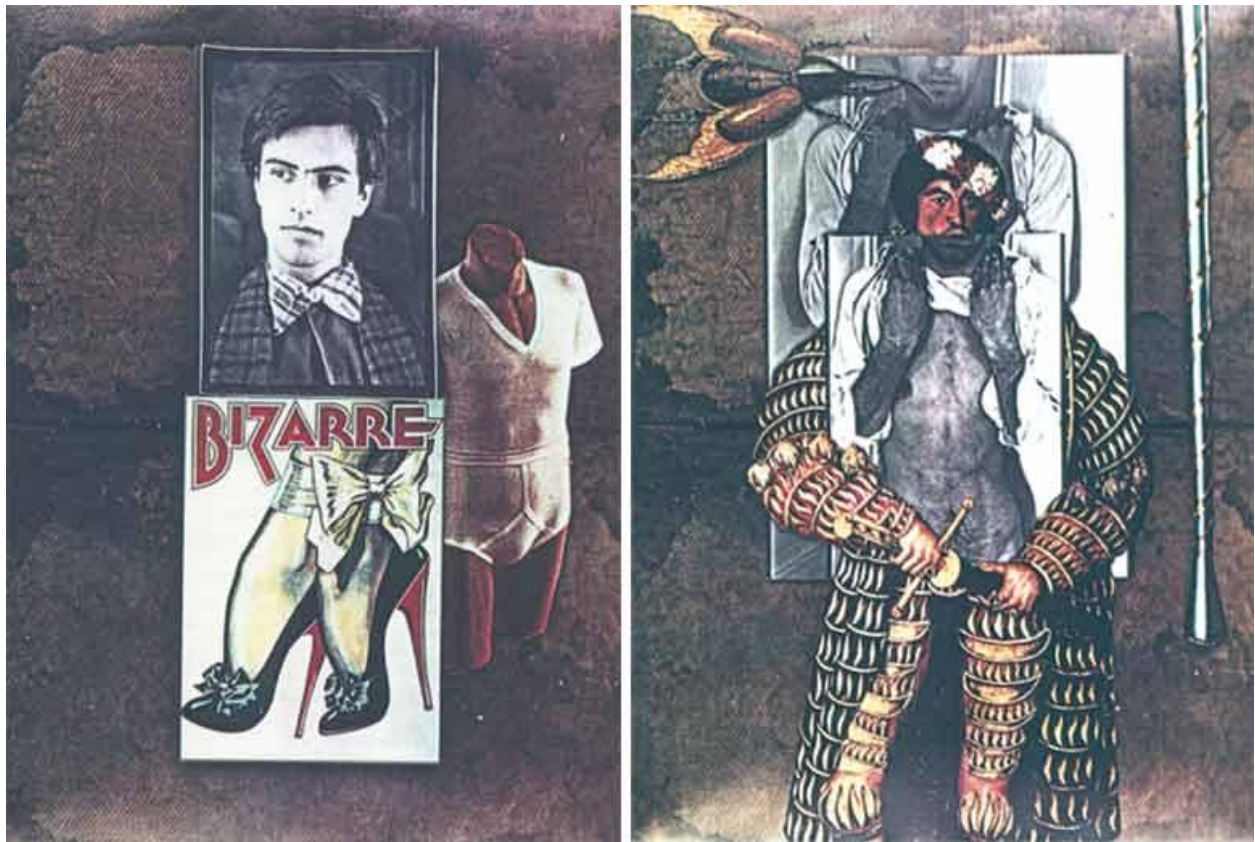


# Ready, set, art!

## Cepa remembers the xerography revolution

BY ELIZABETH LICATA



L-r: Evergon Lunt, *Bizarre* and *Italian Prince Victorious*, both 1979

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**Fast, Cheap & Easy: The Copy Art Revolution is on view at Cepa Gallery, 617 Main Street, through December 15. Go to [cepagallery.org](http://cepagallery.org) for more information.**

**It all started with Andy Warhol smashing his face into the side of an early photostat machine in 1969. Since then, many have imitated Warhol's action, as well as used imaging technology for more complex artistic interventions. See some of Warhol's early**

**experiments, as well as more than 100 (three floors worth) of other examples of copy art, at CEPA, in *Fast, Cheap & Easy: The Copy Art Revolution*, on view through December 15.**

Although it is created all over the world, copy art has a special relationship with Western New York, thanks to the influence of Rochester, home to the Xerox Corporation and Eastman Kodak, and once known as the Imaging Capital of the World. The dry photocopying process had been invented by Chester Carlson in 1942, but the first commercial copier, the Xerox 914, was not available until 1960, with color copying possible in 1973. Thus, a generation of artists who had come of age in an era of social protest and countercultural activities now had a new and highly democratic tool to create and spread visual information.

In the 1980s, artists like Jean-Michel Basquiat and Keith Haring used color copying as a cheap and easy way of self-expression. The 'zine movement of the eighties and nineties was also largely dependent on copying technology.



**From left: Gail Nicholson, *Posing Eva May (red)*, 1986; Robert Hirsch, from *World in a Jar: War & Trauma*; Georg Muhleck, *Armed Arm*, 1992-93;**

The curators of this show—Robert Hirsch, Kitty Hubbard, Klaus Urbons, and Tom Carpenter—stress that copy art has always been based on experimentation and spontaneity, but they acknowledge that East Coast artists tended to have more formal academic training while their West Coast counterparts were more interested in using free-wheeling means of getting their work out to the public. This is apparent immediately after encountering the vividly surreal mashups brought about by Bay Area artist Barbara Cushman, who invited a loose federation of more than 100 artists to collaborate on her *Color Xerox Annual* calendar from 1980 to 1984. Pages from this calendar can be seen upon entering the show and other works by the calendar artists are also on view.

Meanwhile, in the East Coast center of the copy art movement, Visual Studies Workshop was a central gathering place for artists experimenting in the form. Works on view by artists Joan Lyons and Sonia Sheridan demonstrate early innovations, as well as prints by two artists with names familiar to Buffalo gallery goers, Gail Nicholson and the late Marion Faller. Other highlights from this show—which has far too many works to fairly summarize—include xerography transferred onto fabric by Nancy Topolski and clothing rendered as xerography by Barbara Wyeth.



**Nancy Topolski, *October Birds Come back for Breakfast*, 2008**

There's even a museum for copy art: Museum für Fotokopie, an international forum for copier art and technology founded by Klaus Urbons, located in the picturesque [Mülheim an der Ruhr](#), has one of the most important collections of this work in the world. Urbons lent works from his collection to *Fast & Easy*, including those by artists Joseph Beuys, David Hockney, Sigmar Polke, and Warhol.

Quaintly, in CEPA's basement gallery, promotional posters for the first Xerox machines can be seen, with models posing beside them. There are also large acrylic paintings of copiers by Joan Linder. Many of the artworks in this show are not immediately recognizable as involving xerography—they resemble traditional drawings and prints—but the sheer helter-skelter

variety throughout the exhibition reinforces its pluralistic mission. Copy art is, and was, for everyone. And anyone reading this who has access to a machine should look beyond its bland gray functionality to the creative possibilities it still holds, even in a digital age.

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[www.buffalospree.com/Buffalo-Spree/December-2018/Ready-set-art/](http://www.buffalospree.com/Buffalo-Spree/December-2018/Ready-set-art/)