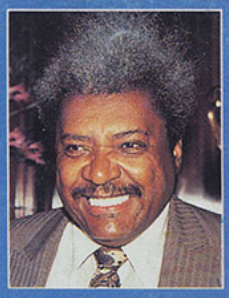
WINNING THE MEDIA WAR

The Victors—and Victims—of the Drama in the Gulf

By Edwin Diamond



DON KING ON THE ROPES

Boxing's Gabby Promoter Tries to Survive at the Top

By Peter Blauner

RESTORATION DRAMA

Turning a Mangled East Side Flat into Period Treasure

By Marilyn Bethany

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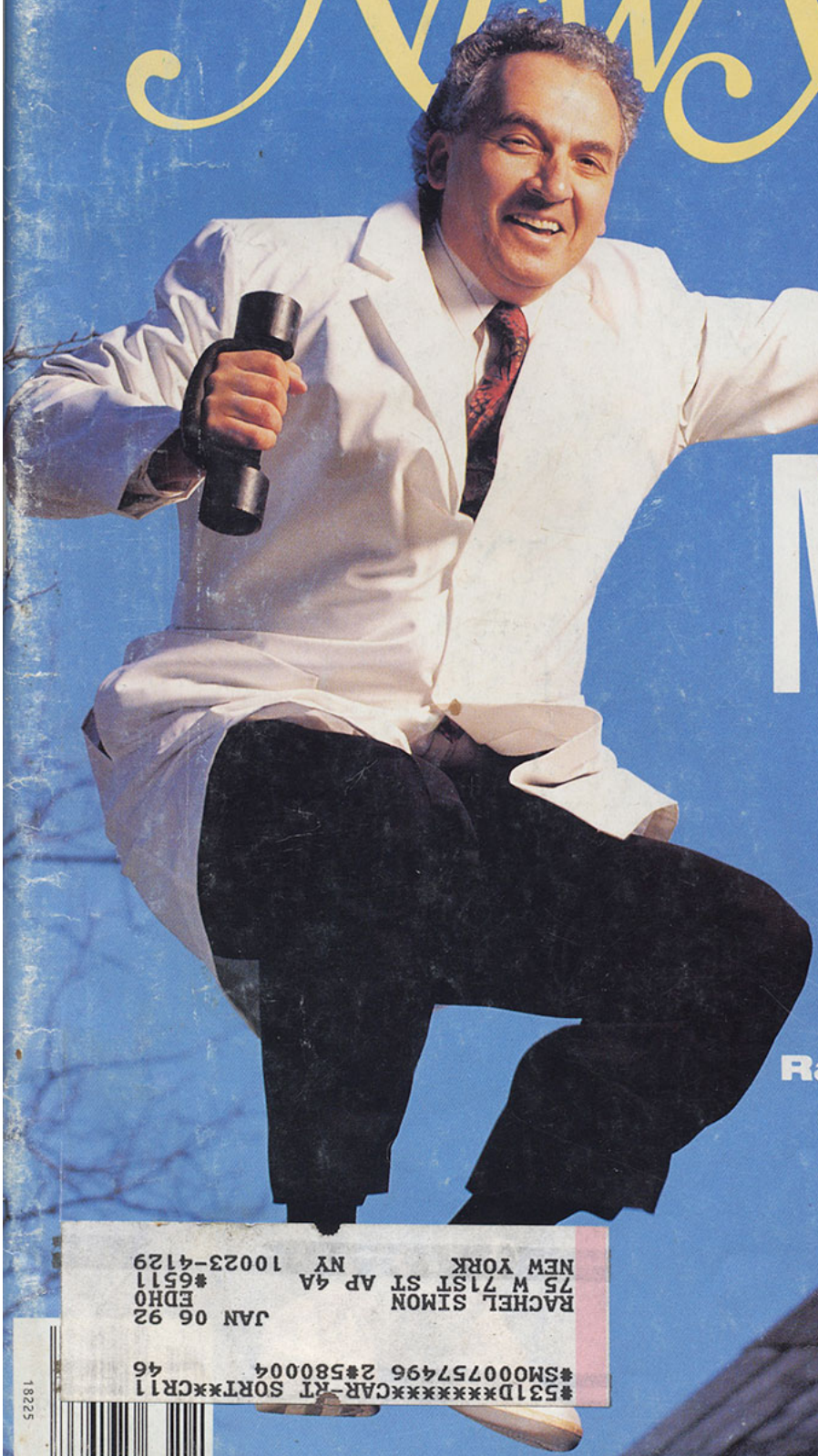
NEW YORK



MAKING WAVES

Can Dr. Irv Dardik's Radical Exercise Therapy Really Work Miracles?

By Tony Schwartz

NEW YORK JOURNAL

ARTISTIC HEIGHTS

THE MEMBERS OF TODCUFF are excited. They've just spotted the tallest signpost ever—fifteen feet, easy. "It's an homage to Brancusi," sighs one of them.

"What a mondo pole," proclaims a second. Best yet, it's a post utterly devoid of sign, a post begging for decoration atop its distant tip.

In TODCUFF (Three Ornery Dudes Clamping Up Fun Fixtures), this grand pole has found able adorners. Metal sculptors in their mid-twenties, the trio, who prefer anonymity, have been bolting their colorful, boisterous, occasionally vulgar work to signposts throughout Manhattan since November. SoHo is home to the vivacious *King Yeow* and a pair of interactive works: the aptly named *Doorknob* and *Spin/Help,* an operable wooden crank that is said to attract a queue on weekends. *Steer,* a massive bull's head fashioned from a motorcycle's gas tank, has been heartily endorsed by the Hell's Angels, whose clubhouse is across the street; *Red Trumpeting Sex* dwells on Central Park West.

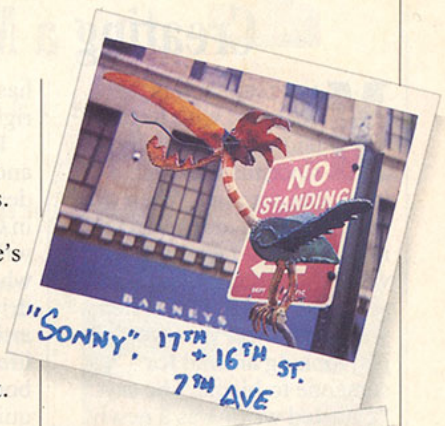
TODCUFF figures most people don't have the time to go to museums or galleries, so the group brings art to the people. So far, very few of the 60-odd pieces have been hauled away; nor have their makers, largely because they work fast and in the dead of night.

Now, for instance, it's somewhere near two in the morning. The mondo pole outside Carnegie Hall, it is decided, is perfect for *Out of the Frying Pan (Dad),* a flaming frying pan that needs lots of room to dangle its escaped fried egg (TODCUFF is painstakingly careful not to obscure street signs).

The two-man ground crew clamps a portable foothold to the pole, and the third sculptor scales it. He wrestles with the sculpture, the egg—a painted fan blade—batting him in the face. It looks for a moment as if both artist and art might tumble down. The climber says his hands are freezing. A police car approaches. Everyone wishes they were elsewhere. But the cruiser disappears, the stubborn bolts find their way in, and the sculpture is finally suspended high above the black street. The fried egg catches the rays of a streetlight and reflects them coyly.

Off to the next installation, maybe a little something for Rockefeller Center. On the way, a pile of garbage on Sixth Avenue beckons: It includes some jettisoned barstools, which TODCUFF promptly bashes apart and stows in the back of the truck. Good, solid legs on those stools—nice and shiny, too. Perhaps they'll turn up hanging over Chelsea one day.

STEPHEN J. DUBNER



DETAILS

Puppets and Pinstripes

THE WINDOW DESIGNERS AT Paul Stuart clothiers (Madison Avenue at 45th Street) are famous for setting faceless mannequins against black backgrounds, but now they've taken a whimsical approach to displaying traditional clothes. Properly dressed mannequins-cum-puppeteers, clad in cashmere and tweed, are being overrun by mice wearing horn-rimmed sunglasses; Swanova, a very elegant and haughty swan, bats her curly eyelashes at this year's lemon-yellow frock; seven fuzzy fleas sport flyaway ties.

"When we decided to do the marionettes, we immediately thought of Bil Baird; his puppets have become folk art," says display director Thomas Beebe. Though the revered puppet-maker died in 1987, his marionettes and hand and rod puppets continue to perform into their fiftieth year under the supervision of Baird's son, Peter.

The vintage puppets arrived from Peter painstakingly packed and labeled, but Beebe was disappointed at first. "They were a little dusty—the strings were tangled; the mice looked like dirty rats. But when the stage lights hit them, they became magical. They're very sensitive to the light. Bil Baird really knew what he was doing."

Gray-haired gents too old to play with toys stop and peer into the windows, mesmerized. For Beebe, it's the contrast that makes the concept work: "We wanted to put the gentlemen who wear our traditional clothes in unlikely situations. Businessmen don't play with marionettes."

Ah, but they do pull strings.

KATE O'HARA

Of mice and men's wear at Paul Stuart.

Photographs: bottom left, Andrew Garn; bottom right, Mary Allen.