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Nancy Davenport

Yves Klein, Harry Shunk, and John Kender, *Leap into the Void*, 1960

I've been intrigued by this picture since I was a student. This documentation of Yves Klein's performance was photographed by Harry Shunk and his then-partner John Kender in October 1960, in the suburbs of Paris. A man leaps off a rooftop with arms outstretched. In the image he is suspended in the air, midfall. In fact, the photograph was made by combining two images—one that was taken of Klein jumping, with his friends ready to catch him in a stretched tarp, and one with a shot of the street—and the montage created the illusion that there was nothing to break his fall.

I've always read this image as intentionally ambiguous and conflicted. I'm not really interested in the kooky metaphysics of Klein but in the turning of that metaphysical optimism on its head. On the one hand, the image very strongly resonates both as a suicidal and a utopian leap—a gesture of ecstatic surrender. On the other hand, the photograph is so famously manipulated. Klein circulated different versions of the montage, including one notorious piece of self-promotion: a fake insert in the newspaper *Dimanche*, complete with fictional captions.