



Clockwise, from top left: Merce Cunningham and Carolyn Brown in *Summerspace*, 1958, Sogetsu Art Center, Tokyo, 1964. Asger Jorn, *Rødt Lys* (Red Light), 1960, oil on canvas, 25% x 21 1/4". Constant working on *Construction*, 1957.

The keen catalogue **CONSTANT: SPACE + COLOUR; FROM COBRA TO NEW BABYLON** (NAI010 Publishers, \$40) inadvertently bathes the utopian artist Constant Nieuwenhuys (1920–2005) in a surprising light. It assiduously contextualizes his mildly bold, tidily irregular paintings, his three-dimensional wire and unusual-for-their-time Plexiglas constructions, and his visualization of “unitary urbanism” (a total human habitat where “life is a game” that merges “the science fiction of social life and urban planning”). Situationist International cofounder Guy Debord christened Constant’s plans for better-living-through-poetry environments “New Babylon,” though Constant didn’t stick with the Situationists for long. There is an affirmative, even (*shh!*) utilitarian spirit to Constant’s bright, forward-facing designs: Even his most way-out ideas, from “spatial colorism” to the aesthetic colonization of outer space, possess a department-store functionality. Trudy van der Horst’s bio of Constant places him squarely in the center of the artistic commotion of his age, but he somehow still seems a placid, well-meaning, trampled-over figure. Several of Constant’s short manifestos are reprinted here, and the one that sticks is called “Our Ambition Lies in Ambiance.” His weird yet stately Duchamp-meets-*This Island Earth* pieces, his set decor (for a ballet of Kafka’s *The Trial!*), furnishings, space oil paintings, and “art-chi-texture” all seem positively *darling*. They would enhance any living room, kitchen, sundeck, or study. If you saw them on Amazon or in Target, you’d buy ‘em instantly. And you wouldn’t be *that* shocked to find them there.

Dive into **ASGER JORN: THE OPEN HIDE** (Petzel, \$45) and you’ll feel like you’ve tumbled into an alternate twentieth century where postwar painting (among other things) has been hijacked from under the noses of haughty gatekeepers by a bravura jester. On Jorn’s terms of sophisticated evisceration, “the process of encountering *the unknown, the accidental, disorder, the absurd and the impossible*” meant turning art inside out. Instead of creating showpieces to decorate the chic modern cathedral/stock market/penthouse, he concocted sinister, laughing cave paintings more suited to the playground or abattoir. This book gains much from its compression and concision: The expert text by Axel Heil and Roberto Ohrt elucidates the artist’s work about as well as any rational, “reasonable” appreciation could. It offers a good thumbnail biography of Jorn and his passage through Cold War times as a maker of all manner of haunting images, books, and spaces. He was a member of the Danish resistance during the Second World War, moved decisively forward as a founder of the Cobra (along with Constant) and the Imaginist Bauhaus movements, and became a key figure in the Situationist International. *The Open Hide* evocatively displays a body of work and ideas that is more flexible—and perhaps ultimately more durable—than the absolutist, anarchist-monarchist decrees of Debord himself. Jorn’s greatest accomplishment was not that he established the Scandinavian Institute of Comparative Vandalism after parting with the Situationists, but that in nearly every word, deed, and action, he managed to live up to the riotous implications of such an auspicious name. —HOWARD HAMPTON

In a 1980 drawing by Yvonne Rainer, traces the influences of Merce Cunningham on modern dance. “ART WORLD” on modern dance. name of their progeny, “RAUSCHENBERG,” the amplifier of creative signals and artists identified. This image of **ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG** (Publishing, \$75), the volume accepted at Tate Modern and the Museum of Modern Art, the same protagonists as **MERCE CUNNINGHAM** (Walker Art Center, \$75), which was among the most important laborators, having served as the costume, and lighting designer. Reading the books together of today’s art made, in the spirit of the contemporary world... performative in implication or co-organizer of the MOMA show. Robert Rauschenberg considered production, more so than prefocus on his output should be characteristic ways of working, graphic exhibition catalogue creator, but Rauschenberg’s rooted in active collaboration, w