

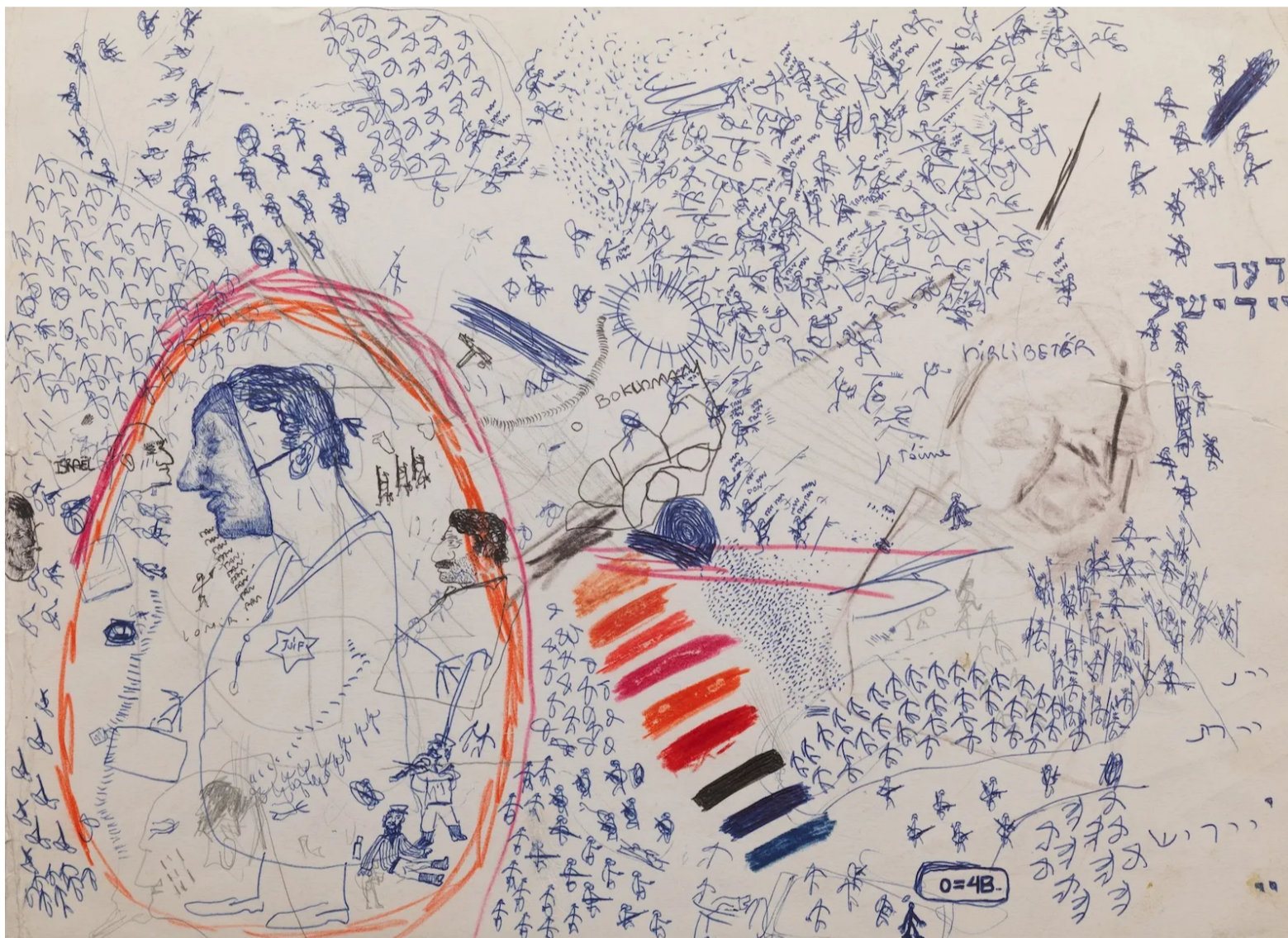
## The New York Review of Books

### ‘Kish Mir in Tuchus!’

J. Hoberman

February 25, 2024

Before his violent early death at twenty-five, the Jewish Belgian artist Stéphane Mandelbaum assembled a body of confrontational drawings.



Private Collection/Stéphane Mandelbaum Estate/Photo by Philippe Migéat

Stéphane Mandelbaum: *Composition (Mask Figure)*, circa 1981

A wannabe criminal who could when he chose draw like an angel, Stéphane Mandelbaum (1961–1986) was the child of two artists, bequeathed at birth the heritage of two genocides. Relatives of his Polish Jewish grandfather were murdered during World War II; relatives of his mother, of Armenian descent, were massacred during the ethnic cleansing of Anatolia. A French-speaking Belgian, Mandelbaum connected with another world-historic atrocity when he married a woman whose parents grew up in the then-Belgian Congo.

Although raised without religion, Mandelbaum decided in his teens to identify as a Jew, at least culturally, learning Yiddish, one suspects both to claim pariah status and perhaps to live out the phrase “shver tsu zayn a yid” (hard to be a Jew). The only painting included in his first American show—an exhibition at the Drawing Center in New



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**Stéphane Mandelbaum: *Mambo Club Party (Portrait  
of Delval Mambo)*, 1985**

## J. Hoberman

J. Hoberman’s new book is a chronicle of New York in the 1960s, underground  
movies, and radical performance and downtown art. (February 2024)

- Coincidentally, Goldman has been revived by the French  
director Cédric Kahn’s absorbing dramatization of his trial,  
*The Goldman Case*, a highlight of the recent New York Jewish  
Film Festival.

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