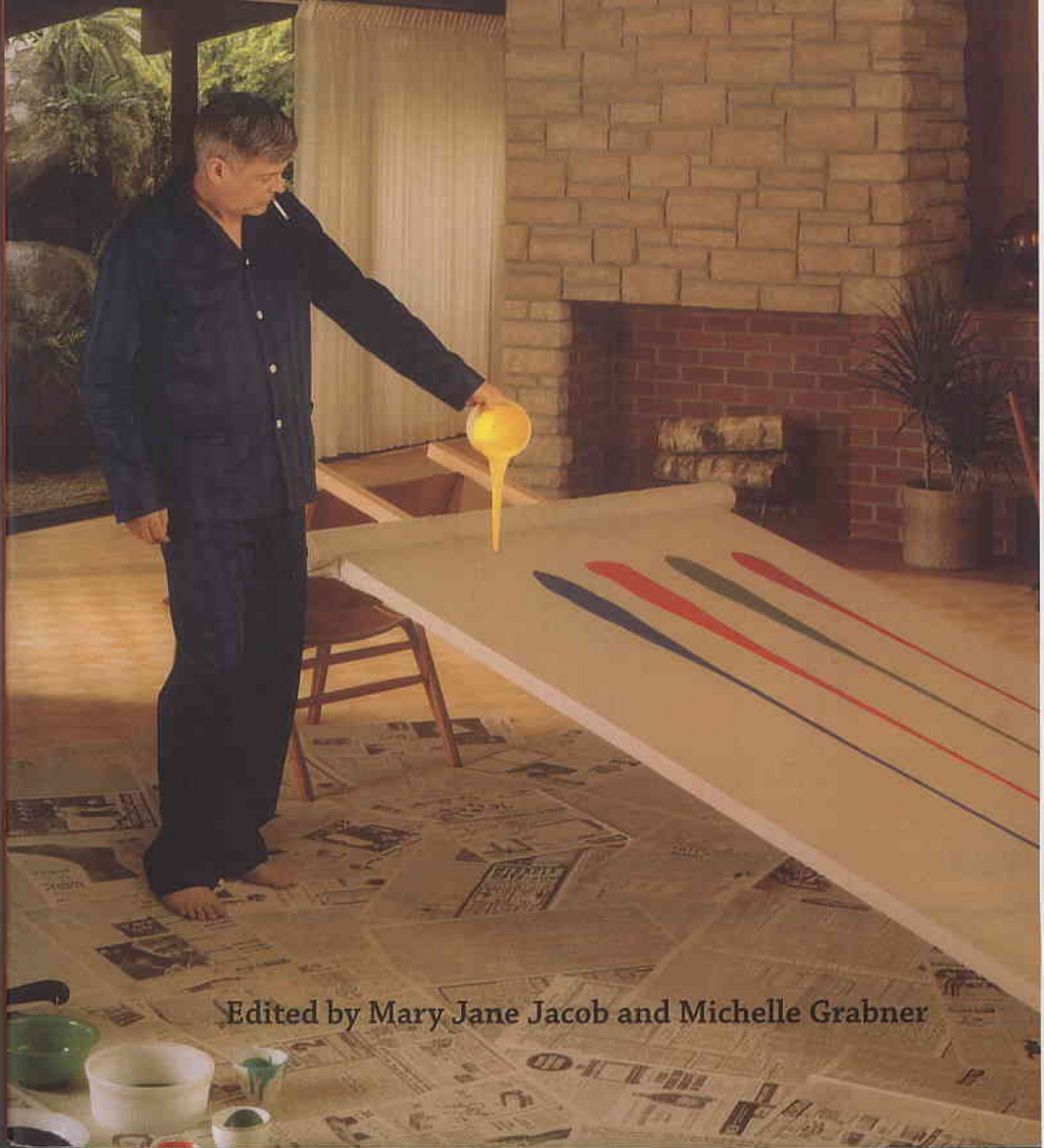


# the studio reader

ON THE SPACE OF ARTISTS



Edited by Mary Jane Jacob and Michelle Grabner

# Rochelle Feinstein

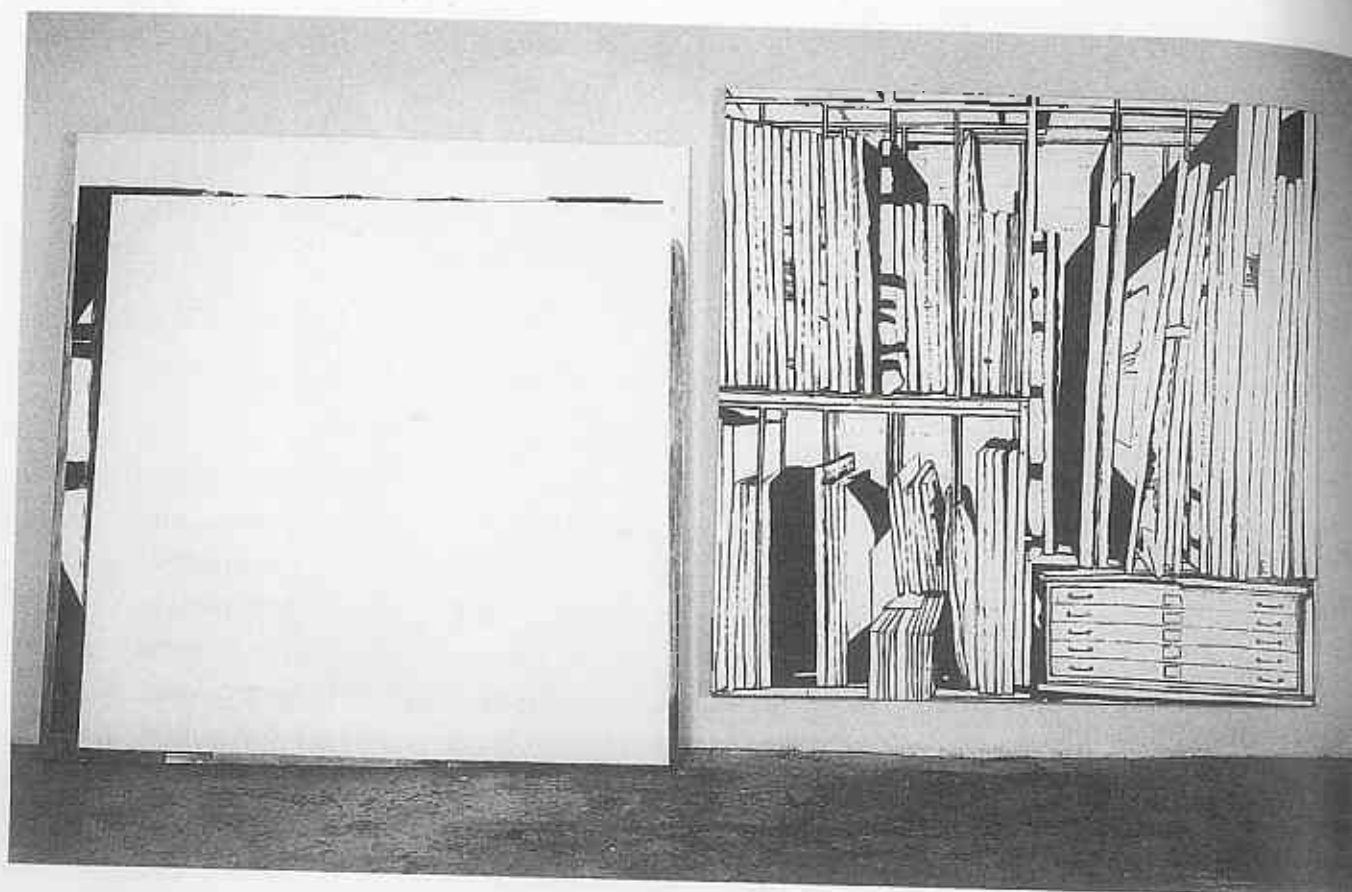
My MFA thesis, in 1978, was titled "The Artist's Studio/Inside Out." In hindsight, I was clueless. I didn't ask anything compelling: What is art? Why, and where, does it art happen? Where art is made now seems as irrelevant as much *art* often is. Writing about the studio in 2009 is a revisitation of the subject. Artists today may locate their work, not on the basis of where it was made, but in relation to expanded fields of interest, geographies, and technologies. This wide-ranging artistic license operates, for better or worse, in the context of a deadbeat global economy.

It occurs to me that a chronicle of my making of things *before* they became art could be a way to consider a studio practice. A subjective conceit, perhaps, but it may cast light on the origins and variety of creative impulse. A studio is both *gestalt* and *zeitgeist*, place and non-place, whether one is a painter or a post-studio artist.

**Ages 4–7** My bed, three by six feet, located in my parents' bedroom. The surface supported a menagerie of stuffed animals, systematically arranged by color, size, and species or as imagined peaceable kingdoms. I slept on this plush until my father threw out the lot.

**Ages 7–10** A desk in my parents' bedroom. Rewrote and illustrated *Little Women*: Jo kept her hair, Laurie and Amy were deleted, Father was home, Mother was who knows where. Detailed drawings in turquoise ink (I still have the fountain pen), black lettering. Generated three or four volumes—greasy loose-leaf sheets, gum-reinforced, yarn-bound—which later "went missing."

**Age 11** Undertook research. Paperbacks and movies were locationless studios. Most inspirational books: *I'll Cry Tomorrow*, Lillian Roth's autobiography, and Nelson Algren's *The Man with the Golden Arm*—the stories of a drunk and a junkie. Saturdays, took the bus to the Utopia Theater on Utopia Parkway, blocks from Joseph Cornell's home. I didn't know his name then, later fantasized we might have shared the same movie at the same time—possible with me sitting through three shows a day.



Rochelle Feinstein, *Before and After* (detail), 1997–1998.

**Age 12** Books thrown out and my bus pass forfeited because I had "too many fantasies" and had grown anemic from "lack of sunshine."

**Age 13** I was given art materials. Took them to Alley Pond Park. Drew and painted every day after school, my first daily practice of art. When finished, wrapped everything in a plastic bag and hid it under a flat rock—protection against weather and discovery. I smelled like mulch for five years.

**Since age 18** Studios include a kitchen table in Fort Greene, a dead storage space used by my graduate faculty, spare rooms in rent-controlled apartments in New York City, spaces in East Village, Chinatown, Soho, Williamsburg, Tribeca, and Dumbo. These studios map an urban pattern in which artists colonize barren, undesirable industrial neighborhoods, which then historically become gentrified.

An artist's studio might be a thought-made material, or not. I started on a bed and write this on a MacBook OS X 10.5.8.