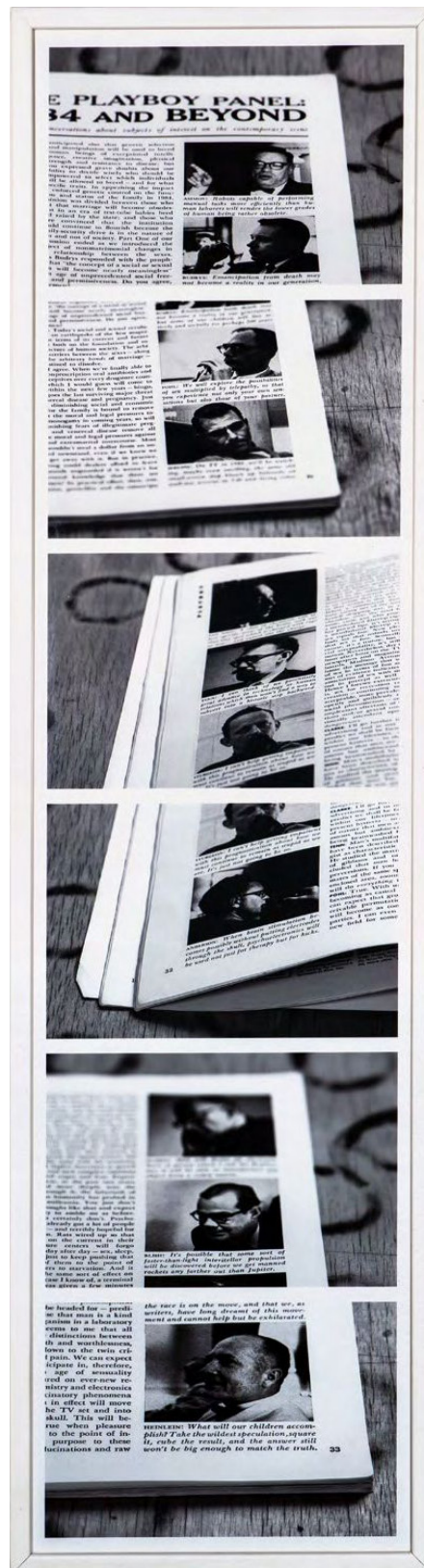


46 - ON 1984 AND BEYOND



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Published in 1963 across two issues of Playboy's interview section, "1984 and Beyond" invited 12 science fiction writers—including Arthur C. Clarke (a regular contributor to Playboy's fiction section) Robert Heinlein (author of *Starship Troopers*) and Rod Serling (creator of *The Twilight Zone*)—to talk about their visions of the future of society circa 1984. 42 years later, Gerard Byrne resurrected this article, editing it into a screenplay and re-enacting it with a group of actors in The Netherlands, reworking the piece in two stages, beginning with a live reading, which was developed into a subsequent film.

Where George Orwell's 1949 vision of the future sees a dystopian totalitarian regime, Playboy's group of writers see immanent sexual, scientific and social liberation. At the same time they appear steeped in political tensions and social and anxieties surrounding the cold war, their visions of the future simultaneously unfold fears of the present. Opening with a discussion about the Russian-American race for the moon (Clark predicts a moon landing circa 1970, and Venus circa 1980) the writers debate the likelihood of the Russians not only capturing the moon, but the "entire orb," before to imagine its commercial potential, and to speculate over lunar real estate and tourist travel. Ideological fears of Communism and discussions of racial issues only too easily translate into imagined alien presences, as the writers gauge how their appearance might "horrify humanity," however they conclude that "few aliens are apt to be more startling than man himself."

– "On 1984 and Beyond," Emily Pethick, Dot Dot Dot #13, 2006

Gerard Byrne,
On 1984 and beyond, 2006,
strip of photographs, 104 x 28.2 cm