the moral is just...never leave the booth unattended [laughter]. But that being said, I don’t really lock it either. We live in an environment where I don’t think a magazine is something that people would steal because it is so niche, it does not appeal to such a popular culture. I mean, if you steal a NOMAG it’s probably like the guy who digitalized it, it’s probably a guy I know. It’s like they not amass something like that, and why would you even take one, why? I mean, it’s happened that someone put stuff down on top of it and then when they lift up they take one, and it’s just, “Ok...”
- TL Do you think they are very precious?
- EW Yes.
- TL I mean, I feel like what’s funny about Thrasher or punk memorabilia [is that they] are also symbols of this ideology that doesn’t treat things with preciousness. It’s funny that they look for something precious.
- EW Mine are precious, for sure, because for me they represent my life, and all it represents. I mean, I have done other things, but this is in a way the most important. I mean, I can tell you like, “Oh, I designed Roger Rabbit parts” but is that the most important thing I have done?