

flowing that at times I also envisioned an endless lap pool where the current never stops. The 2022 Academy Award-nominated documentary *All the Beauty and The Bloodshed* showcased Mueller's life and friendship with artist Nan Goldin, and accelerated the celebration of Mueller as a wild, fun, and influential persona. But what struck me most about her collected stories were her acts of charity. In the third chapter, Mueller releases the debts of fashionable Baltimoreans at a faux-fancy men's shoppe where she worked in the accounts receivable department. When she finds out that the clothes being sold are not what's being advertised and also that the customers had already paid their fair share of interest on their get ups, she releases their debts, soon after escaping to Haight-Ashbury. Later on, Mueller shares her expertise in heroin-overdose etiquette (saline solution shot into the veins) saving a party guest's

life. The book ends with "Ask Dr. Mueller," an advice column that ran in the *East Village Eye*. In these exchanges Mueller lovingly advises on the ills of her urban public: "Dear Dr. Mueller, can Cocaine kill?" Mueller: "You bet your boots it can!" She goes on to explain that the diaphragm can separate from the chest making breathing cease up thus suffocating the user.

I kept trying to think of a corollary in contemporary culture, but today's charitable acts seen through the lens of social media are so often transparent exercises in brand building. Writing is generous. As a practice, it's both a way to transmit knowledge and to develop it, and Mueller was a self-proclaimed daily writer since the age of six. She was also a celebrated underground film actress (a regular in John Waters films), a fashion designer, a go-go dancer, (the list goes on). This volume demonstrates that writing served as the foundation for all of these pursuits, one that provides the reader with another act of charity, experiencing her life and wisdom on the page—a rigorous pursuit that produced seemingly effortless art. —PAUL KOPKAU

PAIGE K. BRADLEY

## DRIVE IT ALL OVER ME

S\*I\*G, 2023  
88 pages

In the voice of Byung-Chul Han (paraphrased here, quoted in a footnote), Paige K. Bradley writes that "objects recede behind the ceaseless digital reproduction and circulation of knowledge." The proper name for this condition is infomania: "where users can pick and choose dematerialized informations as suits them to reinforce a worldview they are already predisposed to."

Selective seeing, selective reading. I am writing now with the aspiration not only to be true but to be better.

So the book is about infomania; Bradley puts on its voice like she puts on the voices of her referents—Jay Chung and Q Takeki Maeda's *Bad Driver*, the stackable 40/4 chair, Vanessa Place's *Gone with the Wind* (itself a reproduction of sorts, a transliteration across media, a re-reading), Sherrie Levine, Jack Goldstein, Agamben, Foucault. She has a way of integrating sources like *Here's something I want to show you*, as in the way people tell stories, or *Look over there*, like someone pointing to the side of the road.

I am predisposed to the worldview that *Drive It All Over Me* is textual shoe-gaze: like the My Bloody Valentine song by the same name, a wall of sound, a wash of textures. The pace of observation changes through the window of a car. I can't drive, so I approximate the experience this way—by images, like Ruscha on Route 66; in flashes, passed through a slide projector.

Reading is just like seeing, really. Now we are too fast for the world. *Titles are all phrases that reveal next to nothing about the art they refer to, even though they functionally serve as accurate signifiers.* Forget the word for the image-word: like framing, like signposting, like a sign seen from the highway, blurred and incomplete, already gone. —MATILDA LIN BERKE

ARIA DEAN

## BAD INFINITY

Sternberg, 2023  
200 pages

"If you really love something, you can't articulate why," writes Aria Dean in her electrifying essay collection *Bad Infinity*, which interrogates how the digital mediates political violence. It's because of how much I love Dean's work that I find it hard to articulate why her writing can leave me frustrated. In a lodestar of an essay, "Black Bataille," Dean presents Black abjection—which makes "visible that which is outside and irrecoverable yet somehow an integral force in generating and maintaining the coherence of life as we know it"—as the legitimate source of critique and sanity. Sold. Yet when it's time to come up with artworks to operationalize her theory, she chooses to only discuss examples that fail. So why bother with art? Is theory just more capable? Throughout this collection, the stakes Dean positions art toward are high: Black blood is being spilled in the streets like champagne, formatted in an aspect ratio for a pocket-sized screen. But in "Channel Zero," she ends with a typical Dean move: the conclusion that there can be no conclusion. Dean seems so ready to anticipate counterarguments from every angle to a point where her original thinking collapses beneath her omnidirectional cynicism.

In the book's foreword, she warns against expectations for a "coherent framework in writing." If her essays strike me as in-process thinking, the sculptures are fucking bulletproof. Take *Little Island/Gut Punch* (2022), a 3D-printed monolith in chroma-key green that looks like it was punched. Yet the hit was simulated in VR software. Dean's essays describe our contemporary moment as one when reality is splitting. The index's direct claim to reality is contested. Photography is no longer indexical of light, it's an image made by a machine—just as basic touch is no longer how we think we know what's real. Like a tragic parody, *Little Island/Gut Punch* totally fakes the index, the ripple as physical evidence of a punch that never took place, cutting right to the core of how reality is structurally constituted. Dean monumentalizes the one-way shift into the metaverse and there's no turning back. Sorry to be so blunt but *Little Island/Gut Punch* is the single greatest work of art I've seen over the last ten years. Dean is the closest we're getting to Duchamp in our time. Dare to challenge me. —GEOFFREY MAK



**HOLGA'S  
MEOW**

P I C T U R E S