

**Quinze variations sur  
un theme  
de GW / 15  
variations  
on a theme  
of GW**

**An artists' book in an edition of 200 plus poster and a special boxed edition of 34 published by *The Everyday Press*, August 2021. Exhibited as part of *THE FEUILLTON, I WILL BEAR WITNESS, piggy-backing from the Edicola*, Spoleto and Rome, summer 2021.**

**THE FEUILLETON:  
I WILL  
BEAR WITNESS**

**Piggy-backing  
from the Edicola**

**2/7-31/8 @ Spoleto**

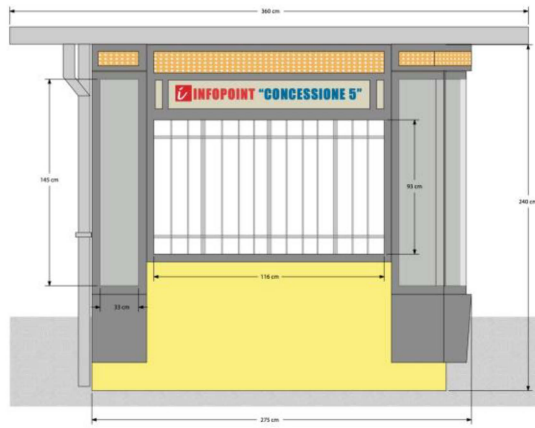
**6-7/7 @ MACRO, Roma**

**6-8/7 @ Edicola, S.M.I.T., Roma**

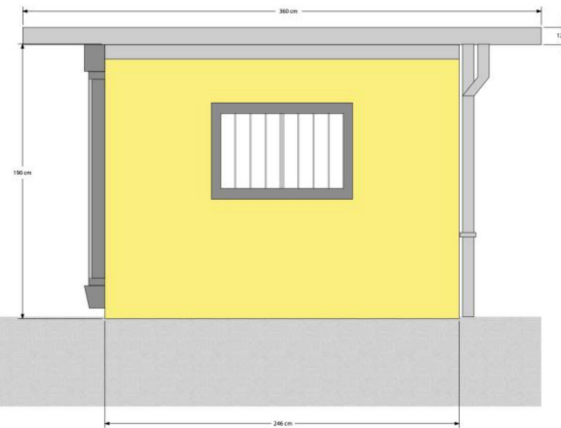
A disused newsstand at a crossroads in Spoleto's old town, becomes a platform for new interpretations of the feuilleton, with palimpsestic echoes at MACRO and in the Edicola, Santa Maria in Trastevere, curated by Vittoria Bonifati. Featuring clusters of artists, using sound, performance, installations, books, posters, videos and ephemeral traces, for the occasion many devise new projects. The strategic use of the 'feuilleton' is an unexpected insertion within journals or magazines. It's a form of piggy-backing an existing distribution network. Known as the 'feuilleton' it comes from French



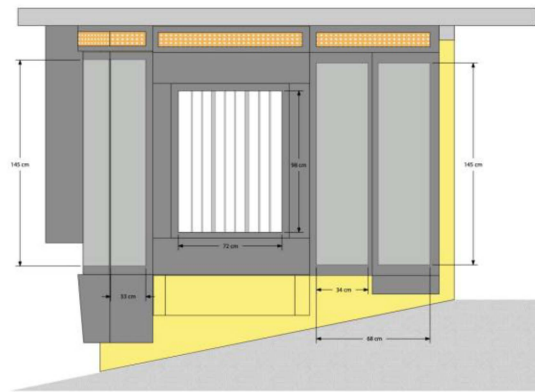
newspapers, popularised by the symbolists and re-activated by so-called conceptual artists in the 1960s and 1970s. Sly political, sociological commentaries are wake up calls for attention whether they are subtle, playful, profound or hybrid mixtures.



**FRONT**



**BACK**



**RIGHT**



**LEFT**





### Edicola

Spoleto, PG, Umbria

42°44'13.7"N 12°44'07.4"E

For Google street map view click on below link

<https://goo.gl/maps/GutyUVujR4qinzJb9>

The Edicola (newsstand) is located at a crossroads in the old town of Spoleto. Five roads lead to it, one is pedestrianised. It is redundant and has been disused for a number of years.



Google Street View April 2010





quinze variations sur  
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1874

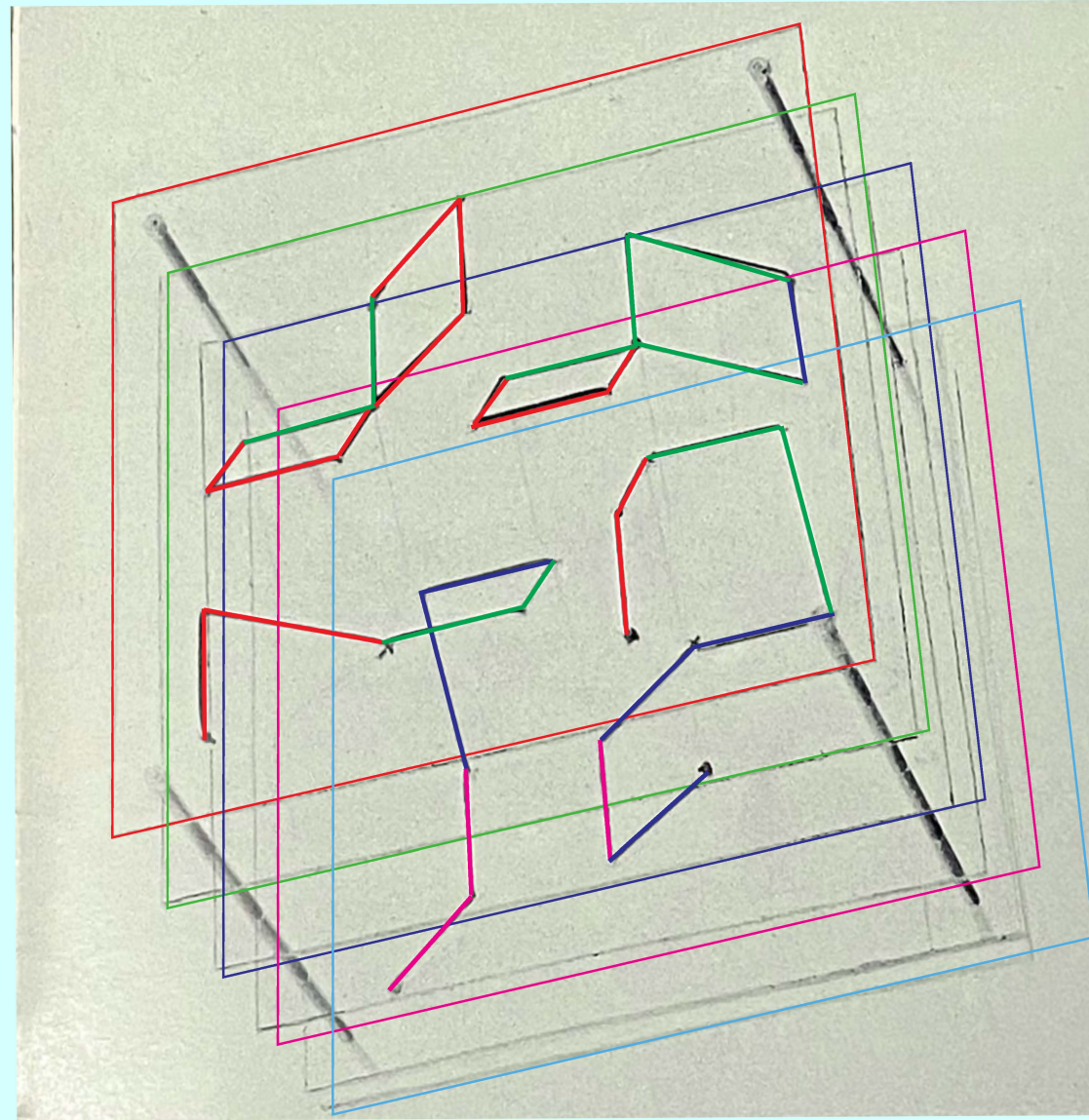


The book took the idea of Max Bill's *quinze variations sur un même thème / 15 variations on one theme, 1935-38* as a reference point important to the artists Gillian Wise. Instead of Bill's 15 systematic geometrical reconfigurations of a triangle within a circle, the page sequence of Bick's book takes images of telephone cables, junction boxes and poles from around Spoleto (supplied to him by friends of the exhibition's curator) and combines them in variation with laser cut rubber stamp viewpoints of a lost construction by Gillian Wise, which Bick had reconstructed in three dimensions using digital software, then transferred to the rubber stamps. Along with this, a narrative of Bick's visit to Wise's studio in Paris and later London, in 2010-2011 is included as a reflection on her artistic genius and unusual relationship to the world at large. Rather than seeing this as eccentric behaviour, the book intends to celebrate the inherent beauty in the unpredictable, and look at ways this enlivens rather than diminishes the originality of a significant artist.

Gillian was badly affected by low frequency radio waves such as wifi and subscribed to an online forum called Mast Sanity.

<https://www.mastsanity.org/>

*...specifically drawing in space with elasticated cord, Perspex and brass or aluminium tubing spacers was the key to her most innovative visualisations. This was achieved through both line and shadow. In Paris in the mid 70s Wise was also using early computer programming for tracking eye movements when apprehending her work and this approach to the visual and perceptual mechanics of reception form a continual thread of innovation throughout her practice. Illustrations of drawings, models, relief constructions and early digital realisations in the few published black and white catalogues and pamphlets that are in circulation indicate clearly the ambiguity and adventure in her spatial propositions. Perhaps the currency of her formulations more apparent to us now because we no longer worry about any 'dated' aspects of the black and white printing, design and typography that surrounds these images. By this I mean that digital archiving, the availability of rare books through online search engines and the general tendency to scour the past for style as much as information has caused subtle shifts in our sense of the contemporary. At this point, revisiting what printed matter on Gillian Wise that there is has equivalence to the potency of discovering an archive of drawing and sketches and shares the same possibility of timelessness in its formal propositions.*



This is an initial digital analysis of the original from which *15 variations...* was produced. This is a small work, probably a maquette and was the image she selected for her pages in the original Amos Anderson Konstmuseum exhibition catalogue SYSTEMI • SYSTEM, An exhibition of syntactic art from Britain, (1969). My images as developments and variations of this will be processed from AI files using rubber stamps and will explore their relationship to an original that is probably lost as well as the diverse thinking of the figure behind the art work.

Oblique associations abound in Wise's work, such as with her 2003 self-published book *Low Frequency*. My small book and its diaspora of images suggests alternative and parallel narratives. It is a story, but without a strict plot line, rather, a series of parallel narratives created through images that are displaced through the oblique forms of reproduction, scans of old prints, rubber stamps, photos of drawings turned in to rubber stamps and then reproduced... It was printed offset on light soft paper as well as digital poster with overlaid screenprint.

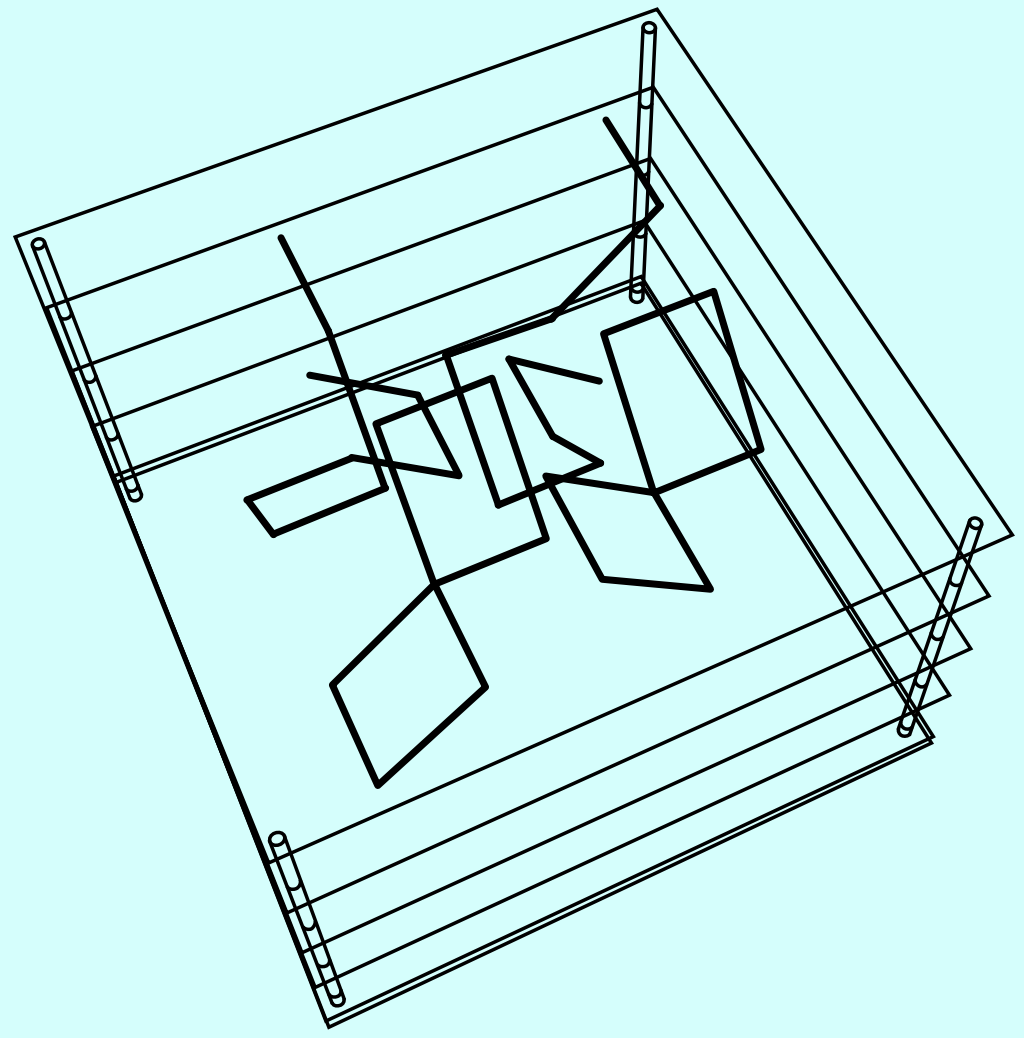
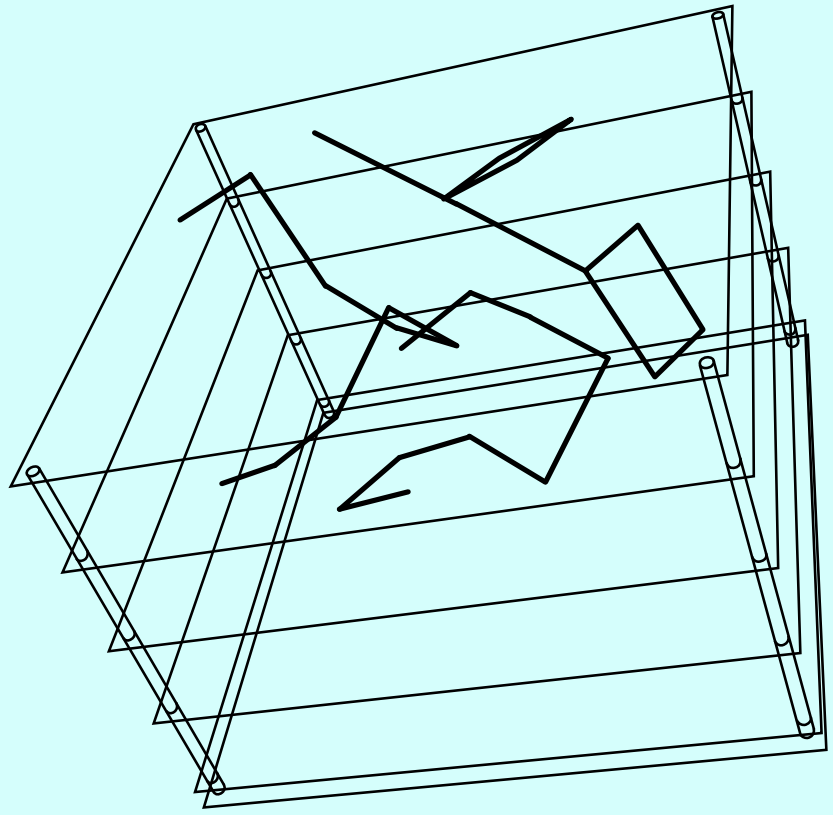


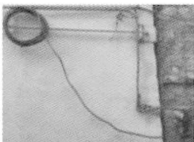












quinze variations sur un theme de GW / 15 variations on a theme of GW



I was initially cautious. Many of these artists had/ have the reputation of not suffering fools and in conversation presenting appreciable vexation at their restricted position in current understandings of British Art. However, this was the start of a journey I have continued to make through dialogue, one in which frequent conversations with the key figures opened a rich field of questioning. In particular I spent hours in conversation with [redacted], who had briefly taught me on MA at Chelsea College of Art in 1987-88, but also with [redacted] and [redacted]. My contact with [redacted] was mostly through [redacted] prodigious correspondence but also studio visits to [redacted] in Paris in 2009 and when [redacted] was house sitting and running a studio in Victoria Grove London W8, in late 2010. [redacted] remains unknown, and [redacted] death from COVID related causes in a care home in Paris in 2020, marked by obituaries in The Guardian and Art Monthly, indicates a moment where a reappraisal of [redacted] work must begin. This book is dedicated to memory and loss, but more importantly to examining what that loss means and what current artists, curators and writers can do to absorb the insights within an artist capable of such a generative way of working.

One thing that struck me from my Paris studio visit, but which I did not think right to photograph, was a bedroom lined with aluminium foil and with a metal mesh structure resembling some sort of Bedouin tent suspended on wires over the bed. It was explained to me that this treatment of the room was protection against the microwaves generated by WiFi elsewhere in the apartment block and I was directed to the campaign website 'MAST SANITY'. [redacted] explained that [redacted] susceptibility to mobile phone radiation meant an inability to use certain local cafes and restaurants. These were out of bounds to [redacted] because of their WiFi. [redacted] wished more of us were alert to this risk.

In researching the Systems group I discovered an extraordinary image of a small, constructed work by [redacted] from the Amos Andersons Konstmuseum exhibition catalogue SYSTEM1 + SYSTEM, An exhibition of syntactic art from Britain, (1969). It shows a maquette constructed from six panels of Perspex, one opaque and five transparent, with elasticated cord threaded through small, drilled holes arranged on a cubed grid between the layers.

It has only recently occurred to me how much this object shows affinity with telecommunications devices.

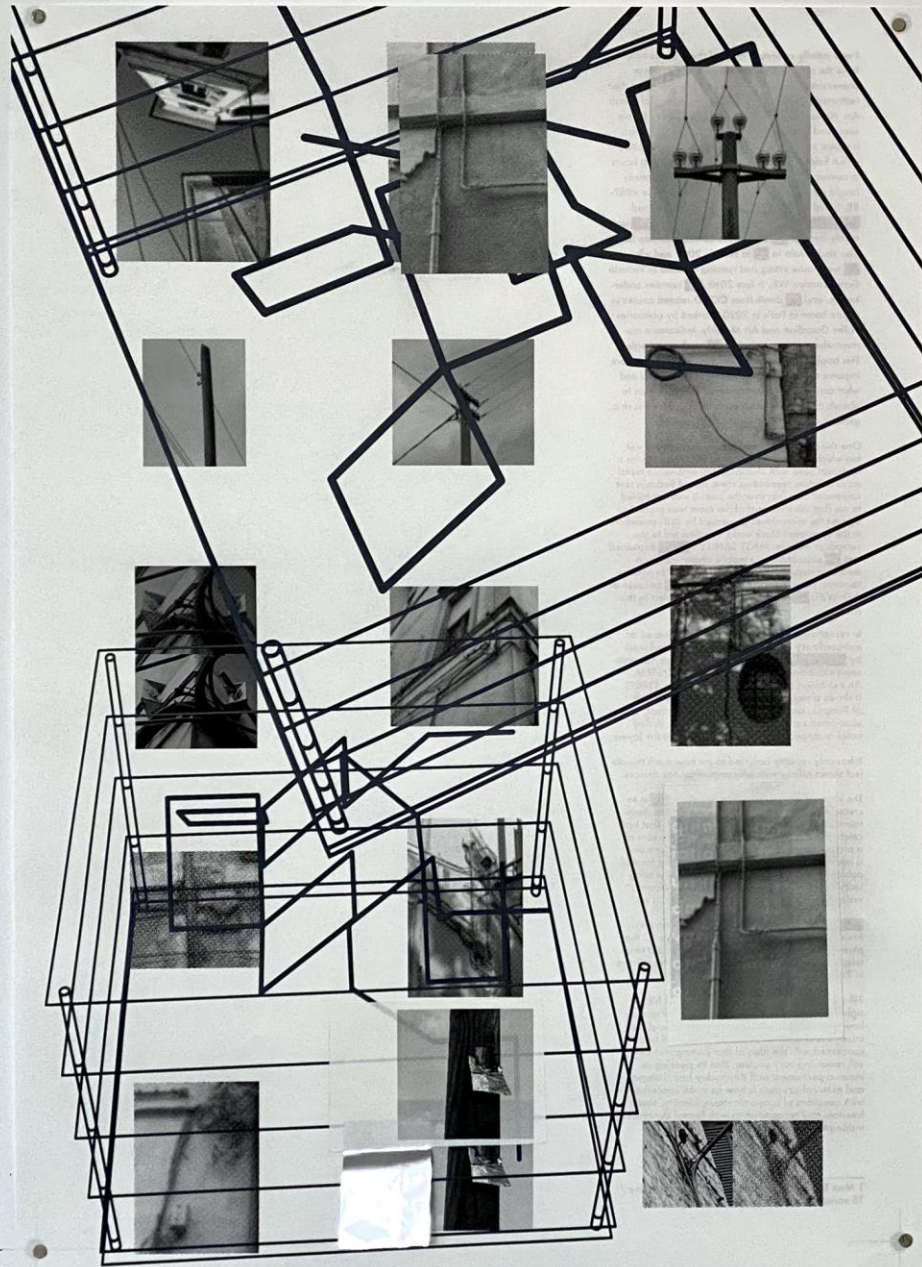
The idea of 15 Variations on a Theme of [redacted] is to create an oblique narrative structure via documentation of place (outside) and idea (inside), that both celebrates and re-energises the formal concerns of a protagonist who has never visited this place and is now being visited upon it as an idea. This form of publishing places [redacted] work in the imaginary context of an investigation of the telecoms systems of the town in which the exhibition is set.

[redacted] also made drawings in response to Max Bill's 15 variations on the same theme<sup>1</sup> ... the photograph of a related drawing of [redacted] next to a telephone, taken on my studio visit to Victoria Grove in 2010 quietly links these associations.

Bill made his fifteen variations because of his insight "...that many art lovers are not clear about how works of art come into being and about their internal and external structure". This small book is concerned with the idea of that coming into being still remaining very unclear, that its clearing remains a permanent and day-to-day task. Internal and external structure is now as much concerned with questions of economic status, identity, social freedom and recognition as with formal concerns of inside and outside.

<sup>1</sup> Max Bill: quinze variations sur un même thème / 15 variations on one theme, 1935-38





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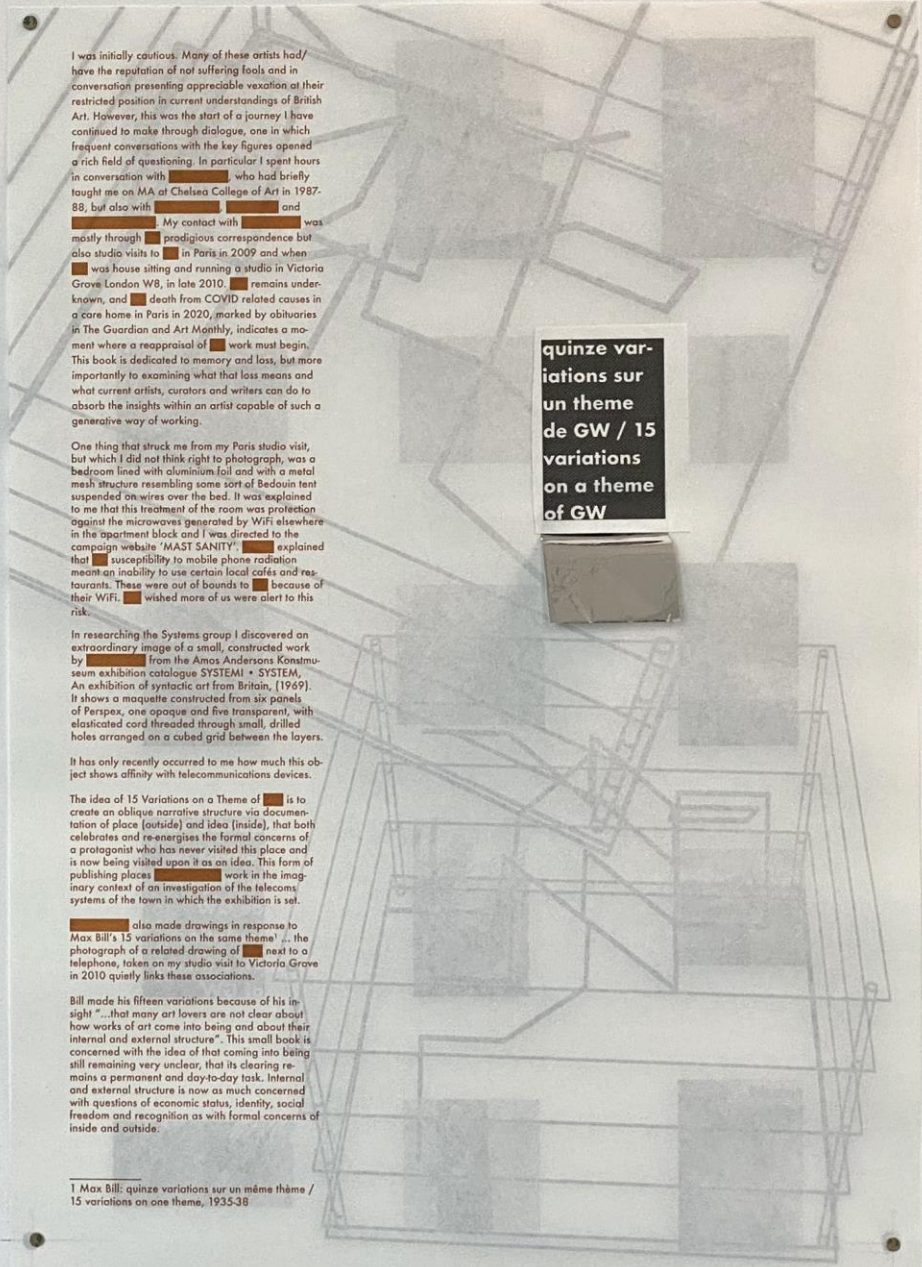
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1 Max Bill: quinze variations sur un même thème / 15 variations on one theme, 1935-38



quinze variations sur un thème de GW / 15 variations on a theme of GW

Customised version of the poster, showing screen printed reconstruction of the original Gillian Wise Perspex and elastic cord relief and the addition of small sections of silver foil mylar emergency blanket.