







could get." It was not the first time that Linda had failed to recognize a favorite celebrity. On a cross-country flight, a white-haired man in the seat next to her introduced himself as Bucky. "I thought he was a lettuce farmer, but it turned out that he was Buckminster Fuller. I had read all of his books, but I had never seen his picture. We spent the whole flight talking about domes and energy." We've all had the same problem; we see a movie but don't know what the director looks like. "Fuller looks like his ideas—basic, alive. He's very convincing." Linda has never stopped reading. She graduated from a small-town high school in western Kentucky when she was 16 and went on to attend the University of Kentucky and New College in Sarasota, Florida, on art scholarships. When she learned she could make a living and support her artistic endeavors as a high-fashion model, she dropped out of college. Now that she lives in L.A., people sometimes mistake her for a celebrity. "When my agent sent some of my photographs to the casting director of Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now*, and a few days later I received a message congratulating me for landing one of the few female roles, I called up and said, 'I'm sorry, but you must have the wrong person.' But they really wanted me." Linda plays, of all things, a Playmate who entertains the troops at a U.S.O. show emceed by Wolfman Jack. Art follows life. If you ever bump into Linda and she tells you she's a Playmate, believe her.

"What are my reasons for becoming a Playmate? Oh, I suppose I want to show my body to the world. To say, 'Hello out there. Enjoy!'"

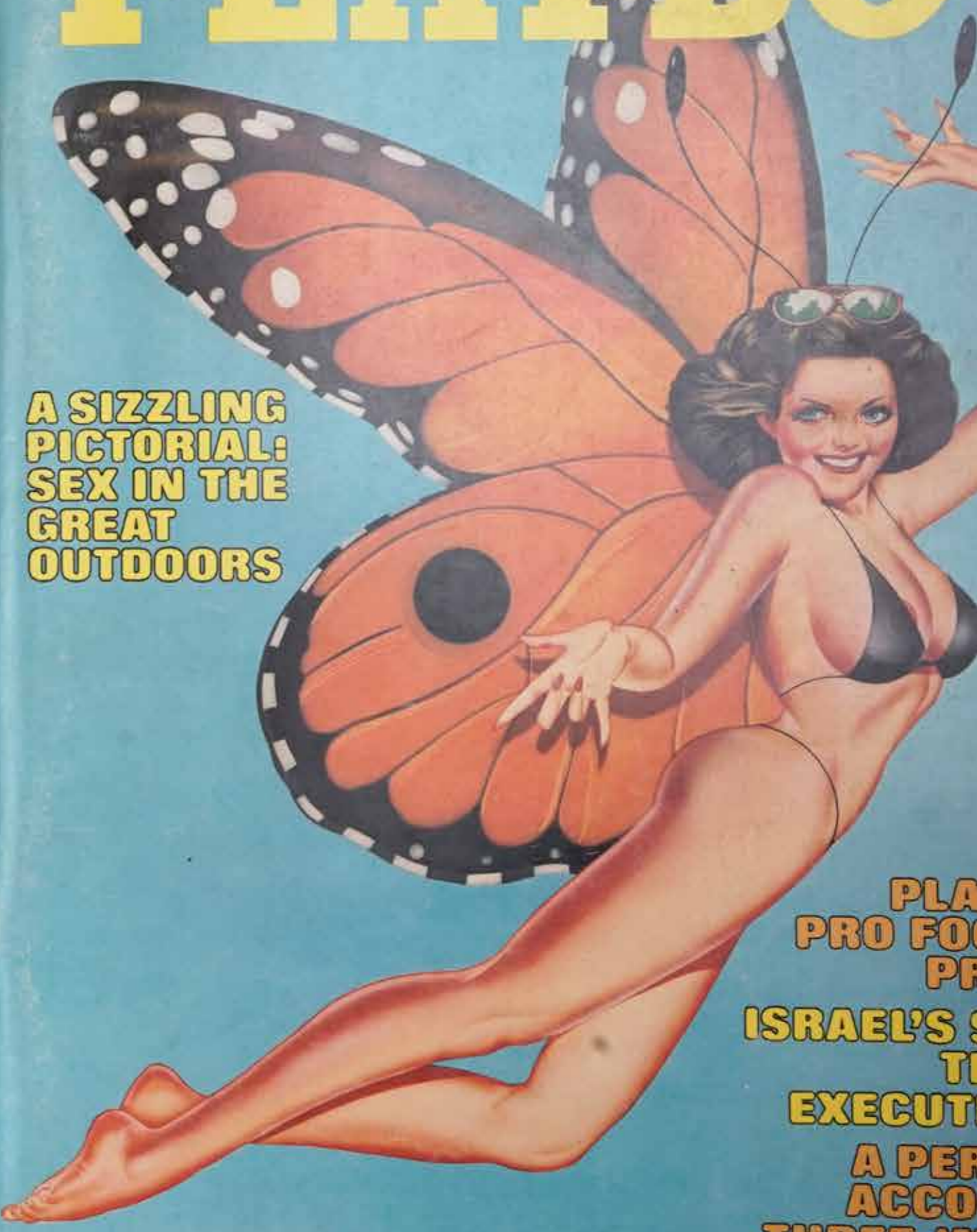


FIGURE 9-1. Jan van Kessel, *Insects on a Stone Slab*, undated. Oil on copper, 175 x 233. © Kunstmuseum Basel. Photo: Martin P. Bühler.

symbols. But in addition to transmitting the obligatory reminder of death, they time and again act as operators of an optical illusion, frequently depicted larger than they should be relative to the other elements of the painting, they tend to be placed where they create a trompe-l'oeil effect, astride the curvature of a piece of fruit, atop a rooster's crest, or on the parafilm frame of the painting. In the case of *Insects on a Stone Slab*, however, the insects have become the principal actors. The still life is "gone," as it were, and the trompe-l'oeils alone remain.

On closer inspection this is in many ways an odd painting. First, even if we assume that some of the South American beetles are fairly large, the height of the slab, reminiscent of a towering stone monument, can hardly exceed three to four inches, which would imply that the artist or observer is lying flat on the ground in front of it. If the slab were as large as its design indicates, the airborne insects would be as big as World War I biplanes. A second peculiar feature is the faulty perspective used to render the second slab. Although it intersects the first at a right angle, the insect perched on it is almost on the same plane as the beetle on the other slab; it is as if it were resisting the artist's attempts at central perspective. As we shall see, this minor discrepancy points to nothing less than one of the central issues of Dutch still life.

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